FIVE FORMS OF PHILOSOPHICAL THERAPY

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Philosophy as therapy has become a buzzword these days. If I were old enough, it might remind me of the catchiness of logical positivism in days of yore. The mere mention of the term instills in one some sense of what the disciplinary community of philosophy is all about—some sense of the significance (or purported significance) surrounding all the spilled ink. But much like older buzzwords, the notion of philosophy as therapy is a slippery one—and for this very reason should probably be held at arm’s length until some clarity can be attached to the notion in question.

The aim of this essay is to articulate five distinct versions of philosophical therapy, each of which is in some way implied by utterances concerning the role of philosophical reflection when the term “therapy” is used in a rough and ready way. My aim here is twofold: on the one hand, I will suggest, via exegesis, that there is no explanatorily significant unifying strand which unites therapeutic perspectives: we have only family resemblance. On the other hand, I will suggest that the notion of philosophical therapy can still be a fruitful one, provided we construe the therapeutic as an interpretive strategy instead of a philosophical position one maintains.

My argumentative strategy in this essay can, in a certain sense, be seen along therapeutic lines as well. My aim will be to provide a genealogical account of versions of philosophical therapy that litter the academic landscape in order to better understand what we might have in mind when we call a philosophical project therapeutic. The point of juxtaposing differing therapeutic models is itself a therapeutic one: by representing the often vastly divergent approaches to philosophical therapy, I will suggest that we should understand the current cash-value of this notion as an approach to texts and problems rather than as a philosophical position one maintains.

Therapy in the Ancient World

In one sense, philosophy was construed as therapy from its very beginnings. Socrates aimed at a practice that would effectively rid one of a delusional fear of death—a fear that for too long had led his fellow Athenians to misconstrue their own lives and the roles they might play within Athenian society. The gadfly Socrates aimed to correct the false views of his philosophical interlocutors through a practice which would throw into relief the fact that death was nothing to be feared. Philosophical therapy for the midwife Socrates turned out to be a preparation of the soul for death. Thus in Plato’s Phaedo Socrates, in giving an account of the immortality of the soul and the need to detach from bodily concerns, claims that the avoidance of bodily concerns “is no other than practicing philosophy in the right way, [it is] in fact, training to die easily” (Plato, 80e). Socratic therapy is thus the acquisition of the right attitude towards death—an acquisition which is made possible by paying proper attention to those things which matter most: namely, matters of the soul.

Indeed, the ancient world is littered with those whose thought hinged on the practical side of philosophical reflection—on its ability to allow one to cope in the appropriate way with daily matters. One thinks of the Cynics defecating in the street as a means of revealing the emptiness of social practices, or of the original skeptics before the bastardization made possible by epistemologically-centered post-Cartesian thought: a plea for ignorance belied by the thought that commitments can do nothing but harm. The
Stoics are perhaps the paradigm case for philosophy as therapy in the ancient world: slaves and emperors who made their primary concern an understanding of the world which would relieve the pain of everyday life.

Cicero provides an interesting synthesis of several ancient schools, and hence provides an ideal source for an exposition of the role of the therapeutic in ancient philosophy. His eclecticism allows him to integrate very diverse doctrines in Hellenistic philosophy while still maintaining the view that the fundamental role of the philosophical endeavor is a therapeutic one. For these reasons, I have chosen Cicero as a model for one version of philosophy as therapy.

The value of philosophical reflection, by Cicero’s lights, is nothing short of spectacular. Philosophy is the tool through which we set aside the falsities that act as cornerstones in our everyday experiences. Our purported need to feel sorrow at the loss of a loved one is an example of one such falsity. Philosophical reflection reveals that one need not feel distress concerning things over which one has no control. We cannot stop the heavens and earth, nor fly rapidly around the sun, to bring back those loved now lost. The thought that we can, or that we cannot, and we should therefore feel pain, is the precise error philosophy can rule out. Once one realizes such things, one is better off. “This deception [about distress], as being the root of all evil, philosophy promises to drag out utterly,” (Cicero 1996, 423). But if this were not enough, philosophy has yet more to offer. According to Cicero, the very limits of good and evil are to be discovered through philosophy (Cicero 1996, 421)—it is to act as the foundation of our existence in the world by locating us in normative space—by showing us where we ought and ought not tread. In its most simplistic form, this vision of philosophy as therapy is summed up as an obvious conclusion in a natural progression: “So it is that by reflection men gradually realize the extreme falsity of their belief” (Cicero 1996, 295). Philosophy facilitates this recognition, and by facilitating it, philosophy enables us to live a certain sort of life. As Stephen White has put the point, Cicero commends philosophy “as a form of psychiatry” (White, 226).

It is hard to say with any degree of certainty where philosophical trope ends and genuine assertion begins. It is precisely this that makes it difficult to determine precisely how philosophy is intended to be a form of psychiatry. One difficulty lies in the fact that philosophical therapy, as it appears in the Tusculan Disputations, seems to be a quite distinct philosophical project than those envisioned in Cicero’s political writings. Before considering the status of Cicero’s project in the Tusculans, I want to give an (albeit all-too-brief) account of how philosophy as therapy might work.

Reading philosophical texts will purportedly prepare the reader for certain occurrences. “One aim of premeditation, then, is to counteract the effect of surprise by lowering our estimate of misfortune in advance” (White, 241). When we pour through philosophical tracts, we are continuously reminded of the status of distressful occurrences in everyday life. The aim of these reminders is to prevent actual happenings from catching us too off guard. This preemptive strike does most of the work of philosophical therapy. Cicero realizes that the syllogism will do little work for one when distress has struck. Indeed, he even speaks condescendingly of the use of the syllogism to console the already-grieving individual. By shaping our beliefs about the world before distress strikes, we can successfully avoid being overcome by despair.

This view depends on a certain analysis of the nature of emotion. “How we feel, it is argued, depends primarily on what we think has happened or will happen, and on what we think is good or bad” (White, 228). Sorrow involves a certain phenomenological er-

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ror. When we are distressed about something, we are perceiving the world in a way that does not correspond to reality. Suffering just is "believing something very bad is present" (Tusc. 3.24, quoted in White). Philosophical activity is meant to root out these beliefs—to define the limits of good and bad in such a way as to reveal the error involved in sorrow.

One of the primary problems encountered when dealing with distress is that distress has a significant normative dimension. Despairing over the death of a loved one cannot be treated by simply pointing out that things have an evanescent quality. One must also counter the sense of the mourner that he is "ought" to despair. Chrysippus, using Zeno's term "fresh" to describe the state of certain beliefs, made this point to explain why certain mourners mourn longer than others. As White has put the point, "the key, [Chrysippus] suggested, is a third factor in the beliefs that cause sorrow: what keeps them fresh is the sense that one should be sad" (White, 230). It is this picture of despair that launches Stoicism as a full-fledged form of therapy. Our grieving turns on certain beliefs we have about the world, and the way these beliefs comport us to the world. This means that our despair is in our own hands—that we need not despair at all. Philosophy serves to make us realize this fact: it places responsibility back into our own hands. As White has remarked, "if Chrysippus is right that our passions depend on our beliefs about how to behave, then modifying those beliefs should modify our reactions as well. Even if few of us have much control over our emotions, his analysis shows us how to acquire some control" (White, 232–33).

Situating Cicero's own view of philosophical therapy within that of Stoicism has been admirably achieved by Stephen White. He notes the subtle differences between the standard Stoic lines of attack and the Ciceronian one—highlighting Cicero's use of moral exemplars instead of advocating the somewhat harsher side of traditional Stoic therapists. Instead of exploring this (relatively esoteric) aspect of Cicero's philosophical project, I want to consider some of the larger brush strokes painted in the Tusculan Disputations. Having provided a (brief) account of how philosophical therapy might aid particular individuals, I would like to explore how this view of philosophy relates to some other aspects of the Ciceronian corpus, as well as how this view of therapy gets situated in Cicero's rhetorically rich philosophical strategy.

Cicero describes his project as "agreeable to the practice of Socrates, in trying to conceal my own private opinion, to relieve others from deception and in every discussion to look for the most probable solution" (Cicero 1996, 435). As A. E. Douglas has noted, this is hardly an adequate representation of Cicero's actual philosophical proceedings, at least as one finds them in the Tusculans. Cicero is not simply towing the most probable line in these books, but offering a rather confessional account of the therapeutic value of philosophical activity. The connection between Cicero's devout allegiance to political activity and his use of the activity of philosophical writing is a difficult one to see. Cicero holds that political allegiances are among the most important duties (rivalled only by duty to one's parents). The public benefit of philosophy is identical in form to the value philosophy might yield for the individual: it sheds light in the otherwise dark corridors of belief. The Tusculans differ from the model of philosophizing found in the earlier political writings: the subject in question is not public. Cicero is not here expounding the duties one has to the state, nor the serendipitous status of Roman Law mapping squarely onto natural law. The Tusculans offer nothing short of the value of philosophizing for the particular individual—indeed, independent of the ability of philosophy to set one straight concerning political matters. As one commentator describes it, Cicero "now turns inwards, to personal problems. Here philosophy is to provide the

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answers, the philosophy which teaches how to cope with these problems” (Douglas, 208).

Oddly enough, the philosophy which will serve one in times of distress is represented as an idealized, anti-personal one. Philosophy in the Tusculans takes on its own identity—it is not merely that which leaps forth from the fingers of the anguished. “Be persuaded at any rate of this, that there will be no end to wretchedness unless the soul is cured, and without philosophy this is impossible. Therefore let us put ourselves in the hands of philosophy for treatment” (Cicero 1996, 241). Whereas Cicero describes his own writings as embracing a Socratic tradition, he describes philosophy per se as achieving grander heights. Hiding behind the designator ‘philosophy,’ Cicero is permitted both arrogance and modesty. The notion of philosophy as agent-independent is assuredly an instance of litotes. Cicero has here reified the activity of particular persons. Philosophy stands above us, capable of guiding us. We are not here in the hands of a statesmen, but of the noble love of wisdom. This rhetorical turn produces the sense of philosophy as encompassing—as more than the ravings of a Tuscan therapist. The personal is displaced by the larger than life—the real by the reified. The act of reading philosophy (and this is assuredly the therapy of which Cicero speaks most of the time) is consenting to philosophy. Reading philosophy becomes submitting to something greater than the reader—something that can cure us, however much we might doubt the act of reading’s ability to fulfill the promise of therapeutic philosophy. “All the same, philosophy claims that she will succeed: only let us consent to her treatment” (Cicero 1996, 325).

This turn is not an innocent one—though to describe it as undignified would certainly be to miss the point. Here, we do have something strikingly Socratic—a certain ironic stance toward the reader. Of course there is no such thing as a “philosophy” soaring above us. The reader cannot in all sincerity think that the act of reading alone will place her beyond herself—in the hands of the grandmother of disciplines. The reader may hold out hopes for reading, but the hope that this personal activity can transcend the personal is certainly misplaced. Philosophy, or so one would think, is an activity of embodied agents—people with everyday pathologies. It cannot be that which is exterior to our act of reading, capable of holding us, consoling us as we are placed in her hands. Philosophy has no hands, but pathology most certainly does. The trope of philosophy as reified—as more than Cicero making particular defenses of certain well-worn views for a consenting readership—is akin to the dramatic stance of the ironic Socrates, that knowing know-nothing. Cicero places the reader in his own hands—hands quite capable of philosophy, to be sure—but not in the hands of philosophy itself.

While it is possible to read the political writings as placing us in the “truth”—as articulating the facts about such things as duty and law—the point of emphasis that characterizes the Tusculans is only secondarily epistemic. While it is certainly the case that Cicero views the acquisition of true beliefs as essential to the therapeutic process, the value of acquiring true beliefs hinges on the therapeutic outcome: one gets at happiness by recognizing truth, and this, as we shall see, makes truth incidental to therapy.

By presenting philosophy as something standing above the text, Cicero pulls us a bit closer to the activity of therapy. We are not disconcerted by the fact that Cicero, one with as many pathologies as we the sick, is guiding us to health. We have instead the guiding light of philosophy above us—shining down upon the path leading to a healthy soul.

But why is this an ironic position, as I claimed above? Cicero is certainly aware that there can be no philosophy without those who engage in it. It is also apparent
that the trope which reifies philosophy is not meant to deceive. As Cicero also says, "Assuredly there is an art of healing the soul—I mean philosophy, whose aid must be sought not, as in bodily diseases, outside ourselves, and we must use our utmost endeavor, with all our resources and strength, to have the power to be ourselves our own physicians" (Cicero 1996, 231). The metaphorical hands of philosophy turn out to be located within. Cicero has drawn us deep into a text that promises to provide help with personal problems in a public forum, but ends up pushing us back out of the text and into a realm where we are all our own physicians. Much as Socrates coaxes his interlocutors into teaching him, only to show that the interlocutor has nothing to teach, Cicero charms us into thinking that philosophy will show us how to be happy, only to find out that any such happening will happen due to our own activities, not by placing ourselves passively in the hands of the great goddess "philosophy."

The irony present here is admittedly of a specific sort. As Nehamas has pointed out, "irony" in the mouth of Cicero does not mean, as is perhaps standardly thought, intending the opposite of what is said. On the contrary, Cicero holds that irony "gives the impression that you are saying something different from (alium, aliter), not contrary (contrarium) to, what you are thinking.... Irony allows you simply to refuse to let your audience know what you think and to suggest that it is not what you say" (Nehamas, 55). Presenting philosophy as that which resides above—as a means by which one passively gains happiness—is an ironic gesture in the context of the personal. Both therapy and philosophy are active endeavors, not spectator sports. It would be a tragic occurrence were one to assume that the mere act of reading philosophy proved sufficient for the attainment of eudaimonia. The eye lulling from line to line does not permit one to be one's own physician, though it may allow for the occasional consoling distraction from tedious living."

So it is that passively experiencing the philosophical is not enough for therapy to occur. One must read as though one's life depended on it. One must read as though the narration was directly addressed to the reader. This, of course, rules out the possibility of an unguided authorial hand: reading becomes dialogue with one capable of forcing us to be our own physicians—not a transcendence into the realm of the goddess discipline. Construing philosophy as having its own existence permits the heavily pathologized author to sneak through the first pages unnoticed—to give the narrator's voice a bit more punch in demanding that we be our own physicians—that we take up responsibility for the voice of philosophy.

The ironic gesture that philosophy stands above us serves to make forceful the notion that philosophy must come from within. Reading passively is thwarted when the text makes demands on the reader. The reader is forced to realize that the text is not the answer, but a medium for the answer a person might seek. It is in this fashion that reading philosophy turns into therapy.

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to two (quite specific) features of the Ciceronian model of therapy, if only to accentuate the ways in which this view differs from those I will explore below. First, the unit of Ciceronian therapeutic analysis is a belief, or set of beliefs, that inform an agent's life. We engage in therapy by noticing what "that" clauses contain false statements about the world, at least insofar as these statements lead to suffering. Second, the truth of these beliefs are crucial components of their psychological efficacy: we cannot turn away from specific attachments to things unless we see the truth of the claim that such attachments are not of utmost importance. The role of philosophy here is to get us to question the contents of our "that" clauses—to make us acquire beliefs that will allow us to escape suffering and live in unison with the world as virtuous beings. It is a view analogous to this one that permeates ancient and Hellenistic

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writings, and that, to a certain degree, disappears with the birth of modern philosophical sensibility.

**Post-Cartesian Therapy:**

**Nietzsche and Narrative**

Ancient therapy allows us a means of answering questions about the value of pursuing truth that avoids begging the question: we seek truth because happiness lies therein—because, to put it in a cliché, the truth will set us free. In this way, the actual emphasis of Stoic thought is the end of the philosophical project. As a means of attaining virtue and the tranquility that accompanies it, philosophy proves an immense resource. Without this end, however, philosophical engagement may just as well be left on the sidelines of life.

The birth of modern philosophy was at the same time a death blow to the ancient world’s conception of the role of philosophical engagement. The texts of Sextus Empiricus that emerged in Descartes’ time added fodder to the Cartesian project. Indeed, one might even say it gave this project direction. Sextus’ aim was to show, à la the Pyrrhonists, that assenting to a particular proposition about the world would only lead to hardship. Ignorance for the Pyrrhonist meant bliss. One might employ any particular view of philosophical import, provided that one did not grant such a view too great a weight in everyday dealings with the world. ‘It is relatively easy to see why, as Medieval science and metaphysics gave way to the so-called “new science,” the emergence of the writings of Sextus Empiricus might act as significant challenge to a blossoming modern sensibility. To defeat the skeptic, in the form of either the ancients or in the closer Montaigne, Descartes was to make epistemology first philosophy. This required a separation of the therapeutic aspects of philosophical enterprises and questions concerning knowledge. Whereas Cicero had seen knowledge as necessary to therapy, it achieved its force from the therapeutic results it yielded—not from the fact that it was knowledge. In Descartes, the situation changes.

I engage in this morsel of over-simplified intellectual history only in order to set the stage for Nietzsche’s (vastly different) therapeutic project. The Cartesian split of therapy and epistemology effectively placed therapy in the streets and philosophy in the academy. Nietzsche’s disdain of University-philosophy undoubtedly reflects this split: his aim was to force philosophy out of white-washed academic walls and into the muck of everyday existence. Because philosophy had ceased to be Lebensphilosophie, it had ceased to be anything worth doing at all. The very idea of the pursuit of truth for the sake of truth stopped Nietzsche cold.

My concern here is not the articulation of the aim of philosophy as Nietzsche construed it. Quite the contrary, my aim here is primarily methodological. My concern is to show the means by which Nietzsche attempted to create a healthy *Kultur*. Put crudely, Nietzsche viewed narrative as a tool that made possible a new understanding of the world and the self. The means by which this feat was to be achieved was redesignation: Nietzsche hoped to provide a new language of description to those emerging on the discursive scene. Because the “self,” for Nietzsche, turned out to be a radically contingent congeries of culturally-informed beliefs and desires (what he called “patterns of affects”), changing the way human beings in fact were involved changing the way in which *Kultur* might construct these individuals. To be a therapist, or cultural physician (*Arzt der Kultur*), in Nietzsche’s lavish idiom, meant to provide a new means of self-constitutive description that would free emergent selves from the nihilistic tendencies with which culture had been beset in the wake of the death of God.

Even Nietzsche’s early philosophical project manifests this same basic tendency. Besides a panegyric to Wagner, *The Birth of*
Tragedy aims to show that our everyday (and culturally-informed) understanding of events can systematically mislead us as to the nature of reality. Music, as Schopenhauerian unembodied will, can remind us of the center of all things: the noumenal *an sich* that drives and undergirds the world of appearances. It is following this recognition—one that involves Dionysian ecstasy and Apollonian detachment—that one can come to perceive the world as an aesthetic phenomenon that, as such, needs no justification.

Much like the later work, Nietzsche’s initial philosophical impulse is (*pace* Nehamas and Rorty) a world-changing one. New descriptions not only allow Nietzsche the opportunity for self-help—for understanding himself as a last voice in a long line of philosophical forebears. They also permit him to attempt to set the cultural stage in such a way as to change our phenomenological lives—to change the pattern of affects that constitutes our selfhood.

It is this political imperative, I am suggesting, that undergirds Nietzsche’s use of narrative as a form of therapeutic advance. Much like *The Birth of Tragedy* sings a Schopenhauerian song that constitutes a world-picture, Nietzsche’s later genealogical excursions into the history of morality and philosophy reweave the terms in which we make sense of our lives. It is this, it seems to me, which lends itself to one of Nietzsche’s most celebrated aphoristic remarks. I reproduce it here in full.

**HOW THE REAL WORLD FINALLY BECAME A FABLE:** The history of an error

1. The true world—attainable for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man; he lives in it.

2. The true world—unattainable for now, but promised for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man (“for the sinner who repents”).

3. The true world—unattainable, indestructible, unpromisable; but the very thought of it—a consolation, an obligation, an imperative. (Progress of the idea: it becomes more subtle, insidious, incomprehensible—it becomes female, it becomes Christian.)

4. The true world—unattainable? At any rate, unattained. And being unattained, also unknown. Consequently, not consoling, redeeming, or obligating; how could something unknown oblige us?

5. The “true” world—an idea which is no longer good for anything, not even obligating—an idea which has become useless and superfluous—consequently, a refuted idea: let us abolish it! (Gray morning. The yawning of reason. The cock-crow of positivism.)

6. The true world—we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one. (Noon: moment of the briefest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; *incipit* Zarathustra.)

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(Nietzsche, 485–86).

This passage marks one of the most succinct and decisive uses of narrative for therapeutic ends. While Nietzsche’s *Towards a Genealogy of Morals* follows the same procedure, for the purposes of this brief excursus into Nietzsche-Studies, I will confine myself to

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an account of the above passage in terms of narratival therapy.

Nietzsche, in the above passage, is aiming at giving us an alternate descriptive account of the emergence of the values we currently have. We begin by reconsidering the picture of the ancients under a new interpretive umbrella. Instead of emphasizing the way the ancients pointed our philosophical concerns in the right direction, Nietzsche instead insists that the view to be found in ancient philosophy, and the children it spawned, are hostile to life. When our concern lies in the appearance/reality distinction, we have abandoned that thing that stands as most important: namely, the ability to embrace a world full of what might seem to be suffering. The first stage in this narrative turns on the insistence that embracing the other-worldly is precisely the wrong picture: it is yet another manifestation of our desire to impose our own beliefs and values onto an amoral world. By emphasizing this new interpretive tactic, Nietzsche is affectively aiming at trans-valuating the values that make sense of the view that only the pious can approximate the real world. This is precisely the therapeutic power Nietzsche saw inhering in narrative. As one commentator has put it, "Nietzsche is concerned with the way people record, narrate, and explain their own past and with evaluating the effects of various types of historical narration upon life" (Mahon, 95). Once the diagnosis of hostility toward life has been made, the task remaining is to re-direct our collective attention by reconstituting the sense we give life, and it is this which new narrative is meant to accomplish.

The primary point of each of the successive stages in this history is to reveal to the reader that we no longer stand in need of the ideals of days of yore: we can give up the ghost, as it were, and stand in the light of day. Our account of life and human interaction can again be a joyous one provided we give up the metaphysical foundation to which we have been clinging, as well as the view that these foundations are to act as significance-giving features of our phenomenological lives.

Moreover, to prevent one from thinking that Nietzsche's dismissal of historical metaphysical foundations is to be replaced en toto by a new system, Nietzsche includes in this brief history what is obviously personal commentary. The parenthetical remarks serve to remind us, pace traditional philosophical accounts, that a specific person is speaking, not a faceless mother discipline. The lesson to be learned is that a foundational account of the world is no longer needed, and so need not be replaced by Nietzsche's own rhetorically rich story of the world. On the contrary, one is to find, at journey's end, the ability to engage in self-creation in such a way as to do without foundations. Nietzsche's metaphorical vocabulary thus aims at revealing that all vocabularies are metaphorical—that no one description can carry the day, and moreover, that no one description needs to. Therapy occurs here precisely in that one sees, via Nietzsche the teacher, that the center of the old foundational view cannot hold: that there is nothing called the 'true' world with which one must correspond if one is to be epistemically responsible. Nietzsche is a teacher here precisely because the narrative accounts he provides are the means by which emerging individuals will see the artificiality of the old paradigms of philosophical discourse: it is in this sense that Nietzsche saw himself as a destiny.

The notion that narrative can play an incredibly efficacious role in our phenomenological lives has gained an increased currency in modern intellectual conversation. From Heidegger to Jerome Bruner, narrative has become quintessential to the project of both an adequate explication of the self and an understanding of how it is possible for something like self-understanding to occur. Nietzsche's genealogical method in certain

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ways anticipates the importance of narrative in self-understanding (as does Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*). To get a better sense of why this sort of investigative procedure proves therapeutic, I would like to consider in some detail the work of one of the more accessible names dropped above: Jerome Bruner.

Towards the beginning of Bruner’s provocative *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, he makes the striking assertion that “there are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. . . . A good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds” (Bruner, 11). Taken out of context, this assertion seems innocuous enough. Indeed, it looks like the sort of thing philosophers since Plato have been on about: poetry is not philosophy. What is striking about the context in which Bruner makes this claim is that the force of the distinction is derived solely from the way in which narrative is empowered. Taking for granted the view that there is no aboriginal reality against which we can judge our narratival accounts of the universe and our place in it, Bruner goes on to insist that our narrative accounts create our phenomenological lives: “perception is to some unspecified degree an instrument of the world as we have structured it by our expectations. Moreover, it is characteristic of complex perceptual processes that they tend where possible to assimilate whatever is seen or heard to what is expected” (Bruner, 47). Moreover, “what human perceivers do is to take whatever scraps they can extract from the stimulus input, and if these conform to expectancy, to read the rest from the model in their head” (Bruner, 47).

Construing narratives as models of expectancy allows us to feel the force of Bruner’s initial distinction: narratives provide scripts for experience in a way that arguments cannot. Narratives provide context in such a way as to have a normative force that is not merely epistemological. Our interpretations of ourselves and others, as well as the actions befitting ourselves and others, hinge on the models that constitute everyday dealings with the world.\(^{13}\)

It is this view, or one extremely similar to it, that marks the specifically therapeutic aspect of both Nietzsche’s genealogical investigations as well as narrative therapeutic endeavors generally. Instead of offering various true beliefs that will allow agents to reach eudaimonia, we are here offering stories about the ways of the world that might more fruitfully enable an agent to cope with the world via the acquisition of a new understanding of it and her place in it.

Of course, it is probably implausible to think that the ancient account of philosophical therapy was not undergirded by a certain narrative about the place of human beings in the universe. Indeed, examples of this are by no means difficult to find.\(^{14}\) Noticing this, however, does not count as an objection to the claim that ancient and post-Cartesian views of the therapeutic role of philosophical reflection are proverbial worlds apart.\(^{15}\) The very thing that matters for therapy undergoes radical revision in Nietzsche’s simple hands: philosophy, construed as the discipline which generates truth-functional claims that aim at corresponding to reality, no longer sits center stage in our attempt to cope with the world. It is usurped by pregnant vocabularies which allow us to see and understand ourselves in distinct ways—ways that do not (at least for Nietzsche) admit of truth and falsity.\(^{16}\) The rift between ancient therapeutic practices and Nietzschean ones is thus a grand one. Ancient therapy turned on two tenets that the good Nietzschean will not endorse: First, ancient therapy held that therapy could be achieved via an acquisition of the right “that” clauses—beliefs that manifested/constituted the appropriate values. Second, though the value of the truth of these “that” clauses was often secondary (as in the case of Cicero), it nevertheless mattered that the propositions actually be true, as truth happened to be that

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which allowed us to cope with the world. In Nietzsche’s view, the appropriate tool of the therapist is not the proposition, but a new narrative account, the truth of which is simply irrelevant.

But the notion of the therapeutic does not stop metamorphosing here. In the hands of Freud, narrative takes on a new therapeutic significance: one that redefines the very role of the therapist in relation to her patient. Whereas both Nietzsche and Cicero prove pedagogues, Freud must refuse to be a teacher if therapy is to prove at all affective. It is this view, though in many respects closely tied to Nietzsche’s own, that constitutes a third version of philosophical therapy.

**Freud and Psychoanalysis: Variations on a Narrative Theme**

The primary point of difference that separates Freud from both Nietzsche and the ancients is methodological. Perhaps ironically, it is also this grand divide which proves the most strikingly similar to the notion of “therapy” one finds in the Wittgensteinian corpus. Whereas Nietzsche saw himself as a teacher for emerging strong spirits—a new disciple of Dionysus—Freud thought it incoherent to place the therapist in such a role: the therapist himself required health—required a rich process of tracing out the causes of his own particular neuroses and pathologies. To presuppose that the therapist need not stand on high—as “philosophy” does for Cicero and as the new language of metaphor does for Nietzsche—is precisely the point at which Freud shines in originality. As Erik Erikson has put it, “he discarded the practicing neurologist’s prevailing role of dominance and of license. This, then, is the first aspect of Freud’s crisis: he had to create a new therapeutic role for which there was no ideological niche in the tradition of his profession. He had to create it—or fail” (Erickson, 30). For my current purposes, Erikson’s apt description of Freud’s genius marks that which separates Freudian therapy from all that came before it.” It is thus upon this aspect of the Freudian corpus that I will focus, only highlighting some of the cognitive machinery surrounding Freud’s avant-garde approach to the therapeutic.

Instead of simple diagnosis—whether it be of false beliefs leading to inappropriate value or flat proclamations of cultural sickness—Freud sees psychoanalysis as aiming at an agreement between patient and therapist. Consider Erikson’s account of this agreement:

Thus was established the one basic premise of psychoanalysis, namely, that one can study the human mind only by engaging the fully motivated partnership of the observed individual and by entering into a sincere contract with him.

But the contract has two partners, at least. The changed image of the patient changed the self-image of the doctor. He realized that habit and convention had made him and his fellow physicians indulge in an autocratic pattern, with not much more circumspection or justification than the very paternal authorities who he now felt had made the patients sick in the first place. He began to divine the second principle of psychoanalysis, namely, that you will not see in another what you have not learned to recognize in yourself. The mental healer must divide himself as well as the patient into an observer and an observed. (Erickson, 29)

It was this insight which led Freud to the suspicion that therapy must be transactional and dialogical: it cannot consist of a sermon on the merits of coherent unconscious drives. The therapist must be willing to place himself in the shoes of the patient: to recognize his own pathological tendencies while also offering aid to the patient trying to discover his own. It is this which permits Freud to disdain the view that the therapist is to be-
come teacher—indeed, it is this thought which lies at the heart of transference.

The transactional view first elucidated by Freud has been the subject of much discussion. It is the kernel of the insight that the simple articulation of true beliefs could not do the job so many ancients thought it might. As Habermas has put the point: "the mere communication of information and the labeling of resistances have no therapeutic effect" (Habermas, 61). It is not enough to provide true propositions about an agent to replace the false ones all ready in the self-descriptions of the agent. The psychoanalyst has a far more complicated job in bringing her patient to health. She must make her patient see the ruptures all ready existing in his descriptive practices. Thus Freud claims that:

If we proceeded in another way and overwhelmed him [the patient] with our interpretations before he was prepared for them, our information would either produce no effect or it would provoke a violent outbreak of resistance which would make the progress of our work more difficult or might even threaten to stop it altogether.

(Freud, 57)

Freud's cognitive machinery does quite a bit of work here. To put the familiar story succinctly: the analyst, in the psycho-analytic situation, is to tease out those unconscious processes which lead the patient to behave in certain ways. In order to understand the subterranean processes involved, the analyst must interpret the manifestations of unconscious drives/beliefs. This is done via noticing those instances where the unconscious boils up to the surface: in the Freudian slip, the dream, and so on. The aim of the analyst is not to reveal the cause of a patient's actions—the particular repressions involved—but to get the patient to see these repressions herself. Thus Freud claims that "the method by which we strengthen the weakened ego has as its starting point an extending of its self-knowledge. . . . Accordingly, the first part of the help we have to offer is intellectual work on our side and encouragement to the patient to collaborate in it" (Freud, 56). Freud's cognitive machinery is here invoked precisely because the notion of repression depends on Freudian meta-psychology: on the interaction between societal constraint and basic desire; between id and superego. The ego, formed from this primordial battle, carries with it all of that which has been unsatisfied. When certain realizations would cause the ego pain, it represses these: forces them back into the unconscious in order to cope with the world. The job of the analyst is thus to get the patient to notice that which is repressed, and this is only to be achieved dialogically.

Therapy here occurs, much like in the case of Nietzsche, because one acquires a new understanding of all that motivates one's actions. Unlike Nietzsche, however, Freud does insist on the empirical verifiability of the meta-psychological apparatus, and it is this which buttresses the need for the analyst to have interpretations which actually correspond to a patient's real repressions. It is thus possible to conceive of Freudian therapy as an Aufhebung of Nietzsche and Cicero: as having integrated both the need for narrative and the need for the articulation of true claims about those undergoing therapy."

There is still the question, of course, about why Freudian therapy is a philosophical therapy at all. I can perhaps only gesture at an answer here. It has frequently been remarked that the picture Freud employs in the psychoanalytic situation is un falsifiable. Although Freud is notorious for his insistence that psychoanalysis is a scientific theory, it is probably not best construed as such. Quite the contrary, we can read much of the cognitive apparatus Freud invokes as a heuristic device which enables new insights about what sorts of human actions there are (the unconscious, for example, enables us to say both that an action is involuntary and that it is

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intentional). In this sense, Freud’s picture can only be philosophical; it is a view about the nature of being human that sheds light on our everyday interaction with the world."

Freud himself, however, by no means thought of his cognitive machinery as heuristic: indeed, he insisted that it was as empirically verifiable as any of the larger, paradigm-dependent notions found in the physical sciences. As Freud puts it,

the processes with which [psychoanalysis] is concerned are in themselves just as unknowable as those dealt with by other sciences, by chemistry or physics, for example; but it is possible to establish the laws which they obey and to follow their mutual relations. . . . Those things posited by psychoanalysis can lay claim to the same value as approximations that belong to the corresponding intellectual scaffolding found in other natural sciences. (Freud, 30)

It is here that one begins to see that which separates Freudian therapy from that which is found in the Wittgensteinian corpus. I now turn to the fourth version of philosophical therapy.

Losing the Ladder:
An Account of Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Therapy

It has frequently been remarked that Wittgenstein’s project was primarily an ethical one. The aims inherent in both the Tractatus and the later work admit of a peculiar similarity in precisely this respect: both aim at allowing the philosopher to cope with the world in a relatively non-pathological way. The stark contrast inhering in this claim is that Wittgensteinian thought is a response to a sickness embodied in philosophical practices: a desire to over-simplify, as John Austin once remarked, that marks the occupation of the philosopher. This model of therapeutic practice, then, is specifically philosophical. While Cicero held that philosophy was a tool by which one could come to live a good life, Wittgenstein sees it as a therapeutic practice that will allow one to give up philosophy whenever one wants.

In several scattered remarks, Wittgenstein offers the interested reader a glimpse into his philosophical project via the metaphor of therapy. Famously, for instance, Wittgenstein remarks in Philosophical Investigations 133 that “there is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.” Or, more famously still, there is the remark that “the philosopher’s treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness” (PI, 255). As is the case with most of the (highly suggestive) remarks of Wittgenstein’s writings, the assertion that philosophy might be construed as a therapy has no obvious interpretation that does not in some way do violence to other remarks in the Wittgensteinian corpus. While perhaps discouraging, this obviously does not entail that it is impossible to get a clear picture of what Wittgenstein had in mind with these cryptic remarks. My strategy in this section will be to explicate Wittgenstein’s conception of the therapeutic aspects of philosophical undertakings by noticing the important differences between Freud’s view and Wittgenstein’s. Pin-pointing some important landmarks negatively (in showing what Wittgensteinian therapy is not) will provide an adequate point of departure for a positive explication of the notion of philosophy as therapy.

Wittgenstein’s relationship with Freudian psychoanalysis is famously ambiguous. It is clear that Wittgenstein thought of Freud’s work both as an instance of genius and as an instance of someone taking his own theoretical constructs in a dangerously serious manner. On the one hand, Wittgenstein thought that Freud’s approach to psychical problems presented a distinctively fruitful method of coming to peace with our identities. On the other hand, Wittgenstein often reveals a deep disdain for the cognitive machinery Freud
invokes for getting us from repression to understanding, as well as Freud's notorious insistence that psycho-analysis was in fact a scientific theory justified by its results, not mere philosophical conjecture. As Jacques Bouveresse has noted, Wittgenstein "thinks that the psychoanalyst is primarily in search of a 'good' story that will produce the desired therapeutic effect once it is accepted by the patient, and yet neither the patient's assent nor therapeutic success in itself proves that this story is true or even should be true" (Bouveresse, 53). It was this sort of intellectual ambiguity that led Wittgenstein to say both incredibly positive things about Freud as well as to offer incisive (and sometimes plainly mean) criticisms of the Freudian project.

Wittgenstein's most substantive objection to Freudian analysis turns on the status of the psychical machinery which purports scientific status. Thus Wittgenstein claims that:

it is a way of speaking to say the reason was subconscious. It may be expedient to speak in this way, but the subconscious is a hypothetical entity which gets its meaning from the verifications these propositions have. What Freud says about the subconscious sounds like science, but in fact it is just a means of representation. (Moore, Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932–1935, 39–40)²¹

What Wittgenstein finds disturbing about the Freudian project is its insistence on speaking as though the claims inherent in the description were more than mere manner of speaking—more than a simply convenient way of coming to understand certain occurrences and actions. By Wittgenstein's lights, the cognitive machinery inherent in the Freudian project obscures more than it reveals. An insistence on the scientific status of the hypothesis of the unconscious is an unnecessary smoke screen damaging our ability to see the 'real' point of Freudian therapy: that certain sorts of description can change the way we understand and exist in the world. As Bouveresse notes, Wittgenstein thinks that "the hypothesis of the unconscious is merely a manner of speaking, which could in principle be discarded without any challenge to what Freud really thinks" (Bouveresse, 27).

Even having said this about the relationship between Freudian and Wittgensteinian therapy, we are still a far cry from understanding what Wittgenstein had in mind in places such as PI 133 and PI 255. While it is clear that Wittgenstein was not the metaphysician we find in Freud, it is also clear that Wittgenstein shared several premises with Freud about the way therapy ought to proceed if it is to be successful. Indeed, these shared assumptions mark the point of convergence that explains why Wittgenstein often said extremely positive things about Freud's project.³²

The primary point of convergence between these intellectual giants, it seems to me, lurks in specific methodological considerations. Consider PI 133 in full:

It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard of ways.

For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed complete clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should completely disappear.

The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question.—Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off. Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a single problem.

There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.

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Examples are used to bring to light specific features of a situation. They are used in an attempt to get the patient to see something she had not seen before. Whereas the good Freudian might offer hints in order to get a patient to explore alternative possible explanations, Wittgenstein offers us primitive language-games that throw light on the way our use of language gains significance, and hence on the arena in which certain words function most appropriately. The force of both of these views lies in an underlying thought: giving away the game—flatly saying what is or is not the case—will do the reader/patient absolutely no good. The reader/patient, if the therapy is to be at all affective, must take hints and examples for what they are: clues for reconsidering a certain picture of things to which one desperately clings. Freud makes this same point in his *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*:

However much the analyst may be tempted to become teacher, model and ideal for other people and to create men in his own image, he should not forget that that is not his task in the analytic relationship, and indeed that he will be disloyal to his task if he allows himself to be led by his inclinations. If he does, he will only be repeating a mistake of the parents who crushed their child’s independence by their influence, and he will only be replacing that patient’s earlier dependence by a new one. (Freud, 53)

To follow out a therapeutic line programatically—whether this means offering a system of rules for language that shows the relation in which our language stands to an ideal one, or simply offering a narratival account of an agent’s real reasons for action—seems a bit too much like pharmacology; like offering the answer to all of one’s frustration before one has bothered to work this out on one’s own. To tell too much is to ruin the therapy, to ruin the very means by which one attains cure: “We avoid telling him at once things that we have often discovered at an early stage, and we avoid telling him the whole of what we think we have discovered” (Freud, 56).

It is a remark such as this that proves to have immense explanatory power when considering the progression of Wittgenstein’s investigations. Wittgenstein refuses to place his thought into epigrams readily available for public consumption. PI does not begin with a series of propositions to be discussed, verified, and elucidated. Instead, it begins with a thought experiment: with a fictitious language-game that is meant to be taken in a certain way—that is meant to point in a certain direction. This direction is presumably one that will clarify certain philosophical problems. As Peterman has remarked, the method of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* “is a method of persuasion carried out through the selection of descriptions designed to produce philosophical peace” (Peterman, 21).

So much, then, for the similar methodology to be found in Freud and Wittgenstein. Both aim at allowing a reader/patient to approach the familiar in unfamiliar ways—to see the common from a different angle. They disagree precisely at what “unfamiliar” amounts to. Whereas Freud insists that the unfamiliar is a series of unconscious desires and thoughts, repressed for this reason or that, which act causally on our familiar experiences, Wittgenstein maintains that it is that upon which all else is built that has become unfamiliar. To put it cryptically, one is in need of therapy precisely when one has lost touch with the form of life that makes possible one’s very engagement in philosophical activity—when the familiar no longer seems transparent, but dangerously distant. Perspicuous representations are meant to bring one back, allowing one to find “a multiplicity of limited perspectives through which the problematic facts no longer are problematic” (Peterman, 24).
With this (albeit vague) sketch of Wittgensteinian therapy available, it is now possible to consider in more detail some of the fundamental features of the therapeutic facets of Wittgenstein’s project. I would like to split this exegesis into two main points. The first of these centers around the famous epigram that there are no theses in philosophy. The second hinges on noticing those things of which philosophical therapy might remind us. In what follows, I will employ some well-known secondary literature in an attempt to make clear the connections between the absence of philosophical theses, the point of assembling reminders, and Wittgenstein’s notion of philosophy as therapeutic.

In Robert Fogelin’s “Wittgenstein’s critique of philosophy,” Fogelin’s aim is to point out that Wittgenstein is not attempting to produce yet another pair of philosophical “glasses”—he is not after yet another theoretical lens through which we can attempt to make sense of the world. On Wittgenstein’s view, there is no need for such an apparatus, since (as Fogelin puts it), “our ‘uncorrected’ way of viewing the world was adequate to begin with” (Fogelin, 34). This attempt is grounded in noticing that we often use language in a misleading fashion. By misappropriating instances of language, we can systematically fall into philosophical puzzles—puzzles that lead us to deep disquietudes and mental cramps. Unlike many critics of traditional philosophical conjecture, noticing our rather systematic misuse of language does not, for Wittgenstein, amount to dissolving those problems with which we are concerned. Quite the contrary, philosophical problems are deep ones, ones not to be taken lightly. In overcoming such problems, we are attempting to overcome in ourselves a disposition to see the world in a certain way. It is for this reason that ridding ourselves of our deep disquietudes requires serious effort—not simply hand-waving dismissal. When we approach the theoretical lenses that have prompted our mental cramps, then, we must not simply rip the glasses from our eyes, but see instead that they are just glasses. “What we do,” as Wittgenstein puts it, “is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (PI, 116).

One of the two main Wittgensteinian attacks on which Fogelin concentrates is the traditional referentialist picture: the view that “the presumptive role of words is to stand for or refer to things, and the presumptive role of sentences is to picture or represent how things stand to each other” (Fogelin, 37). It is this totalizing view of the nature of language that often leads us to misconstrue such things as “pain” and “thoughts.” When we force upon all terms the view that the meaning of these terms is simply a product of the term’s ability to mirror the world—to hook up to objects and represent them—we are misled into thinking that we do not understand everyday notions such as “time.” By paying attention to the fact that the referentialist model is just that, we can at once see how this theoretical optometry might both be useful in certain cases and deeply puzzling in others.2 The point here is to notice that we need not apply this model in every case.

The second target of Wittgenstein’s critique of philosophy is what Fogelin tags “Logical Perfectionism”: “the rules underlying and governing our language must have an ideal structure—they must, for example, be absolutely rigorous and cover all possible cases” (Fogelin, 37). Fogelin breaks Wittgenstein’s response to this picture into three parts, each meant to point to a picture of language as lacking the sort of “crystalline purity” we might demand via noticing that language is rule-governed.

Wittgenstein’s view is that our employment of language does not require that the terms within our language have sharp boundaries, nor determinate rules for application. While our philosophical urges for purity push us into such a search, Wittgenstein continuously reminds us that, rule or not, our language seems to get along
just fine. We need not insist that there are rules inherent in linguistic practice that provide a means of dealing with every possible application of a specific term. When we demand that our application of a term provide an answer to certain philosophical puzzles, we are assuming that the term is in fact applicable to areas far removed from everyday uses. As Fogelin puts it, “the rudimentary mistake is to suppose that the rules governing this concept must already cover all cases” (Fogelin, 53). Moreover, our language need not comprise a perfectly coherent set of rules in order to function. We can imagine analogous games in which rules lead to blatant contradiction. It does not follow from this that we must abandon the game in question, nor does it follow that the game does not work.

The point to be drawn from these critiques is not to be repelled by standard philosophical fare. It is, however, to notice the source of the above views—a certain metaphysical urge demanding that we attach the modal verb “must” to every theoretical lens that catches our fancy. When we notice that we need not force our philosophical models onto everyday events and practices—that our everyday events and practices are fine as they are—we can stop doing philosophy when we want to. “A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably” (Wittgenstein, PI 115). In therapy, the imperative to push forward our picture of things is replaced by an acknowledgment that the picture in question is just a picture.

To bring out this point in a more clairvoyant fashion, it is fruitful to notice what it is which Wittgenstein continuously reminds us of. The finger pointing through the many language-games Wittgenstein either constructs or invents is aimed at the vast diversity of human practices in which we first come to understand the world and one another. It is this set of practices which Wittgenstein calls both “form of life” and “grammar.” It is that in virtue of which philosophy can work itself out—can allow us to stop asking questions of philosophy.

In PI 653, Wittgenstein asks us to imagine the following case:

I tell someone that I walked a certain route, going by a map which I had prepared beforehand. Thereupon I shew him the map, and it consists of lines on a piece of paper; but I cannot explain how these lines are the map of my movements, I cannot tell him any rule for interpreting the map. Yet I did follow the drawing with all the characteristic tokens of reading a map. I might call such a drawing a ‘private’ map; or the phenomenon that I have described ‘following a private map.’ (But this expression would, of course, be very easy to misunderstand.)

Could I now say: ‘I read off my having then meant to do such-and-such, as if from a map, although there is no map?’ But that means nothing but: I am now inclined to say ‘I read the intension of acting thus in certain states of mind which I remember.’

I take this passage to be emblematic of Wittgenstein’s approach to philosophical problems. What is perhaps uncharacteristic of Wittgenstein here, of course, is the perspicuity which follows this passage:

654. Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a ‘proto-phenomenon.’ That is, where we ought to have said: this language-game is played.

655. The question is not one of explaining a language-game by means of our experiences, but of noting a language-game.

These three passages constitute, in one respect, the way in which Wittgenstein’s philosophical remarks might be construed as “therapeutic.” We begin with a particular way of speaking about the world: a conver-
sation between two about my use of a map to move from one place to another. The speech is entirely innocuous: it is perfectly understood; its meaning is transparent. We only fall into perplexity when we aim to extend the bounds in which our notion of using a map makes good sense. While a certain disposition might make us apply this term, or instances that seem to us analogous to the everyday use of the term, to bizarre cases, we need not infer from this that we have in fact discovered a correct account of that to which we newly apply the notion of map reading. On the contrary, our ability to apply the metaphor of map-reading to such things as memory represents an inclination to speak in a certain way, not the way things must be represented if we are to make sense of them. Instead of becoming caught up in an inclination to apply specific terms to particular instances, or demanding an explanation of the our ability to apply terms to bizarre cases, we should simply pay attention to those areas in which particular terms have significance for us. These places, put crudely, are the primitive language games we use to go along together. It is this, I take it, which is the point of saying that we need to note language-games instead of explaining them.

Returning to the language-games in which our terms acquire significance allows us to stop doing philosophy when we want to. It allows this precisely because we notice that we are using terms outside of the contexts in which these terms gain significance. When we offer philosophical analysis of the "mental," for instance, it is quite easy to fall into philosophical quandary concerning the status of this term: is it private or public? Is it material or immaterial? Do I see the mental, and if so, how? Philosophers aiming at the necessary and sufficient conditions of the "mental" seem to be playing a conceptual guessing game. Instead of noting the way this term is effectively used in everyday interaction, the philosopher in need of treatment aims to endlessly clarify the concept in question. While there is of course nothing objectionable about this in itself, it tends to become the source of endless paradoxes where we need have none. We begin to conjecture how the material and immaterial can causally interact, for instance, and lose sight of the ease with which the term "mental" is used and understood in everyday dealings with the world. The philosopher's illness here, and the source of his endless frustration, lies in the need to explain how such terms function independently of how they in fact function.

340. One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to look at its use and learn from that.
But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing this. It is not a stupid prejudice.

So, although philosophical problems are not to be taken lightly, they do stem from an ineptitude: a systematic blindness to the way we use language. Failure to notice how words function leads us to misperceive the roles words perform, or might perform, in everyday contexts. When we have no such grounding, we are led into philosophical confusions. The philosophical impulse—the metaphysical urge—is precisely what is at stake in Wittgensteinian therapy. Imposing one picture on the world leads to puzzles which in turn act as the source of mental cramps and deep disquietudes. Assuming that the term "mental" must have a single function, or conform to a certain theory of naming, is that for which we require a cure.

Wittgenstein makes precisely this point in another context. In discussing pain-behavior in the 300s of the Investigations, Wittgenstein notes that "the paradox [arising from calling pain neither a 'nothing' nor a 'something'] disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts—which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please" (PI, 304). Leaving

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aside the subtle specifics of this passage, the primary point is clear enough: problems arise from insisting on a certain view of things—a certain pattern to which certain terms/things must conform. The role of therapy is to allow us to break free from this by noticing that it is unnecessary: that our primitive language-games do not meet standards of rigor and purity and yet, miraculously enough, do not thereby thwart our ability to cope with the world and one another.

Our urge to say something—to make x conform with our theoretical glasses—is not the end of the story. On the contrary, “being unable—when we surrender ourselves to philosophical thought—to help saying such-and-such; being irresistibly inclined to say it—does not mean being forced into an assumption, or having an immediate perception or knowledge of a state of affairs” (299). Therapy, or the ability to keep an eye on the contexts in which things acquire significance for us, allows us to deal in an appropriate way with our philosophical inclinations. When we note primitive language-games (or “grammar,” or our “forms of life”), we can have philosophical urges without thereby falling into a pit of philosophical despair: we can learn to see our descriptions as “instruments for particular uses” (PI, 291), not as cause for deep disquietude.

Wittgensteinian therapy thus provides the reader with a set of examples that are intended to remind the reader of the significance-giving context in which certain terms are used. These examples, while highly suggestive, are not intended to provide the reader with an alternate picture of the world: they can be discarded once one has regained sight of that which gives significance: namely, our basic forms of life; the ways in which we go on together.

**Recent Permutations: Rorty’s Self-Consuming Redescriptions**

And so it is that under the heavy hands of a philosophical tradition recent thinkers have rather indulgently viewed their own texts as exercises in philosophy as therapy. Rorty has attempted to cure philosophy of its obsession with epistemologically-oriented philosophy of mind via an excursion into the history of philosophy. John McDowell has likewise aimed to diagnose the current philosophical climate via an attempt to naturalize Platonism—to place meaning back in the world without adopting outlandish metaphysical positions. And Hilary Putnam, almost ironically, has attempted to reveal the source of his new-found philosophical health to his old compatriots in the reductive camp of philosophy of mind. My aim in this section is to offer a brief overview of one of these thinkers—not in an attempt at complete exegesis, to be sure, but as a further means of showing the incredibly disparate uses to which the term “therapy” has been put. An articulation of this recent permutation will allow an easier access to the claim I will defend in the following section: namely, that philosophy would do well to watch its back when considerations of its therapeutic elements arise.

Like both Freud and Nietzsche, Rorty thinks that redescriptions constitute our best bet in acquiring new understanding of the world and our place in it. Like Wittgenstein, Rorty sees philosophy as a troublesome arena in which we often are led into unnecessary mistakes. Unlike Freud and Nietzsche, Rorty maintains that there can be no social function for philosophical rediscription. And unlike Wittgenstein, Rorty does not take philosophical puzzles seriously: they are, at best, a bothersome boil on the backside of political concerns. Philosophy is something to be engaged in privately, it is to be seen not as a source of inspiration or guidance but as an idiosyncratic undertaking for certain sorts of people (namely, those seeking autonomy or tenure).

This view of philosophical therapy proves difficult to muster. Indeed, one might wonder why I have bothered to call such
end-of-philosophy antics "therapeutic" at all. If philosophical problems do not lead us to deep disquietudes, pace Wittgenstein, why bother thinking of overcoming epistemologically-centered philosophy as an instance of therapy? There is an answer to this (admittedly rhetorical) question, of course, but it is not an easy one to articulate. Rorty's project is therapeutic precisely because it is self-consuming: the assertions made rely on the very things these assertions attempt to set aside. The end result of working through Rorty's work is understanding a deeper point about the plasticity of descriptions—the way that an appropriate description can lead us to see anything as good or bad. When we have done this we will recognize, in therapeutic fashion, that the descriptions offered in philosophical reflections can distract us from having the right sort of liberal values. A description can make something look good enough to convince us of its value, and our philosophical convictions can blind us to what is truly of moral importance: not being cruel. I will devote this section to spelling out in more detail Rorty's philosophical (and therapeutic) project.

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty remarks that the key to solving the philosophical problems present in the philosophy of mind hinges on understanding whence these problems come: "To answer [questions in the philosophy of mind], I think, nothing will serve save the history of ideas. Just as the patient needs to relive his past to answer his questions, so philosophy needs to relive its past in order to answer its questions" (Rorty, 1979, 33). Reliving the history of philosophy helps exorcize philosophical dilemmas because such an historical investigation enables us to see the origins of our intuitions: "in my Wittgensteinian view, an intuition is never anything more or less than familiarity with a language-game, so to discover the source of our intuitions is to relive the history of the philosophical language-game we find ourselves playing" (Rorty, 1979, 34). It is the above idea that leads Rorty to the dissolution of problems in the philosophy of mind—to showing why these problems are historically contingent artifacts of an historically contingent culture. More importantly for my purposes, it is the same method which aims to support the public/private split found in Rorty's later *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. It is a matter of historical fact that our intellectual left has made it possible to separate the question "Do you believe and desire what we believe and desire?" from the question 'Are you suffering?" (Rorty, 1989, 198). The short version of this story hinges on the eventual recognition that our descriptions of objects and events are incredibly interest-sensitive. Employing the idioms of Nietzsche and Freud, Rorty suggests that intellectual history led us to a new ability "to see redescription as a tool rather than a claim to have discovered essence. It thereby became possible to see a new vocabulary not as something which was supposed to replace all other vocabularies, something which claimed to represent reality, but simply as one more vocabulary, one more human project, one person's chosen metaphoric" (Rorty, 1989, 39).

It is precisely this turn of intellectual history that allows Rorty to claim that questions about my identity and the values constitutive of it and questions about avoiding cruelty can remain separate. To suppose that these questions cannot be separate is to suppose that redescription does not prove contingent: that one vocabulary can act as encapsulator of both sets of questions. It is through a journey into intellectual history much like the one found in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* that one sees that we need not enforce a single, unifying vocabulary on both public and private concerns: we can have a vocabulary in which we discuss our political concerns, on the one hand, and our idiosyncratic questions about identity on the other. Rorty's narrative approach to philosophical therapy, as Taylor has put it, contains the promise "that we can free ourselves from a whole

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host of questions which have been central to philosophy hitherto to... where there have hitherto been thought to be facts-or truths-of-the/matter, there turn out to be only rival languages, between which we end up plumping, if we do, because in some way one works better for us than the others” (Taylor, 258).

The radical contingency of descriptive vocabularies, revealed via narrative, serves yet another function: it allows us to see Rorty’s public/private distinction, as well as its ramifications for philosophical/political discourse, as one more instance of an optional means for understanding the world. It is in this sense that Rorty’s text proves self-consuming: Rorty is offering us a recommendation—a vision of a liberal utopia—which at once begs to be taken seriously as well as ironically. If we follow Rorty’s own advice, we must not only give up the old assurance that philosophical redecision can have a progressive social function—but also the idea that Rorty’s theoretical account of private and public descriptive projects can. As one commentator has remarked, Rorty’s CIS is an attempt to show that “the attempt to fuse, synthesize, and reconcile the private and the public is not only a futile project but that it is unnecessary” (Bernstein, 264). While this is most certainly correct, the role of narrative facilitates a further point: any fusion of vocabularies turns out to be unnecessary. At journey’s end, then, the point to be drawn from Rorty’s work is not that we should privatize philosophical attempts at autonomy and publicize those literary texts that reveal instances of cruelty to us. On the contrary, we are to draw from Rorty’s work the view that any such theoretical account of the world will impose too much—will claim to explain more than it can, Rorty’s included. It is this view, I think, which best makes sense of Rorty’s claim that “philosophy is one of the techniques for reweaving our vocabulary of moral deliberation in order to accommodate new beliefs” (Rorty 1989, 196) alongside the claim that “it would be better to avoid thinking of philosophy as... [having] a social function” (Rorty 1989, 83). Philosophical redecision can provide new, contingent vocabularies through which we can encounter the world, but the fact that these vocabularies are contingent prevents them from acting as a starting point for social reform. Likewise, while Rorty’s view in CIS can give us a means of understanding the role of philosophical theories, it cannot itself provide an agenda for new philosophers. One closes CIS with a certain reluctance: as if a victim of a theoretical joke, the two covers of that book surround the reader in an account that wants to be taken seriously but refuses to allow itself to be.

In what way, then, is this philosophical trick a therapeutic one? In an obvious sense, it is therapeutic precisely because interaction with CIS allows us to see our theoretical approaches—all theoretical approaches—as ultimately contingent, as less important to political progress than we perhaps initially thought. It is therapeutic because, via an excursion into intellectual history, we come to understand our philosophical dispositions in a new way: namely, as idiosyncratic and historical. Moreover, we come to see the implicit dangers in those theoretical accounts which have comprised “philosophy”—as totalizing systems making us blind to the real needs of real people. It is this awareness that makes us toss aside the philosophical tract for the non-totalizing novel: for the narrator who acknowledges his parochial nature. It is the perspectival character of the novel which is to take the place of traditional philosophy—of that which tried to fuse public and private concerns—and hence that which makes novels “far better moral sources for the liberal than the standard wisdom of, say, traditional philosophy” (Gutting, 65).

It is Rorty’s conception of philosophy, which proves itself to be terribly parochial,
which divides Rorty’s project from the therapeutic projects found for example in Cicero: Rorty sees philosophy as a highly professionalized discipline without much content of its own. His therapy often looks like the attempt of a smug philosopher to stew in his own juices—to play with the history of ideas in which he thinks he has wasted so much time. Of course, much of what Rorty says about academic philosophy is true, provided that we construe this in an extremely narrow way: our partaking in sub-literatures consisting of six people will probably have no great social effect. But there is no reason to construe philosophical concerns so narrowly, nor to dismiss them with such hand-waving ease.

Nevertheless, Rortian therapy has its place in the halls of academia. Its effect is to rid those obsessed with description to think that they have (or could have) a final description of the world—a description that allows nature to speak its own language, as Rorty has put it. Exercises in intellectual history reveal the plasticity of value-laden intuitions and the discursive practices these buttress. To see this plasticity is to give up the view of philosophy acting as final arbiter of all things moral and epistemic. While there are certainly many similarities here between Rorty’s project and both Wittgenstein’s and Nietzsche’s, it will prove helpful for my purposes to cast light on some essential differences in summary fashion.

First, Rorty lacks the respect for philosophical problems which Wittgenstein so obviously maintains. This has led Rorty to characterize Wittgenstein’s later philosophical work in much the same way as he characterizes Derrida’s: namely, as instances of satirical commentary. In Rorty’s own terms, “he [Wittgenstein] just makes fun of the whole idea that there is something to be explained [in philosophical problems]” (Rorty 1982, 34). While correct in a certain respect, this view is systematically blind to the seriousness with which Wittgenstein approached philosophical urges (cf. PI 340, quoted above, as well as PI 110–11).

Second, Rorty’s take on theoretical redescription, while close to Nietzsche’s in many ways, fails to capture the Nietzschean hope that descriptions (even theoretical ones) can change the way we see ourselves, and hence the values we have. Rorty’s insistence that philosophy, as a mere “profession,” can do nothing for our social aims hinges on a view of philosophy that proves far too narrow. While Nietzsche has also been known to debunk the academy, or even to call himself a psychologist, he was also very concerned with the role philosophical pictures had played in the development of human identity: indeed, it was a disgust with certain sicknesses imbedded in nineteenth-century identity that lent force to proclamations of the coming of a “new philosopher” in Beyond Good and Evil.

So much, then, for the differences between Rorty’s philosophical therapy and the therapies found in Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. My aim in this section has been to give a sense (of one of the many versions) of contemporary attempts to engage in philosophical therapy, highlighting the significant differences between this view and its historical antecedents. I would like to turn now, albeit all-too-briefly, to the (very modest) conclusions to which the analyses thus far offered point: namely, that there are no explanatorily significant links which unite all versions of philosophical therapy, and that we are not thereby condemned to despair.

A Moral of the Story

“Therapy,” as I said at the outset, has become a buzzword these days. It is not at all hard to see why. In a therapeutic culture backed by a significant history of philosophically-oriented accounts of the therapeutic, it is an easy claim to make. But there are good reasons to believe that the above thinkers are not speaking the same language here. In

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some instances we find appeals to the acquisition of true beliefs enabling us to live the appropriate sort of life. In others, we find an appeal to the varying narrative structures that can be used hermeneutically to understand the significance of our daily activities. On the one hand, we have the twitch of the hermeneuticist who claims that a final description of any given phenomenon is an impossibility—if only because of the ever-changing significance of our objects of analysis via the process of analysis itself. On the other hand, we have the voices of antiquity claiming that it is only something like a final description which promises peace for the soul.

I would like to offer, in epigram form, the primary tenets of those views articulated above. The point of this recapitulation is to bring to light the family resemblances between these views as well as to mark their significant points of divergence.

1) Ciceroian therapy hinges on the acquisition of true beliefs about the world. These beliefs represent specific values we have and lead us to behave in certain ways. Therapy occurs via first diagnosing the false beliefs present in our understanding of the world, and second by replacing these false beliefs with ones that accurately represent the ways of the world.

2) Nietzschean therapy is unconcerned with the truth-status of particular claims. Here, the unit of analysis is not a series of "that" clauses, but the values which saturate and constitute the particular narratives which inform our lives. Therapy here occurs via genealogy: via reworking the overarching stories we tell ourselves to make sense of who we are and our place in the world.

3) Freudian therapy abandons the paternal/didactic role of the therapist, making therapy fundamentally a dialogue between patient and therapist. The therapist aims to allow the patient to come to understand those unconscious mechanisms which produce certain sorts of action. This is achieved through an interpretation of the manifestations of the unconscious and the offering of clues enabling the patient to reinterpret these manifestations in new ways. The therapy here is in narrative form, much like (2), but hinges on uncovering the true repressions of the patient, much like (1).

4) Wittgensteinian therapy uses specific examples in an attempt to remind one in the throes of philosophical confusion of the circumstances in which one's linguistic misunderstanding arises. Specific examples consistently point one back to the form of life which gives significance to derivative language-games. This proves therapeutic because noticing the significance-giving origins of specific terms cures us of a certain metaphysical urge. When we see that our philosophical confusions stem from applying terms outside of their appropriate contexts, we can learn to stop doing philosophy when we want to.

5) Rortian therapy attempts to explain all of our theoretical urges via noticing that our philosophical intuitions are the product of a contingent intellectual history which has produced a contingently salient means of description. It is therapeutic because we can cease thinking of philosophical problems as relevant to social concerns.

Some of these views are admittedly much closer than others. There are several means of dividing these therapies into fewer categories: one might focus on the status of truth-claims, or the role of narrative, or the domain over which the therapy ranges (be it academic philosophy or life generally). I have divided these therapies into five categories to make clear that, though similar in many respects, each counts as a unique approach to what I have been calling "philosophical therapy." While there are many points of convergence among these alternatives, these are by no means pervasive. (5) looks much closer to (4) and (2) than to (1) and (3). Likewise, (2) looks much closer to (5) and (3) than it does to (1) and (4). While

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other patterns of distinctions and/or congruities are available, there does not seem to be anything other than family resemblance that occurs in each of the five forms of philosophical therapy listed. But the question of course remains: do we in fact need such a unified account? Does the absence of necessary and sufficient conditions for calling a project “therapeutic” count as an objection to such a designation? The answer, I daresay, is “no.” Thinking that we need such a unified account represents a certain understanding of what it means to call something therapeutic which is itself optional: to use Wittgenstein’s apt metaphor, it is yet another pair of theoretical lenses through which one might see the world.

This, of course, does not make the use of the term “therapy” innocent when applied to specific philosophical views, or philosophy generally. On the contrary, we might even accuse a philosopher who claimed that his discipline was, or should be, concerned solely with the therapeutic as dangerously irresponsible: as offering a loosely fitting description which did more harm than good by attaching an unclear and slippery significance to what so many take so seriously. If this essay has been at all successful, it is clear that the tag “therapy” has no obvious meaning when applied to philosophical endeavors. It does not follow from this, however, that the designation is condemned to be unhelpful, nor that lack of clarity should breed lack of use. To salvage philosophical therapy from vulgar and jejune use, however, requires that we see in what ways the lack of clarity surrounding philosophical therapy might remain innocuous.

There is, of course, no obvious interpretive strategy to employ here. The best I can do is gesture at what seems to me a useful distinction when considering the therapeutic: if we insist that calling philosophy ‘therapy’ is a definition of the discipline “philosophy,” it is certainly a troublesome designation once we have noted divergent uses. Indeed, such an epithet begs for philosophical clarification. If we do not take this tack, however, things do not seem so perplexing. We need not define a discipline with the catchy tag “therapy.” We can construe calling philosophy, or philosophical endeavors, “therapeutic” in much the same way as we might call certain sorts of philosophy “hermeneutic,” “positivistic,” or whatever: as an interpretive tag that suggests we read in a certain way, albeit a relatively vague one. We need not commit ourselves to a set of dogmatic first principles in order to make sense of the notion of philosophy as therapy: we can approach this (rather loose) epigram as an interpretive gesture—as asking us to notice something elucidating about certain texts, thinkers, and positions.

But what are we noticing? To put this in an assuredly non-explanatory way, we are noticing something from which our attention had been distracted: a false belief, a repressed drive, a fictitious narrative, a primitive language-game, the contingency of description, or whatever. There is no unified way of shedding light on one or all of these things: we have fingers pointing and sick eyes looking. While this account does not serve to articulate the nature of philosophical therapy, it does serve to direct our attention. This, I daresay, is all we need to call “philosophical therapy” an interpretive approach.

To summarize my position succinctly and bluntly: I do not think that there are any explanatorily significant features that might unite each of the above views of philosophical therapy. While it is certainly plausible to claim that each of the above views aims, in one way or another, to improve our daily lives via allowing us to see certain things in new ways, this does little explanatory work. Such a definition of the therapeutic might include novels, biology, poetry, chemistry, film, or even walks in the park. The conclusion to be drawn from this, of course, is not that it is useless (or intellectually sloppy) to call a certain philosophical practice “therapeutic.” On the contrary, the point here is that

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such a designation is only a gesture: a suggestion about the way in which we might approach specific philosophical thinkers and/or ideas. When we speak of philosophical therapy, to put the point another way, this is best construed as a means by which we might interpret specific views. It can be construed as a methodological suggestion for reading texts that need not be pigeon-holed, as opposed to a specific position one takes on the nature of the Fach “philosophy.”

My argument in this essay falls or stands on the adequacy of the examples given. As always, the devil lurks in the details. Deciding whether or not there is something that unifies therapeutic accounts remains a matter of historical investigation. If my account of these five forms of philosophical therapy stands, however, there is a therapeutic lesson to be learned: one need not look for necessary and sufficient conditions of something called “therapy,” as such a search might yield considerably divergent results that only serve to obfuscate the therapeutic point: namely, that things might be seen under a different rubric, and such an occurrence might mark a significant improvement in our ability to cope with the world, wherever we encounter it.

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**ENDNOTES**


2. Cf. A. E. Douglas, “Form and Content in the Tuscan Disputations,” in ibid., p. 205. I. F. Stone’s *Trial of Socrates* (New York: Little, Brown, 1988), misrepresents this very point in claiming that Cicero is fundamentally Socratic by virtue of the fact that Cicero affirms nothing (cf. p. 60). This seems to me a disastrous misreading of Cicero’s philosophical project, regardless of the fact that the book is a popularization.


4. One finds this view in *De Legibus*. As MacIntyre has pointed out, Cicero provided a classic statement of the view that we have a dual obligation to “both the justice of the cosmos and the justice of Rome.” Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 147. Cicero of course held that Rome had achieved something unprecedented: it had managed to duplicate the justice of the cosmos in the justice of the state. It had managed to tap into “that supreme law” which was in force “during all the centuries before any written law or any city state” (*De Legibus*, I, vi, 19. quoted in ibid., p. 147).

5. I do not mean to suggest that Cicero saw the truth of certain claims as incidental. Quite the contrary, it was the truth of a claim which gave it its phenomenological force. Truth is incidental in the sense that philosophy could be just as therapeutic without the gripes about truth. One sees this in a rather striking fashion in both Nietzsche and (the late) Foucault. Genealogy allows us to encounter novel interpretations of our identities—to conceive of ourselves along new descriptive lines—the result of which is the transgression of limits, or the abandonment of the spirit of gravity, respectively. The effect in this case has nothing to do with the truth of the genealogy, only with the way we comport ourselves to the genealogy. I will give a more detailed account of this in section IV, below.

6. As Douglas notes, “Cicero found in writing all his philosophical works a kind of consoling distraction, but not (except in the *Consolatio*) in their substance: there is nothing particularly cheering in *Academia* and *De Finibus*” (Douglas, “Form and Content,” p. 208).

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The ancient Skeptics do not fit easily into the category of "ancient therapists" as I am employing it in this essay. Construed in one light, their insistence on a refusal to assent to philosophical beliefs suggests that all of ancient therapy did not hinge on appropriate belief-acquisition, as my discussion thus far suggests. I must concede this point. I would like to say, however, that the disdain for epistemology found in the Skeptics hinged on a conception of value. Having beliefs leads to attachments, and attachments lead to pain. It is virtually impossible to take these remarks as lacking the marks of a philosophical position. For an extremely interesting account of the Pyrrhonist project which relates this therapy to the Wittgensteinian version of philosophical therapy, see David R. Hiley, Philosophy in Question: Essays on a Pyrrhonian Theme (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

Nietzsche was fond of this metaphor in both early and late writings. See the Philosophenbuch, for example.

Alexander Nehamas famously argues that we might best construe Nietzsche's writings as an instance of literary self-creation, and Rorty follows suit. See his Nietzsche: Life as Literature (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), and Richard Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), especially ch. 5. As is obvious, the responses to this position are encyclopedic.

As we will see below, this is not the case with all narrative versions of the therapeutic. Understanding one's pathology in Freud's schema, it has been argued, demands that one gets right the particular repressions leading one to one's illness.

Of course, I do not mean to suggest that Freud's new methodological approach to therapy can be considered in isolation from his more substantive theoretical claims. Freud's cognitive machinery was new too. My point here is confined to the therapeutic: Freud saw a need for the therapist to come down from on high, to engage in a contract of sorts with the patient that would permit both honesty and health.

Daniel Chapelle, Nietzsche and Psychoanalysis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) attempts to draw much closer parallels between Nietzschean and Freudian thought than I am here allowing. While adequately critiquing Chapelle's view is beyond the scope of my current endeavor, it is worth noting the primary problem Chapelle faces: he attempts to make Nietzsche into a metaphysician—to reduce him to the very tradition he was attempting to overcome.

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19. I am not here offering a definition of philosophy, nor am I committing myself to the view that philosophy is something like a natural kind. I am simply suggesting with what license one might call Freudian psychoanalysis a philosophical therapy.


21. Indeed, as Bouveresse notes, much of Wittgenstein’s *Big Typescript* hinges on things obviously appropriated from psychoanalysis (see ibid., pp. 10–12).


23. See John McDowell *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), where he claims that his aim “is to propose an account, in a diagnostic spirit, of some characteristic anxieties of modern philosophy—anxieties that centre, as my title indicates, on the relation between mind and world. Continuing with the medical metaphor, we might say that a satisfactory diagnosis ought to point towards a cure” (p. xii).


25. While Rorty’s take on things is undoubtedly Wittgensteinian in a certain way, his take on therapy, I will argue, is not. His is a view which places philosophical redescription beyond the boundary of social importance. Moreover, while Wittgenstein consistently points us back to our forms of life to find peace in philosophy, Rorty points us to the offspring of the primitive language-games which operate as fundamental in Wittgensteinian therapy.

26. It is this, I would argue, which separates Rorty’s therapeutic approach most forcefully from Nietzsche’s. Nietzsche thought he could offer a vocabulary to emerging human beings which would allow them to escape from nihilism. Rorty, on the other hand, dismisses any such role for the theoretical, and hence demands that such articulations be seen as private, idiosyncratic endeavors.

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