

Appendix

Philosophy as a Spiritual Exercise

What are the prospects for philosophy as a spiritual exercise in the contemporary world?

The thesis of Pierre Hadot is well known: philosophy in the ancient Greek world used to be practiced as a way of life.¹ The inspiration for such practice was Socrates: his living the life of a philosopher² and his art of conversation, which he described as follows: “For I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old among you not to care for your body or your wealth in preference to or as strongly as for the best possible state of your soul.”³ Among the schools he inspired which developed their own philosophical ways of living were the Cynics, Epicureans, Stoics, and Neoplatonists. One may not wish to recover and reproduce their practices; one may not wish to direct so much attention to governing oneself. Yet the challenge remains: How does one attach greater importance to significant matters and lesser importance to the less significant matters? Is the contemporary philosopher sufficiently trained in attentiveness “to respond immediately to events as if they were questions asked of us all of a sudden?”⁴ Should philosophy be primarily preoccupied with forming correct concepts, opinions, and judgments, or should it be preoccupied with spending its thought on what most demands attention?

In the contemporary world, philosophy is normally practiced in a university. While seminars and conversations still take place, and the young are educated as also occasionally the old, the emphasis is placed on the assessment of opinions expressed in written form. Instead of selecting such opinions for their direct pertinence to the authors or readers, the most respectable philosophical opinions are those that can be debated and accepted by anyone, published and read in the most prestigious journals. Many important matters can be dealt with in this way, yet one cannot help but suspect that the potential of philosophy for shaping a life is not fully realized. At the same time, lives are indeed

shaped by the institutional structures for the practice of philosophy: by reading articles and books, holding debates, formulating arguments, writing essays, presenting papers, advancing careers, and, above all, proposing propositions. Philosophy remains a way of life, even if that way of life is rarely examined.

This relation between philosophy and life can be encapsulated in the following philosophical problem: Is truth subordinate to reason? Or is reason subordinate to truth? Does truth enter the mind as a result of reason? Or does reason enter the mind as a result of truth?

In spite of appearances, this is a problem that bears the utmost political significance. For the choice of a concept of truth that presents itself as politically neutral is indeed a political choice, full of practical implications. It leads to the subordination of the environment, politics, morality, and religion to a technological and utilitarian conception of reason that can only know the truth it accomplishes, and rarely the truth it neglects. In practice, for all our emphasis on reason, thinking remains a matter of trust, a kind of investment of credit in our institutions for reproducing reason. Thinking is also a matter of piety, a determinate and regulated directing of attention. And it is by attempting to exclude the influence of politics, trust, and piety from reason in the name of “truth” alone that one ensures the secret institutionalization of particular practices and preconceptions at the same time as the subordination of truth to a particular practice of reason. For the concept of *truth* has been problematic since the work of David Hume, who demonstrated that the concept cannot be constituted within experience or given an idea without contradiction.⁵ If, by contrast, philosophy were to be pursued as a spiritual exercise, then its practices of reason would be subjected to interrogation and regulated by a vision of truth. In the discussion that follows, I shall examine a dominant exercise of reason that ensures the reproduction of its own utopian politics, its own investment of credit, and its own directing of attention.

A Critique of Modern Reason

Truth is subordinated to reason when reasoning takes place through propositions. A principal component of the propositional model of truth is a Parmenidean hypothesis: “truth is true.”⁶ For if we are to reason at all, then it would seem necessary that the truth of propositions, whether assumed or demonstrated, can be treated as true in premises for subsequent arguments—this is the basis for deduction. Now, the

tautology, “truth is true,” is not self-evident. Indeed, all tautologies are falsifications: A subject is identified with a predicate, and yet a subject is not a predicate. They differ in syntax, as subject differs from predicate. For a tautology to be true, there would have to be a third term—the thing, the matter of thought—that is invoked by both subject and predicate. The Parmenidean hypothesis therefore identifies a problem: “The same thing is for thinking and for being.” What thing is the same for thinking and for being? Under what conditions does truth prove to be true? The entirety of Western philosophy can be taken as a series of experiments with possible solutions to such a problem, whether the thing that links thinking with being is conceived as eternal or drawn from the realm of things, such as a form or substance (as in metaphysics) or conceived as temporal or drawn from the realm of thinking, such as a discipline or practice (as in transcendental philosophy). Any such approach, of course, assumes that we know what either thinking or being is, and forms its idea of the correlative term from its own presuppositions. It begs the question.

A second component of the propositional model of truth is a Cartesian hypothesis: the independence of thought from being. For much of the history of philosophy a contrary Platonic hypothesis had held sway: only the idea is the same for thinking and for being. Thought could conform to being insofar as it participates in the idea. The Parmenidean hypothesis that “truth is true” was verified by recollection of the eternal. By contrast, the Cartesian hypothesis brought a liberation from subjection to the theological ideas of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful because it could always be suspected that such recollections were mere simulacra.⁷ How could one verify that the True is truly true, that the Good is truly good, that the Beautiful is truly beautiful? Or even if the forms are true, how could it be verified that they are truly recollected, that the same thing is actually for thinking and for being? The Platonic solution had merely multiplied the Parmenidean problem. If, by contrast, thought is independent from being, then the task for reason is no longer recollection but construction: the bond between thought and being, far from being presupposed, has to be achieved.

A third component of the propositional model of truth is an Epicurean hypothesis: The world is composed of chance encounters and relations between “atomic” facts. The Parmenidean problem can only be solved on the basis of evidence, where a proposition is true if it correctly refers to what is in fact the case. Truth is here conceived to be individual, for the truth of a proposition is given by the fact to which it refers being the case; it is objective, since the truth of the proposition is independent of the mind that thinks it; it is egalitarian, in that all true

propositions are equally true; and it is passive, since it is the object for consideration for an active, thinking mind. Reason is grounded in the transcendental idea of the world understood as everything that is the case. For such individual truths are permanent, even if the facts referred to are temporary, and individual truths are universal, since every fact can be designated by a proposition.

We may observe a close congruency between such a common-sense notion of truth and a common-sense notion of nature as composed of bits of matter distributed in a geometric space. Such particles are regarded as permanent, individual, objective, equal, and passive, while the science that investigates the spatial relationships between particles, geometry, and the science that investigates the temporal relationships between particles, physics, can in principle give a universal account of all there is. This is the naturalistic account of the world as a self-sufficient, meaningless complex of facts. Such a notion provides a paradigm for objectivity in the resistance matter offers to any changes deriving from our merely thinking about it. It provides a paradigm for a space of representation of facts, a possible world, in which our propositions may be true. It provides a paradigm for considering reality as potentially permanent, individual, objective, equal, passive, and universal in a world otherwise characterized by change and conflict. It provides a paradigm for exclusion of the difference, creation, and faith.

Now, it is notable, as Alfred North Whitehead has remarked, that this common-sense notion of nature has been refuted in every detail by twentieth-century physics.⁸ It is also notable, as Gilles Deleuze has remarked, that the model of thought as recognition of true facts is “impoverished and puerile,”⁹ and contributes very little to the kind of thinking that is actually undertaken in advanced study: Getting the facts straight contributes relatively little to producing thought that is informed, selective, critical, independent, significant, and creative. Above all, it is highly notable that this common-sense notion of truth contradicts its underlying presuppositions.

For the propositional model of truth does not, by itself, solve the Parmenidean problem: It does not explain what it means for a proposition to be true. The proposition, “Today is Friday,” is true if and only if today is Friday: Propositional truth requires repetition of the proposition—disquotation merely restates the Parmenidean hypothesis. To explain such truth one may attempt to construct a sophisticated philosophical theory of truth;¹⁰ one may argue that the problem is insignificant since truth is a basic term, and we largely know how to use it when it occurs anyway;¹¹ or one may argue that our language is

inadequate to bring forth the presence of the facts to which it aspires.¹² Nevertheless, it can easily be shown that all attempts to construct an objective truth are doomed to fail. For the third term, truth, the thing that is the same for thinking and for being, cannot be demonstrated in being if conceived as an idea under the Platonic hypothesis, nor can it be manifested in thought if conceived as a being under the Cartesian hypothesis. According to the Cartesian hypothesis, if thought is independent from being, then a true proposition remains true independently of whether it can be known or demonstrated. Yet what remains truly extraordinary is that no beings are known or demonstrated independently of thinking. Objectivity, like materiality, necessarily remains beyond thought: it may be designated by a transcendent idea, but its being cannot be known. For when a truth becomes knowledge, or when it is taken to be true, thought cannot produce being—for being, being independent of thought, is not produced by thought. In the transformation of being into thought, the verification of true knowledge, there is a magical, inexplicable transmutation whereby the object becomes a subject.¹³ Epistemology, the discipline constructed to bridge this gap, remains a faith in magic.

It is a disappointment that so few philosophers have followed Hume's lead when faced with the epistemological problems of empiricism. Hume's conclusion was that the "memory, senses, and understanding are, therefore, all of them founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas."¹⁴ Thus, instead of being content with probability, justification, or approximation to the truth, Hume delimited reason for the sake of the independent sphere of morals: It was morality that interested him above all else.¹⁵ As Deleuze noted in his reading of Hume designed to liberate empiricism as a science of human nature from the confines of a purely epistemological doctrine: "The important and principal sentence of the *Treatise* is this: 'Tis not contrary to Reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger."¹⁶ Far from dismissing moral concerns from reason, Hume noted that "the truth we discover must also be of some importance."¹⁷ Reason can only ever be a slave of the passions;¹⁸ it is brought to bear within a preexisting world, including an antecedent ethics and order of ends.¹⁹ The same is not to be said of truth. Indeed, writing of his own aberrant philosophical commitments, Hume wondered:

Can I be sure, that in leaving all establish'd opinions I am following truth; and by what criterion shall I distinguish her, even if fortune shou'd at last guide me on her foot-steps? After the most accurate and exact of my reasonings, I can give no reason why I shou'd assent to it;

and feel nothing but a *strong* propensity to consider objects *strongly* in that view, under which they appear to me.²⁰

Problems of “importance” and “propensity” will prove to be indispensable in matters of truth. For it is evident that the propositional model of truth cannot confirm its own truth. It is merely a practice of truth-telling, maintained by faith; it is a political practice, advancing its own importance and propensities. Exceeding the facts, it does not conform to the Epicurean hypothesis. Yet we should perhaps suspend judgment concerning the propositional model of truth for a little longer. As a faith, we may examine its credibility; as a process, we may examine its practice. Only as such will we disclose its true political propensities.

In the first place, this model selects for its idea of the world all that can be based on evidence. Since truth cannot be definitively verified, knowledge can be taken as such if it commands assent: it has to be based on evidence that is repeatable, public, and exchangeable. Knowledge is that which is potentially universal: It can be acknowledged as true at all times and in all places. A truth is therefore for anyone or about anything; as potentially universal, a truth is anything, it does not matter which. A truth would appear to be entirely neutral in relation to value. For that which matters, matters to a particular thinker at a particular time and place; truth may be the truth of that which matters, but truth itself is independent of value—it does not matter.

In the second place, the construction of knowledge takes place in a temporal order. Where thinking takes time, a proposition projects a time when thinking will be complete, when the truth will be known. Indeed, propositions symbolize the time of thought already completed, the work of thinking done, and substitute an atemporal symbol for the temporal work of thought. For if the proposition proves to be true, then it is subsumed under the transcendental idea of the world as all that is the case, designated by the complete set of true propositions. This world has a constructed eternity as a perpetual present: true propositions are permanent, and independent of any process of becoming, any past or future. True propositions belong to the secular order of an abstract present age. Propositions, although they are only local and partial, project their objects as belonging to a possible world that is to come—when all may acknowledge all truths, and all sufficient reasons for what is the case will become evident. Our concept of truth implicitly requires a projection of this utopia of complete knowledge, transparency, mastery, and freedom. In practice, this symbolization of the completed work of thinking is formed in order to save time: instead of thinking through each stage in an argument, we take the premises of

our arguments as already given. The essence of modern reason is saving time. Yet it saves such time in imagination only: it projects a glorious future, when all truth will be known, and the work of reason complete and timeless. As such, truth is entirely neutral in relation to thought; for where thinking takes time, this model of truth is timeless. As such, truth is independent of time and thought—it is thoughtless.

In the third place, in order to bring about the secular utopia of truth, it is necessary to short-circuit our expectations, and treat the secular age as already present, here and now. We project propositions as true, here and now—as hypotheses—before we can test and correct them. We treat them as if they belong to the secular utopia in order to test whether they do. Since the universal, secular utopia that underpins objective truth has not arrived, one substitutes a particular proposition for the universal in anticipation of the universal. Truth, the universal measure of all things, must be treated as local and partial, as the particular object proposed. Indeed, whether one believes in the possibility of the universal, or despairs of attaining the truth, whether one is modern or postmodern, particular, partial, and local truths must be substituted for an abstract universal. This substitution has extraordinary consequences, leading to a strong propensity to adopt such a view of truth.

First, since there is no necessity that determines which particular truth should be substituted for the universal, this structure of thinking can capture all points of view. Whatever you think, however different or individual, a proposition can be created just for you. The secular utopia is pluralist and democratic: it would seem that there will be a place for all. For the substitution of the particular for the universal is a purely formal structure: it does not initially seem to matter which content will come to fill it. In this respect, this conception of truth seems to be the most liberal, since it allows the representation of all possible points of view. As such, it has the most universal appeal.

As a second consequence, however, not all particular propositions are equal. For certain propositions embody the Parmenidean hypothesis of self-reference: “truth is true.” In this paralogism of pure reason, the universal (truth) is treated as a particular (true).²¹ On the one hand, objective truth is the measure of propositions; on the other hand, objective truth is what counts as true. Whoever wishes to know the truth, therefore, must first know objective truth, for objective truth is the truth through which all other truths may be known. Although objective truth does not seem to admit of degrees—all meaningful propositions being either true or false—the proposition “objective truth is the true conception of truth” has a special privilege, in that it is the proposition upon which all else is founded. Objective truth determines what is to

count as real, even if no one counts the truth of objective truth as significant. It is in this respect that it has a self-universalizing power: even if no one thinks about truth, a conception of truth is presupposed in all thinking. It becomes the supremely significant truth, the transcendent pivot around which all thinking turns. While the objective truth of a proposition may be unavailable, one only has to treat a proposition as true, and then objective truth takes on authority, because others, even if they dispute the truth of a particular proposition, must do so on the grounds of objective truth. Moreover, one only has to treat a proposition as false in relation to objective truth, and the appeal of objective truth grows stronger still. Scepticism, doubt, and debate reinforce the appeal of objective truth. Deferral of the arrival of objective truth actually strengthens the conception of objective truth in the search for knowledge. There is no objective refutation of the concept of objective truth, for the objective truth never arrives.

A third consequence is that there is an ongoing need to understand all aspects of life under the form of objective truth. Most disciplines within a university constitute one vast attempt to colonize reality, and to substitute a representation of reality, conceived in terms of objective truth, for direct interaction with the world. In this work of colonization, any thought that does not conform to the quest for objective truth may be excluded as an interruption; and if truth itself were to act within thinking, this would be treated as irrational. Any thought that cannot be represented according to standard academic procedures of argument and evidence must be excluded.

As a final consequence, once all truth has been delegated to a conception of objective truth, then this conception becomes the source of all truth. By saving time and borrowing our particular proposition from a future secular utopia, we owe a debt of gratitude for all our knowledge. It is now up to us to demonstrate that our propositions will indeed count among the saved who appear in the secular utopia. In this respect, the fragility of knowledge and the inaccessibility of objective truth are the source of its strength. If nothing can be proven, then we are under an unlimited obligation to demonstrate the truth of our propositions. We compete for a truth that is scarce. We have to make our thought plausible, so that it will be accepted by others, and so that it will have a chance of representing the universal. In doing so, we are under an unlimited obligation to make our thought as reasonable and plausible as possible. This debt, this obligation, grows ever stronger because it can never be discharged.

It is time to take stock. A propositional model of truth promises the world, but it leaves us with an aspiration for a utopia from which all that matters has been excluded. The utopia of objective truth is a desert

where nothing matters and nothing can live. A propositional model of truth promises freedom of thought, but it imposes an infinite procedure of verification that enslaves thought. Even if utopia never comes, the desert within grows as the will to truth follows an ascetic ideal. A propositional model of truth promises an object of thought that is permanent, individual, objective, equal, passive, and universal, but it delivers a transcendent, colonizing force. Truth is only delivered as a promise, as a supreme value, as a speculative value that inflates itself while devaluing all other values. Truth is only delivered as a debt to the future.

In short, such a model of truth has a propensity to extend itself to infinity. Moreover, this propensity has not been effectively delimited by the corrections of rational critique, however cogent, nor by the passions excited by morality, however justified. For, on the one hand, the propositional model of truth, embedded in science, finds its proofs in practice through technology. The truth of this model seems to be effectively revealed through mastery of nature: thinking constructs being. On the other hand, the propositional model of truth demonstrates its rectitude through political economy. Economics is the moral discipline founded on an appeal to the evidence, based on the propositional model of truth. In spite of claims to moral neutrality, political economy constitutes itself as a morality that displaces competing moral claims. This is clear, above all, from Hume's account of the origins of morality in the form of justice, where he writes of the origins of the morals of private property and contractual integrity as the essential form of morals as such. According to Hume, since society facilitates an increase in power through combining strength, an increase in ability through a division of labor, and an increase in security through mutual aid, it conforms to self-interest.²² But while self-interest is the motive for establishing justice, sympathy with the common good is the source of the moral approbation of justice.²³ If, then, morality is purely a convention for the harmonizing of passions, political economy is precisely such a moral set of conventions for maximizing self-interest. We may observe a close congruency between a common-sense notion of truth and an economic notion of society as composed of private property prepared for exchange. Does our conception of economic life serve truth, or does our conception of truth serve economic life? In practice, the universal value of political economy, money, is both the supreme value as the means of access to all other values, and a moral obligation when created by fiat in the form of loans or debts. Whatever one's moral sensibilities, the obligations to make profits and repay debts devalue all other values, since they take priority as prerequisites for participating successfully in society. Living "in accordance with truth"—that is, in line with the evidence—becomes living to repay debts.

Philosophy and Freedom

A case could be made that philosophy is the safeguard of human freedom. For if our environmental, economic, and cultural worlds are determined primarily by *how* we think, and only subsequently by *what* we think, then all power passes through thought, and thinking otherwise is the essence of liberation. Thus liberation would be conceived as liberation from oppression, injustice, ignorance, and illusion. If liberation from *oppression* may be conceived as the freedom to access and employ physical, social, and educational resources required for human flourishing without fear of external appropriation or restriction, then such liberation may be conceived, in turn, as dependent on liberation from *injustice*, as freedom of political representation to ensure that the cries of body and soul are heard and interests are met. Political liberation, in turn is dependent on liberation from *ignorance and delusion*, so that one speaks, struggles, and acts in one's own interests and against one's own oppression. Liberation from delusion, in turn, requires the liberation of *truth* so that it may germinate and grow in its own proper elements of reason, attention, and insight. So is philosophy to be regarded as the source of liberation?

Three distinctive features of our current era may call the work of liberation by thought into question. First there is the collision between economy and ecology: the immense global transformation of human life and production in the twentieth century, under the guidance of reason, has reached fundamental limits set by ecological, economic, and energy crises that are only just beginning to manifest themselves.²⁴ Once overall growth is no longer possible, wealth is only to be obtained at the expense of others. The predatory nature of our collective quest for material wealth starts to manifest itself—perhaps present before and throughout modernity, but formerly justified in the name of progress—once economic contraction is met with the transfer of wealth to the elite few alongside expulsion from productive society of the many. Disaster capitalism extends dispossession just as it intensifies the opportunity for neoliberal market reform in the name of recovery.²⁵ In short, in the surpassing of ecology by economy we see an illusory quest for the infinite; it leaves many outside the social production of value and recognition, those who count for nothing. Since they have nothing to offer, their demands are unreasonable.

A second distinctive feature of our era is the financialization of culture, securitization of debt, and the invention and proliferation of trading in derivatives. Those who profit from speculation can make money

by shorting the markets just as easily as by investing: there is a disengagement of economic power from the production of wealth. What this amounts to is the “end of politics”: political decisions have to serve the interests of financial capital first, rather than the interests of the people, for without financial stability there is no economy for the people. In disaster capitalism, elected governments are blackmailed into transferring wealth from the majority to the wealthy elite simply in order to preserve a temporary stability. Then social control is most effective when it operates through debt—an obligation to the wealthy elite. Indeed, when the wealthy become largely disengaged from dependence on the poor, the poor lose all privileged access to economic power, political power, and even to truth. One has no experience of the essence of capitalist power if one is excluded from capitalism: one merely observes its masks and tools.

This brings me to a third distinctive feature of our era: an eclipse of truth. This is more than the predominance of the chatter of lies, propaganda, and interested opinion in public discourse. More fundamentally, the management of information has replaced understanding. For understanding concerns intrinsic relations such as limits, conditions, proportions, interdependence, continuity, the interrelation of means and ends, and judgments of significance or decisiveness, whereas in the management of information, extrinsic relations govern the exercise of thought. This eclipse of truth involves the end of philosophy once prophesied by Martin Heidegger in the rise of positivist science: Once we know the facts of history, culture, and religion, we will possess all requisite knowledge—requisite, that is, for the pursuit of our interests. Once philosophy is reduced to a weapon of reason in the battle of ideas, such battles are mere shadow-boxing, for under the rule of the particular, positions are decided by prior commitments and interests. Then if competing interests cannot be negotiated via reason, their relative distribution can be settled more economically. Over a decade ago, therefore, I posed the question of the pricing of thought: of its determination by a symbolic economy of innovation and prestige directly convertible into material wealth.²⁶ The prophecy of the end of philosophy is fulfilled when reason is situated directly within the marketplace, demanding payment for its services, promising career advantages for those it teaches, while demonstrating with hard evidence the economic or cultural impact of its research: presentation takes over from interior reasoning. The danger, here, is that reason itself becomes unreflective and unthinking, reproducing established habits, presuppositions, concepts, grammatical structures, and evaluations, pausing to reflect on its inner constitution only in order to manage reason more efficiently and

profitably—replacing the liberal arts with marketing courses, and philosophy with sophistry. Freedom degenerates into the liberty to assert, exploit, neglect, and destroy.

These three characteristics of our age are each expressed in material, social, and epistemic practices. The end of modernity, in the surpassing of ecological finitude by economic growth, discloses *our illusory quest for the infinite*; the end of politics, in the emergence of a society disciplined by debt, discloses *our illusory quest for disengagement*; the end of philosophy, in the substitution of appearances for intrinsic reasons, discloses *our illusory substitution of the extrinsic for the intrinsic*. These are our three habitual illusions: infinitude, disengagement, and substitution. As Bernard Stiegler puts it, “Our epoch is, however, very singular: unlike any before it, *it has made carelessness into the very principle of its organization.*”²⁷

Now the foundational myth of philosophical liberation is given in Plato’s allegory of the cave: a prisoner, whose vision has been restricted to moving shadows on the wall, escapes his chains, flees the cave, and finally sees objects themselves in direct sunlight. The time has come to consider seriously whether this escape from constraint, detachment from others, and fulfillment in vision does not embody precisely the practices of infinitude, disengagement, and transposition from which we need liberation. Do we need liberation from the quest for liberation that has been embodied in Western philosophical, scientific, economic, and perhaps even theological practices? This “epistemological” problem of liberation is, in truth, a religious problem articulated by St. Augustine in his *Confessions*: When we love the truth, do we love what we take to be true, or do we love the truth that judges and illuminates the falsehood of our prior thinking?²⁸ How do we answer to conscience?

Yet does our modern rational age, with its devotion to objectivity, liberty, wealth, and reality, still dwell in a cave? Have we, who tolerate only light and clarity, replaced substances with shadows? Well, perhaps it is all down to our source of light. The foundation of human politics on material interests projects four kinds of shadows that arise from the way in which such interests are brought into consciousness and counted as socially significant. Material interest is made significant via money:²⁹

- Since money is the value through which all other values are measured for the sake of agreement and contract, it becomes the basis for theoretical knowledge. Values are measured in terms of prices, so they

are measured in terms of costs of replacement or substitution, even though many things in life cannot be substituted for or replaced. We do not count things themselves, but only money, projecting the shadows of our own collective desires—a *shadow of objectivity* derived from substituting the extrinsic for the intrinsic.

- Since money is required to repay debts, and meet all other obligations, it becomes that which is most in demand, the supreme value through which all other values may be obtained, the principle guiding practical conduct. Values are measured in terms of money to be spent, so they are measured from the point of view of one who has money to spend, as if he procures whatever he wants or needs by spending, even though the goods and services will in fact be provided by others—a *shadow of liberty* derived from a quest for the infinite.
- Since securities, financial derivatives, and even money itself are created as debts, then each asset is someone else's liability. Even investment assets, such as land, commodities, property and shares, are priced by speculation, so that their value is supported by the amount of debt people are willing to undertake for them. Asset values are measured by an anticipated rate of return, an increase in the liabilities of others, even if this involves consuming the basis of material production—a *shadow of wealth* derived from disengagement from production.
- Such economic behavior is constrained by competitive selection, so that only those who profit by living out of the preceding illusions in a cave of shadows prosper and grow, while those who live by touch are excluded, or are martyred by exploitation. Then it is no longer tyranny that rules the people, but an autonomous, self-positing system of evaluation. Since money is created as debt, and debt must be repaid in the form of money or more debt, and debt becomes the supreme principle of theoretical knowledge, practical conduct, and mutual trust, then this perspective of evaluation is not chosen but imposes itself—a *shadow of reality*.

The extremity of our predicament is this: When light itself is composed of shadows, when objectivity, liberty, wealth, and reality are shadows themselves, we cannot simply escape the cave and return to the sunlight. For all that we see is the value that we expect others to place upon things, and the value that others place upon things is the value that they expect others to place upon things. We live within a world of reciprocal vision, where the world around us as well as ourselves are constituted by seeing and being seen—and yet, compelled to see only what others see, we all become blind, exchanging mere tokens of vision

and evaluation. The consequences can be seen in daily life, as Charles Eisenstein explains:

On the road, everywhere my eyes turn, there is a billboard. On the subway, on the internet, on the street, commercial messages reach out to “capture” attention. They infiltrate our very thoughts, our narratives, our inner dialog, and via these, our emotions, desires, and beliefs, turning all toward the making of product and profit. Our attention is hardly our own anymore, so easily do the powers of politics and commerce manipulate it.

After it has been so long manipulated, chopped up, habituated to intense stimuli, and jerked around from one lurid but empty object to another, our attention is so fragmented we cannot sustain it long enough to create anything independent of the programs that surround us. We lose our capacity to sustain thought, understand nuance, and put ourselves in another person’s shoes.³⁰

What is a common feature of daily experience may also be true of the disciplined labor of reason: We work to construct images and tokens of thought that are acceptable to others—or capture the imagination of others. Yet these propositions are fragmented, alienated from the conditions under which they arise, and manipulated for extrinsic purposes that our minds are employed to serve. Reason becomes a mechanical process, and the power it achieves is bought at the expense of an impoverishment of thinking. What is at stake, here, is a crisis of human conscience, for our most conscientious devotion to reason itself may be our most irrational act. For when reason is formed by a quest for infinitude, by disengagement, and by substitution, then reason loses touch with reality. Moreover, it is not as though we can simply return from the contemporary mindset to the conscience and reasoning of the past. For, ever since Plato, reason has been formed by the very same practices. Our contemporary condition of blindness has been incipient in Western reason since its origin.

The path taken since Plato may not be the only route possible. The solution to immersion in a group mind has always been the call of conscience. As Hannah Arendt puts it:

When everybody is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join in is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action.³¹

For Arendt, the criterion of such Socratic thinking is agreement with oneself, avoiding all self-contradiction.³² Then it is somewhat surprising

that she draws attention to the end of the contested Platonic dialogue, *Greater Hippias*, in which Socrates confesses a lack of agreement with himself:

I, however, am subject to what appears to be some supernatural ill fortune. I wander about in unerring perplexity, and when I lay my perplexity before you wise men, you turn on me and batter me with abuse as soon as I have explained my plight. You all say just what you, Hippias, are now saying, how foolish and petty and worthless are the matters with which I occupy myself, but when in turn I am convinced by you and repeat exactly what you tell me, that the height of excellence is the ability to produce an eloquent and beautiful speech and win the day in a law court or other assembly, I am called every kind of bad name by some of the audience, including especially that man who is always cross-questioning me. He is a very close relative of mine and lives in the same house, and when I go home and he hears me give utterance to these opinions he asks me whether I am not ashamed of my audacity in talking about a beautiful way of life, when questioning makes it evident that I do not even know the meaning of the word "beauty."

Socrates was perplexed and disoriented, and only as such did he proceed with his famous dialectical method of cross-questioning others. His wisdom or agreement with himself was only to be found in his confession that he knew his own ignorance. Then it would seem that the Socratic experience of thinking proceeds as much through self-contradiction, even self-abuse, as it does through the aspiration to reach a moment of agreement with oneself: Absolute disorientation is the necessary condition of true morality felt as unlimited responsibility.³³ The dialectic method of self-questioning leads eventually to pure negativity. The disorientation of the Socratic subject anticipates the detachment from the world of the Christian mystics just as it anticipates the Nietzschean murder of God. Yet even if the bullying of conscience has been used to justify claims as diverse as those of natural law, personal faith, individual autonomy, or the fragmented postmodern subject, in each case there may have been an inattentiveness that short-circuits the unbearable experience of thinking. For the insults of the Socratic conscience and the absolute disorientation and disgrace that results are merely the start of a conversation. Thinking may move beyond the dialectic. What if, instead of assuming that we know all too well what our inner self might tell us, we learn to listen? Do we only hear contradiction or abuse, the condemnations of conscience? What if we suppose a being of wisdom and compassion that dwells in our inner self, a voice within who knows something just a little deeper and profounder than

we know ourselves, but who can only speak to us in the language we offer to it? If we think only in terms of law, it can only speak to us of obligation; if we think only in terms of responsibility, it can only speak to us of freedom; if we think only of God, it will assume the voice of the Almighty. Then there remains the possibility of moving from condemnation and insults to conversation and cooperation, should we learn what language to offer to the inner self who sees. To find the language that gives birth to insight: this would be a worthy experiment.

So is there an alternative way of conceiving the liberation of truth? Can we conceive the practice of liberation differently even within the allegorical terms of Plato's cave itself? For in the allegory, the illusion of moving shadows derives from the fact that the prisoners were chained and could not move, and the fire in whose light the shadows are projected is itself concealed behind a wall, leading to a transposition in which the two-dimensional and colorless shadows seem real, while the concealed servants carrying the shapes seem imaginary. Then the task of liberation is to break the chains of illusion, move around the cave and touch its walls, discover the fire as the source of projection, greet the servants and share their labor in bearing shapes. It is by moving the mind, discovering its limits, forming new alliances, and overthrowing illusions and appearances that truth comes to germinate in the soul. Spiritual liberation compels our attention back to finitude, engagement, and the intrinsic. In doing so, the truth of its transformation is proven by the encounter with a third dimension and with color that is made visible as soon as the mind is able to move. Instead of projecting a colorless utopia, thinking encounters the sources of light that give it color, significance, and meaning directly. The task of philosophy becomes liberation through moving the mind, using it as an organ of groping experimentation and discovery. Philosophy is restored to a spiritual exercise.

Philosophy as a Spiritual Exercise

The use of philosophy as a spiritual exercise is hardly unknown in modernity, and yet it has normally taken place outside of academic life. One thinks of Descartes's renunciation of responsibilities in later life to lead the life of a wandering thinker; one thinks of the young Maine de Biran abandoning the world for his country retreat where he could solely think and write; one thinks of a distinctively French tradition of meditation and introspection on the experience of thinking, as

epitomized by Henri Bergson's work on time and free will. One thinks of Spinoza's refusal of any academic appointment. One thinks of Søren Kierkegaard's pseudonymous literature, cultivating distinct perspectives and subjective attitudes toward truth; one thinks of Friedrich Nietzsche with his alpine wanderings, furiously scribbling in his notebooks in a welter of passion. One thinks of Franz Rosenzweig in the trenches of the Eastern Front, writing postcard after postcard on relation and redemption. One thinks of the notebooks of Simone Weil, where principle after principle is commanded to her ascetic self. In these cases, as with many others, distance from established institutions and abandoning conventional practices of thought were the conditions for creativity and insight. And how has the modern world received such prodigies? It has studied them. It has recuperated their lives and their thinking within the institutions of interpretation. It has made them an object of scholarship. It has redeemed them from their self-imposed isolation to hold them up as heroes for us all, so that one may feed on the pleasure of their insights and shake one's head over their self-deceptions, without having to repeat the hardships and labors of their thinking. This is not to say that only scholarship takes place. Alongside the gravity of public and published scholarship there is the levity of a private fantasy life: "Of course it is unrealistic and it wouldn't pay, but if I were a private thinker, free to determine my life by my thought rather than follow the necessary institutional practices of teaching, scholarship, publication and peer review, then I would..."

The projection of a utopia of truth is a collective, social practice, where thought is regulated by and accountable to others, and where trust in this process has become institutionalized. The pursuit of philosophy as a spiritual exercise has been a private, individual practice, where, suspicious of the habits, presuppositions, and established institutions of thinking, one tries to make one's life accountable to a distinctive vision of truth. Philosophy is divided between public reason and private fantasy, between trust and suspicion. What seems to be missing in both cases is an attentive community of practitioners who enhance each other's thinking practice. For if we delimit thought to projecting propositions, to stating possible opinions, then human relations are similarly reduced: one can share an opinion, or praise it, criticize it, accept it, or replace it. Thinking with another is reduced to a matter of power. Alternatively, if one follows an individual path, then one can suspect others, criticize them, interpret and explain them, or else one can learn from them and treat them as an authority; in a similar vein, one can only expect others to treat one's individual thought in the same way. Thinking with another is again reduced to a matter of

power. Yet when it comes to thinking with, before, and for another, there are so many other modes of possible interaction: abusing, displaying, confessing, teasing, seducing, suggesting, promising, inspiring, undermining, guiding, resisting, suspending, delaying, waiting, and responding. Philosophy is no longer a battlefield, a tribunal, a marketplace, or an industry. It requires a theater to display its personal interactions.³⁴ Reason is no longer restricted to the material of public projection or private fantasy: it comes to life when thinking responds directly to thinking. This would be a fresh style of philosophy in the contemporary world, one more reminiscent of the ancient philosophical schools. And in an age where networking and interaction is more possible than ever before, a fresh impetus and urgency is imparted to our guiding question: What are the prospects for philosophy as a spiritual exercise in the contemporary world?

The time is coming when it will be necessary to proclaim a new table of values. Freedom to pay attention is superior to freedom to choose. Care is more significant than the discipline of work or pleasure. The spontaneous growth and emergence of life is more fruitful than uniformity. Engaging the heart is more significant and powerful than an appeal to reason. Awakening to the life of the soul is more significant than writing theories to advise agents who hold power. The singular case is more significant than the general principle. Experience, attention, and insight are more significant than belief, reasoning, or procedure. In short, we need a new modernity, a new value system, a new basis of piety at the most subtle level, embracing affect and posture on the one hand, institutional formation on the other, and the reasoning that informs belief structures and discourse in between. What is key is to approach the heart of the matter, to make thought live, to pose its urgency with irresistible force. For the philosophical exercise is a training in human freedom. Philosophy is the highest freedom known to humanity. It is the place where the world is created. Of course, the creation of the world also occurs through invention and love. But philosophical creation invents new states of the soul: it builds the soul, builds true wealth, it adds to human experience with a new quality of thinking. Each word written in a philosophical journal has its effect. Even if it is never read again, it still has its effect. For the primary purpose is not communication but crystallization: the coming to expression of an awareness. A thought is given a body, a life of its own. Thoughts may be more fleeting than butterflies, but the aim of such writing is not to make the thought endure but to make it live—to give it the power to bring forth other thoughts. Thoughts abide in swarms or multiplicities, and the more that reach maturity, the more that others can be formed.

Philosophy is a practice aimed at liberating thought. When society was ruled by belief, the aim of philosophy was to liberate thought from opinion. The ancient emphasis on the eternal was invoked to separate reason from opinions ruled by temporal passions. Later on, the modern emphasis on doubt was invoked to separate views established on an internal order of reasons from arbitrary or authoritarian opinions. But now society is ruled by established ways of thinking. These are correlates of specific institutional requirements; they are introjections into the soul. Philosophy encounters these social forces within: the fate of humanity is decided within the soul. The task is no longer criticism or doubt: it is one of ascesis. The aim is to stop the motor reflex of thought, the habitual pattern, the task of explanation. In each habitual pattern, whether recognition, explanation, modeling, representation, categorization, or reflection, the productive power of imagination takes over from attention and receptivity. Yet the meditative philosopher can quieten the processes of habit, memory, and imagination in order to attend to the birth of thought. To pursue philosophy as a spiritual exercise is to proceed without method, purpose, content, object, or goal. It is to make the grand renunciation of all commonality, all agreement, all certainty, all knowledge, all confidence. It is to enter the void simply because truth and reason cannot be pursued as a possession. One knows no more after the exercise than before. Yet self-discipline can be conceived as control over one's sense of time. One has built a virtue, a soul, a possibility of interaction. For the philosopher encounters the entire world within the soul. It is encountered as a course of energy, prior to any rationalization, reflection, or imagination. By attending to the birth of thought within oneself or within others, one discovers a form, shape, channel, script, or score for experiences one has not known how to name, describe, or perhaps even feel. Then energy resolves into a motivation, a reason; then life takes on wealth, power, and meaning.

Notes

1 Thinking and Life: The Speech of *Phaedrus*

1. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) and *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
2. Plato's *Apology*, 36c, translation cited in Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 85; Alternatively see the translation by G. M. A. Grube, in John M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: The Complete Works* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 32.
3. Plato, *Apology*, 29d–e.
4. Plato, *Crito*, 48b in *Plato: Complete Works* 42.
5. Plato, *Apology*, 38a.
6. Plato, *Apology*, 28d.
7. Hadot quotes Sallustius, a fourth-century Neoplatonist, here. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 94.
8. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 94.
9. Simone Weil, *The Notebooks of Simone Weil*, trans. Arthur Wills (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), Volume 2: 498.
10. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 2: 498.
11. Plato, *Theages* 128b in *Plato: Complete Works*, 635: "As regards this subject of learning, I claim to be more clever than any human beings previously or now." See also *Symposium*, 177d, and the extraordinarily rich commentary, James M. Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom and Silence* (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2003).
12. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 2: 491.
13. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 2: 494.
14. Weil *Notebooks*, Volume 2: 492.
15. Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr (London: Routledge, 2002), 11; *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 160–1.
16. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 2: 483–4.
17. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 2: 495.
18. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 145, 160.
19. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 2: 527.
20. Weil, *Lectures on Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 193.

21. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 134.
22. Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, trans. Richard Rees (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 102.
23. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 139.
24. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 136, 142.
25. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 173–4.
26. Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, 335.
27. Matthew 16.25 RSV.
28. Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, 147.
29. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 1989), 189.
30. See Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone, 1988), 17–21.
31. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1990), 55.
32. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988), ch. 2.
33. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone, 1983), xiii.
34. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone 1994), 265.
35. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 1.
36. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 110.
37. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994), 174.
38. Michael McGhee, *Transformations of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.
39. Most evident in the Platonic dialogues *Alcibiades* and *Laches*, and recovered in the works of Pierre Hadot. See also Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), and Robert C. Solomon, *Spirituality for the Skeptic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also Michael McGhee (ed.), *Philosophy, Religion and the Spiritual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and John Cornwell and Michael McGhee (eds.), *Philosophers and God* (London: Continuum, 2009).
40. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 28.
41. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 29.
42. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 21.
43. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 69.
44. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 74.
45. Cf. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 129–31.
46. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 85.
47. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 169.
48. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 23.
49. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 115.
50. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 97.
51. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 120.

52. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 101.
53. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 124.
54. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 139.
55. Plato, *Symposium*, 217–18.
56. Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom and Silence*, 374.
57. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 192.
58. See also Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom and Silence*, 400.
59. Plato, *Symposium*, 218e in *Plato: Complete Works*, 500.
60. Mentioned by Cicero (*Tusculan Disputations*, 4.37), and remarked by Montaigne and Nietzsche.
61. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 253d–254e in *Plato: Complete Works* 530–1.
62. Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom and Silence*, 141.
63. Plato, *Apology*, 32a.
64. Simone Weil, *Waiting on God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (Glasgow: Collins, 1977), 93.

2 Ends and Illusions: The Speech of Pausanias

1. René Descartes, *Discourse on Method & the Meditations*, trans. F. E. Sutcliffe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968); Søren Kierkegaard, *Johannes Climacus*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).
2. Robert Spaemann, *Happiness and Benevolence*, trans. Jeremiah Alberg (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 93. Heidegger by contrast read the telos as that which circumscribes, completes, and bounds so that the thing “begins to be what after production it will be.” See Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in David Farrell Krell (ed.), *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), 315.
3. Spaemann, *Happiness and Benevolence*, 87.
4. Spaemann *Happiness and Benevolence*, 104.
5. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 105.
6. Matthew 21.28–31.
7. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 101.
8. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 78.
9. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 79.
10. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 79.
11. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 81.
12. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 95–6.
13. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 97.
14. Weil, *Lectures on Philosophy*, 205.
15. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 97.
16. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 22.

17. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 107.
18. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 26.
19. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 12.
20. Longinus identified this phenomenon in his treatise *On the Sublime*: “By a sort of natural law in all such matters we always attend to whatever possesses superior force; whence it is that we are drawn away from demonstration pure and simple to any startling image within whose dazzling brilliancy the argument lies concealed. And it is not unreasonable that we should be affected in this way, for when two things are brought together, the more powerful always attracts to itself the virtue of the weaker.” Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 15.7.
21. Plato, *Apology*, 30a.
22. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 102.
23. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 158–9.
24. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 351.
25. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 225.
26. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 158, 161.
27. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 120.
28. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 220.
29. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 352.
30. Nietzsche seems to have deployed the eternal return in such a way as an intensive repetition that weds to eternity. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1969), “The Seven Seals.”
31. Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, 102.
32. McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 169.
33. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 152.
34. Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 37.
35. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 30.
36. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume 1: 52.

3 Hypocrisy: The Speech of *Eryximachus*

1. Herbert McCabe OP draws on a similar thought experiment, Robert Nozick’s “Experience Machine,” to argue the Thomist case of the priority of activity over experience. McCabe, *The Good Life* (London: Continuum, 2005), 50.
2. Winifred Gallagher, *Rapt: Attention and the Focused Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009).
3. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998).
4. Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 12.

5. Cited in Outka, *Agape*, 4.
6. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Volume II, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), 535.
7. Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (London: SPCK, 1954), 78.
8. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 536.
9. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 555.
10. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 540.
11. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 535.
12. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1970), 62.
13. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 449.
14. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 449.
15. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 17.
16. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 8.
17. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 40.
18. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 16.
19. Derrida continues: "The mass productions that today inundate the press and publishing houses do not form their readers; they presuppose in a phantasmatic and rudimentary fashion a reader who has already been programmed. They thus end up preformatting this very mediocre addressee whom they had postulated in advance." Jacques Derrida, *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 31.
20. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume I: 245.
21. Weil, *Notebooks*, Volume I: 251.

4 Dispositions and Interests: The Speech of *Aristophanes*

1. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 136. Note the proximity to the phrasing of the English translation of *The Metaphysics of Morals*: "act upon a maxim that can also hold as a universal law" (in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 380); this is closely confirmed by *The Critique of Pure Reason*: "So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law" (in *The Cambridge Edition*, 164); yet the variant phrasing in the earlier *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* may prove significant to this discussion: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature" (in *The Cambridge Edition*, 73).

2. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 136.
3. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 137.
4. Kant, *Groundwork*, 81.
5. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 208. Note that in this emergence of a passion from an idea we are not far from the emergence of a value from a fact, an “ought” from an “is.”
6. Hume, *Treatise*, 206.
7. Note the case of the German woman from Königsberg, Kant’s city, who when advised to flee the advancing Russians in January 1945 replied, “The Russians will never get us. The Führer will never permit it. Much sooner he will gas us.” If the Führer’s will is truly universal, nothing can countermand it, neither particular inclinations of the Russian army nor the will to survival. Arendt completed the story with her own provocative joke: “There should have been one more voice, preferably a female one, which, sighing heavily, replied: And now all that good, expensive gas has been wasted on the Jews!” Arendt, *Eichmann*, 111.
8. Kant proclaimed the dignity of human persons as objective ends in themselves, irrespective of partial inclinations, because only a good will can be good in and of itself (*Groundwork*, 50). The will is valued higher than objects of the inclinations as follows: “All objects of the inclinations have only a conditional worth; for if there were not inclinations and the needs based on them, their object would be without worth. But the inclinations themselves, as sources of needs, are so far from having an absolute worth, so as to make one wish to have them, that it must instead be the universal wish of every rational being to be altogether free of them.” (*Groundwork*, 79) Kant therefore gets himself into a terrible tangle when he attempts to use his categorical imperative for assessing moral actions such as suicide, repaying debts, cultivating talents, and benevolence, since his discussion is of maxims that derive from particular inclinations, whether the will to survive or the will to die, the will to maintain reputation or the will to cheat, the will to success or the will to idleness, the will to give to others or the will to hoard one’s own wealth (*Groundwork*, 74–5). By far the more consistent conclusion would be to abandon all particular inclinations in favor of a universal will given from outside.
9. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 288.
10. The story is recounted by Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna. H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) 6; it derives from Lucian.
11. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone, 1988).
12. See Félix Ravaisson, *Of Habit*, trans. Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair (London: Continuum, 2008), 25.
13. Pierre Maine de Biran, *Influence de l’habitude sur la faculté de penser* (Paris: Henrichs, undated), viii.
14. Such a conception of reason follows Hume in making reason serve the interests of the passions (*Treatise*, 265–6). Hume even derived justice from self-interest as the convention of abstinence from the possessions of others, without

which society and mutual cooperation would dissolve (*Treatise*, 312–21). Yet since interests must be perceived through sympathy first, the difficulty with this conception is that reason only extends as far as sympathy, not as far as justice. Neglected interests cannot claim to be taken into account. Hume was perhaps a little inconsistent in denying reason an interest of its own, confessing that, “morality is a subject that interests us above all others,” (*Treatise*, 293) while claiming that, “philosophers never balance betwixt profit and honesty, because their decisions are general, and neither their passions nor imaginations are interested in the objects.” (*Treatise*, 273). One concludes that if Hume was interested in virtue, then it was the idea of virtue toward which he directed his view, not the stimulating prospect of becoming virtuous. Nevertheless, we may detect here the emergence of an interest intrinsic to ideas themselves.

15. Hume, *Treatise*, 312.
16. Hume, *Treatise*, 356.
17. Hume, *Treatise*, 370.

6 Death and Love: The Speech of Socrates

1. 1 John 3.16.
2. *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 148.
3. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 148.
4. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 297.
5. As Paul Tillich put it: “Knowledge of that which concerns us infinitely is possible only in an attitude of infinite concern.” *The Courage to Be* (London: Collins, 1977), 125–6.
6. Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 48–63.
7. As in Plato's *Phaedo*, 65a in *Plato: Complete Works*, 56.
8. As in Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin, 1989).
9. As in Heidegger, *Being and Time*.
10. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 277.
11. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 282, 284, 294.
12. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 307.
13. It is therefore somewhat ironic that Heidegger could write that “death lays claim to Dasein as individual Dasein” (*Being and Time*, 308), that “Dasein is certain of death” (301), that “covering it up it is in Untruth” (301), for nothing is more uncertain than the possibility of an impossibility. Heidegger uses death to disclose the ontological structure of Dasein as care, emphasizing that *existentiale* Being-toward-death is not an *existentiell* stand toward death nor comporting toward death for edification (292). Yet he derives the ontological

difference between the *existentiell* and the *existentiale* from the possibility of death itself, in other words, from imagination, which is of course an *existentiell* attitude. By contrast, I would suggest that there is no ontological Being-toward-death, merely differing subjective attitudes.

14. Spinoza *Ethics* IV Proposition 67, in Michael L. Morgan (ed.), *The Essential Spinoza* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), 134.
15. *Phaedo*, 64a in *Plato: Complete Works*, 55.
16. *Phaedo*, 66a in *Plato: Complete Works*, 57.
17. Spinoza *Ethics* V, Proposition 23, note, 154q.
18. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (London: Souvenir Press, 2011), 60.
19. For the character of life as something to be repressed, see Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 50–55.
20. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 268–9.
21. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 87; emphasis in the original.
22. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 55.
23. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 154.
24. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 181.
25. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 59.
26. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 3.
27. Norman O. Brown, *Life against Death* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 9.
28. *Phaedrus*, 254e in *Plato: Complete Works*, 532.
29. Brown, *Life against Death*, 90.
30. Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (New York: Random House, 1966).
31. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 135.
32. Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 177.
33. Jonathan Lear, *Love and its Place in Nature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 173.
34. Brown, *Life against Death*, 95.
35. *Phaedrus*, 271d in *Plato: Complete Works*, 548.
36. *Phaedrus*, 271a–b, in *Plato: Complete Works*, 547–8.
37. Plato, *Seventh Letter*, 341c in *Plato: Complete Works*, 1659.
38. *Symposium*, 203d in *Plato: Complete Works*, 486.
39. *Phaedrus*, 249c in *Plato: Complete Works*, 527.
40. *Symposium*, 177e; *Theages*, 128b in *Plato: Complete Works*, 462 and 635 respectively.
41. John 15.13.
42. See Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 113.
43. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 123.
44. E.g. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1991).
45. Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 88–89.
46. *Gravity and Grace*, 89.
47. *Gravity and Grace*, 89.

Appendix: Philosophy as a Spiritual Exercise

1. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*.
2. Plato, *Apology*, 28e.
3. Plato, *Apology*, 30a–b.
4. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 85.
5. Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 30. Hume noted that not only is the ancient philosophy based on substances and accident unable to demonstrate the reality of its presuppositions, but so also the modern philosophy based on extension and solidity. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 219–31.
6. “Come now, I will tell you—and bring away my story safely when you have heard it—the only ways of inquiry there are for thinking:
 - the one, that it is and that it is not possible for it not to be,
 - is the path of Persuasion (for it attends upon Truth),
 - the other, that it is not and that it is necessary for it not to be,
 - this I point out to you to be a path completely unlearnable,
 - for neither may you know that which is not (for it is not to be accomplished)
 nor may you declare it... For the same thing is for thinking and for being.” Parmenides fragments 3 and 6, trans. by S. Marc Cohen, Patricia Curd, and C. D. C. Reeve, *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), 36–38.
7. See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 59–64; *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (London: Athlone, 1991), 253–65.
8. Alfred North Whitehead, *Nature and Life* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 5–6.
9. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 139.
10. E.g. Lawrence E. Johnson, *Focusing on Truth* (London: Routledge, 1992), summarizes the recent history while adding his own contribution.
11. E.g. Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
12. E.g. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976).
13. Here I draw upon Henri Bergson’s discussion of the “transformation scene from fairyland” common to materialism and idealism:

The material world which surrounds the body, the body which shelters the brain, the brain in which we distinguish centres, he [the materialist or idealist] abruptly dismisses; and, as by a magician’s wand, he conjures up, as a thing entirely new the representation of what he began by postulating. This representation he drives out of space, so that it may have nothing in common with the matter from which he started.

- See Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1911), 32–3.
14. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 265.
 15. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 455.
 16. Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 33; Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 416.
 17. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 449.
 18. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 415.
 19. Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 33.
 20. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 265; emphasis in the original.
 21. This “paralogism of rational psychology” is discussed by Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1929), 328–83. It is generalized to modern reason in Philip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion: The Price of Piety* (London: Routledge, 2002), 43–8.
 22. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 485.
 23. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 489–500.
 24. New Economics Foundation, *Growth Isn't Possible* (London: New Economics Foundation, 2010).
 25. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (London: Penguin, 2008).
 26. Philip Goodchild, “Money, Gift and Sacrifice: 13 Brief Episodes in the Pricing of Thought,” *Angelaki* 4:3 (1999): 25–39; also Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion: The Price of Piety* (London: Routledge, 2002).
 27. Bernard Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy*, trans. David Ross (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 126.
 28. Augustine, Book X.
 29. For a fuller critique of money as shaping contemporary consciousness, see Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*, and Goodchild, *Theology of Money* (London: SCM Press, 2007 and Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
 30. Charles Eisenstein, *Sacred Economics: Money, Gift and Society in the Age of Transition* (Berkeley: Evolver Editions, 2011), 75.
 31. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Thinking* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1978), 192.
 32. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 186.
 33. See Mika Ojakangas, *The Voice of Conscience: A Political Genealogy of Western Ethical Experience* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 392–3.
 34. See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 8–10.

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