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Notes

Introduction

- 1 Bergner (1998: 73, 79–80).
- 2 For example, Ayer (1947).
- 3 I have in mind Wittgenstein and Rorty in particular. The latter, by arranging it so that after his death a sociologist (Gross 2008) would dissect his philosophical life and thought into a series of career moves (concerning prospects for promotion, spotting a niche to make it into the world of public intellectuals, etc.) made his ultimate anti-philosophical statement. In this way, he bettered Wittgenstein. Attempts to make philosophy more like science have been a more reticent – and thereby more influential – part of the same trend.
- 4 An excellent survey is provided by David Cooper (2003), who would not make this objection.
- 5 I shall later say ‘overall purpose’; simply as a safeguard against possible misunderstandings.
- 6 You then have to check if the keys are really where you think, but it is the best possible start.
- 7 I have in mind the influence this idea seems to have had on eugenicists in late nineteenth-century France; see Hecht (2003). The idea was morally salvaged by Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl, whose highly influential *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Frankl 1946) became the founding document of empirical psychology’s interest in attributions of social meaningfulness.
- 8 Polybius (second century BC: 441).
- 9 With the conflation in place, you might unthinkingly assume that if nihilism is true, then there can be no social meaning. But nihilism is obviously unable to prevent us from engaging in the activities we value. I shall discuss the related but more sophisticated worry that accepting nihilism might spoil our attitude to life in Chapter 2.
- 10 It might be argued that since our standards of good and bad come from within life, then this provides the contrast. But there are both good and bad things within life. And anyway, when we are not using these standards to think about how life would be if it did have a meaning, it is not clear that comparisons make sense. It would be odd to say that nihilism is good compared to murder, or bad compared to charity, for instance.
- 11 I think that fear of decay, loss and death, which I take to be fairly common (especially among philosophers), has an intimate connection with the hope that reality has a good meaning that extends beyond physical life. I also think that anger at injustice plays a role for some people. But fear (or anger) obviously provides no evidence for believing in such a meaning, and the related worry that it might matter what we think (‘if you don’t believe it, you won’t get it’) displays concern with a more particular – and thus even less likely – kind of possibility; albeit one deeply rooted in our history. It is a fear that does not impress me: ‘whaddya gonna do?’, as Tony Soprano would say. But still, I can see the selfish appeal of a well-timed deathbed conversion, when madness would not matter to you.

- 12 Quine (1975).
- 13 Jackson (1982); Searle (1992: 118). The best I could do for physicalism was presented in my 'Conceptualizing Physical Consciousness' (Tartaglia 2013), which was the belated final product of my PhD (2001). I am afraid to say that by the time I had perfected it (a valuable process) I had long since ceased to believe in it: I will never do anything like that again.
- 14 Moore (2012: 589–90); see also p. 579. I think Moore is right to make this concession, but for much stronger reasons than he gives. For it seems to me that you cannot have metaphysics without the concept of transcendence; whether transcendence itself is being affirmed or denied (perhaps only implicitly).
- 15 This argument comes out most clearly in Moore's criticism of Kant; see Moore (2012: 141).
- 16 For why it is important for philosophy to regain cultural influence, see Chapter 8.
- 17 Murphy (2010: 137); for a similar example, see Morris (1992: 50). To find out just how terribly bad nihilism can be thought to be, see Casey (2004) or Metz (2013: 152).
- 18 Camus (1942: 53); Klemke (2008: 193).
- 19 Kauppinen (2012: 345–6, 352).
- 20 Kekes (2000: 30); Edwards (1967: 127); Kauppinen (2012: 361); Metz (2013: 5) (though he never returns to say it, by the end of his book we can safely assume that Metz thinks Hitler's life was worse than meaningless; it had *negative* meaning).
- 21 Kekes (1986) and (2000); Edwards (1967: 127) (see also p. 125, where 'meaning' and 'zest' are equated). See Taylor (1970) for a similar view.
- 22 For example, Levy (2005); Pritchard (2010); Metz (2013). For the origins of this idea, see Ayer (1947) and Nagel (1971) (the latter is discussed in Chapter 2).
- 23 Wolf (1997); see also Wolf (2010).
- 24 Oakley (2010).
- 25 Tolstoy (1880).
- 26 To spell this out, if judgements about the presence of meaning are fallible, then judgements about its absence must be too; if we are judging the same thing. To say that we can both fallibly judge that our life lacks meaning (when it subjectively engages us) or infallibly judge the same thing (when it does not), shows that the judgement must have a different basis in each case. The basis of the latter judgement can only be seeming meaninglessness (construed as subjective engagement). But then, only a purely subjective criterion of actual meaningfulness could motivate making seeming meaningfulness a necessary condition on actual meaningfulness. Mixed theorists think they are rejecting any such criterion, but they are actually just incoherently combining it with an objective one; the incoherence only reveals itself in the limiting case where only the subjective criterion counts, because otherwise it is trumped by the objective condition. The analogy with perception breaks down because perception representationally graduates with the world it represents, but engagement with meaning graduates both with the world and our attitude to the world; between X being '(maximally) worth doing' and '(maximally) not worth doing'. Thus if your conscious state is not of the appropriate subjective kind for accurate perception, there is either no perception, the perception is misleading, or we might perhaps retreat to the notion of unconscious perception. If it does not consciously seem that I am perceiving a tree, then, this rules out my perceiving a tree unless we can say that what I take to be a lamppost is really a tree I am (mis)perceiving, or that I am unconsciously perceiving a tree. But social meaning cannot be a similar kind of state, because conscious disengagement rules out meaning: it cannot be that your state is misleadingly or unconsciously directed upon a meaningful life. That this is ruled out makes it clear that

in the infallible cases (those to which the objective condition is irrelevant), it is only the conscious component that is being analysed, that is, seeming meaninglessness. And that the mixed account is incoherently and inconsistently treating seeming meaninglessness as the sole criterion of actual meaninglessness in these cases.

- 27 I can think of other plausible options; but these are enough for present purposes.
- 28 Oakley (2010); Brogaard and Smith (2005: 455, 444).
- 29 For example, Steger, Kawabata, Shimai and Otake (2008); Mason (2013).
- 30 Kauppinen (2013) is a very rare exception.
- 31 This is not to deny that there might be philosophically interesting things to say about social meaning in these senses; I am just saying that they require no further explication. For instance, maybe what is morally bad about some forms of deception is best understood as deceiving people about the social meaning of their lives, as I have recently (2015) heard J. J. Valberg argue. But I have discovered nothing similarly interesting in the literature reviewed here.
- 32 Wiggins (1976: 377–8). Perhaps Wiggins's warning was too abstruse. But Steven Cahn's succinct response to Wolf's influential preaching really should have put an end to this kind of thing (Cahn 2006). Cahn relies heavily on rhetorical questions to express his exasperation and incredulity; nothing else should have been required.
- 33 Metz (2013: 249).
- 34 Metz (2013: 146–7, 234). Nozick once toyed with this idea in passing (Nozick 1974: 50) but had enough sense not to pursue it.
- 35 Metz (2013: 165, 231, 149, 217).
- 36 Metz (2013: 91–3, 171–2, 247–8).
- 37 Nozick (1981: 571–619); Nozick (1989: 162–9).
- 38 Nozick (1981: 606, 609, 610).
- 39 Nozick (1981: 610).
- 40 Cooper (2003: 126–30, 133, 140); see also Cooper (2002) and (2005).
- 41 Cottingham (2003: 100).
- 42 Seachris (2013); Mintoff (2008: 68).
- 43 I discovered his work in summer 2014 and was amazed at how Munitzian a book I had written.
- 44 Munitz (1986: 19, 282). Munitz sometimes expresses his message about social meaning in an unnecessarily ambiguous manner (Munitz 1993: 113); but nevertheless his position is clear enough.
- 45 Waghorn (2014).

Chapter 1

- 1 Bradley (1893: 148).
- 2 Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Kelly think that meanings which we make up can have no authority over us (2011: 142). When they are largely the imagination creations of individuals, they have a point, since the framework may make them practically unsustainable; although Don Quixote did rather well against the odds. But when society consents to them, they can become integral to our engagement with the framework, which is the most authority they can have.
- 3 Breathing is an interestingly ambiguous case: for it is typically automatic, but can be controlled. This, I think, accounts for the interest taken in it within Eastern philosophies and religions.

- 4 Heidegger (1927a: 239, 167); Sartre (1943: 59); Foucault (1977: 119).
- 5 To view something 'objectively' is to view it in terms of our conception of what it actually is; a conception which aspires to rational communal assent. Thus a goal might seem valuable to me, but when I look at it objectively I may conclude that it ought not to; because it is not actually valuable. Our attempts to view the world objectively ultimately lead back to the spatial conception of existence I call 'objective thought'; see Chapter 4.
- 6 This way of looking at the world is rather reminiscent of the 'truth-taking stare' of schizophrenics described by Louis Sass (Sass 1992: chapter 2). Sass's extraordinary book draws fascinating parallels between, on the one hand, the beliefs of people with schizoid personalities and full-blown schizophrenics, and on the other hand, philosophy and modern art. He often toys with the idea that philosophy is infected with madness, and thereby devalued (especially when discussing Fichte and Derrida), but in the end is frustratingly evasive about this. His real agenda comes from the opposite direction, namely to show that schizophrenia has been misunderstood as a kind of primitive irrationality.
- 7 Heidegger (1929: 87 ff.); Heidegger (1938: 59 ff).
- 8 Heidegger (1938: 77).
- 9 Heidegger (1927a: 98).
- 10 Heidegger (1927a: 233).
- 11 This claim will be qualified when we discuss Heidegger's conception of time in Chapter 6, Section 2, which will supplement and complete the argument of this present section.
- 12 Heidegger (1927a: 435) (for a parallel view see Bradley 1914: chapter 26); Gadamer (1960: 277).
- 13 Heidegger (1929: 87–8; 1927a: 395).
- 14 After my son (5) has finished his cornflakes, and I have put a slice of bread into the electric toaster for him, he often asks: 'what can I do while I'm waiting for my toast?'
- 15 Perhaps adult boredom can be just as intense, and even take pathological forms; but I am inclined to agree with Peter Toohey that such views may simply result from mixing it up with depression (Toohey 2011: 188). I disagree with Toohey, however, when he draws a radical distinction between 'simple' and 'existential' boredom (*ibid.*: 6; chapters 3 and 4). Even if he is right that the latter notion has been applied to a number of distinct conditions – such as depression – there is still a unifying core to it. And this core, namely disengagement from the framework and the exposure to nihilism it provides, is on a continuum with simple boredom. Boredom can be useful in detaching us from mindless or overly familiar framework goals, and it can also lead into philosophical reflection. But these are just different uses it can be put to, and their metaphysical root is the same. So I disagree with the central thesis of Toohey's book that boredom should not be rendered 'alarmingly significant by endowing it with philosophical accoutrements' (*ibid.*: 190).
- 16 Heidegger (1938: 74–174).
- 17 For an interesting survey of scientific accounts of the mechanisms underlying time perception, see Hammond (2013).
- 18 Heidegger (1938: 118, 126).
- 19 Heidegger (1938: 138); cf. Schopenhauer (1844a: 313).
- 20 Heidegger (1938: 165); cf. Heidegger (1927a: 394).
- 21 Schopenhauer (1844b: 576; 1844a: 312, 164–5).
- 22 Schopenhauer (1844a: 380).
- 23 Wittgenstein (1921: 6.44); Heidegger (1949: 386).

- 24 Adolf Grünbaum thinks that the question owes its appeal to the religiously motivated assumption – which he rejects – that nothingness is the natural state of affairs (see Holt 2012: 69ff.). But as Derek Parfit points out, nothingness would demand an explanation just as much as any particular something (Parfit 2011: 647–8).
- 25 Leibniz (1714: 258ff.).
- 26 Non-existence for no reason might be similarly puzzling.
- 27 Kant (1787: B534).
- 28 Anyone who suspects there are more substantive options on the table for making sense of the fact of existence would do well to read Jim Holt's *Why Does the World Exist?* Holt does a brilliant job of surveying the leading authorities on this question, from science and philosophy, and of refusing – armed with some philosophical acuity and a lot of common sense – to accept the very poor answers he is offered; the most sensible of the scientists and philosophers acknowledge the answers are poor. The best the scientists can hope to offer, as Holt realizes, is an account showing that 'the laws describing the regularities inside the world are incompatible with the nonexistence of that world' (Holt 2012: 162–3), which does not address the question of why there is a world in which these laws hold. While the best the philosophers can do – if they aspire to address the question head-on, as those Holt focuses on mainly do – is to appeal to pure possibility, and suppose that a certain kind of possibility actualized itself. Thus in Derek Parfit's terms, there are possible 'selectors' – such as being maximally good, or part of the fullest way reality can be, or existing in accordance with the simplest laws – which could be sufficient for actuality. Parfit concedes that we must accept the 'highest selector' as a brute fact (Parfit 2011: 645), but the real problem which prevents this approach from answering the question, is that it requires us to accept an inexplicable transition from possibility to actuality; saying that whichever selector governs the transition would be a 'fundamental truth' or 'the single highest law' (ibid.: 636, 645) simply underlines this inexplicability. For the question was never *which* possibility is capable of actualizing itself, but rather *how* the mere possibility of something existing could make it exist. Basic physical laws can explain why something happens given pre-existing conditions because the conditions have causal power, but pure possibility lacks this. The only flaw to Holt's book is that he has little time for the positions of Kant and Wittgenstein, which he classifies as 'rejectionist' (Holt 2012: 29). While I agree with Holt's criticisms of Kant (ibid.: 48, 82), I think Kant nevertheless provided the basic insight required for a fully satisfying answer to Holt's question, which Wittgenstein's reflections on staying within our language-games to some extent supplement; and I do not think this answer requires us to hold that 'the very question is meaningless' (ibid.: 29). The answer I favour will become apparent in the second half of this book, and I will briefly return to this question in the final chapter, by which point my answer will require minimal explanation.
- 29 Rosen (2009); an exception to this consensus is Megill (1985: 34) (who is misled, I think, by Nietzsche's comments on 'active' nihilism); Reginster (2006: 7 [also 51], 21). That Nietzsche's most extensive discussions of nihilism are found in his posthumously published notes is a mixed blessing: it generates doubts about whether these were his considered views, of course, but he writes much more candidly than he often saw fit to in his published books.
- 30 Nietzsche (1883–8: 3–4, 18). Reginster, whose interpretation I otherwise follow in this section, reads the former passage slightly differently; (Reginster 2006: 52). For the 'destiny' claim, see Nietzsche (1888b).
- 31 Reginster (2006: 28ff); Nietzsche (1882: 279); Nietzsche (1883–8: 318, 17–18).
- 32 Nietzsche (1888a: 121); Nietzsche (1883–8: 12–14, 253).
- 33 Nietzsche (1883–8: 319); Reginster (2006: 50, chapter 4).

- 34 Before Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky (1880: 753) voiced this highly influential ‘anything goes’ thought through one of his characters: “Only how,” I asked, “is man to fare after that? Without God and without a life to come? After all, that would mean that now all things are lawful, that one may do anything one likes.”
- 35 Cf. Parfit (2011: 587ff).
- 36 Fichte (1800: 20).
- 37 This point was well-expressed by McTaggart (1909). Rationality brings us to nihilism, but once nihilism is grasped we recognize that we do not have to be rational. However, nihilism leaves open the possibility that there are things in life we have to do if we want to be rational – as many moral philosophers have supposed – just as there may be things we have to do if we want to be happy, or to achieve political office, for instance. Irrationality is typically a matter of indifference to evidence (‘the pyramids were built by aliens’), indifference to argument (‘it doesn’t matter what you say, I’ll still believe it’), or both.

Chapter 2

- 1 James (1896: 61).
- 2 Sartre (1943: 626).
- 3 Lin-Chi (ninth century: 31). Similar advice arises in Ikkyū: ‘In this world we eat, we shit, we sleep and we wake up – and after all that all we have to do is die’ (fifteenth century: 204).
- 4 Nagel (1971: 55).
- 5 Nagel (1971: 56).
- 6 Nagel (1971: 55).
- 7 Nagel (1986: 216, 210; 1971: 57).
- 8 Nagel’s paper has caused considerable confusion. It has led some to think that if our lives are absurd, then they are meaningless (Pritchard 2010), and others to use ‘absurd’ and ‘meaningless’ interchangeably (Morris 1992: 49ff.; Kauppinen 2012: 355). For a refreshing exception, see Metz (2013: 6).
- 9 Camus (1942: 32, 34, 98).
- 10 Cf. Nagel (1971: 53).
- 11 Cf. Valberg (2007: 91ff.).
- 12 For present purposes, the concept of transcendence we are employing can be left at an intuitive level reliant upon examples; but we shall be in a position to clarify it in Chapter 5.
- 13 Sartre (1938: 188); see Toohey (2011: 125) on the title of Sartre’s novel.
- 14 Wittgenstein (1921: 6.41).
- 15 Valberg (2007: chapter 1).
- 16 Chuang Tzu (fourth century BC: 43).
- 17 Santayana (1940: 505). See also Nozick (1981: 599).
- 18 Thaddeus Metz spends considerable time arguing against philosophers who fail to imagine the enormity of a transcendent hypothesis of meaning (2013: chapters 6–8). His main objection to ‘supernaturalism’ is that it is ‘incoherent’, because ‘we do not know whether anything spiritual exists but we do know that meaningfulness exists’ (ibid.: 158). However the social meaning he has in mind is attributed within life, whereas transcendent meaning would accrue to life in virtue of its existence within a wider context of meaning. Since these might not coincide, it is perfectly coherent for the supernaturalist to suppose that our lives have social meaning even though we

- do not know whether they also have wider meaning. The problem Metz identifies could only arise for a supernaturalist who believes that social meaning is conferred by a wider context. But even then, the position is not incoherent if construed as the hypothesis that what we regard as meaningful is made so by the wider context. Metz's problem only arises for a supernaturalist who regards our judgements of meaning as both infallible and conferred by a wider context. But any supernaturalist who grasps the enormity of the transcendent hypothesis will reject this combination of views.
- 19 This is no good reason to believe in transcendent meaning because our richest conception of reality – from which all our reasoning derives – is objective thought (Chapter 5, esp. Section 6); and objective thought supports nihilism (Chapter 1). Moreover the reasons I shall later provide for denying that objective thought provides our metaphysical criterion of reality have no bearing on nihilism, except to hold open the idle possibility that it is false (Chapter 8, Section 1). (I see no tension between this and my talk of nihilism as a 'fact' and of its 'truth', since there are many things we hold to be facts which nevertheless might not be. Moreover, if my transcendent hypothesis of Chapter 5 is false, then we are back with objective thought, so that would not undermine talk of nihilism as a 'fact'.) Nevertheless, there are many philosophers who think there are good reasons to believe in God. I have nothing much to add to this ancient debate, except to note that the metaphysical theory developed in the second half of this book provides good reason to be suspicious about any kind of cosmological argument (which strike me as considerably more plausible than any other kind of argument in this area). Nevertheless, those who think there is good reason to believe in a wider context of meaning – or have faith in one – may still discover much they find conducive in what follows (albeit obviously not the nihilism). For I argue that there is an important sense in which religious belief evidences more philosophical acumen than atheism (*ceteris paribus*).
 - 20 Metz, as we saw in the introduction, thinks this notion of meaning has an exact content which provides a positive appraisal (so not *just* social impact), but which is distinct from notions such as morally good or happy (2013: 3–6). However his methodology (testing his intuitions against everything he can possibly find in recent philosophy to construe as a theory of what makes life socially meaningful) soon wanders from this motivating presupposition, since he has no qualms about including authors discussing a 'good and worthwhile life' or the 'value of a life', for instance (ibid.: 150, 187).
 - 21 Metz (2013: 242–4) argues that it is 'incoherent' to argue for nihilism on the basis that there is no wider context of meaning, because the nihilist is both rejecting a 'supernaturalist' conception of meaning and using it to judge that life is meaningless. This line of reasoning is confused, however, because the nihilist does not reject the *concept* of wider meaning: it is evidently widespread, largely because people have recognized that only wider meaning could make life meaningful. Rather, the nihilist denies that reality satisfies this concept. There is nothing incoherent, after all, in an atheist supposing that only a god could save us: the atheist does not believe that there are any gods and so does not think we can be saved. Note that there is no conflict between this response to Metz, and my earlier response to Nagel and Camus, because although only a wider context of meaning could make life meaningful, there is no good reason to think that only a wider context of meaning could make life important enough to be worth taking seriously (and hence not absurd); the latter requires a value judgement which only makes sense from a religious perspective, whereas the former does not.
 - 22 Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Kelly have their own suggestion for how we ought to live, although they do not think that is what it is. This is to cultivate *physis* and *poiesis* (2011:

chapter 7). The former, which in my terms is the kind of complete immersion in the framework which makes thoughts of nihilism all but inconceivable, they graphically describe as 'whooshing up' (ibid.: 200). We experience this phenomenon in sport, music, political rallies, sexual encounters and wars. The latter, which they adopt from Heidegger to provide a more gentle counterpoint to the whooshing that mainly inspires them, is exemplified by the craftsman who skilfully responds to each job on an individual basis, with respect for and knowledge of his local environment. And of course, we are perfectly free to follow their advice: we can actively seek out situations which carry us away, take up carpentry, hold tea ceremonies, and so on. While these activities engage us, nihilism will never cross our minds, as it doubtless does not cross the minds of peasants struggling to survive and soldiers fighting wars; at least not during the day. But nihilism is still true even when we are so engrossed we cannot notice it, and we are equally free to do the things Dreyfus and Kelly disapprove of instead, such as set the GPS and just drive, or fiddle with our phones. It seems to me, in fact, that they have the significance of new technology exactly upside down, since it is nihilism it tends to cover over, not meaning (see Chapter 8, Section 3). At the end of their book they deny they are making a moralistic claim: there is no reason we should follow their advice, but there are 'callings' which 'demand to be heard and obeyed' (ibid.: 221). The framework does indeed make demands on us, as would a meaning of life. But all they have is one more suggestion for living, the moralistic intent of which pervades their nevertheless fascinating and insightful book.

- 23 The phenomenon of changing the subject to social meaning in philosophical discussions of the meaning of life is perfectly exemplified by Paul Thagard's *The Brain and the Meaning of Life* (2010); he does it on page one and never looks back. Thus Thagard thinks it is an objection to Camus to point out that he was a man with plenty of 'valued goals' in his life (ibid.: 142–3); in other words plenty of social meaning, which is not what Camus was talking about. Thagard argues that we can discover the meaning of life by looking at the effect our activities have on our brains. I have no objection to his moral outlook, with which I am basically in agreement, but apart from the fact that he is not really talking about the meaning of life, but rather which activities we find rewarding; and apart from the deep implausibility of drawing conclusions about what we ought to be doing from what is going on in our brains (why should we engage in activities which yield 'brain-based emotional consciousness of satisfaction and happiness?' [ibid.: 166]); apart from all that, this is a very dangerous line of (thankfully spurious) reasoning. Suppose diligent and honest neuroscientists discover that what really satisfies us more than anything is war. Who knows what our evolved primate brains – when conceived with Thagard as a kind of Freudian other – might have to tell us?

24 Sartre (1946: 358).

25 Dreyfus (1991: 336 ff.).

- 26 Many philosophers reject this contrast between the objective facts and our moral evaluations of them because they think there are objective moral facts. Nagel, for instance, thinks moral truths are basic, and as such do not need to be grounded by any other kind of truth (2012: 101–5); he is 'convinced that pain is really bad, and not just something we hate' (ibid.: 110). I find such views implausible and am suspicious of their motivation. Two reasons I find them implausible are the following. First, in a world in which people hated pain just as much as us but thought it was morally good, we would have to say that they were wrong; regardless of what role it played in their lives. Secondly, because if there are objective moral truths, then all of our moral judgements could be wrong; the nature of reality might determine that murder is not wrong, perhaps in a way we could never ascertain. I find both these consequences

unacceptable. Two reasons I am suspicious of their motivation are the following. First, because insisting on objective moral truths looks like an otiose attempt to reinforce our moral evaluations, allowing us to say that the Nazis were wrong not just in our opinion, but because of the nature of reality; otiose because once the argument between us broke down, this supposed moral truth would not help us. And secondly, because the kind of pluralism such views implicitly endorse, according to which there can be innumerable different kinds of objective truth, seems rooted in a desire to keep all options live, including currently unimaginable mysteries; a willingness to embrace such views, I suspect, stems from opposition to nihilism (see Chapter 8). So I am with the relativists on the evaluative truths of morality and aesthetics. But this is a big debate, and the main thread of the argument that follows does not depend on my opinion in this regard.

- 27 Rorty (1998: 4).
- 28 Rorty (1991: 21–34).
- 29 Boghossian (2006).
- 30 Strictly speaking, it cannot be an objective truth; only a fact which the objective truth points to.
- 31 Derrida (1978: 292); Sartre (1943: 59).

Chapter 3

- 1 Spinoza (1662: 3).
- 2 Thirteenth–tenth centuries BC / George (ed.) (1999: 1–100).
- 3 George (ed.) (1999: 19).
- 4 George (ed.) (1999: 124).
- 5 Gilgamesh learns what Dreyfus and Kelly call the ‘ability to live at the surface’ (2011: 163).
- 6 For example, Russell (1959: 7).
- 7 For example, McGinn (2008); Smith (ed.) (2007).
- 8 Rorty (1979: 391); Rorty (1982: 92).
- 9 There may be more indirect ways in which metaphilosophy can count as a kind of philosophy. What Williamson means by ‘philosophy of philosophy’, for instance, is an investigation of a certain kind of philosophical methodology using a certain kind of philosophical methodology (Williamson 2007: 5–6), although it is a philosophical methodology only because he applies it to philosophical subjects. It is a mistake, however, to use ‘philosophy of philosophy’ as if it were straightforwardly synonymous with ‘metaphilosophy’, as is sometimes now the practice (e.g. Stoljar 2010). Have we been engaged in ‘meta-metaphilosophy’? If you like; but this is not philosophy, simply general reflection at a level of abstraction necessitated by the extent to which philosophy’s subject-matter has been covered over by its history.
- 10 They are also a great source of pride to some philosophers; which is indicative of the lack of self-confidence that pervades contemporary philosophy.
- 11 Comte (1842: 19).
- 12 Knobe and Nichols (eds) (2008: 10, 81–104).
- 13 Comte (1842: 24ff).
- 14 As John Cottingham has noted, although philosophers have come to think of themselves as ‘researchers’, the average philosopher’s research methods amount to ‘reading some books and thinking about some ideas’ (Cottingham 2009: 234). This only seems bad if you make the false comparison with science that ‘researchers’ encourages.

- 15 Descartes (1633: 79–108); Schelling (1803).
- 16 Some years after I wrote this sentence, a new volume appeared defending various versions of dualism, including Cartesian; see Koons and Bealer (eds) (2010).
- 17 For example, Russell (1945: chapter XXXI); Dummett (1978: 454ff.); Williamson (2007: 278–92).
- 18 Heidegger (1964: 58).
- 19 Martin (2002); Horwich (1998); Papineau (2002).
- 20 For example, Rose (2006: 215–16).
- 21 Hirsh (2009); Lakoff and Johnson (1999).
- 22 Rorty (1982: chapter 6) and Derrida (1987); McGinn (1993); Hanly and Lazerowitz (eds) (1970) and Kusch (ed.) (2000).
- 23 This not to say that valuable work in philosophy is impossible without philosophical self-consciousness; that is obviously false. It is only to say that philosophy, as a paradigm of self-conscious human reflection, would be absurd if at least some of its practitioners did not attain, or at least aspire to, such self-consciousness.
- 24 For an introduction to prototype concepts, see Laurence and Margolis (1999: 27ff.).
- 25 Parmenides (fifth century BC: 79).
- 26 *Timaeus* 29d–e.
- 27 For example, Armstrong (1978).
- 28 *Sophist* 246a–b. For similar perspectives on this issue, see Robinson (1991) and Rorty (1979: chapter 1).
- 29 See Clarke (1997).
- 30 The idea of nihilism existed long before Nietzsche, of course; it is there in Macbeth's 'sound and fury' speech, just to mention the best-known example. In fact, it has probably been around as long as – or almost as long as – the question of the meaning of life; for once raised, the idea of a negative answer was bound to suggest itself. Nevertheless Nietzsche was the first Western thinker to extensively theorize nihilism. Arguably, nihilism was discovered much earlier in the East by Chan (Zen) Buddhism, with its central idea, as Hui-neng put it, that 'Enlightenment is only to be sought in the mind; Why bother seeking mysteries outside?' (seventh century: 29) Thus once it was understood that life has no meaning to become 'enlightened' about, the Chan practitioner could simply continue with ordinary life, their attitude transformed. If this interpretation of Chan is right, and Chan is right about Buddhism, then nihilism has been influential in non-Western philosophy for almost as long as Western philosophy has existed; Nietzsche did say that Buddhism was nihilistic, but then he said that about Christianity too, and meant only that it had within it the seeds of nihilism (in his rich sense).
- 31 *Meno* 80e, 86b–c.
- 32 For an interesting attempt to relate philosophy to the satisfaction of curiosity, see Goodman (1956).
- 33 Experimental philosophy might well have a useful contribution to make to the former kind of reflection.

Chapter 4

- 1 Russell (1927: 383).
- 2 This includes our framework understanding, since we cannot make sense of our goals without presupposing that we are interacting with objects to achieve them. I reject

Heideggerian ontology for reasons already given (Chapter 1, Section 3) and which will later be extended (Chapter 6, Section 2). But the problem we will now address arises for Heidegger too, since he grants that we understand the world objectively at times, and that this is perfectly legitimate; his dispute with 'Cartesian' ontology is over whether objective thought should provide the basis for ontology. But regardless of this dispute, objective thought still purports to be an all-inclusive way of understanding the world, and hence should on the face of it include consciousness.

- 3 Strictly speaking, I should perhaps say that consciousness is something we know exists *concretely*, since we are not here concerned with the view of some philosophers that numbers and sets, for instance, should be thought of as abstract objects; this qualification should be borne in mind whenever relevant in the subsequent text.
- 4 Nagel (1986).
- 5 Quoted in Feigl (1967: 138).
- 6 For example, P. Russell (2002).
- 7 Hume (1748: 152); Schopenhauer (1844a: 3).
- 8 Rogers (1975: 216); Montague (2009: 505); Rogers (2004).
- 9 *Metaphysics* 12.9, 1074b35–6 / trans. Caston (2002: 786).
- 10 Rosenthal (1997).
- 11 Martin (2002).
- 12 Harman (1990: 39).
- 13 Valberg (1992: 22).
- 14 For example, Dennett (1991); see also Rorty (1979) and Sellars (1956).
- 15 Strawson (2008: 6).
- 16 Dennett (1991: 354ff. and 98).
- 17 Dennett (1988).
- 18 Groeger (1997).
- 19 Dennett (2000).
- 20 Dennett (1991: 25–7 and 406–11).
- 21 Dennett (1991: 26–7 and 407).
- 22 Dennett (1991: 408).
- 23 Dennett (1991: 410). Wittgenstein asked, 'what would it have looked like if it had *looked* as if the Earth turned on its axis?' (quoted in Anscombe 1959: 151); Derek Jarman milked this line for all it was worth in his 1993 film *Wittgenstein*.
- 24 Searle (1997: chapter 5). Dr Johnson famously kicked a rock to disprove Berkeley's immaterialist metaphysics.
- 25 Dennett (1991: 364).
- 26 Dennett (1991: 408).
- 27 Wittgenstein (1953: §124).
- 28 Butler (1729: 20).
- 29 Only Smart drew the analogy with Frege.
- 30 Farrell (1950: 179).
- 31 Place (1956: 49).
- 32 Place (1956: 49).
- 33 Smart (1959: 149).
- 34 See Putnam (1967). We have the intuition that inflation can supervene on physically very different states of the objective world not because we think inflation is non-physical, but because we think that talking about inflation is a highly abstract way of talking about the world, thus rendering the property of inflation irreducible. Talk of consciousness, however, seems to be neither an abstract nor concrete way of talking about the objective

world. Philosophers who think non-reductivism is relevant to consciousness, then, are confusing two different reasons multiple realizability intuitions can occur.

- 35 Loar (1997). Loar actually says that we directly refer to 'physical-functional' properties, because he does not want to commit to the properties being physical rather than functional. I think this is confused because he clearly thinks the concept of experiential greenness refers to something concrete, and yet a functional property is not something concrete, but rather something that can be realized by something concrete. However my omission makes no difference to the argument, because Loar does not mean a function we could know through ordinary reflection on the everyday role of experience, but rather a theoretical property of the brain.
- 36 It might be responded that 'green,' 'oblong' and so on also refer to neuronal configurations. However although this might have some plausibility with colours – where we suppose only a causal link between the surfaces we see and the experiences we have – in the case of shapes we also suppose *resemblance*; that the oblong shape of the experience has something in common with oblong objects. If we are actually conceiving a neuronal configuration this will not be the case; so we must be misrepresenting the neuronal configuration. In any case, the pointlessness of such responses will become apparent by the end of this discussion; for they will not allow us to avoid revisionism.
- 37 Loar (1997: 608–9); Donnellan (1966).
- 38 The reason for this will be explained in Chapter 5, Section 4.
- 39 This is the fatal flaw to the position I presented in Tartaglia (2013).
- 40 Nagel (1998; 2012); Strawson (2008).

Chapter 5

- 1 Levinas (1981: 73–4).
- 2 Bradley (1893: 264). This is a fundamental flaw to naturalism, according to Bradley (*ibid.*: 263–4). His reasoning depends on the idealist premise that 'my organism, like all else, is but what is experienced'. Thus if the natural world is experientially known only as a state of a brain, then everything in nature is a state of a brain. But brains are part of nature, so a brain itself is a state of a brain. But then if a brain is a state of a brain, it must be a state of a state of a brain, and a state of a state of a state of a brain and so on. Thus everything in nature becomes 'states of one another in indefinite regress' and we can never know what they are states of: 'this illusive quest goes on for ever'. Naturalism consequently leads us to a view of nature as 'the phenomenal relation of the Unknown to the Unknown', and for Bradley this means it is an illusion. If we drop the idealist premise, however, the most this argument can show is that brains cannot tell us about the world since they cannot tell us about themselves; if we know the world only as it affects our brains, then such knowledge requires us to know the effect on our brains, for which we would need to know the effect on our brains of the effect on our brains and so on.
- 3 Sartre (1943: introduction).
- 4 Valberg (2007: chapter 3).
- 5 The hope that there might be a further waking, and hence that death might not be final, explains interest in near-death experiences. There is no evidence for the veracity of such experiences however; the people reporting them are simply reporting dreams, and the content of a dream, no matter how vivid or disconcerting, could not, except in the most fantastical circumstances, be a good reason to believe a hypothesis about

the nature of transcendent reality. (The fantastical circumstances? If the dreamer awoke with a sufficient level of amazing and inexplicable knowledge we should probably believe them, but this has nothing to do with dreaming: we should probably believe anyone who demonstrated magical omniscience, whether they gained it from a dream or not.)

- 6 Bradley makes much the same point when he says that appearance 'can have no place to live except reality' (1893: 132), although since he takes the Kantian 'Thing-in-itself' to be unknowable, he distinguishes it from his own 'Absolute'. It seems to me, however, that they are both talking about the same thing, namely transcendent reality, and that since any reality there is to appearances must belong to transcendent reality, knowledge of appearances must be knowledge of the Thing-in-Itself.
- 7 The discussion of the mind/body problem in Kripke (1972) provides a particularly influential example of this.
- 8 Russell (1927: 402).
- 9 McGinn (1991: 61).
- 10 The view that experience is the best-known part of reality immediately jars with physicalism, even though physicalist discussions of 'qualia' tend to presuppose it. For if experience is the brain, then we ought to know the brain better than the rest of the world, which we manifestly do not. The would-be physicalist may avoid this embarrassment by adopting a revisionist conception of the physical, such that our awareness of experience provides superior knowledge of the intrinsically experiential nature of our own brain states. Thus we see how the view that introspection and perception detect 'different regions of reality' naturally tends towards idealism.
- 11 A desire to maintain this philosophically naïve attitude in the face of philosophical reasoning (no doubt because the naïve attitude has nothing to do with transcendence) motivates philosophers to insist on direct as opposed to indirect realism, even when their conception of perception is essentially the same.
- 12 See Sacks (2012) for some vivid examples.
- 13 See Reid (1785: 318).
- 14 For some attempts to describe cognitive phenomenology in detail (from those contributors who do not adopt the revisionist strategy of denying that it exists), see Bayne and Montague (eds) (2011).
- 15 This reasoning could be resisted by holding that experiences are only contingently self-knowing, not self-knowing by nature (and hence subjective). But this clearly violates our conception of experience, since it implies that a pain could exist without being felt, for instance. This is the route taken by panpsychism, which combines the worst of both revisionist worlds: it revises our conceptions of both experience (experiences need not be experienced) *and* the objective world (the objective world is 'experiential', in the panpsychist's novel sense of the word).
- 16 For example, Hobson (2002).
- 17 Waking experience is apparently causally dependent upon an objective brain, but this is not so clear in the case of dreaming experience; for there is a sense in which it appears to be causally dependent upon objects within the dream, including the dream-brain. There is also a sense in which it appears to be causally dependent on the objective brain, of course, but to say this is to presuppose that it belongs to the same context of existence as the objective brain, since the concept of causation is rooted in the objective context; apparent causal dependency within a dream results from the dream appearing to be an objective context. Since the transcendent hypothesis rejects the assumption that experience (whether waking or dreaming) belongs to the

context of the objective world (an assumption common to the physicalist and dualist, and made natural by our objective misinterpretation of experience), it must insist on the terminology of apparent *ontological* rather than causal dependency (hence our exclusive employment of the former in formulating the concept of transcendence). The evidence for causal or ontological dependency is the same, namely that experience systematically co-varies with the state of the brain and would cease to exist if the brain did. But describing this evidence as apparent ontological dependency – by which it is meant that the nature of the experience appears to be dependent upon the nature of the brain – does not presuppose a unitary context of existence, and is thus more theoretically neutral. It is compatible with the dualist view that this appearance is explained by actual causal dependency upon the brain; the physicalist view that it is explained by actual ontological dependency upon the brain; and the transcendent hypothesis view that it is explained by our interpretation of transcendent reality.

- 18 The disanalogy between primary and secondary qualities is simply that our original, pre-scientific concept of shape seems applicable to both experiences and the objective world, while our original concept of colour does not. However this is a false impression. The fact that individual molecules have no colour provides no reason to think that macroscopic surfaces do not.
- 19 For the former, see Tye (2009); for the latter, see Montague (2009).
- 20 We do not conceive it as the subjective appearance of something painful being located in the body, as some philosophical analyses try to insist (Tye 2000), since it is the subjective appearance itself we conceive as located in the body. Moreover there is no way to prise off the appearance from the spatiality, since a pain that is nowhere is no pain.
- 21 Nagel (1974); Jackson (1982).
- 22 The root of these mistakes is metaphilosophical: it is failing to correctly demarcate philosophy from science. See Chapter 8, Section 2.
- 23 Farrell (1950).
- 24 Jackson (1982).
- 25 Thus, given the nature of consciousness, the final context could not be one with which we had experiential continuity; which was a possibility mooted in Chapter 2, Section 3. It could still be meaningful, however, and we could still wake from life into a transcendent context that is not the final one, but nevertheless one in which we are somehow able to grasp the meaning and independent nature of the final one; but only in the cheap sense of 'could'.
- 26 Bradley was making a similar point when he wrote that: 'in the Absolute we must keep every item of our experience. We cannot have less, but, on the other hand, we may have much more; and this more may so supplement the elements of our actual experience that in the whole they may become transformed' (Bradley 1893: 172). I agree until he starts talking about the elements being transformed in the whole; we cannot accurately characterize the independent being of transcendent reality as it is in itself except to say that it exists and transcends our perspective.
- 27 Kant (1783: 111–12).
- 28 Kant (1783: 40); see also Kant (1787: A491–3).
- 29 See Chapter 7, Section 4. Note that to interpret or represent transcendent reality does not presuppose that we actively impose a structure upon it through a priori mental operations, or that the structure we interpret it as having is possessed of necessity.
- 30 That we cannot escape the picture obviously does not mean that there is nothing outside the picture. If there were not – the picture tells us – there would have been no picture; since that is where it came from.

Chapter 6

- 1 Dōgen (1231–53: 42).
- 2 Elias (1984: 46, 49).
- 3 Heidegger (1927b: 268); see also Elias (1984: 105–30).
- 4 Elias perceives a similar mistake, arguing that to think ‘time’ names an independent existence is to enter upon ‘a wild goose chase, a hunt for something that does not exist’ (1984: 123). Rather there are only a variety of timing practices, used by different societies for different purposes, which involve comparing distinct continua of change with each other. Thus he argues that ‘one could not speak of “time” in a universe which consisted of one single sequence of changes’ since in such a ‘single-strand universe’, timing operations would be impossible (ibid.: 71). However, even if he were right that the concept of time could not develop in such a situation, it does not follow that there would be no time. For Elias presupposes that the world changes, and yet change seems to presuppose time; the concept of change, we might reasonably think, is just variation over time (Mellor 1998: 70). For his argument to be effective, then, Elias would need to provide an alternative, non-temporal account of change; but he does not attempt this.
- 5 Erikson (1968).
- 6 Cf. Nagel (1986: 59).
- 7 Laozi (sixth century BC: 152); for interpretations of Parmenides, see Sorabji (1983: 99–108).
- 8 See Hoy (2013).
- 9 Bradley (1893: 207).
- 10 *Physics* 4.10 and 6.3.
- 11 McTaggart (1908).
- 12 Price (2011).
- 13 Smart (1949).
- 14 Smart (1963: 136).
- 15 Ned Markosian (1993) offers a number of possible responses to this argument, with his guiding idea being that notions of time are basic to objective thought, and hence do not need to be explained by anything more basic. This displays a misunderstanding of the absoluteness in question, as will become clear in the course of this chapter.
- 16 Heidegger (1927b: 272). That the aporia results from a misconception is a view Heidegger shares not only with idealism, but also, as we shall see, with the block conception and the transcendent hypothesis.
- 17 Heidegger (1927b: 261–73) (quotes: 262, 271, 267, 266, 269).
- 18 Heidegger (1927a: 380, 477).
- 19 Heidegger (1927a: 372).
- 20 Heidegger (1927a: 423).
- 21 Heidegger (1927a: 377).
- 22 Heidegger (1927a: 472–80).
- 23 Heidegger (1927a: 414).
- 24 Heidegger (1927a: 255).
- 25 We speak of looking into the past as we look at distant stars, but within the moving present conception, this can be understood as seeing, in the present moment, light that left the star long ago; even though in that same present moment there may no longer be a star at the location from which the light originated.
- 26 Stannard (2008: 16–19).
- 27 For objections to this proposal, see Ludlow (1999: 89ff.).

- 28 Cf. Sorabji (1983: 179).
- 29 Cf. Elias (1984: 128).
- 30 For the former, see Godfrey-Smith (1979); for the latter, see Zimmerman (2011).
- 31 For this view from a scientist, see Stannard (2008: 30–32).
- 32 Butterfield (1984); see also Mellor (1998: 66–9).
- 33 Callender (2004).
- 34 Dainton (2011).
- 35 This formulation captures the contradictory nature of our objective misrepresentation of experience. If we conceive an experience as akin to a photograph, say, there is a sense in which this provides perspective in the objective world, since it seems to be spatially and temporally located; and also a sense in which it does not, since a photograph is just another part of the centreless objective world. The latter is overcome by our identification with the ‘photograph’: by our conceiving it as self-aware. Thus experience can orientate us because we misrepresent it as both objective and self-aware.
- 36 Valberg makes this distinction when he says ‘the spatial in contrast to the temporal present does not have a constant meaning for us’ (Valberg 2013: 373). I would say both have a conditional meaning, while only the temporal present has an extra, unconditional meaning.
- 37 We can say that it *could have been* simultaneous with a past utterance; but this qualification is not required in the case of experience.
- 38 Mellor (1998: 42–5); Grünbaum (1968: 331–2).
- 39 Valberg makes a similar objection to this kind of account when he says that if ‘temporal presence is part of the explication of demonstrative reference, demonstrative reference cannot, in turn, be part of the explication of temporal presence’ (Valberg 2013: 374).
- 40 Valberg argues that reflection on the temporal present confronts us with an ‘impossible generalisation’, namely that it is uniquely ‘now’ and yet ‘always like that’ (Valberg 2013: 372). But there is nothing impossible here, because what is uniquely ‘now’ is transcendent experience, but what is ‘always like that’ is the fact that we are always, at every point in objective time, misrepresenting transcendent experience as an objective experience which is privileged as ‘now’. Thus every point in our conscious lives seems unique but is not; it seems to be because it is a point of entry upon transcendence, but it is not because they all are. This is no more puzzling than the fact that every point of a dream is something outside the dream, though the sense we are able to make of what is outside the dream is the same at every point; if we try to make different sense of it, we make the mistake of trying to think outside the dream. At the end of his paper, Valberg says that when we realize that the problem is specific to consciousness and not ‘intrinsic to reality’, we are left ‘both puzzled and philosophically relieved’ (ibid.: 386). But we only remain puzzled if we continue trying to make sense of the privilege we misrepresent objective states as having, not realizing that to do this is to try to make positive sense of transcendence. The puzzlement, and belief in an impossibility, result from trying to explain something that cannot be explained, and when this is recognized both should disappear. I think, although cannot argue here, that the same kind of response can be made to all the apparent impossibilities Valberg thinks are actual (Valberg 2007: chapter 24).
- 41 Cf. Dainton (2011).
- 42 Dōgen (1231–53: 50).
- 43 Hui-neng (seventh century: 54).

Chapter 7

- 1 Heidegger (1936–7, vol. I: 201).
- 2 See Bluck (1958).
- 3 Plato did not think that the philosophical life was open to all, however.
- 4 For example, Nietzsche (1883–8: §§409, 521, 522, 568, 584); see also Hales (1996).
- 5 Ramsey (1925); MacBride (2005); Strawson (2006: 193–9; 2009: 304–17; 2015).
- 6 Ryle (1957); *Republic* (596a); *Parmenides* (130c–d).
- 7 Wittgenstein (1953: §66).
- 8 For responses to this objection to objectivist accounts of colour, see Tye (2000: chapter 7).
- 9 Dennett (1991: 381).
- 10 Armstrong (1978b: 7–9); Armstrong (1980: 162–3).
- 11 Armstrong makes this point against a similar argument by Michael Loux (Armstrong 1978a: 103ff.); however none of Armstrong's suggestions for making sense of predicates that do not ascribe characteristics show any potential for making sense of Nietzschean scepticism.
- 12 Quine (1951); MacBride (2005).
- 13 Strawson (2006: 198, 195).
- 14 Strawson (2015: 15); Nietzsche (1883–8: §522).
- 15 Strawson (2006: 199). Applied to reality as a whole, this recalls Bradley's mystical view that since the relational, subject-predicate structure of thought falsifies, we can only approach the final truth about reality through a 'consummation' whereby our thought is 'absorbed into a fuller experience' and thereby commits 'happy suicide' (Bradley 1893: 170–3). Such holism does seem the natural outcome of scepticism about ordinary distinctions between particulars and properties, and Strawson's 'identity metaphysics' (Strawson 2015) endorses this tradition. But even Bradley's view that as reason ascends to truth it fades away, cannot avoid the basic difficulty that this ascent is guided by the discursive thought we are told to distrust.
- 16 Whitehead (1929).
- 17 Kołakowski (1988: 39–59) tells a good story about the knots the Neoplatonists tied themselves in through excessive scepticism about language.
- 18 Campbell (1981: 125).
- 19 MacBride thinks that the characterization of a universal as a one-over-many is a 'crude slogan' which fails to illuminate the universal/particular distinction; because we could equally think of a particular as the 'one' which unites 'many' universals (2005: 566). If we did not approach the distinction from objective thought he would be right. But as it is, this characterization adequately distinguishes universals from the objective world that provides the bedrock of our understanding; we already accept particulars, but this line of reasoning seems to show that we must also accept universals as the one-over-many.
- 20 Armstrong (1978a: 110).
- 21 Williams (1966); Campbell (1981).
- 22 Armstrong (1978a: 116).
- 23 Armstrong (1978a: 109).
- 24 Armstrong (1978a: chapter 12) (quotes from 127); Armstrong (1980).
- 25 Kant (1787: B136n, A320/B377). Peirce says that 'Kant was a nominalist' (Peirce 1903: 5). However this is because he construes the issue as 'whether *laws* and general *types*

- are figments of the mind or are real' (ibid.: 4); since Kant falls on the 'figments of the mind' side of this disjunction, he counts as a nominalist for Peirce. But since Kant is not committed to the sole existence of particulars, he is not a nominalist in the ontological sense we are employing. For Kant's most explicit rejection of 'Ontology', see (1787: A247/B303); although he does provide an ontology of a sort simply through his commitment to things-in-themselves.
- 26 Matson (1966); Rorty (1979: chapter 1); Robinson (1991); MacDonald (2003: chapter 7).
 - 27 It is hinted at in certain special contexts, such as in reference to dreams (cf. Matson 1966).
 - 28 *De Anima* III.4, 429b29–430a7.
 - 29 Kant is atypical; he merged Platonism and Cartesianism by, effectively, identifying the objective world and mind. Thus he was Cartesian in conceiving mind as appearance; but Platonic in conceiving the objective world as appearance, and contrasting it with transcendent reality.
 - 30 Philosophical use of the terminology of 'concepts' originated with Leibniz, from whom Kant adopted it via Wolff and Baumgarten; all these philosophers used it to refer to representations. See Caygill (1995: 118–22).
 - 31 For an analysis of how certain shadow concepts came to be prioritized in this manner, see Chapter 5, Section 4.
 - 32 Berkeley (1710: *Principles*, Introduction §12).
 - 33 Kant (1787: A271/B327); Sellars (1956). To some extent, Kant's move was prefigured by Locke, who allows that some ideas are formed on the basis of 'internal Sense' of 'the Operations of our own Minds within' (Locke 1700: II.1.§4). This anticipation of Kant's appeal to the mind's operations, rather than its phenomenal manifestations, does not affect Kant's criticism, however, since Locke never seeks to equate conceptualization to these operations. Concepts, or 'general ideas', are the collections of ideas which we 'put together', sometimes inconsistently (ibid.: IV.7.§9).
 - 34 Kant (1787: A141/B180); for discussion see Guyer (2006: 97).
 - 35 For the standard analysis of the flaw in Berkeley's argument, see Williams (1973) and Mackie (1976: 52–4).
 - 36 Leibniz (1704: §§53–8); Leibniz (1714: *Monadology* §23). I take this example from Tim Crane (1998), who does not press it, but rather concedes immediately that alternative descriptions are available, such as that a physiological condition woke us up to pain. However I have heard others insist on describing this case as involving unconscious sensations (e.g. Coleman 2014: 41). Why? To support revisionist, mind-based conceptions of the objective world.
 - 37 Evans (1982).
 - 38 Tye (2000: 61).
 - 39 See Bermúdez (2003).
 - 40 The terminology of 'concepts' was introduced into philosophy to mean 'representations', as previously noted. We might then say that animals have non-linguistic conceptual self-awareness of experience; or failing that, that they have non-linguistic self-representations which we count as experiential because of their similarity to our conceptually self-aware experiences.
 - 41 Note that I am not denying that there might be cases which do not involve the self-awareness of experience, but where the representational relation is between the property conceived and the objective property; if the apple is conceived as having a certain spectral surface reflectance, then this present case would be like that. However, in such cases misrepresentation would be possible (the reflectance conceived might not match the actual one), and the representation would obviously

- not account for the existence of the objective property. So the arguments to be presented below would not apply; nominalist explanations of such cases would be possible even if the representation was accurate.
- 42 I am of course putting to one side externalist conceptions of content; most philosophers recognize the notion of content I am employing here, even those who endorse some form of externalism.
 - 43 It is sometimes claimed that experience must have a hidden structure to explain certain phenomena, such as similarities between colours (Armstrong 1978b: 124–7) or the logical form of thought (McGinn 1991: chapter 4). However if the mind is a misrepresentation, then attributing additional structure to it will not pave the way to naturalizing it, as these authors suppose. Moreover building up the misrepresentation in the proposed manner conflicts with our conception of experience, because if the hidden structure of a red experience was essential to it, we might seem to have a red experience when we actually do not. A better tactic is to explain the phenomena in question in terms of brain states or sentences, for instance.
 - 44 I have principally in mind the philosophers inspired by Nietzsche discussed above; Nietzsche's own views on metaphysics are ambivalent.
 - 45 See Tye (2000) for such efforts.
 - 46 See Cottingham (2000).
 - 47 Cf. Pears (1967).
 - 48 Nietzsche (1883–8: 24ff., 316–22).
 - 49 Heidegger (1939–46, vol. IV: 203).
 - 50 This recalls certain attempts in recent philosophy to recover the 'enchantment' of the world, albeit for ostensibly different purposes; see McDowell (1994).

Chapter 8

- 1 Kolakowski (1988/2001: 111).
- 2 Heidegger (1936–7, vol. II: 198–233); Nietzsche (1883–8: 330). As Reginster (2006: 227) points out, for Nietzsche the 'Christian demand for an eternal life is objectionable not because it aspires to an infinite life, but because it aspires to a life free from change and becoming.'
- 3 Fichte (1800: 80–2).
- 4 I call eternal recurrence 'nonsense' because despite the scholarly consensus to the contrary (a notable exception is Kaufmann 1950: 326ff.), I think Nietzsche believed that reality *literally* does eternally recur; rather as he believed that Christianity literally had inculcated life-denying values. Consider how the man actually reacted to this 'revelation' (see Safranski 2002: 220ff.); such bombast would be inappropriate to the kind of subtle doctrines his sympathetic interpreters find in the thought of eternal recurrence. Of course, Nietzsche did place great significance in the life-affirming psychological significance of being able to welcome eternal recurrence. But the ability to feel no regret at (e.g.) having just clumsily knocked over my pint, and rather delight in the thought of this event eternally recurring, just strikes me as idiocy.
- 5 Kant (1787: Bxxx).
- 6 Fang (2010).
- 7 Schopenhauer (1844); Benatar (2006).
- 8 Epicurus (Fourth–third century BC: 29); Camus (1942: 1).
- 9 Nietzsche (1888a: 40).

- 10 Nietzsche (1883–8: §1065).
- 11 Ray Brassier not only grasps all this, but shares my perspective on nihilism. Thus he ‘does not treat nihilism as a disease, requiring diagnosis and the recommendation of an antidote’, but rather thinks that it ‘deserves to be celebrated as an achievement of intellectual maturity’; it is ‘not an existential quandary but a speculative opportunity’ (Brassier 2007: x–xi). However, he also seems to sympathize with extreme misanthropy – presumably on independent grounds not stated in his book – since he uses a quote from antinatalist Thomas Ligotti as his epigraph, and wrote an approving preface to Ligotti’s book (Brassier 2010). With this I have no sympathy at all, since the arguments for these morbid views seem to have become worse – if that is possible – since Schopenhauer. They fill me with despair, but not in the way the authors intend. To explain why would take me too far afield; but I have already explained why such views are unconnected to nihilism. (For inappropriately temperate, but nevertheless sensible criticism of David Benatar’s antinatalism, see Harman 2009.)
- 12 Schlick (1927); *Laws* 803b–e.
- 13 Hawking (1988: 13). Since there are innumerable things we cannot predict, from diseases to earthquakes, this should be read ‘accurate predictions *in principle*’.
- 14 Hawking (1988: 13–14).
- 15 Hawking (1988: 191).
- 16 Hawking (1988: 191); Hawking and Mlodinow (2010: 13).
- 17 Philosophy will discover anything it can too, but it does not issue in technology. If some currently unimaginable circumstance arose which made us seriously believe that a philosophical idea was about to instigate a catastrophe, then politicians might have to intervene, I suppose. But with science the circumstances are all too easy to imagine.
- 18 Kurzweil (2012) and Bor (2012) (consciousness); de Grey and Rae (2007) (immortality); Coustenis and Encrenaz (2013) (aliens).
- 19 Stoljar (2010: 25).
- 20 Rorty typically motivates his abandonment of objective truth with the failure of representationalism, rather than as a consequence of nihilism. But he nevertheless made no secret of his allegiance to the Nietzschean tradition that sees objective truth as untenable outside of a religious perspective; see Rorty (1989: 5).
- 21 Passmore (1970).
- 22 There may be no answer as to which of two possible interpretations the author had in mind when the author did not realize that these two interpretations were available. But it is very rare for an author not to have anything in mind.
- 23 Kierkegaard (1846: 255 ff.).
- 24 Rorty (1989: chapter 4); see also Dreyfus and Kelly (2011: 194).
- 25 Philosophers have often argued that science tells us only about relations, not the intrinsic natures being related (for some classic examples, see Holt 2012: 192–6). They then typically go on to say that these intrinsic natures are mental, which leaves philosophy in the important position of needing to complete the job of describing the objective world; or at least telling science what it still has to do (if these intrinsic natures are not held to be immune from scientific investigation). Other philosophers have recoiled from this line of thought, however, by holding that reality is exclusively relational (Rorty 1994; Ladyman and Ross 2007). Then philosophy no longer looks as if it is challenging science. It seems to me, however, that when the notion of ‘intrinsic’ is taken outside of its ordinary use – as when we say that somebody’s looks are intrinsic to them but their job is not, for instance – then the resulting philosophical intuitions are simply a tip-off to transcendence. To say that science describes a

- purely relational world is innocent – and an improvement on saying that it misses out the intrinsic properties of the objective world – so long as this relational world is not thought to be independent reality (Ladyman and Ross), and so long as it is not thought to replace the need for an independent reality (Rorty). But we could just as well say that the relations tell us the intrinsic nature of things in the objective world.
- 26 In previous drafts of this book I tried to cover more.
- 27 Thus Kant was right that the question of why the universe exists applies to a transcendent reality of which we can make no substantive sense; but his analysis of the confusions we entangle ourselves in if we nevertheless try are marred by his *a priori* theorizing about the nature, rather than status, of the objective world. Wittgenstein does a better job of explaining these confusions simply by reminding us that our language-games are ill-equipped for reasoning about *all* of reality – rather than events within reality – and so the kind of substantive answer we naturally expect is not to be had. Combining these two insights provides us with the best answer available to the question of why there is something rather than nothing.
- 28 McGinn (1993).
- 29 Darwin (1860: 12).
- 30 Darwin (1887: 54).
- 31 See McGinn (1991: 4–5).
- 32 The aliens might tell us that our conceptual apparatus is unable to form unified perceptual and introspective concepts, and that this is why we cannot understand the physical nature of consciousness; this is the prospect Colin McGinn has in mind (1991: 1–22). But we could respond that they have misunderstood the distinction between perception and introspection. Even they could not short-circuit our philosophical debates.
- 33 On one reading ‘piece’ is a mereological term akin with ‘part’, and as such a piece of string cannot have a length except if there is string of greater extension than the particular piece from which the latter is either actually or possibly partitioned. But in the loose and popular sense, ‘piece’ is evidently context-dependent: we would not call a string encircling the Earth a ‘piece’, but a sufficiently large giant might. Taking this second sense, consider object *O* instantiating the property of being string *S* in a context of size *C_n*, where the spatio-temporal dimensions of any context *C_i* are determined relative to an observer or object. Assuming for the sake of simplicity that string is always a physical object, there is a length $L_1 > 0$ and a length $L_2 < C_n$ where $L_1 \neq L_2$ such that if *O* instantiates length *L_k* where *L_k* is greater than or equal to *L₁* and less than or equal to *L₂*, then *O* instantiates the property of being a piece *P*. But how is this specification to proceed, in its endeavour to locate us within the open space of the question, when questioning itself remains unquestioned? For only when the question is seized in its undecidedness can we hope to wrest from it the possibilities of the ‘piece’, and thereby grasp what is always already asked of us anew; only then will we no longer hear it as a passing amusement, an unanswerable in our world of answers – but rather as a paean to certainty. My point? That philosophy can start to look very silly indeed when it wanders too far from its subject-matter, where its techniques and styles have a history and purpose.
- 34 Heidegger (1954).
- 35 Žižek (2006: 195ff.). For the kind of technological developments envisaged, see Fukuyama (2003).
- 36 That by far the most influential recent book on religion (Dawkins 2006) is by a scientist has not helped; the book is overflowing with philosophy, of course.