Introduction

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I

Individuals and the societies in which they live establish and maintain identity in relationship to some sense of a past, principally of interest insofar as it is of practical relevance in the present. The relationship may be unreliable: memories may be mischievous, a heritage fanciful, a history fabricated, or so brutally abridged as to be mythic. Regardless of the confidence with which a 'past-relationship'[1] is assumed, however, its disruption can be deeply destabilising. These commonplaces about what Michael Oakeshott called the 'practical past' are no less pertinent to academic disciplines than they are to societies and individuals. The history of political theory, for example, still sometimes presented as an on-going tradition of debate and dialogue reaching back to the ancient Greeks, was invented as an authenticating lineage for the newly institutionalised university study of politics only around the end of the nineteenth century. Much the same might be said of the gatherings of canonic texts conventionally studied as histories of national literatures. In all these cases, the posited history retains its shape, momentum and character by the competing needs to affirm, reform or subvert a contemporary disciplinary activity. Such histories are often so present-centred as to be largely convenient lineages, anachronistic in predication of content and 'whiggish' in narrative structure.

In many ways the history of philosophy is at one with, and may have been a model for, the patterns of these adjacent academic genealogies. Aristotle set a precedent in isolating his own metaphysical position in counterpoint to figures such as Empedocles and Plato. But something approximating the modern history of philosophy was not born until the seventeenth century, when it appeared together with the history of theology, partly in an attempt to tame the incendiary absolute truths of

[1] J. G. A. Pocock, 'The Origins of the Study of the Past: A Comparative Approach', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4 (1962), 209–46.

systematic theology and philosophy by treating them as opinions held by historical sects.[2] While it remained associated with 'eclectic' philosophy, the history of philosophy retained this relativising and pluralising tendency. Once pressed into the service of a priori philosophy by Kant, however, it was transformed into an historical apologetics for modern philosophical doctrine.[3] It was Hegel, though, who showed just how far the past could be captured in the interests of promoting a present identity. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* he provided the very dialectical structure that explained how what was worthy led to him.[4]

Since then, and irrespective of whether Hegel's philosophy has itself been found acceptable, the history of philosophy has remained largely in the hands of philosophers as a tool of contemporary doctrinal exploration and justification. Certainly the difficulties in writing historically about a philosophical past have generated a substantial methodological literature from within philosophy; and in some defined sub-fields historical understanding may be enhanced by the use of specific philosophical techniques, such as the use of modern notation to elucidate medieval logic.[5] Yet even here, the main point seems to be to see how far the translation of propositions into modern notational form can help us assess contributions to a discipline that have hitherto been obscured by the inadequacies of Latin.[6]

Leaving to one side the exploration of the past as a source of propositional treasure, the attitude of philosophers to their history has been instrumentalist in two ways. It may be taken as a relatively neutral territory on which they can meet ecumenically when otherwise divided. Most commonly, however, philosophy's history may be used as a pedagogical induction into the present, in much the same way that, according to Kuhn, histories of physics functioned in science education.[7] Similarly, for many years post-Reformation German philosophers have had to

[2] John Christian Laursen (ed.), *Histories of Heresy in Early Modern Europe: For, Against, and Beyond Persecution and Toleration* (Houndmills: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2002).
[3] Donald R. Kelley, 'History and/or Philosophy', in J. B. Schneewind (ed.), *Teaching New Histories of Philosophy* (Princeton N. J.: University Center for Human Values, 2004), 345–59.
[4] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. Haldane and F. Simson (3 vols., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1892–5).
[5] See, for example, the journal *History and Theory*, an important repository of such arguments; also *The Monist* 53 (1969), special issue; Giorgio Tonelli, 'A Contribution Towards a Bibliography on the Methodology of the History of Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 10 (1974), 456–8.
[6] Alexander Broadie, *George Lokert: Late Scholastic Logician* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983); D. P. Henry, *Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* (London: Hutchinson, 1972), 1–4.
[7] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, 1969), Preface and 1–9.

trudge their way to Kant in order to be blessed with metaphysical respectability.[8] Yet, as Kuhn also remarked of histories of science, when a new orthodoxy is established or an emergent school vies for recognition, the history has to be re-written. Thus fifteenth-century Italian rhetoricians are suddenly the precursors of structuralism;[9] Hume the empiricist becomes a pragmatist, an emblem of the importance of William James's battle with idealism.[10] Shadowy or discounted figures are shifted into the glare of attention by the need to situate developing interests. The rediscovery of Hobbes as a philosopher of language had much to do with a twentieth-century 'linguistic turn'. In the same present-centred idiom, lamentation can be as important as celebration. What might seem wrong now can be articulated by blaming selective figures from the past. Thus, according to Richard Rorty, the whole of seventeenth-century epistemology put philosophy on the wrong track;[11] and for others Cartesian dualism is still in need of exorcism.[12]

In some way, however, the history of philosophy is a little different from the histories of other academic disciplines. The self-consciousness and highly contested nature of modern academic philosophical enquiry helps ensure particularly varied perceptions of what the relationship between philosophy and its past amounts to. But there are two polarised claims between which it might seem all other positions must be located. At one extreme is the notion that philosophy is essentially an historical activity and therefore that philosophising well in ignorance of it is impossible. As R. G. Collingwood famously argued, to understand the answers philosophers have given, it is necessary to reveal the contingent and variable nature of their problems, even if history here is really the medium in which such problems are resolved.[13] At the other extreme

[8] Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–29.

[9] Nancy Streuver, *The Language of History in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 15, 43n, 184–5; Richard Waswo, *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), and on the debate it generated, Ian Maclean, *Interpretation and Meaning in the Renaissance: The Case of Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1–8.

[10] Bruce Kuklick, 'Seven Thinkers and How They Grew', in Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Quentin Skinner (eds.), *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 125–40: on textbook histories of philosophy and the pragmatic lineage, 129–32.

[11] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, 1980), e.g. 4–9.

[12] Rorty, *Philosophy*, chs. 1–2; and for valuable discussion of much of the literature, Raia Prokhovnik, *Rational Woman: A Feminist Critique of Dichotomy* (London: Routledge, 1999), 50–90.

[13] R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939, 1967), 29–43, 53–76. Charles Taylor, 'Philosophy and its History', in Rorty, Schneewind and Skinner, *Philosophy in History*, 17–30.

is the argument that a history of philosophy is impossible.[14] For whereas historians infer and reconstruct from surviving evidence a philosophical proposition, the thought of a given philosopher is always in the present. The history of philosophy is always philosophy.

That philosophy cannot or must be historical are synoptic extremities that would apparently demand a more reasonable position between the two, with scholars recognising history and philosophy to be different activities, yet holding that they can be mutually enlightening. Thus Rorty, Schneewind and Skinner argue that while entirely past-centred canons of historicity lead towards a futile antiquarianism, a present-centred abridgement of earlier philosophical propositions results only in legitimating anecdotalism. The first endeavour fails to distinguish philosophy from intellectual quackery, the second reduces history to myth.[15] All that seems to be required is an avoidance of these excesses.

Up to a point, a position such as this is appealing, not least because it invites an examination of evidence and cases of the interplay between historical knowledge and philosophical proposition. Yet, most broadly, it begs the question of whose criteria are to be used in judging an account of a philosopher from an earlier time insofar as philosophers and historians have diverging interests. If it is likely that philosophers will continue to expect their own standards and priorities to take precedence in their own history, it remains open to the historian to explore the linguistic and institutional means of asserting this precarious authority over a neighbouring discipline. What also remains unclear is the degree to which it is possible to avoid difficulties associated with the specific genre of philosophical history.

As a mode of intellectual history, philosophical history is so structured that historical events unfold as the means of resolving present philosophical problems. As Hegel put it: 'The course of history does not show us the Becoming of things foreign to us, but the Becoming of ourselves and our knowledge.'[16] 'Our knowledge' is supposed to arise from human subjectivity's on-going pursuit of self-clarification, and is in this sense timeless. Eighteenth-century Kantians were amongst the first to practise this kind of philosophical history. They treated the entire history of philosophy

[14] Gordon Graham, 'Can There be a History of Philosophy?' *History and Theory* 21 (1982), 37–52; and Jacques Derrida, '"Genesis and Structure" and Phenomenology', in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 154–68.
[15] Rorty, Schneewind and Skinner, *Philosophy in History*, 4–11.
[16] Cited in Kelley, 'History and/or Philosophy', 347.

prior to Kant as if it were an attempt to overcome the impasse between an idea-less empiricism and a sense-less rationalism, even if this impasse was in fact internal to the structure of Kant's transcendental idealism.[17] We can find the same basic approach in more recent histories that assimilate the most diverse texts and contexts to a narrative leading to Kant's discovery of the transcendental structure of subjectivity[18] or the transcendent structure of a universal moral identity.[19]

A no less problematic feature of 'presentist' philosophical histories is their presumption that we already know what philosophy is – typically, some combination of the disciplines of epistemology, metaphysics and moral philosophy – such that its history is always a history of that which we call philosophy today. This is the presumption that all of the contributions to this book seek to question, by showing in different ways that we cannot read off early modern philosophies from current philosophical doctrines. What philosophy might be is a matter for historical investigation of the activities that have been called 'philosophy', regardless of whether to modern eyes these activities resemble post-Kantian epistemology, and regardless of whether they look more like theology, poetry, polemics or natural sciences.

Viewed from a post-Kantian vantage, be it an analytic or a continental one, the landscape of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century philosophy appears as a foreign country. Not only was there little interest in the problems of epistemology, but the range of disciplines classified as philosophy was larger and more diverse than it became from the late eighteenth century. After scanning a number of different classifications typical of the European universities, Joseph Freedman concludes that 'the nine disciplines which most frequently appeared . . . were metaphysics, physics, mathematics, ethics, family life, politics, logic, rhetoric, and grammar'.[20] Once we recall that physics typically comprised the main Aristotelian works of natural philosophy – *The Heavens*, *On Generation*

[17] See, for example, Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie für den akademischen Unterricht* (3rd edn, Leipzig, 1820). In English: *A Manual of the History of Philosophy*, trans. A. Johnson, ed. and rev. J. R. Morell (London: Bohn, 1852). For a helpful discussion, see T. J. Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 213–19.

[18] Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and his Predecessors* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969).

[19] Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[20] Joseph S. Freedman, 'Classifications of Philosophy, the Sciences, and the Arts in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe', *The Modern Schoolman* 72 (1994), 37–65 at 43.

and Corruption, *Meteorology*, *On the World*, and *On the Soul* – and that mathematics included the musical and astronomical disciplines in addition to geometry and arithmetic, and that politics could embrace jurisprudence, the full diversity of the philosophical domain begins to appear. The fact that this array included all of the disciplines apart from theology, law and medicine is a pointer to the degree to which the concept of philosophy was determined by what was taught in university arts or philosophy faculties. As Ian Hunter shows, any such determination of philosophy's scope could be contentious, often subject to the contingencies of overtly confessional dispute.

The situation is complicated further if one turns to England, a country whose universities were quite often peripheral to what people saw as philosophy and whose major figures worked outside a university environment. In common usage 'philosophy' might not refer to any discipline at all, but to the ends or purposes of many jostling claimants to wisdom. Similarly, the increasing importance of natural philosophy during the seventeenth century could mean that there might be no stable distinction to be drawn between medicine and philosophy, as was attempted within the context of university structures. The anatomist and physician Walter Charleton presented himself to his readers as a philosopher;[21] William Harvey was admired as a philosopher because of his work on circulation.[22]

Historically speaking, then, it becomes increasingly implausible to see early modern philosophy as a single discipline or intellectual endeavour expressive of something like the human subject's struggle to clarify its consciousness or conscience. Some philosophical disciplines were indeed methods of self-clarification. Some, though, taught positive metaphysical or natural philosophical doctrines, still others the arts of logic, grammar and rhetoric, or of memory, navigation or computation. In certain times and places, a certain kind of philosophical *persona* could be cultivated by seeking self-clarification, yet other kinds of philosophical *personae* have been cultivated in other ways: by seeking union with God or knowledge of corpuscles, freedom from passion or the alphabet of all possible sciences, mastery of the classics or impartiality of legal judgment.

Such purposive and doctrinal diversity raises the question of whether the history of philosophy can be conceived as an object of enquiry without accepting what philosophers are in the habit of taking for granted. There

[21] See Emily Booth, *A Subtle and Mysterious Machine* (New York and Dordrecht: Springer, 2005).
[22] See, for example, Robert G. Frank Jr, *Harvey and the Oxford Physiologists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

is a way out of this apparent impasse, however, namely for the history of philosophy to take as its object those doctrines and disciplines that have been accepted as philosophical across a range of historical settings. By treating this acceptance as an object of historical investigation, we shift our focus from philosophical problems to the institutional contexts in which they are delimited, and from the subject of consciousness to the *persona* of the philosopher that is cultivated in such contexts.

II

In proposing to recover understandings of philosophy not easily assimilated to the current self-understanding of the discipline, this volume of essays argues for a new and more thoroughly historical approach to the history of early modern philosophy. It focuses on the complementary phenomena of the contested character of philosophy, and the *persona* necessary for its practice, that is, the purpose-built 'self' whose cognitive capacities and moral bearing are cultivated for the sake of a knowledge deemed philosophical.

To take an interest in the *persona* of the philosopher requires that we attend to the kind of intellectual work that individuals must perform on themselves in order to conduct their minds and persons in a way that is accepted as philosophical. By the same token it requires attention to the moral qualities needed for the education of others as philosophers. This interest is not sociological, as it makes no general assumptions regarding the organisation of societies in which philosophical *personae* are cultivated, or about the 'structural' functions this might serve. It is social, however, to the extent that modes of intellectual conduct are only recognised as philosophical in and for particular institutional settings: monasteries, seminaries, universities, courts, secret societies, epistolary networks, and so on. Further, this interest is historical, in the sense that the means of carrying out this intellectual and moral work – the modes of scepticism or assent, the forms of abstraction and argument, the image of the person one aspires to become by performing this inner labour – are historically transmitted and put to work under particular circumstances. These circumstances are frequently focused in a highly distinctive institutional milieu where an ensemble of disciplines that determines what counts as philosophy is taught, and where a particular philosophical *persona* is cultivated.

A philosophical *persona* is thus not what one has to have in order to solve problems universally recognised as philosophical. Neither is it a proxy

for the philosophical 'subject', deduced, transcendentally or otherwise, from universal acts of cognition or judgment. Rather, recognition of a problem as philosophical only takes place within the milieu where a philosophical *persona* is cultivated, as a result of the intellectual and moral means employed for this, and in accordance with the larger historical context in which this milieu operates. To understand a philosophical problem thus means to engage in a process of self-presentation, an act of self-problematisation, or to advocate an idealised character to which potential philosophers should aspire. This kind of process is as evident in the Cartesian procedures for purging the mind as it is in the spiritual exercises of the Jesuit philosophy course, where a whole class of scholars is required to doubt the adequacy of their intellect in the face of their corrupt desires, as a means of inducing their need for authoritative philosophical doctrine.[23] The existence of a philosophical problem is integral to the instituted practice in which the special kind of person who knows and resolves such problems – the philosopher – is groomed for office.

Any history of philosophy written from this perspective will not be an account of universal philosophical problems unfolding in time. It will not be an account of how the dialectic of rationalism and empiricism eventually resolved the relation between reason and the senses; or of how the discovery of the transcendent structure of thought finally established the true relation between the metaphysical and physical worlds, a story, to put it bluntly, of how this or that was solved, how we learned to get it right. Rather, it will be a more local and contextual undertaking, focused on uncovering the circumstances in which these ostensibly universal problems were posed for individuals in a manner that made their resolution contingent on the cultivation of a particular kind of philosophical *persona.*

For this reason, disputes over philosophical problems quickly become disputes over what is to count as philosophy and what it is to be a philosopher. In this regard, early modern Europe witnessed a whole series of protracted border conflicts over the scope of philosophy and the duty of philosophers. These included disputes between the scholastic logician and the humanist rhetorician, the Aristotelian physicist and the Galilean astronomer, the philosopher and the jurist, the arts professor and the metaphysician, the court Neoplatonist and the university Aristotelian, and the philosopher and the theologian. Such disputes were in turn informed by the moral *habitus* of overlapping institutional environments

[23] Paul Richard Blum, *Philosophenphilosophie und Schulphilosophie. Typen des Philosophierens in der Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998), 142–6.

and by the larger political and religious conflicts in which these institutions played their roles, especially those conflicts associated with the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation and the building, or more haphazard formation, of princely territorial states.

III

There are a number of broad points arising from this shift in perspective. First, it has some precedent in recent scholarship on the history of ancient philosophy, in which attention to the presented way of life of a philosopher, an exercise or activity of the *psyche*, has been shown to be integral to what was specifically argued.[24] Aristotle's synoptic comments on the interrelationship between *logos*, the word or discourse, and *ethos*, the presentation of the speaker through these words, offers one kind of support for the view that, in antiquity, the relation between the identity of the speaker and the standing of the discourse was not a contingent matter. The attention given to his own dress and comportment in explaining why he did not succeed Plato as scholarch at the Academy, for example, is another.[25] The essays of this volume show a continuity of concern with the nexus of *persona* and argument, highlighting the manner in which philosophical disputes could be about a way of life, and the qualities, aptitudes and education necessary for its conduct. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ancient notions of philosophical *personae* were preserved or recovered and made central to the elaboration of philosophical debate, a point illustrated, for example, in the chapters by Hunter and Friedeburg. Issues of living a certain kind of philosophical

[24] Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989); Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Juliusz Domanski, *La philosophie, théories ou manière de vivre?* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires de Fribourg, 1996); Ilsetraut Hadot, *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seeleneitlung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969); Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Pierre Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Pierre Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002); Dorothee Kimmich, *Epikureische Aufklärungen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993); Anne Marie Malingrey, *Philosophia* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1961); Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Jackie Pigeaud, *La maladie de l'âme* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1981); Paul Rabbow, *Seelenführung* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1954); André-Jean Voelke, *La philosophie comme thérapie de l'âme* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires de Fribourg, 1993).

[25] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. Rhys Roberts (New York: Modern Library, 1954), 1356a; Anton-Hermann Chroust, 'Aristotle's Alleged "Revolt" against Plato', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* II (1973), 91–4 at 93–4.

life and exhibiting a specific philosophical moral decorum persisted. Moreover, this authenticating dimension to the business of philosophising could, as in antiquity, be displayed and advertised beyond words, through the semiotics of dress and cultivation. So the philosopher of the early modern world was bearded and modestly if not shabbily dressed, a constellation of values and priorities.[26] He, and it was nearly always a he, was also likely to be afflicted or driven by a certain psychological disposition, the tyranny even, of melancholia (see the essay by Curtis), or the hubris of presuming to think like God.

Second, the way of life was held to involve responsibilities to something beyond the interests of the individual philosopher. This locus of duty varied, as did the (sometimes interchangeable) terms used to express it. Philosophy involved responsibilities to truth, to Man, to God, to Nature, perhaps to a sovereign or else to God through a religious order; it could therefore be presented as an office. As a result, it was easy to assimilate notions of philosophy as conduct and activity to adjacent intellectual and practical offices understood through much the same moral vocabulary. The office of the philosopher was fashioned through the same general language as that of the judge, the spiritual director, the counsellor or the ruler (see the essays by Saunders and Friedeburg). Indeed, the language of office, inherited and augmented from antiquity – consider Platonic analogies between the midwife and the true philosopher, or Christian-Aristotelian figurations of philosophy as theology's handmaid – was pervasive or implied in disputing philosophical *personae*. This was something that helps explain what has been noted above, that the word 'philosophy' had a range of use well beyond any putative coherent discipline. The long-standing *topos* for exploring the nature of the philosophical life, the choice between its active or contemplative modes as the best means towards its ends, had implications for religion and civic commitment. Arguments about the nature of philosophy could be conveyed through discussion of the responsibilities of institutionalised offices, and the model for the active philosophical life might be little different from the office of civic counsel. Conversely, the paradigm of the contemplative life could be the monk or nun exercising offices to God. Attention to the issue of religious character, as Harrison argues in his essay, makes clear why post-Reformation denominational divisions

[26] See the iconography throughout Thomas Stanley, *The History of Philosophy* (London, 1660).