

PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

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Distinguishing Philosophical Counseling from Psychotherapy

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Abstract

The relationship between philosophical counseling and psychological therapy has been much debated in the short history of the philosophical counseling movement. This paper intends to distinguish philosophical counseling from psychotherapy in terms of several indispensable elements, namely their entailed problems, goals, methods and approaches, safety, and the relationship between counselor and client.

Keywords: *Philosophical counseling, psychotherapy, comparison*

Introduction

In the 20th century, psychology has almost had an exclusive role in solving human problems, although there are serious contradictions in its methodology. Psychology, in Gerd B. Achenbach's opinion, has fallen into the error that it had originally stood up against: the commitment and normative character of theological psychotherapy. Achenbach insists that while philosophical counseling may be a valuable alternative to psychotherapy, and may have therapeutic effects, it is not itself a therapy (1984, p.29). Lahav & Tillmans (1995) think psychological therapies are quite distinct from philosophical counseling, but it has been a difficult task to distinguish them, a task which hasn't yet been fully achieved. Lydia Amir says that philosophical practice is not necessarily in opposition to psychology or to psychologists (2005). Philosophical practitioners have often emulated psychotherapy. Philosophical counselors have adopted the traditional psychotherapeutic framework of one-hour talking sessions with a counselee, the focus on the counselee's personal problems, the weekly appointments, the professional office, the payment of fees, and consequently the attitude of a 'professional'. Even the pioneers of philosophical practice, who had envisioned an altogether new kind of practice, started their practices by conducting one-hour talking-sessions about personal predicaments, just as in psychotherapy. Under their influence many later practitioners have come to regard philosophical practice primarily as a form of counseling (Lahav, 2008).

Ran Lahav (2008) states that the practice of philosophical counseling should not follow normative psychologies and psychotherapies, but this is not to say that the philosophical practitioner should spare himself reflection on the possibilities of a philosophical psychology. Therefore, the awareness of the differences and overlaps between philosophical psychology and psychological philosophy appears to be a condition of philosophical counseling. An interdisciplinary perspective is very much desirable for understanding philosophical counseling, but it must not mean the entangling of the tasks of each. This essay intends to distinguish philosophical counseling from psychotherapy in terms of several indispensable elements.

Entailed Problems

1. Different Demarcations of the Entailed Problems

There are various demarcations of the respective entailed problems in philosophical counseling and psychotherapy. Marinoff portrays philosophical counselling as a potential remedy for many types of personal discontent or anguish that are routinely misdiagnosed as psychological problems. He argues that many common types of emotional complaint are symptomatic of maladjusted philosophical worldviews; accordingly, the most appropriate and effective intervention should be philosophical contemplation under the guidance of an expert. He calls the process of philosophical counseling “therapy for the sane” (Marinoff 1999, p.11). It does not do the work of psychotherapy or treat mental illness. Marinoff rejects the medicalization of many life problems at the hands of the psychotherapeutic community. The maladies to which Marinoff refers are not pathological diseases of body or mind, but “dis-eases”; i.e., disturbances of emotional homeostasis. Viktor E. Frankl (1959) thinks that existential frustration, which for logotherapists is not an illness but is a “healthy pain” (Zaiser 2005), needs existential analysis. To illustrate, symptoms can be existential anxiety, apathy, despondency, distress, emotional tension, emotional exhaustion, headaches, inertia, insomnia, and lethargy. It is noted that healthy pain has its origin not in the psychological but rather in the noetic dimension of man. Thus, therapies for the sane suffering from a healthy pain are logotherapy and philosophical counseling. Frankl mentions that for healthy pain or existential frustration, existential analysis is not a therapy of neuroses and therefore not a reservation of physicians but mainly a task for philosophers (Zaiser 2005). If psychotherapy or psychoanalysis is attempted we could be accused of malpractice. Shlomit Schuster concedes that for some clients philosophical counseling is not likely to be helpful, and psychiatry and psychotherapy may be more appropriate and effective. Philosophical counselors cannot help persons suffering from severe functional cognitive defects or those afflicted with serious communicative disorders—those who cannot understand a commonsense explanation, cannot respond to simple questions, or fail to express themselves at all through ordinary language. For such people, philosophical counseling might only be helpful after a successful medical or psychotherapeutic intervention (Schuster, 1999, pp.15–16).

2. Concerning different aspects of problems

Philosophical counseling employs philosophical questions that ask what is common to all humankind—the universal, the essence of humanity and reality. Psychotherapy is only able to concern itself with personal and concrete things, and can therefore never open consciousness inward towards the essence, and answer the problems of life views and views of values. Philosophical counseling is not only concerned with the self, but also opens the mind for an enhanced perception of the self (Van Hooft, 28). As far as a client learns to transcend the self, philosophical counseling helps to cope with transience and death. Philosophical therapy resumes the holistic and interdisciplinary view that was characteristic for the ancient world. Psychotherapy is a specialized field within the social sciences. Psychotherapy concentrates on making people fit for survival and procreation.

3. Some psychological problems caused by unresolved philosophical problems

A challenging noetic problem of modern times is existential frustration, which is not an illness but a “healthy pain.” Frankl explicitly called on philosophers to help existentially frustrated people. Frankl’s theory is based on the premise that our primary motivational force is to find meaning in life and man’s

strongest intrinsic motivation is his existential (Heideggerian) and transcendental (Kantian) “will to meaning” (Frankl, 1958, 1997). The lack of meaning can result in an existential vacuum. It is a state of inertia, boredom, and apathy. If this state persists, it can progress into existential frustration, a universal human experience. Existential frustration, however, is another designation for the frustration of man’s will to meaning. Global phenomena like aggression, addiction, depression and suicide are not fully understandable unless recognizing such an existential vacuum, existential frustration, or feeling of meaninglessness underlying them. According to Marinoff, all dis-eases, such as unresolved moral dilemmas, unsettled injustices, or unfulfilled purposes can eventually become manifested as diseases. In general, a persistent state of dis-ease can taint or mar one’s thoughts, words, and deeds which will negatively affect one’s emotional and physical well-being (Marinoff, 2003, p12).

Goals

It is acknowledged that philosophical counseling may have beneficial psychological effects that can be broadly described as therapeutic. A therapeutic effect in the sense of psychotherapy can only emerge in philosophical practice as a “by-product” and not as an objective.

1. An examined life

Contemporary philosophical counseling aims at a Socratic life, i.e. a life in which there is honest self-appraisal and rational inquiry into goals; in short, an examined life (Van Hooft, 20). The aims of philosophical counseling are to help clients come to know themselves and to understand their lives better by philosophical means. It concerns questions about the meaning of life and other existential themes. Philosophers are well- (if not uniquely) qualified to help their counselees escape from narrow conceptions of their lives, and to encourage them to open their minds to new ways of understanding themselves and the world. In Achenbach’s dialectical model, the chief aim of philosophical counseling is to question unreflective assumptions and to stimulate insights into personal situations, not to provide comfort to those in distress (1995, p68).

2. A search for wisdom as a way of being

According to the majority of practitioners, philosophical counseling aims at conceptual clarification and wisdom, without explanatory recourse to psychological patterns or mental health constructs. Ran Lahav thinks that philosophical practice should be viewed as a search for wisdom. Wisdom is not the same as knowledge or intelligence, since a knowledgeable or intelligent person need not be wise, and vice versa. It is an attitude that expresses a broad understanding of life not just in thought, but in one’s actions and reactions, emotions, manner of speaking, interpersonal relations, and entire way of being. The important point is that wisdom is not an isolated skill, but a way of being. The search for wisdom, therefore, is a process that involves changing one’s attitude to life, developing a new openness towards one’s world. In short, it requires a personal transformation (Lahav 2008).

3. Avoiding some psychological problems

Psychotherapy can help people to maintain their emotional well-being, which is essential to certain dimensions of personal growth—including one’s personality, habits, likes, dislikes, ambitions, aversions, and so forth—while philosophical counseling can transform one’s dis-ease to ease, which can prevent some dis-eases from becoming diseases.

4. Making sense of everyday life

Steven Segal thinks that unlike psychotherapy, philosophy does not focus on the disruption of the personality, psyche, or self, but on the breakdown of conventions which structure everyday life. Thus a philosophical crisis is one in which the conventions of everyday living no longer give everyday life structure or meaning. From this perspective, the aim of philosophical counseling is not to heal the self but to explore the disruption of conventions and to open alternative frames for making sense of everyday life (Segal, 2006).

Methods and approaches

It is well-known that, being based in science, the approach of most psychotherapies is causal. But it is not necessarily the case that delving into the causes of one's behaviour or concerns is always helpful in improving the situation. The philosophical counselor's approach differs from that of the psychotherapist, and Schlomit Schuster has made a noteworthy distinction: "Unlike many mental health practitioners, the philosophical counselor's attempt to understand the nature or source of the client's problem is not based on an *a priori* understanding of it." (Ellenbogen 2006).

The mental health practitioner tends to approach new clients armed with various theories through which she interprets complaints. Achenbach has accused most therapists of creating illusive realities by interpreting questions or problems exclusively in terms of a specific theory (Schuster, 2006). By contrast, the philosophical counselor sees the client as an individual, not as an example of a general paradigm (Ellenbogen 2006). Lahav states that there is no compelling reason why philosophical practitioners should cling to this psychotherapeutic inheritance of one-on-one counseling, and that other frameworks such as workshops, companionships, weekend retreats, or even informal coffee-house conversations are more conducive to philosophical practice (Lahav 2008). Marinoff (1999, p.31) thinks that helping people philosophically should not be based on science because it is an art. It requires empathy rather than scientific expertise.

Philosophical also counseling differs from psychoanalysis, which seeks causes of which the client is unconscious; but other forms of psychotherapy, such as REBT, existential therapy, and logotherapy, bear similarities. Raabe (2001) questions whether the distinction is sustainable, especially since many forms of psychotherapy involve the 'intentional stance' towards clients that is central to philosophical counseling: to help people apply philosophy to examine values, solve ethical dilemmas, and improve their lives. In Raabe's experience, self-discovery and improvement through philosophical exploration may be far more beneficial to many people, in many situations, than other approaches, for example, the psychologist's exploration of childhood memories and today's moods.

Philosophical counseling aims to assist clients in achieving authenticity in self-knowledge and action. To this end, the counselor uses hermeneutic techniques of understanding, and encourages clients to apply phenomenological forms of thought to their self-understanding via establishing a conversation characterized by authenticity. The idea of authentic conversation demands that the ethical attitude delineated by these philosophers should also form the essential core of philosophical counseling.

A good philosophical counselor needs methods and practices, notwithstanding Achenbach's "beyond method" method (Schuster, 1999, p. 38). First and foremost, he needs to develop a high level of context-sensitivity, and a capacity for judgment that helps decide which method to use, how to use it, and also, in

some cases, when it is better to set all methods aside and let them rest, because something completely different is needed.

Risks to clients

Mental health professionals often want to diagnose problems by classifying them. This is usually done via labels for persons who exhibit or describe similar symptoms. Thus, when a client describes a symptom, e.g., anxiety, he seems easier to understand by thinking of him as an “anxious person” or as suffering from anxiety disorder and proceeding on this hypothesis. A client often perceives himself as facing an unsolvable problem or dilemma because of an unconscious and unexamined assumption that he has made, and without first recognizing his initial assumption, the client cannot view his problem in any other way. Wittgenstein might describe this situation by saying that the client is in the grip of a picture, “a picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat itself to us inexorably” (Wittgenstein 1953, p.115). Clients resist psychological counseling because they are not willing to concede they are mentally ill. Thus, when a client appears to be “trapped” by a conceptual problem which paralyzes her ability to act, it is helpful to ask her questions designed to uncover a hidden assumption. Schuster argues that philosophical ‘care’ can be trans-therapeutic even for people with highly disturbed thoughts and feelings, who yearn to have their irrational ideas taken seriously without the stigma of psychiatric diagnoses which ironically may provoke further ego-protecting delusions (Schuster 1999, p.16).

Philosophical counselors can eschew not only the negative effect on clients of labels of several symptoms in psychotherapy, but also other risks of harms to clients by some kinds of techniques, such as reinforcements, that behaviorists often employ.

Relationship between counselor and client

1. “Therapy for the sane”

Marinoff (2003) explains that many philosophical counseling relationships are very short term, with some comprising only one session. They help people to think more clearly about their problems through the exchange of philosophical ideas with the counselor. So the relationship between counselor and client in philosophical counseling is an ordinary relationship. However, the relationship between counselor and client in psychotherapy is often thought of as doctor-patient relationship.

2. Objectifying the client

Philosophical counseling is, briefly stated, not a “treating” discipline, but an educational discipline, wherein the client is an active participant, not a passive patient. If the client is in need of treatment, or doesn’t have the necessary disposition which philosophical counseling requires, then he is referred to doctors or psychologists, who have appropriate expertise. Schuster (1999) sees psychologically therapeutic approaches as objectifying the client. The therapist is an expert and the client becomes an object of treatment. The ideal of philosophical counseling, in contrast, involves a mutuality between counselor and client as they engage in a conversation with salutary intent. Schuster attempts to demonstrate that the relationship between counselor and client is dialogical and dialectic, and not authoritative and hierarchical.

3. Philosophical Practice Entailing Self-inquiry

The therapeutic element in philosophical counseling refers to the client's own effort, the client's self-inquiry in philosophical questions. In philosophical counseling the counselor often impels client to be his own therapist. It must be emphasized that one must clarify the direction of one's thinking, namely, whether focusing on the questioning man or the suffering man.

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Epicureanism as a Foundation for Philosophical Counseling

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Abstract: The paper discusses the manner and extent to which Epicurean ethics can serve as a general philosophy of life, capable of supporting philosophical practice in the form of philosophical counseling. Unlike the modern age academic philosophy, the philosophical practice movement portrays the philosopher as a personal or corporate advisor, one who helps people make sense of their experiences and find optimum solutions within the context of their values and general preferences. Philosophical counseling may rest on almost any school of philosophy, ranging — in the Western tradition— from Platonism to the philosophy of language or logic. While any specialist school of philosophy may serve valuable purposes by elucidating specific aspects of one’s experiences and directing future action, the more ‘generalist’ the philosophy used as the basis for counseling is, the broader and more far-reaching its potential impact on the counselee. Epicurean ethics is a prime example of a philosophy of life that is suitable for philosophical counseling today. Its closer examination reveals that, contrary to superficial opinion, it is not opposed to Stoicism and may in fact incorporate Stoicism and its antecedent virtues (including many Christian virtues) in a simple yet comprehensive practical system of directions for modern counseling.

Keywords: *Epicurean ethics, Stoicism, philosophical practice, counseling, life-plan, pleasure, moderation, virtues, wisdom, conscience.*

Epicurus: Philosophy as therapy and the role of pleasure

The essential ‘therapeutic’ function of philosophy is perhaps most clearly shown by Epicurean ethics. While in the modern age psychology and psychologists have carved up a legally exclusive niche for themselves as the only ‘experts’ qualified to provide talk therapy, many counseling experiences, as well as common sense, suggest that psychology, a child of philosophy, merely extrapolates and simplifies a philosophical methodology of therapy, and in many cases falls short of achieving its full effect. Increasingly psychological intervention is geared to treat symptoms and try to effect external behavior change without looking into the causes of the seemingly dysfunctional behavior or trying to elucidate the meanings of the person’s problems. Although admittedly there are clearly mental illnesses that require medical intervention, there are many more cases of ‘problems of meaning’ that cause anxiety, depression, personality and relationship issues. These are today commonly treated by medication, yet many may be properly addressed by philosophy. The legal ban on the use of the term ‘therapy’ for philosophical counsel marks a de-humanisation of counseling and an arbitrary turf boundary imposed by the zealous keepers of psychology’s claim on exclusivity. The now ‘heretic’ concept of philosophy as therapy, and not as merely complementary to therapy, was in fact essential to the very beginnings of western ethics, which, in Stoicism and Epicureanism (and to some extent in Plato and Aristotle) were what we call today ‘philosophy of life’:

Empty is that philosopher’s discourse which offers therapy for no human passion. Just as there is no use in medical expertise if it does not expel the sickness of bodies, so there is no use in philosophy if it does not expel the passions of the soul. (Porphury, *Ad Marcellam*, in Pötscher, 1969, p. 31).

It is the role of ethics as a philosophy of life to ‘expel passions of the soul’ by providing precepts for a balanced, happy life. Such life must include moderate pleasures and a wisdom that helps virtue to flourish, thus allowing conscience to rest at ease. Perhaps the best formulation of this perception of ethics was Epicurus’ 5th Principal Doctrine, which reads:

It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and honorably and justly, and it is impossible to live wisely and honorably and justly without living pleasantly. Whenever any one of these is lacking, when, for instance, the man is not able to live wisely, though he lives honorably and justly, it is impossible for him to live a pleasant life.

The 5th Principal Doctrine marks a fundamental distinction between Epicurean ethics, on the one hand, and Plato and Aristotle, on the other. Plato argues that pleasure, though desirable, is not an end in itself (cannot be a *telos*) and should be sought in proportion with reason. Such a life pursuit ideally results in a ‘mixed life’, where reason is accorded a higher position in the hierarchy of values (*The Republic* 581c–588a). According to Plato, there is something inherently heteronomous in pleasure, something that it is not ‘contained in itself’. This heteronomy is reflected in the fact that pleasure ‘could not be measured by itself, but needed an external yardstick, such as purity’. In Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle interprets pleasure as the unimpeded activity (*energeia*) of a natural condition of the soul. While he renounces pure hedonism, Aristotle reconciles his ‘rationalism’ with a positive role accorded to pleasure by considering that pleasure which arises from intellectual activity the most noble of all pleasures (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1153a14–15). The point of departure for Epicurus in relation to the highly nuanced views of pleasure held by Plato and Aristotle is that for him every pleasure *qua* pleasure is a good in itself, and every pain *qua* pain is an evil. To procure pleasure and prevent pain is thus the ultimate aim of life and the most basic value-matrix on which to base a life-plan.

A life plan can be designed either on rationalist, intuitionist, or hedonistic grounds. Epicurus opts for uniting reason and pleasure by making the sustained pleasure of a well integrated person the deciding criterion for a good life-plan:

We declare pleasure to be the beginning and end of the blessed life, for we have recognized pleasure as the first and natural good, and from this we start in every choice and avoidance, and this we make our goal, using feeling as the canon by which we judge every good (Epicurus. *Letter to Menoeceus*, in Bailey, 1926, p. 128).

The use of pleasure as therapy to achieve greater fulfillment and satisfaction in life, however, brings one deeper into Epicurean philosophical methodology and casts Epicurus’ ethics in a light very similar to the Stoic ethics of asceticism. The main goal of Epicurean quest of pleasure is not a maximum intensity of pleasure. Rather Epicureans insist on a pleasure the threshold of which is “the avoidance of all pain”, and a life-plan that minimises the influence of chance on one’s happiness:

Fortune, I have made advance preparations against you, and barred the passage against every secret entry you try to make. We shall not give ourselves up as captives to you or to any other circumstance. But when necessity leads us out, we shall spit upon life and upon those who emptily plaster themselves in it, and we shall depart from it with a noble song of triumph, crying out at the end: ‘We have had a good life’ (Metrodorus of Lampsakus. *Sententiae Vaticanae*, printed in Bailey, 1926, sentence no. 47).

In order to sustain pleasure throughout one's life, it seems that Epicurus suggests at least two stages that must be passed. First, one must dispense with fear, which prevents one from achieving a freedom of the spirit and a relaxed state of the mind (*ataraxia*). To do so, one is well advised to apply the four therapeutic instructions known as the Epicurean Tetrapharmakos, which can be paraphrased in the following way:

1. Do not fear gods, for they do not busy themselves with insignificant human affairs;
2. Do not fear death, because it does not bring with itself any threatening new experience;
3. Always be aware that things necessary for happiness (in the minimalist sense of absence of pain and want (*aponia*) and absence of anxiety (*ataraxia*)) are easy to procure;
4. Always be aware that the inevitable pains tend to be outweighed by pleasures, that they are usually relatively easy to endure, and even in protracted illness filled with pain, moments of pleasure, if properly conceived, greatly outweigh the moments of intense pain.

The last point is elaborated in *Principal Doctrine* no. 4:

Continuous bodily pain does not last long; instead, pain, if extreme, is present a very short time, and even that degree of pain which slightly exceeds bodily pleasure does not last for many days at once. Diseases of long duration allow an excess of bodily pleasure over pain.

There is a notable parallel between the Epicurean insistence on the need for 'therapy' to liberate ourselves from fear and the typical situation in modern civilisation that in many urban centres most people are in formal therapy for anxiety, and the prescribing of medication is everyday practice just to keep people 'functional' amidst threats and fears inherent in increasingly complex lives. If one replaces the notion of threat of 'gods' (the prominent sources of internal sanction for prohibited behavior in Antiquity) with conscience, reproach by peers or social stigma (the prominent sources of anxiety today), one gets an almost ready set of recommendations as to how to gear the initial phase of contemporary counseling of almost any counselee.

Epicurus joined the rest of the ancient Greek tradition in distinguishing between natural and necessary desires and those that are not natural or necessary. While most other ancient philosophers, including Plato and Aristotle, include the needs of the stomach (the desire for food and drink), as well as the need for shelter and sexual desires, amongst the natural and necessary desires, Epicurus attaches less weight to sexuality and considers the sexual desire to be natural, but not necessary, because it is 'easy to satisfy, but equally easy to refrain from' (Usener, 1887, p. 456). His minimalism is thus structurally (in the types of desires considered absolutely necessary) more pronounced than in the respective treatments of the topic by more 'rationalist' thinkers of the time. According to Epicurus, the only desires that a wise man habitually seeks to satisfy are those that are both natural and necessary. At the same time, the satisfaction of those desires marks the (quite low) threshold of happiness:

The flesh cries out not to be hungry, not to be thirsty, not to be cold. If someone is in these states and expects to remain so, he would rival even Zeus in happiness (Sent. Vat. Sentence 33).

This is where the most controversial point in Epicurean ethics, the concept of "pleasures of the flesh" as the fundamental desires that guide our action, plays a seemingly twofold role. On the one hand, this aspect

of Epicureanism has been focused by the critics and used to declare Epicureanism the opposite to Stoicism, as a philosophical doctrine advocating a profligate life style. On the other hand, once the 'desires of the flesh' are considered more carefully, it becomes clear that they signify a minimalism of desire: only those necessary desires of the flesh without which life would not be able to be sustained are ones that should be routinely satisfied, and the person — any person — who is not thirsty or hungry and has shelter, has reason to consider themselves as happy as the supreme Greek god. There is a condition attached to this, however: an ability to develop resilience to more challenging needs, which, unlike the needs of the flesh, are difficult to satisfy and thus may become sources of unhappiness and anxiety. Contrary to what critics have pointed out, the "flesh" in Epicureanism is a beacon of ascetic life style rather than indulgence:

The wealth demanded by nature both has its bounds and is easy to procure; but that demanded by empty opinions goes off into infinity (Principal Doctrine no 15).¹

The concept of 'empty opinion' shows a rationalist aspect of Epicurean ethics: the way to living a life free of stress and deprivation is primarily based on changing perceptions of own needs. Once a minimalism of needs, reduced only to desires that are both natural and necessary, (needs of the flesh), is adopted, it becomes clear that any other perspective leads progressively into potentially insatiable appetites that 'go off into infinity'. In other words:

Insatiable is not the stomach, as the many say, but false opinion about the stomach's boundless need to be filled (Sent. Vat. 39).

The role of 'empty opinion' (prejudice, false beliefs) is what needs to be addressed by the therapeutic and educational role of philosophy, because these opinions, rather than real needs, cause the unhappiness that seemingly arises from an absence of things one needs or desires:

Wherever intense seriousness is present in those natural desires which do not lead to pain if they are unfulfilled, these come about because of empty opinion; and it is not because of their own nature that they are not relaxed, but because of the empty opinion of the person (Principal Doctrine 30).

It is easy to see how these Epicurean views are directly relevant to problems arising from the modern rampant fabrication of needs and the resulting mass neurosis. The concept of potentially insatiable desires has even entered modern 'left wing criminology' as that of 'relative deprivation'. People are considered more prone to committing crimes if they do not have what their peers have, regardless of how high the property threshold is, or whether or not they actually need what they do not have. For example, for people living in poor areas this may relate to sufficient food, electricity and clothes, which brings the needs-based account of propensity to commit crime close to intuitive justification. However, in wealthy areas, where most people own a swimming pool, those who do not own one, even though they own everything else they need, fall into the category of 'relatively deprived', and apparently crimes have been committed as a pattern, conforming to this motive of 'deprivation' (see Webber 2007).

The above type of empty opinion relates to social prejudice as well as to individual or personal one. Just as the purpose of social reforms is to 'cure' the society from empty opinion about the way it needs to operate, its organisation and the needs it must cater for, the purpose of individual counseling is to identify, with a counselee, a road leading directly to the most optimal satisfaction of her real needs, while dispensing with false opinion about the significance and role of a variety of relationships, commitments and desires that cause instability, confusion and anxiety. This is the cognitive role of counseling that is often neglected, even

intentionally sabotaged, by psychotherapy, which focuses on the idea that ‘behavior change’ is required, backed up by the conviction that such change cannot be effected through cognition alone, but must include an element of volitional manipulation.

While it may be true that behavior change in itself may not always be possible only based on insight, it is also true that in many cases people have problems of meaning that cause their world to become warped and lose focus, and the resulting dysfunctionality manifests itself as psychological problems. In such, numerous cases, returning ‘home’ cannot be achieved in reverse order, especially if the intervention is focused on motivational manipulation aimed to effect behavior change only. Behavioral dysfunctionality is often a result of cognitive confusion. The truth about one’s life situation needs to be established and clarified with the counselee, and in healthy individuals this alone should lead to behavior change. In any case, behavior change itself may not be the main indicator of success of counseling, but rather the satisfaction with life, the achievement of harmony between inner values and external action — what is commonly called ‘quality of life’. This is the meaning of Aristotle’s statement that ‘the unexamined life is not worth living’, and at the same time the main calling of philosophy as a counseling discipline. Conversely, being ‘behaviourally functional’ does not guarantee being happy, or leading a life that is ‘worth living’, namely having a high quality of life. This is witnessed by the hundreds of thousands of ‘functional’ people today who take Prozac every day and perceive their daily routines as prison regimens from which they try to escape through alcohol, drugs, sports, or, in more optimistic cases, through counseling, religion, friendship or writing. The numerous modern therapies for dissatisfaction and identity issues mark the problem: there is a general deficiency in the quality of life, and it is this deficiency that requires counseling. To address this potential void in one’s existence from the point of view of meaning and direction has been the calling of philosophy from its beginning. The Epicurean ‘naturalist’ criterion to determine the right from the wrong, the necessary from the superfluous, and the wisdom that leads to ‘happiness’ from ‘empty opinion’ — the concept of pleasure — contrary to common critique, is a highly potent criterion that lends itself easily to a variety of philosophical intervention techniques today.

Epicureanism provides for a direct and verifiable criterion of the appropriate action, namely what we could call ‘informed satisfaction’. It requires the possession of virtues so that the pleasure arising from the satisfaction of one’s optimum of desires is not burdened, and thus lessened, by the pangs of conscience, fear of the future (such as in potential legal reprisals arising from immoderate and illegitimate gain), and open to the cultivation of the more basic into the more sophisticated preferences. Epicurus himself died in agony, however while on his deathbed he claimed that he had lived a happy life, and that the pains of his illness had been greatly outweighed by the ‘pleasures of conversation’ he had had with his friends. This points to a common sense approach to counseling that is capable of remaining on relatively uncontroversial value grounds for most people (innocent pleasures stated by Epicureanism as the lower threshold of satisfaction with life), while allowing substantial room for being refined into minutely structured value systems such as ascetic or Christian ones. All of these systems may be seen as being in accord with Epicureanism, depending on what types of pleasures are accentuated and how they are specifically determined for each individual.

The general principle of satisfaction in Epicureanism reads as follows:

He who follows nature and not empty opinions is self-sufficient in all things. For relative to what is sufficient for nature every possession is riches, but relative to unbounded desires even the greatest riches are not riches but poverty (Usener, 1887, p. 202).

Several *Principal Doctrines* provide evidence for a further intellectual dimension of Epicurus' ethics, namely the emphasis on an economy of satisfactions so as to make them sustainable throughout the entire life, thus reducing one's exposure to chance. Such pleasures are appropriately termed "peace" by Epicurus, and come very close to the Stoic and Christian ideas about satisfaction (as in the Christian Liturgy Prayer: 'May peace come upon you.').

Principal Doctrines 8, 16 and 20 read:

8: No pleasure is a bad thing in itself, but the things which produce certain pleasures entail disturbances many times greater than the pleasures themselves.

16: Chance seldom interferes with the wise man; his greatest and highest interests have been, are, and will be, directed by reason throughout his whole life.

20: The flesh receives as unlimited the limits of pleasure; and to provide it requires unlimited time. But the mind, intellectually grasping what the end and limit of the flesh is, and banishing the terrors of the future, procures a complete and perfect life, and we have no longer any need of unlimited time. Nevertheless the mind does not shun pleasure, and even when circumstances make death imminent, the mind does not lack enjoyment of the best life.

The three maxims suggest clearly that some pleasures of the moment, however innocent they may seem, should be avoided, even at the cost of temporary pain or serious deprivation, if in a more comprehensive calculus they are likely to cause more disturbance in the future than they bring satisfaction in the present. This is a classic utilitarian model of maximising satisfaction while minimising the disturbance connected with some types of satisfaction. This may require the agent to take a more troublesome road or even to submit oneself to pain where pleasure is available instead, in order that one may lead a more peaceful life in the future, as the pleasure of the moment comes at a significant cost in the future. This allows, as the next two maxims imply, for a most sustained life of pleasure and peace, as opposed to 'bursts' of extreme satisfaction that last a short time and usually lead to withdrawal syndromes of various kinds at the lower, and to bursts of corresponding pain, guilt, or punishment, at the higher ebb. Finally, the last maxim shows that for Epicurus the maximisation of pleasure is a life-plan guided by reason. There are no guarantees in such life that pleasure-seeking strategies will succeed, but regardless of the extent to which they succeed or fail the intellectual pleasure of 'knowing the desires of the flesh' and acting accordingly so as to secure them in a most sustainable way throughout one's life, will ensure that one has had a 'good life', or morally justified life, based on the guiding values with all the disclaimers this entails when the requirements of communal virtue and 'justice' are concerned. Only a balanced life, arising from a quest of minimalist desires, amplified by intellectual enjoyment of the development of virtue and being 'just' to one's peers, may be seen as a 'good life', conducted according to a rational life-plan. Indeed, the concept of 'pleasure' in Epicureanism is anything but uncritical indulgence. Only such a balanced and rationally planned life strategy may result in a lasting 'well balanced state of the flesh'. Such a rational life strategy, in its ultimate form, is "ultimately indifferent, like *ataraxia*, to the actual achievement of naturally desirable objectives. (...) the perfection of the strategy is what happiness and the best life depend upon". Thus "(t)he Epicurean theory of desire and the limits of pleasure (...) has a shape very similar to the Stoic theory of appropriate action" (Algra et al, 2005, p. 666).

Epicurean ethics in the modern philosophical counseling

Understood in the broad sense as a ‘philosophy of life’, ethics plays a key role in philosophical counseling. Candidates for this type of practical philosophical work are rational, well organised persons, with problems that arise either from unresolved conflicts or from cognitive and emotional confusion. Many such counsees have problems that could be summed up as ‘issues with their worldview’. Any exceptionally stressful situation may trigger or, if they are chronic, aggravate these problems, ranging from difficulties at work to divorce to death of a close person or a serious illness. In most situations, whether or not the ‘symptoms’ or ‘behavioral disturbance’ that often result from such problems are treated medically or not, it is essential for the sufferer to understand her predicament, to clarify her values and attach value-assessments to her previous choices in order to map a way out of the seeming impasse. Philosophical counseling helps people to find the best solutions according to their own measurements, while respecting their freedom of choice on all levels of decision-making. In doing so, philosophical counselors abide by their own ethics, which prohibits explicit suggestions to the counsees about what specifically they are to do in particular situations, what choices to make, or what value-systems to favour over others.

In counseling moral concerns are understood in a broad sense, as including moral obligations to oneself. This way of conceptualising ethical issues allows philosophical counseling to progress in situations when the counselee’s own values and initiative are darkened or inhibited, by questioning one’s ‘constitutional’ goals and qualities, moving into the realm of one’s duties to oneself or one’s rights to enjoy life. Such situations tend to result, in due course, in a discussion of the limits of one’s rightful pursuit of one’s own preferences, as well as of the best and most sustainable way to achieve one’s goals. More often than not, external limitations imposed by the environment make it the counselor’s task to help the counselee make sense of the various impossibilities, restrictions or moral boundaries. One of the modern approaches to address such boundaries with counsees is the IDEA method of stoic counsel.

The IDEA method is the acronym for four phases of dealing with the problem, namely:

1. I = Identify the real issue behind the counselee’s complaints;
2. D = Distinguish the ‘internals’ from the ‘externals’, namely the elements of the situation and potential courses of action that are a matter of the counselee’s free choice from those that are ‘fixed’ and imposed externally, acting as restrictions on the counselee’s exercise of free choice;
3. E = Exert effort only where acting can change the situation, and
4. A = Accept what cannot be changed (Ferraiolo, 2010).

The process of progression through the four phases of the Stoic counsel appreciates the need for argumentation and deliberation in order to ‘identify’, ‘distinguish’, ‘exert effort’ and ‘accept the unchangeable’. While all four phases of the process are formally uncontroversial, and will readily be accepted by almost any school or type of psychotherapy, the actual achievement of these recommendations requires contemplation and specifically philosophical reasoning. On a psychological level, in order to cognitively accept and volitionally embrace any direction for new thinking or behavioural change, a degree of ‘equilibrium’ of emotions is needed. Contrary to what is achieved by the use of psychotropic medication, the lasting equilibrium arises from an elaboration of options and a rational understanding of the limits of the situation one finds oneself in. Just like coping with an emotional loss and the achievement of emotional ‘closure’ require both a process of grieving and the actual understanding of what has happened to the

person, why and how it fits in one's perceptual and value schema of life, adopting a change in views or behavior when faced with a problem requires a rational conceptualisation of what has happened (is happening), and the achievement of an emotional equilibrium.

Lou Marinoff calls this process of achieving the equilibrium PEACE process, where the explanation for the acronym PEACE is:

P: Identifying the problem;

E: 'Constructively' expressing one's emotions about the problem;

A: Analysis of the available courses of action to address the problem,

C: Contemplation of the 'disposition that allows one to choose the best option', and

E: Achievement of the emotional equilibrium (Marinoff, 2002, p.168).

Marinoff considers the described process to be a 'meta-methodology for philosophical consultants', and indeed it appears capable of serving this purpose. The PEACE method is compatible with the Stoic counsel in that it explains the cognitive process parts of which are at play in the achievement of each of the four stages of the Stoic counsel. The PEACE method is particularly relevant for the Epicurean perspective on the Stoic counsel, because it emphasises the subjective dimension of satisfaction through the concept of equilibrium. Namely, the IDEA method shows in stages how to achieve an understanding of what can and what cannot be changed and how to best economise effort in order to change what can be changed. This rational perspective omits the element of personal emotional benefit: the problem is a problem not only because it causes us 'objective' obstacles (e.g. an obnoxious boss forces us to contemplate how to deal with the possibility of losing the job), but also, and perhaps primarily, because it causes us distress. Some problems, especially those connected with relationships, do not immediately lead to 'objective', external changes, yet they cause deep suffering and anxiety that need to be addressed through the elaboration of context, the meaning of the problem and options to overcome it. After all, by far the most clients in counseling suffer from relationship issues, where the subjective element of suffering prevails over any external consequences. One may stay in a bad marriage and suffer a long time with no external consequences occurring. However, one will have no less of a problem just because the failed marriage does not manifest itself to external observers. The Stoic counsel provides a formal, rational framework of directions to solving outstanding issues, but it omits the subjective element that, according to Epicureans—and, it seems, intuitively to most ordinary people—is essential, namely the element of suffering and the need to overcome it with or without an objective 'solution'.

Stoic counsel and Epicurean ethics appear as complementary philosophical perspectives to be cast simultaneously on most 'internal' issues. On the one hand, such problems cannot be effectively resolved, in most cases, by merely behavioural or cognitive intervention, nor by medication: if so treated, the 'anxiety' of which Epicureans speak may retreat temporarily, however the problem itself will not be addressed and all the emotional issues attendant to it will return once the medication or psychological intervention is over. (Unless, of course, one is kept constantly under medication and/or psychotherapy, which, common as it is, provides additional reasons to worry about the intentions and strategic plans of psychology in its therapeutic modality.) In order to achieve a solution, a 'road map' that will bring the person outside the labyrinth of distress and disempowerment, a rational elaboration of the issues is necessary, and this is appropriately achieved by Stoic counsel, which clears the practical ground for action on a minimalist assumption of needs and resources.

A combination of self-discipline characteristic of Stoicism and the practical common sense enshrined in the IDEA method provides a simple and effective schema to apply philosophical counseling to most cases of distress. However, this schema addresses the cognitive side of the problem alone, and cannot serve, by itself, as a sufficiently complete methodology for counseling. People may adopt the IDEA method, progress through it and successfully reach the necessary conclusions; they may even act accordingly and position themselves 'objectively' outside of, or formally in charge of their initial problem, while remaining emotionally troubled, inhibited, heart-broken. The aim of Epicurean ethics is to address the unhappiness and suffering by both elucidating the sufficiency of a minimalism of needs, which is the common thread with Stoicism, and by accentuating the feelings of pleasure and satisfaction that need to be sought in the process of solving any issue. Epicurean counsel encourages the troubled minds to seek pleasure in the removal of pain arising from every step in the process of cognitively elaborating the problem; it favours the highest form of Epicurean pleasure, the 'pleasure arising from conversations' as inherent in the philosophical dialogue, and directs counsees not only to understand the limitations of their situation and possible courses of action with regard to their initial problem, but also to seek pleasure in new ways that are compatible with the conclusions reached through the philosophical deliberation.

Epicureanism emphasises a key practical element of counseling, and that is that people need to be reminded to take pleasure in small things, and to seek opportunities for pleasures that are benign enough to not likely cause chain effects of pain in the future. For example, a marriage counselee (or couple) will be taught by the Stoic counselor that they ought to work on themselves and perform their best as husband or wife, while accepting the limitations of doing so in the context of the aim to preserve the marriage: if the other person does not want the marriage to survive, it may not survive whatever the person who wishes the marriage to continue may or may not do. Consequently, the Stoic counselor will direct the client to moderate the expenditure of effort in situations where it is clear that the other person wishes a divorce, while at the same time directing one's constructive efforts into other areas, where one has more control, such as work, child-rearing, or caring for someone else, such as an elderly parent. However, on an emotional level, this may do little to eliminate the trauma: the person may be strong and sufficiently disciplined to act rationally as per the Stoic advice; however, they may remain deeply unhappy about the loss of mate and failure of the family.

Epicurean counsel supplements the Stoic counsel on this crucial level: the Epicurean counselor will likely suggest to the counselee to identify what aspects of the relationship that constitutes the marriage are the most important to them and where one finds the most satisfaction, followed by the examination of possible ways in which this aspect of the relationship may be preserved despite the divorce. Additionally, the Epicurean will ask the counselee to identify other sources of satisfaction, either related or unrelated to the relationship in trouble. The counselor will systematically assist the counselee in identifying those, finding their remaining sources, and enjoying them to the safe maximum within the given situation. The satisfactions of this type may include friendships, hobbies, erotic pleasures with the spouse or with another person, a possible alternative relationship, or any of a number of other things that people focused on their problem may not accord proper priority to. While there are many different paths that lead to the top of the mountain, arguably some are more pleasant and picturesque than others. Epicureanism seeks those paths with a better vista and better fruits to be picked on the way to the same summit.

Stoic counsel can serve as a test for the appropriateness of Epicurean counsel in many clients, especially those struggling with emotional issues connected with relationships. I recollect a case of J, a 29 year old female kindergarten teacher, with a recent diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, which was the immediate reason for her to seek counseling. Soon after the first session it became clear that she was perfectly

capable of coping with her medical condition, which did not manifest itself in major physical complaints, but she had serious emotional issues connected with a difficult relationship with a married man from a completely different religious, cultural and social background, from a small town in Bosnia. She said she was in love with the man, and was prepared to forfeit almost every aspect of her present life away in order to fulfil his expectations: to change faith, leave her job, move from a big city to a small Bosnian rural community, and marry him in an illegal religious ceremony without him divorcing his present wife. She was hurt that he had lied to her about his family situation when they first met, and by his proposal to be his 'second wife', but was essentially willing to go along with all his demands.

When probed for deontic ethical principles, she said that she understood that what she was about to do was not something she could wish everybody else to do in a similar situation, and she acknowledged that her choice would likely adversely affect the man's children, wife and her own family. Her argument in favour of her choice was that the relationship with the man gave her such joy that she believed it was justified to 'break the ordinary rules of morality' in order to improve one's quality of emotional life dramatically. This clearly indicated a utilitarian type of reasoning as her dominant ethical 'worldview', and henceforth the counseling process adapted to this.

The next approach tried was to explore whether a Stoic way of thinking would be able to stabilise her judgements in line with her utilitarian values. I suggested that she considers very carefully what would in fact improve her quality of life the most, and to pay special attention to the possibility of refraining from extreme affairs so as to avoid being hurt. She seemed very intrigued by the proposition, but returned the next session with a clear: 'not really' answer.

When we discussed what caused her such intense excitement in the relationship it became clear that, in addition to being attracted to the extremely challenging and unconventional aspects of the situation, she was most strongly drawn by the man's intense attraction to her. At the same time, she was puzzled and confused by this. At one stage she said: 'I know this situation would be resolved at once if only I could understand his motives. This way I feel as though I am under his spell'. After the 8th session I introduced the aesthetic and hedonistic facet to the discussion: we started addressing the problem by discussing the reasons she was interesting to her partner. It turned out that she knew nothing about the town the man was from, and when faced with information about the way of life there she decided that she was probably far more 'exotic' to him than he was to her. She realised that the man's unwillingness to divorce matched his perception of the relationship with her as an adventure only, and suddenly saw the prospect of being a 'second wife' as an extremely dark one. Still, she seemed unable to make a decision.

Faced with the moral issue of being responsible for the conflicts and other family issues the man's children would be subjected to, and with the legal repercussions of possible discovery by the Bosnian authorities of a bigamous religious marriage, which is a crime, she said that she would be willing to take all the risks. However, when we discussed the everyday life in the town she contemplated moving to, the fact that this was a place with one hairdresser, a petrol station and a bar, no house help, and a culture of strong mail dominance, where she would spend most of her days doing housework, would have virtually no time or opportunity for sports, and would have no opportunity for beauty or spa treatments, she reacted unexpectedly strongly: 'No way that I can live that way! He wants to use me to improve his quality of life, but soon he would lose any interest in me because I would become the same as all of the local women'. She made the decision at that session and never returned to counseling. She let me know a month later that she had resolved the problem definitively.

Although this case may seem trivial, because it belongs to the most numerous category of ‘relationship cases’ and the motives involved seem extremely mundane, it is interesting from the point of view of methodology of counseling and the outcome. J. was willing to accept the moral responsibility for the partner’s children, change of religion, loss of support by her own parents and brother, however, she was totally unwilling to live without certain ‘perks’ of the big city. Relaxed in a non-judgmental counseling setting, she made substantively the same decision that most moralists would suggest to her. This was the decision that was probably ‘objectively’ the best for everyone concerned, including the man and his family: she broke up the relationship. However, nobody outside the counseling room knew about the reason she decided this. The reasons were entirely hedonistic. They were based on purely Epicurean grounds: she calculated what mattered to her happiness the most, and decided that the unhappiness she would endure as a result of the decision to proceed with the relationship would far outweigh the joy of it.

One could argue that J’s decision is not inherently moralistic, because it was not motivated by the consideration of the interests and rights of others, although in its final outcome it is the best and morally most satisfying decision for everybody concerned. This illustrates how Epicurean ethics, while perhaps unable to serve as the ethical criterion for right and wrong in a sufficiently intuitively acceptable sense, may still be a useful counseling strategy to resolve internal conflicts that may or may not lead to results that will be as satisfying to all stake-holders in the situation as any outcome produced by deontic moral reasoning might. In J’s case, the deontic moralism was tried and it failed, so there remained little choice of methodology for the counseling. In other cases the choice might exist, but the pursuit of pleasure as the counselee’s dominant value may be as valuable, or more so, than a traditionally moralistic approach in helping the client reach the most optimal outcomes, such as J. did.

‘External morality’ and Epicurean counsel

The ‘self-sacrificial morality’ that has come to dominate modern ethics is based entirely on the internalisation of external expectations and on pressures to limit one’s spontaneous desires and needs in the fear that they may disturb external expectations or appear inappropriate. One of the consequences of insistence on duty-bound ethics, on issues of responsibility, respect for others’ rights, limiting one’s pursuits that may challenge the social *status quo* or communal peace, has been the gradual entrenchment of a profound feeling of guilt on an individual level. Guilt is connected to fear of social reprisals, and if sufficiently deeply rooted it leads to fear of the internal sanction, of self-reproach and the withdrawal of self-esteem and self-confidence. Through this mechanism the morally oppressive modern western society has generated the epidemic of depressions and mood disorders that keep millions of people at the psychiatrist’s couch. The social learning of values, a powerful process of internalisation of social expectations, has turned many members of modern communities into horrified shadows: guilt and fear loom large as the main emotional problems of our age.

The dominance of highly imposing external moral demands—some that could be called ‘moral absolutism’ (Fishkin, 1984), make many people feel deprived. Little normative room is left for the pursuit of ‘selfish pleasure’. The fulfillment of external moral obligations, on a subjective level, leads to a ‘way of life (...) respected and admired: or at least the minimum features of a respectable way of life...’ (Hampshire, 1978, p. 11). Such a respectful way of life is free of blame, and thus of internalised and learned guilt. It is appropriate to remember here that Epicurus also considered fear of reproach arising from transgressions of socially imposed values (‘fear of gods’—at the time) one of the main reasons for unhappiness, and that Epicureans expended most of their energy arguing to dispel fear of gods and fear of death. Two of the four maxims that constitute the Tetrapharmacos address these two types of fear.

One may note that as early as in Hellenism the ‘external’ ethics of virtue (arising from the fulfillment of moral expectations of the community), or *arête*, preceded the Epicurean ethics of ‘the good life’ (*eudaimonia*). Epicurus in fact argued in favour of seeking a good life filled with moderate pleasures in opposition to the already dominant external ethics that placed pressures arising from moral expectations on the individual. The wheel seems to have turned once again since then and the dominant modern ethics is again an ‘external’ ethics of demands posed on the individual. The exclusively ‘external’, duty-driven morality’s greatest weakness appears to be that it reconciles itself very easily with the possibility of living a perfectly moral life that is at the same time perfectly unhappy. From an Epicurean point of view, there is something fundamentally wrong with this perspective.

On the one hand, in the modern, complex circumstances of life that are highly suggestive of guilt and responsibility (external moral pressures), the expectations of the community are entrenched so deeply in everyday life that the achievement of moral justification of actions is a pre-requisite for the achievement of a peace of mind (*ataraxia*), which, along with the absence of ‘disturbances of the flesh’ (*aponia*), was for Epicureans sufficient for happiness. In the modern context, dominated by external moral demands of the individual, a pre-requisite for the achievement of peace is to satisfy an optimum of external demands (Alexander, 2011). On the other hand, to make life valuable in an Epicurean perspective, one needs to develop a way in which the situation of the piece of mind achieved through the fulfillment of the external moral demands is capable of being transformed into positive pleasure, enjoyment of the peace and quiet. This is a key practical aspect of Epicurean ethics.

Epicureans distinguished between the static (katastematic) and dynamic (kinetic) pleasures, where, crucially, *aponia* and *ataraxia* (lack of disturbance and need on both the physical and mental levels) are katastematic pleasures, however their full appreciation arises from the development of consciousness that such states have been achieved and enjoying them (Cicero. *On Moral Ends*, 11.3-2; 11.9-10; 16,75). The enjoyment of the two katastematic states is considered by Epicureans to be a dynamic (kinetic) pleasure. This means that it is possible to achieve a state that allows one to be happy, without being aware of one’s happiness, namely without consciously enjoying the blessings that one has—a common theme in modern literature, but also a regular issue in modern psychotherapy. This is another key aspect of Epicurean philosophical counsel.

While morality (in a broad sense, the quest of *arête*) provides conditions for the achievement of *ataraxia*, it is conscious philosophical practice, including both counseling and solo practice, that allows one to develop the ‘wisdom’ of enjoying one’s happy condition of life. Epicureans placed great emphasis on the practice: the *Vatican Sentences*, and especially the *Principal Doctrines*, were collections of sayings apparently intended to be memorised and practiced in one’s mind until they ‘drive out deeply rooted empty opinion’ and integrate the skills to enjoy peace of mind and the body into one’s habitual models of perceiving and reacting to the world:

Then practice these things and all that belongs with them to yourself day and night, and to someone like yourself. Then you will never be disturbed waking or dreaming, and you will live amongst men like a god (*Letter to Monoceus*, in Bailey, 1926, p. 135).

Epicureans have developed numerous recommendations as to how to assist counselees (or ‘students’) to achieve the described hedonistic state of mind. In Philodemus’s treatise on friendship entitled *On Frank Speaking*, it is made clear that those who lead others in the achievement of hedonistic skills must first be free of the empty opinions that they purport to expel from others, and must judge critically the timing and circumstances of their intervention: with those who are delicate, the emphasis should be on friendship,

support and ‘mild irony’, while with those of ‘more robust constitution’ a directness that is sometimes ‘brutal’ is recommended. An inadequate manner of critique risks to

inflare (the students being criticised) when they themselves (the teachers) are guilty of the same things, and do not love them or know how to correct them (the students) or indeed have any chance of persuading persons who are much superior to themselves, instead of to someone who is purged and cherishes and is superior and knows how to apply therapy (Philodemus, *On Frank Speaking*, Fragment 44).

These are in fact practical instructions for counselors that link the counseling method with the sensibilities of the counsees, all of which have since been taken over by psychotherapy. Epicurean counsel is thus a model fully equipped with the instruments to provide effective guidance to those in need of amending their lives so as to make them happier and more fulfilling, and such are, in essence, all philosophical counsees. In a proper therapeutic community, such as the Epicurean Garden was conceived to be, the inner circle of teachers could gain intimate knowledge of the characters of each particular student (counselee), and use the numerous possibilities that presented themselves in the course of spending most of their time together to apply the best approach to the particular person in the best of circumstances. Philodemus even suggests that the relationship between the teacher and student (or counselor and counselee, for this is what the ‘therapeutic’ relationship was explicitly understood to be) implied the understanding that the student was under obligation to regularly confess all of one’s mistakes. The therapeutic effect of the confessional has since been constantly recognised not only in the various religions, but also in psychotherapeutic (especially in psychoanalytic) practice. The confessional was highly desirable in the Garden:

Heraclides is praised because he supposed the criticisms he would incur as a result of what was going to come to light were less important than the benefit he would get from them, and so informed Epicurus of his mistakes (Philodemus, *On Frank Speaking*, Fragment 49).

Epicurean philosophical counsel, as we have seen, is capable of integrating modern external morality. However, the Epicurean counsel transcends an exclusively external, duty-driven morality in that it provides a further goal, namely the achievement of a piece of mind and an optimum satisfaction of bodily needs (one could call this ‘equilibrium’) as a basis for what Epicureans see as the meaning of life, and that is joy in the peaceful condition so obtained. To feel this joy is to achieve happiness in its ultimate form, and a prerequisite for the achievement of this ultimate objective is the learning and exercise in developing specific sensibilities for happiness.

On physical and cosmological levels Epicureanism is intimately connected with ethics: the idea that the soul is an aggregation of atoms dissipated by death provides a basis for arguing that death does not include any sensations, because the soul that ceases to exist is no longer capable of feeling anything. Epicurean physics is unacceptable to most modern counsees, whose physical and metaphysical ideas are shaped by the long history of very different philosophical and religious views. In this context, Epicureanism as a comprehensive philosophy does not satisfy the necessary criteria of plausibility for a viable contemporary worldview. However, Epicurean ethics, regardless of its less than plausible physical foundation, is entirely reconcilable with a variety of metaphysical worldviews, including most of the large global religions: seeking a life of moderate satisfaction, a reduction of all unnecessary needs, and learning, within a circle of friends, the skills of appreciating the happiness arising from the absence of pain and disturbance, are all almost universally integrated practical precepts in most of the dominant religions. There is thus some reason for Pierre Gassendi’s attempts to reconcile Epicurean ethics with the Christian faith (Gassendi, 1972), though

admittedly there are aspects of Epicureanism that appear to militate against any substantive morality that is compatible with Christianity. For example, the view that:

Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which is associated with the apprehension of being discovered by those appointed to punish such actions (*Principal Doctrine* 34).

Lines like the above appear to discredit Epicureanism as an ethics of the right and wrong. After all, Epicureans did not perceive ethics in this sense at all. However, in a therapeutic sense, which was in fact the main objective of Epicurus' teaching, Epicurean ethics in the form of a philosophy of life remains highly valuable for philosophical counseling. It is particularly well suited to address issues of guilt, fear and anxiety arising from the high external pressures of the modern age. As the example of J, discussed earlier on, shows, it is possible for Epicureanism to be the counseling philosophy of choice (or, as in J's case, the only appropriate method), with a strong 'therapeutic' impact, while reaching almost universally beneficial external outcomes. There is thus a big difference in perspective between a morality of the moral right and wrong and an eudaimonistic morality as a practical counseling or 'therapeutic' method. Epicureanism is not a good candidate for the former, but is an excellent example of the latter.

Epicurean ethics provides not only well-tested inroads into problems of emotional deprivation and lack of fulfillment that are endemic in our day and age; it also provides non-medical (and not medicated) instruments for the development of skills necessary for making life meaningful and fulfilling, while retaining Democritus' sentiment that practical wisdom requires us to avoid, whenever possible 'large movements of the soul'. Thus Epicurean teaching appears very useful and flexible within the various contexts of modern philosophical counsel.

Note

1. *Principal Doctrines* are preserved in entirety in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and opinions of eminent philosophers*, vol. 2, books 6–10.

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Against the Diagnosis of Evil: A Response to M. Scott Peck

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Abstract

M. Scott Peck (1983) claims that the term “evil” applies to human beings and not merely to human behavior. He argues that evil is a sickness and should be considered a psychiatric diagnosis. Yet he insists that it is also a condition for which those afflicted with it are blameworthy and accountable. I take issue with the notion that the term “evil” applies to human beings by arguing that when “evil” is understood as a term that connotes blameworthiness, it does not apply to those who meet Peck’s criteria for using it, i.e., to those whose behavior is conditioned or determined by their narcissism. I further argue that it is incumbent on us, both on ethical and pragmatic grounds, to refrain from judging as evil those who engage in evil behavior; we should instead adopt a methodology of charity and limit ourselves to judging their actions.

Keywords: *evil, diagnosis, narcissism, charity, compassion, morality, moral luck*

In *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*, M. Scott Peck claims that the term “evil” applies to human beings and not merely to human behavior. He argues that evil is a sickness and should be considered a psychiatric diagnosis. Yet he insists that it is also a condition for which those afflicted with it are blameworthy and accountable. As he remarks “[i]n labeling certain human beings as evil, I am making an obviously severely critical value judgment” (1983, p.10). He goes on to say that “it is ... itself evil to ... refrain from making moral judgments” (1983, p.255) and to call for a judgemental and confrontational mode of treating those he considers evil.

Peck’s remarks are both troubling and puzzling. They are troubling because the injunction to judge others as evil flies in the face of the intuition most of us have that there is a moral imperative to be charitable. We think that judging people charitably is desirable, even obligatory, partly because as we want to be given the benefit of the doubt, we think that we should likewise extend it to others. In addition, it can be—and has been—argued that judging people charitably is necessary if we are to be able to read reason into their behavior and, thus, to understand them. And to whatever degree that we, as clinicians, fail to understand our clients it will be that much more difficult for us to empathize with them and, ultimately, to conduct successful interventions.

Moreover, even leaving aside the implications of calling people evil, Peck’s argument that we should do so—his account of what it is to be evil—seems intuitively problematic. To call someone evil is to imply that he is blameworthy or accountable. This, in turn, is to imply that he acts freely, i.e., that his behavior is undetermined. But if evil is a sickness—a sickness that makes a person behave in an evil way—then this sickness would seem to determine the person’s behavior. And in that case he would not be blameworthy and so could not accurately be called “evil”. So it would seem that the term “evil” cannot be both a term of opprobrium and a term that refers to a kind of sickness.

My aims in this paper are twofold. I first examine Peck’s account of what it is to be evil and I challenge the notion that the term applies to those who meet his criteria for using it. I then argue that it is incumbent on us, for both pragmatic and ethical reasons, to refrain from judging as evil those who engage in evil behavior. We should instead adopt a methodology of compassion and limit ourselves to judging their actions.

What is it for a person to be evil? For Peck, to be evil is to be afflicted with a personality disorder whose symptoms include but go beyond those associated with malignant narcissism. Peck—who bases his discussion of narcissism on the work of Erik Fromm rather than on the DSM—claims that one of the disorder’s central features is an unwillingness to submit one’s will to ideals that go beyond one’s private needs and desires. Whereas mentally healthy people submit their wills to the demands of their conscience, those who Peck calls “evil” do not. As he remarks, “in the conflict between their guilt and their will, it is their guilt that must go and their will that must win” (1983, p.78).

In addition to their willfulness, narcissists exhibit a need to see themselves as perfect. They cannot tolerate a sense of guilt, i.e., as Peck says, they are unwilling to bear the burden of being displeasing to themselves. Thus, when their willfulness leads them to do what they believe to be wrong, they seek to escape from the feeling of guilt by hiding from themselves through rationalization, resistance to self-scrutiny and self-criticism, and other self-deceptive strategies. Thus, by evading guilt, they allow themselves to commit evil, and so Peck remarks, “[e]vil originates in an effort to escape guilt. The problem is not a defect of conscience, but an attempt to deny conscience its due. We become evil by attempting to hide from ourselves.” (1983, p.76) “The evil are people of the lie”(1983, p.66). In other words, since hiding from ourselves leads us to do evil, narcissists, by virtue of habitually engaging in this hiding, are taken to be evil themselves.

What are we to make of this line of reasoning? First of all, we should note that it presupposes the view that exhibiting narcissistic qualities is a freely chosen behavior rather than a determined behavior. It may be that “hiding from himself” causes the narcissist to behave in ways that are evil. It does not follow that this “hiding behavior” makes him evil—in the sense in which Peck uses the term when he says that in labeling certain people as evil, he is making a “severely critical value judgment”. For the narcissist to be evil in this sense, it would have to be shown that he was accountable for exhibiting the narcissistic qualities that Peck mentions. And to show that he was accountable, it would have to be shown that exhibiting narcissistic qualities was something within the narcissist’s control. The question, then, is, “Are defensiveness, resistance to self-scrutiny and self-criticism, etc. mental habits which are within our control?” The answer may be, “not for everybody” for the capacity to overcome these habits is acquired, and not everyone has the opportunity to acquire what they need to overcome them.

Let us examine the quality of being resistant to self-scrutiny and self-criticism. Someone will be able to subject himself to self-scrutiny and self-criticism—and thus to entertain the thought that he has erred—only to the degree to which he is secure. In other words, an agent will only be able to tolerate a sense of having done wrong or having faults if he sees himself as fundamentally acceptable in spite of his imperfections. For self-scrutiny and self-criticism require that we, as Peck says, bear the burden of being displeasing to ourselves. And an agent will only be able to bear the burden of being displeasing to himself on a given occasion if he sees himself as fundamentally good—and sees his shortcomings as occasions for correction rather than for condemnation. The insecure person who fears that she is unacceptable will be unwilling to risk engaging in self-scrutiny and self-criticism. For since she does not see herself as good, she fears what she would uncover through an examination of conscience. Or to put the point another way, her sense of being in general unacceptable makes it impossible for her bear to be displeasing to herself on particular occasions.

How is this sense of being unacceptable acquired? One plausible answer is that it is acquired through relationships. For we come to see ourselves as worthy of respect and acceptance when we receive these messages from others. The insecure person, then, may not have had the type of relationships that foster a

sense of being worthy of respect and acceptance; she may, for example, have had relationships with people who judged her harshly; she may have been labeled “evil” on the occasions on which she engaged in wrong-doing. What is clear in any case is that she has not had the experience of being unconditionally accepted. And because she has not, she is unable to engage in sincere self-scrutiny and self-criticism. Thus, the insecure person is what Thomas Nagel would call “morally unlucky”: she is narcissistic, but she has not had the opportunity to become otherwise, that is, her narcissism is, as Nagel puts it, “largely a matter of constitutive bad fortune” (1976). She might be called “bad” in the sense in which Arthur Danto uses the term when he says that, for Nietzsche, “bad people are like bad eggs...it’s not their fault that they are bad” (1980, p.159). But to be bad in this sense is obviously quite different from being evil in Peck’s sense. The narcissist cannot be called evil, despite habitually engaging in evil behavior, because she is not blame-worthy and accountable.

Another way of putting this point is that the narcissist is not evil because his narcissism results in moral blindness. Here one is reminded of Socrates’ arguments in the *Gorgias* that people are not inherently evil but may choose to do evil out ignorance. As he notes, “no one voluntarily does wrong, but...all who do wrong do so against their own will” (1961, p. 292); “the soul in the opposite condition to the temperate is...foolish and undisciplined” (1961, p. 289). Socrates held that such ignorance could be dispelled through philosophical inquiry; contemporary therapists hope that it can be dispelled through counseling. Yet, as Socrates recognized, there are people who are incurable, i.e., whose ignorance cannot be dispelled, because their resistance to constructive change is too great. One example of such a person is the Nazi Alfred Rosenberg whose fictionalized relationship with a psychiatrist Irvin Yalom depicts in his novel, *The Spinoza Problem*.

Rosenberg, an ideologue and self-styled philosopher, apparently acquired his belief in anti-Semitic doctrine under the influence of Houston Stewart Chamberlain’s racist book, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, which Rosenberg read as a high school student. In the novel, his teacher and headmaster, upon finding themselves unable to convince him of the falseness of his beliefs, speculate about the reasons for his enthusiasm for the book. They theorize that the doctrine of racial superiority appeals to him because of his feelings of inadequacy. Apparently, he comes from a loveless home and is unpopular with his classmates, who mock him. When he re-encounters a childhood friend, the psychiatrist Friedrich Pfister, he is encouraged by Pfister’s inviting manner to confide in him his continuing loneliness; later, wishing to change himself in order to alleviate his isolation, he engages Pfister’s services as a psychiatrist. Despite his aversion to anti-Semitism, Pfister agrees to work with him because he hopes that he can make him more moral and help him to address the irrationality of his anti-Semitism. Yet all of Pfister’s efforts prove unsuccessful: in the beginning of their relationship, Pfister tells Rosenberg that his Jew-hatred must have psychological or philosophical roots and urges him to explore the logical base of his beliefs; Rosenberg replies that to subject such obvious conclusions to philosophical inquiry is like analyzing why you love beer or sugar. Later, Pfister asks Rosenberg what his evidence is that the Aryan race is superior; Rosenberg replies that his blood feelings are his evidence, that true Aryans trust their passions. Finally, Pfister urges Rosenberg to look at the human implications of the Nazis’ proposals; Rosenberg then terminates his relationship with Pfister and denounces him.

Yalom’s novel raises the question of whether those who, like the fictionalized Rosenberg, refuse all help in dispelling their ignorance are not more culpable for choosing to do evil. I would argue that, contrary to first impressions, they are not. In order for an agent to be said to be refusing help in dispelling his ignorance, he must perceive himself to be in need of such help, i.e., he must be, on some level, aware of his ignorance. But Rosenberg is not in the space of being able to question his convictions; his beliefs are

unshakable—he thinks that it is Pfister who is unaware of the facts and in need of enlightenment. Thus, he appears almost constitutionally incapable of “taking in” what Pfister is saying. One plausible explanation for this inability is that his need to feel superior renders him incapable of recognizing any defect in his reasoning or his character; this is evidenced by the fact that he attributes his fellow party members’ dislike of him to their envy of his superior intellect rather than to his own behavior. Why is his need to feel superior so great? Pfister suggests, citing Alfred Adler, that it is because he needs to compensate for his feelings of inferiority, feelings that originally arose from his unpopularity during his childhood and are reinforced by his isolation in later life. Rosenberg’s need to feel superior prevents him from being able to examine either himself or the doctrines to which he adheres and so he appears tragic or pathetic rather than evil. In other words, it seems more accurate to say that he cannot change rather than that he will not change, i.e., that he consciously resists change. Because of his sense of superiority, which seems to have arisen from his experiences of ostracism, he is doomed to moral blindness and thus commits evil acts.

Some may object to such a charitable interpretation by arguing that Nazis and others who commit evil acts at least have evil intentions and are evil in virtue of having such intentions. But the reply to this objection must be that in order to be said to have an evil intention, an agent must conceive of what he intends to do as evil. And those who commit evil actions – where “doing evil” is taken to mean “deliberately harming others”—do not believe that in so acting, they are doing something wrong. For those who do evil are experiencing anger or contempt. And in these states, they conceive misguided beliefs that their intended acts are justified and correct—i.e., that they are morally right.

Let us first consider acts motivated by anger. Anger springs from the belief that one has been wronged, i.e., deliberately harmed or offended. And those who are in the grip of such a belief are prone to conceive sincere albeit false beliefs about how they should respond to the objects of their anger. Often they believe that justice demands that those who have wronged them be punished; that it is not right that they should “get away with it.”

What underlies this type of reasoning may be the notion, articulated by Hegel, that someone who wrongs another has asserted his superiority over the other and that the effect of punishment is to deny what the wrong doer has asserted. Since asserting superiority over another is unacceptable, Hegel held that punishment is necessary and justified. No doubt all of us who believe we have been wronged feel that the transgressor lacks respect for us and has conveyed his sense of superiority through his actions. The fact that we all think this way may seem to suggest that we are all narcissistic. But the difference between narcissists and others is that, for most of us, the impulse to take revenge is tempered by other thoughts, e.g., that a decent and dignified person would not take revenge, that doing so would compromise us. Narcissists are unmoved by these considerations because their heightened insecurity makes them more vulnerable to perceived assertions of superiority than the rest of us are; they react with more rage and the rage that they feel affects their judgment. And so when they feel wronged, they believe, with Hegel, that punishment is necessary and justified, and they avenge themselves thinking that they are doing something right.

Others commit evil acts not out of anger but out of contempt. Or, to put the point another way, they do evil to others because they consider them inferior. Thus, they think that it is right that the objects of their contempt should be treated as inferior or be accorded an inferior status (compare Aristotle’s thought that slavery is natural). Contempt is what is behind enslavement, torture, genocide, and, on a smaller scale, bullying. It springs from a lack of empathy, i.e., from an inability to recognize the objects of our contempt as fully human. Some psychologists have argued that the lack of empathy has neurological causes. If this is

right, then the contemptuous person's inability to feel empathy is not something within his control. He is bad, but only in the sense in which Arthur Danto uses the term when he says that bad people are like bad eggs.

A therapist with a philosophical bent will try to alter such a client's evil behavior by challenging the beliefs behind the behavior. To this end, she will rehearse arguments designed to convince him of the wrongness of the view that there are circumstances under which deliberately harming others can be right. If she succeeds in convincing the narcissistic client, she may see a change in his behavior. But what she will have changed is his reasoning; she will have corrected his false beliefs and changed the arguments he accepts from unsound to sound. She will not have altered his character; she will not have changed it from evil to "not evil". For the narcissist has never had an evil character; rather, he has been in the grip of mistaken beliefs which have determined his behavior.

I have argued that the narcissist's evil behavior is determined—determined by his limitations which, in turn, often result from the quality of his earlier relationships. If this view is correct, what implications does it have for how a clinician should treat such a person? One thing that follows is that if a clinician is to be of help, she must refrain from thinking of such a client as evil. If narcissism results from insecurity, which in turn results from not being accepted, then providing unconditional acceptance is surely the only way in which a clinician can heal the narcissist of his narcissism. Unless the narcissist feels secure, he will respond defensively to being corrected, which will hinder his ability to change. To say that the clinician must unconditionally accept the narcissist is not, of course, to say that she should accept his evil behavior. But it does mean that she should refrain from making moral judgments about his character. It has become a truism that therapy can be effective only if the clinician exhibits positive regard for the client—a client needs to trust a clinician and in order to trust her, he must feel accepted by her. And a clinician will be unable to manifest acceptance or positive regard for a client to the degree that she regards him as evil. For if she judges a client as evil, she will feel that she is justified in hating him. For when Brentano argued that "good" means "correct to love" and "bad" means "correct to hate" (2009), he demonstrated the objectivity which we attribute to our value judgments. As Peck remarks, "Evil people are easy to hate" (1983, p.9). And though he argues at the end of the book that the way to heal the evil is to love them, he says elsewhere—somewhat inconsistently with his final remarks—that a therapist's negative counter-transference toward an evil client—i.e. the therapist's feeling of revulsion—is an appropriate response, given the nature of the client. Peck's remark on the appropriateness of hating the evil unwittingly shows the impossibility of carrying out his injunction to love them. As long as we think of people as "evil" or "bad", we think of them as people whom, as Brentano put it, it is "correct to hate".

How do we treat people we deem it correct to hate? Not with acceptance or respect but with disdain—which is to say that we treat them as though they were less fully human than we consider ourselves to be. And how do clients respond to being so treated? Not with trust but rather with anger. And, thus, when we read a case study from *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*, we find a client whom Peck confronts with her evil recoiling from him defensively and shunning therapy with him retorting, "... how can you work with me if you think I'm evil ... you don't really care for me." (1983, p.175).

By contrast, when we read a recent biography of defense attorney Clarence Darrow, we find his clients Nathan Leopold and Dick Loeb reacting with respect, gratitude, and the beginnings of remorse to Darrow's compassionate speech in their defense—a speech in which Darrow refrains from judging them but rather seeks to understand them. It seems, then, that acceptance is a necessary condition for helping a habitual wrong-doer to change.

It is not, of course, always a sufficient condition. There are those who will ultimately prove incurable. But since we cannot know that this will turn out to be the case, it surely behooves us to persevere in treating them with respect and acceptance in case it should turn out to be effective. Socrates remarks in the *Gorgias* that the incurable are eternally punished in Hades so that they may serve as an example and a warning to new arrivals whose wickedness is curable. Here we have advanced beyond Socrates for we do not institutionalize the criminally insane so that their incarceration may serve these purposes. We could advance still further by consistently treating them with the respect and acceptance that rehabilitation requires. If we wish to help those who do evil, we must refrain from judging them as evil on pain of rendering ourselves incapable of providing them with what they need.

We can make the further point that judging others as evil undermines our ability to help them by hindering us from understanding them. For to think of someone as evil is to think of them as “other than ourselves”, i.e., as having an alien nature. And as Donald Davidson and, more recently, Karen Armstrong have argued, we can understand someone only if we interpret him charitably, i.e., only if we assume that his behavior can be made sense of, that he shares the same basic human nature that we do. For only if we employ the principle of charity in interpreting another’s behavior will we take into account the context in which it took place and imagine ourselves, in similar circumstances, feeling them same. As Armstrong remarks, “The principle of charity and the science of compassion are . . . crucial to any attempt to understand discourse . . . that initially seem[s] baffling, distressing, and alien [for they enable us to] see where people are coming from. In this way, we can broaden our perspective and ‘make place for the other’. We can ignore this compassionate imperative only if we do not wish to understand other people—an ethically problematic position.”(2011, p.139).

I have argued that interpreting people charitably is valuable on pragmatic grounds: it enables us to help those who habitually do evil to change. I would now like to suggest that, independently of this consideration, judging people charitably is something that we should do anyway. That is, if we wish to be moral and ethical, we will refrain from judging others as evil. Persons, as Kant argues, have intrinsic dignity; respect for persons is a duty. And Rawls expands on Kant’s notion and argues that there is a right to respect. Without it, we cannot develop the self-respect which we need in order to flourish. Just as a just society is one that promotes the conditions under which its individual members can feel respected, so a just individual is one who treats others with respect. And one part of treating others with respect involves extending to them the benefit of the doubt. Accordingly, someone in Rawls’ original position, choosing how she would be treated from behind a veil of ignorance as to what her character would be—i.e., someone who did not know whether she would be one of Nagel’s morally unlucky—would choose to be judged charitably. She would want her wrong actions to be treated as mistakes—mistakes for which she should be corrected, to be sure, but not as necessary indicators of her character, not as necessary indicators of who she was and who she would continue to be. For respect is incompatible with the judgment that someone has an inherently evil character. Therefore, we should therefore refrain from applying the term “evil” to those who commit evil actions; we should reserve the term for their behaviors

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**Camus' *Askesis*: Reading Camus, in Light of the *Carnets*
(and his *L'Imromptu des Philosophes*)**

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“But first of all, we must achieve mastery over ourselves ...” *C II*, 77¹

Abstract

Albert Camus kept detailed notebooks (his ‘Carnets’) from 1936 to his untimely death in 1960. These notebooks have attracted little critical attention. In the critical literature they have generated, Camus’ Carnets have largely been read as draft material for Camus’ published works, or else as a partial, personal diary. Following Pierre Hadot’s groundbreaking work on ancient hypomnemata (principally in his studies of Marcus Aurelius) as a key component of the Stoic practice of philosophy as a way of life, this essay argues that Camus’ Carnets are better read as—in large measure—a document to the philosopher-author’s ongoing work of philosophical self-formation. They attest to Camus’ lasting effort to cultivate what he himself calls a style of living: one characterised by a continuous attention or wakefulness to all the different facets of human experience, including an elusive sense of transcendence Camus took from his youthful experiences of sensuous and contemplative enjoyment. If we read Camus, beginning from the sense of his philosophical persona that emerges from the Carnets, this paper argues that a very different image of the man and the thinker (than popular clichés of his being a ‘prophet of the absurd’) emerges: of Camus as a philosopher aiming at conceiving, and practicing, a kind of virtue ethics

Keywords: *Camus, Hadot, askesis, hypomnemata (notebooks), philosophy as a way of life*

Introduction

At the end of the third notebook or volume of his *Carnets*, in February 1942, Albert Camus cites the Stoic philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations*. “Cf. Marcus Aurelius,” Camus directs himself:

‘Wherever it is possible to live, it is possible to live well.’

‘What prevents a work being completed becomes the work itself.’

What bars our way makes us travel along it. (*C I 120 [italics in original]*)

Four years earlier, in April 1938, Camus had enjoined himself to “every day, write something down in this notebook.” (*C I 48*) While this daily regimen was not always maintained, Camus kept writing in his Carnets until his untimely death (at age 46) on January 4, 1960. Ultimately, his Carnets spanned nine volumes.² Read together, Camus’ Carnets represent a remarkable, literary and philosophical work in themselves. As Philip Thody has commented, they provide us with a unique insight into the mind of a Nobel-prize winning author, and a man who has been described as the moral conscience of his time. (Thody 1963, viii-x, xi) For Thody as for Paul de Man in his response to Camus’ Carnets, however, reflecting the predominant reception of Camus as a litterateur, not a philosopher: “it is first and foremost as a writer that Camus interests us, and [it is] for the light which the Carnets throw on the way he worked that they are most valuable.” (Thody 1963, viii; de Man 1989, 19-26) Thody’s argument is that there are three different types of entries to be found in the Carnets. All of them relate, in Thody’s assessment, to Camus’

published works: first, fragments of philosophical ideas, conversations, and observations which made their way into Camus' completed publications; second, citations and ideas from, together with reflections upon, books by other authors Camus was reading; and the third, "by far the largest," draft materials which Camus never used elsewhere, "which are therefore interesting mainly as evidence of ambitions [Camus] at one time entertained but subsequently abandoned." (Thody 1963, x)

This paper will argue a different position concerning Albert Camus' *Carnets*. Thody is right, we maintain, in noting in these entries ideas, phrases, and drafts for Camus' literary works. He is also right in noting the remarkable absence of entries in Camus' notebooks documenting Camus' personal experiences and feelings. (Thody 1963, vii) We hear little in them concerning particular individuals or events in Camus' life, of Camus' wife, family, or numerous love affairs: a fact which merits explanation, and might disappoint our curiosity. (cf. Sontag 1986, 52-60) The *Carnets* can as little be completely assimilated to the genre of autobiography or diary, as they can to the writer's journal or workbooks. Yet we will argue that Camus' *Carnets* contain another register elided by Thody or de Man, one which points towards their quite different significance as a literary artefact: namely, as testimony to Camus' particular conception of philosophy, or better, to his distinct persona as a philosopher and philosophical author.

When Camus has been taken seriously as a philosopher, he has been read (as he is taught in sophomore philosophy courses) as an existentialist, "prophet of the absurd". His oeuvre is grouped together with Jean-Paul Sartre's, with whom Camus nevertheless very publically broke after World War II. In line with Camus' repeated denials that he was an existentialist, we will argue here that the conception of philosophy operative in Camus is quite different. We will argue that for Camus, philosophy was above all a way of life, and that his conception of philosophy—rooted in his own experiences, and his lifelong fascination with classical ideas—is remarkably reminiscent of the ancient Greek conception of philosophy which Pierre Hadot, and in his wake the late Michel Foucault, are famous for recovering. (Hadot 1995, 2002) According to Hadot, in its original conception, philosophy was not solely about the construction of systems of ideas. In the ancient Hellenic and Hellenistic schools, it was primarily concerned with practically reshaping the lives of interested men and women. One became a Stoic like Marcus Aurelius, an Epicurean, sceptical, cynical or neoPlatonic philosopher in a way as much like what we associate with religious conversion, involving a binding existential commitment affecting all of one's activities, as the way in which today our students become advocates for one or other theoretical system (Badiouians, Derrideans, Davidsonians, etc.). (cf. Hadot 2002b) Alongside learning each school's particular dogmata, Hadot stresses, the ancient philosophical student was enjoined to undertake a series of what he calls "spiritual exercises": forms of discipline or askesis including forms of meditation (*melete*); the memorisation of principles, aphorisms, and formulae; premeditation of hardships and examinations of conscience; dialogue with teachers and rhetorical exercises; confession with confidants (in the Epicurean garden); ongoing self-examination; and perhaps certain tests of physical endurance and privation. (Hadot 1995, 56-61, 81-125, 238-250) The goal of these exercises was not that the student should be able only to speak or write cleverly or in an erudite manner. It was that they should come to live philosophically, exemplifying in her or his person the school's particular ideal of life, and conception of *eudaimonia*. (eg: Hadot 1995; 81-125; 1998, 35-53; 2002a 172-235)

And here is the rub for our contention here: centrally in his book on Marcus Aurelius, *The Inner Citadel*, but also elsewhere, Hadot has showed that, particularly in the Stoic school, the writing—daily or as often as possible—of memory notes or aids (*hypomnēmata*) was recommended as a key spiritual exercise. Michel Foucault has also highlighted this ancient use of "self writing" in his studies of Hellenistic and Roman philosophy. (Foucault 1997) Such writing was meant to help constantly keep the principles of

the Stoic philosophy fresh in the mind of the student (*prokopton*), so it could remain ready to hand (*procheiron*, *encheiron*) in shaping the philosophers' impulses, judgments, speech, and actions. In John Sellars' astute formulation, philosophy in the Hellenistic schools led by the Stoa involved both *epistēmata* (bodies of knowledge) and *askēses*, including practices of writing, intended to assist the student in internalising or "digesting" these bodies of knowledge. (Sellars 2003, 119-123)

It should not surprise us, we want to argue, that Camus should have ended his third notebook by quoting Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*. The reason hails from how, as Hadot and Sellars have convincingly argued, Aurelius' work, known in Greek as "Notes to Himself" (*Ta Eis Heauton*), and seemingly an unordered collection of notes written over two decades, is in fact a principle exemplar of a Stoic *hypomnēma*. (Hadot 1998, 35-53; Sellars 2003) "How can our principles become dead, unless the impressions [thoughts] which correspond to them are extinguished?," as Aurelius asks himself, and then adds, describing his own endeavours in *Ta Eis Heauton*: "But it is in thy power continuously to fan these thoughts into a flame." (*Meds.* VII.2) Just so, alongside being the kind of workshop Thody or de Man envisages wherein Camus the litterateur developed many of the sketches and motifs which would make their way into his published oeuvre, we will argue here that Albert Camus' *Carnets* represent *hypomnēmata* for Camus the philosopher and the man. What Thody mentions in passing as "one of the many stories to be read between the lines of these Carnets"—namely, "the struggle between Camus' intellectual recognition of the need for discipline and what he referred to, in an interview of 1959, as the 'profound anarchy' of his nature" (Thody 1963, xi; cf. C II 156)—we propose is of their essence. At the least, we propose that this way of approaching the Carnets alone allows us to understand a large proportion of the entries in Camus' notebooks between 1935 and January 1960. Significantly, this way of reading Camus' Carnets as a document in Camus' self-formation, and testimony to his attempt to live as well as think philosophically, has been skirted before by Marc Blanchard in his "Before Ethics: Camus' Pudeur". Blanchard even mentions Foucault's Hadot-influenced work on "discourses of self-management," only to drop the thought. (Blanchard 1997, 676) Our task here (which will be carried out in Part 2 of the essay) is then to show how the Carnets work as *hypomnēmata* for Camus, particularly in terms of Camus' continuing attempt to remain wakefully aware of the beauty of the natural world which so powerfully affected him, in and despite the dispersing effects of habit, quotidian life, and the pressures of his growing political commitments.

In conclusion, we will suggest how rereading Camus' *Le Myth de Sisyphe* and his other philosophical essays in the light of the Carnets, casts these works too in distinct, new relief. Closer to what today is called a "virtue ethics" position than an existentialist philosophy, we shall propose that, read in the light of the Carnets, Camus' philosophical essays can be seen to be advocating for a specific, philosophically shaped attitude to existence; one characterised by virtues of courage, intellectual honesty or "lucidity", and a "fidelity"—or "strange form of love" (R 304)—to this world as we find it, even as we continue to protest against avoidable injustices and meaningless suffering, in solidarity with our contemporaries, "breathing under the same sky as we". (MS 51; R 306)

We begin (Part I), however, with a little known, unpublished comedy Camus wrote about philosophy, since this *Impromptu des Philosophes* of 1948 expresses acerbically Camus' criticism of contemporary academic philosophy as ungrounded in any way of life. This criticism, alongside Camus' wider reflections on philosophy in broaching the "ancient quarrel" of poets and philosophers, point us by a *via negativa* towards understanding Camus' Carnets as living testimony to Camus' own philosophical *askesis*.

I. Camus' *Impromptu des Philosophes*, and the Relation of Philosophy and Literature

“Yes, he is a philosopher. I bought him in Paris.” C III 171

In order to make a case for Camus as any kind of philosophe, Camus' own ambivalence about the label “philosophy”, and more importantly, about “philosophers,” must first be addressed. “Why I am an artist and not a philosopher?”, Camus asks himself rhetorically in October 1945: “Because I think by words and not by ideas.” (C II 73) “The evil geniuses of contemporary Europe bear the label of philosopher. They are Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche,” Camus later remarks, summarising the key claim of *The Rebel's* devastating critique of the political implications of modern European philosophy. (LCE 354) Camus' eventual break with Sartre in 1952, following Francis Jeanson's response to *The Rebel in Les Temps Modernes*, was extremely hurtful for Camus, as the Carnets reveal. “Sartre, the man and the mind: disloyal” (C III 50), concludes one entry in these Carnets. “Cheating, insults, denunciation of the brother. Then the sound of thirty deniers”, reads another, concerning *Les Temps Modernes'* polemical depiction of him as a *belle âme* too tender for the harsh realities of History. (C III 51; Jeanson 2004 [1952]) Yet on another level, Camus' hurtful break with Sartre crystallised Camus' sense of the distance between his own intellectual trajectory and identity, and those of the celebrated Parisian philosophes of his day—notably Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir, alongside Sartre (cf. C II 109). From his arrival in Paris in the early 1940s, indeed, the Carnets repeatedly attest to Camus' sense of being an exile in a strange land amidst Paris' boulevards and monuments. (cf. C II 101; C III 49-50; 57; 76; 134)

Camus' growing hostility towards Sartre, his circle, and the model of philosophy they represented for Camus is most spectacularly demonstrated in a work he drafted in 1948 entitled *L'Impromptu des Philosophes*. Planned to appear under a *nom du plume*, and never published, it has for these reason attracted little critical comment. In the play, a *Comedie dell'Arte* as bitter as it is sometimes hilarious (C III 81), a mysterious philosophical prodigy named Monsieur Néant (or “Mister Nothingness”, as in the title of Sartre's 1942 book *L'Être et Néant* [Being and Nothingness]) shows up at a provincial backwater, armed only with an unnamed *magnum opus*. As the action transpires, Néant undertakes to initiate the town Mayor, Monsieur Vigne, into the mysteries of his new philosophy, which we are told is *à la mode* in Paris, and the “portal” to all things considered important by the Parisian intellectuals who matter. In a twentieth century Parisian reprise of Aristophanes' hilarious spoof of *Socrates in the Clouds*, in what follows Néant then proceeds to educate his own too-eager Strepsiades that chance (*hasard*) governs all things, which are at base absurd (IP 774); that the Monsieur can become “heroique” without doing a single thing, if only he propounds the Master's bracing opinions (IP 774); that there can be no happiness in a life free of existential anxiety (*angoisse*) (IP 781); that the highest truth is that we never are, so much as always becoming what we would be (IP 780); that we can never be free unless we are threatened with unfreedom, so France cannot truly become a Republic unless it falls under a regime which actively suppresses Frenchmen's political liberties (IP 787) . . . and so on, through a series of increasingly explicit parodies of the celebrated theses of Sartrean existentialism.

To this education, Monsieur Néant's charge responds enthusiastically. Soon, Monsieur Vigne is cautioning his unimpressed wife that he is radically free at any moment to leave her; and telling the perplexed paramour of his daughter Sophie that he cannot become “engaged” to her unless he is existentially engagé. Yet he cannot become thus engagé except by placing himself in a “bad situation.” So there is nothing for it but that he should first impregnate Sophie with a batard. This will prove the seriousness of his intentions. Only then will he prove himself worthy to ask Vigne for his daughter's hand. (IP 775-776)

The dénouement of the entire comedy comes when it is revealed that Monsieur Néant does not in fact hail from Paris, from whence he claimed to have travelled to bring his salutary brand of enlightenment to the provinces. The good philosophe has been deceiving all concerned, and not least himself. In fact, Néant has wandered free from the local insane asylum, whose genteel Directeur arrives now as the restorer and voice of homespun common sense. "I do not know anything," Camus has the Directeur instruct Monsieur Vigne, who by the *Impromptu's* end is made to pass through a kind of rapid-fire "exit" experience from the faux-Parisian cult of nothingness:

But if you ask my opinion, I know that it is not good that philosophy is spread to too many people. Philosophers should remain isolated creatures (seuls). They are like the lepers, so it is necessary to keep them separate a little. In this way, their malady profits them and makes no one else unwell. In this way, they can think with the appearance of reason, and end by instructing the entire world. And as concerns this particular philosophy, let me say to you that if it appears to me very attractive to exercise the reflection of some good minds (esprits), it does not seem to me apt to govern a family, nor to decide concerning marriages! (IP 790)

Camus' mature, much more grave, critique of post-Sartrean existentialism as a kind of Augustinianism without grace or salvation, one dimension of his darkest book *La Chute*, cannot concern us here. (cf. C III 49-51; 76-77; C II 112; Srigley 2010, ch.3) Our concern here is to underscore that Camus' rebellion against the perceived shortcomings of the Parisian academic elite, whom he does often identify with philosophy per se in the heated debates of the time, does not count out considering Camus a philosophe in other senses than those he criticised in Sartre et al.

Two remarks from the Carnets, we propose, show that Camus himself entertained at least one very different, and much more elevated, notion of philosophy, informing the indignation about Sartre et al expressed in *L'Impromptu's* satire. "Philosophies are worth the philosophers who make them," Camus writes in the Carnets in June 1937, "The greater the man, the truer his philosophy." (C I 19) Secondly, in late 1943-early 1944, Camus writes that "the Greeks would have been completely unable to understand existentialism—while, in spite of the scandal, they were able to enter into Christianity. This is because existentialism does not presuppose any conduct." (C II 58 [italics his]; cf. C I 98) Whether wholly just or not, that is, a decisive part of Camus' criticism of "existentialism," underlying his desire to stress that he was not an existentialist despite the hype, is that while the existentialist philosophers might provide a "fundamental ontology" of everyday being-in-the-world, they remain theoretical philosophies. At most, the existentialists can theoretically circumscribe, or artistically describe, the general parameters of an "authentic" life. But beyond that, the acceptance and promotion of these philosophies is all-too-consistent with the most common forms of ethical mediocrity, and can be a prop to vanity or hybris. Monsieur Néant in *L'Impromptu des Philosophes* is in the vein presented by Camus as stuffing his face with the food his hosts have provided him without a care in the world, as he empties himself of a learned discourse on the mysteries of existential angouisse. (IP 781) The good philosophe later reports that the only way he has been able to still his fervour (ivresse) for the new philosophy, "too often and too long", is at the side of a certain "young and blond person who I have made my compagne". (IP 787) This philosopher-god has feet of clay, to say nothing of his investment in other parts of the male anatomy.

Our point here is that Camus' ethical critique of existentialism, in terms which would apply equally to any solely theoretical philosophy, speak directly to Pierre Hadot's conception of ancient Greek philosophy as embodying a "primacy of practical reason" introduced above. That Camus was aware of such a conception of ancient philosophia as a way of life is again made clear in the Carnets of 1942. Camus has been reading Gilson, and in an important entry reflects on the nature of modern philosophy, tying its devolution into "theory alone" to the advent of the printing press:

Philosophers in the ancient world . . . thought much more than they read. That is why they stuck so close to concrete cases. Printing has changed that. People read more than they think. We don't have philosophers any more but merely commentaries. This is what Gilson says in arguing that the age of philosophers concerned with philosophy has been followed by the age of professors of philosophy concerned with philosophers. This attitude contains both modesty and impotence. And a thinker who began his book with the words: 'And let us take things from the beginning' would raise some smiles. We have reached the point where a book of philosophy published nowadays that did not rely on authority, quotation, commentary, etc., would not be taken seriously. And yet . . . [end of entry]" (C II, 44 [our italics]).

In Camus' work, reflecting his own identity as philosopher and litterateur (McBride 1993), the metaphilosophical issue of the nature of philosophy is however most often carried out in terms of considering the ancient question of the relations between philosophy and poetry or literature. In *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, Camus claims that the distinction between philosophy and literature, and between the personae of the philosopher and the litterateur, belongs to an age—which Camus at this time proposes is past—when philosophers could feasibly develop total theoretical systems. (MS 100) Camus' thought is that, when such systems were believable, a philosophe could still hide behind the metaphorical wall of his system, disavowing how all philosophy is an unwitting "confession" of its proponent, as he quotes Nietzsche. (MS 101; Nietzsche 1990, #6) But, Camus argues, this no longer is, or should be, the case. And nor was it the case in the ancient Greek thinkers. In the lyrical essay "Helen's Exile" of 1950, a piece devoted to reflecting on the West's progressive forgetting of the Greeks' contemplative approach to natural beauty, Camus reflects on the difference between ancient and modern philosophical writings:

Whereas Plato contained everything, nonsense, reason and myths, our philosophers contain nothing except either nonsense or reason, because they have closed their eyes to the rest. The mole is meditating. (HE 138; C II 120)

Hadot has remarked of his conception of ancient philosophy as a bios, that it began from his labours as a philologist, faced with the enigmatic, literary dimensions of ancient philosophical writings. (PAH 59; cf. PAH 30-32) If ancient texts contain nonsense, reason, myths—and Hadot adds: aphorisms, dialogues, precepts and maxims, poetry and rhetoric, theatre and elaborate dramatic stagings—this is because ancient philosophy hailed from an oral culture (1995, 61-65), one in which the aim of philosophical writing was hence to persuade and "form", rather than only "inform", their audiences. In the context of the classical conception of philosophy, in Hadot's words, written discourse becomes:

a privileged means by which the philosopher can act upon himself and others: for if it is the expression of the existential option of the person who utters it, discourse always has, directly or indirectly, a function which is formative, educative, psychagogic, and therapeutic." (Hadot 2002, 176)

In this light, it is worth underscoring that Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and in his *Carnets* finally denies the force of the distinction between philosophy and literature. (MS 96-101) Literature and literary creation has a primacy for him over philosophy since most "people can only think in images." So: "if you want to be a philosopher, write novels." (C I 5) The young Camus, that is, was struck by the observation—and for some philosophers, the anxiety—as old as Plato's *Republic*, that poetry or literature is much more able to affect many more people than abstract philosophising, whose appeal is more recondite. "Feelings and images multiply a philosophy by ten," Camus asserts near the end of his third notebook, on the same page as he cites Marcus Aurelius. (C I 120) But there is no sense in these remarks that for Camus, doing philosophy precludes writing literature, any more than writing literature need be conceived

as a wholly insulated activity from thinking or living philosophically. A philosophical literature will just be more powerful, in touching, affecting, or “forming” a larger audience than an abstract or academic philosophical presentation.

It is in just this sense, notably, that Hadot reads the remarkable, sometimes limpid poetics of Aurelius' *Meditations*, together with all the other prominent features of that text which can strike a modern reader as quizzical: the product of poor editing or of the work being merely preparatory notes. We mean the text's repetitions, circumambulations, citations of other authors sans comment, aperçus, mock dialogues, one-line observations or injunctions, endless variations on a small number of key themes . . . Far from reflecting Aurelius' editorial laxity or theoretical shortcomings, Hadot argues that these literary features of the *Meditations* are testimony instead to the work as an ongoing, concentrated effort of the rhetorically-trained philosopher-philosopher to find the “most effective, striking formula[e],” in order to generate a lasting effect on his intended audience in that work. It is just that, with the *Meditations*, that audience was the philosopher-emperor himself:

In world literature, we find lots of preachers, lesson-givers, and censors, who moralise to others with complacency, irony, cynicism, or bitterness, but it is extremely rare to find a person training himself to live and to think like a human being . . . the personal effort appears . . . in the repetitions, the multiple variations developed around the same theme and the stylistic effort as well, which always seeks for a striking, effective formula. . . . we feel a highly particular emotion when we enter . . . into the personal intimacy of a soul's secrets, and are thus directly associated with the efforts of a man who . . . is trying to do what, in the last analysis, we are all trying to do: to live in complete consciousness and lucidity, to give to each of our instants its full intensity, and to give meaning to our entire life. Marcus is talking to himself, but we get the impression that he is talking to each of us. (Hadot 1998, 312-313; cf. Hadot 1995, 85)

II: The *Carnets* as Camus' Hypomnāmata

And so we return, via Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* to Camus' *Carnets*, since these also mix in seemingly random order citations, admonitions, piquant observations, metaphors and images, with Camus' literary and philosophical drafts and sketches. Our claim is that, like Aurelius' enduring work, Camus' notebooks represent the author's hypomnāmata, and testimony to his explicitly neoclassical conception of philosophy as an askēsis or way of life. (cf. C II 66) To underline: we do not deny that, as Thody or de Man observes, the *Carnets* are also one place where Camus assembled his draft plans, sketches, and ideas for his published literary works. Nor do we wish, when we claim that the *Carnets* show Camus' conception of philosophy as a *manière de vivre*, to deny that reading these notebooks provides us many insights into the tentative, inquiring, and Socratic way in which Camus' theoretical positions took shape, often after long periods of inner wrestling.³ Our claim is that Camus' *Carnets*, like Aurelius' *Meditations*, at different points both theorise, and themselves exemplify, a lived practice of philosophy as a continuing spiritual endeavour by an individual to cultivate and then maintain a particular conscious attitude towards existence. Beyond even the ethics “before ethics” Blanchard sees in the *Carnets*, in which Camus the writer is seen as concerned with his authorial role and responsibility alone (Blanchard 1997, 678-9), the *Carnets* see Camus clearly engaged in a process of self-formation as a human being, in all aspects of his life: “I don't . . . want to be a genius at all, finding it difficult enough to be a man.” (C II 88)⁴ So what then is this attitude to existence, and what do the *Carnets* reveal about its content?

The opening pages of the young Camus' 1935 notebooks already stake out the ground for Camus' ongoing existential trajectory. Camus' notes are punctuated, from the very beginning, with a series of de-

scriptions of natural phenomena—a thin, transparent band of blue sky beneath storm clouds in August 1935 (C I 2); light through branches out of an open window of the room where Camus was convalescing in January 1936 (C I 4-5); the sun above him as he descends a hill, coming out of woods with friends into “the miraculous daylight” (C I 9); “the strange joy which comes down from sky to sea” which Camus enjoys in the embrace of an unnamed lover (C I 12); “a great leap of joy and a great desire to love simply at the sight of a hill against the evening sky ...”, and more. (C I 13) So compelling is the young Camus’ sensitivity to such natural beauties and physical, sensuous delights, that Camus soon has to admonish himself: “Seek contacts. All contacts. If I want to write about men, should[n’t] I stop talking about the countryside [paysage]?” (C I 8; cf. Marchand 1997, 680-681) Again and again, however, the young Camus is overtaken by an almost rapturous sense of “delight” or “joy” at something very like the sheer fact of being alive: “... the harmony between the hand and the flowers it touches, ... a loving understanding between the earth and men who have been freed from human things.” (C I 32)

Readers of Camus’ early collection of lyrical essays, *Noces* (Nuptials) will be familiar with like, wonder-filled expressions of what Camus sometimes calls “the love of life,” and pledges himself repeatedly to trying to convey. (eg: C I 6; NT 65-72⁵; WD 73-79) Their specific, life-affirmative tonality is perhaps the defining feature which separates Camus’ elementary philosophical sensibility from that of Sartre. In his early review of Sartre’s *Nausea*, as in his letters to his teacher Jean Grenier, Camus’ admiration for Sartre’s literary talents is tempered by a critique of Sartre’s propensity to depict broken or “mutilated” characters: “it is the failing of a certain literature to believe that life is tragic because it is wretched. [But] life can be magnificent and overwhelming—that is its whole tragedy.” As Camus reflected elsewhere, “it is my concern for beauty, and for liberty, which causes me most anguish.” (LCE 201; CJG 77; C I 113)

To call Camus’ overwhelming sense of the “magnificence” of “the song of the world” (C I 7) a kind of mysticism, or even a kind of religiosity, is in fact to go no farther than the Carnets themselves. In phenomena like the “gentleness of the world on a bay”, the young Camus claims in 1935, the world tells us “the truth”, “with ... sad and insistent beauty.” (C I 18; cf. WD 73) “I can say, and in a moment I shall say, that what counts is to be true, and then everything fits in, both humanity and simplicity,” an earlier entry recounts, before asking: “And when am I more true than when I am the world?” (C I 5) In June 1938, Camus corrects his earlier thoughts that the world tells us the truth. But then it is only to say, echoing mystics of different traditions, that “the world offers no truths, but only objects of love.” (C I 53) Waxing lyrical concerning his almost definitively pagan sense of erotic fusion with the natural world (“I also walk through the world, but I am caressed by a god” (C I 4; cf. C I 40; NT 68; Payne 1960)), the young Camus exclaims in the Carnets that: “Ah, I should become a convert to this if it was not already my religion.” (C I 32)⁶ The “secret of my universe,” Camus reflects in the Carnets in early 1942, is “to imagine God without human immortality.” (C II, 7) A more recurrent thought in the Carnets is that what Camus’ work and philosophy will aim at is a kind of persona, that of a “saint,” albeit characterised by “a Sainthood of negation—a heroism without God—pure man in fact.” (C II 12; cf. C I 5) Readers of Hadot might think of the preChristian figure of the sage as philosophical ideal. (HADOT 2002 220-229; 253-260; HADOT 1995 251-263) After Camus became familiar with the work of the neoPlatonic philosopher Plotinus while preparing his Diplôme thesis in early 1936, for his part, he felt sufficient kinship with Plotinus’ conception of reason as aiming at a wordless fusion with the objects of its contemplation to adopt Plotinus’ language as his own:

To feel one’s ties to a land, one’s love for certain men, to know there is always a place where the heart can find rest—these are already many certainties for one man’s life ... But at certain moments, everything yearns for a homeland of the soul: ‘Yes, it is to this we must return.’ What is strange about finding on earth

the unity Plotinus longed for? Unity expresses itself here in terms of sea and sky. The heart senses it through a certain taste of the flesh that constitutes its bitterness and its greatness. (SA 90)

But these moments or limit experiences are only one side of Camus' emerging philosophical persona. For Camus soon recognises exactly the dilemma that Pierre Hadot argues in his first book, *Plotinus, or The Simplicity of Vision*, that Plotinus faced, having claimed to have achieved mystical union with the One only a few, fleeting times in his life. (Hadot 1993, 55-56; 65; 82; 86) This is that such moments, if they intimate some elusive truth, unity, participation, or "contact" (eg CI 4; 13) with a higher reality or significance to life are also passing. "Soon," Camus reflects, "my attention will be filled again with other things and with the world of men." (CI 4) Yet the young Camus, like Plotinus, wants to keep this higher sense of life present to mind: "to cut out this moment from the cloth of time as other men leave a flower in the pages of a book ..." (loc cit.) An important note from early 1942 describes the dilemma, reflecting on the situation of a man who "tries to live continuously with his views". Such a man realises that the "most difficult thing in the world" is to maintain such an awareness: "Circumstances almost always stand in his way. He has to live lucidly in a world where dispersion is the rule. / He thus realises that the real problem, even without God, is the problem of psychological unity ..." (C II 6)⁷ It is just this dilemma, Hadot argues in *Plotinus: The Simplicity of Vision*, that shapes Plotinus' virtue ethics in the *Ennead*, with its ladder of civic, purificatory, and contemplative virtues and exercises.⁸

At one level, as Camus becomes increasingly concerned to explore, the problem facing the individual who would live in this way philosophically is simply one of memory, since "the primary faculty of man is forgetfulness". (C II 36) "My immense ability for forgetfulness", reads one characteristic note, simply, from early 1951. (C II 177)⁹ A note from 1950 cites Max Jacob's 'With a strong memory, you can create a precocious experience,' a thought to which Camus responds in the imperative: "Cultivate one's memory, immediately." (C II 134)

At another level, as Hadot for his part explores in his late study of Goethe (Hadot 2008, 21-31; 62-66), a further obstacle Camus confronts to such lucidity is the world of our daily lives, social and physical necessities, ever-encircling gossip (CI 41), and what Camus calls "the mechanical aspect of things and people." (C II 43) For Goethe, this is *das Gemeine*, the present in its quotidian aspect: as opposed to the *Augenblick*, or moment of insight, "trivial, common, ordinary, banal, mechanical, vulgar, mediocre, platitudinous." (Hadot 2008, 24) Echoing Montaigne, here as elsewhere, Camus' Carnets single out habit in particular as inevitably dulling the force of our most vital insights: "... as everything finally becomes a matter of habit, we can be certain that [even] great thoughts and great actions do become insignificant ..." (C II 43; 19; cf. CI 39)

Finally, in a way which again reflects closely Camus' proximity with the classical philosophers (Hadot 1995, 95), a third source of psychological "dispersion" lies in the passions and our pleasures: "It is the pleasure of living that disperses, abolishes concentration, halts any upsurge towards greatness. But without the pleasure of living ... No, there is no solution." (C II 129) For Camus, then, in a way strikingly opposed to Sartre and others' negative and ontological conception of freedom (cf. MS 56-60), freedom is a positive and ethical work of self-mastery, what Clamence in *La Chute* calls a long distance race, not a sprint (F 133). "Until man has learned to dominate desire, he has dominated nothing," Camus writes, echoing a definitive motive of Greek philosophical therapy: "And he almost never succeeds." Despite his own well-known adulteries, Camus comes increasingly convinced—like the ancient sages—that "Sexuality was given to man to divert him from his true path. It is his opium." (C II 22) "Chastity, O liberty!", ends a later reflection on sexuality and "the tyranny of female charm", which the Carnets reveal to have particularly unsettled Camus. (C II 137; C III 66; esp. C II 23, 25)¹⁰ In this connection, Camus consents to

describe his work as a “classicism”, if “classicism means mastering of the passions,” as it most certainly did in the philosophical schools of Greek and Roman antiquity. (C II 66)

How then is memory to remain “awake”, as Camus puts it, and the deadening effects of habit, forgetfulness, and the lures of our pleasures to be combated? We suggest that Camus’ ongoing attempts to address this problem, as Hadot argues concerning Plotinus, is the key to understanding Camus’ philosophical persona as it emerges from the Carnets. From very early on, Camus’ Carnets become recurrently concerned with the need to try to cultivate, despite everything, “a continued presence of self with self ... not happiness, but awareness.” (C I 5) If Camus did at times blush at the label *philosophe* for reasons we saw above, one early note affirms his contentment with the label “intellectual,” provided that by an “intellectual” we mean “someone whose mind watches itself. I like this, because I am happy to be both watcher and watched. ‘Can they be brought together?’ [someone will ask] That is a practical question. We must get down to it.” (C I 15) “The essential thing,” Camus declaims in the Carnets in May 1936, “is not to lose oneself, and not to lose that part of oneself that lies sleeping in the world” (C I 13); alternately, it is a task “to remain lucid” (C I 24 [July 1936]); “and reject any strength which is divorced from complete awareness.” (C I 72) A long entry of September 15 1936 describes Camus’ efforts at self-transformation in these terms:

My effort now is to carry this presence of myself to myself through to the very end, to maintain it whatever aspect my life takes on—even at the price of the loneliness that I know it is so difficult to bear. Not to give way—that is the whole secret. Not to surrender, not to betray. (C I 33; cf. C II 134)

Whether knowingly or not, we would thus argue, Camus’ Carnets show him making his way towards the kind of spiritual *askēsis* which Hadot, Foucault, Sellars and others have argued was central to the ancient Hellenistic philosophical schools. Indeed, Camus in the Carnets is unafraid to describe what he is aiming at, explicitly, as a matter of asceticism. (C II 77; 168; 176; Cf. CJG 73) His goal, Camus reflects, “is not possible without a discipline which is difficult to reconcile with the world. Here lies the problem, for it must be reconciled with the world. What must be achieved is living by a Rule in the world.” (C II 6)¹¹ In November 1939, cajoling himself towards sexual and mental chastity—“to prevent one’s desires from straying, one’s thoughts from wandering”—Camus prescribes to himself a “ruthless” personal and professional discipline:

One single, unchanging subject for meditation. Reject everything else.

Work continuously, at a definite time, with no falling off etc. (Moral training and asceticism too).

A single moment of weakness and everything collapses, both practice and theory. (C I 91)

Particularly notable here is Camus’ recurrent emphasis on the goal of a conscious presence to oneself, and “attention” to the present moment, which Hadot has argued “is, in a sense, the key to spiritual exercises” in the ancient schools. (Hadot 1995 84; cf. 59, 69, 84-85; 268) Camus likewise insists upon this: “faced with the humblest or the most heart-rending experience, man should always be ‘present’ and ... he should endure this experience without flinching, with complete lucidity,” Camus writes. (C I 80; cf. C I 14) As Hadot again discerns in the Hellenistic schools, so too in Camus’ philosophical asceticism, this attempt to live fully wakefully is periodically animated by a sense of the urgency of the task, given the transience of life. “Life is short, and it is a sin to waste one’s life,” the young Camus echoes Horace’s famous *carpe diem*. (C I 4; 14; Cf. Hadot 1995 88; 224-225) In August 1938, Camus directs himself to recall: “The

degradation involved in all forms of suffering. One must not give in to emptiness. Try to conquer and 'fulfil' time. Time—don't waste it." (C I 54) In 1942, Camus speaks to himself in the imperative again: "Don't forget: illness and the decay it brings. There is not a minute to lose—which is perhaps the opposite of 'we must hurry.'" (C II 52) For Camus, diagnosed with tuberculosis at 17 and subject to relapses throughout his short life, the ancients' stress on the need to periodically, actively recall the fact of one's own mortality was at times forcibly impressed upon him:

The sensation of death which from now on is so familiar to me. . . . to have a foreboding of death simply at the sight of a pocket handkerchief filled with blood is to be effortlessly plunged back into time in the most breath-taking manner: it is the terror of becoming. (C II 45)

Yet, as in the ancient schools, Camus' awakening here to the concrete sense of what Martin Heidegger called the "not-to-outstripped" necessity of his own death (Heidegger 1962, #53) is not one, ultimately, of terror or *angoisse*. An admirer of Montaigne's famous essay on death (C II 101; Montaigne I.20), Camus works to appreciate the opportunity for clarity and presence of mind this *memento mori* provides—an opportunity which underlay the ancient philosophers' recommendations of this mnemonic operation as a spiritual exercise to be actively repeated. (Hadot 1995, 58; 68-69; 93-101) The next note but one in the *Carnets*, after Camus' horrified apprehension of the inevitability of death (and then a typical naturalistic description), sees Camus recovering his serenity:

Death gives form to love as it does to life—by transforming it into destiny / . . . What would this world be without death, but a succession of forms fading away and being reborn, an anguished flight, an uncompletable world. But happily death, the stable one, is here. (C II 45)

For Camus, the fact that we each must die our own deaths shows definitively the falsity of constructivist or culturalist claims that human beings are solely social or historical creatures: death recalls to each of us, soon enough, that we are also parts of the natural world. (C II 80)¹² In this way, interestingly, its recollection for Camus points in an almost opposed direction to the signification accorded the *memento mori* in Heidegger, wherein confronting our finitude "calls" us to the recognition of our authentic historicity. For Camus, in words which evoke Seneca closely, "there is only one liberty in coming to terms with death." (C II 98) Yet this liberty, as for the Stoics, is a liberation from the goods and concerns our cultures foist upon us, which appear in the light of the certainty of our death differently, if not as the "indifferents" of the Stoa.¹³ It is in this register that Camus' lyrical essay "The Wind at Djemila" of 1937 entertains the thought that the only true progress in civilization is in breeding people capable of "conscious deaths" (WD 77), despite the centuries of myths cultures have provided to "cover up" this larger reality of our condition. (C III 11; C II 78)¹⁴ Camus' captivation with natural beauty, from the beginning of his life to its end, is always tied up with sense in which nature entirely transcends, and relativises, human concerns. An early reflection at Fiesole captures well this link in Camus between natural beauty and our finitude, at the heart of Camus' lived sense of philosophy as involving an attempt to achieve what one early *carnet* describes as an "aware[ness] of myself, insofar as this is also awareness of something that goes beyond me as an individual" (C I 24):

Millions of eyes have looked at this landscape, and for me it is like the first smile of the world. It takes me out of myself, in the deepest meaning of the expression . . . it denies me a personality, and deprives my suffering of its echo. The world is beautiful, and that is everything. The great truth which it patiently teaches me is that neither the mind nor the heart has any importance. And that the stone warmed by the sun and the cypress tree swelling against the empty sky set a boundary to the only world in which 'to be right; has any meaning: nature without men. This world reduces me to nothing. It carries me to the very end. Without anger, it denies that I exist. And, agreeing to my

defeat, I move towards a wisdom where everything has already been conquered—except that tears come into my eyes, and this great sob of poetry makes me forget the truth of the world. (C I 31)

Conclusion: Camus' Philosophy as Enjoining a Way of Life

In the light of the lived philosophical askēsis which Albert Camus' *Carnets* document, this paper has argued that all attempts read the *Carnets* as either a diary, or a collection of working and preparatory notes, cannot tell the entire story.¹⁵ The *Carnets* do contain much draft material for work which Camus would publish elsewhere. Yet there are entire strata of the *Carnets*, as we have emphasised, in which these notes clearly address Camus, their author, the man. The first addressee is Camus the man and the thinker when he commits certain observations to the page, like “The temptation shared by all forms of intelligence: cynicism” (C I 53) or “Reputation: It is given you by the mediocre, and you share it with the mediocre and rogues” (C II 75¹⁶); or when the *Carnets* list ethical regulae, like: “Rule: start by looking for what is valid in every man” (C I 80) or:

Remain close to the reality of beings and things. Return as often as possible to personal happiness
 ... Recover energy—as the central force./ Recognise the need for enemies. Love that they exist
 ... / Recover the greatest strength, not to dominate but to give. (C III 204)

Such notes, observations, injunctions, maxims and reflections in Camus' *Carnets* are so many mnemonic aids for a man concerned to live as well as he could, by his own lights—including as a writer—facing the demands, distractions, and weaknesses characteristic of any person's life, and his own evolving persona as a celebrated public intellectual. “I need to give myself a morality”, the young Camus wrote in the *Carnets* in May 1935: “Admit it, then. I do.” (C I 15)¹⁷ The image of Camus which emerges when we read his *Carnets*, then, is as a thinker preoccupied with shaping an ethos, through philosophical reflection. It is a long way distant from one popular image of Camus as an atheist, nihilist or existentialist. Peyre (1958), May (1958), and Bronner (1999) have each depicted Camus as a “moralist,” thinking of his emerging public persona in the French resistance and immediate post-war France. The *Carnets* show that “ethicist” is the more accurate term, from the Greek for character (ethos), and invoking the tradition of classical philosophical therapeutics and eudaimonism. If we begin reading Camus with his *Carnets* and not with the celebrated novels (particularly *L'Étranger*), nor by syphoning off the opening and closing pages of *The Myth of Sisyphus* (as is often done in philosophy courses), we see that Camus is in fact his own species of virtue ethicist. The virtues which particularly attract Camus are those of courage, moderation, friendship, and honesty (C I 48; 72; 81-82; C II 34; 41; 62; 65; C III 68; AT 137), all based in an honest confrontation with human limits. What returning to even *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* in the light cast by the *Carnets* attunes us to is how well over half of the text, beginning from the section “Absurd Freedom” until the closing vignette on *Sisyphus*, are devoted to the need for men who have confronted the famous absurd to develop a *savoir vivre*, “discipline”, “daily effort, self-mastery ... an askēsis” or “school of patience and lucidity”. (MS 98, 115) The goal here is exactly the “constant presence of a man in his own eyes” (MS 54) informed by a remembrance of the experience of the absurd whose shape we have seen in the *Carnets*. While *L'Homme Révolté* is properly most often read as a work of political philosophy, similarly, it is notable that its closing pages thus end not with institutional prescriptions, but a hymn to the aretai of courage, lucidity, an “agonised serenity” before the difficulties of the times, and “a strange form of love” for our fellows. (R 302-306) In the contemporary essay collection, *L'Été*, both “The Almond Trees” and “Helen's Exile” end with exhortations to “the conquering virtues”: strength of character, taste, worldliness, classical happiness, severe pride, “the cold frugality of the wise”, and friendship: as aretaic language saturates these pieces. (AT 137; HE 153)

Of course, we have been unable in the space of this paper to profile the entire physiognomy of Camus' idiosyncratic philosophical ethics. Especially notable is both that Camus was aware of how, in the ancient schools, the ideal life of the sage was depicted as a transcendence of the human condition (cf. esp. C II 98), and—like Montaigne and Bacon amongst the moderns, and the Greek tragedians before them—Camus firmly rejects this goal of philosophic apotheosis as hybriatic, aligning it with all human attempts to claim absolute knowledge or sanction. (R 305-306¹⁸) Twentieth century experiments with trying to actualise political utopias, Camus argues, recommend “the original rule of life: [as] to learn to live and to die, and, in order to be a man, to refuse to be a god.” (R 306) Besides, the *Carnets* rejoin, “I know myself too well to believe in totally pure virtue.” (C II 105; cf. 88, 141) Nevertheless, to have shown, even incompletely, that Camus stands in the legacy of the Hellenistic conception of philosophy, so that even his mature political philosophy is built upon the basis of a virtue ethics looking first of all to his own project of self-formation is quite enough for one paper. And so it is that, reading Camus in the light of his *Carnets*, we are not surprised to see that, when even literary creation is posed by Camus in *Le Mythe*, it is importantly because of the “ordeal it demands of a man” that it interests Camus. (MS 117; 101) Far from a litterateur who dabbled in philosophy, it might be better said that for Camus literature was—both as an activity and for the descriptions of the human condition it allows—one more means of philosophising as a way of life: “a discipline that man sets himself for understanding and for living.” (MS 97)

Notes

1. Due to the frequency of their citation, all in-text references in the following to either Albert Camus' and Pierre Hadot's texts are given by abbreviations, for example: C I = Camus, Albert. *Carnets 1935-1942* trans. with Introduction & notes by Philip Thody. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963. These abbreviations are listed separately in the “List of References” at paper's end.

2. Written at first in school notebooks and not intended for publication, in 1954 Camus directed a typewritten, corrected copy made of his first seven notebooks, spanning May 1935 to July of that year. In the years immediately following Camus' death, his literary executors allowed the publication of all Camus' *Carnets* up to March 1951. The notebooks of Camus' final decade were eventually published in French in 1989, and appeared in English translation in 2008.

3. See esp. C II 64-105, where we can see Camus wrestling with what Ron Srigley has argued is the key dilemma in Camus' political philosophy (Ronald Srigley *Camus' Critique of Modernity* (Missouri: Missouri University Press, 2011), namely the staking out of a position which would be less “anti-Christian”, framed wholly in theological categories (as in “There is no objection to the totalitarian attitude other than the religious or moral one. If this world has no meaning, they are right ... It is our task to create God” (C II 64; cf. also 78-9)), than simply “non-Christian” or Hellenistic in inspiration. In these pages, spanning end of 1944 to June 1947), with this post-theological dilemma stated—either totalitarianism and a meaningless world, or else Christianity or the Satanic-Nietzschean rivalling of God (C II 98)—Camus makes his way towards a “middle way” (C II 104). One by one, in fact, all the *tertium datur* of his later thought and *L'Homme Revolté* emerge, amidst hesitations, back-trackings, and surrounded by ideas for works, citations of other authors, etc.: classicism and Greek thought (C II 73; 88-9), the other (C II 83), nature and beauty, as opposed to History (C II 80; 83; 89; 92; 94; 97; 99; 103), and dialogue (C II 81).

4. So, again, we are not denying the partial truth of Blanchard's assessment of particular notes and strata of the *Carnets*. As with Sontag, Thody and de Man, we are only arguing that they miss the level and significance of other moments of the *Carnets* as *hypomnēmata*, exercises in self-formation.

5. See for instance this remarkable, but characteristic, passage from “Nuptials at Tipasa”: “Those who need myths are indeed poor. Here the gods serve as beds or as bearings as the day races across the sky. I describe and say: ‘This is red, this blue, this green. This is the sea, the mountain, the flowers’. Need I mention Dionysus to say that I love to crush mastic bulbs under my nose? Is the old hymn that will come later to me

quite spontaneously even addressed to Demeter: ‘Happy is he alive who has seen these things on earth’? To see, to see on this earth: how can we forget that lesson? All that was required at the mysteries of Eleusis, was to watch. Yet even here, I know that I shall never come close enough to the world. I must be naked and dive into the sea, still scented with the perfumes of the earth, wash the former in the latter, and consummate upon my skin the embrace for which sun and sea, lips to lips, have so long been sighing. Once in the water, it is a shock, the rise of a thick, cold glue, a dive with ears ringing, nose streaming and a bitter mouth—swimming, arms shining with water now outside the sea, flashing in the sunlight and folded in a twist of all muscles; the stream of water along my body, that tumultuous possession of the waves by my legs—and the horizon disappears. On the beach, a fall onto the sand, given over to the world, concentrating on the weight of my flesh and bones, drunk with sunlight ...” Camus “Nuptials at Tipasa”, 68 [translation adapted].

6. Cf. C I 8-9: In March 1936, at the time of his break with the Communist Party in Algiers, Camus reflects that, if he cannot for the sake of an ideal of justice accept “stupid ideas” and extreme forms of action, there is also “this concern for religious matters” separating him from atheistic communism.

7. Compare Nietzsche, *Daybreak* #534, against the idea that there could be a single event, capable of transforming the entire psyche, and underscoring the need for habituation: “Thus we want to guard against exchanging head over heels and with acts of violence the moral condition we are used to for a new evaluation of things—no, we want to keep on living in that condition for a long, long time—until we, very late, presumably, become fully aware that the *new evaluation* has become the predominant force and that the small doses of it, *to which we will have to grow accustomed from now on*, have laid down in us a new nature.”

8. After such unitive experience, Plotinus writes, “souls necessarily become, as it were, amphibious, alternately living the life up above and the life down here below.” (*Enn.* IV.8.4.31-33) “When one falls from contemplation, he must reawaken the virtue within him. When he perceives himself embellished and brought into order by the virtues, he will be made light again, and will proceed through virtue to intellect and wisdom; then, through wisdom, to the One.” (*Enn.* VI.9.11.46-51)

9. In late 1942, Camus reports upon “[t]his sound of running water all through my days. The flow around me, through sunlit meadows, then closer to me and soon I shall have this sound within me, this running stream within my heart and the noise of this fountain will accompany all my thoughts. It is forgetfulness.” (C II 15; 177)

10. In Alan Woolfolk, “The Artist as Cultural Guide: Camus’ Post-Christian Asceticism” (*Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Summer 1986), pp. 93-110), Woolfolk observes Camus’ wrestling with sexuality, and connects it with Camus’s search for a “Post-Christian asceticism” at p. 96. However, as in the entire piece, Woolfolk reads this through his theological perspective expressed in Phillip Rieff’s terms of a conflict between conservative-interditory motifs, and a “remissive”, modern component to Camus’ persona as an artist. For Woolfolk’s perspective, the project of a post-Christian asceticism is an impossibility bound to collapse. But this conclusion assumes a premise Camus denies, that the only viable source of internal or external order can be theologically grounded. If this premise is not granted, Camus’ scepticism concerning inherited Christian theolegemes need not be seen as equivalent to opening the door to a “remissive cultural symbolic.” (Woolfolk 1986, 96) As Camus specifies his ascetic position concerning sexuality: “Sexuality leads to nothing. It is not immoral *but it is unproductive* ... only chastity is linked to personal progress.” (C II 23 [our italics]; or see C II 25)”

11. Introduced to the Eastern soteriological philosophies through Jean Grenier, the young Camus reports experimenting in this vein with “the breathing habits of the Tibetan Yogis.” (C I 24). At one point, his *Carnets* enjoins their author to write down “all the events of my life: ‘Today I am twenty-seven’, and so on”, with the goal of “keep[ing] punctuation and regularity of breathing.” (C I 100)

12. Importantly, this is another criticism Camus develops of his existentialist contemporaries, which sees him aligning them in his mature thinking with German idealism and Marxism, and before these modern schools of thought with Christianity. All of these philosophies, Camus argues, argue that the human being is

wholly historical, rather than also belonging, inescapably and decisively, to the natural world. (C II 92; 103; R 303) It is possible that Sartre's trajectory from existentialism to Marxism was particularly important in shaping Camus' thoughts here, given his charged relation with Sartre.

13. More enigmatically, Camus recurs throughout the *Carnets*, in a phrase borrowed from Grenier, to an overwhelming desire to be "stripped bare of everything" which in later essays merges into a non-Freudian postulation of a human desire for death. (C I 17; 31-32; 39)

14. "To be able to die knowing what is happening, without bitterness," one note reads, without further comment. (C II 65; 98)

15. There is not space here to pursue all the features of Camus' distinct philosophical asceticism. On top of those of its features we have seen—the aim to maintain a wakeful awareness of the present moment and a mindfulness of the larger truths of our condition intimated to us in limit experiences of beauty, but also love and art; together with *memento mori*—the *Carnets* also attests to Camus rediscovering the classical philosophical exercises for disillusioning of adepts to the charms of fame (C II 77); Camus' cultivation of a detached objectivity (what Hadot calls "physics as a spiritual exercise") in order to promote an enlarged perspective on his own particular concerns (eg: C II 18; C III 252, 254); together with Camus' own particular struggle with his weakness before feminine beauty, and the temptations it presented him. In a complete account, one would have to note Camus' awareness of the ancients' equation of the sage with a god or the gods (esp. C II 98), a model of *theosis* the final pages of *The Rebel* pointedly reject. (R 305-306)

16. Thought is always out in front. It sees too far, further than body, which lives in the present." (C I 59); "At Corinth, two temples stood side by side: those of violence and necessity" (C I 76)

17. Cf. Notably, in his *Carnets* of the late 1950s, Camus toys with the idea of writing a book on "practical morality" or, to be provocative, "Everyday Aristocracy." (C III 51)

18. "We shall choose Ithaca, the faithful land, frugal and audacious thought, lucid action, and the generosity of the man who understands ... each tells the other that he is not God; this is the end of romanticism." R306.

List of Camus In-text References

AT = Camus, Albert. "Almond Trees", in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*. Edited by Philip Thody, translated by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Vintage Books 1968:134-137.

C I = Camus, Albert. *Carnets 1935-1942* trans. with Introduction & notes by Philip Thody. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963.

C II = Camus, Albert. *Carnets 1942-1951* trans. with Introduction & notes by Philip Thody. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966.

C III = Camus, Albert. *Notebooks 1951-1959* trans. with Introduction & notes by Ryan Bloom (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008).

CJG = Camus, Albert and Jean Grenier. *Correspondence, Albert Camus & Jean Grenier*. Translated and with an Introduction by Jan. F. Rigaud. USA: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.

FT = Camus, Albert. "On the Future of Tragedy", in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*: 295-310.

HE = Camus, Albert. "Helen's Exile", in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*:148-153.

IP = *L'Impromptu des Philosophes*. In *Oeuvres Complètes, 1944-1948 Volume II*. Editions Gallimard, Paris, 2006.

LCE = Camus, Albert. *Lyrical and Critical Essays*. Edited by Philip Thody, translated by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Vintage Books 1968.

MS = Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Translated by Justin O'Brien. London: Penguin, 1978.

NT = Camus, Albert. "Nuptials in Tipasa" in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 65-72.

R = Camus, Albert. *The Rebel*. Translated by Justin O'Brien. London: Penguin, 1971.

SA= "Summer in Algiers", in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 80-93.

WD = Camus, Albert. "Wind at Djemila", in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 73-79.

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Book Review

Radden, J., Sadler, J.Z. (2010). *The Virtuous Psychiatrist: Character Ethics in Psychiatric Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-0195389371 (hardcover), 256 pages.

REVIEWED BY ELIZABETH PURCELL

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Should the goal of therapy be to service a customer or to help an individual lead a flourishing life? This is the central question that Jennifer Radden and John Sadler seek to answer in their work, *The Virtuous Psychiatrist*. The familiar theme of virtue ethics, that the focus of ethics should not just be about what it is good to do, but about who it is good to be, is brought to the clinical setting in this exceptional work. In order to live a happy or flourishing life, one must, virtue ethicists argue, develop the appropriate feelings and character traits which enable one to perform ethical actions. In short, in order to be happy, one must also be a good person. It is this emphasis on who it is good to be that Radden and Sadler make relevant for those in the fields of psychiatry, counseling, and philosophical practice.

In the field of mental health, over many years professionals have appropriated a “consumer model” from the managed health care system (19). This model is convenient and operates on the assumption that the healthcare provider’s main responsibility is to service her client, i.e., to ensure that her client is pleased, or happy with, her services. While this model may work well in the field of business or other areas of healthcare, its extension into the field of providing care for mental health disorders proves problematic. This problem is most evident in the particular example of a “manic” patient that Radden and Sadler provide:

After treatment with a potent monoamine oxidase inhibitor, a depressed postal clerk has “switched” from depression to mania, over the course of a day or two. He presents to the clinician with a packed briefcase full of notes and briefs. He says: “Thank you Doctor, for making me feel so good. . .let me tell you the plans I have for a restructuring of General Motors. . .I have made several calls to Lee Iacocca to share these plans, but he hasn’t returned my calls. . .perhaps I shouldn’t have called at 3am this morning” (2010: 40).

This example captures the limitations of the consumer model for mental healthcare. Although this patient considers himself happy because he feels manic pleasure, he is not flourishing. It is this breakdown between the consumer model and the particular needs of the mental healthcare patient which demonstrates the need to appropriate more than just a utilitarian calculus of pleasure in counseling. *The Virtuous Psychiatrist* provides a solution to this breakdown by turning to virtue ethics.

Radden, a philosopher, and Sadler, a psychiatrist, bring their fields together in their well-researched work and situate the practice of becoming a “virtuous psychiatrist” at the intersection of multiple dialogues: bioethics, managed care medicine, mental health research for disability studies, and contemporary debates in virtue ethics for moral psychology. Having tested their theory in empirical settings, they provide a model of the virtues needed for the delicate setting of the psychiatric and counseling practitioner’s office. This book is a must read for those in therapy, psychological counseling, and philosophical counseling to help a client flourish.

Though the motivation for their undertaking is clear, the task of extending the virtue-theoretical framework to psychiatric practice is no simple matter. Radden and Sadler accomplish this task by constructing a division between more “traditional” or familiar virtues, such as trustworthiness and integrity, and specific “role-constituted” virtues such as unselfing and propriety. Both sets of virtues should be developed by the practicing clinician. Mastering clinical skills and knowledge can be helpful in client recovery. Yet, these skills and knowledge are not all that is used in therapy. Rather, these skills and knowledge overlap with certain qualities, or virtues, which make clinicians moral healers. In order to be a good moral healer, one needs to be a virtuous moral healer. Radden and Sadler provide a list of these “role-constituted” or role-specific virtues a clinician should seek to acquire, and I will touch on a few of the most significant here which are specifically relevant for philosophical practice.

Propriety is the first of these role-constituted virtues. It is a specific virtue needed more for psychiatrists than for counselors, but is helpful for anyone in the field of mental health practice. This particular virtue “comprises a distinct set of motives, as well as many different, internalized patterns of attention, care, and sensitivity to the effects on others of one’s behavior and words; in addition to communicative skills and understanding, they also include strengths of forbearance, self-control, and self-knowledge” (2010; 12-13). The virtue, in short, requires both a professional demeanor, and virtuous intentions and actions towards the client. The reason why propriety is important for psychiatrists is because it is important for the psychiatrist to give the proper appearance of being virtuous (as well as actually being virtuous). The psychiatrist, after all, is in a more powerful position than the client and has the power both to diagnose and to prescribe medications. The virtuous psychiatrist who has developed the virtue of humble propriety is well aware that he or she will be held to a higher moral standard by society when treating a patient.

The second virtue—(or perhaps better: set of virtues)—necessary for a virtuous counselor are those of self-knowledge and self-unity. These two virtues are intertwined and refer to reflective self-examination. At first glance, knowledge of oneself and awareness of the constancy of one’s actions are important for a psychiatrist or counselor when enabling a client to flourish. But these virtues are also important with regard to power: the psychiatrist or counselor must have self-knowledge in order to resist the vices and temptations which come with privilege and power status. Because the counseling setting is a vulnerable setting for the client, it is important that the psychiatrist or counselor be aware of the potential abuses of that power relation and be capable of resisting them.

The third virtue that Radden and Sadler argue is necessary for a virtuous counselor is “unselfing” (2010; 132). The virtue of “unselfing” is defined as “the personally effaced yet acutely attentive and affectively attuned attitude toward the patient, the relationship, and its boundaries, adopted by the ethical and effective practitioner” (2010; 132). Unselfing is not to be confused with professional detachment because it concerns attentiveness and carefulness during intimate sessions.

Similar discussions of practices that exemplify the attitude of unselfing or being a “transparent self” for others have been developed by philosophers Murdoch, Fitz-Gibbon, and Kittay. Murdoch construes unselfing as a personal moral change in which the psyche sheds its egoism to be attentive to the outside world (Antonaccio, 2000; 191). Fitz-Gibbon, like Murdoch, discusses the virtue of “un-selfing” as a stripping of the false, isolated self, which is necessary for a true relationship with others (Fitz-Gibbon, 2012; 16). Finally, Kittay’s “transparent self” who, as a dedicated care worker, is a “self through whom the needs of another are discerned, a self that, when it looks to gauge its own needs, sees first the needs of another” also exhibits the attitude of unselfing (Kittay, 1999; 51). Radden and Sadler’s virtue of unselfing appears to be most like Kittay’s transparent self, yet it differs insofar as the virtuous psychiatrist must be

not only attentive to the needs of the patient but also must be attentive and careful when helping the patient cross delicate or intimate boundaries in the course of therapy. This virtue is especially important for those in the mental health profession.

The fourth virtue Radden and Sadler articulate, the virtue of realism, is perhaps a little surprising. Radden and Sadler argue that realism is a virtue necessary for virtuous counselors because it helps counselors maintain realistic expectations for long-term patients. It is a prudential virtue rather than a moral one and it is important in promoting one's own good. Realism allows the psychiatrist or counselor to maintain a balanced view and allows the practitioner to correct mistaken beliefs and evaluations of the patient. By developing the virtue of realism, the counselor or psychiatrist will be able to help the patient become more realistic and as a result, this virtue will enable the patient to flourish.

The final virtue worth noting is the virtue of gender-sensitivity, which is a strength of their general outlook and yet exposes a weakness in the work. While Radden and Sadler should be applauded for their firm commitment to identity politics and the role of gender in the counseling setting, the reader is left with two questions: (1) what about intersectionality, i.e., the overlapping of differences such as race, gender and disability, and (2) how do I acquire gender-sensitivity as a virtue with regard to intersectionality? Although their attentiveness to this subject is a true contribution to the field of both psychology and philosophical practice, I believe that more work needs to be done "fleshing out" the details of what this virtue would be and how it would be exhibited and adapted for particular differences. My hope is that Radden and Sadler follow up with this loose thread in their subsequent work. I would be eager to see it addressed. A philosopher who discusses the overlapping role of gender and race in moral psychology and virtue ethics is Nancy Snow.

There are two challenges which Radden and Sadler face by bridging the field of virtue ethics with mental health counseling. The first is the challenge of wedding virtue ethics with role morality. In virtue ethics, character is not simply a series of fleeting states; rather it is a person's self-unity and identity and remains constant over time. This stability of character, then, is in tension with virtues that are role-oriented. To work through this tension, Radden and Sadler consider moral psychologist and "situationist" philosopher John Doris' situation-specific virtues as virtues taken up in specific situations when I am in a specific role (Doris, 2002). Radden and Sadler are quick to make the distinction that I am not playing a role, but I am that role. For example, I do not play at being a mother; instead, I am a mother, but that role is only specific for certain people (my children) and at specific times (I am also a spouse, professor, etc.). Role-constituted virtues, however, should not be understood as inconstant virtues. Radden and Sadler discuss other virtues which are needed for the mental health practitioner such as moral leadership, empathy, patience, fortitude, respectfulness, and phronesis. These virtues are valuable in other fields of healthcare and in everyday life, but are still necessary for the delicate psychiatric setting. Virtues such as truthfulness and respectfulness should not be understood as role-specific. A virtuous character possesses these virtues across situations and therefore maintains cross-situational consistency. Virtues which are role-specific, by contrast, such as propriety and unselfing, are situation-specific virtues which a practitioner must learn to cultivate in the particular setting of mental health practice.

The second challenge Radden and Sadler face concerns whether virtue can actually be taught. Learning to be virtuous is a challenging task, but they believe a practitioner can learn to be virtuous through habituated practice of the virtues and through exemplary models in the field. The goal would be for these virtues to become second nature for the practitioner. However, a concern which arises for the practice of acquiring virtues is the problem of feigning virtue. Radden and Sadler are emphatic that role-constituted

virtues should not be inauthentic. They must be genuine because the aim of the practitioner is not only to help the patient feel good, but also to help the patient flourish. Thus, it will be up to the practitioner to learn to monitor oneself and acknowledge if one is falling short. The virtue of self-knowledge will be helpful here.

In sum, *The Virtuous Psychiatrist* is an excellent and thorough extension of a virtue ethics framework to the practice of mental healthcare. It addresses significant problems created by the consumer model and instructs counselors in psychiatry, psychology and philosophical practice how to help their patients flourish. Radden and Sadler's work was both well-researched and well-practiced. As a result, this piece is an inspiring read for those in mental health care and provides multiple applications for those in bioethics, psychiatry, counseling, empirical moral psychology, philosophical practice, and disability studies.

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Book Review

Stolorow, Robert D., *World, Affectivity, Trauma: Heidegger and Post-Cartesian Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, New York, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-415-89344-2. 108 pp.

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While *World, Affectivity, Trauma* is a short work, it is very dense—as it would have to be, given Stolorow’s stated purpose of contributing to both post-Cartesian psychoanalysis and to philosophy by showing how the existential thinking in Heidegger (primarily from *Being and Time*) enriches post-Cartesian psychoanalysis and how post-Cartesian psychoanalysis enriches our understanding of Heidegger’s existential work. The first of these tasks Stolorow attempts in chapters one through eight; the second in chapters nine and ten.

These stated purposes for the book may seem a bit over-ambitious, but Stolorow has the background and expertise to make such claims viable. He is one of the founding faculty members at the Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles, as well as at the Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity in New York. He is also one of the original members of the International Council for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology. In other words, he is well known and respected in the upper reaches of the psychoanalytic community. In addition, he is well versed in philosophy, having almost gotten a second doctorate in the field. One of the things that makes Stolorow distinctive in his area is his understanding of the importance of philosophy and his incorporation of the tradition into psychoanalysis.

Neither psychoanalysis nor existentialism have been in the forefront of academic scholarship in the recent past. For a few years now, however, they have been making a comeback, as people begin to see their relevance anew. What is significant about their latest comeback is the way they are becoming more and more integrated, and what is intriguing and important about Stolorow’s work is the way he weaves together the scholarship of psychoanalysis and Heidegger’s philosophical ideas.

Because Stolorow is writing for such different audiences—both philosophers and scholars of psychoanalysis—he has a lot of explanatory work to do, and he does it surprisingly well. The reader is initiated into Stolorow’s conception of post-Cartesian psychoanalysis, his understanding of trauma, phenomenology, and Heidegger’s Daseinanalytic. In the penultimate chapter, readers get the bonus of a direct application of the ideas in the preceding chapters to Heidegger, in a forensic psychoanalysis of the philosopher via the philosopher’s own thinking.

Given the amount of explanatory work Stolorow has to do to get all of his audience to a place where the psychobiography of Heidegger will make sense, it is no surprise that much of the book is taken up with densely-packed exposition and exemplification of the central Heideggerian concepts, their mutual interdependence, and their relation to Stolorow’s conception of trauma and psychoanalysis. Although a physically short book, *World, Affectivity, Trauma*, consisting mostly of this explication, is not a quick read. The early chapters, taken up as they are with terminological studies from the Daseinanalytic of *Being and Time*, as well as some other interesting phenomenological excursions from works such as *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* and “What is Metaphysics?” makes for slow, but by no means impossible, going, especially for those not already familiar with the subjects being illuminated. Stolorow’s sketch

of the concepts and their interlocking structure, while complex because of the very nature of the subject matter discussed, feels more like gentle guidance through a maze, than like an expert professing to the ignorant.

Before beginning in earnest, Stolorow follows the current custom of telling us what he is going to do and how, and a review of the structure may prove useful given the complexity of the content. First to come is a discussion of Heidegger's phenomenological/hermeneutic method (chapter two), followed by an explication of post-Cartesian psychoanalysis in terms of a contextual (Heideggerian) phenomenology (chapter three). Chapter four presents the reader with not only an explication of Stolorow's conception of trauma, but an understanding of how it relates to anxiety and finitude. Luckily Stolorow understands Heidegger quite well, and brings in, in chapter five, a discussion of temporality with respect to finitude and trauma. This leads, as one might expect, into a discussion of our kinship-in-finitude in chapter six. Following this, the author spends a very short chapter explaining how Heidegger's structural approach affects his conception of finitude. In the last chapter (eight) of the main part of the work, Stolorow does something interesting: he discusses the ethical implications of the relationality of Heidegger's thought. Other than a few pages of conclusion in the last chapter, Stolorow has ended the first section of the work. Chapter nine, while comprising the main part of his attempt to show how post-Cartesian psychoanalysis can shed light on philosophy, comes in at around 20% of the entire work. This chapter makes all of the effort required in the previous eight chapters well worth the reader's time.

While the ninth chapter feels jarring when first approaching it after the first 80% of the work, it does do a lot of important and enlightening work. It is Stolorow's attempt to present a case study to help the reader get a better understanding of post-Cartesian psychoanalysis. What makes it so interesting for Heideggerian scholars is that Stolorow uses Heidegger himself as the case under study, doing a bit of what he calls "psychobiography," an integral part of psychoanalysis, as he sees it. This psychobiography is not complete, of course, but focuses mainly on Heidegger's later hypostatization of Being. This chapter is perhaps the most interesting of the book, given the insights Stolorow has about the relationship between Heidegger's life and psyche on the one hand, and some of the niggling issues all Heideggerian scholars have, on the other. For example, we get insight into perhaps why Heidegger treated Arendt so poorly, an examination of the psychological underpinnings of his Nazism, and some analysis that helps us see just why he disavowed Christian metaphysics, yet consistently built it in to his thought. It also helps that Stolorow's presentation of all of this is particularly lucid and easy to follow.

So much for the organization of the work. Let us turn now to the actual content and its relevance for philosophical practitioners. Stolorow's Heidegger explication begins in the second chapter, where we find an entry into Heideggerian thought via his phenomenological method. Those already steeped in Heidegger won't find anything new here, as Stolorow's interpretation is traditional and fairly standard, but for those with little or no previous experience reading Heidegger, this material is an excellent introduction to those aspects of Heidegger's thought necessary for understanding the rest.

Because he sees contextualism as being at the heart of his post-Cartesian psychoanalysis, Stolorow spends a lot of time bringing to light his reasons for seeing it in Heidegger's thought. Much of this is simply the mutually recursive nature of various phenomena, the "equiprimordiality" of certain phenomena, the totality of significations. Nothing here is contentious at all—again, it is merely informative for the non-Heideggerian. What is important for Stolorow here is the contrast between Heidegger's interrelated structure of various phenomena, especially individual humans, and the standard Cartesian model of a detached, isolated, decontextualized individual.

For Heidegger, Dasein is never isolated and detached. Dasein and its world are one. We exist in the world with others, with projects, interests, goals, objects, tools, institutions—all of which also make up a part of who and what we are as individuals. Care or concern is a constitutive part of our Being-in-the-world. We are partially constituted by the world around us, our relationships to others and to things—and those others wouldn't be what they are if not for their relationships to us.

The question that should now come to mind is something along the lines of, “What does any of this have to do with psychoanalysis?” Stolorow answers this for us quite well by laying out his conception of post-Cartesian psychoanalysis as a phenomenological contextualism. One might simply say that Stolorow just throws Heideggerian structural ontology and phenomenology over to psychoanalysis, but that would leave out much of importance. Stolorow, like many psychoanalysts, takes a developmental view of personality. We experience recurring patterns of interactions with others and with the environment, and then those principles become the unconscious building blocks of personality development. Intersubjectivity being one of the most important phenomena in such development, Stolorow makes much of it.

In Heidegger's thought, both Dasein and its world are mutually conditioned and interpenetrating. One cannot exist without the other. All individuals are their world, and thus are others, as well. Individuals thus influence not only the world, but also each other. Since this intersubjective continuity plays such an important role in personality formation, it also is largely responsible for all types of psychopathologies. Individual psyches are not detached and independent, as they were for Descartes, and later, Freud. The interrelated and mutually-conditioning nature of the human psyche seems to be Stolorow's main application of Heidegger's thought to psychoanalysis.

In this particular work, Stolorow focuses on trauma, which he also views in Heideggerian terms. In explaining his understanding of trauma, he brings in Heidegger's discussion of *Befindlichkeit*, often translated as “mood,” but which Stolorow views as “disclosive affectivity.” *Befindlichkeit* is constitutive of what it is to be a human in the world. It is also contextual and intersubjective. Stolorow views affectivity, as opposed to Freudian drives, as that which places psychoanalysis into the realm of phenomenological contextualism.

Befindlichkeit gone wrong, then, works into trauma as unbearable emotion. Because we are intersubjectively intertwined with those around us, what we feel is partially determined by the relationships we are in. When we cannot share our emotional lives with others who are attuned and responsive to us, there is a breakdown of the system we require for dealing adaptively with our affective states. We require integration of our affective experiences, and such cannot be accomplished, on Stolorow's view, without the attuned responsiveness of others. When we don't have the appropriate attuned responses—because of a failure on the part of others or because of a simple lack of an available other—the result is trauma. When this happens with children, they become unable to appropriately deal with emotions, and this then causes feelings of isolation, shame, and so on. Additionally, as time passes, the possibilities for expressing those and related emotions dwindle and constrict. When one is unable to express behaviors associated with certain emotions safely, psychopathology results.

Another interesting aspect of Stolorow's conception of trauma is his use of Heidegger's structural intersubjectivity to remove the standard Cartesian conceptions of people, events, states, things, and so forth as being separate and individual. For example, cognition is often seen as absolutely distinct from affect, and yet we now know that that is not the case. Of course we have traditional refutations with thinkers like Hume (2000) and more recent scientific refutations with cognitive scientists like Damasio

(2005), but all that is absolutely consistent with the Heideggerian interrelated structure of Being-in-the-World.

Trauma for Stolorow is something conceived of as embedded in contexts of world and life, and also as something carrying much existential import. In fact, the very concept of trauma is here loaded with all sorts of existential components. Anxiety, finitude, authenticity, Being-Toward-Death, temporality—all of these Stolorow weaves in and around trauma. Trauma produces, according to Stolorow, an affective state similar to Heidegger's conception of anxiety. Thus, Heidegger's solution to anxiety, namely, authenticity, becomes Stolorow's solution as well, when viewed, as Stolorow does, as a "kinship-in-finitude." Thus relationalized, an authentic understanding of finitude becomes the existential and theoretical basis for the solution to the pain of emotional trauma.

By putting psychoanalysis onto the scaffolding of Heidegger's structural ontology, Stolorow has done much good work. We now have an intelligible understanding of what post-Cartesian psychoanalysis looks like, and, with his psychobiographical penultimate chapter analyzing Heidegger, we also get to see just how this contextual psychoanalysis works. Stolorow is a psychoanalyst, but his grasp of Heidegger matches that of most respected Heideggerian scholars. The work explicating the structural and contextual elements of the thinker's work is alone enough to make the book worth the time it takes to read it.

Practitioners of all sorts will find much of value in *World, Affectivity, Trauma*. Stolorow's discussion of the temporality of trauma, relationalized through finitude and Being-Towards-Death, is very enlightening, providing a lot of understanding for any practitioner who deals with clients who have been traumatized and continue to retraumatize themselves. Stolorow's little book, both practically and theoretically, provides useful information that may be utilized in many different client contexts. It is also simply fascinating as a work of philosophy and psychoanalysis. Both interesting and useful, *World, Affectivity, Trauma*, is a worthwhile read for most any practitioner.

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Book Review

G. Randy Kasten, *Finding the Truth in a World of Spin*, Quest Books, Wheaton, Ill., 2001,
ISBN: 978-0-8356-0889-3

REVIEWED BY RACHEL BROWNE
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G. Randy Kasten is a civil litigation attorney and has also acted as a judge. The book arises from his experience of being faced with an enormous number of lies, both as a lawyer and in the wider world. The book is anecdotal to a large extent, but is all the more enjoyable for that.

We find comfort, Kasten argues, in believing in objective truth, though we seldom know very much at all. The court of law is a prime example of the activity of pursuit of truth. The judge and jury expect to be able to find out the truth about whether someone has committed a crime despite the fact that they are expected to come to a conclusion using only a very small amount of information about the defendant. The defendant's political affiliation and religious beliefs are kept quiet, while circumstantial evidence takes primacy.

From this, Kasten notices that as a general rule the wider the picture we have of an individual or state of affairs, the more we are likely to be close to the truth. Kasten concentrates much on truth, outlining many different kinds. But it is information that is important. There is a high cost to be paid for acting on uninformed beliefs. In today's technological world the risks are increased. We respond to an e-mail immediately, perhaps not giving it enough thought, whereas we are more likely to labour over a response to a letter. In contrast to seeking a wider picture, hastiness and intuition are not functional in gaining correct information. By gaining information about human nature and situations, we are less likely to be deceived. People seem to be deceivers by nature.

Many people (everyone I would say) present a persona to the world. This is especially so if the person is vulnerable. Kasten says we can help other people by learning to show them how to be more honest about themselves, but the book also provides "other specific ways to build trust and promote honest communication" (p.4). A detailed account of the various types of liars, and types of lies provides material to help spot liars or those acting under an illusion. The book combines advice, self-help exercises, and philosophy as well as illustrative anecdotes.

Kasten's book reminds us of how often people make subjectively true comments but then go on to couch them in terms that make them seem objectively true. An example is that someone might say "That person is really ugly" which is a subjective judgement of taste, but the "IS" implies it is factual. If questioned, the answer might be "Come on everyone thinks so", which is a consensual truth, and as such not objectively true in any "tangible" sense. (p.7)

The various types of truth are outlined. These should be kept in mind when judging people and situations. That the various types of truths are outlined as well as the many different types of lies and liars we may come across is useful because it is explicit, explicating what we tend to take for granted, as we rely on intuition or sub-conscious reactions, as opposed to using reasoned thought.

Of course, Kasten accepts that we are not robots and often act with passion and self-interest without wanting to gain information or recognise the facts. However, things may be worse than Kasten seems to think. The neuroscientist and neurologist, Antonio Damasio, has argued that all thought comes with affect. We don't distance ourselves from circumstances. The analytical philosopher, Bernard Williams, has also argued that there is no objective viewpoint. Thought just is subjective. Thought occurs as part of an individual subject's relation to the world and others. It is always a stance.

Kasten also finds that people are inclined not to think for themselves, but defer to lawyers and doctors and others who command respect. Again, things might be worse than Kasten imagines. The American analytical philosopher, Tyler Burge has argued that we don't possess the concepts we think with. Burge uses the example of arthritis, but "string theory" or any other mysterious concept would do. He argues that when we talk or think of arthritis we normally don't have many background beliefs so what we mean is what the doctor means. When we talk of arthritis we don't have a private concept. If we DID have private concepts, communication would eventually become impossible. The upshot of Burge's argument is that very often we don't know what we are talking about.

If Damasio and Williams are correct, we are much less rational than we think. If Burge is correct, we can talk and act on the basis of a quite frightening lack of information. This makes Kasten look bizarrely optimistic in his claim that we take comfort in truth and to gain understanding of humans and situations we should make sure where and who we are getting our information from if we are to be well informed.

However, what might actually be the case doesn't mean we should give up an aspiration to be clearer and better informed, and try to be as rational as we can. The pessimism of analytical philosophers and neuroscientists is countered by this book.

Kasten has many ideas that will be of help to counsellors and clients wishing to examine their conceptual worlds. Most people have prejudices even if they think not. We come to a counselling situation with background beliefs, such as how far we believe that people can change. We have to remember that people tend to remember incorrectly, Kasten claims. He seems to be correct. This is actually has the support of neuroscience. When we recall an event it is not exact, but comes with new inflections. The memory is not identical to the event which occurred. The memory is re-written. The counsellor is listening to subjective truth. Current neurological research shows no recollective accuracy, but rather distortion. Though Kasten doesn't go into detail here, at a psychological level he is astute.

There is detailed analysis of ways in which we may fail to find out the truth about others. There is a comprehensive list of how we can go wrong, such as in stereotyping, using jargon, or feeling we need to be right. Kasten's position is that it is beneficial to be able to detect lies, but prevention is best. He details how to do this. As a lawyer, he doesn't want surprises when he is in the courtroom, so has learnt to get as much information from witnesses as possible. To help someone in a counselling situation, Kasten's approach and experience is invaluable.

The rest of the book has little relevance to philosophical practice, although there are sections on the human's propensity for gullibility and self-deception, which while folk psychological seem beyond criticism as descriptive. Kasten is very optimistic that human failings such as these can be overcome. I'm not so sure, but think Kasten's positive attitude towards improvement is inspiring.

Turning to a recent paper, it seems there is a lot of literature on misinformation showing that misinformation is highly pervasive and can have very bad consequences (Lewandowsky et. al. 2012). We all know of Iraq's supposed possession of "weapons of mass destruction." There was some scepticism about this at time, so the mistaken belief was able to be reversed in the light of knowledge. Yet this is not always the case. In the United States, Listerine falsely claimed that their mouthwash would protect against colds. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission called for corrective advertising, given that this was misinformation. The company had a \$10 million budget, but failed to completely reverse belief in the misinformation. Lewandowsky et. al. report research suggesting that after the campaign to reverse belief, 42% of Listerine users still believed the product was a cold remedy and 57% said they bought the product because of its "presumed medicinal properties" (2012).

Lewandowsky et. al. contend that "debiasing, or bringing people to acknowledge they are misinformed" is not very successful (2012). So far, three techniques have been identified: warnings at the time of exposure to the misinformation; repetition of the correct information; and corrections that fit in with your background beliefs.

Repetition didn't work in the case of Listerine.

Kasten's position would be that we should try not to be misinformed in the first place.

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Book Review

Tim Ryan, *A Mindful Nation. How a Simple Practice Can Help Us Reduce Stress, Improve Performance, and Recapture the American Spirit*, Hay House, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-4019-3929-8. 203 pages.

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A Mindful Nation presents Congressman Tim Ryan's re-thinking of his personal and professional experiences after learning about mindfulness. Mindfulness is a quality of attention aimed at cultivating awareness (Epstine, 1999). It entails a choice to intentionally attend to mental events in the present moment without judgement. Kabat-Zinn (2005) describes mindfulness as a deliberate "non-doing" where an individual actively attends to each moment to remain awake and aware. Learning to be mindful implies learning "be in" and accept the present moment without attempting to control the experience. It also involves learning to nurture quietude and self-acceptance; learning to observe the mind, by watching and releasing thoughts, perceiving the interconnectedness of thoughts, behaviours, sensations, images, interpretations, memories and emotions; and dis-identifying and decentering perception in the wider context of field awareness to allow new perspectives to emerge. Mindfulness aims to nurture an open and accepting mode of response that deliberately confronts challenges, obstacles, difficulties and discomfort (Kabat-Zinn 2005, Epstine 1999, Teasdale, et. al. 2002, Williams, et. al. 2006).

Throughout the book Ryan refers to his own experiences as a child, young man and adult, through both personal and professional eyes. It is clear that he is passionate about mindfulness, and well informed about the various research projects demonstrating an emerging trend highlighting the benefits of mindfulness in promoting wellbeing, positive mental health, and life skills in a number of contexts. Ryan presents an argument for adopting mindfulness-based interventions in education, economic and health policy. From a mental health and occupational therapy perspective it is exciting to hear of a politician who is interested in implementing policy that is informed by research on wellbeing and positive mental health.

Ryan starts his book with a review of past American values and compares them with those of present-day America. He contends that resilience was previously a strong characteristic in Americans that helped America cope with crises successfully, something that he feels is less evident today. He argues that a return to a political focus on compassion, kindness, generosity and citizenship would promote greater wellbeing and prosperity than today's political focus on materialism. In the first chapter he talks about a paradigm shift implicitly supported by evidence emerging in the discipline of positive psychology that suggests the most important contributors to human happiness are non-material (Myers and Diener 1995). A study by Rosenberg (2004) suggests that mindfulness can foster a quality of consciousness that allows people to reflect on the ecological consequences of their actions and choices, thus acting as an effective intervention for consumerism.

In chapter two, "Discovering mindfulness," Ryan presents his deeply personal and positive experience of encountering and applying mindfulness in his own life; chapter three provides an overview of the scientific background for mindfulness including many of the neuroimaging and electroencephalographic studies that report on the physiological and anatomical impact of mindfulness practice.

The rest of the book sets forth the author's opinion on how mindfulness could benefit every individual and indeed the whole community of America in moving towards a more mindful way of life. Ryan proposes

that mindfulness practice has many utilities. He reports that mindfulness can support compassion and therefore may be used in helping to rehabilitate convicted offenders and reduce criminal recidivism. Research on the benefits of mindfulness would indicate some promise for offender health and rehabilitation (Himmelstein 2011; Samuelson et. al. 2007).

Ryan is also a strong advocate for teaching mindfulness to schoolchildren. In chapter four, “How mindfulness can increase our children’s attention and kindness,” he says “a young child who can regulate his emotions is a child who will do better in school,” and argues that teaching mindfulness to all children can increase their learning capacities, attention and kindness. There is a burgeoning body of evidence suggesting that mindfulness supports metacognitive awareness, and can nurture an ability to cope with discomfort, ambiguity and complexity (Williams, et. al. 2006). There is evidence that mindfulness interventions can be useful for children with attention and behavioural problems (Semple et. al. 2010) and can be useful in reducing anxiety, and promoting resilience, emotional and self-regulation and social skills (Beauchemin et. al. 2008, Broderick & Metz 2009, Schonert-Reichl & Stewart Lawlor 2010). Ryan’s comments about mindfulness in education highlight a developing interest in the field of positive education. And there are many global examples of successful positive psychological interventions in schools.

In chapter five, “How mindfulness can improve our health and our healthcare system,” he presents examples to demonstrate how mindfulness can help us develop awareness about our habits, behavioural or mental, and help our long-term health. Research has demonstrated that mindfulness can have a positive effect on both clinical and nonclinical populations in healthcare (Mars & Abbey 2010, Spence, et. al. 2008). It can enhance immune function and pain management (Kabat-Zinn 2005, Smith 2004). Epstine (1999) and Shapiro, et. al. (2005) suggest that mindfulness practice can also foster resilience, hardiness and protect against job stress in health professionals, and can support clinical reasoning and decision making.

Chapter six, “How Mindfulness can improve performance and build resiliency for our military and first responders,” emphasises how mindfulness could benefit people on the ‘front line. In fact the utility of mindfulness may even stretch beyond Ryan’s hopes. For example Kringer (2005) found that mindfulness can support decision making in crisis situations among pilots. Chapter seven discusses the way mindfulness could help to reshape the values underpinning the American economy. And finally, chapter eight recapitulates the idea of encouraging mindfulness to promote a better life for individuals and the community: mindfulness helps us to be prepared for whatever comes our way. In addition to Ryan’s commentary on programmes and interventions to support mindfulness, he also presents a list of resources for learning more about mindfulness and these are all useful for anyone who is new to the concept.

There are two themes that emerge when reading this book: one about mindfulness and its benefits in different aspects of an individual’s life, the other a politician’s view of this approach in diverse areas of his work in his political world. As an academic and health care professional it was satisfying to see the expansion of mindfulness to so many areas of people’s lives and work in America through Ryan’s promotion in different fields: education, health care, the economy and the military. The best way for mindfulness to be acknowledged and encouraged within the Western culture of living and working is through evidence of its success with scientific backing, and it is encouraging to see that Ryan does refer to evidence based interventions throughout the text.

Ryan’s openness to experiment with mindfulness, which is not rooted in contemporary Western culture, has led him to promote the application of mindfulness in order to achieve a mindful America. It is

encouraging to see that science is being supported by those in power to inform policy and to further the sum of our knowledge by supporting further research and scientific enquiry. Researchers do experience times of disappointment when their ideas, regardless of strength, are either rejected or delayed if there is no support from policy makers or in particular significant people who fund research projects. However, there are always some pioneers who are genuinely working hard to bring their new ideas to fruition. It would be encouraging to hear of other politicians reading Ryan's book and learning from his stories and investigations on the usefulness of this approach. There is much in the world in terms of good deeds and thoughts that can support human beings to become better, but this is not necessarily believed by everyone. Successful and well-known people giving their support to an idea is a great step in encouraging more people to see the good 'things' in life.

It would have been useful to have an additional chapter about Americans being good global citizens and how mindfulness could impact America's international as well as national politics. Mindfulness is very much about being human and being more attentive to our lives moment by moment, and this is not necessarily limited to our experiences of the world within our own countries. Mindfulness is not limited by space. In different sections in this book Ryan expresses his feelings about war and the very sad consequences for soldiers who come back from combat, and for their families. But Ryan only portrays the damage sustained by Americans, therefore the total scale of damage suffered by all sides in war cannot be fully expressed in his book.

In chapter 6 there was a touching sentence from a mother: 'I haven't raised up a killer'. This highlights the impact of war, not only for soldiers but also for their families and their environment. We wonder if one day, if people all think and live more mindfully, would there be any motivation for war? Would mindfulness help us to see our connections as humankind, and be led less by the needs of individuals and nations. The very genuine view of the author made us think that this could happen if the whole world is seen as belonging to all humankind.

Our view of the book was enhanced by a phone call from the mother of one of the authors, a 70-year-old from Iran. After a few sentences of the first chapter of the book were read to her, she said, "How amazing—I wonder how the author knows Persian culture so well!" This left us with the thought that this book may be relevant to many nations, not only America.

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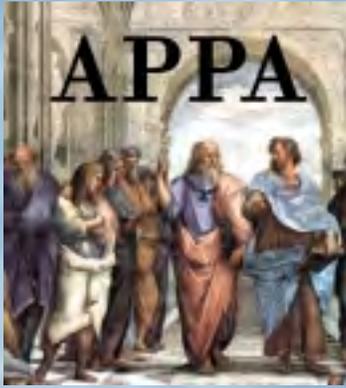
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