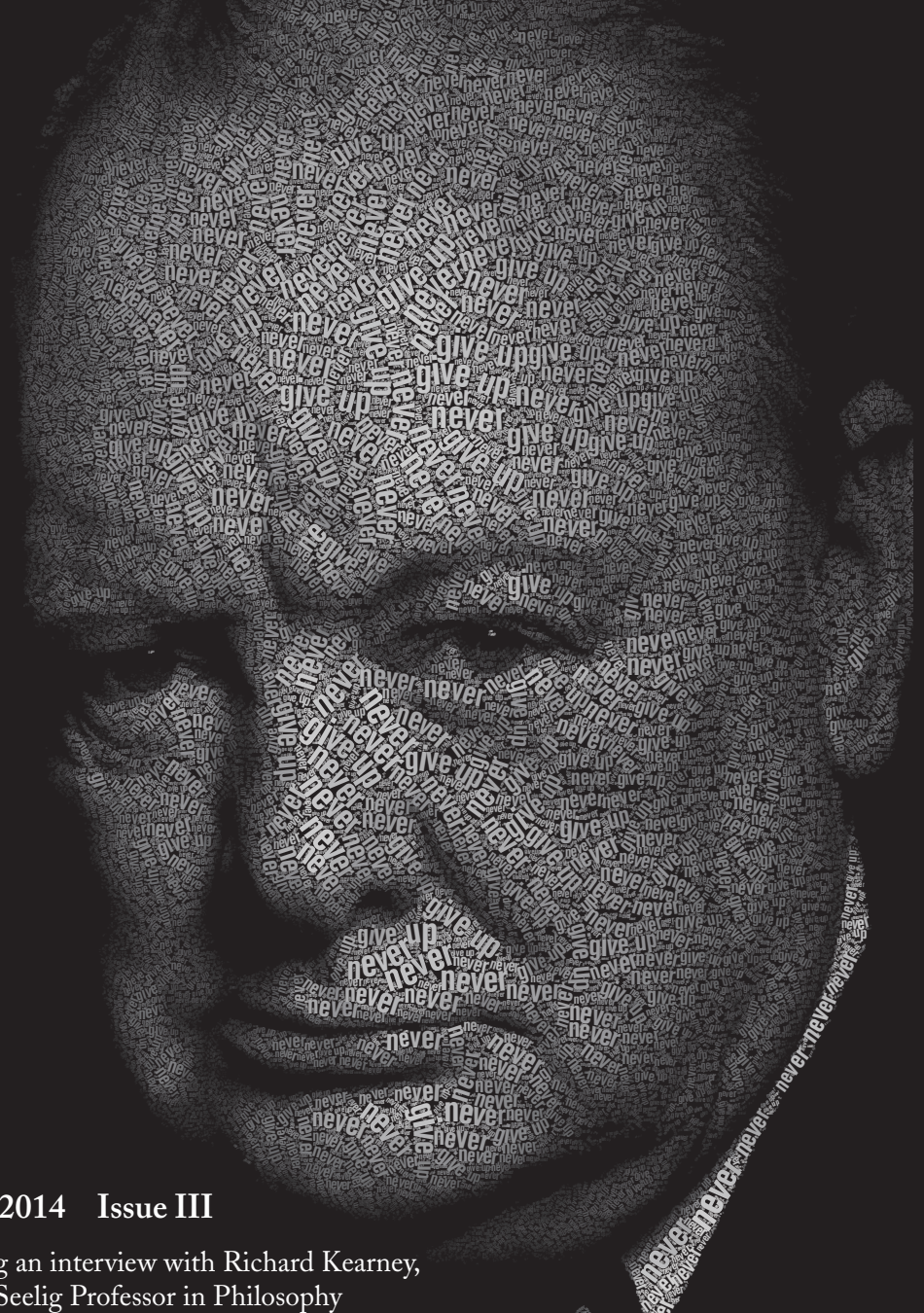


DIANOIA

The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Boston College



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THE UNDERGRADUATE PHILOSOPHY JOURNAL OF BOSTON COLLEGE

SPRING 2014 ISSUE III



Spring 2014 Issue III

Featuring an interview with Richard Kearney,
Charles Seelig Professor in Philosophy

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Dianoia fosters open philosophical discussion and writing among undergraduate students at Boston College. The journal provides a necessary venue for sharing creative, philosophy-based papers that bridge academic disciplines.

The ancient Greek word *διάνοια* translates as “thought” but connotes a discursive direction or search for a higher form of knowledge.

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The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Boston College
Spring 2014 Issue III

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Winston Churchill was as much an intellectual as he was a political figure. His leadership of Britain during the Second World War helped the Allies defeat Nazi Germany and re-establish peace in Europe. However, Churchill was more than just a British prime minister. He was a prolific author who penned numerous, comprehensive, and well-written publications, for which he won a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953. It might be said, then, that Churchill's strength as a public figure had its source in the strength of his intellectual life. By all accounts, Winston Churchill was more than just a statesman—he was a public intellectual.

The theme of this third incarnation of the undergraduate philosophy journal of Boston College is the role of the public intellectual in contemporary society. In light of this theme, *Dianoia* is pleased to publish the highlights of an interview with philosopher, Richard Kearney. Kearney—a highly regarded public intellectual who played an influential role in the peace talks between northern and southern Ireland—serves as the Charles Seelig Professor in Philosophy at Boston College, where he continues to author books and teach students. We would like to thank him especially for contributing to this year's issue.

From a number of high-quality submissions, *Dianoia* is also pleased to present a selection of five essays that we hope will contribute to the intellectual dialogue on campus. "Banksy: Dissident Artist" examines the role of street art in critiquing consumer culture. A thoughtful analysis on the dialectical interplay between Kierkegaard and Hegel is presented in the essay "Encountering Paradox: Movements of Faith and Reason in the Dialectics of Kierkegaard and Hegel." Plato's famous Third Man Argument is examined in the most analytic essay of this year's issue, "A Critical Examination of the Third Man Argument." Though more literary in style, the Journal has also included "Nietzsche the Autobiographer" for its pedagogical value in understanding Nietzsche's own assessment of his life and works. Finally, "Divine Simplicity: The Centerpiece of Aquinas' Doctrine on God" provides philosophical and theological insight into the thought of Aquinas.

This year, *Dianoia* has opted to publish fewer essays that are, in turn, lengthier on average than a standard paper. Our hope in doing so is that anyone who does not know much about a given topic—say, Nietzsche's life—can pick up this Journal and learn from the content. *Dianoia* seeks to be a forum for intellectual debate and dialogue in the Boston College community, and we believe that this year's issue reflects that goal. Please enjoy the third edition of *Dianoia*, and we look forward to your continued support.

Sincerely,

Karel-Bart Celie, *Editor-in-Chief*

Lucilla Pan, *Managing Editor*

Andrew Skaras, *Managing Editor*

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...being involved with the public means trying to be answerable to, and attentive to, suffering and pain. As well as then imagining, through hope and utopia, alternatives of that.

Interview with Richard Kearney, Charles Seelig Professor in Philosophy

Richard Kearney, Ph.D.



As a part of this issue's theme of the public intellectual, Dianoia conducted an interview with Richard Kearney, the Charles Seelig Professor in Philosophy at Boston College. Hailing from Ireland, Kearney has been extremely influential both philosophically and politically in the public talks surrounding the Troubles of Northern Ireland and the Peace Talks that occurred between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the government of the Ireland. Since then, he has appeared publicly in numerous forums to discuss issues of terrorism, politics, and philosophy.

Dianoia: Could you describe your role in the Northern Ireland Peace Talks?

Kearney: In 1977, I cofounded a journal called the *Crane Bag*, which was an interdisciplinary intellectual review founded by the Arts Councils of northern and southern Ireland. It was a way of bringing together politicians, philosophers, writers, teachers, and professional people to develop a dialogue on the future of northern and southern Ireland. It was open to all points of view. So we did an interview with the head of the IRA and with the Minister of Communications of Ireland at the time (you couldn't find two people more opposed). It led to a controversy with Margaret Thatcher and Ian Paisley, who openly denounced it in Westminster Parliament saying, "Here's British public funding going to a journal that shook hands with the IRA." While our point of view was: "You've got to shake hands with the devil."

So it was the idea that philosophy—or a philosophy journal—should be something that develops public debate. And also that all are admitted, because philosophy is a discipline which, as Husserl said, is really the "science of sciences." It is a foundational investigation for all disciplines. So it's a forum—an *agora*, as Socrates put it—where people can come together and share opinions. That was kind of the beginning.

Then, in 1984, we did a special issue of the journal—called "The Forum Issue"—and this was an issue that published the proceedings of the forum for a new Ireland that was set up by all the political parties in Ireland to imagine new solutions for the future. One of the solutions that I, as a representative of the south of Ireland—with a Catholic, Nationalist, Republican background—proposed (and I co-presented with another philosopher from the north) was a model of joint sovereignty for Northern Ireland. Now sovereignty *per se* has always been defined as "one and indivisible," going back to Rousseau and Bodin. So, if that's the case and you've got a claim for a united Ireland, as was the case with the Republican Nationalist cause, which a majority in southern Ireland and a minority in northern Ireland supported, and then you've got a contrary claim for a United Kingdom, supported by the Unionists who are the majority in northern Ireland, then you've

got a *conflict of sovereignty claims* that is absolutely incompatible and irresolvable. If sovereignty is going to be indivisible you can be British or Irish, but you can't be *both*. So we proposed that you *should* be able to be both; and even though joint sovereignty is legally and constitutionally a contradiction in terms—that was the only solution for a contrary society like Northern Ireland! Which in a sense is an oxymoron, strictly speaking, because you can't share sovereignty. But, by putting it in terms of a contradiction you can lead to new thinking. Constitutional impossibility calls for imaginative possibility! And poetry works like that—Yeats talks about “beautiful despair.” You grow up between opposites and contradictions, and when you put the two together, you get poetic imagination. Or as Seamus Heaney put it, “Two buckets are easier carried than one, I grew up in between.” And our big wager was, “If you put two contradictory positions together, you get political invention.” So we proposed joint sovereignty. And that was eventually one of the three proposals that were brought by the government of Ireland to Margaret Thatcher: joint sovereignty, federal Ireland, and a united Ireland. And she famously responded, “Out, out, out!” to my proposal and to the two others.

So that was my first exposure to tough political debate as a public intellectual. My first foray into politics—British-Irish mainly. Although in my book *Postnationalist Ireland* I also explored pan-European-federal solutions, seeing Ireland as a region within Europe.

Then I did a number of television programs and public broadcasting. I used to have a weekly program on Irish national television on politics, philosophy, and literature. We interviewed the likes of Vaclav Havel, Noam Chomsky, Umberto Eco, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida ... they were all the published in a book called *Debates in Contemporary Philosophy*. And that was kind of a weekly attempt on British and Irish television to create debates between intellectuals—philosophers from Europe and North America.

There was in Ireland and Europe at the time the idea that philosophers—or academics generally—could be public intellectuals. It is less so here [in the U.S.]. For the most part, philosophy remains much more of a ... specialized professional activity I find. Regrettably so.

Dianoia: You mentioned the different roles that philosophers play in the U.S. versus in Europe. Did this shape your role in creating a public forum? What brought you to the place where you decided to start your journal and have those public conversations?

Kearney: Growing up, doing European philosophy—here sometimes called Continental Philosophy, although often more Continental *American* philosophy—

some of the main people I was studying were Camus, Sartre, De Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricoeur. They all edited and wrote for journals. These different intellectuals were all involved in public broadcasting and public intellectual debates. Some of them taught at universities but the rest of the time they were out, engaged with the public. The first president of Czechoslovakia, Masaryk, was a Ph.D. in philosophy, a philosophy professor, who studied with Husserl and Freud. And his follower, Jan Patočka, a great philosopher in Prague, went on to found the famous peace rights movement, Charta 77, and was imprisoned and tortured for his trouble. But he left a huge legacy on Vaclav Havel and a whole generation of intellectual dissidents who brought about the Velvet Revolution in 1989.

In other words, the people I was studying were people who were involved with the public. The split between a professional academic specialization—called philosophy—and applied philosophy, practical philosophy, engaged philosophy, simply did not exist in that way. And this also appealed to me because I was doing philosophy *and* literature. Most of these publically committed philosophers were themselves writers—some of them, like Camus and Sartre, even being awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. When teaching existentialism, I always start with Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky—who are as much literary writers as they are philosophers. I actually found it quite strange to come to North America, where philosophy departments were often cordoned off.

In 2008 I set up a Guestbook seminar here at BC [Boston College] with fourteen different departments involved, faculty and students. The idea was to develop philosophy *in dialogue with* literature, art, physics, psychology, political science, romance languages, and so on. And it was great fun. I still very much believe in interdisciplinary teaching and publishing.

The third point I would make, which is relevant to all of you as undergraduate and graduate students, is that I resent the fact that everything revolves around the question: “Where are your philosophy students placed?” And if they are not placed in an academic institution—and usually a tenure track—it doesn’t count. You won’t get points for the ranking. Whereas, I would say that a good portion of my grad students since I came to BC ended up in public positions, *not* in academic institutions. One is running an NGO in Jerusalem, as co-director for the free movement of Palestinians. She wouldn’t have gotten that position without a philosophy degree. She’s also writing philosophy—she does both. But that doesn’t count as a placement. The last two presidents of Ireland had Ph.D.’s in philosophy—neither would be counted as placements here. If Obama had a Ph.D. from Boston College or any American university—his being president in the White House would not count as a placement. So it’s considered an academic “failure” to put someone in charge of an NGO or a government. Tell that to half the ministers in the French government—all Ph.D.’s. Doesn’t count. Havel—doesn’t count. Masaryk—doesn’t

count. So it's kind of absurd, expressed in the narrow view that if you do philosophy at a graduate level, it has got to be to teach at a tenure-track university job. Whereas a lot of European and Continental philosophy, in any case, teaches in a very broad and interdisciplinary way. So it's a huge plus to go into an interview and have a graduate degree in philosophy. It's very sought-after. And not just in Europe—where it certainly is—but also, I believe, increasingly here in America. Or at least that is what some of my grad students out there in the market tell me. It's kind of a prestigious thing to have—undergraduate or graduate, M.A. or Ph.D.—going into non-philosophical jobs.

Dianoia: Would you say that the philosophical environment in the United States precludes philosophy students from functioning as public intellectuals?

Kearney: It is hard to speak in general terms. With a graduate degree, you have the choice—1) to become a professional academic philosopher, teaching in a university or 2) do that *and* have a public role, or 3) *just* have a public role. But either way philosophy will form you—it's a foundational humanistic formation. And this should be touted and promoted as a plus. I taught in Dublin for 21 years in our Ph.D. program, and I would say maybe 50% went on to teach in philosophy programs. Most of the rest went into public functions. That was always my interest—philosophy *and* something else—not just specialized logic-chopping. But that doesn't mean one shouldn't have a really rigorous academic training. Of course one should. But it should always be in dialogue with other disciplines. Or at least have the option of doing that. These should be equi-primordial options—to stay in academic philosophy or to apply your talents to public discourse and debate. Or both.

Dianoia: Do you think that is changing at all? Do you think people are becoming aware that the inter-disciplinarity is important?

Kearney: I think it's growing. And for two reasons. First of all, people are opening their minds. They are realizing that specialization is going to disappear into a hole. And second, the Ignatian humanistic spirit of BC and other Catholic universities—and I talk about that in a broad sense—caused them to always have this broad education in the humanities. So BC is ripe for that. But I think there was a tendency for a while to ape the Ivy Leagues and say, "We should be doing what Harvard and Yale are doing." When what the Jesuit intellectual tradition is doing is far more interesting and profound and life-changing than the kind analytic knit-picking and conceptual navel-gazing that passes for philosophy in certain esteemed quarters. It's an intellectual inferiority complex which infuriates me.

“We’ll drop in the rankings if we don’t become like Harvard.” Well, who makes the rankings?

So I think that is turning around, and BC, in its intellectual and spiritual culture, is very open to interdisciplinary, humanistic education. There’s different ways of doing philosophy—as technical rationality or as humanistic reason. Analytic philosophy, which has predominated in so called “Anglo-Saxon” thinking, privileges the former; so called “continental” philosophy the latter. Every student should be trained in both, but I know where my preference lies.

Another factor, of course, is that there just aren’t enough academic jobs today for Ph.D.’s. There are not enough university posts for Ph.D.’s, so people *have* to think out of the box. But that is not a reason not to study philosophy. We have all these unemployed Ph.D.’s in philosophy so what can they do? How about running the country? Running NPR? Running the diplomatic corps? Running a publishing company, setting up journals, running theatres, running NGO’s?

Dianoia: Do you think there is a cultural reason for this? Something in American culture that is the reason why the role of philosophy is perceived so differently here as compared to Europe?

Kearney: I think exactly the same reason that the government took away public funding from NPR. Same thing. Thinking is dangerous. Keep it cloistered. Of course, that’s putting it too bluntly. But when I pay taxes I want some of those taxes to go for public education, public broadcasting, and public debate. Yet there seems to be a prejudice in certain quarters that if funding for public broadcasting comes from taxpayers instead of from private individuals, it is somehow suspect. It’s an extraordinary indictment of what one means by “public.” And that division between public and private is, in my view, ruinous.

Some people would say: well what about Greece? And I would say well that went to the other extreme, where you had 80% of the people working in public or state positions, and that has got to be countered. But America has gone to the other. I throw up my arms in despair at the way certain people use the term Obamacare as a *slur*. Rick Santorum, for example, described it as “apartheid.” Saying, “How can Obama be celebrating Nelson Mandela’s memory when he is introducing apartheid here?” So what can you do? There can’t be a sense of ownership of the public domain, either of health, education, or broadcasting, when the term ‘care’ is treated as a term of insult.

Also, there tends to be a sense that the disciplines should be quantifiable. It’s very hard to quantify theology or philosophy. If you want to do so you need to adopt a quasi-scientific form of reasoning that can get grants and work with

strict criteria of verification and falsification. Now that is a certain side of philosophy—Aristotle wrote the *Physics*, as well as the *Metaphysics*. He did both. So I'm not saying that there shouldn't be a scientific philosophy or a philosophy of science—there are wonderful people here at BC who teach that. I'm all for it. But the tendency since the 50's and 60's has been to focus on a certain brand of philosophy that is “measurable” in terms of proofs. And then certain philosophy departments (Princeton, Yale, Harvard, and so on) tried to ape the sciences in narrow ways—though things are beginning to open up again now and the whole analytic-versus-continental divide is happily beginning to erode. Some scientists replied: don't try to do *our* job, do *your* job, and then we will talk to you ... because you can teach us things about foundational human questions that we're not doing here in our laboratory. But don't try and compete with the rats in our laboratory—we're doing very well, thank you very much. And of course that gave pseudo-scientific philosophy an inferiority complex. They couldn't measure up to the sciences! But as I say things are beginning to open up again. I'm delighted, for instance, that Shawn Kelly is the chair at Harvard—he comes from Merleau-Ponty and he can do cognitive sciences *and* phenomenology of perception. The important thing is to get the two traditions to talk to each other.

Dianoia: You've alluded to the fact that, in Europe, there has been a more active role played by public intellectuals than in the United States. Do you think that the media also plays a role? Should public intellectuals function to filter what is presented to the public? The media is there to correct factual errors, but there is no discussion about ideological errors.

Kearney: That's a very good point. And it's a lack of a middle ground—a mediating ground. You've got the ideologies of government, as it were, and the statements and proposals come out, and then you've got the big public. But no one is really mediating. So more and more the media has taken up the role of mediation—as they should. But they should be a *forum* for public intellectuals and commentators also. And there still are some out there, but increasingly it's becoming pundits in an entertainment game. It's like sports commentary except it's political commentary. Tick-tack, tick-tack, but it's not a deep, informed, philosophical debate. It's all sound bites. (I'm talking mainly about Fox News and even CNN, more than NPR which has some excellent cultural programming of course—but they are always under such huge financial pressure.) It has become increasingly about entertainment rather than education. BBC, when it was set up, was founded with a few principles, one of which was definitely *education*. In the media, it's important that you get the fact-checkers—that's essential, the media should be there to invigilate the facts. But the second role is commentary and interpretation, and that's

become *incredibly* impoverished. You go into an airport or a hotel, and you've got split screens and it's just to-and-fro news clips and "opiniators." It's a spectator's sport—gladiatorial, adversarial chit-chat—but rarely real in-depth interviews apart from NPR/PBS, which has a minority audience. Now, I repeat, the latter is often excellent but it absolutely reduces me to tears to hear them have to *beg* five days in a row during fundraisers. In the meantime, they can't have a debate because they have to get the money to support it. And to me that is just not a democracy—when people have to scrape, borrow, and beg to get enough to talk intelligently about things! I mean on one level it goes back to the American spirit and that's fine—we all pay for what we get. I'm all for things from the ground up rather than the top down. That can be extremely important. People get together, and there's a groundswell of opinion from beneath. Yes. But NPR has to appeal for money to individuals in their cars, in their homes, on their way to work. It's almost always an appeal to *private individuals*. Not a community or province or state thing. And public radio is *communal*. So it should be paid for communally.

Dianoia: Do you find the literature in Europe—in philosophy, for example—more accessible to a general reading audience than it is here? Conversely, is the general reading audience more informed, so that a higher-level journal is more accessible to them?

Kearney: I think it works both ways. Remember, in France, Germany, Italy, and several other European countries, philosophy is part of the high school education—it's taught to all students prior to graduation. You don't have to wait till you go to university to study philosophy—you are already formed and informed by it. And that makes a big difference.

But I don't wish to be too down about American education. I came here for a reason. I came here to work, so it's not like I don't see the wonderful opportunities and advantages of the great universities, libraries, research institutes. They are really wonderful, among the best in the world. My argument is not about resources. It is elsewhere.

Let me put it in the form of a question: "What happened between the intellectual heyday of Jefferson and Franklin, for example, and our own day to explain how, for some reason, the intellectual-philosophical work isn't as central to the culture?" Why did it get cloistered and confined to academic campuses (often in remote settings like Dartmouth, Wellesley, Princeton, even Boston College) in a kind of cultural apartheid? Why this quarantine of philosophy? One learns great things, but far from the madding crowd. One thinks great thoughts but apart from the world.

Dianoia: You teach philosophy of imagination, and you've written several books on imagination. Could you flesh out what you see the role of imagination is for the public intellectual?

Kearney: Well, it enables one to enter the kingdom of "as if." And that opens up the space of possibility, a laboratory of possibilities, so that you can think otherwise. And if you can *think* otherwise, things can *be* otherwise. It reminds me of Bertolt Brecht, a German playwright and poet, who said, "The most radical poem I ever wrote was of an apple growing silently in a Berlin orchard during the height of Hitler's power." This was radical because to imagine something beautiful growing in the middle of evil was a categorical imperative that things *can* be otherwise, that things *must* change. So imagination opens up the future, it opens up the realm of possibility. And I think that's why, say in Northern Ireland, the road to the peace process was paved not just by politicians and jurists but by poets and writers, able to imagine what it was like to be the enemy, to empathy with the adversary, to image the possibility of the impossible. To imagine what came about with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

I'm currently directing an international project called "Guestbook," which started here at BC, where we bring together young people, students, from different divided communities—Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Jerusalem, Dokto—and we get them to exchange narratives. First of all, we get them to share their own story. And then, in the second part, they imagine a new story. They create something together from the components of their respective histories. The wager is that if they can come up with an aesthetic solution in images—it can be poetry, video, drama, graffiti, comic-strip animation—something new may be created in reality afterward. There's a prize at the end of each year. A prestigious committee decides on the winners and they come to Boston College to screen their work and receive their prize.

That's all based on the idea of narrative imagination. You tell your own story, and then you listen empathically through your imagination to the story of your enemy. And then you co-create a third story. So that's the philosophy of imagination applied to the public pedagogical domain. I'm working with young people because, in these split countries/cities, the thing is so trans-generational. The hope is in the young people making new images and stories with their iPhones, computers, and flip-cameras. That technology has changed the world. They are coming up with some remarkable work which they post on our website—guestbook-project.com—and then engage in exchanges with other international students on our interactive website and blogs.

Dianoia: Do you think that your designation as a public intellectual has shaped how you view yourself and your work? How do you see that designation shape you as you continue?

Kearney: Well, it means that I'm always wondering, "How does this relate to what's happening in the world now?" So you could say that that is Socratic existentialism. Of course, I'm not comparing myself to Socrates—I'm talking about the method. You go into an *agora*, and you see what the debates are. What is justice? What is war? Let us not forget that Greek philosophy and drama first arose in response to war—the Peloponnesian War, the Trojan War, the Persian War, and so on.

So being involved with the public means trying to be answerable to, and attentive to, suffering and pain. As well as then imagining, through hope and utopia, alternatives of that. Now, I'm not saying *all* philosophy needs to do that. There is always that moment, absolutely indispensable, when one needs to take a step back and retreat, and contemplate, before going out into the world again. Philosophy has two lives—the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*. You need both.

There are so many distractions, so many things to plug into, and so on. My own personal retreat is the south of Ireland—we still have a little house there. I go there every summer for three months, and that's where I get all of my writing done. If I didn't have that, I couldn't do the more public stuff. One needs to step back to step forward.

This interview was conducted by Karel-Bart Celie, Editor-in-Chief, and Andrew Skaras, Managing Editor, with Richard Kearney in December of 2013.

It is through Banksy's dissidence, his dedication to graffiti, and his determination to reveal what he perceives as consumerism's threat to humanity, that he attempts to resurrect and propagate a culture in which social relations are not mediated by financial interactions.

Banksy: Dissident Artist

Alexander Trimes

In a conversation with author Tristan Manco, Banksy, the anonymous graffiti artist from Bristol, England, states, “All graffiti is low-level dissent, but stencils have extra history. They’ve been used to start revolutions and to stop wars.”¹ Banksy’s own use of stencil graffiti has earned him an international reputation as a political artist whose pieces challenge the status quo and undermine authority around the world.² Perhaps most prominently, Banksy’s art functions as a critique of consumer culture and the heavy influence that advertising holds in contemporary society. An analysis of his pieces through the lenses of Herbert Marcuse’s and Erich Fromm’s Frankfurt School philosophies provides a greater understanding of Banksy’s status as a dissident artist.

Banksy adopted and developed the use of stencils in the early 1990s, a technique that enables him to produce pieces more quickly and thus reduces the “danger of detection that is the risk of a slower freehand piece.”³ The illegal status of graffiti is significant as it endows Banksy’s art with a dissentient quality it might not otherwise possess. As Herbert Marcuse claims, society has invalidated the “subversive force,” that is, the “truth” of art that would ordinarily be considered political by “assimilating its antagonistic contents.”⁴ By operating outside of the mediums condoned by the “new totalitarianism,” which relegates political works of art to objects of leisurely contemplation accessible only in museums, Banksy’s art makes it impossible for society to absorb the “destructive content” of his art, as its very presence disobeys the law and transgresses the norm—it cannot be ignored. In this sense, Banksy’s art “saves its substance by denying its traditional form and thereby denying reconciliation.”⁵ It is perceived by the legal system not as art, but as crime.⁶

Much of Banksy’s art critiques the oppressive influence of advertising agencies and corporations over society and the subsequent rise of consumerism. According to Banksy:

The people who truly deface our neighborhoods are the companies that scrawl their giant slogans across buildings and buses trying to make us feel

inadequate unless we buy their stuff. They expect to be able to shout their message in your face from every available surface but you're never allowed to answer back. Well, they started this fight and the wall is the weapon of choice to hit them back.⁷

As the quotation suggests, Banksy interprets consumerism as the pursuit of a specific brand of adequacy, one that is constructed by the companies that manufacture the advertised products. Such a conception of consumer culture resembles Erich Fromm's sentiment that, "the individual, primarily alone and self-sufficient, enters into economic relations with others as means to one end: to sell and to buy."⁸ In Banksy and Fromm's understandings of consumerism, objects function as mediators for social interaction, the dynamics of which is dictated by the producers—in order to adhere to the established norm, in order to avoid "feel[ing] inadequate," that "we buy their stuff."⁹ Banksy, however, chooses not to adhere, but rather to engage in the "fight" and raise issue with the contemporary paradigm.

In his effort to retaliate, Banksy employs "the wall," the same public medium used by advertisers, to undermine consumer culture.¹⁰ His 2011 piece *Sorry! The lifestyle you ordered is currently out of stock* is a prime example of this technique. The piece, which is simply the title spelled out in large font, is painted over a space regularly reserved for advertisements. It expresses Banksy's notion that companies, when advertising, are not advertising their product so much as the lifestyle they want consumers to associate with their brand; the product is a means of achieving a certain "adequate" lifestyle. The fact that the lifestyle is "out of stock" suggests that the lifestyles that companies advertise, and lifestyles in general, cannot be bought. A way of life is not contingent upon a single purchase. By depicting a deficiency of consumer culture, that no product provides the lifestyles companies construct and advertise, Banksy exemplifies Fromm's definition of "disobedience" as an "affirmation of reason and will."¹¹ Through his attempt to disillusion consumer society by promulgating what he identifies as the truth, Banksy realizes "man's capacity to see, to say what he sees, and to refuse to say what he does not see."¹² He is, essentially, prompting the viewer to think critically so that he or she may discern the disjunction between what is advertised and what can actually be bought.

Banksy encourages his audience members again to consider their purchasing habits and the way they perceive the stores where they shop in *I Pledge Allegiance to the Bag*. As Eva Branscome describes the painting, it depicts "three sweet little patriotic children [who] are taking part in a flag-raising ceremony."¹³ In a twist on the term *brand loyalty*, it is not a flag that has been raised at the top of the flagpole but a Tesco bag. The Tesco logo remains intact; Banksy does nothing to deface it, but he does alter the context in which it is displayed. The work suggests that consumers live according to the dictates of brands, as they are conveyed in advertise-

ments. The viewer is encouraged to consider how he or she perceives companies and how his or her purchasing decisions are influenced by advertisements.

I Pledge Allegiance to the Bag is not the only work where Banksy portrays a relationship between children and consumer culture. His 2007 piece *ATM Girl* exemplifies a separate instance in which the artist comments on consumerism's effect on children. The work displays a robotic arm that, having emerged from an ATM, is grasping a young girl by the waist. When considered alongside *I Pledge Allegiance to the Bag*, this piece clearly shows that Banksy takes issue with the way materialism influences children. The pieces, like Marcuse, both suggest that "products indoctrinate and manipulate" individuals.¹⁴ Banksy proposes that children, who enter this indoctrination process at birth, who spend their entire lives and mature in consumer society, will know no alternatives and will remain obedient to the brands that they see advertised—they will pledge their allegiance to brands. In such a society of material consumption, the children are, as Banksy implies, controlled by and are at the whim of the ATM, that is, money, which will enable them to participate in society through the medium of products produced by those brands they are raised to obey.

Banksy's critique of consumer culture gains a more serious, morbid dimension in the piece *Shop 'Till You Drop*. The work, which he painted during the 2011 holiday shopping season, is located about halfway down the length of a tall building in London and portrays a woman grasping onto a shopping cart as she plunges to her death. Distinct from the previous two paintings, *Shop 'Till You Drop* does not overtly elicit critical thinking regarding the viewer's relationship to companies or brands and does not initially call into question what exactly brands are attempting to sell the consumer and how the consumer is influenced by advertising, but instead posits that materialism and consumer culture are harmful, even deadly, to the individuals so thoroughly immersed in it. The work induces the viewer to consider how consumer culture affects him or her negatively; it conveys Marcuse's notion that, through indoctrination, consumerism "promote[s] a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood" by illustrating how products destroy humanity and human relations.¹⁵ As materialism becomes a "way of life" that consumers can perceive as nothing other than "a good way of life," it displaces the previous ways of existence in which products did not facilitate all social interaction.¹⁶

Banksy adopted an alternative method of criticism of conveying his criticism when, in October 2013, he set up a stall in Central Park to sell "100% authentic original signed Banksy canvases."¹⁷ The stall, which sold the paintings for \$60 each, performs two functions. First, it undermines the commodification of art, as a BBC article reports that "many of the pieces [are] estimated to be worth up to £20,000 [\$32,000] each."¹⁸ By selling the works for so much less than the market

says they are worth, Banksy makes the monetary values assigned to works of art appear arbitrary.¹⁹ Second, as Forbes writer Kathryn Tully explains, “the Central Park sale ably proves the artist’s point. Without the context or hype, New Yorkers can’t spot a signed Banksy original when it is literally right under their noses.”²⁰ The stall’s lack of success illustrates the influence of advertising in sales; despite the value of the pieces, the stall only sold eight canvases and generated a mere \$420 in revenue after customers negotiated for lower prices.

The manner in which Banksy conducts himself, both with regard to the “huge prices” that his “anti-establishment art commands” and his decision to remain anonymous, embodies the ideals Plato establishes in the *Apology*.²¹ Though Banksy’s own financial status is unclear, his art, as graffiti, is inherently free to view and consider.²² In a 2007 interview with the *New Yorker* he acknowledges, like Plato’s Socrates who has never “exact[ed] or sought pay of anyone,” that he “give[s] away thousands of paintings for free.”²³ In the article, he proceeds to admit, “The money that my work fetches these days makes me a bit uncomfortable, but that’s an easy problem to solve—you just stop whingeing and give it all away. I don’t think it’s possible to make art about world poverty and then trouser all the cash” [*sic*].²⁴ Similar to Socrates, Banksy does not seek monetary compensation, but uses his art as a means of “examining” the status of society and prompting others to think critically about the consumerist culture in which they live.²⁵

Additionally, Banksy, like Socrates, is unable to lead “a public life” free of persecution, due to the nature of his work.²⁶ As previously mentioned, it is the illegality of graffiti that enables his art to be truly subversive. Aware that he “has issues with the cops,” Banksy is unable to reveal his identity without encountering legal consequences.²⁷ Were he to pursue a public existence under his real identity, he would be unable to continue his art, his dissent, the very things he “dedicate[s] [his] entire life to.”²⁸ It is for these reasons that only his work can remain public, that it must remain public, while Banksy lives anonymously. In order for Banksy’s message to be interpreted politically, it is necessary for his art to explicitly undermine the culture it opposes; to critique consumer culture as a spectacle with an exhibit inside a museum that charges an admission fee would damage the work’s integrity as well as the artist’s credibility. Under such circumstances, Banksy’s options are limited to outlaw or apolitical artist.

In *Wall and Piece*, Banksy writes, “The greatest crimes in the world are not committed by people breaking the rules but by people following the rules. [...] As a precaution to ever committing major acts of evil it is our solemn duty never to do what we’re told, this is the only way we can be sure.”²⁹ The statement embodies, though perhaps hyperbolically, Fromm’s notion that disobedience, with which “human history began,” can function virtuously to perpetuate existence, while “it is not unlikely that [*humanity*] will be terminated by an act of obedience.”³⁰ It is

through Banksy's dissidence, his dedication to graffiti, and his determination to reveal what he perceives as consumerism's threat to humanity, that he attempts to resurrect and propagate a culture in which social relations are not mediated by financial interactions.

- 1 Tristan Manco, *Stencil Graffiti* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 76.
- 2 Provocative pieces such as those depicting children escaping over, or peering through the shattered remains of the West Bank Barrier in Israel earned Banksy a spot on Time Magazine's list of the 100 most influential people of 2010.
- 3 Eva Branscome, "The True Counterfeits of Banksy: Radical Walls of Complicity and Subversion," *Architectural Design* 81.5 (2011): 116. In this article, Branscome summarizes the evolution of Banksy's method.
- 4 Herbert Marcuse, *One-dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 61.
- 5 Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (London: Routledge, 1998), 145.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Banksy, *Wall and Piece* (London: Century, 2005), 8.
- 8 Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: H. Holt, 1994), 9.
- 9 Banksy, *Wall and Piece*, 8.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Erich Fromm, *On Disobedience: Why Freedom Means Saying "no" to Power* (New York: Harper, 2010), 24.
- 12 Fromm, *On Disobedience*, 24.
- 13 Branscome, "True Counterfeits of Banksy," 116.
- 14 Marcuse, *One-dimensional Man*, 12.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid. Emphasis Added.
- 17 Banksy, "Central Park," *Banksy NY*, October 13, 2013.
- 18 "Banksy Stall Sells Art Works for \$60 in New York," *BBC*, October 14, 2013.
- 19 Banksy has previously undermined what he identifies as the "small group" that "create[s], promote[s], purchase[s], exhibit[s] and decide[s] the success of Art" by hanging his own pieces in major museums including Tate Britain, the Louvre, and MOMA. Banksy, *Wall and Piece*, 144.
- 20 Kathryn Tully, "Would You Buy A Banksy From A New York Stall For \$60? Not Many Did," *Forbes*, October 14, 2013.
- 21 Will Ellsworth-Jones, "The Story Behind Banksy," *Smithsonian*, February, 2013, 2.
- 22 According to Branscome, "Banksy has made money through the sale of his book *Wall and Piece*," which was a bestseller when it was released in 2005, "selling 90,000 copies and taking £1 million." Branscome, "True Counterfeits of Banksy," 116.
- 23 Plato, "Apology," *The Internet Classics Archive*, Trans. Benjamin Jowett (MIT, 1994-2009), 11. Lauren Collins, "Banksy Was Here," *The New Yorker*, May 14, 2007, 6.

24 Collins, "Banksy Was Here," 6.

25 Plato, *Apology*, 14.

26 Ibid., 12.

27 Ellsworth-Jones, "Story Behind Banksy," 1.

28 Keegan Hamilton, "Village Voice Exclusive: An Interview With Banksy, Street Art Cult Hero, International Man of Mystery," *The Village Voice*, October 9, 2013, 3.

29 Banksy, *Wall and Piece*, 51.

30 Fromm, *On Disobedience*, 1.

Kierkegaard's hostility towards Hegel was like that of an angry sibling: however much he rejected and ridiculed Hegelian dialectic, nonetheless antithesis and its explication was for him, too, the key. His notion of dialectic is similar to Hegel's in the sense that it involves a "becoming," but unlike Hegel, it is a subjective becoming not an objective becoming.

Encountering Paradox: Movements of Faith and Reason in the Dialectics of Kierkegaard and Hegel

Francis Adams

The disquieting feeling that usually accompanies reading the works of Søren Kierkegaard arises from the daunting realization that he is challenging us to critically evaluate our existence; to consider the possibility that we are not living in the most authentic way of which we are capable. He does not say this explicitly, but it is implicit in his unusual method of communication—what he calls “indirect communication.” The challenge in reading Kierkegaard is in unraveling what he means by indirect communication. We can get at in the following way: as a whole, his literary production shows great thematic breadth, ranging from the poetic to the philosophical and into the religious. His chameleon-like versatility is further shown by the fact that he unfolded his production through a series of pseudonyms. They appear in many of his works, either by themselves or in tandems, and each speaks his own mind. It becomes clear, then, that he is not concerned with merely espousing his theories and leaving it up to his readers to decide whether or not they agree with him. He is challenging the reader to enter deeply into the existential questions he engages, to restore what he thought was the essential element in the human search for meaning: passion. It is for this reason that he is often referred to as the “father of existentialism,” (although he would probably not enjoy being associated with an “ism,” for reasons I hope will be clear by the end of this analysis). At the same time (and this is the crucial point), there is a definite order with which Kierkegaard, as the manager of these various characters, holds their views over and against each other. The whole of his production is meant to be a theory of existence, an expression of the journey of the individual through various stages, which he sees as culminating in the religious stage with the character who poses the ultimate challenge to our existence: Jesus Christ.

Much of Kierkegaard’s thinking was in reaction to what he considered to be the highly speculative nature of philosophy down through the ancient, medieval and modern periods. It is unfortunate then, (for the German philosopher, Hegel) that he was the man that received the butt of the criticism, for Kierkegaard’s criticism really applies to all the great metaphysicians in the history of Western philosophy. Nevertheless, we will examine Kierkegaard’s specific problems with

Hegel and all the thinkers who were so greatly influenced by him (many of whom were Kierkegaard's peers at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, where he lived). His primary grievance with this brand of philosophy was that it reduced the real to the rational; that is, it asserted that all truth could be expressed in rational categories. Kierkegaard strongly disagreed with this view and held that there are other truths, truths more relevant to the human condition, which could not be explained rationally. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, he undergoes his most comprehensive critique of Hegel and asserts that truth is subjective as opposed to objective; that is, truth is grounded in the individual and not in a larger system of knowledge, as Hegel asserted. Although Kierkegaard is critical of Hegel in this sense, there is an important thread that unites these two thinkers that will serve as a useful tool for illuminating their philosophies: their use of dialectical reasoning. Hegel's dialectic does away with the distinction between subject and object and therefore determines truth to be an objective, assimilated whole, whereas Kierkegaard's dialectic is entirely subjective, as it traces the movement of the individual through what he determined to be the three stages of existence: the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious stage. These differences in dialectical style point to distinctive epistemologies and worldviews. It is only after our comparison of Hegel and Kierkegaard that we will be able to understand that authenticity for Kierkegaard can only be fully realized subjectively as one navigates through the various paradoxes of existence.

Hegel's self-proclaimed project as a philosopher was to advance the field of philosophy away from being merely a *love* of knowledge and into an actual *attainment* of knowledge.ⁱ He believed that metaphysical truth could only exist in a scientific system, that is, objectively, for otherwise it would be tainted by the various prejudices of subjectivity. He claims, therefore, to have apprehended the realm of truth, "as it is, stripped of all integument, in and for itself, implicit and explicit."¹ He claims to have grasped the *Darstellung Gottes*, that is, God's presence, as he was in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and finite spirit.²ⁱⁱ Kierkegaard reviled this tendency of systematizing knowledge (again, present in ancient, medieval, as well as modern thought), for its abstract, speculative quality. Hegel, on the other hand, was deeply animated by the belief that he could grasp the universal order of things. One of Hegel's pupils, Hotho, described his mentor's ambition as follows: "It was precisely in the depths of the seemingly undecipherable where this powerful mind pried and poked about with splendidly self-confident ease and

i. It is telling that Hegel misrepresents the meaning of the word "philosophy" by substituting the word "knowledge" for "wisdom," thereby extracting the distinctly human quality from the word.

ii. It should be noted that Hegel's use of "God" is ambiguous and should not be understood in the theistic sense. Scholars seem to think Hegel merely used the word "God" to save his chances of gaining a position as a professor. Hegel is considered a pantheist. The words, "God," "Spirit," and "Absolute" will be used synonymously throughout this analysis.

calm.”³ Merold Westphal, in his essay, *Kierkegaard and Hegel*, captures the essence of Hegel’s ambition as a metaphysician, while helpfully contextualizing him in the history of Western thought:

Hegel’s insistence that philosophy must be scientific answers Kant’s question whether metaphysics can be objective knowledge, free from perspectival subjectivities of sense, opinion, tradition, authority, interest, and so forth. It is easy to recognize in this aspiration to objectivity not merely a modern awe of physical science but an ancient awe of mathematics that goes back to Pythagoras and Plato. When this awe gives place to envy and this envy gives rise to the quest for metaphysical comfort that comes from metaphysical certainty, we have a dominant tendency in Western philosophy.⁴

In Hegel’s thinking, the only true method was the one that included *all* regions of thought. He strove towards a unity of cognitive thinking that encompassed contradiction, that is, he apprehended actuality as structured in opposites. “Yes” and “No,” “A” and “non-A” are thought to both be expressions of pure thought as such, so through a triadic movement of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, the two opposites are apprehended into the Whole, the Absolute.ⁱⁱⁱ This means that oppositions like true and false are merely different ways in which the substance of the Absolute expresses itself; a contradiction, therefore, represents an advance, and each negation is a positive act of cognition leading to a higher and broader level of truth. Through this dialectic movement, the Absolute is thought of as in a continual process of becoming. Hegel’s dialectic is interrelated with history, as history comes to be seen as a series of stages in which the Absolute is actualized:

All historical events admit of being regarded from a viewpoint according to which they represent opposed opinions, contradictory attitudes and contrasting elements. It is a truism that history proceeds in movement and countermovement. It likewise seems to be unequivocally clear that the movement of history repeatedly leads to a kind of equalization in which antinomies are sublimated.⁵

To get a clearer picture of Hegel’s view of history, it will be useful to highlight some of the significant periods of history in which the supposed development of Spirit can be seen. He regarded Spirit as being asleep in nature before human beings came to be on earth. With the rise of human beings, Spirit “woke up” in the self-consciousness of the human. Further down the road, Christianity came to represent one of the higher stages of Spirit’s self-consciousness. This was the stage

iii. The unique German word for this triadic movement is *Aufhebung*, which combines the senses of “cancelling out,” “nullification,” and “sublimation,” and therefore connotes a development, together with a dissolution, of what came before.

in which Spirit came to understand itself by way of representation. The metaphor of God becoming man in Jesus represents Spirit becoming conscious of itself. In this sense, he regarded Christianity as true in content, but not in form; a merely representational form of truth is ultimately inadequate for Hegel because, in his view, a historical point of departure (God existing in time through Christ) is incapable of being given for an eternal consciousness. Hegel's rather arrogant view, therefore, is that religion is "defendable" in the sense that we cannot all be philosophers, but "pure" philosophy is the proper form in which truth exists. It follows from Hegel's dialectic that the distinction between subject and object is lost as the two are sublimated into the Absolute. Kierkegaard, as we will see, took subjectivity very seriously and used this distinction as a point of departure for creating his own dialectic grounded in the individual existing person.

Kierkegaard's existential dialectic is unique in the sense that its stages are presented as a hierarchy of three stages of existence: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. Kierkegaard's hostility towards Hegel was like that of an angry sibling: however much he rejected and ridiculed Hegelian dialectic, nonetheless antithesis and its explication was for him, too, the key. His notion of dialectic is similar to Hegel's in the sense that it involves a "becoming," but unlike Hegel, it is a subjective becoming not an objective becoming. For Kierkegaard the dialectic is a lived process by which the individual moves towards fulfillment. As the German philosopher and psychologist, Robert Heiss, notes, "it has similarities to experiments in depth psychology where the subject is made to talk, to present himself in the flux of his different life situations, of his ideas and his objective and subjective relations."⁶ This analysis helps illuminate what Kierkegaard is trying to accomplish through the work of his various pseudonyms; their navigation through the stages of existence (which we are about to explore), can be regarded as a sort of self-analysis of the existing person. From stage to stage there is (as with Hegel) an *Aufhebung*, and each step of this dialectic process grows in scope and intensity, as the individual himself grows in passion and inwardness.

In Volume I of the first pseudonymous work, *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard first demonstrates a unity, that is, the aesthete. The aesthete's writing is romantic literature in the highest sense; it is written in a whimsical, undecided spirit, in which the negativity, and the ultimate lack of viewpoint of the author shine through. The irony with which this part is written is clear and perhaps exaggerated at times: "To be a perfect man is after all the highest human ideal. Now I have got corns, which ought to help some."⁷ Nevertheless, his criticism retains a caustic humor as well: "It happened that a fire broke out in a theater. The clown came out to inform the public. They thought it was a joke and applauded. He repeated the warnings, they shouted him down. So I think the world will come to an end amid general applause from all the writs, who believe that it is a joke."⁸ Everything he touches

upon in this volume seems to be dealt with in a half-serious, half-mocking tone. It is meant to express a peculiar state of indecision, a wayward shifting from irony to seriousness with no particular goal in sight. In Volume II of *Either/Or*, there is a dramatic shift in tone, style, form and character. This author is a married man whose purpose is to defend marriage to the author of Volume I. In his defense of marriage, he also attacks his friend's whimsical attitude towards life and his existential position. The high aesthetic quality of writing of the first volume is replaced by a didactic tone in the second:

...You take great delight in "comforting" people when they have recourse to you in critical situations. You listen to their exposition of the case and then say, "Yes, I perceive perfectly that there are two possibilities, one can do either this or that. My sincere opinion and my friendly counsel is as follows: Do it or don't do it—you will regret both." But he who mocks others, mocks himself, and your rejoinder is not a mere nothing, but a profound mockery of yourself, a sorry proof of how limp your soul is, that your whole philosophy of life is concentrated in one single proposition: "I say merely either/or...life is a masquerade..."⁹

The essence of Kierkegaard's dialectic in this case is in unmasking what he has shown to be a unity (the aesthete) so as to reveal him to be, in fact, a disunity, a man in despair. The married man's concern quoted above is to elevate the aesthete into the ethical stage of existence. Thus we see part of Kierkegaard's dialectical purpose at work: to bring about a confrontation between the aesthetic and ethical stages of existence. When one finds himself in the midst of the despair of the aesthetic stage, one inevitably makes a choice: to either remain an aesthete or to enter the ethical. This decision, as Kierkegaard sees it, can only be formulated dialectically: "choose or do not choose, in either case you have chosen."¹⁰ Quite clearly, the ethical man is the higher type for Kierkegaard; he lives more passionately, with more intensity, and is therefore closer to authenticity.

In this progression from the aesthetic to the ethical stage of existence we can see similarities to Hegel's dialectic: one stage is left for another in a forward movement characterized by contrast; whatever the new level may be, it is not reached by any sort of direct development, but by way of contradiction. In both cases there is progression that results from these contradictions. Despite Kierkegaard's contempt for Hegel, the fundamental nature of his own brand of dialectical thought is quite dependent on him.

In Kierkegaard's well-known work, *Fear and Trembling*, we see the formulation of the religious stage of the dialectic. The radical change in seriousness in terms of tone and subject matter that takes place in the transition from *Either/Or* to *Fear and Trembling* was shocking to his contemporaries, who had considered him a mere poet and man of letters. In *Fear and Trembling* we see him abandon irony al-

together and enter into the religious pathos of dread. Instead of dealing with what previously seemed like light-hearted themes, he turns his attention to the great religious figure, Abraham, and the story of the binding of Isaac, in which Abraham is commanded by God to sacrifice Isaac, his first-born son. It is clear from the outset that Johannes de Silentio, the pseudonym in this work, reveres Abraham: “No one is as great as Abraham! Who is capable of understanding him!”¹¹ He is referred to as the “Knight of Faith,” the paradigm of the faithful man precisely because nobody can understand him. Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac, whose birth was a miracle of God, simply cannot be understood from an ethical point of view; if anything, we might understand it ethically as intent to murder. Kierkegaard tells us, however, that Abraham’s action involves what he calls a *teleological suspension of the ethical*, in which the duty to the society (i.e. the universal) is given up in favor of duty to God. Kierkegaard is very careful to make this point; for this is the point at which he breaks decisively from Hegel. In the Hegelian system, the laws and customs of society represent the highest moral duty. In other words, for Hegel, Kierkegaard’s ethical stage of the dialectic is the highest. But it is precisely this movement beyond the ethical, which Abraham makes, that comprises the last stage in Kierkegaard’s dialectic; namely, the movement of faith. In this movement, Kierkegaard reveals the paradox that is faith:

Faith is precisely the paradox that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal, is justified before it, not as inferior to it but as superior...[for] the single individual as the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute ...the paradox of faith, then, is this...that the single individual determines his relation to the universal by his relation to the absolute, not his relation to the absolute by this relation to the universal.¹²

The movement of the single individual through faith is a paradox that goes beyond human understanding and communication, precisely because it does not reference the objective world of the ethical, but rather the subject-based relationship with the absolute. Indeed, only faith is “capable of transforming a murder into a holy act most please to God, a paradox which gives Isaac back to Abraham, which no thought can master, because faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off.”¹³ We see, then, that the individual’s ultimate duty is to God—that this represents the fullness of truth, and that therefore the state cannot be the embodiment of the teleological fulfillment of the Divine Reason, as Hegel claims.

Now that we have the three distinct stages of Kierkegaard’s dialectic in place, we can begin to examine the qualitative shifts that take place in the movement from one stage to the next. With this in mind, it will be important to take note of the subtitle of *Fear and Trembling*: “A Dialectical Lyric.” The lyrical component of his dialectic helps distinguish it from Hegel’s dialectic because the implication

is that it does not take place in the dimension of rational thinking, but in another “lyrical” dimension. The dialectical movement for Kierkegaard is defined by the movement of the individual through the stages of existence; therefore truth is subjective, (grounded in the individual), and not objective (grounded in the realm of rationality). We saw how in *Either/Or* the aesthete lived in a state of whimsical, ironic paradox; he lived his life indecisively and without passion. The introduction of the Husband, that is, the ethical man, presents a schism; whereas the aesthete treats paradox as an existential game and makes the most of life in the midst of this paradox, the ethical man compels a decision: to continue living in despair or to grow in passion, to rise to the ethical stage or to remain in the aesthetic. The ethical man’s didactic tone, (as opposed to the aesthete’s ironical tone) is more serious, a quality that Kierkegaard calls, an “inward deepening,” an intensification of passion, and a move towards authenticity. In *Fear and Trembling* the tone of the dialectic movement darkens even more; it changes from a didactic tone to a *dreadful* tone, as the horror of Abraham’s predicament becomes manifest. Thus the passion it takes to get from the ethical to the religious stage is far greater than the passion needed to get from the aesthetic to the ethical stage. This intensification of passion is what Kierkegaard sees as the highest form of authenticity and is described as “making room so that God can come.”¹⁴

The Kierkegaardian dialectic differs in another important respect from Hegel’s. Rather than proceed by way of a synthesis between opposites halves of a paradox, the Kierkegaardian dialectic proceeds by a deepening of paradox without clear resolution of its terms. The qualitative shifts in tone that we have just witnessed reflect not only an intensification of passion, but an expansion of paradox that occurs as one moves through the stages of existence. The “either/or” that the aesthete confronts in his whimsy, always shifting between decisions and unsure why it even matters that a decision be made at all, turns into a dreadful “either/or” for Abraham in which the consequences of the decision have suddenly become ominously fateful. Philosopher Walter Kaufmann said of this characteristic Kierkegaardian quality:

Nobody before Kierkegaard had seen so clearly that the freedom to make a fateful decision that may change our character and future, breeds anxiety. . . I know of no other great writer in the whole nineteenth century, perhaps even in the whole of world literature, to whom I respond with less happiness and with a more profound sense that I am on trial and found wanting, unless it were Søren Kierkegaard.¹⁵

One of Kierkegaard’s primary goals in *Fear and Trembling* is to challenge those who read the Genesis story from what he would likely call an “aesthetic” point of view, that is, those who admire Abraham for his faith, yet do not hesitate to abhor any religious fanatic who resolves to act like Abraham. In his analysis of this hor-

rible story, he asserts that an authentic faith requires that one obey God even if it is required that one disobeys his conscience.

As a Christian, much of Kierkegaard's animosity towards Hegel was in reaction to his claim that his system "completed" Christianity by restoring it to its proper conceptual (i.e. philosophical) form. In Hegel's view this was the only sense in which Christianity could be true, for a historical point of departure could not be given for an eternal consciousness. Thus, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard undergoes his most thorough philosophical critique of Hegel's system, through the mouthpiece of a new pseudonym, Johannes Climacus. Although it is clear that Kierkegaard admires Hegel in the sense of making use of the dialectic and praising the rigor with which he constructed his system, he is nonetheless ardently opposed to this type of speculative philosophy because it relegates the individual to the level of a "fantastical abstraction," a non-person with no orientation in life. The essence of his critique is that Hegel trespasses over what he considers to be an insurmountable gap between the human and Divine understanding; he erroneously tries to explain the nature of reality *sub specie aeterni* (in the aspect of eternity). This is not to say that Kierkegaard disbelieved in systematic knowledge as such. It is merely to say that if a system of existence did exist, it could only be known by God. In other words, only God could be a Hegelian.

Furthermore, Kierkegaard considered Hegel to be overly troubled with history. He preferred not to live thinking about the past, for it extracted from his self-awareness as one living in the present. He termed this preoccupation with history as a form of "absentmindedness," a psychological trick the individual plays on himself in order to divert from his awareness as an existing person. He sees this decision to speculate about the past as a form of inauthenticity, for it estranges the individual from truth, which is grounded in his subjectivity. He diagnoses this absentmindedness and reluctance to live in the present as a spiritual disease of the age:

Perhaps the reason our age is dissatisfied when it is going to act is that it has been coddled by observing. That is perhaps why there are so many fruitless attempts to become something more than one is by lumping together socially in the hope of impressing the spirit of history.¹⁶

He recognizes that complacency readily gives way to speculative thought because it is only through speculation that one is able to extract oneself from lived life. In perhaps his most debilitating criticism of Hegel, however, Kierkegaard exposes Hegel's dubious presuppositions by pointing out that the system requires a human being to create it, which raises the vexed question of how it could ever be completely objective. He poses a few questions rhetorically: if the Spirit's only objective is to manifest itself dialectically over the course of history, how does one explain the fact that it wastes so many generations of people and so much time to

set the dialectic in motion? Why is the process so slow if this is all God wants?¹⁷ Furthermore, Kierkegaard (and indeed many other philosophers) thought it arbitrary to import movement into logic: "It is indeed curious to make movement the basis in a sphere in which movement is inconceivable or to have movement explain logic."¹⁸ This point is made clearer as Kierkegaard analyzes the way in which Hegel tries to get his system off the ground. The opening chapter of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, deals with this very problem and argues as follows:

Thus the beginning must be an *absolute*, or what is synonymous here, an *abstract* being; and so it *may not presuppose anything*, must not be mediated by anything nor have a ground; rather it is to be itself the ground of the entire science. Consequently, it must be purely and simply an immediacy, or rather merely *immediacy* itself...the beginning therefore is *pure being*.¹⁹

Climacus sees the problem with this line of reasoning: "How does the system begin with the immediate, that is, does it begin with it immediately?"²⁰ His objection shows how the lack of regard for the individual thinker is the death of the system before it even gets started, for it requires a human *reflection* to decide to begin with *immediacy* and not some other beginning point. Ironically, this is a point that Hegel seems to concede. He writes, "All that is needed (at the beginning of the system) is simply the resolve, which can also be regarded as arbitrary, that we propose to consider thought as such."²¹ But Climacus sees this starting point as anything but the harmless starting point that Hegel considers it to be, for two reasons: firstly, the resolve to consider thought as such assumes that it is possible to conceive of thought without a thinker; secondly, that it is appropriate to do so. Climacus seems to think that is not appropriate to do so, for it would once again be elevating the individual to the level of God. In the end, regardless of whether or not these contentions hold water, Hegel's decision to embark upon the system assumes that Kierkegaard is wrong, and therefore breaches the system's own requirement of a presuppositionless point of departure.

As we can see, the highest task in life for Kierkegaard cannot be to think objectively, that is, to risk falling into the trap of speculative thinking, but to become *subjective*, to find "inwardness." Chapter II of the *Postscript* commences by setting out to identify what it is to be subjective, to begin to exist inwardly. He starts by commenting on the nature of objective reflection versus subjective reflection:

Whereas objective thinking is indifferent to the thinking subject and his existence, the subjective thinker as existing is essentially interested in his own thinking, is existing in it. Therefore, his thinking has another kind of reflection, specifically, that of inwardness, of possession, whereby it belongs to the subject and no one else. Whereas objective thinking invests everything in the result and assists all mankind to cheat by copying and reeling off the results and answers, subjective thinking invests everything in the

process of becoming and omits the result, partly because this belongs to him, since he possesses the way, partly because he as existing is continually in the process of becoming, as is every human being who has not permitted himself to be tricked into becoming objective, into inhumanly becoming speculative thought.²²

Here we again see the emphasis placed on process, the individual's movement through life; objectivity seems to be represented as a kind of stasis. Truth is to be found in subjectivity, for it is only subjectively that we are aware of ourselves as existing persons. Truth is to be discovered inwardly through what he calls "inward deepening," and any retreat from this is seen as gratuitous speculation: "Essentially viewed, the knowing that does not inwardly in the reflection of inwardness pertain to existence is accidental knowing, and its degree and scope, essentially viewed are a matter of indifference."²³ This is to say that all knowledge is essential only in as much as it relates to the knower. Only momentarily, in subjective inwardness, can one be in a unity of the infinite and the finite that transcends existing. He calls this "the moment of passion." Hegel believed that we can transcend existence objectively, but this is not the case according to Climacus. This can only be done subjectively, in the moment of passion. The moment of passion is essential because it is the way in which we move through the stages of existence; it is what stands in the face of paradox and asserts the individual's will to truth. He also sees passion as essential because it is the way in which we relate in truth to the eternal, *revealed* truth—Jesus Christ.^{iv} It is how we are lifted out of the finiteness of our existence through faith. He holds that Christ is a paradox, fully God, fully man, and that any hope of relating to Him must be purely subjective, for, "[the fact that] truth becomes a paradox is grounded precisely in its relation to an existing subject."²⁴ Christ, for Kierkegaard, cannot be understood objectively by reason. The person who chooses the objective way is doomed to fail because God himself, as figured in Christ, is a person, a subject, and must therefore be related to as such. Climacus' passion begins to shine through as he discusses "the wise person" who, in his inwardness, does not waste his time trying to apprehend God objectively, for he knows that every moment in which he does not have God is a moment wasted. Indeed, "God is something one takes along *a tout prix* [at any price], which in passion's understanding, is the true relationship of inwardness with God."²⁵

This is a re-articulation of the description of authentic faith displayed by Abraham in *Fear and Trembling*—the willingness to not demand objective certainty, but to trust in God. Kierkegaard speaks of this moment of passion as a decision

iv. It would be interesting to consider how Kierkegaard reconciles his view that truth is grounded in the subject with the notion of revealed truth, which is of course essential to holding a Christian worldview. This is a question he takes up in his work, *Philosophical Fragments*, which we unfortunately can't delve into here.

a man must make when he comes to a fork in the road where he has to decide whether to risk objective uncertainty and have faith, or keep objective certainty and lose faith. On the one hand, he observes nature and does indeed see omnipotence and wisdom, but on the other hand, he sees immense suffering. Yet for him, faith must triumph in this situation, for:

At the point where the road swings off, objective knowledge is suspended... (but) the inwardness is so very great, precisely because it grasps this objective uncertainty with all the passion of the infinite... Without risk, no faith. Faith is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am able to apprehend God objectively, I do not have faith; but because I cannot do this, I must have faith.²⁶

The claim that Christ is a paradox is essential for Kierkegaard, as it forms the foundation for his explication of “indirect communication,” the way by which we relate to Christ, in his work, *Practice in Christianity*. Now under the pseudonym, Anti-Climacus, he argues that without acknowledging the fact that Christ is a paradox, (the eternal essential truth come into existence in time), it is impossible to be an authentic Christian. To objectify Christ, as he claims so many speculative theologians do, is to misunderstand Him, to idolize his teaching, to reduce Him to the level of a moral teacher. Moreover, to deny the paradox is to do the same as Hegel, that is, to suppose that we can see from God’s point of view. Kierkegaard reminds us that we are no position to do so: “I am only a poor existing human being who neither eternally nor divinely nor theocentrically is able to observe the eternal but must be content with existing.”²⁷

Anti-Climacus so despises speculative theology that he thinks it worse, and more dangerous, than the modern trend to demythologize Christianity, pointing out that it “accepts the paradox [of Christ], but does not stop with it.”²⁸ The reason he is so hostile to this is because he thinks there is no need to go further than the paradox, for when a person in faith continues to adhere firmly to it, he deepens himself in the inwardness of faith and “does not stop either.”²⁹ In fact, that is the reason Christ chose to reveal Himself as such, with the summons that the existing individual go further and further in the inwardness of faith. By trying to go beyond the paradox, the speculative thinkers are not, in fact, *explaining* it, but *correcting* it. In doing this, they not only extract the existing person, that is, Jesus of Nazareth, out of the paradox, but they extract the existing quality from the person who encounters the paradox as well.

Christ’s decision to abase himself, that is, to become fully human, is the heart of Christianity because it is what makes any communication between us and God possible. Christ is the sign of contradiction, however, so direct communication is impossible. This is where the notion of *indirect communication* comes into the fore; the idea that Christ communicates with us not directly, but rather indirectly by

being the embodiment of the paradox, fully human and fully divine. This mysteriousness makes Christ's communication with us on earth anything but a straightforward teaching on morality of the kind that a speculative theology would like to provide; it requires a deeper, more intimate part of our humanity: the heart. Kierkegaard realizes that Christ, fully perfect yet fully abased, can only appeal to this part of our psyches. We cannot imitate Christ before we are drawn by and begin to love Him; this is what Kierkegaard meant by indirect communication. In other words: "[Christ] exercises power over (man), the power of love, which is indeed capable of everything, above all of making alike; (man's) whole deepest inner being is transformed little by little, and he seems to be beginning to resemble, however imperfectly, this image that has made him forget everything—also the world in which he is, which now regards him with astonishment and alienation."³⁰ The essence of the Christian faith is in accepting God's love and being drawn to Him through Christ. This is what Christendom has lost in objectifying Christ by turning Him into a moral teacher; it has lost that very mysterious, yet very real, intimate form of indirect communication that far surpasses rationality and penetrates the depths of the soul in appealing to the heart. Thus any objective moral system derived from Christianity without first going through faith subjectively is essentially lifeless.

In the end, it is clear why Kierkegaard has been such an influential thinker in our time. By insisting that truth is subjective, he sought to restore the essential element of passion to life. The only thing that mattered to him was how we live; what we know is meaningless, it is vanity in the face of death. This is why he is often called the father of existentialism. Nonetheless, he does not merely forget his favorite speculative thinker (to criticize, that is), Hegel, but appropriates his notion of dialectical movement into his body of work. The dialectic he espouses is very different from that of Hegel, as we have seen, but it is effective because it works by the same Hegelian principle of *Aufhebung*, in which contradiction, or opposition, is acknowledged, but the movement continues regardless. Unlike Hegel, who, when confronted with paradox of Christ, rises above it and attempts to explain it objectively, Kierkegaard sees the appropriate response as a sort of yielding to and communication with it. This principle of embracing paradox and advancing onwards in inwardness is the heart of authenticity for Kierkegaard, for it is also the essence of moving through the three stages of existence. Once we arrive at Jesus Christ in the religious stage, the essence of faith will become the paradox itself. We are confronted by contradiction in life's journey at each stage: the movement through the stages requires "a moment of passion" in which we push forward and grow in inwardness despite paradox. We see this growth in each individual moment of decision: at first the aesthete is complacent and whimsical, then the ethical man enters the picture and demands decision, and finally in Abraham we see the supremely inward decision of placing his trust in God. Similarly, in our

relationship with Christ, rational considerations must be left behind, and we must compel ourselves in inwardness to relate to him in truth, that is, as the abased human person.

- 1 Heiss, Robert. *Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx: Three Philosophers Whose Ideas Changed the Course of Civilization*. Trans. E.B. Garside. New York: Delta Books, 1975, 9.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid., 10.
- 4 Westphal, Merold. "Kierkegaard and Hegel," *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*. Ed. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 112.
- 5 Heiss, *Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx*, 99.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Kierkegaard, Søren. *Either/Or*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton University Press, 1987. 42.
- 8 Ibid., 45.
- 9 Ibid., 48.
- 10 Ibid., 50.
- 11 Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Essential Kierkegaard*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. New York: Princeton University Press, 1991. Kindle Edition. 49.
- 12 Ibid., 56.
- 13 Ibid., 58.
- 14 Heiss, *Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx*, 291.
- 15 Kaufmann, Walter. "Kierkegaard and the Crisis in Religion". Princeton University. 1960. Lecture. YouTube.
- 16 Kierkegaard, Søren. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992, 138.
- 17 Ibid., 159.
- 18 Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, 196.
- 19 Westphal, *Kierkegaard and Hegel*, 114.
- 20 Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 111.
- 21 Westphal, *Kierkegaard and Hegel*, 114.
- 22 Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, 191.
- 23 Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 197.
- 24 Ibid., 199.
- 25 Ibid., 193.
- 26 Ibid., 195.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid., 197.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Kierkegaard, Søren. *Practice in Christianity*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991, 224.

One can see throughout the Parmenides that one of the basic dissimilarities between Socrates and Parmenides is that the latter is a committed materialist, whereas Socrates is not.

A Critical Examination of the Third Man Argument

Gjergji Evangjeli

What has come to be known as the Third Man Argument has brought scholars of Plato and philosophers at large many headaches, due to the seeming end that it brings to the Platonic theory of the Forms. Most puzzlingly, it is included in the Platonic corpus itself. One could assume from this that this could either be a window into Plato's own doubts about the Forms, or an exercise that Plato meant for his students to undertake a solution that has been lost through the ages. This paper will show that the Third Man Argument and the infinite regression resulting from it can conclusively be proven to be unsound and the regression dissolved. To achieve this goal, a three-step process is appropriate. First, recent scholarship will be analysed along with two arguments, one from differences in predication and one that seeks to show that there is an inherent inconsistency in the argument will be examined. This analysis will show that the first argument is successful but leads to a further problem that in turn needs to be solved and that the second misunderstands the nature of the Forms. Second, an original argument solving the Third Man will be offered, supported by recent developments in formal logic. Lastly, an attempt will be made to conclusively solve the predication problem in the first part through appealing to the original argument offered in the second section.

I. Analysis of Recent Scholarship on the Third Man Argument

The argument in *Parmenides* 132a1-b2 comes as a series of attacks by Parmenides on the Theory of the Forms, which include questioning whether any particular participates in only part of a Form or in it fully. Having been unable to argue against the Forms in that way, Parmenides proceeds by saying that there must be an infinite regression of Forms, since every time a Form is considered to be the principle behind a set of objects that share a certain property, a new set arises which includes the first set and the Form, which itself necessitates a new Form. Unlike most of the other arguments, however, the young Socrates does not give a response to this argument, and it is ultimately swept under the rug for the purpose of advancing the dialogue. Though this is not the only time Plato does

not choose to follow a particular argument to the end, this particular instance seems rather problematic, in that solving the regress which Parmenides argues to be inherent in the Theory of the Forms is both central to Platonic philosophy and does not seem obvious.

The name ‘Third Man Argument’ comes from Aristotle,¹ who made the argument famous, but in Aristotle’s account there are added complications. First, there is the issue of trying to put Platonic Forms into Aristotle’s categories. Since the Forms cannot be fully put either in the category of ‘substance’ or ‘form/essence,’ Aristotle’s version would necessitate a prolonged discussion of whether the Forms can be put appropriately into one of these categories. Before treating the argument proper, Aristotle reminds the reader that substance is made up of essence and matter, which means that the Forms cannot be accurately described as substances. If this were true, Aristotle would be correct in saying that to believe the Forms exist would lead to an absurdity, since it would necessitate that all things simply are replications of the same thing. As Plato does not argue that the Forms are material, however, this view is patently false. The Forms being essences is not a path which Aristotle takes and one is left to wonder why this is the case. The fact that humans are used as the illustrating example is a further difficulty, since neither Plato nor Aristotle has a very clear account of how Form or essence fully relates to humans, and the debate still rages concerning a correct understanding of both philosophers’ views regarding this issue. Therefore, since the logical structure of the argument does not change much between the version in *Parmenides* and the Aristotelian version, it would be more prudent to treat the argument as it appears in *Parmenides* and avoid the additional metaphysical hurdles in the Aristotelian version that do not directly relate to the Third Man Argument as such.

In terms of logical structure, the argument relies on three basic principles. The first principle is the Principle of Abstraction, which says that for every property f there must be a Form, F -ness, through which all objects with f get that property.² There are multiple places in the Platonic corpus where this is affirmed. The second principle, known as Uniqueness, states that for each set of objects that share the property F there must be one and only one Form F -ness through which F is instantiated. The third principle, here referred to as the Feedback Principle, asserts that the Form F -ness and all the objects that it substantiates form a new class of things with the property f from which a new Form F' must be posited.³ The Feedback Principle is drawn out of two enthymemes, namely Non-Identity, which follows directly from Separation, and Self-Predication. Non-Identity means that a Form is not identical to any of its instantiations. This is a logical necessity and well supported within the Platonic corpus as being directly deductible from Separation, which is to say that a Form is by itself or “one over many.”⁴ The Principle of Self-Predication is also well supported within the Platonic corpus and gets to the

idea that a Form F -ness is (a) f^5 , where ' f ' is the quality for which it stands. Since the Feedback Principle contradicts the Principle of Uniqueness, the latter is false. From this can be concluded that the Theory of the Forms leads to an infinite regression and, as a result of this, is absurd. Mapped out, this argument states:

- (i) (Abstraction) For every F there is a Form F -ness, through which all objects with F get that property.
- (ii) (Uniqueness) For each F there is at most one F -ness.
- (iii) (Separation) Each F -ness is one over many and itself by itself.
- (iv) (Non-Identity, from iii) F -ness is not identical to any particular p_f .
- (v) (Self-Predication) F -ness is (a) f , where f is the quality for which it stands.
- (vi) (Feedback Principle, from iv and v) For every set $(F) = \{\text{any } f\}$, there is a second set, $(F_1) = \{F + F\text{-ness}\}$.
- (vii) C1 (from i and vi) Therefore, there must be an infinity of Forms, F -ness, F -ness₁, F -ness₂, F -ness _{n} .
- (viii) C2 (from C1) Therefore, ii must be false.

There has been some discussion among academics concerning whether the Principle of Self-Predication and the Principle of Separation are mutually exclusive and that, therefore, the argument is invalid and the Principle of Separation has to be excised from Plato's Theory of the Forms in order to make it coherent.⁶ This position, however, seems to misunderstand Plato in what he means concerning Separation. Both Separation and Self-Predication (though there could be a better name for it) can be held in common if one properly understands that a Form is different from the objects it instantiates since the instantiated objects contain the property in question imperfectly, whereas the Form holds it perfectly and is the ultimate source for instantiations. Others have considered the Principle of Self-Participation as precisely trying to bridge this gap. However, careful text analysis of *Parmenides* and other Platonic dialogues shows that the instantiated objects are always taken as participating in the Form, which implies that the Form not only has the property which it instantiates, but is the ultimate possessor of it, from which other objects 'borrow' that property.

Constance Meinwald⁷ notes that there are simply two different modes of predication within Plato's Theory of the Forms, namely predication *pros ta alla*, by which particular objects are instantiated, and predication *pros heauto*, by which the Form itself acquires the quality it represents. Whereas objects that do not possess a certain property f as being in their nature are predicated through participation in F , F receives its property f by its very nature. Meinwald failed to recognize that a difference in predication leads to an understanding of a distinction in participation, which Francis Pelletier and Edward Zalta point out.⁸ The Form F , then, is both predicated by and participates in itself (though this phrasing seems redun-

dant, everything fully participates in itself) by virtue of its very nature. By offering this argument, then, the Third Man is resolved since there is a qualitative difference between F and all objects that exemplify f .

Bryan Frances, however, challenges this view due to certain details in Meinwald's analysis. Though the first 'part' of the Third Man seems to be sufficiently answered by the *pros ta alla* and *pros heauton* distinction, there is a second Third Man that arises from it, or at least so Frances argues.⁹ Specifically, he argues that if all the Forms receive the property of being eternal *pros ta alla*, as Meinwald argues, then there is an infinite regress formed there. The simple solution to that problem, however, is that not all the Forms receive eternality *pros ta alla*, since the Form of the Eternal receives its eternality *pros heauton*. Frances considers this solution, but, for some reason, seems to think it is unimportant. Having made this argument, it is necessary to flesh out what *pros ta alla* and *pros heauton* predication means in terms of the Forms and of other objects that are not Forms and what saying that a Form has *pros ta alla* predication means metaphysically.

According to Plato, the Forms are perfect, eternal, immutable, and simple. If this is true, there should be an innate uneasiness in saying that Forms participate among themselves *pros ta alla*. If the Forms are simple, then it would be more appropriate to argue that, for example, the Form of Justice is eternal not *pros ta alla* by participation in the Form of the Eternal, but *pros heauton* qua its being a Form in itself. This, however, would simply give rise to a modified version of the Third Man. Under this version, F_a, F_b, F_c, \dots are eternal *pros heauton* and the Form of the Eternal (F_E) is also eternal *pros heauton*. Therefore, a new set can be formed for which there should be a new Form (F_{E1}) and so on and so forth *ad infinitum*. This solution, then, brings us nowhere.

A possible way to mend the argument so as not to fall into the trappings of a second Third Man would be to make a distinction between *pros heauton* predications which are not also self-predications and those that are. Under this view, all objects in the sensible world are predicated for some property f by *pros ta alla* predication, Forms that contain f but are not F_f (i.e. the Form of Virtue is virtuous) are predicated *pros heauton* by virtue of it being that particular Form or a Form (so that the Form of Justice is virtuous by virtue of it being the kind of Form that pertains to virtue and eternal by virtue of being a Form as such), and the particular Form F_f is predicated *pros heauton* through itself. This second distinction also works in reverse, since not only is the Form of Justice virtuous, but the Form of Virtue is just *pros heauton* by virtue of being the kind of Form which pertains to justice. This distinction in *pros heauton* predications, however, requires some degree of separation from the Platonic corpus in that, although it is not contradictory to it and works well in explaining the relationship between different Forms, there seems to be no direct evidence in Plato to support the making of

such a distinction. Therefore, it must be approached with a *caveat* for those who do not stray too far from the text and for whom a purely explanatory proof that fits with the Platonic principles is not sufficient. The solution to this problem, therefore, must be seen as likely but not proven and, ultimately, will have to wait until the first argument in Section II to be conclusively resolved.

Another principle considered is the idea that F is distinct from F_1 in function. If this is the case, the expanded set every object that has the property f and F itself bring forth a 'new Form,' F_1 . However, it follows from this that F is not an f , but rather an f_1 and so on and so forth *ad infinitum*. In this case, if F is, in fact, not an F but an F^1 , and it cannot be included in the expanded set, because it is not one of the things that have the property f . To simply assume that F gets the property of being f from F_1 etc., is to assume that one needs more than one Form for each property, but this is the conclusion of the argument. Since this is so, to include it as a suppressed premise makes the argument invalid.¹⁰ If the property which F^1 instantiates is any different than the property of F , then the argument makes no sense. If it is the same, then the argument is circular because it assumes what it is trying to prove. The problem here seems to be that the Forms are seen solely as regulative and explanatory principles rather than full metaphysical beings as the *Parmenides* and Plato's work at large would argue. This, however, seems to be a departure from the text of *Parmenides* and applies only to the extensive papers that have only recently been written on this issue by current philosophers. It seems, then, that this solution does not bring us any closer to solving the Third Man.

II. Solving the Third Man Argument

These considered, an argument can be formed which does not rely on subtle metaphysical principles to solve the Third Man. The most obvious problem with this argument is that the Forms are not physical, but exclusively immaterial. One can see throughout the *Parmenides* that one of the basic dissimilarities between Socrates and Parmenides is that the latter is a committed materialist, whereas Socrates is not.¹¹ Though this argument relies on principles that Aristotle, rather than Plato, formally puts forth.¹² As those acquainted with Aquinas should be familiar with, every angel is its own species since there is no individuating principle to distinguish between two individuals.¹³ The same principle applies in this case. Since the Forms are simple, there is no individuating factor to differentiate between F and F^1 , since they both instantiate a given property f . By Leibniz' Law of Indiscernibles, which states that two things which hold all their properties in common cannot be numerically distinct, F and F^1 must, of necessity be one and the same Form. Every time a distinction between the two is made, it collapses on itself since the Forms are immaterial. The infinite regression, then, while possible in thought, is impossible in reality, since the argument fails to grasp the kind of

thing that a Form is and is therefore invalid.

At this point, a proponent of the Third Man Argument may choose to argue that the set of all things which have property F ($S=\{x: F(x)\}$) is inherently inconsistent by appealing to Russell's paradox. Russell's paradox argues that a set of everything is inherently contradictory, because the set would have to be one of the members of the set, which, according to the Foundation Axiom, would be an absurdity. The Foundation Axiom says that there cannot be an infinite sequence of sets each of whose terms is an element of the previous term.¹⁴ One might reply, however, that the set proposed is simply not specific enough, since the Platonic Theory of Forms makes a clear distinction between the manner in which any given thing in this world which has a property F is instantiated and the manner in which F -ness itself is instantiated (i.e. F -ness has the property F perfectly, whereas any particular object that has F does so imperfectly). Be that as it may, however, recent developments in set theory make it possible to have a consistent set even without relying on the distinction between the instantiation of the Forms and the instantiation of particular objects. Since a Form has the property which it instantiates and, therefore, participates in itself, the expanded set of the Form and all the objects which it instantiates has to be understood as a Non-Well-Founded set. Though Russell's paradox deems the set $\Omega=\{\Omega\}$ an absurdity,¹⁵ Aczel introduces a variation of Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory with the AFA¹⁶ by using which one can keep the theory of the Forms consistent. The Anti-Foundation Axiom (AFA) argues that sets should be considered as graphs rather than a collection of elements, where a set "is an abstract obtained by taking a graph G and then associating to each node of x in the graph a set in such a way that the set associated to x is the set of sets associated to the children of x in G ."¹⁷ Peter Schweizer explains the contribution of this theory as follows:

This object induces an infinite descending chain of membership, but it is nonetheless hereditarily finite, since each member of the chain has only one element. ZFC, with the axiom of foundation replaced by the AFA, is provably consistent relative to the original system. Thus circularity is formally absolved ... and the world of 'hypersets' is rendered just as axiomatically secure as the cumulative hierarchy.¹⁸

By implementing this method, there is a consistent way to understand the Theory of Forms in terms of Self-Predication and Self-Participation which further dissolves the infinite regression argued for in the Third Man.

III. Differences in Predication Revisited

For those who are not convinced that the distinction between predication *pros heauton* and predication *pros heauton* as self-predication can be applied to

Platonic metaphysics without altering any principle already in place, the solution of the second Third Man formulation would have to be solved by appealing to the principle in Section II that, since the Forms are immaterial, no individuating principle can be produced for them. Therefore, since here also F_f and F_f' cannot be distinguished by appealing to an individuating principle, they also collapse back into one another. The Third Man, then, is doomed to fail due to the fact that Parmenides seems to have a physical conception of the Forms, whereas Socrates argues that they are immaterial. Whatever the case, one possibility which can be conclusively be thrown out is that the Forms are predicated *pros ta alla* in being (for example) eternal, since that would clash with the principle that they are simple.

IV. Conclusion

In short, the Third Man argument fails to show an infinite regression of the Forms. Of the three arguments put forth, the argument from differences in predication successfully dissolves the regression if the added principle that there is a substantive difference between *pros heauton* predication when the principle in question is drawn naturally from the Form and *pros heauton* predication as self-predication is accepted. If this principle were not accepted, this argument would have to rely on the argument from lack of an individuating principle in order to conclusively dissolve the second Third Man. The argument seeking to show that the Third Man is inherently circular, though very similar to the argument from lack of an individuating principle, has to be discarded, since it injects a later conception of the nature of the Forms which Plato himself does not share. Ultimately, the argument from the lack of an individuating principle dissolves the infinite regression since it shows that there is an additional assumption that Parmenides makes in forming the argument that Socrates disagrees with. Together with the implementation of the theory of Non-Well-Founded Sets, this argument shows that both the expanded set is logically consistent without producing a regression and that the regression is only possible in thought. Having considered that there are either two or three arguments, depending on whether one accepts the added *pros heauton* distinction and the rather provocative titles that recent articles carry that treat the issue of the Third Man, an account that looks favourably on the Third Man Argument will have to appeal to more nuanced interpretations in order to maintain its bite.

1 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1038b35-1039a2

2 Schweizer, Peter. "Self-Predication and the Third Man." *Erkenntnis* 40.1 (1994): 23. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20012526>>

- 3 Ibid.
- 4 See *Phaedo* 75c11–d2, 100b6–7 and *Republic* 476b10, 480a11, in *Plato: Complete Works*, trans. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).
- 5 Plato, *Symposium* 210e, *Phaedo* 100^c
- 6 Schweizer's article does a good job of pointing out that Wedberg and other have been able to solve the Third Man Argument, but at the expense of departing from the Platonic text and compromising Plato's theory of the Forms. To take that position one would have to assume either that Plato thought that there was some fallacy in the argument which turns out not to be so or that he saw a problem with the theory of the Forms which he hoped his successors would be able to solve. To argue for either of these cases, however, would be to have to make an inference without any evidence.
- 7 Meinwald, Constance, "Good-bye to the Third Man," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Trans. R. Kraut. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 365-396.
- 8 Pelletier, Francis J., and Edward N. Zalta. "How to Say Goodbye to the Third Man." *Noûs* 34.2 (2000): 165-202. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2671980>>
- 9 Frances, Bryan, "Plato's Response to the Third Man Argument in the Paradoxical Exercise of the Parmenides," *Ancient Philosophy* 16 (1996): 54.
- 10 Schweizer, Peter, "Self-Predication and the Third Man." *Erkenntnis* 40.1 (1994): 27-28. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20012526>>
- 11 See, for example, *Parmenides* 145a-b, among others.
- 12 For the sake of extreme preciseness, it is Averoes which is accredited, at least in Aquinas, as coming forth with this central principle, by interpreting Aristotle.
- 13 Aquinas, St. Thomas. *On Being and Essence*. Trans. Armand A. Maurer. Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1968, 54.
- 14 *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Non-Wellfounded Set Theory, 2.2
- 15 Schweizer, "Self-Predication and the Third Man," 38.
- 16 Aczel, Peter, *Non-Well-Founded Sets*, Center for the Study of Language and Information, Stanford University, Lecture Notes Number 14, 1988.
- 17 Ibid. 2.3.
- 18 Schweizer, "Self-Predication and the Third Man," 38.

Until the middle of the twentieth century, Nietzsche was associated with the very ideas that he fundamentally opposed throughout his active life.

Nietzsche the Autobiographer

Anthony Cossette

Without a shred of doubt, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche is a giant among Western philosophers, not least because of his immense but sometimes controversial influence upon succeeding generations. He has certainly furnished this culture with a treasure-chest's worth of memorable quotations, including the pithily infamous and now-hackneyed aphorism "God is dead."¹ However, critically appraising the full scope and force of Nietzsche's personality and ideas requires delving into one of his most overlooked but extraordinarily insightful works: his short autobiography entitled *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*. For all of its faults, it stands out as a *tour-de-force* among the canon of memoirs and autobiographies, for it offers nothing other than Nietzsche's own view of his life and his works. As Walter Kaufman, the preeminent Nietzsche scholar of the 20th century, duly noted when introducing *Ecce Homo*, "Who would not rather have Shakespeare on Shakespeare, including the poet's own reflections on his plays and poems, than the exegeses and conjectures of thousands of critics and professors?"² Indeed, more than anything else Nietzsche ever wrote, *Ecce Homo* deserves a distinct place within the world's autobiographical *oeuvre* simply because it is a "triumph of style" and offers a range of insights not just on the development of Nietzsche's own self-consciousness but, more fundamentally, on the human condition itself.³

Before attempting to digest what Nietzsche thought about life's undeniable complexities, a brief account of his background will be presented in conjunction with passages from his autobiography so that one can fully understand and appreciate how the development of his philosophy was inextricable from the pivotal events and influences that surrounded his life. The son of Lutheran Minister Carl Ludwig Nietzsche and his wife, Franziska Oehler, he was born on October 15, 1844 in the German town of Röcken in modern-day Saxony.⁴ Whether by coincidence or not, Nietzsche began writing his autobiography *Ecce Homo* on his forty-fourth birthday, October 15, 1888; on the same day, he inscribed a dedication to introduce the main work after the preface as a form of thanksgiving to the fateful role he played in the circumstances of his own life's unfolding, a characteristic of

his perfectly cheerful philosophical outlook:

On this perfect day, when everything is ripening and not only the grape turns brown, the eye of the sun just fell upon my life: I looked back, I looked forward, and never saw so many and such good things at once. It was not for nothing that I buried my forty-fourth year today; I had the *right* to bury it; whatever was life in it has been saved, is immortal. . . . *How could I fail to be grateful to my whole life?*—and so I tell my life to myself.⁵

Nietzsche actually had every reason to *disparage* his own existence because it was fraught with difficulties and major illnesses that plagued him up until the very end. A series of protracted ailments threatened to overtake his well-being, but he fought back and instead chose the path of affirmation and fashioned his “will to health, to *life*, into a philosophy.”⁶

Regarding his parentage, Nietzsche informs the reader that “My father died at the age of thirty-six.”⁷ Indeed, records show that his father Carl Ludwig died in the year 1849 from what was then diagnosed as a “softening of the brain,” a euphemism for a major mental illness.⁸ It should be noted here that the death of his father, as with all people who suffer bereavement from the painful experience of losing one’s relatives or loved ones, must have made an indelible mark on Nietzsche’s psyche even at such a young age. The lack of a parent whom he never had a chance to know left him without an instructional figure of his own sex in his household. Nevertheless, Nietzsche speaks of him with reverence and a large sense of pride, as his father “had received his pastoral position” from the Prussian King Frederick William IV, after whom his son Friedrich was named.⁹ In a subsequent section of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche again comments on the metaphysical (rather than actual) relationship with his father by saying, “I am merely my father once more, and, as it were, his continued life after an all-too-early death.”¹⁰ Thus Nietzsche treats as seminal the continuities that lay between him and his father, whose legacy his son intends to fully bring to fruition in the form of the written word.

Nietzsche does not say much about his mother other than a few remarks about her full-blooded German-ness which contrasted sharply with his supposed belief in his Polish ancestry,¹¹ a claim that turns out to be patently false.¹² There is an extant photograph of Nietzsche standing next to his mother who has her hands clasped around his right arm, perhaps symbolic of her overprotectiveness (Appendix 1). After her son succumbed to mental illness, she took him under her care until her death in 1897, and his sister Elizabeth nursed him thereafter until he died in 1900.¹³

Toward the end of Nietzsche’s life and especially after his death, the status of his relationship with his sister remained contentious in the minds of many. As children and young adults, they were quite close, but as they grew older, Nietzsche

“came to realize that [his sister’s] character and outlook were basically opposed to what he wanted his own to be.”¹⁴ When she married a prominent nationalist and anti-Semite named Bernhard Förster whose ideologies completely and utterly contrasted with Nietzsche’s own, the bonds that held brother and sister together for so long were broken apart.¹⁵ The philosopher, who stood vehemently opposed to any strain of anti-Semitism that ran through Europe in his era, especially in his native Germany, could not restrain himself any longer. He unleashed his fury and targeted it directly toward his sister in a letter written not too long after her marriage to Bernhard and the couples’ emigration to Paraguay to found a new German anti-Semitic colony there called *Nueva Germania*; one can unquestionably feel the arousal of irritation in the letter’s tone and a condemnation of any association of his name with the anti-Semitic movement:

One of the greatest stupidities you have committed—for yourself and for me! Your association with an anti-Semitic chief expresses a foreignness to *my* whole way of life which fills me ever again with ire and melancholy. . . . It is a matter of honor to me to be absolutely clean and unequivocal regarding anti-Semitism, namely *opposed*, as I am in my writings.¹⁶

In spite of all of this, after her brother had lost much of his mental faculties, Elizabeth returned to take care of him and assume custody of all of his writings, sometimes distorting them to suit her and her husband’s nationalist and anti-Semitic viewpoints.¹⁷ It is for this reason, and the fact that the Nazis appropriated the Nietzsche “cult” based on Frau Förster-Nietzsche’s corrupt “corrections” of her brother’s writings, that Nietzsche’s reputation in the West suffered greatly for the longest time. Until the middle of the twentieth century, Nietzsche was associated with the very ideas that he fundamentally opposed throughout his active life. Fortunately, his image has been resuscitated thanks to more scholarly and authentic editions of his voluminous writings being published in Europe and notable English translations that adhere closely to Nietzsche’s style and original intent appearing in the Anglosphere.¹⁸

Apart from his familial troubles and the tainting of his name by others, Nietzsche was grateful that he received the best education one could have in his time. Indeed, his schooling years were formative and exerted no less of a decisive influence upon his thinking. As a youth he was educated at the Schulpforta, one of the most prestigious boarding schools in 19th century Germany.¹⁹ Here Nietzsche began to take up an interest in classical philology, a field that would eventually land him a professorship at the University of Basel in Switzerland at the young age of only twenty-four.²⁰ Outside of school, Nietzsche read the writings of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer whom he called “more honest but gloomy in matters of spirit” and whose philosophical influence on Nietzsche was profound.²¹ The young Nietzsche was attracted to Schopenhauer’s essential

doctrines of the primacy of the Will in human action, his advocacy for an ascetic lifestyle, and his synthesis of Western ideas with Indian philosophy as found in the Hindu *Upanishads*. Moreover, Schopenhauer's skepticism and staunch atheism led Nietzsche to appreciate him all the more, as Nietzsche's own attitudes toward religion were uncompromising, strongly rebuking all forms of organized worship.²² He touches upon this radical distancing of himself from the concept of God in the second section of *Ecce Homo*:

I do not by any means know atheism as a result; even less as an event: it is a matter of course with me, from instinct. I am too inquisitive, too *questionable*, too exuberant to stand for any gross answer. God is a gross answer, an indelicacy against us thinkers—at bottom merely a gross prohibition for us: you shall not think!²³

According to Kaufmann, Nietzsche never appeared to experience any sort of “crisis of faith” as an adolescent.²⁴ Not until near the end of his writing career, in the same period in which he wrote *Ecce Homo*, did he direct his most sustained attacks against Christianity. He loosened all inhibitions against the world's largest religion by penning *The Antichrist*, with a title meant to portray the author as “anti-Christian” and, at the same time, “be as provocative as possible.”²⁵

Alongside the Schopenhauerian influence, no one can avoid discussing Nietzsche and his autobiography without mentioning his friendship with and ultimate dissociation from the German composer Richard Wagner. With reluctant praise, Nietzsche “considered the composer Germany's greatest living genius.”²⁶ But when Wagner became increasingly nationalistic and anti-Semitic in his outlook and opinions, Nietzsche could no longer remain privy to the developments in his old friend's artistic circle and simultaneously hold true to his integrity. Thus he increasingly forbade himself all possible contact with the goings-on at Bayreuth, where the annual performances of Wagner's operas were held.²⁷ In *Ecce Homo*, the one reason he “could never forgive Wagner” was “[t]hat he *condescended* to the Germans—that he became *reichsdeutsch*.”²⁸ Elsewhere, Nietzsche often repeats what he thinks of his fellow compatriots with characteristic irony and acerbic wit, especially when he discusses questions of health, climate, and nutrition as metaphors in relation to the development of the self: “The slightest sluggishness of the intestines is entirely sufficient, once it has become a bad habit, to turn a genius into something mediocre, something ‘German.’ The German climate alone is enough to discourage strong, even inherently heroic, intestines.”²⁹ Aside from these caustic remarks, Nietzsche always admired the true, original spirit of Wagner and his music, as he writes that “All things considered, I could not have endured my youth without Wagner's music. For I was *condemned* to Germans.”³⁰ In 1888, during his last year of lucidity, Nietzsche composed two whole books containing both praise and criticism of Wagner and his aesthetic and artistic tastes: *The*

Case of Wagner and Nietzsche contra Wagner. In essence, then, Nietzsche's relationship with Wagner was more than mundane love-hate; it was the consummation, at least for Nietzsche as he wrote many years earlier in his first book *The Birth of Tragedy*, of identifying the "Dionysian artist . . . with the primal unity, its pain and contradiction."³¹

Ecce Homo itself is a very well-crafted and stylized autobiography despite Nietzsche's inability to publish it during his own lifetime, perhaps due to his incapacitation so soon after writing it as well as the pronouncements present in his other late writings³¹ that were certain to stir controversy amongst would-be readers. Still, little of his work was read while he was still alive anyway, and Nietzsche knew all-too-well how those few who did read his books consistently misunderstood and clouded them with half-truths and downright lies. Therefore, the problem of misinterpretation stands at the forefront of his autobiography and may have been the very reason he decided to embark upon writing it. One can conceive of the work as his own kind of apology or testimony in front of the jury of humanity and, specifically, his audience, an appropriate metaphor considering his posthumous fame. Furthermore, Nietzsche thought of himself as an "artistic Socrates" without his namesake's emphasis on reason and Apollonian restraint.³³ Just as Socrates in Plato's dialogue the *Apology* thought it was "right for me . . . to defend myself first against the first lying accusations made against me and my followers, and then against the later accusations and later accusers,"³⁴ so Nietzsche felt the time had come for him to "confront humanity with the most difficult demand ever made of it . . . for I have not left myself 'without testimony.'"³⁵ At the outset of *Ecce Homo*, unfairly indicted and constantly taken out-of-context as an author and philosopher by the majority of his readership, Nietzsche feels the urgent need to justify coming up with a defense of his own views by justly affirming his identity for all time, exclaiming "Hear me! For I am such and such a person. Above all, do not mistake me for someone else!"³⁶ It is unfortunate how little this demand was heeded, for the irony of how his own sister bowdlerized his writings after his mental collapse becomes all the more apparent in light of the above statement.³⁷ His actual views were properly assessed with a decent degree of accuracy only after his death and the coming of the Second World War. But in his lifetime, Nietzsche himself was well aware of his own obscurity and untimeliness to the point that, right from the beginning of *Ecce Homo*, he believed that "one has neither heard nor even seen me" and that his fame had not arrived yet as "some are born posthumously."³⁸ These are certainly prophetic statements concerning the reputation he would acquire soon after his death.

The structure of *Ecce Homo* is dependent on Nietzsche's penchant for irony, contradiction, and sardonic wit. It is divided into a preface and four distinct sections, all bearing mockingly self-congratulatory designations: "Why I Am So

Wise;” “Why I Am So Clever;” “Why I Write Such Good Books;” and “Why I Am a Destiny.”³⁹ Nietzsche, of course, did not mean to inflate his own ego with the christening of these different sections; Nietzsche commentator Thomas Steinbuch warns those who jump to hasty conclusions about Nietzsche’s supposed pomposity that “if an ideology of affirming self-importance has been found here, this is only the projection of an authoritarian society’s own obsessive focus on figures of domination and its need to believe in the monolithic action of authority.”⁴⁰ Rather, as French philosopher Georges Gusdorf says, Nietzsche as a writer and, more importantly, as an *autobiographer* is here straining “toward a complete and coherent expression of his entire destiny.”⁴¹ In other words, no one knows Nietzsche better than Nietzsche himself.

The very title of the autobiography is a not-so-subtle proclamation of his stance toward Christianity if one knows him well, neatly borrowed from Pilate’s words to Jesus in the Gospels and refashioned to suit Nietzsche’s own purposes. Kaufmann articulates astutely what Nietzsche intended to mean with this title: “Here is a man! Here is a new, different image of humanity: not a saint or holy man any more than a traditional sage, but a *modern version*.”⁴² In addition to all of this, the title and the work itself represent, at bottom, a conscious revolt against idealism and a rebellion against traditional moral injunctions coming from Christianity that exhort man to be something altogether different from what he truly is. This spirit is best encapsulated in a passage contained within *The Twilight of the Idols*, another work written by Nietzsche in the same year as *Ecce Homo*:

Let us finally consider how naïve it is to say: “Man *ought* to be such and such!” Reality shows us an enchanting wealth of types, the abundance of a lavish play and change of forms—and some wretched loafer of a moralist comments: “No! Man ought to be different.” He even knows what man should look like, this wretched bigot and prig: he paints himself on the wall and comments, “*Ecce Homo!*”⁴³

The subtitle of *Ecce Homo*, “How One Becomes What One Is” represents no less of a significant choice on Nietzsche’s part. To attain the supreme goal of human life, which is self-transformation from the lowest depths to the ultimate heights of human existence (to the “fullness of life,” as Nietzsche would say), one should not even have to recall it to consciousness. No other person should imprint their own imperative or command on the individual; every person is their own master and commander. Hence, a strong individualism was foremost in Nietzsche’s mind at the time he was writing his autobiography. Furthermore, Nietzsche himself is very permissive of every misstep traversed on the path of life and every mistake or folly defective human beings undeniably commit in one way or another: “From this point of view even the *blunders* of life have their own meaning and value—the occasional side roads and wrong turns, the delays, ‘mod-

esties,' seriousness wasted on tasks that are remote from *the* task."⁴⁴ Nietzsche's primary existential task of transforming Schopenhauer's will to negate all existence into something more positive, a will to affirm reality as it is, represented a paradigmatic shift in the psychology of motivation. Instead of dwelling on petty "thoughts and feelings of renunciation and vindictiveness," Nietzsche thought that humans should refocus their efforts on unconditional acceptance, "willing that nothing be otherwise than it is," the opposite of *decadence*; only then will the single individual have the power to become what he or she truly is or wants to be.⁴⁵ The paradox Nietzsche formulates here is the expression of gratitude for the life that is given to us no matter how much inescapable suffering we must bear in our lives without any hope or prospect of release from it. He of all people practiced what he preached, so to speak, by his unconditional acceptance of his fate beyond anyone's mere imagining; indeed, his "formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati* [love of fate]: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it—all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary—but *love* it."⁴⁶

The style of *Ecce Homo*, like all decent autobiographies, is inseparable from the oddities and quirks of its author. That autobiographical style paints, above all, a *self-portrait*, has been established as axiomatic by a number of critics who opine that the autobiographer "in writing his story artfully defines, restricts, or shapes his life into a self-portrait."⁴⁷ Nietzsche's own unique style and its literary merits have been amply discussed and imitated by other writers, even those who are not philosophers. The linguistic elements of his style act as his own kind of outlet for conveying complex philosophical ideas and a very unique train of thought. Nietzsche's development of the *aphorism* is a notable trait among his writings, for he epigrammatically condenses into a few words the inherent profundities and contradictions in life that make his aphorisms difficult to decipher at times. For instance, multiple interpretations exist for a famous expression of his that has now become almost proverbial: "Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you."⁴⁸ Besides wanting his readers to think with subtlety, Nietzsche's purpose in employing his own style is "to communicate a state, an inward tension of pathos, by means of signs, including the tempo of these signs" and to express the "most delightful and daring *nuances* of free, free-spirited thought."⁴⁹ His use of the word "tempo" to describe style is reminiscent of his interest in music and his insistence that "it be cheerful and profound like an afternoon in October."⁵⁰ But he maintains that making "good style in itself" a goal of writing is a "pure folly," for style without substance or content is meaningless and smacks of pure idealism in lacking any basis in reality, the likes of which Nietzsche would not tolerate.⁵¹

Nietzsche's thinking best typifies what one may call a *poetic* philosophy. Indeed, Nietzsche's books, with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Ecce Homo* being the most representative of this kind, are replete with symbols and metaphors in a type of poetic meter often contained within prose. Nietzsche's unique contribution to philosophy may be solidifying the equation of philosophy with poetry, or philosophy and art, or philosophy and *music*, rather than the stale didacticism of traditional academic philosophy typically presented in the universities. *Ecce Homo* channels the inward expression of Nietzsche's soul into poesy and is his method of developing a *metaphor of self*. This can undoubtedly be accomplished since, as autobiographical theorist James Olney says, "philosophy, being of the nature of poetry, is validated in experience in the inner world of thought and emotions, in the understanding of one's self."⁵² Nietzsche's metaphor of himself in his autobiography and other writings (for what else could his written corpus be other than one long autobiography?) hearkens back to a classical notion of divinity, a being who reckons himself to be a "genius of the heart . . . the tempter god and born piper of consciences whose voice knows how to descend into the netherworld of every soul," including his own.⁵³ There is no coincidence, then, that Nietzsche adopts the name of the founder of Zoroastrianism, Zoroaster or Zarathustra, as his mouthpiece for communicating states of mind that seem to originate from "high mountains" which no man ascends or from the deep places of the world to where no foot descends.⁵⁴ The ideas Nietzsche presents to the reader through metaphor, such as the eternal recurrence, the will to power, and the *Übermensch*, are meant to connect the familiar elements of life with unfamiliar and frightening territories that humans are often afraid to tread upon. *Ecce Homo*, therefore, can only venture into *terra cognita* by using a metaphor "through which we stamp our own image on the face of nature, allow[ing] us to connect the known of ourselves to the unknown of the world."⁵⁵

Other than by examining stylistic considerations, *Ecce Homo* can be touted as an epitome of autobiographies by explaining how it fulfills the necessary preconditions of the autobiographical model established previously by the *Confessions* of Augustine and Rousseau, both of whom are taken to be "central figures" in the autobiographical tradition.⁵⁶ In fact, *Ecce Homo* goes beyond these requirements by striving only to seek the truth rather than preach to "improve mankind" or convince people to conglomerate into some sort of ideological sect.⁵⁷ Religious ideas, like many moral prejudices, are to Nietzsche mere vagaries of the masses:

[T]here is nothing in me of a founder of a religion—religions are affairs of the rabble; I find it necessary to wash my hands after I have come into contact with religious people.—I *want* no "believers"; I think I am too malicious to believe in myself; I never speak to masses.—I have a terrible fear that one day I will be pronounced *holy*: you will guess why I publish this

book *before*; it shall prevent people from doing mischief with me.⁵⁸

Ecce Homo, however, was not published until eight years after the author's death, and it did not prevent his faithful friend in life Peter Gast from proclaiming at Nietzsche's funeral, "Holy be thy name to all coming generations."⁵⁹ The prohibition against readers not to accept the author's conclusions *without question or debate* is why Nietzsche's autobiography may be considered more modern than, say, Augustine's *Confessions*. It does attempt to aim for some kind of "truth," or a perspective concerning the truth. But as a more-or-less open question, it intentionally leaves the reader pondering whether or not Nietzsche succeeds in this endeavor. Nietzsche admits and even *encourages* objections to be raised against any proposition encountered in his autobiography. This is what Gusdorf meant when he said that "in autobiography the truth of facts is subordinate to the truth of the man, for it is first of all the man who is in question."⁶⁰ Thus we are here analyzing more of the man himself rather than any "truths" he happens to be discussing at a particular point in time. Therefore, *Ecce Homo* is as appropriate a title as any for an autobiography of this superior caliber.

Nietzsche's autobiography does not merely chronicle his life events, although he does perform this function at various points throughout the book. In fact, Nietzsche goes so far in the third section of *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Write Such Good Books," as to chronologically self-evaluate each of the major books he has written throughout the course of his career, beginning with *The Birth of Tragedy*. According to Jean Starobinski, "every autobiography . . . is a self-interpretation" and Nietzsche's is no exception.⁶¹ Here he situates his first book in the context in which it was first conceived, when Nietzsche served briefly as a medical orderly in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871.⁶² He writes, "taken up with some degree of neutrality, *The Birth of Tragedy* looks quite untimely: one would never dream that it was begun amid the thunder of the Battle of Wörth. Before the walls of Metz, in cold September nights, while on duty as a medical orderly, I thought through these problems."⁶³ That is, he reflected on the mode of tragedy in ancient drama and poetry just as he was confronting the tragedy of having to tend to wounded soldiers as they were returning from the front. Therefore, his self-consciousness as a writer is once again not merely apparent but *actual*. Not only this, but he is acutely aware of the general cultural and intellectual trends of his day. He reserves praise only for a few select authors, such as Stendhal and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. The first he calls "one of the most beautiful accidents of my life" and the second he refers to as "the only psychologist, incidentally, from whom I had something to learn."⁶⁴ What Nietzsche thinks of his contemporaries and which of whom he holds in either high regard or contempt is fascinating in itself and as a source of literary and philosophical criticism.

In addition to tackling the problem of himself *qua* himself in his autobiog-

raphy, Nietzsche possessed a keen sense and critical eye for the problems facing his culture and humanity in general. This brings the reader to Nietzsche's method of *Kulturkritik* as a way of "strengthening" his affirmation of life "in the face of unending waves of desire for renunciation and revenge that threatened to engulf him."⁶⁵ "Warfare" was Nietzsche's metaphor of threatening to attack what he often called *decadence*, or any ideology or societal *milieu* which was life-negating or that obstructed our attempts to overcome our petty weaknesses. Christian morality was one example of what he thought best exemplified this trend; another was nihilism, a symptom of the decay of the spirit of individuality and fortitude that strongly characterizes the *Übermensch*.⁶⁶ Furthermore, author Jill Ker Conway's definition of a "secular hero" is in close kinship with Nietzsche's program of cultural critique: "the forces which drive the action of [the hero's] life are not the classical fates but the war of the individual against society."⁶⁷ This is only partially true of Nietzsche, for he accepted both fate and war as prerequisites for living well, as "givens" in human existence. Nietzsche says of himself that "attacking is one of my basic instincts" and "the strength of those who attack can be measured in a way by the opposition they require: every growth is indicated by the search for a mighty opponent—or problem; for a warlike philosopher challenges problems, too, to basic combat."⁶⁸ Thus his warlike sentiment was not really literal so much as philosophical. To warfare's logical extremes, he took the whole of Western Europe to task for its sense of entitlement and its positivist insistence that man was "progressing" as a species: "higher types are indeed attained, but they do not last. The level of the species is *not* raised."⁶⁹ Of note, he finds no comparison between the man of modernity and the man of former times:

Mankind does *not* represent a development toward something better or stronger or higher in the sense accepted today. "Progress" is merely a modern idea, that is, a false idea. The European of today is vastly inferior in value to the European of the Renaissance: further development is altogether *not* according to any necessity in the direction of elevation, enhancement, or strength.⁷⁰

But Nietzsche is hopeful that Renaissance *virtu* will be found again in the form of the *Übermensch*, who says "Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems."⁷¹ Nietzsche's eponymous protagonist in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* seems to be confident of the success of man's endeavor of self-overcoming when he says and then asks his disciples, "Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?"⁷² According to the doctrine of eternal recurrence, "that is, of the unconditional and infinitely repeated circular course of all things," great people will again walk upon the earth, and mankind will be composed of those who say "yes" to suffering even in the most extreme cases.⁷³

Through the act of writing his autobiography, Nietzsche manages to unearth

features of existence that hitherto humanity has not had the courage to question. He acknowledges how daily existence can be a painful struggle and people often almost capitulate or give into despair, denying reality as it is. But these are struggles everyone undergoes. And Nietzsche admires most of all “anyone who manages to experience the history of humanity as a whole as *his own history*” or vice versa.⁷⁴ *Ecce Homo* engages in the exploration of the most questionable aspects of human existence and therefore concerns not just Nietzsche but humanity in general. Thus, Nietzsche’s autobiography, which ostensibly touches upon Man in the singular, becomes the autobiography of Man in the plural, the plurality of Men. In this way, “the autobiographical is transformed. It is no longer the writer’s own experience: it becomes everyone’s. He is no longer writing about himself: he is writing about life.”⁷⁵

Having surveyed the field that Nietzsche tills in his autobiography and other writings, can the reader critique *Ecce Homo* on its own terms? There is no other answer to that question other than the affirmative. Even though the autobiography is exceptional among its kind, there are still places where it could have used improvement or even redaction. His tendency to overestimate his significance in the grand scheme of things may border on egotism, but if one thoroughly acquaints himself with most, if not all, of Nietzsche’s writings, having read them two or more times, then this will not be an encumbrance. Nietzsche’s constant references to his own *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* can become tiresome to the reader and interrupt the flow of reading and deeply experiencing the autobiography. In addition, female readers will not be pleased with some sections that appear to be wholly contemptuous of women. Nietzsche’s apparent misogyny is controversial amongst many readers, but one may point to other places where he may not be so critical of the other sex. Interestingly, he never really treated women as inferior in real life; he befriended many women such as the Russian intellectual Louise von Salomé, in whom Nietzsche found unrivalled inspiration and whose poem *Prayer to Life* Nietzsche set to music in a composition for piano and voice entitled *Hymnus an das Leben*, meaning “A Hymn to Life.”⁷⁶ Therefore, the disconnect between some of his words and his behavior can be best explained by how Nietzsche said of himself in *Ecce Homo*, “I am one thing, my writings are another matter.”⁷⁷

Despite these numerous flaws, is there still a reason to read Nietzsche? The ultimate answer to this question may depend upon a person’s interests and inclinations, but Nietzsche’s importance and influence in the history of philosophy cannot be overstated. He was a fascinating individual with equally interesting ideas worthy of the highest rank; likewise, his peerless wit and intelligence showcases his originality as a thinker. There is a distinctive level of self-awareness and *humanness* in his writing, most especially in his autobiography. Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo* encompasses a broad range of experience and insight into human psychol-

ogy. He gave a useful criterion of what it means to have a vision that is relevant to the scope of autobiography: “Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir.”⁷⁸ Importantly, the most one can gain from reading Nietzsche is something no individual can take away from another: self-understanding and personal growth.

Appendix 1:



Wildman, Wesley. “Photograph of Nietzsche with his Mother.” 2010. *Profound Atheism*. Web. 8 December 2013.

- 1 Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974, 181.
- 2 Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Modern Library, 2000, 657.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 658.

- 4 Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. 4th ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974, 22.
- 5 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 677.
- 6 Ibid., 680.
- 7 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 678.
- 8 Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 22.
- 9 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 682.
- 10 Ibid., 684.
- 11 But Nietzsche commentator Thomas Steinbuch suggests that Nietzsche's extravagant claim of being a Pole could be symbolic of the fact that the normal process of German "socialization never fully took hold in him" (40). Indeed, Nietzsche's criticism of his own nationality and the German people is practically ubiquitous elsewhere in his writings. See Steinbuch, Thomas. *A Commentary on Nietzsche's Ecce Homo*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1994, 40.
- 12 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 681; Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 22.
- 13 Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 56.
- 14 Ibid., 42.
- 15 Ibid., 42-43.
- 16 Quoted in Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 45.
- 17 Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 14.
- 18 Ibid., 1.
- 19 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 695f.
- 20 Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 26.
- 21 Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Will to Power*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, 59.; Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 24.
- 22 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 735.
- 23 Ibid., 692-693.
- 24 Ibid., 693f.
- 25 Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Portable Nietzsche*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1982, 565.
- 26 Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 30.
- 27 Ibid., 34.
- 28 That is, a German Nationalist; Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 704.
- 29 Ibid., 696.
- 30 Ibid., 705.
- 31 Ibid., 49.
- 32 For example, The Antichrist.
- 33 Ibid., 659.
- 34 Plato, *The Apology*, in *Great Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse, trans. W.H.D. Rouse. New York: New American Library, 1999, 424.
- 35 Plato. *Complete Works*. Ed. John M Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company,

- 1997, 18a; Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 673.
- 36 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 673.
- 37 Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 8.
- 38 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 673, 715.
- 39 Ibid., 656.
- 40 Steinbuch, Thomas. *A Commentary on Nietzsche's Ecce Homo*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1994, 25.
- 41 Gusdorf, Georges. "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography." Trans. James Olney in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, 35.
- 42 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 660.
- 43 Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 491.
- 44 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 710.
- 45 Steinbuch, *A Commentary*, 8.
- 46 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 714.
- 47 Howarth, William L. "Some Principles of Autobiography." *New Literary History* 5.2 (1974): 365.
- 48 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 279.
- 49 Ibid., 721, 230.
- 50 Ibid., 707.
- 51 Ibid., 721.
- 52 Olney, James. *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, 322.
- 53 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 423.
- 54 Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 122.
- 55 Olney, *Metaphors of Self*, 32.
- 56 Olney, James. *Memory & Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, 217.
- 57 Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 502.
- 58 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 782.
- 59 Ibid., 782f.
- 60 Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits," 43.
- 61 Starobinski, Jean. "The Style of Autobiography." Trans. Seymour Chatman. In Olney, *Autobiography*, 73-83.
- 62 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 726.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 700; Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 549.
- 65 Steinbuch, *A Commentary*, 60.
- 66 Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 9.
- 67 Conway, Jill K. *When Memory Speaks: Exploring the Art of Autobiography*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998, 9.

- 68 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 688.
- 69 Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 363.
- 70 Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 571.
- 71 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 562.
- 72 Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 124.
- 73 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 729-730.
- 74 Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 268.
- 75 Spender, Steven. "Confessions and Autobiography." In Olney, *Autobiography*, 117.
- 76 Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*, 752f.
- 77 Ibid., 715.
- 78 Ibid., 203.

*To deny the doctrine of divine simplicity
is to walk dangerously close to an
anthropomorphic and empty conception of
God as one being among many beings.*

Divine Simplicity: The Centerpiece of Aquinas' Doctrine on God

Jonathan Phillips

Editor's Note: The following paper draws extensively from an Aristotelian-Thomistic background, which is a system that is intricately built on itself. Thus, this paper—which addresses the concept of Divine Simplicity—cannot be properly understood without first understanding the arguments which precede it in the Summa theologiae. If this paper were fully to explain the arguments to defend the premises it assumes—various metaphysical realities, the existence of God, and so forth—it would be far too long to publish. When possible, the author has provided references to the arguments in favor of the assumptions he makes in the course of the paper. The interested reader is encouraged to examine the works of Edward Feser, a prominent contemporary Thomistic scholar. His book Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide is an excellent source of information on this matter and explains this paper's metaphysical assumptions in a way that is far beyond what is possible here.

The doctrine of divine simplicity is one of the central aspects of St. Thomas Aquinas' thought, without which one can easily descend into a philosophically bankrupt form of anthropomorphic theism. It claims that God¹ is supremely, entirely one, and not composed whatsoever of any parts on any metaphysical level. It is a consequence of the arguments to establish God's existence, which demand that he hold a status of priority above all other things and that he have dependence on nothing else; thus God cannot depend on something else to join together various parts to make him what he is. As the first mover and first cause of all things outside himself, God cannot be causally posterior to any other thing, since that would require God to be affected by that which has no existence and no action without God's own power to create and to sustain. This doctrine has several important consequences, and it will be beneficial to see how it informs Aquinas' entire conception of the nature of God.

In order to understand this doctrine, we must first understand what it means to be composed. The fundamental relationship in Thomistic philosophy is that of

actuality and potentiality.² When we examine anything existing in the world—a tree, for example—the tree is said to be *actually* existing, or existing in a state of completeness as a tree, as opposed to something in the process of becoming a tree. But in order for the tree to change and to become something else, we must acknowledge another aspect of being: potentiality. In the case of the tree, the tree can potentially become a table if it is cut down and used to build one. Thus the tree is actually a tree and potentially a table in this example. More generally, the tree is potentially a multitude of things such as whatever a person could make out of it or whatever into which it could decay by natural processes.

Furthermore, potentiality is not actuality. If a tree is potentially a table, it has the capacity to change into a table. But if a tree is actually a table, it is already a table—and not a tree after all. So, if we were to say that potentiality is actuality, this would mean that having the capacity to change into a table is the same thing as being a table, which is false. Potentiality is not nonbeing, or otherwise it would be impossible for the tree which is potentially a table to become actually a table; this is because if the capacity or potentiality of the tree to become a table does not exist at all, then the tree cannot become a table as its capacity to do so does not exist. Potentiality is therefore a middle ground between nonbeing and actuality.

Actuality is a more fundamental mode of being whereas potentiality is a more contingent mode of being. Actuality refers to things that have real being, while potentiality refers to the ability to change, the capacity to come into being. Potentiality requires actuality and depends on it in order to exist; potentiality has no independent actual existence without actuality. Indeed, the demonstration of the concept of potentiality above presupposes some actual being, the tree, which possesses the potentiality, the tree's capacity to change into a table.

According to the doctrine of divine simplicity, God is one in all respects. In other words, God is not a composite of actuality and potentiality. But if we are going to admit that in God, there is no such joining, then what is there? These two concepts describe all modes of being that are possible: something either actually exists or it potentially exists. In order to come to a greater understanding of what divine simplicity is *per se*, let us understand that Aquinas argues that God is purely actual, with no potentiality.³ This is because Aquinas argues that the world, as a contingent, caused, changing thing, necessarily implies the existence of some source and ground of being, something which is able to give it existence.⁴

It will be helpful to recall the general metaphysical point underlying the idea of divine simplicity: that God is the Supreme Being, the ultimate metaphysical reality and source of all other reality, and not dependent on anything else for his existence. Now, if something is composed of parts, then, unless those parts are joined together, the thing does not exist. It would be nonsensical to say, for example, that a table, which is composed of a surface and legs, could exist without the

legs. Since something that does not exist cannot cause itself, as it cannot perform any operation without first existing,⁵ the thing would depend on something else to join those parts together so the composite being could exist. Therefore, all composite beings require some logically prior agent to join together those things of which the being is composed.⁶ This means that any composite being cannot be the source and ground of all existence since the composite being requires a prior cause to produce the combination that results in the composite; thus if God were composed of actuality and potentiality, he would require some being to exist before him—either temporally or metaphysically—in order to join his actuality to his potentiality, or to bring him, as the composite, into being, serving as the source of his existence. But this is incoherent given Aquinas' Five Ways; God is the ultimate source of existence, so the being which is supposedly prior to God would then be the true God. This true God would need to be simple rather than composite for the reasons we have just seen.

If we accept the notion that God is simple, then several important things follow. When we speak of God's goodness, justice, or power, we are referring to the same thing considered under different aspects; since there are no parts in God, God does not "have" things like power or goodness. Rather, God *is* power and goodness. While this may appear rather counterintuitive, it is important to understand that God's attributes are not the same as ours—our attributes are particular and distinct things which are different from each other, but God's attributes are the consequences of his possessing in himself the fullness and plenitude of being. Thus God is completely good because, in a Thomistic metaphysical analysis, being and goodness are the same,⁷ and evil is a lack of goodness and therefore of being. God is omnipotent because he, as the first being and as pure actuality, enjoys being to the greatest degree and cannot be limited by any privation of being or any lack of perfection. God's attributes, therefore, are not distinct, but all refer equally to the supreme unity which is God.

One particular dilemma that this doctrine is extraordinarily helpful in resolving is that which is presented in the *Euthyphro*. Is goodness good because God wills it, or does God will something because it is good? Both seem to be unacceptable; the first would make goodness an arbitrary standard where God could will anything to be good, and the second would make a standard of goodness apart from God, so he would depend on this other standard for judgments of right and wrong. If this were so, God would not be causally independent of all other things. Divine simplicity allows for a resolution of this problem: goodness is based in the divine nature, and God's goodness is inseparable from and identical to God's will. As God cannot change his goodness or being, so he cannot change his will for us; he always wills the good, in such a way that he cannot ever actively will that we do some action which does not accord with our nature. Thus what God wills for

us regarding morality is not some arbitrary or contingent desire which he could change at will. Rather, the case is that God must will that our actions accord with natural law. This is not to say that God is not still the standard for goodness, since goodness is determined by the final cause or end of something,⁸ and since God is the final cause of all creation, he is the ultimate standard and source of goodness without which nothing is good. But simplicity allows for the recognition that God's will is immutable and identical to his goodness, so, as Edward Feser writes, "what is objectively good and what God wills for us as morally obligatory are really the same thing considered under different descriptions, and ... neither could have been other than they are."⁹

I would like now to examine the doctrine of simplicity from a different angle. The philosopher Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., writes the following regarding Aquinas' First Way, the argument from motion or change, to demonstrate God's existence:

In a series of essentially subordinate movers [a series of causes in which each depends on the one before it for its continued operation, so each acts as an instrument rather than on its own and indeed has no capacity for causation on its own, as a hand moves a stick which moves a rock which moves a leaf] we must finally arrive at one which is its own principle of motion [change], and which can explain the *entity* [being] *of its own action*. But that alone can explain the entity of its action, to which the action belongs intrinsically, not only as a potency [potentiality], but also as an act [actuality], and which, consequently, is *its own very action, its very activity*. Such a mover is *absolutely immobile* [unchangeable] in the sense that He has by and of Himself that which the others acquire by motion.¹⁰

This explanation is meant to show that God is pure actuality, unchangeable, and cannot have any mixture of potentiality. Any potentiality is a potentiality *for* something, to change into something, and it could be realized as an action or an activity of changing into something else or producing some change. And no potentiality has a capacity to actualize itself, because potentiality has an intermediate character between being and nonbeing—the character of potential being—but anything which *causes* or performs *actions* must be actually existing in order to operate. But, if God is to terminate the regress of change that forms the basis for the First Way, he must be able to explain his own activity without reference to some higher source. This is only possible if God's activity belongs to him as actual, not as potential. If it were to belong to him as potential, the question would arise: how does God operate at all, since operation, if it involves motion from potentiality to actuality, would seem to be dependent on some being to move the potentiality to actuality, as no potentiality can actualize itself? The notion that God moves himself to actuality will not solve this problem, because if this motion of moving

himself to operate were also a motion from potentiality to actuality, the same question would arise regarding that motion: does God have it potentially or actually? Then, if it is granted that God has *that* motion as actual and is identical to it, then that aspect of God which is identical to this operation would more accurately constitute God, whereas the other aspects of "God" which are not identical to his operation would rather be secondary causes through which God acts.

Consider the following explanation. Suppose God performed the action of creation. Is the action of creation present in God potentially or actually? If it is present in God actually, then it is clear that God is his own operation. If it is present potentially, then something must have moved God to perform this operation. This would either be another being, or it would be another operation from God. It cannot be another being, since God, by the conclusion of the First Way as the termination of the causal sequence of change, must be causally prior to every other being. It would then have to be another operation from God, at which point the same problem arises: is this operation in God potentially or actually? Each operation that is in God potentially raises this same question of how that operation comes about. In order to explain the existence of any of these operations, then, we must arrive at some first operation which is in God actually, and which God is. The other operations which this one explains are extraneous and not truly part of God himself, but rather are secondary causes on which and through which God acts. This is because they are logically posterior to the first mover, the true and real God, who is his operation. And indeed God is identical to *all* his operation, because any operation which is not identical to God would be a secondary cause through which God acts, as described above. Since God must be identical to his own operation, it follows that there can be no mixture of potentiality in God. Any potentiality is a potentiality for some operation, but God is actual and is identical to all his operation, so God's operation is actual. Therefore, there can be no potential operation in God, so there can be no potentiality at all in God; God is *purely* actual.

The importance of divine simplicity in this conclusion is that it allows a statement in the vein of "God is identical to his operation" to be coherent. It is easy to imagine that one who is not familiar with the overall Thomistic system might understand this to mean that God is some vague impersonal force, but this is not the case. God is not *merely* an operation; rather, God is the supreme reality, and since there are no parts or composed things in him, he is identical to all of his attributes and operations. This is not a limiting view of God but rather a more expansive view; it allows God to exist in a mode that safeguards philosophical theology from anthropomorphism and from attempts to think of God as a sort of superhuman being, or one powerful person among other people. So, as Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange's explanation of the First Way shows, God is his operation, but he is also his will

and his power and his intellect. His existence is unlimited, depends on nothing else for its own being, gives existence to all other beings, and so is the foundation and first cause for all things.

Thus, as we have seen, simplicity is not merely an abstract consideration regarding some esoteric attribute of God; it is the foundation for our understanding of God, the universe, and moral living. To deny the doctrine of divine simplicity is to walk dangerously close to an anthropomorphic and empty conception of God as one being among many beings. The doctrine's profound implications range from metaphysics to morality, and it is one of the greatest achievements of Aquinas' philosophical investigation into the divine nature. It serves as a fitting centerpiece for the Thomistic philosophical edifice in its highest ascent to the inexhaustible mystery of God.

- 1 Aquinas begins in this philosophical section of the *Summa theologiae* without admitting any prior knowledge of God. He proceeds through strictly philosophical methods without making any reference to Christianity or the Bible, or any divine revelation at all. He makes passing references to other authors, including Biblical ones, but his argument is independent of these references.
- 2 These are sometimes referred to as *act* and *potency*, both meaning states of being, not actions or operations.
- 3 Unfortunately it is out of the scope of this paper to provide argumentation in defense of Aquinas' Five Ways to demonstrate God's existence, but I assure the reader that many defenses exist and they are strong. Please see the editor's note for more information.
- 4 As an aside, the question of whether the world came into being at a certain point in time does not in any way factor into Aquinas' arguments for God's existence.
- 5 See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, part 1, question 2, article 3, and Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, chapter 4, as well as Feser, *Aquinas*, chapter 1, mentioned in the editor's note.
- 6 For information on why it would be impossible for an infinite series of composite beings to join more composite beings together further and further down the chain, see the sources mentioned above in note 5.
- 7 This complex metaphysical topic is explored in Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, part 1, question 5, articles 1-6.
- 8 See above in note 7, especially article 4 of that question.
- 9 Edward Feser, "God, Obligation, and the Euthyphro Dilemma," October 26, 2010. <<http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2010/10/god-obligation-and-euthyphro-dilemma.html>>
- 10 Garrigou-Lagrange, Réginald. *God: His Existence and Nature*, vol. 1. Trans. Dom Bede Rose. Mount Angel: B. Herder Book Co., 1955, 266.

Author Biographies

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Alexander Trimes '14 is majoring in English and minoring in Philosophy. He spent the fall term of his junior year studying abroad at Queen Mary, University of London, and hopes to teach English abroad following graduation. His academic interests include literary and cultural theory, as well as postmodern literature. As a long-term goal, Alexander plans to further pursue these interests through graduate study.

Francis Adams

Francis Adams '15 comes from the small town of Dobbs Ferry, NY, and is currently pursuing a double major in English and Philosophy. His interests include literature and philosophy of all kinds as well as the various religions of the world. He plans to pursue graduate studies in some capacity, but hopes to make some money in the “real world” first—doing what, he has no idea.

Gjergji Evangjeli

Gjergji Evangjeli '14 is a senior with a concentration in Philosophy and Classics. He is interested in Ancient Greek philosophy, especially Plato and the synthesis of Philosophy and Theology evident in authors like St. Thomas Aquinas. He is curious about the paradigm shifts that have led to the philosophical and religious disconnect of most modern Westerners with classical philosophy and religion, particularly Christianity. Gjergji will be pursuing a 5th Year Master's at BC next year, and is considering a Ph.D. afterwards.

Anthony Cossette

Anthony Cossette '14 is majoring in Psychology and minoring in Philosophy. He is the current president of BC's chapter of Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology, and is involved in a number of other extracurricular activities such as playing Alto Saxophone in the Boston College Pep Band at hockey and basketball games. His intellectual interests range from Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience to History, Philosophy of Mind, Epistemology, Ethics, and Environmental Science. Anthony plans on taking a year's sojourn or more from formal schooling to reassess his goals and hopes to attend graduate school in the near future.

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Jonathan Phillips '15 is a junior Philosophy major with an interest in medieval philosophy, particularly that of St. Thomas Aquinas, and in the philosophers who have continued writing in the tradition that he began. He is especially interested in their methods of arguing for the existence of God. He intends to go to law school after graduating from Boston College.