Athens Journal of Philosophy

March 2025

Athens Journal of Philosophy

Published by the Athens Institute

Athens Institute is an Athens-based World Association of Academics and Researchers based in Athens. Athens Institute is an independent and non-profit Association with a Mission to become a forum where Academics and Researchers from all over the world can meet in Athens, exchange ideas on their research and discuss future developments in their disciplines, as well as engage with professionals from other fields. Athens was chosen because of its long history of academic gatherings, which go back thousands of years to Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. Both these historic places are within walking distance from Athens Institute's downtown offices. Since antiquity, Athens was an open city. In the words of Pericles, Athens"…is open to the world, we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing". ("Pericles' Funeral Oration", in Thucydides, The History of the Peloponnesian War). It is Athens Institute's mission to revive the glory of Ancient Athens by inviting the World Academic Community to the city, to learn from each other in an environment of freedom and respect for other people's opinions and beliefs. After all, the free expression of one's opinion formed the basis for the development of democracy, and Athens was its cradle. As it turned out, the Golden Age of Athens was in fact, the Golden Age of the Western Civilization. Education and (Re)searching for the 'truth' are the pillars of any free (democratic) society. This is the reason why Education and Research are the two core words in Athens Institute's name.

The *Athens Journal of Philosophy* (AJPHIL) is an Open Access quarterly double-blind peer reviewed journal and considers papers from all areas of philosophy. Many of the papers in this journal have been presented at the various conferences sponsored by Philosophy Unit of the Athens Institute. All papers are subject to Athens Institute's Publication Ethical Policy and Statement.

President's Message

All Athens Institute's publications including its e-journals are open access without any costs (submission, processing, publishing, open access paid by authors, open access paid by readers etc.) and is independent of presentations at any of the many small events (conferences, symposiums, forums, colloquiums, courses, roundtable discussions) organized by Athens Institute throughout the year and entail significant costs of participating. The intellectual property rights of the submitting papers remain with the author. Before you submit, please make sure your paper meets the basic academic standards, which includes proper English. Some articles will be selected from the numerous papers that have been presented at the various annual international academic conferences organized by the different divisions and units of the Athens Institute for Education and Research. The plethora of papers presented every year will enable the editorial board of each journal to select the best, and in so doing produce a top-quality academic journal. In addition to papers presented, Athens Institute will encourage the independent submission of papers to be evaluated for publication.

The current issue is the first of the fourth volume of the *Athens Journal of Philosophy* (AJPHIL), by the published by the Philosophy Unit of ATINER

Gregory T. Papanikos
President
Athens Institute

Athens Institute for Education and Research
A World Association of Academics and Researchers

20th Annual International Conference on Philosophy
26-29 May 2025, Athens, Greece

The [Philosophy Unit](#) of Athens Institute organizes its 20th **Annual International Conference on Philosophy, 26-29 May 2025, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts](#). The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers of all areas of philosophy and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2025/FORM-PHI.doc).

Academic Members Responsible for the Conference

- **Dr. Patricia Hann**a, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Athens Institute, ex-Dean & Professor Emerita, University of Utah, USA.
- **Dr. William O'Meara,** Head, Philosophy Unit, Athens Institute & Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion, James Madison University, USA.
- **Dr. Mark Fagiano**, Deputy Head, [Philosophy Unit](#), Athens Institute & Assistant Professor, Washington State University, USA.

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **15 April 2025**
- Acceptance of Abstract: **4 Weeks after Submission**
- Submission of Paper: **28 April 2025**

Social and Educational Program

The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Athens Institute.

- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit

Conference Fees

Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€
Details can be found at: https://www.atiner.gr/fees

Athens Institute for Education and Research
A World Association of Academics and Researchers

10th Annual International Symposium on Religion & Theology
26-29 May 2025, Athens, Greece

The Humanities & Education Division of Athens Institute is organizing its 10th **Annual International Symposium on Religion & Theology, 26-29 May 2025, Athens, Greece**. The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers of Religion, Theology and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair of a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2025/FORM-REL.doc).

Important Dates
- Abstract Submission: **15 April 2025**
- Acceptance of Abstract: **4 Weeks after Submission**
- Submission of Paper: **28 April 2025**

Academic Member Responsible for the Conference

- **Dr. William O'Meara,** Academic Member, Athens Institute & Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion, James Madison University, USA.

Social and Educational Program
The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Athens Institute.
- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
- Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion
  More information can be found here: https://www.atiner.gr/social-program

---

Conference Fees
Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€
Details can be found at: https://www.atiner.gr/fees

From the *Euthyphro* to Theodicy:
The Problem of Language and God

By Ori Z Soltes*

Beginning with the Euthyphro and continuing with reference to the Cratylus, Plato's Socrates introduces and repeatedly confronts the problem of defining terms that humans—specifically, his fellow Athenians—use every day, without considering what the terms really mean. The aporetic outcome of the Cratylus underscores the abiding problematic of language as an instrument for the dialogue necessary to philosophy. The particular focus of the Euthyphro, on piety/ holiness (hosiotes) and its definitionally desperate connection to divinity, offers a turn from philosophy to theology and carries the discussion from Plato to the text of Ex 3:14 and the problematic of God's name. In turn this leads to the discussion by Levinas in his essay "God and Philosophy" of the juxtaposition and hierarchy of philosophy and theology—by way of the question of whether human language can ever function as well as we hope or imagine it might or does in conveying what the sort of God in which the Abrahamic faiths believe is, and whether It can ever be effectively expressed or understood. This also leads down a path parallel to that of Socrates by way of Genesis 6 (the problem of evil and thus of divinely-ordained ethics) and all the way to Job and the problem of theodicy (why the innocent suffer in a world made by such a God)—and to the challenge and obligation to ask questions, even—especially—those without answers.

In one of Plato's earliest dialogues, *Euthyphro*, Socrates encounters the sophist[1] for whom the dialogue is named on the courthouse steps in Athens and confronts the self-proclaimed wise man with a question: what, exactly, is *hosiotes*—translatable either as "piety" or as "holiness" (for the purposes of this particular discussion either translation into English will do). As usual in such Socratic conversations, the two characters parry back and forth; Euthyphro feints in this direction and that, and each time Socrates deflects with a simple explanation of why his interlocutor is not leading toward a viable answer. With one last thrust, Euthyphro offers what he imagines to be a solid answer: *hosiotes* is what is pleasing to the gods. Alas, for him, Socrates counterthrusts twice: he asks whether something is *hosios* because it pleases the gods or whether it pleases the gods because it is *hosios* (to which a flummoxed Euthyphro has no real answer)—and

---

*Professor, Georgetown University, USA.

[1]This term (Gk: *sophos*) simply means "wise (man)," but is used in Plato to refer to individuals who not only claim wisdom and specific kinds of knowledge, but typically claim to be able to impart it to others, for a fee—in contrast to Socrates, who is eager to share wisdom with and even more so, to gain it from others, simply for the intellectual satisfaction that such an exchange can offer. If the Euthyphro of the dialogue by that name (who is also referenced in the *Cratylus*) is Euthyphro the Prospaltian, we know of him as a self-proclaimed *mantis*—as kind of prophet, which would make him different from, say, Hippias or Gorgias or Protagoras, but part of the larger category of *sophoi* with whom Socrates is often in conversation. The main issue in so-labelling him is his pretense of wisdom. See, inter alia, Debra Nails, *The People of Plato*.

observes, furthermore, that, as they have noted earlier in their conversation, the gods often disagree about things; so, what if a given action pleases one god but displeases another: could it then really be called *hosios*, based on Euthyphro's definition?

At that point, Euthyphro suddenly remembers that he needs to be elsewhere. He walks away from the courthouse steps as Socrates himself prepares to enter the building and face a charge—of impiety. We thus understand that the discussion—and many others like it—is not only about the abstract issue of definition, or even about the intellectual problem of Euthyphro-like characters, who abound in Athens. It is about how one actualizes the consequences of thinking and not thinking about these matters. How will a jury of Socrates' peers—several hundred of them—in a democracy shaped so that all of those jurors are everyday citizens, judge whether or not he is impious, if none of them has really ever thought about what "piety" is. If a renowned wise man hasn't thought about it, how likely is any of them to have ever done so? It is not only, in the end, about how one thinks; it is about how one lives.

Plato's *Euthyphro* ends in *aporia*: Socrates has failed to elicit an effective definition of *hosiotes*. This early dialogue is a harbinger of inconclusive endings in Platonic works over the next nearly four decades, as Plato furthers the search initiated by Socrates for absolute definitions of diverse aspects of the Good. One of the most important of Plato's efforts is the *Cratylus*—coming about midway through his writing and teaching career—which is the fullest of his explorations of the problem of language as a medium for accessing the truth regarding the Good and the entire realm of Ideas. Included among the many kinds of words examined by Socrates, Hermogenes, and Cratylus are the names of gods, but the essences conveyed by these names are not perceived as more problematic than those of other names and nouns: in the end *this* dialogue's *aporia* pertains to the fundamental *inadequacy* of language: using *words* to apprehend words of any sort. That inadequacy derives from two fundamental problems. The first pertains to how language functions, in the grammatical and syntactical sense: what does a word that we call a noun *do* so that we call it a "noun," whereas we call a verb a "verb" and an adjective an "adjective"? That sort of parsing of language's constituent parts, it turns out, was being understood and diagrammed, and the various parts of speech accordingly labeled in terms of their function, in India, by Panini (ca 520-460 BCE), some time before Socrates was prowling the streets of Athens and Plato the corridors of his Academy. The Hellenic world would become familiar with Panini's work through the conquests of Alexander the Great (ca 330-25 BCE) and it would be in the following generation that the Stoic philosophers would recast Panini's Sanskrit descriptives of what words do in a sentence into Greek (which would later be translated into Latin by the Romans; we use anglicized versions of those Latin terms: noun, verb, adjective, preposition, infinitive, subjunctive, optative, imperative, et al.).

Plato's vocabulary does not—*cannot*—distinguish between a word, a common noun, a proper noun, a name—or between names like Socrates, Cratylus, Hermogenes, Ajax, or Agamemnon, of which there could be many instances, and the names of gods like Zeus and Hermes, of which there is only one exemplar. The same

word—*onoma*—is used to refer to all of these types or categories of words. Moreover, *onoma* is also used to mean "subject," whereas *rhema* is used to refer to "predicate"—but also "verb" and also "phrase" (where *onoma* refers to a single word). *Logos*, in turn, is used to refer to a sentence—composed of an *onoma* and a *rhema* (or more than one of each) but also to refer to an account of indeterminant length—it could be a paragraph or five pages long—but which is a *reasoned* argument. In this quality, *logos* is opposed to *mythos*, which is an account shaped by something other than reason—inspiration from a divine source, for instance.[2]

The very phrases *peri onomaton orthotes* and *peri onomatos orthotes*—the first used as a subtitle to the *Cratylus*, but both found early on within the dialogue—are ambiguous as to their meaning. The first means "on the correctness of *onomata* (plural)" and the second, "on the correctness of an *onoma* (singular)." They are ambiguous both because of the ambiguities of "*onoma*" and because of those of "*orthotes*": does "correctness" refer to word-*usage* or to the *creation* of *onomata* in the first place, and then: is this last issue the same when we ask whether Hermogenes was correctly named by his parents and when we ask whether "table" is the correct word for the object to which I refer by that term? In this last instance, are we confining our query to Greek, which would be difficult enough? Or do we mean to filter it through a wider lens, which recognizes the existence of many languages with diverse phonemic structures and diverse phonemic agglomerations for objects? Thus, "table" is *trapeza* in Greek but *mesa* in Spanish, *Tisch* in German, and *shulhan* in Hebrew, for instance.

The *Craylus* sets out, in essence, to ask the question of whether language is an instrument fit for the needs of philosophy: if we are trying to define "tableness" or "piety" or justice" can we be sure that in our discussion we are all starting from the same point of understanding, or is the notion of dialogue undercut from the very beginning because we can never arrive at a definitive common starting point with the words that we use to engage in our dialogue?

The array of issues raised in these last few paragraphs are the tip of a larger iceberg.[3] The enterprise seems doomed to *aporia* from the start—and certainly end ups there. Moreover, most of Plato's discussion—even including that which pertains to the names of gods—doesn't even arrive at the second complication, which pertains to discussions *of* divinity. Simply put: we are human and divinities are divine. They don't grow ill or grow old or die and we *do*. These are just the most obvious distinctions between divinity and humanity—but the point is that the gods are the ultimate *other*. Their realm is of an entirely different order (pun intended) from ours. It doesn't operate in time and space as ours does; the closest approximation we experience is in our dream reality, with its stunningly unpredictable twists and turns in time and space

---

[2]Thus in the *Phaedo*, Socrates offers a succession of *logoi* to prove the immortality of the soul, each of which is shown to be flawed, and then reverts to *mythos*, telling a tale that he strongly believes, but which cannot be validated by reason. In the end, his convictions are validated by *ergon*—action—when he drinks the hemlock as if it is fine wine, corroborating at least the notion that he *fully believes* that he is going to a better place, where his soul can more effectively pursue the knowledge of truth and the Good.

[3]For a fuller discussion see Ori Z Soltes, *Plato's* Cratylus *and The Relation of Language to Truth in the History of Philosophy* (The Edwin Mellen Press, 2007).

and circumstance.

So, when Euthyphro resorts to "that which is pleasing to the gods" the problem with that reference is not only what Socrates points out, but more fundamentally: what does it mean to say that a god is "pleased" or "displeased"? Do we—*can* we— know what gods "feel" or "think"? If we speak of divine power or mercy, can we know what such turns of phrase really mean for a god? We can only infer what those feelings and the words referencing them actually are and mean for gods from our own *human* experience. Everything that we say about them is functionally a metaphor, an allegory—an analogy drawn from what we experience as humans.

Given that the Greeks understand divinities as anthropomorphs—bigger, better, eternally youthful and swifter and stronger versions of ourselves—their inferences regarding their gods have a certain weight and can be conveyed by language. We see this in Greek literature, most obviously in epic and tragic poetry, where gods physically interact with humans—whether fighting on the battlefield before Troy or speaking out to various characters from a *makhina* (crane) above the stage.

By the time of Socrates and Plato, the Greeks themselves had become less convinced of direct divine involvement of this sort in human affairs. The gods still interact with us, but almost exclusively through a unique handful of individuals, known as priests. Even where priests are concerned, as divine-human interaction settles mainly on a few sites, such as Delphi, the god (in this case, Apollo) inspirits a sybil, whose semi-incoherent mumblings and rants are interpreted by priests (thus only indirectly receiving words from the god)—and even at that, the individual seeking advice from the god may end up *further* interpreting the message mediated through the sybil and the priests, correctly or incorrectly.[4]

This problem of divine-human communication intensifies as Western religious thinking shifts its understanding from that of many divinities of limited power, knowledge, and vision to the sort of God worshipped by Jews, Christians, and Muslims: singular, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-merciful, all-good, and interested and interventionist in human affairs. For Jews and Muslims, God is also always absolutely formless and non-physical, and thus inaccessible to the senses. To begin with, can we know what descriptives like "all-powerful" really mean, in God's terms? Our verbal instruments won't suffice to describe God beyond our own vocabulary and experience; they fall short of being true descriptives of God—far shorter than is the case with Greek anthropomorphic gods.

This complication is exemplified in part by the brief dialogue between Moses and God (Ex 3:14) in which, when Moses asks who to tell the Israelites has sent him, God responds: "I am/will be that I am/will be." Rather than being coy, God is asserting to Moses that the divine essence is Being itself, which cannot be defined by the essence-confining box of an ordinary name. One might turn back to the Greeks to understand what God is saying to Moses. The idea that a name is

---

[4]Arguably the most famous example of that process leading an individual astray through his misinterpretation of what the god told him through the priests is related in Herodotus I.53ff. in which the Lydian King Croesus consults the god Apollo through the sybil at Delphi, asking whether he should attack the Medo-Persian Empire, whose ruler was Cyrus II. The sybil's response that, if Croesus does so, he "will destroy a great empire" is mistaken by him as an affirmative—which it was, except that the empire that he destroyed was his own.

understood by most cultures and traditions—including that associated with Homeric literature—to encompass the essence of its bearer, is nicely exemplified in Book 19 of the *Odyssey*. When the hero returns home after 20 years of war and wandering, disguised, thanks to Athena, as an old beggar, his unsuspecting wife offers the old man hospitality. She instructs the old nurse, Eurykleia—Odysseus' own nurse from childhood—to wash the traveler's feet and legs. Rolling up the tattered robe of the beggar, Eurykleia sees, with a shock, the scar on his thigh that identifies him to her immediately as Odysseus.

Embedded within the dramatic pause—the hero's leg suspended in mid-air as his old nurse gasps for breath—the narrator tells us that when Odysseus was a small boy, he killed a boar, which at the same time gored him in the leg, leaving that scar.[5] We are led to understand that his name comes from that moment and from the Greek verb *odyein*, meaning "to give or receive pain"—for his essence was *captured* in that moment: he gives and receives pain. Odysseus is constantly referred to as long-suffering, but he is also constantly administering suffering to others—anyone involved with him feels pain: whether the wife or son left alone without him for 20 years, or the mother who died of heartache while he was gone, or the father who went off to live as if in semi-poverty out on the old family farm; or the city of Troy, destroyed through his ruse of the wooden horse; or the crew of his ships—not a single one of whom made it back to Ithaka alive; or Polyphemos, the Kyklops whom he blinded, or the Phaiakians who ferried him safely home—whose ship and crew were then turned to stone within sight of their home harbor, by Poseidon; to the goddesses Kirke and Kalypso, no less, both of whom would have loved him to stay longer with them—Kalypso wanted to immortalize him and spend the rest of eternity with him—to the suitors whom he slaughtered when he finally returned home, and all the families who grieved for them.

So, the name of Odysseus conveys his essence, but where the Name of God is concerned, its essence is essence—*being—itself*, and offers no appropriate linguistic instrument to express, since pure being is beyond the human capacity to grasp. This is what God asserts to Moses in response to the prophet's name-question: you and the Israelites cannot grasp what I am—and was and will be—*isness itself*, that cannot be bound by human understanding, or confined by human terminology: I cannot be defined (from the Latin root, *fin-*, meaning boundary), which is what a name *does*. Ultimately, the common name for God—the tetragrammaton, *YHVH* (for, as a Semitic language, Hebrew focuses only on the consonants, as far as word-roots are concerned)—is not only viewed as inarticulatable (for the vowels become uncertain), but is pronounced as *Adonai*, the phonemic content of which bears no relationship to those four consonants. So, the Name that God doesn't give to Moses (although God *does*, since the root consonants of the tetragrammaton, *YH*, are the root consonants of the verb "to be") is ineffable.[6]

---

[5]*Odyssey* 19:359-469.

[6]The rabbinic tradition will further underscore that even the Name such as it is, is ineffable—it cannot be said—and eventually, traditional Jews won't even pronounce "*Adonai*" in any non-prayer context. They substitute the word *HaShem*, meaning "The Name." God's name is approached by increasing circumlocution between the time of Moses at the Burning Bush and our own era.

Moreover, God's *Name* is still not *God*—just as Odysseus' name, while it may convey his essence, is not Odysseus actually standing before me: if I pronounce his name—or the name of anyone I know either through literature and history or my own life—there is a sense in which that person enters the room, but it is not the same as if s/he actually entered my physical space in flesh and blood form. How much the more so where God and God's Name are concerned! So the problem of understanding God encompasses both the ineffable divine Name and every divine attribute that we assert. From "all-powerful" to "engaged" we do not and cannot know what such concepts really mean in divine terms. We use them as a convenience and because we lack better instruments; we apply them from our own realm of experience, but they all fall short, offering at best metaphors for a God whose actual essence and attributes are beyond human knowledge.

This is the problem engaged, and carried further, by Emmanuel Levinas in his 1974 essay, "God and Philosophy." We not only cannot effectively speak of God with language, we cannot know how God speaks to us through prophets when our sacred texts use the phrase "God said" or "God spoke." Levinas argues that in the West, philosophy has emerged since Socrates and Plato as "an all-encompassing structure or of an ultimate comprehension" under which "rational theology" is subsumed as a vassal.[7] However, this makes the *discussion* of God, much less the *understanding* of God impossible, since the ultimate concern of philosophy is ontology—the study of being—and the biblical God is *beyond* being: "the God of the Bible signifies the beyond being, transcendence."[8] Moreover, "Rational theology, fundamentally ontological, strives to take account of transcendence in the domain of being by expressing it with adverbs of height applied to the verb being; God is said to exist eminently or par excellence. But does the height, or the height above all height, that is expressed belong to ontology? And does not the modality which this adverb expresses, borrowed from the dimension of the sky over our heads, modify the verbal meaning of the verb to the point of excluding it from the thinkable as something inapprehendable, excluding it from the *esse* showing itself, that is, showing itself meaningfully in a theme?"[9]

Levinas is engaged in two processes here. One is to underscore the distinction between philosophy as it has evolved in the West and (rational) theology: philosophy pertains to the matter of our own reality and theology to a reality beyond our own. One might note that Western philosophy did not necessarily begin that way, but encompassed what is beyond our own reality in Plato's discussion of the Forms/ Ideas, (particularly in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*). The Good and its concomitants are understood to transcend our reality with its many instances of acts and expressions that we label as "good." There is an assumed relationship between these inaccessible, transcendent Forms/Ideas that Plato's Socrates is depicted as desperate to know by truly defining them, and these acts and expressions, understood to be in a direct imitative relationship to the Forms/Ideas. Yet no matter how many instances of justice or piety or goodness

---

[7]Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy," in Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak, et al, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 129.
[8]Ibid, 130.
[9]Ibid,130. "*Esse*" is the Latin infinitive, "to be."

Socrates and his interlocutors are represented as investigating, they consistently fall short of defining the Forms/Ideas of Justice, Piety or the Good—*inter alia*. They always end up in *aporia*.

Plato's Forms/Ideas bear a conceptual relationship to the evolving Israelite-Judaean-Jewish/Christian/Muslim notion of a transcendent God; the key difference pertains to God's directive interaction with humanity through prophets like the Moses who has such a difficult conversation with God before the Burning Bush, whereas the Forms/Ideas simply *are*, their role in our reality is simply to be there as the metaphysical and transcendent realities in which every act of justice and piety—and table-construction and house-building—participates.

Once Aristotle succeeded Plato as the pre-eminent Western philosopher, certain as he was that all that we need in order to understand reality is *within* our own reality, then Western philosophy begins the divergence to which Levinas alludes. While, from Aristotle to Heidegger, Western philosophy becomes obsessed with being, whether simply seeking to define it or parsing it into constituent uses—existential, essential, copulative—even that, *pure being*, is conceived as within our reality. Levinas understands theology to address a God even *beyond* that sort of (understanding of) being—beyond even what God asserted to Moses.

The second process in which Levinas is engaged is to underscore the impossibility of describing God because all the terms that we use derive from our reality, whereas God, in being beyond that reality, is not susceptible to terms such as those referring to space—height, for instance—both because God is beyond the highest imaginable sky and also because the very concept of height is relative to our own reality and perspective: the sky is high, which is to say that it is placed in an upward direction because that is how we perceive it from our own point of view and relative to our place, whereas God defies any such limited perspective and point of spatial view; there is no up or down or in or out where God is concerned.[10] Thus, undergirding the discussion of God is the *problematic* of discussion: that it uses words, *our* words, drawn and developed from our own experience, understanding, perspective, point of view—words that are, by definition, confined and confining and thus incapable of functioning as real instruments for describing God or defining divine attributes or even referencing them (because they are beyond confinement).

So, we have returned to where Plato left off at the end of the *Cratylus*—not circled back to the same place, but spiraled back to a slightly different iteration of that place: the inadequacy of language not only for philosophy, but even more so for theology, the object and subject of which is God. And Levinas has, more than incidentally, liberated theology from its condition of enthrallment to philosophy, in recognizing the reach of theology beyond even where philosophy seeks to go: toward "the beyond the beyond."

There is another important implication for all of this, given the role that theology

---

[10]While this is not the point of this essay, one might note how this problematic of describing God is cognate with that proving that God in fact exists—which is mirrored by the problematic for the atheist who wishes to prove that God does *not* exist. Neither the believer nor the non-believer can prove his/ her point to someone of the opposite perspective, since God is beyond not only absolute description but beyond full-proof existential proof—as is clear from Anselm to Descartes (who wish to prove God's existence) to Hitchens (who wishes to disprove it).

comes to play in defining a moral and ethical code imposed by a metaphysical superstructure—by God. Levinas inches toward but does not quite arrive at this problem, in the last section of his "God and Philosophy" essay, entitled "Prophetic Signification." If our language is inadequate for defining God, is it capable of understanding *God's* language when God commands and prescribes particular behavior? Even within the confines of the words comprising human language that we think we understand, the presumed revelation deriving from prophetic intermediation leads to a distinctive kind of interpretational *aporia*: Do we know what it means to "have no other gods before Me"? or what it means to "not commit murder"? If we consider the further possibility that we may not even have correctly received the words as they were originally transmitted—even before we are skewered on the horns of trying to interpret the words that we assume have been correctly transmitted in our language—the *aporia* deepens.

For example: in Gen 6:5ff, we are told that all of humanity had become evil—except for Noah, who was "a righteous man within his generation"—and so the Lord purposed to destroy them all, except for Noah and his family. There is no explanation whatsoever, however, as to what "evil" means to the God who will soon bring a massive flood: what exactly did they all do that constitutes "evil"? There is no indication all the way back to the beginning of Genesis 1, in fact. We may *interpret* Adam and Eve to have committed *evil* in abrogating God's command not to eat from a certain tree, for example—but for this they were punished with banishment from the Garden of Eden, and it is in any case, our interpretation.[11] The only other thing that they were commanded was to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28)—but this commandment they clearly fulfilled, which is why there are so many people for God to drown by Noah's day. So, we are not only left with the problem of trying to interpret the word "evil" but we might even consider among the underlying problems embedded within this interpretational challenge, the (rather heretical) possibility that God's prophetic scribe—Moses, by tradition—who was writing down the Torah, altogether misunderstood something: that he missed a word or phrase or whatever it is that might explain "evil". Or might this possibility, if we entertain it, derive from the fundamental problem of *language*: that Moses did not always *understand* God's language—and we, farther away from that direct relationship, are even farther from having a secure and absolute understanding of it?

The implications of all of this intensify when, in the aftermath of events like, say, the Holocaust, we pose the question of *theodicy*—that is, the question of how it is that a God deemed all-powerful and all-good and all-merciful, and also interested and involved in human affairs throughout history can have allowed a million and a half children to be fried in ovens. The problem of understanding what God is and how God operates comes to ground level with such a question, overwhelming both philosophical and theological speculation. A legion of Jewish and Christian thinkers has tried to explain God's action—or inaction—in spite of our fundamental inability even to know God's Name or the divine parameters of the

---

[11]It is, incidentally, not clear that the labelling of the tree "of the knowledge of good and evil" from which they eat is even intended to suggest "good and evil" in the common parlance moral and ethical sense, since that biblical Hebrew phrase can mean, rather, "full knowledge of a subject, derived from seeing it from all sides."

words we use to describe God.[12]

The only ones who may claim to have found some sort of answer to the question have done so by redefining God. Thus Rabbi Richard Rubenstein's "God of Nature," as opposed to "God of (involved directly in) History," solves the theodicy question by eliminating key aspects of the traditional Abrahamic understanding of God.[13] Jewish philosopher Emile Fackenheim's "614th Commandment" derives from his assuming a kind of prophetic stance in order to redirect a traditional understanding of God—bifurcating God's interface with humanity, and in particular with "Israel" (and thus, in his terms, Jews), into a dual salvational and commanding presence.[14] Protestant theologian Paul Tillich—and subsequently, with slightly different turns, he is followed by Thomas J. J. Altizer—found an answer by turning God the Father into a tyrant (extending a long Christian tradition of regarding the Hebrew Biblical God as angry, versus the New Testament God as loving) and rejecting Him, turning exclusively to the Son.[15] All of these viewpoints try to explain God by reformulating an understanding of God, which won't help traditionalists—and, of course, the Protestant formulation will be of no help to Jews, for whom there is no Father-Son understanding of God, much less a sense of God as tyrannical. Rubenstein, in fact, in reviewing these and a range of other, more traditional perspectives, ultimately asserts that "the term 'God' is very much like the unstructured inkblot used in the Rorschach test."[16]

Some recognize that this may be the wrong question—that humans, not God, devised the gas chambers and crematoria—that perhaps we should be questioning what *we* are as a species, anthropologically, sociologically, and psychologically, and not trying to reason out what God is, *theologically*. Aside from the obvious fact that humans, not God, created the gas chambers and the crematoria, this seems a more than reasonable proposition given our inability to even know God's true Name or to describe God's attributes. Can we be sure that we have ever really understood what God's imperatives for us are as a species—and thus the "purposes" for God's actions?

Levinas approaches, but doesn't quite reach, the discussion of this last series of complications, beginning with his reference to "*hineni*"—"Here am I"—which is Abraham's response in Gen 22:7 to what takes shape as a commandment to kill his own son; and Moses' response in Exodus 3:4 to what eventuates as a commandment to return to Egypt and command the Pharaoh, on God's behalf to "let my people go."[17] He further notes that this offers "ethical signification [that]

---

[12]A concise discussion of what about a dozen Jewish and Christian theologians have come up with as answers to the post-Holocaust theodicy question is take n up by the Jewish rabbi and psychoanalyst, Richard Rubenstein, in his path-breaking 1966 (revised and expanded in 1992) volume, *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism*).

[13]Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 172-6. Incidentally, Rubenstein confuses "pantheism" with "panhenotheism/panentheism," but that confusion does not affect the issue that I am raising here.

[14]Emil L. Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections*. (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc, 1997). The volume was first published in 1970.

[15]Their views, together with that of William Hamilton, are succinctly summarized by Rubenstein, Ibid, 247-52.

[16]Rubenstein, 251.

[17]Ibid, 146.

signifies not *for* a consciousness which thematizes but *to* a subjectivity, *wholly an obedience*, obeying with an obedience that *precedes understanding*. Here is a *passivity* still more passive than that of receptivity in *knowing*…."[18] Put otherwise —in rather Platonic terms—Abraham and Moses follow the divine orders without hesitation because they "know" with seamless faith that the orders must be part of the *Good*.[19]

Further, "the ethical moment is not founded on any preliminary structure of theoretical thought, on language or on any particular language. Language then has over signification only the hold a form has, clothing matter…. There is here a break-up of the omnipotence of the logos… Transcendence… requires the blinking and dia-chrony of *enigma*…" [emphasis added].[20] The power of a reasoned argument—a *logos*—has been reduced—as Plato himself clearly recognized in his frequent falling back onto *mythos*—in favor of insoluble enigma.

Moreover, as the word *logos* itself evolves from Plato's time and usage to that of the New Testament, we are reminded anew—even when *mere prophecy* is superseded by God Itself assuming human form—that our understanding of God cannot be encapsulated with words, even *if* they assume physical form. "In the beginning was the word (*logos*)… and the word was God…" (John 1:1)— underscores the idea that all of reality begins with the issue of words—of language— but also raises the question: whose reality? whose words/language? God's or our own? And how are the two connected, aside from the late-in-the-game transformation of the word into flesh?

Given the limitations of human language and understanding—however the attempt to engage, explore, understand, explain, or express God or God's actions are concerned, from Plato to Moses to John to Levinas to ourselves—how can we anticipate anything other than an *aporia* that is both Socratic and *Jobian* when we enter from philosophical into theological inquiry, with its presumptions regarding divine Being and divine ethical prescriptions, actions and inactions?[21]

If on the on hand we cannot avoid those limitations in wrestling both with the reality around us and even more so with a transcendent reality, yet on the other hand—and this is certainly Plato's Socrates' view—those limitations are not, per se, a liability. On the contrary, we can and should be mentally and morally invigorated by the challenge—by the sense of obligation, if we are to be fully *human*—of using the uniquely human instruments of language and inquiry to

---

[18]Ibid, 148.

[19]It is Abraham's seamlessness of faith, of course, to which Kierkegaard calls attention in his coinage, "The Knight of Faith," as that idea is discussed in his 1843 work, *Fear and Trembling*, (ascribed to his pseudonymous alter ego, Johannes de Silentio).

[20]Levinas, 148.

[21]By "Jobian" I am referring to the fact that a) Job doesn't know what we know, since we, artificially, have been witnesses to the debate between God and the satan regarding his faith, and thus to the initiation of what proves to be a test of his faith; and b) when God finally answers the long-suffering hero of the story beginning in Chapter 38 of the book, the essence of the divine response is that Job is presumptuous in trying to understand why he, innocent of sin, has suffered so (and by extension anyone who is innocent but made to suffer). For there are things that humans are not equipped to understand. So the conclusion is absolutely aporetic if the goal of the narrative is to find an answer to the question regarding the suffering of innocent people.

address both divinity and all of the "lesser" issues that flow from divinity as the source of our reality. To be fully human is to embed ourselves in the problematic posed to Euthyphro by Socrates and to thinking readers by Levinas on the one hand and by words, phrases, and direct divine comments in Genesis, Exodus, and Job on the other.

Bibliography

Ademollo F (2011) *The Cratylus of Plato: A Commentary* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Fackenheim EL (1997) *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections*. (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc).

Helm P (1981) *Divine Commands and Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Levinas E (1996) *Basic Philosophical Writings*, edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak, et al, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

Nails D (2002) *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing).

Robbins J (1999) *Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature*, The University of Chicago Press.

Rubenstein R (1992) *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press (Second Edition).

Soltes OZ (2007) *Plato's* Cratylus *and The Relation of Language to Truth in the History of Philosophy* (The Edwin Mellen Press).

_____ (2023) *The Problem of God and How Humans Have Tried to Solve It Across History*, Generis Publishing.

Naming/Meaning Distinction Delineated in the Context of The Essence/Existence Distinction

By Tennyson Samraj*

The epistemic nature of truth provides the basis of understanding the relationship between the naming/meaning distinction and the existence/essence distinction. Every word denotes a reductive reference and connotes a non-reductive meaning. Every word is associated with both intension/meaning and extension/ reference (Putnam). A noun is a naming word; like all words, it denotes a reference and connotes meaning. The distinction between naming and meaning with reference to nouns is necessary because nouns like all words, deal with both extension and intension. The essence/existence distinction defines why it is essential to separate naming from meaning. For naming and existence is an ontological matter; meaning and essence is an epistemic matter. What does a word or specifically a noun entail? It can ascribe (1) the identity of a person, place, or principle; (2) it can affirm the existence of something (material/ concrete world); the subsistence of something (mathematical/abstract world), or the absistence of something (mental world, F.N. Findlay); or (3) it can define the essence of something as being an essential, accidental, or emergent property. The central thrust of my paper is to discuss why words/ nouns can be understood as either defining the identity and existence of something or defining the meaning and essence of something. There are no nouns/words without reference or meaning. When we see something, what conjures in our mind is either the existence of that thing or the essence of that thing. Naming deals with the specificity and existence of something, while meaning deals with the universality and essence of something. Naming puts emphasis on what is reductive, and meaning puts emphasis on what is non-reductive. Naming and meaning like existence and essence are intertwined because the truth of existence (including subsistence and assistance) and the truth of essence are inseparable, if truth is an epistemic matter. Essence/ existence distinction is fundamental to what exists, subsists or absists in understanding the relationship of the naming/meaning distinction.

Introduction: Epistemic Nature of Truth

To delineate the naming/meaning distinction in the context of the essence/ existence distinction is to understand the epistemic nature of truth. What is epistemic is related to what is ontological; however, what is ontological is not necessarily related to what is epistemic. What there is to know is an ontological matter but what we know of what there is an epistemic matter. What exists is a reductive given, what we know of what exists is a non-reductive given. Reality and what we know about reality are separate and distinct. We do not have access to reality as is; we only have access to reality as we know it. The basis for understanding the relationship between what there is and what we claim to know about what is there, is to understand the relationship between essence and existence.

---

*Professor of Philosophy, Burman University, Canada.

The essence/existence distinction provides the basis for understanding the naming/meaning distinction. Hence, essence is explicable, and its explicability is possible because words are meaning-determinate and the world of existence is essence-explicable. Naming is necessary, and what exists is nameable,[1] because what exists entails essence/existence distinction —hence the epistemic nature of truth. What must be asked is whether essence/existence distinction is an ontological given or an epistemic given. Can we talk about essence independent of existence, subsistence or absistence? Do all objects require existence, e. g. does Pegasus need to be alive to be considered as a being? Plato's argued that what exists is only a 'copy' of the essence, Alexius Meinong argued that the essence of objects can be discussed independent of existence[2]--as objects without a being.

A noun is a naming word[3]. Nouns as words are directed to either the 'is' of identity and existence or to the 'is' of meaning and essence. Naming deals with the 'is' of identity and existence, and meaning deals with the 'is' intension and essence. What is the relationship between essence and meaning? Is meaning related to establishing the 'is' existence, or is meaning related to establishing the 'is' essence? But before we make any claims about essence, we must begin by making ontological commitments. Science and mathematics are the basis for ontological commitments. Science is interested in what there is[4] along with mathematical claims such as *all* or *some*—considered abstract (non-physical) ontological commitments[5]. These quantifications are the basis for ontological commitments. Ontological commitments can be made related to the existence (material world), subsistence (mathematical world) or absistence (mental world or mode of non-being) of something[6] Once we make ontological commitments, we can begin making claims about essence.

Claims related to essence can be understood as being an essential, accidental, or emergent property. We know that the universe is composed of 118 elements distinguished from each other by the number of protons processed by each. Each element is composed of protons and neutrons, which in turn are made up of Up and Down quarks. So basically, the whole universe at the quantum level is

---

[1]Virgil C. Aldrich, "*Mr.* Quine on Meaning, Naming, and Purporting to Name". *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Feb., 1955), 20.

[2]Reinhardt Grossmann, "Meinong's Doctrine of the Assusersein of the Pure Objects" Mar., 1974, Vol. 8, No. 1, Symposia Paper Read at the Meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association in St. Louis, Missouri, April 27-29, 1974 (Mar., 1974), pp. 67 Denoting an object but not having a being—just as a thought in one's mind--F.N. Findley.

[3]It's definition means "name" https://www.bibme.org/blog/grammar/what-is-a-noun/.

[4]Hilary Putnam on Quine & Ontology https://www.google.com/search?q=putanm+on+quine&rlz=1C1CHBF_enCA1024CA1024&oq=putanm+on+quine&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOdIBDzM5NzcyNTM1NjFqMGoxNagCALACAA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:a06c8fd2,vid:AhHIVEN839s.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Reinhardt Grossmann, "Meinong's Doctrine of the Assusersein of the Pure Objects" Mar., 1974, Vol. 8, No. 1, Symposia Paper Read at the Meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association in St. Louis, Missouri, April 27-29, 1974 (Mar., 1974), pp. 67 Denoting an object but not having a being—just as a thought in one's mind--F.N. Findley.

composed of Up and Down Quarks based on its spin[7].When we talk about the essence, we define the nature of reality. Essence is understanding the nature of reality, which is made possible because the nature of the mind that allows us to connect the essence/ existence distinction with the naming/meaning distinction.

The Relationship between the Essence/Existence and Naming/Meaning Distinction

To understand the relationship between the naming/meaning distinction and the essence/existence distinction is to highlight the nature of language. Language, in particular words, helps us define the relationship between reality and the nature of reality. Hence, there is a relationship between words and the world of reality. Words both denote reference and connote meaning because words deal with both existence and essence. Words, in general, can be about being or non-being depending on whether one is talking about existence, subsistence, or absistence[8]. We can talk about the material world of existence, we can talk about the mathematical world of subsistence, or we can talk about the mental world of absistence.[9] While it is easy to talk about being in the material world; it is also possible to talk of non-being in the mental world as in Pegasus as a non-actualized being[10], while also entertaining the idea of a round-square as an unactualizable impossibility. What is there—everything[11], that is-- there is what there is[12] There is a relationship between words and the world. When a word, like a noun, is created, we notice that it can invoke either the existence or the essence of something. Sensing the existence of the world is an empirical given, ascribing essence to what exists is an epistemic given. What is the relationship between the 'is' of identity and the 'is' of composition in understanding the 'is' of essence and existence? How much of essence is related to what is reductive, and how much essence is related to what is non-reductive? How much of essence is equated with extension, and how much of essence is related to intension (meaning). We can assume that essence precedes existence but never know what the essence is. Speaking about what is reductive, we must note that secondary qualities have no place nor location; while what caused it not only has a place and location but is also a reductive given. In other words, reality as it is has a place or location, but reality as we perceive it does not have a place or location. That is why it is argued that we cannot know objective reality objectively; we can know objective reality only subjectively So, what we call an objective match

---

[7]A proton is composed of two Up quarks and one Down quark while a neutron is composed of two Down quarks and on Up quark. https://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/Upquarkspin.htm. https://byjus.com/physics/quark/.

[8]Reinhardt Grossmann, "Meinong's Doctrine of the Assusersein of the Pure Objects" Mar., 1974, Vol. 8, No. 1, Symposia Paper Read at the Meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association in St. Louis, Missouri, April 27-29, 1974 (Mar., 1974), pp. 67 https://plato.Stanford.edu/entries/meinong/#ObjTheOntBeyBeiNonBei. (denotes being an object but not having a being—just as a thought in one's mind. F.N. Findley

[9]All creative ideas exist as non-entities in mind.

[10]Willard Van Orman Quine –On What there Is. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wx9RJFBcb00.

[11]Willard V. Quine *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (Sep., 1948), 21.

[12]Ibid. 22.

between perception and reality is nothing but a subjective match between perceivers and not an objective match between perception and reality. How much of essence needs to be reductive for it to have meaning? While secondary qualities have no place or location, we can reduce secondary qualities to some reductive origin—for example, color as an electromagnetic ray. Secondary qualities like memory, ideas, intentionality, creativity, or subjectivity have no place or location.

How do we define the essence of what it means to be human? This depends on whether mental states are considered as being reductive or non-reductive. If pain states are reducible to C-fibre firing, then only the stimulation of C-fibre firing can be understood as pain states.[13] Is naming reductive? How much of naming deals with *a posteriori necessity*[14]? A reductive explanation of consciousness –where mental states are understood as (1) a neural state, (2) a emergent property, or (3) a quantum phenomena, reduces consciousness to some type of pan-psychism. As long as we attempt to understand consciousness to be reductive, it is hard to define the essence of consciousness. For only when consciousness is understood as being non-reductive, can we understand mathematics, morals, and metaphysical realities such as essence.

Truth of Existence vs. Truth of Essence: Determinacy of Meaning and the Explicability of Essence

Understanding the relationship between the naming/meaning distinction and the essence/existence distinction is to establish the truth of existence and the truth of essence. What does a Word/Noun try to establish? Is it to establish the truth of existence or the truth of essence? Words connect the world of reality[15] and the world of essence. Essence is what connects words with the world. So, the truth of existence cannot be separated from the truth of essence. Essence and existence are intertwined. While we can affirm existence without knowing what the essence is, we cannot affirm essence without reference to some form of existence (material world), subsistence (mathematical world), or absistence (mental world). In the paper it is argued that we cannot talk about essence without is connection to some type of being—be it existence, subsistence or absistence. Nor can we talk about existence without its connection to some aspect of essence—be it essential, accidental or emergent. What differentiates one atom from another is the number of protons in each atom. So, the identity of an atom is strictly based on the number of protons in each atom. We can try to understand the 'is' of essence at the atomic level, but at the sub-atomic level, every chance of being distinctively reductive is lost when we realise that every proton and neutron is made up of Up and Down quarks.[16] It would be difficult to distinguish one thing from another if the 'is' of

---

[13]Saul A. Kripke "Naming and Necessity" in *Philosophy of Mind*, David Chalmers, (New York: 2002) 331.

[14]Saul A. Kripke "Naming and Necessity" in *Philosophy of Mind*, David Chalmers, (New York: 2002) 331.

[15]John Hospers An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1997) vi, 7.

[16]A quark is a type of elementary particle and a fundamental constituent of matter. https://byjus.com/physics/quark/.

composition is exactly the same. Gold and iron are different only because of the number of protons in the atom, but if protons and neutrons are all made up of Up and Down quarks, then there is no difference between gold and iron. How then, does one define essence if essence at the reductive level is made of the same cosmic stuff. How much of the 'is' of identity is essential to define the 'is' of existence and the 'is' of essence. What is the relationship between the 'is' of identity, the 'is' of composition, the 'is' of existence, the 'is' of essence and the 'is' of necessity/ contingency?

Is a noun a name for the truth of existence or a title for the truth of essence? What defines existence and what defines essence? Quine's notion of the confusion between name and naming[17], led him to argue for the indeterminacy of meaning[18], especially in the context of his naturalized epistemology[19]. However, traditional analysis of knowledge allows for the existence/essence distinction because of which we can argue that naming/meaning distinction The two ways to defuse the confusion between naming and meaning is to (1) understand the naming/meaning distinction in the context of the essence/existence distinction, and (2) understand the being/non-being distinction in the context of existence, subsistence, and absistence distinction. A noun is a naming word. Noun means name[20]. Is knowledge about what exists or about the essence of what exists. Every word has two aspects— reference and meaning. Nouns, like words, have references but also deal with quiddity (inherent nature or essence)[21]. If every word pertains to some entity, then every word defines in some form the truth of essence or the truth of existence. A word can be about truth, about essence, or about identity. For instance, the word Toyota can be about the existence of a car, the essence of a car, or the model of the car. But what exactly does a noun capture-- its truth, its essence, or its identity? How much of the word defines identity and existence, and how much defines essence and meaning? How do we establish the truth/veracity of meaning when there is no universal semantics? We can establish the existence of an entity, but it is not easy to establish the essence of an entity. It is easy to define essence if essence precedes existence. The idea for its existence is the reason for creating what exists. However, if an entity does not have a beginning, it is hard to understand its essence because there is no distinction between essence and existence. That is why, while it is easy to establish the truth of existence--being or non-being, it is hard to establish the truth of essence; even harder to establish the essence of something related to subsistence or absistence.

The determinacy of meaning is the basis of communicating the essence of what exists. There are three ways we can communicate meaning associated with essence. (1) meaning associated with symbols like hieroglyphics, (2) meaning

---

[17]Virgil C. Aldrich, "*Mr.* Quine on Meaning, Naming, and Purporting to Name". *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Feb., 1955), 21.

[18]Quine, W. V. 1970. "On the Reasons for Indeterminacy of Translation." *The Journal of Philosophy* 67 (6): 181.

[19]Quine rejected both analyticity and synonymity in his naturalized epistemology. —circularity of analyticity and synonymity does not define anything. For Quine all epistemic facts should be reduced to empirical facts.

[20]What is a Noun? https://www.bibme.org/blog/grammar/what-is-a-noun/.

[21]Quiddity—noun, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/quiddity.

associated with words like in language, and (3) meaning associated with sign language like braille. Determinacy of meaning is necessary even though we cannot establish universal semantics. Determinacy of the meaning is the basis of communicating essence. Multiplicity of meaning and the indeterminacy of translation makes it hard to understand the science of semantics. However, the multiplicity of meaning and the elusive nature of essence do not negate the meaning associated with words. While meaning deals with the 'is' of intention and essence, naming deals with the 'is' of identity and existence. The epistemic nature of truth provides the basis for understanding the relationship between the essence/ existence and naming/ meaning distinction.

The explicability of essence is best defined in the context of how we understand the universe came into existence. There are three options related to how we understand the universe came into existence. (1) If the universe's beginning involves an intelligent beginning, then we can argue that essence precedes existence. (2) If the universe's beginning involves an unintelligent beginning, then we can define essence from what we know about reality. (3) If the universe has no beginning, as Sartre would argue, then we cannot make an ontological split between essence and existence, as such it would be difficult to make the essence/ existence distinction. As such, if the universe did not have a beginning then there was never a time the universe did not exit.[22] The universe exists without cause, without purpose, and without meaning.[23] These options clearly define our understanding of the existence/ essence distinction as an epistemic matter. Naming is related to establishing the 'is' of existence, while meaning is related to establishing the 'is' of essence.

Naming and Meaning in the Context of Being: Existence, Subsistence and Absistence

When we define something, we either define the existence of something or the essence of something. We are cognizant of essence and know that essence precedes existence, if what exists has a beginning. With reference to the universe we can assume that the universe had a beginning or assume that the universe does not have a beginning. If the universe has a beginning we can assume that essence precedes existence, if it does not then we cannot make an ontological distinction between essence and existence. The best way to address the essence/existence distinction is to understand the naming/meaning distinction in the context of the types of being, namely, existence, subsistence, and absistence.

The first aspect of dealing with the naming/meaning distinction deals with existence. What exists can be named or is nameable—what there is to be named. [24] Names are ascribed to what exists (reference)[25], and meaning (essence) is ascribed to names, which leads us to conversations about what exists. The central question

---

[22]Jean Paul Sartre. Being and Nothingness, 29.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Virgil C. Aldrich *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Feb., 1955), 20.

[25]Ibid 18.

of all conversation is about what there is[26] and the nature of what there is. We cannot separate naming and meaning. Naming is directed to the existence of something, and meaning is directed to the essence of something. It is the meaning associated with naming that makes communication possible[27]. Naming without meaning would be gibberish. Meaning independent of naming would make conversation devoid of any reference or reality. That is why naming is related to extension, and meaning is related to intension.[28]

Kripke argued that once we name or identify something, only that entity is that entity. For instance, if we say water is H2O, only H20 can be water in all possible worlds. Here, identity and essence are connected. But if identity is not part of the essence, then essence can be understood independently of identity. For instance, a table's essence can be understood independently of the material used to make it. We can say the same thing about water if identity is not associated with essence. If elsewhere in the universe something like water sustains life but it is XYZ[29], then it also can be considered as water if identity is not related to essence.

The second aspect of the naming/meaning distinction deals with subsistence. Mathematics is an excellent example of what subsists. Here, the names given and the meanings ascribed to these realities are unique. Here, it is essential to note that the language of the mind is different than the language used to communicate thought. Symbols in the mind are different than symbols on paper. For instance, symbols for multiplication, division, subtraction, and addition on paper are different than the symbols in the mind that we all possess which Foder called mental language —often called mentalese[30]. The difference between numbers and numerals will highlight something important. Numerals like Roman numerals are symbols on paper. However, numbers are concepts that subsist in the mind of the conceiver. We understand numbers as having no beginning nor end. There is no such thing as the birth or death of numbers. This is a good example of the need for an immortal God in whose mind these concepts exist. Since numbers seem eternal, there must be an infinite mind in whose mind such realities exist. Numbers subsist only in the mind. And if numbers have no beginning nor end, then there must be an eternal mind in whose mind such realities exist.

The third aspect of the naming/meaning distinction deals with absistence. Here, objects of imagination like Pegasus are objects only in the mind. How does one deal with the essence/existence distinction with reference to absistence. Naming and meaning attached to objects in the mind when understood in the context of essence/ existence distinction, poses some challenges. For instance, is identity related to the truth of essence or the truth of existence? If most of the inventions begin in the mind, how do we address the naming/meaning distinction? It appears we can name all inventions even if there is no being attached to the object like Pegasus.

---

[26]Quine, W. V. 1970. "On the Reasons for Indeterminacy of Translation." *The Journal of Philosophy* 67 (6): 178-183.

[27]John Hospers An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1997) 7.

[28]Hilary Putnam The meaning of "meaning" in David Chalmers, Philosophy of Mind, 581.

[29]John Campbell, "Extension and Psychic State: Twin Earth Revisited". Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition, Jul., 1982, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Jul., 1982), 67.

[30]https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/language-thought/ Jerry Fedor, The Language of Thought, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975.

Just as we cannot say Pegasus does not exist when in thought and speech, it does absist[31]. Similarly, we can think and talk about contradictions in the world of absistence, such as round squares, even though there is nothing related to in the world of existence.[32]

Naming and Meaning in the Context of Essence: Essential or Accidental

Defining the 'is' of existence is different than defining the 'is' of essence. While the 'is' identity defines the 'is' of existence, the 'is' of essence defines the 'is' of whatness or the nature of something—considered as essential or accidental/potential. What all beings share in common is existence; what differentiates one from the other is essence. So, when we walk into a room, everything we observe exists; however. as soon as we say 'what exists,' everything becomes different. What differentiates each from each other is essence. It seems that way. But when we look at what each thing that exists consists of, we realize that it is exactly made of the same stuff. Everything that exists consists of atoms; every atom is made of protons and neutrons, and every proton and neutron is composed of Up and Down quarks. So, in reality, everything is made up of quarks—Up and Down quarks, depending on their spin[33]. The question is how does something common in each become different in terms of essence. Is it the number of protons, its biology, its DNA structure, its utility, its design, its sentience, its intelligence, or its disposition?

Truth as an epistemic matter makes the explicability of essence inevitable, and the explicability of the essence is necessary if we are engaged in communication even though essence is elusive. Why is essence elusive? Essence is what something is. What constitutes the essential characteristic of something is a challenge. For instance, the essence of a table can be defined strictly in terms of its use. So, a big stool can be used as a table and can be a table. On the other hand, the essence of God can be defined in terms of the type of existence, namely a necessary or eternal being. God by definition is a necessary being. As such, a necessary being cannot be thought not to exist[34]. Is the naming of God important or the meaning of God important? If God is defined as a creator-- is God being a creator an essential or accidental characteristic of God?[35] If God is God because of creation then what was God before creation. Naming is an ontological/existential matter, but meaning is an epistemic/metaphysical matter. Essence is a non-reductive explanation for what is. If essence precedes existence as in having an intelligent cause, then it is easy to note the given essence. This is true even if we have no contact with the intelligent cause; we can assume that essence precedes existence. However, if there is an unintelligent cause ascribed to any given thing, then it is very difficult to ascribe an essence --like the beginning

---

[31]<u>Willard V. Quine</u> "On What There Is" *<u>The Review of Metaphysics</u>*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (Sep., 1948), 22.

[32]file:///C:/Users/tsamraj/Downloads/Meinong's%20General%20Theory%20of%20Objects.html.

[33]A proton is composed of two Up quarks and one Down quark while a neutron is composed of two Down quarks and on Up quark. https://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/Upquarkspin.htm<u>.</u>

[34]Anslem, Proslogion Chapter III 94. trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson Proslogion (Minneapolis: The Author J. Banning Press, 2000).

[35]If God is God because of creation, then what was God before Creation.

of the universe ascribed to a big bang. We cannot ascribe any intelligent essence if its beginning or cause was unintelligent. Essence is a meaningful concept only if essence precedes existence. That is why an eternal mind is understood as necessary if essence precedes existence in a platonic sense. What is the essence of a steam engine? Does its use in a locomotive change the nature of its essence? Is the use of a steam engine as a locomotive engine an accidental characteristic of its essence? An engine is a power source, but its power source can be steam, gasoline, and gas, while the essence remains the same. When does identity become a given, and what is the relationship of identity to both existence and essence?

Challenges Related to the Determinacy of Meaning and Essence

There are two challenges –one related to the determinacy of meaning and the other to the explicability of essence. The first challenge deals with the determinacy of meaning. According to Quine, the indeterminacy of meaning[36] is related to the indeterminacy of translation[37] and the confusion between name and naming[38]. Since there are no universal semantics, it is difficult to translate what the author had in mind. That is because words have different or multiple meanings attached to it. As such, indeterminacy of meaning cannot mean being devoid of meaning. Meanings are multiple, not devoid of meaning. If that were the case, none of us could be sure that we could communicate anything. All communication is made possible through meaning-driven conversation. We may have duplicity or confusion of meaning, but there is never an absence of meaning. Equivocation happens when we confuse several meanings of a word. It is when we use a single word several times in a sentence to mean several different things. As such, meaning-indeterminacy does not mean words are meaning-indeterminate, naming and meaning are an epistemic given, not an ontological given, and as such, non-reductive.

"Words are meaning-determining information encoded by the words of a natural language of meaning." Communication is possible because of meaning. Without meaning, we cannot have a meaningful conversion. Without meaning, all language would be gibberish. Quine cannot argue for the death of meaning without ascribing meaning to what he is claiming. Meaning is a fundamental part of human language.[39] Meaning provides for communication. Meaning is the message conveyed by words, sentences, and symbols in a given context.[40] As such, semantics, in short, is the study of different kinds of meaning for different kinds of words. Language is a necessity only because we want to communicate to others what we are thinking about, trying to explain to someone what one knows (of what there is to know) until the other knows what one knows as one knows it. So, meaning is central to

---

[36]Quine, W. V. 1960. *Word and Object.* US, MA: MIT Press. 23

[37]Quine, W. V. 1970. "On the Reasons for Indeterminacy of Translation." *The Journal of Philosophy* 67 (6): 178-183

[38]Virgil C. Aldrich, "*Mr.* Quine on Meaning, Naming, and Purporting to Name". *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Feb., 1955), 21

[39]Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

[40]Richard Nordquist, Meaning Semantics. https://www.thoughtco.com/meaning-semantics-term-1691373.

communication. For someone to communicate what is known in both the context of making the other know what one knows the way it is known and the way the world is, is a feat. Understanding the world as we see it and communicating what is known is not an easy task. Language is required only because we want to communicate what we know about reality to others of what is known of reality.

There are two types of meaning—Semantic meaning deals with content, while pragmatic meaning deals with context.[41] To begin with, words/nouns define the relationship between the mind and the world.[42] The question is, what is the relationship between words and world of reality? Understanding the relationship between reality and what we know about reality provides the basis for delineating the naming/ meaning distinction in the context of the essence/existence distinction. Words are used to communicate to each other about reality and the nature of reality."[43]. Every word, especially nouns, both denote and connote meaning[44]. Words are jam-packed with meaning. They are not meaning indeterminate—they are meaning-ridden -- as such, what is indeterminate is *which* meaning a given word expresses[45]. Indeterminacy of meaning is related to the multiplicity/duplicity of meaning, not the death of meaning or being devoid of meaning. Quine's example of the word scholars use to argue for the indeterminacy of meaning is *Gavagai*. *Gavagai* could mean rabbit or express rabbit parts. How does the multiplicity of meaning for a word imply that there is no meaning when it simply purports multiple meanings? Just because there are two possible meanings does not entail that there is no meaning communicated. Words can be directed to the truth of its existence or the truth of its essence. So, the question is not the **indeterminacy of meaning** but the **multiplicity of meaning.** Indeterminacy of meaning must be understood in the context of the multiplicity of meaning, not the death of meaning or being devoid of meaning.

The second challenge deals with the explicability of essence. Swinburne argued for essence-inexplicability[46] because factual necessity is inexplicable[47]. However, what must be noted is that essence is explicable though elusive. The inexplicability of essence does not mean there is no essence, essence is an epistemic given (not an ontological given), making communication possible. Essence is explicable when we define what we perceive essence to be, especially when defining essence of things that are not of our own making. Essence is the inherent nature or essence of an object. Literally its whatness/or isness. But it is not written on entities. It is an epistemic matter. The essence/existence distinction can be traced to Plato when he argued that essence precedes existence if things have a beginning. The world of ideas precedes the world of existence. In fact, to Plato what we see is only a copy of the idea or essence. So, all beings that have a beginning have their beginning in

---

[41]Ibid.

[42]What is the meaning of meaning https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgacYGfP_a4.

[43]Word Meaning https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/word-meaning/.

[44]The words *connote and denote both describe the relationships between words and their meanings*. Words can be defined as nouns are as verbs.

[45]Colin McGinn, https://www.colinmcginn.net/difficulties-with-indeterminacy/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=difficulties-with-indeterminacy.

[46]Richard Swinburne, The existence of God (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004) 78-79.

[47]Ibid.

the beginning as ideas or essence. Essence itself can be understood as something that is an essential part of its being or an accidental part of its being. For instance, the essence of a table is its utility. Having four legs is an accidental part of its essence. We can have a round table with just one leg. Essence precedes existence only if beings have a beginning. However, if beings do not have a beginning, existence precedes essence, as Sartre would argue. Sartre argued that there was never a time when the world did not exist—it has always existed without cause, purpose, or reason[48]. If that is the case, then we can insert essence into what exists. So, as humans, what we create or invent is such that we can argue that essence precedes existence. However, the world as we see it and know it, is basically our understanding of how the world is. But if we are talking about beings that do not have a beginning as in the case of God, when we cannot make an ontological split between essence and existence, it becomes even harder to decipher its essence. That is why Swinburne argued that the essence or the factual necessity of God is inexplicable[49]. That is why, while the de dicto essence of God is explicable, the de re essence of God is inexplicable.[50] As such, no proof that can guarantee brief in God, because the essence of God cannot be a reductive given. God is immortal, humans are free and humans have a self are a self-evident truths, but they are an either/or[51] matter hence, we must choose to believe or disbelieve in God, freedom and the self. Only in the human race are there are believers and non-believers.

The determinism of meaning must be understood in the context of the explicability of essence—in that we cannot create a word without thinking about essence of some sought. Naming and meaning without reference to both essence or existence is impossible. That is why naming deals with the existence of something and meaning deals with the essence of something. Explicability of essence simply means defining what is intentional. Essence is a non-reductive explanation of what is exists. Essence can never be a reductive given. As such, we can say that meaning-indeterminacy does not mean words are meaning-indeterminate. Naming and meaning are an epistemic given, not an ontological given, and as such, non-reductive. Similarly, the inexplicability of essence does not mean the world is essence-inexplicable, essence is an epistemic given. not an ontological given, making communication possible. As such, every word is directed towards the *essence* or the *existence* of something. If it is directed towards *essence,* then it is related to meaning; if it is directed towards *existence*, it is related to identity.

Conclusion

The essence/existence distinction is fundamental to what exists, subsists or absists in understanding the relationship of the naming/meaning distinction. However, the essence/existence distinction is possible only if there is an intelligent beginning for everything that exists, subsists or absists. For instance if the universe does not have

---

[48]Jean Paul Sartre. Being and Nothingness 29.
[49]Richard Swinburne, The Existence of God. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004) 78-79, 95.
[50]Richard Swinburne, The Existence of God. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004) 95.
[51]Soren Keirkegarrd, *Either/Or*

a beginning then it would be hard to make the ontological distinction between essence/existence. But regardless of all the difficulties involved in essence/existence distinction we cannot communicate thought without understanding the relationship between the essence/existence distinction to the naming/meaning distinction. As such, we should be able to talk about essence not only in terms what exists but also about what subsists and what absists, because all objects in the mind have essence not only for concrete objects (like tables) and abstract objects (like numbers) but also contradictions like round squares. When we understanding the relationship between the naming/meaning distinction and the essence/existence distinction we understand the relationship between words and the world of reality. Words both denote reference and connote meaning because words deal with both existence and essence. Words, in general, can be about being or non-being depending on whether one is talking about existence, subsistence, or absistence. We can talk about the material world of existence, we can talk about the mathematical world of subsistence, or we can talk about the mental world of absistence. Based on the three types of reality, namely existence, subsistence, and absistence, we can understand that (1) naming deals with the specificity and truth of existence; and (2) meaning deals with universality and the truth of essence.

Determinacy of meaning is necessary, even though it is hard to establish universal semantics. Determinacy of the meaning is the basis of communicating essence. The explicability of essence is best understood in the context of how we understand the universe came into existence. (1) If the beginning of the universe involved an intelligent cause, then we can argue that essence precedes existence. (2) If the beginning of the universe involved an unintelligent cause, then we can define essence from what we know about reality. (3) If the universe has no beginning, as Sartre would argue, then it would be difficult to define essence because we cannot make an ontological split between essence and existence, as such it would be difficult to make the essence/existence distinction.

Meaning-determinacy and essence-explicability poses a challenge because it not an ontological given, it is an epistemic matter. Meaning-indeterminacy does not mean words are meaning-indeterminate. What is indeterminate is which meaning is being used not that words are devoid of meaning. Words have multiple meanings, however it is non-reductive. Similarly, the challenge associated with the explicability of essence does not mean there is no essence; essence is an epistemic given, not an ontological given, as such a non-reductive given, making communication possible. As such, every word is directed towards the *existence* or *essence* of something. If it is directed towards *existence*, it is related to identity, if it is directed towards *essence,* then it is related to meaning. Words used to communicate the world of thought require some essence-determinate words explaining the essence of what exists.

Meaning-determinacy is a epistemic task though essence-explicability is a non-reductive matter. Essence-explicability is foundational if one is to communicate thought. Ontological claims have relevance only when associated with epistemic claims. The only challenge when communicating thought is whether words are directed toward meaning and essence or towards identity and existence. The relationship between the naming/meaning and the essence/existence distinction provides the

basis for both the determinacy of meaning and the explicability of essence, thus, establishing the truth of essence and the truth of existence. To argue that names relate to only identity and is devoid of meaning would make communication impossible. Naming/meaning distinction is an epistemic given and the essence/ existence distinction is a ontological given.

Works Cited

Aldrich VC (1955) *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Feb., 1955), pp. 17-26

Bassi R (2023) "A four-sided triangle." https://medium.com/@ranjanbassi02/a-four-sided-triangle-3d7cf845b817.

Bostrom N (2005) "Understanding Quine's theses of indeterminacy." *Journal: Linguistic and Philosophical Investigations*, *4*, 1.

Christen S (2016) *Quine's Views on Meaning and Translation as Presented in His Articles" Two Dogmas of Empiricism" and" Translation and Meaning"*. GRIN Verlag, 2016.

Campbell J (1982) "Extension and Psychic State: Twin Earth Revisited". *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Jul., 1982, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Jul., 1982), 67 pp. 67-89

Green C (2017) "*On Quine, Grice and Strawson, and the Analytic-Synthetic Distinction.* https://www.csus.edu/college/arts-letters/philosophy/_internal/2017-christian-green.pdf.

Hájek Al (2014) "Probabilities of counterfactuals and counterfactual probabilities." *Journal of Applied Logic* 12.3 (2014): 235-251.

Harman G (1967) "Quine on Meaning and existence, I. The death of meaning." *The Review of Metaphysics* (1967): 124-151.

Hospers J (1953) *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*. New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1953.

Lemmon EJ (1955) "Virgil C. Aldrich. Mr. Quine on Meaning, naming, and purporting to name. Philosophical studies, vol. 6 (1955), pp. 17–26." *The Journal of Symbolic Logic* 21.4 (1956): 384-385.

Mărășoiu AI (2020) "Quine's Ontology. The Interplay Between Commitment and Decision." *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 12.XII-2 (2020).

Meinong's Doctrine of the Aussersein of the Pure Object Author(s): Reinhardt Grossmann Source: *Noûs,* Mar., 1974, Vol. 8, No. 1, Symposia Papers to be Read at the Meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association in St. Louis, Missouri, April 27-29, 1974 (Mar., 1974), pp. 67-82 Published by: Wiley Stable URL: http://www.jstor.com/stable/2214646

Munro BR (1975) "*The Philosophical Significance of Quine's D-Thesis.*" University of Waterloo.

Ogden CK, Richards IA (1923) "*The meaning of meaning: A study of the influence of thought and of the science of symbolism.*" Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. NewYork.

Philosophy Dictionary of Arguments. (Quine). https://philosophy-science-humanities-con troversies.com/.

Quine WV (1970) "On the Reasons for Indeterminacy of Translation." *The Journal of Philosophy* 67 (6): 178-183

Quine WV (1948) "On what there is." *The review of metaphysics* (1948): 21-38.

Decock L (1999) "Quine on names." *Logique et analyse* 42.167/168 (1999): 373-379.

Quine WVOr (2000) "Two dogmas of empiricism." Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language: A Concise Anthology. *Peterborough (Canada): Broadview* (2000): 189-210.

Ring M (2022) "*The 'Dim View of Meaning*" in Two Dogmas." Department of Philosophy, College of Humanities and Social Sciences. (2022).

Rocknak S "*Willard Van Orman Quine* 1908-2000." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Hartwick College. https://philarchive.org/archive/ROCQOTv1.

Sartre JP (1977) *Being and Nothingness*, tr. Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Washington Square press, 1977.

Schwartz J (2016) "Quine and The Problem of Truth." *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy,* Volume 4, No. 10. (2016).

Soames Sc (2008) "*Ontology, Analyticity and Meaning: The Quine–Carnap Dispute."* University of Southern California School of Philosophy (2008).

Suttle III, WF (2011) "*An Extensionist Approach to Ontological Commitment: Why Quine is Mostly Right*."

Verhaegh S (2016) "*Blurring Boundaries: Carnap, Quine, and the Internal-External Distinction.*" 874-888.

Atom Builder: https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aso/tryit/atom/elempartp.htm l#:~:text=Each% 20proton%20and%20each%20neutron,up%20quarks%20and%20down%20quarks.

Meinong's Doctrine of the Aussersein of the Pure Object Author(s): Reinhardt Grossmann Source: *Noûs*, Mar., 1974, Vol. 8, No. 1, Symposia Papers to be Read at the Meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association in St. Louis, Missouri, April 27-29, 1974 (Mar., 1974), pp. 67-82 Published by: Wiley Stable URL: http:// www.jstor.com/stable/2214646

Just Athens and Jerusalem?
What about Banaras? Heroes, Nomads, and Bhaktas at the Cross-cultural Roads

By Thomas B Ellis[*]

Contemporary Continental philosophy employs "ethnotropes" in its ethical critique of transcendental phenomenology. Ulysses, the Greek Hero, stands in for Edmund Husserl's transcendental ego. Abraham, the Jewish Nomad, stands in for Jacque Derrida's and Emanuel Levinas's deconstructive subject. Ethical concerns arise when the transcendental ego is posited as the ground for all experience. The transcendental ego intends its world. The fulfillment of intention constitutes the metaphysics of presence. According to Derrida and Levinas, the other is reduced in the transcendental ego's experience. The other becomes transparent to phenomenological intention. Transparency elides the space between self and other necessary for ethics. Husserl's transcendental ego is in this way like the Greek Hero Ulysses who conquers all others, returning to Athens unaffected by an encounter with true alterity. Derrida and Levinas employ the Jewish Nomad to offset the violence of the Greek Hero. Unlike Ulysses, for whom all others are merely moments on a centripetal, not to mention violent and heroic, return to the homeland, Abraham never reaches the other, a point constitutive of return. This is the case because Abraham is always awaiting the arrival of the other. Abraham waits for the Messiah to come. Accordingly, Abraham is the ethnotrope for the deconstructive subject for whom the messianic establishes a permanent structure of absence. The messianic is intended as an ethical critique of the heroic. The deconstructive project falls short of its ethical intention. This is the case because the messianic remains tied to the metaphysics of presence. The other is still to come to presence. To complete the critique, a third ethnotrope is available, the Hindu Bhakta. According to the Hindu tradition of viraha bhakti, or love-in-separation, the Other (i.e., Krishna) is withdrawing from the presence of the Bhakta. This establishes the negative messianic. The ethical critique of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology finds its full voice in Hinduism's negative messianic. Not only is the other not present, the other isn't even coming. Banaras's Hindu Bhakta affords an ethnotropic resource with which to complete the ethical critique of Athens's Greek Hero begun, yet left incomplete, by Jerusalem's Jewish Nomad.

Keywords: *Phenomenology; deconstruction; Hinduism; ethnotropes*

The church father Tertullian once queried the relationship between two prominent centers of human culture in the ancient world, Athens and Jerusalem. His question concerned the relationship of reason to faith. Athens, ostensibly the birthplace of reason, presented a challenge to the traditions of faith emanating from the Promised Land, so-called. Remaining unresolved (Swinburne 1977, Craig 2008, Mackie 1983, Coyne 2016, Plantinga 2000), an iteration of Tertullian's question emerged in late

---

[*]Professor of Religion, Appalachian State University, USA.

twentieth- and early twenty-first century Continental philosophy. This iteration, however, replaced geographical considerations with literary ones: "What does Ulysses have to do with Abraham? And Abraham with Ulysses?" In Continental philosophy, Ulysses and Abraham are what I call, "ethnotropes." These ethnotropes, that is, the Greek Hero and the Jewish Nomad, serve as literary substitutes for the transcendental ego and the deconstructive subject, respectively. No longer an exclusively epistemological issue pertaining to reason and faith, this iteration considers claims regarding ontology as first philosophy and the ethical ramifications associated therewith. As we will see, the myopia affecting Tertullian's concerns continue to inform the Continental discussion.

The nature of the transcendental ego is fully articulated in the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1960), an extension of which may found in the ontology of Martin Heidegger (1988) and the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1997). The deconstructive subject (Critchley and Dews 1996), on the other hand, finds its characterization in the works of such authors as Jacques Derrida (1978), Emanuel Levinas (1998), Mark C. Taylor (1984), and John D. Caputo (2000). The latter is meant to be an ethical critique of the former. I do not believe it, or the authors promoting it, achieves its goal. The reason for the failure rests not in the ethically unimpeachable nature of the transcendental ego. Rather, the cultural and philosophical resources at the disposal of those suffering from Tertullian myopia are limited. If we expand our information search, we will see that there is another ethnotrope available to those who wish to displace the transcendental ego's imperious scope. While Athens and Jerusalem, and the associated Greek Hero and Jewish Nomad, provide material with which to think through the ethical relationship obtaining, or not, between the transcendental ego and its other, Banaras, and its Hindu Bhakta, affords a model with which a completed, ethical critique of Husserlian phenomenology may be achieved.[73]

The literary theorist Erich Auerbach (1968) was perhaps the first to address the tension between Ulysses and Abraham. The former is well-known for his adventures abroad. Greek heroes travel to foreign lands to conquer and plunder, returning home enriched and edified. Centripetalism characterizes heroic adventures. Such adventures, however, turn out to be no adventure at all. As Auerbach would have us believe, there is no development to Ulysses's character. The Greek Hero remains the same throughout his many exploits abroad. The Jewish Nomad, on the other hand, never returns home. There is a centrifugal force to Abraham's journey. Always hoping to arrive, the Nomad ostensibly never returns or settles. Abraham is no Ulysses (Derrida 1995). To understand the distinction between Tertullian's query and its renaissance in recent Continental philosophy, we must consider what it is that enables the Hero to make the return trip and what it is that keeps the Nomad from such similar satisfaction.

The Continental iteration rests with a revisioning of that to which reason and faith pertain. Reason is ostensibly committed to a totalizing, universalizing discourse regarding that which can be known. Faith, on the other hand, is a discourse pertaining precisely to things unseen and unknowable. Levinas (1969) suggested that this distinction is one between totality and infinity. The question for Continental

---

[73]For an extended discussion of the following, see Ellis 2013.

philosophy ultimately concerns the nature of alterity and the possibility of the ethical within the purview of transcendental phenomenology (Taylor 1987). It would seem that the ethical is impossible without another.

Husserl's phenomenology established the transcendental ego as the ground of all being and experience. The world exists as an object of egoic intention. Such intentions ontologically ground what would otherwise be perceived as a transcendent, mind-independent reality. Husserl notes in his, fittingly titled, *Cartesian Meditations*: "Anything belonging to the world, any spatiotemporal being, exists for me – that is to say, is accepted by me – in that I experience it, perceive it, remember it, think of it somehow, judge about it, value it, desire it, or the like"(1960, 21). This is transcendental idealism, a position which states that "the entire natural world, including human minds, is nothing but an intentional structure of transcendental consciousness" (Philipse 1995, 244). Husserl's ego thus exists in a certain solipsistic state: nothing is truly other for transcendental phenomenology. As it perhaps is with all idealisms, the nature of alterity does not find easy accommodation within Husserl's system. The metaphysics of presence, and its attending ontotheology, struggles with alterity and absence. How can one intend what one cannot intend, or, as Derrida put it, "an intention to renounce intention" (1997, 174)? According to the Continental authors, the other, in order to be other, must be something beyond the intentional horizon of the self. The other must be beyond, or without being (Marion 1995). The Greek Hero Ulysses, for whom all others are merely penultimate moments in an ultimate return to self, is the ethnotropic substitute for the transcendental ego. "The autonomy of consciousness," argues Levinas, "finds itself again in all its adventures, returning home to itself like Ulysses, who through all his peregrinations is only on the way to his native land"(1986, 346), noting elsewhere, "Intentionality remains an aspiration to be filled and fulfillment, the centripetal movement of a consciousness that coincides with itself, recovers, and rediscovers itself without aging, rests in self-certainty, confirms itself"(1998, 48). It is for this reason that Auerbach similarly notes, "on his [i.e., Ulyssess's] return is exactly the same as when he left Ithaca" (1968, 17). Centripetal adventures cannot easily solve the riddle of the other.

Husserl's attempt to solve the riddle involves analogy. He recognizes that the other constitutes a certain blind spot within the constituting ego's intentional horizon, but this does not present a truly destabilizing presence. Transcendental egos understand other minds, and other beings, as analogues of self. Husserl claims, "the body over there, which is nevertheless apprehended as an animate organism, must have derived this sense by an *apperceptive transfer from my animate organism…* the '*analogizing' apprehension* of the body as another animate organism" (1960, 130). Some suggest that Husserl's solution is no solution. Analogy cannot preserve alterity. "The ego is the same," Derrida argues, "The alterity or negativity interior to the ego, the interior difference, is but an appearance: an *illusion*" (1978, 93). It is precisely here where the ethical concern with phenomenology/ontotheology as first philosophy arises. Transcendental phenomenology simply cannot accommodate transcendence. There are no others for Husserl's Greek Hero. "The struggle to refute transcendence in all its guises," Taylor notes, "culminates in the philosophy of the constructive subject developed by Hegel and elaborated by Husserl" (1987, 203). Levinas likens this struggle with alterity to an autoimmune disease: "Western philosophy coincides with

the disclosure of the other where the other, in manifesting itself as a being, loses its alterity. From its infancy philosophy has been struck with a horror of the other that remains other – with an insurmountable allergy" (1986, 346). Allergic to alterity, philosophy – the very spirit of reason and the universal for Tertullian – attacks itself in its struggle to refute what may be ineradicable to its self, a point to which we return. For now, we see this same conservation of self in the work of Martin Heidegger. For Heidegger (1988), the other shows up in *Dasein's* subjectivity as *mit-sein*, or being-with-the-other. The other is, in this regard, still a presence for the self. Heidegger's subject, like Husserl's, accommodates the other through its own structure. Heidegger's *Dasein* and Husserl's transcendental ego suffer not perturbation at the other's being, or lack thereof as the case may be. The Greek Hero either remains the same, as Auerbach contends, or is enriched by, according to Hans-Georg Gadamer, the other. We will return to the latter issue below. For now, we can note that the Jewish Nomad putatively affords an alternative.

Unlike Ulysses, Abraham never makes the return trip. This is the case because the conditions for the return never appear. In order for one to make the about face, one must come into the presence of the other. Alterity must become similarity. For Continental philosophy, this may never be the case. Levinas, for instance, notes, "to the myth of Ulysses returning to Ithaca, we wish to propose the story of Abraham who leaves his fatherland forever for a yet unknown land, and forbids his servant to even bring back his son to the point of departure" (1986, 348). Although remaining couched in a geographical idiom, the land remains unknown because the other remains unknown. Unknown land is promised land precisely because it is not here now. Promises, like hope, pertain to the future. Of significance for this discussion are the dynamics of this future other. According to the Continental conversation, a conversation remaining caught between Athens and Jerusalem, the unknown, the promised, pertains to something that has yet to arrive. This is the nature of the messianic. Taylor writes, "For Abraham, the Messiah has not yet come and hence human fulfillment is deferred and delayed. In the absence of the Messiah's presence, there is no *Parousia* here and now" (1987, 8). The messianic ostensibly disturbs the metaphysics of presence because the Messiah is present as currently absent.

The Jewish Nomad operates as the ethnotropic substitute for the deconstructive subject. Deconstructive subjectivities do not enjoy the plenitude of being (Critchley and Dews 1996). This need not mean that the specifically Jewish understanding of the messiah is determinative. For authors such as Derrida and Caputo, there is a notable distinction between the messianic and messianisms. Messianisms are historically and culturally contingent characterizations of a specific agent or event that will come to pass at a future present moment. Messianisms include not only the Jewish expectation of the arrival of the Jewish messiah, but also Christian understandings of a second coming of Christ, Muslim expectations of the arrival of the Mahdi, Buddhist expectations regarding Maitreya Buddha, and Hindu concerns regarding the arrival of Kalki. Perhaps a universal feature of the human imagination, almost all communities throughout time and space have anticipated the arrival of a definitive event that would bring the present world history to a close. Some Continental philosophers propose for this reason that a distinction must be made between such historically constituted narratives and the (anti)structure of the messianic. Historical messianisms seemingly

betray the ethical critique of transcendental phenomenology found within the messianic. As it is with Husserl's analogies and apperceptive transfers, and Heidegger's *mit-sein*, the messianic is intended to be a certain structure within transcendental subjectivity. The messianic ironically intends to destabilize the heroic intention. It is here where the dynamics of alterity become important. For Derrida, and others, the messianic announces that which is still to come to presence for the transcendental ego. The messianic announces that which is to arrive. "If the other is… what is not invented," argues Derrida, "the *initiative or deconstructive inventiveness* can only consist in opening, in uncloseting, destabilizing foreclusionary structures so as to allow passage toward the other. But one does not make the other come, one lets it come by *preparing* for its *coming*" (1989, 60 emphasis added). Transcendental egos can only prepare for that which is to come. There is, in this regard, a difference between letting something come and letting something be. Things that are enjoy being present. Things that are yet to arrive are otherwise than being (Levinas 1998). All the same, the messianic harbors hope for a completed metaphysics of presence. There is, to be sure, "a certain messianic hope in the coming of the other" (Caputo 2000, 56). The messianic is intended to disrupt Husserl's analogy, preparing thereby a space for the ethical. Analogies, after all, subsume multiple others within one intentional horizon. In much the same way that the medieval Jewish philosopher Maimonides notes that God's essence is not our essence and it admits of no analogy, so too, all others escape the analogy. Jewish deconstruction (Caputo 1997, 2000) sees every other as wholly other. This is precisely what Derrida intends when he suggests that *tout autre est tout autre*: every other is (w)hol(l)y other. The Jewish Nomad is, for this reason, no Greek Hero: "Abraham, in remaining faithful to his singular love for every other, is never considered a hero" (Derrida 1995, 79).

Tertullian's question, with which we began our discussion, seemingly announces an antagonism. Athens, and its reason, and Jerusalem, and its faith, should not have anything to do with one another. That may be the case. For the present iteration of the concern as expressed through the ethnotropes of the Greek Hero and Jewish Nomad, it is not the case. The present concern has everything to do with the question pertaining to the ethical responsibility Husserl's transcendental ego and Derrida's deconstructive subject have towards alterity. According to Derrida, Husserl's phenomenology does violence against the other. It does so in its unwillingness to recognize that the other is precisely not an analogously constituted self. For Derrida's messianic, the other will always be still to come. Although apparently approaching, the other never arrives. That said, Continental philosophy's ethical criticism of transcendental phenomenology does not reach its full potential. It cannot because it, like Tertullian, remains caught between Athens and Jerusalem. There is, however, another ethnotrope available that carries this deconstructive critique of transcendental phenomenology to its conclusion, a conclusion elusive to deconstruction as it is envisioned with the ethnotrope of the Jewish Nomad and the messianic. These geographic and ethnotropic limitations, knowingly self-imposed or not, become apparent when we recognize the resource emanating from Banaras, that is, the work the Hindu Bhakta can perform in the current conversation.

Greek Heroes and Jewish Nomads remain committed to a metaphysics of presence. It is such metaphysics that ostensibly preclude an ethical commitment.

Presence and alterity are mutually exclusive. If everything is present, if everything is reducible to the present – a present always and already for the constitutive subject – then there is no true other and thus no true ethics. The Continental conversation stops here. It does so because it promotes a parochial commitment. For good or ill, Western philosophy remains committed to the options Athens and Jerusalem hold forth. The twentieth-century Hindu philosopher Jarava Lal Mehta rightly notes in this regard, "The present self-understanding of the West has been mediated by the dialectic of Athens and Jerusalem" (1985, 159). But it need not remain so. Perhaps some decolonization of Western philosophy is in order here.

There is a Hindu iteration of Tertullian's question: What has Banaras to do with Madurai? And Madurai to do with Banaras? While the church father was interested in the relationship between reason and faith, an epistemological question to be sure, the Hindu question, like the Continental one, is an ontological one. Running throughout Hindu literature and philosophy is the theme of fusion and separation (Kakar 1981, Roland 1988). The extent to which the Western philosophical tradition can be characterized as an allergy to transcendence notwithstanding, the Hindu tradition equally has its moments of reduction. These moments are most frequently found within what has often been considered the preeminent school of classical Hindu thought, that is, the Advaita Vedanta.

Advaita Vedanta is a non-dualistic tradition that proposes there is only one true being in reality, Brahman, an infamously difficult "concept" to translate. That said, Brahman is most often characterized as being, consciousness, and bliss (Deutsch 1980). It is understood to be the only truly existent "entity." Advaita Vedanta presents a monistic idealism, not wholly unlike Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. In this regard, ethical concerns have equally been raised regarding Advaita Vedanta's metaphysics. Although some consider the Advaita Vedanta to be essential to understanding Hindu philosophy, not to mention psychology (Roland 1988), one would be remiss not to acknowledge a countervailing trend within the Hindu traditions. This trend pertains to transcendence. It pertains to alterity.

Hindu mysticism, and much philosophy, is rightly associated with a metaphysics of presence. It often denies the reality of the other (Masson 1980). There is, however, another tradition within the Hindu world that promotes an understanding of alterity. This tradition is associated with bhakti. From the Sanskrit root *bhaj*, meaning to separate/share, bhakti entails a relationship to another. The nature of this relationship has received its fair share of commentary throughout South Asian history. For instance, within the Vedantic tradition, there is a school of thought known as Visistadvaita Vedanta. Associated with the philosopher Ramanuja, this school sought to characterize the relationship to the other as one of qualified, non-dualism. Ramanuja understood that there was a certain identity-in-difference between Brahman (the other) and the individual, often referred to as the Atman. Departing from an earlier Vaishnava philosophy known as the Pancaratra, Visistadvaita Vedanta comes close to endorsing an ontology of emanations, perhaps much like the Kabbalah according to Maimonides and Moses de Leon. An emanation is not, to be sure, identical to its source and yet it is simultaneously not wholly distinct. The tradition of Vedanta that sought to uphold a distinct division between self and other was, and remains, Dvaita Vedanta (Sarma 2003), or dual Vedanta. According to Madhva, the preeminent Dvaita

philosopher, there will always remain a division between Brahman and Atman. This irreducible dualism finds its complement in the school of Samkhya. For the latter, there will always be a duality between the Self (i.e., the *purusha*) and the material world (i.e., *prakriti*). Dvaita Vedantic and Samkhyan endorsements of dualism notwithstanding, these schools quite possibly remain tied to a metaphysics of presence. Although dual, both schools ultimately envision alterity as something that can be known and thus ultimately reduced. These philosophical systems do not represent *bhakti*, or devotion. Perhaps they too are, in this regard, allergic. Bhakti is the antihistamine.

The bhakti traditions within Hinduism are diverse. A review of this diversity would take the present discussion too far afield. Here the focus will be on one particular strand within the devotional material, that is, *viraha bhakti* (Ellis 2009). Viraha bhakti is love-in-separation. Perhaps most pronounced in the late first millennium CE text, the *Bhagavata Purana*, this model of devotion is predicated on the strengthening of devotion due to the absence of the beloved. The beloved, that is, Krishna is dear to his followers, the *gopis*. At one point in the narrative, Krishna decides to withdraw from the *gopis'* presence. In his absence, the *gopis* pine for the return of their beloved. Uddhava, a disciple of Krishna, approaches the *gopis* to inform them of the presence afforded to them through yoga and philosophy. This the *gopis* reject. Through devotion, presence, and a certain philosophy tied to reason and universality, is denied. This is what the other affords. The scholar of Vaishnava traditions, Friedhelm Hardy notes, "his [i.e., Krishna's] motives for concealing himself and causing the *gopis* to undergo the suffering and separation are… elusive… [I]t can be regarded… as done for the sake of letting love and devotion grow" (1983, 536). To put this into the language of the Continental conversation, the withdrawal of the other enables love and devotion, that is, the transcendental condition for ethics. "The *withdrawal* of the sacred," Taylor writes, "releases one into the infinite migration of error where meaning is unrecoverable and direction undiscoverable" (1999, 45, emphasis added). Here an equivocation in the Continental conversation emerges.

For the right reasons, or at least the right Western Christian ones, one might associate the Messiah with the sacred. This may be a mistake. According to some of the Continental thinkers, the Messiah is on a trajectory of arrival. The Messiah is to come to presence. With regard to Taylor's sacred, we see a different dynamic, one more in line with the Hindu tradition of *viraha bhakti*. According to Taylor, the sacred withdraws. Krishna withdraws. The sacred is, in this regard, more akin to a friend than a messiah. Caputo notes, "The *withdrawal* of the friend… the 'passage' that is always being made and always being blocked" (2000, 60 emphasis added). To be sure, messiahs arrive; friends withdraw. According to Mehta, "the principal word for the relationship between the divine and the human is 'friendship'…. Krishna is Arjuna's friend and therefore another" (1992, 124). This is where the ethical critique of transcendental phenomenology finds its completion.

Deconstruction has always had a Jewish tint to it (Caputo 2000). It is predicated on a ruptured present. Greek Heroes and Western philosophy, so considered, wish to render all things intelligible and thus reducible to the intentions of the constructive subject. Such presence, such reduction, disallows the space between self and other requisite for an ethical concern. The metaphysics of presence is, for this reason,

violent. Derrida, and others, believe that the messianic, as represented through the ethnotrope of the Jewish Nomad, disrupts the totalizing gaze of the transcendental ego. That which is to come is present as absent. The messianic forever rends the idealist's project incomplete. Total presence is an illusion. Derrida's messianic putatively accomplishes this task by being always-to-come. I suggest that this ethical concern, though rightly raised by the Jewish Nomad, ultimately fails to reach the final step. This is the case because things that are yet-to-come are still wedded to the metaphysics of presence. As Caputo notes, there is a messianic hope animating the deconstructive project. Ethics and hope may be antithetical. Perhaps ethics begins with the hopeless, that is, with jettisoning the imperial hope that all things will eventually be rendered present. To be hopeless is not necessarily to be in despair. Perhaps ecstatic love is the condition of the hopeless (Taylor 1984). Models of alterity predicated on a hoped-for presence do not do justice to alterity. For this, we need sacred friends.

The Hindu tradition of *viraha bhakti* presents a model of alterity predicated on friendship. As we have seen, friends withdraw from their others. Truly, absence makes the ethical grow stronger. *Viraha bhakti*'s emphasis on the friend's withdrawal constitutes the negative messianic. Negative messiahs, that is, friends, are not coming. Friends deliberately do the opposite of the messiah. Derrida was right to note that every other is wholly other; however, every other is always and already withdrawing from the phenomenological intention of the transcendental ego. Unlike the messianic other, the friendly other is never coming.

Greek Heroes, Jewish Nomads, and Hindu Bhaktas never encounter the other. The reasons for why this is the case for each ethnotrope, however, are quite different. As we have seen, there are no others for the conquering Greek Hero; others are merely penultimate stops along a centripetal journey back to self. Jewish Nomads, on the other hand, never encounter the other because for the nomad the other is a messiah, still yet to come. Here we can answer Tertullian. What, indeed, does Athens have to do with Jerusalem? Both are committed to the metaphysics of presence. Hindu Bhaktas, on the other hand, do not encounter the other because the other has always and already withdrawn. Bhaktas are devoted to friends, and friends withdraw. It is for this reason that friendship, the negative messianic, completes the ethical critique of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. Athens and Jerusalem need Banaras.

The foregoing discussion rests on a certain abstract level. Talk of transcendental egos and alterity may seem a bit denuded of practical implications. It need not be so. It should not be so. The foregoing discussion ought to inform the one pertaining to actual, cross-cultural encounters. Although alluded to above, this discussion can inform decolonization.

Comparative philosophy is a fraught subject (Larson and Deutsch 1988). Is it even possible to compare philosophies? What does a cross-cultural, philosophical conversation look like? Although a topic in much need of attention, here is not the place to consider all of the issues associated with comparative philosophy. Rather, we will briefly consider one particular, not to mention central, aspect of the cross-cultural encounter, that is, philosophical hermeneutics.

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1976, 1997) spent his career considering what it means to engage in a dialogue with another, whether that be one's own historical tradition or those of another. The problem arises because of the situated nature of the self. While

Husserl may have identified the transcendental structures of subjectivity, all subjects are ultimately and already grounded in one particular, historical context rather than another. There is no Archimedean point (Rorty 1979, 1991). As Heidegger noted, to be *Dasein* is to be always already thrown into a particular culture, tradition, and language. Gadamer agrees. The ineradicable history of any one particular subject disallows a prejudice-free access to the other. Every subject enjoys, or is burdened by, a particular horizon of meaning and expectation. For Gadamer, this means that the other ultimately provides a moment of provocation for the self. The other, if truly other, eludes whatever expectation and anticipation the subject may bring to the encounter and is thus irreducibly provocative. Significantly for the present discussion, the outcome of such provocation, according to Gadamer, is edification. Gadamer's hermeneutics are, precisely in this regard, philosophical. Philosophy, and philosophical hermeneutics, may be inextricably tied to the heroic.

Gadamer's project is committed to a fusion of horizons, so-called. Different horizons engage each other through provocative dialogue. Provocation leads to fusion, or so Gadamer would have us believe. Tellingly, fusion enriches one's base. Like Ulysses on his return home, one grows through the encounter with the other. While this may appear on first pass to be a good thing, politically and ethically speaking, some have expressed worry that Gadamer's project is still tied, like Husserl's ego, to a metaphysics of presence. Philosophical hermeneutics, like heroic phenomenology, may harbor a colonial intention. "When fully developed," Taylor notes, "hermeneutics tends to become culturally imperialistic…. The participants in dialectical/ hermeneutical conversation move toward the other so they can return to themselves enriched" (1990, 142). Mehta similarly writes, "hermeneutics is… a means of achieving cultural totality, if not wholeness, by assimilating the other as element in a total dream image… hermeneutic as a weapon directed against the other" (1992, 174, 183). Gadamer himself admits as much: "the fact that a foreign language is being translated means that this is simply an extreme case of hermeneutical difficulty – i.e., *of alienness and its conquest*" (1997, 387, emphasis added). Elsewhere Gadamer writes, "It [i.e., the hermeneutically enlightened consciousness] is higher because it allows the foreign to become one's own" (1976, 94). Is it always the case that through encounter with the other, one's own base heroically grows? Does it always become broadened? Can one be anything other than a philosopher? This is often how philosophical hermeneutics presents itself. There is yet an alternative.

Philosophical hermeneutics appears tied to the edification of self and thus a certain heroic colonialism. *Postcolonial* hermeneutics, however, is different. Rather than emphasizing fusion, growth, and edification, postcolonial hermeneutics recognizes the potentially disruptive nature of the encounter with the other (Ellis 2013). This would seemingly capture the nature of the encounter between India and Europe (Halbfass 1988, Mehta 1985). Mehta writes, "the only difference in this two-sided, mutual participation is that from the Western end it is in the nature of supplementing the substance of their mainstream culture, an assimilation of the alien and subordinating it within a more widely based totality. From the non-Western, including Indian, the participation is an appropriation of the substance itself, not peripheral as in the Western case, and the only question is, how deep does this approximation go" (1990, 230). Philosophical hermeneutics, like the Greek Hero, supplements itself. Postcolonial

hermeneutics, like the Hindu Bhakta, suffers displacement. "Idols must be set up and idols must be broken, these same idols, our own, not those of others," writes Mehta, "without the final perception of these symbols, including those called concepts, and of our very belongingness to a tradition, as idols to be discarded, down to the very last, there can be no arrival, no homecoming" (1985, 206-207). It is in the very nature of hermeneutics, both philosophical and postcolonial, for a return to the point of departure, a return the Jewish Nomad wholly repudiates. The question concerns the effect upon the point of departure the other has. Mehta writes of the relationship to tradition as "an irreparably broken one" (1985, 261). The distinction between philosophical and postcolonial hermeneutics thus rests with the nature of the self subsequent to the encounter with the other. As Gadamer describes it, philosophical hermeneutics is heroic. The encounter with the other is enriching. Postcolonial hermeneutics, on the other hand, is disruptive, rendering it more in line with the Hindu Bhakta. Disruption of self, both transcendental and historical, reflects an ethical stance toward the other as irreducibly absent.

Tertullian's limitation continues to inform Continental philosophy. While the church father may rightly be forgiven his cultural myopia, the same should not, nay cannot be said for twentieth- and twenty-first century philosophers, Continental or otherwise. As several authors have noted, it would appear that following to its logical conclusion the trajectory first inaugurated in Athens leads to Husserlian phenomenology. According to authors such as Derrida, Husserl's project disallows alterity and as such disallows ethics. Employing what have here been called ethnotropes, Continental thinkers invoke the Greek hero, Ulysses. All heroic journeys end with the decimation, and consequent plundering, of the enemy, the other. Such journeys, like the philosophical hermeneutic one, are wholly centripetal. There is always a return to an enriched homeland. Countering the Greek Hero is the Jewish Nomad, Abraham. For the same Continental authors, Abraham substitutes for the deconstructive subject, the one for whom the other is not present for conquest and plunder. Rather, the Nomad is forever nomadic because the other is never present, a presence enabling the return trip. Abraham remains hopeful, however, that the Messiah, the other, will arrive. Intended to provide an ethical corrective to the hero's metaphysics of presence, Jewish Nomads remain expectant of a fulfilled presence, even if not here and now. This is the phenomenological legacy of Jerusalem. As seen above, however, Tertullian's world can no longer remain so parochial. Banaras holds out an alternative.

Heroes issue from Athens. Nomads pursue Jerusalem. Bhaktas return to Banaras. The ethnotrope of the Hindu Bhakta proffers a model of the relationship between self and other that completes the ethical critique of Greek Heroes and their transcendental phenomenology. Unlike the Jewish Nomad forever waiting and hoping for the arrival of the other, the Hindu Bhakta recognizes the other as friend. Friends withdraw from the phenomenological presence of bhaktas. Friendship constitutes the negative messianic. While Greek heroism informs philosophical hermeneutics, Hindu friendship and the negative messianic inform postcolonial hermeneutics. What, indeed, does Athens have to do with Jerusalem? Both are committed to a metaphysics of presence; both lack the resources for ethics as first philosophy. For this, we need Banaras's negative messianic, that is, we need the Hindu Bhakta.

Bibliography

Auerbach E (1968) *Mimesis: The representation of reality in Western literature*, trans. by W. R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Caputo J D (1997) *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without religion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Caputo J D (2000) *More Radical Hermeneutics: On not knowing who we are*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Coyne J (2016) *Faith Versus Fact: Why Science and Religion are Incompatible*. New York: Penguin.

Craig W L (2008) *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. Wheaton: Crossway Press.

Critchley S, Dews P (1996) *Deconstructive Subjectivities*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.

Derrida J (1978) *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Derrida J (1989) "Psyche: Inventions of the Other" in *Reading de Man reading*, ed. by L. Waters and W. Godzich, 25 – 65. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Derrida J (1995) *The Gift of Death*, trans. by D. Wills. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Derrida J (1997) *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. by G. Collins. London: Verso.

Deutsch E (1980) *Advaita Vedanta: A Philosophical Reconstruction*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Ellis T B (2009) "I Love You, I Hate You: Toward a Psychology of the Hindu *Deus Absconditus*," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 13:1, 1-23.

Ellis T B (2013) *On the Death of the Pilgrim: The Postcolonial Hermeneutics of Jarava Lal Mehta*. New York: Springer.

Gadamer H G (1976) *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. by D. E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gadamer HG (1997) *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall. New York: Continuum.

Halbfass W (1988) *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Hardy F (1983) *Viraha Bhakti: The early history of Krishna devotion in south India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Heidegger M (1988) *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Husserl E (1960) *Cartesian Meditations: An introduction to phenomenology*, trans. by D. Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Kakar S (1981) *The Inner World: A psycho-analytic study of childhood and society in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Larson G, Deutsch E (1988) *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New essays in comparative philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Levinas E (1969) *Totality and Infinity*, trans. by A. Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Levinas E (1986) "The Trace of the Other" in *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and philosophy*, ed. by M. C. Taylor, 345 – 359. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Levinas E (1998) *Otherwise than being, or beyond essence*, trans. by A. Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Mackie J L (1983) *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Marion J L (1995) *God without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. by T. A. Carlson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Masson J M (1980) *The Oceanic Feeling: The Origins of Religious Sentiment in Ancient India*. New York: Springer.

Metha J L (1985) *India and the West: The Problem of Understanding*. Chico: Scholar's Press.

Mehta J L (1990) *Philosophy and Religion: Essays in Interpretation*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research.

Mehta J L (1992) *J. L. Mehta on Heidegger, Hermeneutics and Indian Tradition*, ed. by W. J. Jackson. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Philipse H (1995) "Transcendental Idealism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, ed. by B. Smith and D. W. Smith, 239 – 322. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Plantinga A (2000) *Warranted Christian Belief*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Roland A (1988) *In Search of Self in India and Japan: Toward a Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rorty R (1979) *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rorty R (1991) *Essays on Heidegger and others: Philosophical papers, vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sarma D (2003) *An Introduction to Madhva Vedanta*. New York: Routledge.

Swinburne R (1977) *The Coherence of Theism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Taylor M C (1984) *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Taylor M C (1987) *Altarity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Taylor M C (1990) *Tears*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Taylor M C (1999) *About religion: Economies of faith in virtual culture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Redefining Heroism: A Tapestry Woven with Napoleon Bonaparte, Mikhail Kutuzov, Andrew Bolkonsky, Nicholas Rostov, Feodor Dolokhov, Captain Tushin, Pierre Bezukhov and Platon Karataev in War and Peace

By Oidinposha Imamkhodjaeva[*]

In his monumental work, "War and Peace," Leo Tolstoy boldly confronts the traditional depiction of heroism in the context of war. He meticulously deconstructs the archetype of the flawless leader, replacing it with a diverse ensemble of characters who redefine heroism through their actions, motivations, and in some instances, their pursuit of a meaningful life. This essay delves into Tolstoy's innovative portrayal of heroism through an array of characters, both historical figures like Napoleon Bonaparte and Mikhail Kutuzov, and fictional personas such as Prince Andrew Bolkonsky, Nicholas Rostov, Feodor Dolokhov, Captain Tushin, Pierre Buzukhov, and Platon Karataev. Tolstoy invites readers to perceive heroism not as grandiose acts or military prowess, but as the quiet strength, resilience, and moral compass exhibited by unsung heroes. The essay explores this theme through a diverse cast of characters, from unassuming soldiers like Captain Tushin to self-serving figures like Dolokhov, and disillusioned idealists like Pierre and Andrei. Contrary to the image of the glory-seeking conqueror, Tolstoy portrays heroism as the right way of being, embodied by ordinary people. The essay argues that true heroes prioritize duty, empathy, and a commitment to a greater purpose. The analysis extends beyond the battlefield, underscoring the heroism of resilience and compassion embodied by the peaceful survivor Platon Karataev. Lastly, the essay scrutinizes the complexities of heroism, acknowledging the imperfections of some heroes and the power of collective action. By dismantling the myth of the infallible leader, "War and Peace" urges us to recognize the various forms heroism can take and to celebrate the unsung heroes who shape our world. This essay encapsulates the essence of Tolstoy's view of individual character and ethical and religio-philosophical views of individuals by providing a comprehensive overview of its key arguments and themes.

---

[*]Assistant Teaching Professor, Pennsylvania State University, USA.

Thesis Statement

In War and Peace, Leo Tolstoy deconstructs the traditional concept of heroism associated with war. He presents a complex tapestry of characters, from soldiers like Tushin to historical figures like Napoleon, to redefine heroism as the quiet strength, resilience, empathy, and moral compass displayed by ordinary individuals, challenging us to look beyond the battlefield and celebrate the unsung heroes who shape our world.

The Warrior Hero Ideal

In the realm of Western philosophy, the concept of a warrior hero is often intertwined with the philosophical discourse on ethics, morality, and the nature of the self. One such figure that stands out is the ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates.

Socrates, often considered the father of Western philosophy, was a warrior in both the literal and metaphorical sense. He served as a hoplite, i.e. heavily armed foot soldier in the Athenian military during the Peloponnesian War, demonstrating physical courage on the battlefield[1]. However, it is his intellectual and moral courage that truly characterizes him as a warrior hero in Western philosophy.[2]

Socrates was a relentless seeker of truth, challenging the conventional wisdom of his time. He engaged in rigorous intellectual battles, using his method of questioning (the Socratic method) to dissect and analyze the beliefs and values of his contemporaries. His philosophical inquiries often led to discomfort and annoyance among the Athenian elites, yet he never backed down from his pursuit of wisdom.[3]

His moral courage was most evident in his trial and subsequent execution. Accused of impiety and corrupting the youth, Socrates had the option to escape or to compromise his principles for a lesser sentence. Yet, he chose to stay and face his death, believing it was better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. This act of defiance, of choosing to die rather than renounce his philosophical beliefs, solidifies Socrates' status as a warrior hero in Western philosophy.

Socrates embodies the warrior hero not through physical prowess or martial skill but through his unwavering commitment to truth and justice. His life serves as a testament to the power of philosophical inquiry and the courage required to challenge societal norms. In this way, Socrates exemplifies the warrior spirit in the intellectual and moral arenas, making him a true warrior hero in the annals of Western philosophy.

But the idea of the military hero has long captivated the Western mind. From classical antiquity, we remember Achilles, the undefeated warrior; and the world conquerors.[4]

---

[1]Bob Carruthers. (2013). *War in Ancient Greece*. Pen & Sword Military, p.113

[2]Levi, A. W. (1956). The Idea of Socrates: The Philosophic Hero in the Nineteenth Century. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *17*(1), 89–108. https://doi.org/10.2307/2707687

[3]Kateb, G. (1998). Socratic Integrity. Nomos, 40, 77–112. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24219955

[4]Ball, R. (1967). ACHILLES: TRAGIC HERO. *The Classical Outlook*, *44*(5), 53–56. http://www.jstor. org/stable/43929347 Odysseus, the survivor who overcomes all odds; (Stanford,

From the European Middle Ages, we remember the ideal of chivalry, the strong and fearless fighter who is the defender of the weak.[5]

By Leo Tolstoy's time, the example of Napoleon - the self-made man who became master of Europe supposedly through his own ability and audacity - had captured the European imagination.[6]

Tolstoy had seen enough of military life to understand the reality behind these images. He served as an artillery officer in Chechnya and then in the siege of Sebastopol during the Crimean War. He greatly admired the courage of the common soldiers, while seeing how badly they were treated, and he came to see the hollowness of the idea of the individual hero.[7]

Napoleon's Delusions of Grandeur

Napoleon Bonaparte continues to fascinate scholars and inspire debate. Whether he's a hero or a villain is a complex question, and current literature reflects this ambiguity. In this paper, we will explore Tolstoy's portrayal of a spectrum of heroes, ranging from the selfless to the selfish, and everything in between. We will argue that these characters, including Napoleon, are not merely one-dimensional figures, but rather complex individuals who embody varying degrees of heroism.

A brief review of the literature reveals that numerous scholars have delved into Napoleon's rise to power within the context of the French Revolution, often portraying him as a hero of the revolution. Works such as Philip G. Dwyer's "Napoleon Bonaparte as Hero and Saviour: Image, Rhetoric, and Behaviour in the Construction of a Legend"[8] provide an interesting examination of how the media depicted Napoleon in three primary ways: as a victorious general, a virtuous republican, and a peace bringer.

These images collectively constructed a 'hero-savior' myth, which was instrumental in Napoleon's ascension to power in 1799. However, these images conflicted with his quasi-monarchical public persona outside France. Dwyer's article explores the origins and evolution of Napoleonic propaganda, shedding light on the dissonance between his promotion within France and his conduct abroad. The author discusses how the hero-savior myth was utilized to legitimize Napoleon's rule

---

W. B. (1982). Astute Hero and Ingenious Poet: Odysseus and Homer. *The Yearbook of English Studies*, *12*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.2307/3507394) and Alexander the Great (Burn, A. R. (1965). The Generalship of Alexander. Greece & Rome, 12(2), 140–154. http://www.jstor.org/stable/642311) and Julius Caesar COURSEN, H. R. (1962). The Fall and Decline of Julius Caesar. Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 4(2), 241–251. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40753597).

[5]Paris, W. A. (1988). "Heroic Struggle": A Medieval and Modern Dilemma. *Journal of Religion and Health*, *27*(2), 143–153. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27505966)

[6]Rosenshield, G. (2018). TOLSTOI, NAPOLEON, AND HERO-WORSHIP: THE PATHS OF PIERRE BEZUKHOV AND ANDREI BOLKONSKII. *The Slavic and East European Journal*, *62*(2), 359–381. http://www.jstor.org/stable/45408481

[7]Before They Were Titans. Essays on the early works of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. Edited with an Introduction by Elizabeth Cherish Allen, Boston 2015, p.153-211; "Tolstoy," by Rosemund Bartlett, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, NY, 2011, 454.

[8]French History, Volume 18, Issue 4, December 2004, 379–403.

during the Consulate and Empire periods, adding a powerful dimension to our understanding of his reign.

Napoleon's military brilliance is another facet of the hero narrative. Hegelian interpretations, as exemplified in https://www.napoleon.org/en/history-of-the-two-empires/articles/napoleon-hegelian-hero/, argue that he was a 'man of action' embodying the spirit of the times. In Hegel's philosophy of history, Napoleon is seen as the 'soul of the world'. Hegel views Napoleon's actions as a realization of the 'Absolute', a concept he explores in his work 'The Phenomenology of Mind'. From Hegel's perspective, Napoleon is a philosophical hero.

In Thomas Carlyle's work "On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History," he presents a series of lectures discussing various types of heroes, including divinities, prophets, poets, priests, men of letters, and rulers. When it comes to Napoleon, Carlyle categorizes him as a "Hero as King," which is the title of his sixth lecture.

Carlyle views Napoleon Bonaparte as a quintessential example of a hero in the realm of political leadership and modern revolutionism. He investigates the mysterious qualities that elevate humans like Napoleon to cultural significance, suggesting that such individuals possess divine inspiration and unpredictable heroic qualities. Carlyle's portrayal of Napoleon is complex; he recognizes Napoleon's military genius and his role in shaping European history, while also acknowledging the controversies and the ultimate fall associated with his rule.

Carlyle's examination of Napoleon and other figures is part of his broader argument about the importance of heroic leadership. He believed that heroes have a profound impact on history, not just through their actions, but also through their spirit and ideas, which can inspire others and lead to significant cultural and societal changes[9].

The paper "Heroic Power in Thomas Carlyle and Leo Tolstoy" by Ilia Stambler explores the contrasting views of Carlyle and Tolstoy on the concept of heroic power. Carlyle, in his work "On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History," argues for the significant role of heroes, attributing to them a high degree of control over social and political events. Conversely, Tolstoy, in "War and Peace," challenges the existence of such heroic influence, suggesting that individual leaders have limited personal mastery and face substantial constraints. Ilia Stambler delves into the intellectual and political debates that arose in Europe following the Napoleonic Wars, which highlighted the role of the individual in history. Stambler presents Carlyle's and Tolstoy's models as coherent yet contradictory, reflecting a polarized view of power and mastery and the sense of individual insecurity during historical upheavals.[10]

However, Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' challenges this one-dimensional hero image. Tolstoy shows that heroism is not just about power and self-aggrandizement. Tolstoy uses Napoleon as an example of how history is shaped by impersonal forces, not by the actions of "great men."

---

[9]Thomas Carlyle. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. University of California Press, 1993. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=295064&site=ehos t-live&scope=site.

[10]Stambler, I. (2006). Heroic Power in Thomas Carlyle and Leo Tolstoy The European Legacy, 11(7), 737–751. https://doi-org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/10.1080/10848770601023073

Elizabeth Duquette tells how the West was fascinated by Napoleon Bonaparte. Despite not fully conquering Europe, he had a profound influence on the 19th century. His life, achievements, and failures were a constant topic of discussion among both major and minor European thinkers, leading to a wide range of opinions. She wrote (p.636): "The circulation of Napoleon across the century - the ceaseless repetition of his life, achievements, failings, and example - created an alternative Napoleonic empire, distinct from its political antecedent and more formative for the century's culture. Because opinion varied widely - for Hegel, he was a "world-soul," "astride a horse, [who] reaches out over the world and masters it" (p.114), while Tolstoy thought he was "predestined by Providence for the sad, unfree role of executioner of the peoples" (p.817) - his empire's archive comprises much contradictory material.[11]

Catherine Gallagher's essay, "What Would Napoleon Do? Historical, Fictional, and Counterfactual Characters," examines the distinctions between historical, fictional, and counterfactual characters, using Napoleon Bonaparte as a case study. The essay illuminates how varying contexts and perspectives, including those of Hegel, Tolstoy, and Louis Geoffroy-Chateau, can yield diverse, even contradictory, portrayals of Napoleon. Gallagher's work underscores the growing prevalence of counterfactual characters in contemporary narrative genres and highlights the importance of understanding these distinctions in our interpretation of historical figures.[12]

The following quote from Irene Collins provides a fascinating insight into Leo Tolstoy's perception of Napoleon, as depicted in his epic novel "War and Peace". She writes: "Tolstoy despised Napoleon, not because he was a Frenchman (there is more hatred of the Germans than of the French in War and Peace), but because he seemed to be a petty-minded individual, vain enough to believe that armies marched because he commanded them to do so, that victories were won because he devised them, and that the fate of nations could be changed by his decree"(p.45).[13] Napoleon's belief that he can command armies and devise victories speaks to an inflated sense of self-importance and egoism. Tolstoy criticizes this as a petty and vain understanding of one's role in the world.

Scholars such as Ahearn, S. T. (2005) explore Tolstoy's use of metaphor to illustrate the dissonance between Napoleon's self-image and reality. Napoleon believes himself to be in control of events, but Tolstoy suggests that history unfolds according to forces beyond his grasp. Ahearn writes (p.631), "Leo Tolstoy employs some striking mathematical metaphors to illustrate his theory of history and to explain the naivety and arrogance of placing the responsibility of history's direction on the shoulders of the leaders of armies and nations." [14]

---

[11]Duquette, E. (2015). The Man of the World. American Literary History, 27(4), 635–664. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43817723

[12]Gallagher, C. (2011). What Would Napoleon Do? Historical, Fictional, and Counterfactual Characters. *New Literary History*, *42*(2), 315–336. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23012546.

[13]COLLINS, I. (1986). VARIATIONS ON THE THEME OF NAPOLEON'S MOSCOW CAMPAIGN. History, 71(231), 39–53. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24412016;

[14]Ahearn, S. T. (2005). Tolstoy's Integration Metaphor from War and Peace. The American Mathematical Monthly, 112(7), 631–638. https://doi.org/10.2307/30037547

Jeff Love states, "Napoleon seeks to impose his will on events by grasping the patterns they follow such that will and intellect may become one, a combination which for our tradition is associated with the deity: the deity has only to think something to create it, to make it happen." [15]

Let's look more closely at Tolstoy's own words. In War and Peace Tolstoy's Napoleon serves as a cautionary tale, embodying the distorted concept of heroism fueled by ego and ambition. He is portrayed as a self-absorbed manipulator, driven by a thirst for power and a desperate desire to be etched in history as a great conqueror. His decisions are often impulsive, fueled by a delusion of control, and his victories are more a product of chance than strategic brilliance. Napoleon's ultimate downfall highlights the emptiness of heroism built solely on personal glory. Far from being a celebrated conqueror, Napoleon emerges as a self-absorbed figure, ultimately exposed as a pawn in the grand scheme of history. Through his portrayal of Napoleon, Tolstoy dismantles the myth of the "great man," suggesting that true significance lies not in individual ambition, but in the complex interplay of forces beyond human control.

In each scene in which Napoleon appears - the conversation with wounded Russian officers (p. 306-307)[16], the interview with the envoy General Balashev (p. 661-669)[17], his reception of a picture of his son on the eve of the Battle of Borodino (p. 832-836)[18] and the many other scenes - neither he nor members of his entourage say a single thing to each other that is meaningful. Everything is for effect.

During preparations for the invasion of Russia, a Polish cavalry officer tries to impress Napoleon by taking his men across a river at a dangerous point where Napoleon happens to be, rather finding a safe river ford. Forty Poles drown, and the rest of them don't even make it across the river. Napoleon cares nothing for what they did, but he gives their leader a medal anyway. (p. 651)[19]

Not one order given at the Battle of Borodino is carried out as ordered. (p. 838)[20]. However, Tolstoy notes, Napoleon "carried out his role of appearing to command calmly, and with dignity," and Tolstoy admits that the ability to play this role is an essential part of command. (p. 841)[21]

Napoleon looks on the dead and wounded on the battlefield and for a moment is shaken. But when an adjutant says Russians are still holding on, Napoleon says, "Let them have more." (p. 873)[22]. He consoles himself with the fact that the

[15]Love, Jeff. "The Great Man in War and Peace in Rick McPeak & Donna Tussing Orwin eds *Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in War and Peace*, edited by Rick Cornell University Press, 2012. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pensu/detail.action?doc ID=3138366 85-97.

[16]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983.

[17]Ibid

[18]Ibid

[19]Ibid

[20]Ibid

[21]Ibid

[22]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983

number of dead Russians and also of dead allied troops exceeds the number of dead Frenchmen.

After the battle, he makes what Tolstoy says are the worst possible choices. He could have wintered in Moscow, he could have attacked St. Petersburg or Nizhni Novgorod, or he could have withdrawn by a more northerly or southerly route. Instead, he remains in Moscow until October, allows his soldiers to loot the city, and then allows them to carry their loot on the retreat, and chooses to retreat along the worst possible route - the route by which they came in. Tolstoy writes that if Napoleon had intended the destruction of his army, he would not have acted differently. (p. 1070)[23]

He issues many decrees, but they are not carried out. Tolstoy says Napoleon was no more in control of his retreating army than the figurehead of a ship is in control of a ship. (p. 1072 - 1077)[24]

From the outset, Napoleon is presented as a man obsessed with self-image. Tolstoy emphasizes his posturing and theatrical pronouncements, highlighting the gulf between his perceived grandeur and the reality of his actions. We see Napoleon constantly preening and manipulating his public image, more concerned with appearing a great strategist than with the human cost of his campaigns. His pronouncements about his "destiny" ring hollow when contrasted with the chaotic nature of war and the randomness of events on the battlefield.

Tolstoy further undermines Napoleon's heroic stature by stripping him of agency. He portrays the French emperor as a puppet manipulated by historical forces beyond his comprehension. Napoleon believes himself to be a master strategist, dictating the course of events. However, Tolstoy emphasizes the unpredictable nature of war and the role of chance. Battles are depicted as chaotic and brutal, with outcomes determined by factors outside of Napoleon's control. This emphasis on chance and uncontrollable forces serves to diminish Napoleon's perceived brilliance and control.

The devastating impact of the French invasion on Russia further exposes the hollowness of Napoleon's heroism. Tolstoy portrays the war not as a glorious conquest, but as a brutal and senseless act of violence. The suffering of ordinary people stands in stark contrast to Napoleon's self-aggrandizement. We see the destruction of Moscow, the hardships endured by soldiers, and the devastation inflicted upon civilians. Through these scenes, Tolstoy emphasizes the human cost of Napoleon's ambition, effectively dismantling any notion of him as a heroic figure.

By the novel's conclusion, Napoleon is a diminished figure, stripped of his aura of invincibility. His retreat from Moscow is a humiliating defeat, exposing the emptiness of his grand pronouncements. Tolstoy's portrayal of Napoleon serves as a powerful critique of hero worship and the "great man" theory of history. True significance, the novel suggests, lies not in individual ambition or self-promotion, but in the complex interplay of forces that shape human events.

---

[23]Ibid
[24]Ibid

Mikhail Kutuzov, the Servant Leader

Leo Tolstoy's portrayal of General Kutuzov in "War and Peace" aligns remarkably well with Robert K. Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership[25].

General Kutuzov, the commander of the Russian forces against Napoleon, is depicted as a humble and spiritual leader. He is not the archetypal image of military leadership, being old, fat, and one-eyed. Yet, he is a brilliant strategist and a practiced philosopher of human nature. Rick McPeak (p.111) writes: "Yet, in conjunction with this malevolent prophecy, Kutuzov extends personal and professional kindness to Prince Andrei. The venerable Commander-in-Chief, realizing that his subordinate has bonded with his infantry troops in a way no staff officer can, allows Prince Andrei to refuse duty on Kutuzov's own staff and lead his regiment into combat.[26] Kutuzov also comforts Prince Andrei, who is mourning the recent death of his father, by declaring "I'm like a father to you… If you need anything, come straight to me" (p.743–744)" [27]

Kutuzov is motivated by personal belief rather than the desire for acceptance. He is more realistic and wary about the state of things. He hesitates to declare a Russian victory at Borodino despite the obvious advantages of doing so. Such awareness of the mysteries of existence wins Kutuzov our—and Tolstoy's—approval.

Robert K. Greenleaf's Servant Leadership is a non-traditional leadership philosophy that places the primary emphasis on the well-being of those being served. The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The servant-leader shares power puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.

When we juxtapose these two perspectives, we can see that Kutuzov embodies many of the principles of servant leadership. Like a servant leader, Kutuzov is humble, putting the needs of his soldiers and his country before his own. He is not driven by ego or personal ambition but by a deep sense of duty and service. His strategic brilliance is not used for personal glory but for the benefit of all. His humility and spirituality, contrasted with Napoleon's vanity and self-absorption, further underscore his alignment with the principles of servant leadership.

Ani Kokobobo (p.221) writes, "In a long coat on an immensely fat body, with a somewhat rounded back, an uncovered white head, a blinded white eye in a puffy face, Kutuzov entered the circle with his dipping, swaying gait, and stopped behind the priest. He crossed himself with a habitual gesture, touched the ground with his hand, and, sighing deeply, bowed his gray head (764). With his 'immensely fat body', Kutuzov dips and sways and is pulled down by gravity… Unlike

[25]Greenleaf RK, Senge PM, Covey SR, Spears LC. *Servant Leadership : A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. Vol Twenty-fifth anniversary edition. Paulist Press; 2002. Accessed June 13, 2024. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/login.aspx?Direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=587729&site=ehost-live&scope=site

[26]McPeak, Rick & Donna Tussing Orwin, eds. Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in War and Peace. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2012.

[27]Rick McPeak, Benevolence on the Battlefield, in Cooke Brett ed. Critical Insights War and Peace, Salem Press, 2014;101-118.

Napoleon, who likes to present himself as seamless underneath his blue uniform, which he uses to cover his overweight parts, Kutuzov is not interested in hiding his weight. …As Andrei notes before Borodino, Kutuzov is the right person to lead the Russian army because there is no personal ego driving him." [28]

Tolstoy's Kutuzov and Greenleaf's servant leader share a common ethos of service, humility, and a focus on the well-being of others. They both challenge traditional notions of leadership, offering a model that is more compassionate, ethical, and ultimately, more effective. This comparison not only sheds light on the depth of Tolstoy's characterization but also underscores the timeless relevance of servant leadership.

As depicted by Tolstoy, Kutuzov is in stark contrast to Napoleon. He is the antithesis of the traditional war hero - an unassuming, aging man with a shrewd understanding of human nature and the limitations of command. He doesn't rely on elaborate strategies or seek personal glory.

He largely ignores proposed plans and sometimes falls asleep during councils of war. (p. 274-275)[29]. Instead, he trusts his experience, the resilience of his troops, and "time and patience" to defeat Napoleon. (p. 798)[30]. Kutuzov's heroism lies in his pragmatic wisdom, his ability to inspire loyalty and his complete lack of personal ambition.

While Napoleon has absolute authority, Kutuzov is subject to the authority of Tsar Alexander. While Napoleon's entourage consists of sycophants and hero-worshipers, Kutuzov is surrounded by critics and back-biters who don't respect him.

We first meet Kutuzov as a commander in the field in 1805, in retreat with Austrian allies after Napoleon has taken Vienna. He has no plan, but neither surrenders nor offers battle and keeps his army in the field (p. 174-175)[31]. When finally forced to stand and fight, his army is saved by the steadfastness of an artillery captain whose identity he probably never learns. (p. 197-206)[32]

He knows the Battle of Austerlitz is probably un-winnable. He tells Tsar Alexander so and is ignored, but does his best anyway. (p. 268)[33].

Andrew Bolkonsky, reporting for duty in 1812 when Napoleon invades, sees that Kutuzov is no ordinary commander. "It was evident that Kutuzov despised intellect and learning, and even the patriotic feeling shown by [Vasily] Denisov; but he despised them not because of his own intellect, feelings or knowledge – he did not try to display any of these – but because of something else," Tolstoy wrote. "He despised them because of his old age and experience of life." (p. 795-796)[34].

---

[28]Ani Kokobobo Tumbling Napoleon and Fat Kutuzov, in Cooke Brett ed. Critical Insights War and Peace, Salem Press, 2014;210-224.

[29]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983

[30]Ibid

[31]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983

[32]Ibid

[33]Ibid

[34]Ibid

Kutuzov tells Bolkonsky that time and patience are the keys to victory. He says, *"*It is not difficult to capture a fortress, but it is difficult to win a campaign. For that, not storming and attacking, but *time* and *patience* are wanted." (p. 798)[35]

Andrew reflects, "He will not bring in any plans of his own. He will not devise or undertake anything, but he will hear everything, remember everything, and put everything in its place. He will not hinder anything useful or allow anything harmful. He understands that there is something stronger and more important than his own will – the inevitable course of events, and he can see them and grasp their significance, and seeing that significance, refrain from meddling and renounce his personal wish directed to something else." (p. 799)[36]

He had no grand plan to lure Napoleon into the depths of Russia. (p. 732, 733)[37]. When he fights the Battle of Borodino, he hopes to win. The day after the battle, he hopes to finish off the French army. (p. 882-884)[38]. But when he sees that this is impossible, he lets Napoleon occupy Moscow rather than sacrifice his army. Again, he neither surrenders nor tries to fight a hopeless battle but relies on time and patience to find a way. (p. 884-886)[39]

He is not afraid to fight, but his priority is to preserve his troops, who are starving, barefoot, and in rags, rather than to sacrifice their lives when the battle is useless. He does not allow himself to be limited by the so-called rules of war, because he does not think of war as a game.

When Napoleon evacuates Russia, he does not try to trap him or block his way, although he is unable to restrain his troops from giving battle. (p. 1100, 1178)[40] He resigns his command once Napoleon's army has left Russian soil because his mission has been accomplished. (p. 1178)[41]

Andrew Bolkonsky: What Price Glory?

Prince Andrew Bolkonsky seeks military glory and fame because of a lack of purpose and meaning in his personal life. He scoffs at his friend Pierre Bezukhov's idea that people should fight for their convictions. If that were so, he says, there would be no war. Pierre asks him why he is going to war. He replies, "What for? I don't know. I must. … I'm going because the life I lead here does not suit me." (p. 25)[42]

He is a capable and intelligent officer, valued by General Kutuzov. But prior to the Battle of Austerlitz, he admits to himself that his motivation is the desire for glory. He thinks, "…if … I want glory, want to be known to men, want to be loved by them, it is not my fault that I want it and want nothing but that and live only for that. Yes, for that alone! … Death, wounds, the loss of family – I fear nothing. And

---

[35]Leo Tolstoy *War and Peace*. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[36]Ibid
[37]Ibid
[38]Ibid
[39]Ibid
[40]Ibid
[41]Ibid
[42]Ibid

precious and dear as many people are to me: father, sister, wife – those dearest to me – yet dreadful and unnatural as it seems, I would give them all at once for a moment of glory, of triumph over men, of love from men whom I don't know and shall never know, for the love of these men here." (p. 276-277)[43]

The next day, he performs a heroic deed, inspiring soldiers by carrying a regimental flag into the face of the enemy. (p.193)[44] He is wounded and nearly killed. (p. 294)[45].

His near-death experience makes him feel that, from a cosmic point of view, the quest for fame by military heroism is meaningless. (p. 294, 307)[46] He retires from active service. He says he will never serve in the army again, even if Napoleon invades Russia and overruns Bald Hills, his family estate. (p. 403)[47]

But when Napoleon actually invades, he rejoins the army. This time his motive is hatred of the enemy, who has invaded his nation, destroyed his family estate, and indirectly caused the death of his father. (p. 830)[48]

This time he goes into battle without illusions and without any desire for individual glory. Like Kutuzov, his desire is to destroy the enemy by all means necessary, also without regard for the rules of war. As he sees it, the outcomes of battles and wars are decided by the courage and determination of the troops, not the tactics and strategy of the leaders. (p. 828-829)[49]

Once again, he is wounded, this time fatally. (p. 868)[50] Dying, he loses all fear of death. (p. 870)[51] His worst enemy, Anatole Kuragin, is on a hospital bed next to him, and he feels compassion for him (p. 872)[52] He is overwhelmed by a feeling of love of life and humanity, but Tolstoy gives no indication he regrets military service.

The Education of Nicholas Rostov

Nicholas Rostov is a more typical Russian officer. When he enlists, he has illusions about military life, such as that brave soldiers never feel fear. (p. 152)[53]. He experiences battle and realizes he actually could be killed. "Can they be running to me?" he thinks. "And why? To kill me? *Me*, whom everybody is so fond of?" He is wounded and survives. (p. 195)[54].

---

[43]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[44]Ibid
[45]Ibid
[46]Ibid
[47]Ibid
[48]Ibid
[49]Ibid
[50]Ibid
[51]Ibid
[52]Ibid
[53]Ibid
[54]Ibid

He soon comes to understand the reality of military life. He comes to realize, not only that soldiers give false accounts of their exploits in battle, but that it is impossible to give a truthful account, because of the power of the illusion of glory.

He comes to see the arbitrariness of so-called military justice. An officer steals a purse of gold from one of his comrades, and he tries to get it back. He is told to apologize to the thief, which he refuses to do. (p. 136 - 138)[55]

His friend Vasily Denisov is unjustly punished for seizing needed provisions of hungry troops without authorization. (p. 421-425)[56]. The Tsar refuses to accept his petition on behalf of Denisov (p. 436 - 437)[57]

At the same time, Nicholas feels welcome in his regiment. He feels it is his home. He feels he understands his comrades and is understood by them. He feels he will be taken care of. This is at a time when the regiment has lost half its men due to hunger and disease. In spite of this, the regiment has high morale. (p. 417 - 421)[58]

A review of the troops by the Tsar Alexander gives Nicholas a feeling of unity and meaning. Tolstoy wrote, "Every general and every soldier was conscious of his own insignificance, aware of being but a drop in that vast ocean of men, and yet at the same time was conscious of his strength as part of that enormous whole. … Rostov … experienced the same feeling as every other man in that army: a feeling of self-forgetfulness, a proud consciousness of might and a passionate attraction to him who was the cause of triumph." (p. 255-256)[59]. Nicholas feels he would die of happiness if Alexander addressed him, but later gets stage fright when he has a chance to actually encounter the Tsar. (p. 301)[60]

When the Tsar and Napoleon make a treaty, he feels betrayed. But he tells himself it is not for him to judge. He reflects, "We are not diplomatic officials, we are soldiers and nothing more. Command us to die—then we die. … If we once were to begin criticizing and reasoning about everything, nothing would be left holy to us. In that way, we would be saying there is no God, nothing." (p. 441)[61].

When Napoleon invades, Nicholas goes bravely into battle. He has learned to steel himself so as not to be influenced by fear. He nearly kills and then captures a young Frenchman. He is given a medal but feels vaguely ashamed without knowing why. He comes to realize it was because he hesitated to land the killing blow because he recognized the humanity of his enemy. He is unable to decide whether this is a weakness. (p. 698 - 699)[62]

Even though Russia has been invaded, Nicholas is happy. His regiment is filled up to its full complement, which means the war will continue and he has a good chance of being promoted to a regimental command. As for the outcome, that is the responsibility of Kutuzov and the Tsar. (p. 1008)[63]

---

[55]Leo Tolstoy *War and Peace*. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[56]Ibid
[57]Ibid
[58]Ibid
[59]Ibid
[60]Ibid
[61]Ibid
[62]Ibid
[63]Ibid

Feodor Dolokhov: The Egoistic Hero

Feodor Dolokhov embodies another kind of heroism. As an officer and trooper, he is insolent and arrogant. (p. 116 - 117)[64] He has a strong sense of pride and a desire to distinguish himself. He carries out dangerous missions successfully. He seeks advancement and the admiration of his superiors and his peers, but he has no respect for his comrades-in-arms or supposed friends. The only people for whom he feels affection are his mother and crippled sister. Dolokhov's heroism is a performance, a pursuit of self-interest, and an expression of ego that fails to cultivate lasting respect or inspire true loyalty.

We first encounter him prior to the Battle of Austerlitz, having been degraded to the ranks for some offense, in a military parade. A friend offers to give him whatever he may need. He replies he will *take* whatever he needs. (p. 123)[65] He calls attention to himself and tells Kutuzov of his desire to distinguish himself. Kutuzov is unimpressed. (p. 119)[66]

In private life, he casually humiliates Pierre Bezukhov, leading to a nearly fatal duel. (p. 320 - 322)[67] He lures his supposedly close friend, Nicholas Rostov, into a card game, in which Nicholas suffers a ruinous loss. (p. 355 -357)[68] He abets Anatole Kuragin's attempt to seduce and ruin Natasha Rostova. (p. 620 - 624)[69]. It is implied that he has a grudge against the Rostovs because Sonya rejected him in favor of Nicholas. (p. 350)[70]

Napoleon's invasion of Russia finds Dolokhov once again degraded to the ranks and trying to ingratiate himself with Kutuzov. (p. 820)[71] He also tries to reconcile with Pierre – whether sincerely or not is unclear. (p. 821)[72]

During Napoleon's retreat, Dolokhov and Vasily Denisov are in command of guerrilla bands who harass the retreating French troops. Dolokhov, but not Denisov, executes all French prisoners.

Fifteen-year-old Petra Rostov, Nicholas' younger brother, turns up. He has joined the army as a cadet against his family's wishes and is delivering a message. (p. 1110 -1111)[73] He is inspired by dreams of glory and risks his life unnecessarily. He delivers a message ordering Dolokhov and Denisov to rejoin the main forces. The two commanders decide to attack on their own instead, and allow Petra to join them in return for him pretending the message was not delivered on time.

The night before the attack, Dolokhov takes Petra with him on a dangerous mission behind French lines in French uniform, highly dangerous to both of them. They get back safely, due to Dolokhov's steely courage. During the attack the

---

[64]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[65] Ibid
[66]Ibid
[67]Ibid
[68]Ibid
[69]Ibid
[70]Ibid
[71]Ibid
[72]Ibid
[73]Ibid

following morning, Denisov tells Petra to hold back, but he doesn't and is killed, another victim of the dream of glory. Dolokhov says he is "done for" twice, in a tone "as if the utterance of these words afforded him pleasure." (p. 1128 - 1130)[74].

Ayn Rand might have approved of some aspects of Feodor Dolokhov. Rand might approve of his independence and strength. She wrote: "Independence is the recognition of the fact that yours is the responsibility of judgment and nothing can help you escape it—that no substitute can do your thinking, as no pinch-hitter can live your life—that the vilest form of self-abasement and self-destruction is the subordination of your mind to the mind of another, the acceptance of an authority over your brain, the acceptance of his assertions as facts, his say-so as truth, his edicts as middle-man between your consciousness and your existence."[75]

Dolokhov's unwavering sense of pride and honor and his willingness to take risks showcase a strength and independence that aligns with Rand's ideal.

Dolokhov's skills as a soldier demonstrate a level of competence Rand admires in her heroes who achieve their goals through reason and ability. Her hero Howard Roark says: "No. I hate incompetence. I think it's probably the only thing I do hate. But it didn't make me want to rule people. Nor to teach them anything. It made me want to do my own work in my own way and let myself be torn to pieces if necessary. (p.470) …Just weakness and cowardice. It's so easy to run to others. It's so hard to stand on one's own record. You can fake virtue for an audience. You can't fake it in your own eyes. Your ego is the strictest judge. They run from it. They spend their lives running. It's easier to donate a few thousand to charity and think oneself noble than to base self-respect on personal standards of personal achievement. It's simple to seek substitutes for competence—such easy substitutes: love, charm, kindness, charity. But there is no substitute for competence." (p.539).[76]

But she would reject Dolokhov's destructiveness (605) "The first right on earth is the right of the ego. Man's first duty is to himself. His moral law is never to place his prime goal within the persons of others. His moral obligation is to do what he wishes, provided his wish does not depend primarily upon other men. This includes the whole sphere of his creative faculty, his thinking, and his work. But it does not include the sphere of the gangster, the altruist, and the dictator. .. A man thinks and works alone. A man cannot rob, exploit, or rule--alone. Robbery, exploitation, and ruling presuppose victims. They imply dependence. They are the province of the second-hander"[77] Dolokhov's actions, particularly his vengeful pursuit of the Rostovs, are driven by a destructive force that goes against Rand's emphasis on creation and achieving happiness through life-affirming actions. Dolokhov's manipulative tactics, such as his gambling scheme to take advantage of Nicholas Rostov, contradict Rand's vision of a hero who achieves success through their own merit and honest actions. By examining Dolokhov's character through the lens of

---

[74]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983

[75]Ayn Rand For the New Intellectual: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand, New York, Random House, [1961], p.128

[76]THE FOUNTAINHEAD by Ayn Rand. Copyright (c) 1943 The Bobbs-Merrill Company Copyright (c) renewed 1971 by Ayn Rand. New York, New York 10022.

[77]THE FOUNTAINHEAD by Ayn Rand. Copyright (c) 1943 The Bobbs-Merrill Company Copyright (c) renewed 1971 by Ayn Rand. New York, New York 10022.

these quotes from her works, we can see how he embodies some of the traits Rand values because he is for himself, he asks nothing from others and he stands by and allows others to suffer the consequences of their decisions, but he ultimately falls short due to his destructive tendencies and manipulative behavior.

Captain Tushin and Other Unsung Heroes

Captain Tushin, an artillery officer, represents the often-overlooked heroism of ordinary soldiers. In 1805, during the retreat from Vienna, his battery alone held back the French and allowed the Russian army to escape in good order.

An infantry general and a cavalry colonel retreat, leaving Tushin without support. But Tushin himself fails to receive the order to retreat and is left to face the enemy alone.

In the face of enemy fire and overwhelming chaos, he displays calmness and unwavering determination. His focus is on fulfilling his duty and ensuring the safety of his men. He takes the advice of his sergeants. He inspires loyalty not through fear, but through his genuine concern and steady leadership. (p. 197-200)[78]

It was Captain Tushin who saved the day, while the general and colonel nearly caused a disaster. But they nearly steal the credit due to Tushin because the boastful pair more nearly fit the image of macho warriors. Only Prince Andrew's intervention saves him from a reprimand for losing a cannon. (p. 206)[79] It never occurs to Tushin that he might be a hero. He embodies the quiet courage and selflessness that Tolstoy identifies as true heroism. (p. 203-206)[80]

Two generals, Dimitry Dokhturov and Priotr Konovnitsyn, also represent Tolstoy's ideal of servant leadership. They are brave and always at the forefront of the action. They follow orders without hesitation or complaint and never call attention to themselves. Consequently, they are virtually unknown to history. They are, in Tolstoy's words, "unnoticed cogwheels, which, without clatter or noise, constitute the most essential part of the machine." (p. 1094)[81]

Then there is the peasant soldier, Tihon Shtcherbatov, recruited into a guerrilla band that harasses Napoleon's retreating troops. Like Dokhturov and Konovnitsyn, he is always at the forefront of the action and never claims any special credit. Tolstoy wrote, "When anything particularly disagreeable or revolting had to be done—to put one's shoulder to a wagon stuck in the mud, to drag a horse out of a bog by the tail, to flay a horse, to creep into the midst of the French, to walk fifty versts in a day—everyone laughed and asked Tihon to do it. … Tihon was the bravest and most useful man of the lot. No one discovered so many opportunities for attack, no one captured or killed so many Frenchmen. And consequently, he was the favorite

---

[78]Leo Tolstoy *War and Peace*. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[79]Ibid
[80]Ibid
[81]Ibid

subject of all the gibes of the Cossacks and the hussars, and readily fell in with the position." (p. 1113)[82]

A counterexample is an anecdote told to Nicholas Rostov, about a general who personally attacked the enemy, along with his two sons, in order to inspire the troops. Nicholas' reaction is scorn for a man who would risk his sons' lives for a pointless gesture. (p. 690-691)[83]

Pierre Bezukhov and Platon Karataev

Pierre Bezukhov is a civilian who is fascinated by war. He comes to visit the Russian army and his friend Andrew Bolkonsky and view the battle of Borodino as a spectator. When he sees the battlefield from afar, with men marching and cannons giving off puffs of smoke, it seems picturesque. He falls in with an artillery company, where he is treated as a mascot.

A bombardment begins. An artilleryman who asked Pierre why he wasn't afraid is killed himself. A Frenchman has his head blown off in front of Pierre. The once picturesque landscape is covered with the dead and maimed. Pierre wonders why such horrors are allowed to continue. (p. 849 - 855)[84]

He looks for glory and meaning in life by staying behind in Moscow in 1812 to assassinate Napoleon, whom he had come to regard as literally the Anti-Christ. As Tolstoy points out, he is temperamentally incapable of doing so. In Tolstoy's words, he "was tortured – as those are who obstinately undertake a task that is impossible for them not because of its difficulty but because of its incompatibility with their natures – by the fear of weakening at the decisive moment and so losing his self-esteem." (p. 983)[85]

Instead, he impulsively intervenes to protect a woman from abuse by French soldiers and is taken prisoner. (p. 994 - 996)[86] Forced to accompany the French on their death march out of Russia, he endures hardships equivalent to the hardships of the ordinary soldier. He meets the wise peasant conscript soldier, Platon Karataev, and learns from him how to live from day to day, taking things as they come, enduring hardship without complaint, and appreciating life itself as a blessing.

Tolstoy wrote that Pierre "had learned … that there is nothing in the world that is terrible. He had learned that just as there is no condition in which a man can be happy and perfectly free, so too there was no position in which he need be unhappy and not free. He had learned that suffering and freedom have their limits and that those limits are very near together; that the person in a bed of roses with one crumpled petal, suffered as keenly as he now, sleeping on the bare, damp earth, with one side getting chilled while the other was warming; and that when he

---

[82]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[83]Ibid
[84]Ibid
[85]Ibid
[86]Ibid

had put on tight dancing shoes, he suffered just as he did now, when with bare feet that were covered with sores – his footgear having long since fallen to pieces. He discovered that when he had married his wife —of his own free will, as it had seemed to him – he had been no more free than now when they locked him up for the night in a stable…" (p. 1132)[87]

Tolstoy goes on, "After the second day's march, Pierre, having examined his blisters by the camp-fire, thought it would be impossible to walk on them; but when everybody got up, he went along, limping, and later on, when he had warmed up, he walked without feeling the pain, though at night his feet were more terrible to look at than before. But he did not look at them and thought of other things." (p. 1133)[88]

Platon Karataev shows Pierre by example how to live in adversity. He is courageous, resourceful, and cheerful despite danger and hardship. He never complains and is never downhearted. (p. 1034-1040, 1132-1134)[89]

He makes no plans, has no expectations, and is never disappointed. He has the kind of impartial love for everyone and everything that Andrew achieved only when he was on the brink of death. He shows how to be grateful for life itself when things are at their worst.

He follows the hard teachings of Jesus. He loves his enemies (or rather does not recognize enemies), has no permanent possessions, shares what little he has, and does not condemn others' behavior. Pierre is the only one among his companions who recognizes his qualities.

Tolstoy does not tell us whether Karataev was ever on a battlefield or how he came to be a prisoner, but it is impossible to imagine that he would kill to avoid being killed. A Karataev and a Dolokhov would be incomprehensible to each other.

Beyond the Battlefield: Tolstoy's Redefined Heroism

By weaving together, the stories of these characters, Tolstoy deconstructs the traditional concept of heroism. He emphasizes that true heroes are not defined by grand gestures, military victories, or a thirst for glory. They are the individuals who display quiet courage, empathy, a commitment to a greater purpose, and the will to do what is right. They are the soldiers who fulfill their duty with unwavering resolve, the leaders who inspire through compassion and wisdom, and the individuals who strive to make a positive impact on the world around them. War and Peace compels us to look beyond the battlefield and celebrate the unsung heroes who face adversity with strength, resilience, and a commitment to doing what is right.

This redefined heroism extends even to the civilian population. When the Rostov family prepares to flee Moscow, Natasha Rostova tells them to leave behind their furniture and valuables and transport the wounded to safety. This sheltered young

---

[87] Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[88] Ibid
[89] Ibid

woman then takes responsibility for caring for the wounded. Characters like Natasha Rostova, who displays remarkable emotional strength and selflessness in the face of personal loss, and the Rostov family as a whole, who sacrifice their possessions to help those displaced by the war, exemplify the heroism of resilience and compassion that thrives even amidst the chaos.

The Flawed Hero and the Moral Compass

Tolstoy further blurs the lines of heroism by presenting characters with both admirable and flawed qualities. Pierre Bezukhov, despite his journey of self-discovery, remains a somewhat naive figure prone to impulsive decisions. Similarly, Andrew Bolkonsky's transformation is gradual and marked by moments of bitterness. However, their willingness to learn, grow, and act with moral integrity ultimately defines their heroism in Tolstoy's eyes.

The Absence of Heroes: The Power of the Collective

In some instances, Tolstoy suggests that heroism may not be embodied by a single individual, but rather emerges from the collective spirit. The soldiers on the battlefield, despite experiencing fear and facing unimaginable hardship, find strength in their shared experience and unwavering loyalty to their country. Their collective determination to defend their country and resist the enemy is a powerful form of heroism. Even though they are ravaged by hunger and disease, they are brave and loyal. Tolstoy shows the horror and senselessness of war in granular detail. But he also shows his pride in the courage and patriotism of what he always calls "our" troops.

Conclusion: A Tapestry of Heroism

In our inquiry into the thematic underpinnings of heroism, as depicted within Leo Tolstoy's seminal work, War and Peace, we embarked upon a multifaceted journey, traversing the challenging narratives of a diverse ensemble cast. Through a careful examination of the lives and deeds of pivotal figures such as Napoleon Bonaparte, Mikhail Kutuzov, Andrew Bolkonsky, Nicholas Rostov, Feodor Dolokhov, Captain Tushin, Pierre Bezukhov, and Platon Karataev, we have undertaken a deconstruction of the traditional conception of heroism.

Tolstoy, in his masterful narrative, transcends the conventional portrayal of heroes as mere victors on the battlefield. Instead, he threads together a rich tapestry of heroism that extends beyond the realms of glory and conquest. Through his meticulous characterizations and profound philosophical and ethical reflections, Tolstoy invites us to discern heroism in its myriad forms—be it the strategic acumen of a military commander, the moral integrity of an idealist, or the simple acts of compassion exhibited by everyday individuals amidst the chaos of war.

Our scholarly discourse has not been confined solely to Tolstoy's great novel; rather, it has been enriched by a comprehensive survey of pertinent literature, augmenting our understanding of the profound philosophical, social, and ethical currents that underpin Tolstoy's exploration of heroism. Through this interdisciplinary approach, we have illuminated the symbiotic relationship between Tolstoy's philosophical and ethical musings and the complex realities of human existence.

Central to Tolstoy's thesis is the assertion that true heroism transcends the ephemeral glories of warfare, finding its apotheosis in the quiet fortitude and unwavering compassion of ordinary individuals confronting extraordinary challenges. As we peel back the layers of Tolstoy's narrative, we are confronted with a profound existential inquiry—one that impels us to reevaluate our preconceived notions of heroism and to embrace a more expansive and inclusive understanding thereof.

War and Peace, in its profound meditation on the nature of heroism, serves as a clarion call for a paradigm shift—a recalibration of our collective consciousness towards a more holistic appreciation of human virtue. Through Tolstoy's magnum opus, we are beckoned to recognize heroism not as the exclusive domain of the valorous few, but as an intrinsic facet of the human condition—an indomitable spirit that perseveres in the face of adversity, and a beacon of hope that illuminates the darkest recesses of the human soul.

In conclusion, Tolstoy's War and Peace stands as a testament to the enduring power of literature to transcend temporal boundaries and illuminate the universal truths that bind humanity together. Through its complex portrayal of heroism, Tolstoy beckons us to embark upon a transformative journey—one that leads us from the narrow confines of conventional wisdom to the boundless expanses of human empathy and understanding. As we bid adieu to the hallowed halls of Tolstoy's literary universe, let us carry forth the torch of enlightenment—fueled by the indomitable spirit of heroism that beats within each and every one of us.

References

Tolstoy L (1983) *War & Peace,* Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Clifford, Oxford University Press,1983,1344p.

Levi A W (1956) The Idea of Socrates: The Philosophic Hero in the Nineteenth Century. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *17*(1), 89–108. https://doi.org/10.2307/2707 687

Schefski H K (1995) Tolstoi's Vindication of General Kutuzov as Subtext in "War and Peace." *Russian History*, *22*(1), 79–90. http://www. jstor.org/ stable/24657832

Ungurianu D (2000). Visions and Versions of History: Veterans of 1812 on Tolstoy's War and Peace. *The Slavic and East European Journal*, *44*(1), 48–63. https://doi.org/10.2307/30 9627

Seinen N (2009) Kutuzov's Victory, Prokofiev's Defeat: The Revisions of "War and Peace." *Music & Letters*, *90*(3), 399–431. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40539031

Collins I (1986). Variations on the Theme of Napoleon's Moscow Campaign. *History*, *71*(231), 39–53. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24412016

Greenleaf R K, Senge P M, Covey S R, Spears L C (2002) *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. Vol Twenty-fifth anniversary edition.

Paulist Press; 2002. Accessed June 13, 2024. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezaccess. Libraries.psu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=587729&site=ehost-live& scope=site

Mikaberidze A (2022) *Kutuzov: A Life in War and Peace* (New York, 2022; online ed, Oxford Academic, 18 Aug. 2022), https://doi-org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/10.1093/oso/97801 97546734.001.0001, accessed 13 June 2024.

Cooke B (2014) *War and Peace*. Salem Press, 2014. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/lo gin.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=779889&site=ehost-live&scope=site.