Are There Any Genuinely Philosophical Novels?

Kendra Wegscheidler

PhD

University of York

Philosophy

September 2024

Abstract

At first sight it looks as if the idea of a philosophical novel is too vague and loosely applied to be of much theoretical interest. However, the term is widely used and cries out for clarification. The thesis seeks to offer that, not by proposing some single strict (but seemingly arbitrary) definition, but by accepting flexibility in interpretation and application, and drawing some plausible bounds between different kinds of cases. The main proposal is that there are three tiers (or levels) of philosophical novels: "strong", "moderate", and "marginal". This suggests a foundation that is neither arbitrary nor inflexible.

For a novel to belong in one of the tiers, it must meet a set of criteria centred on what can be disclosed in interpretation. Three case studies provide paradigms for these tiers: Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and Jane Austen's *Emma*. Detailed analyses show not only how each work successfully meets the relevant criteria, but also offer a solid justification as to why three distinct tiers are necessary for adequately characterising what a philosophical novel is.

The thesis confronts some potential threats from within philosophy. Philosophical purists will deny that a work of pure imaginative fiction lacking argumentative structure could be genuinely philosophical, while philosophical pluralists see no problem with that. If the former are right then the thesis cannot get off the ground, if the latter are right then the thesis is redundant. A compromise is sought between purism and pluralism.

Each of the tiers invites and rewards a different mode of interpretation—"discovery", "reconstruction", and "creativity"—according to how the text of a novel sustains a philosophical reading of a strong, moderate or marginal kind.

The broad conclusion is that the idea of a "philosophical novel" is theoretically valid and useful under the constraints proposed.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

A special thank you to my parents, Tony and Karen Wegscheidler, and my grandparents, Anton and Rita Wegscheidler. For being my greatest support network since day one and teaching me the value of education and a good work ethic.

I would not be where I am today without my family's love and kindness. My success has been and always will be our success.

I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to the many members of the University of York's philosophy department, whose dedication, help, and consideration are much valued and appreciated.

A respectful thank you to Owen Hulatt (joint supervisor in my final year) and Gregory Currie (member of my Thesis Advisory Panel and chair of my progression panel) for raising helpful questions and keeping me on track.

A warm thank you also to Janet Eldred, who assisted me even before I moved to York, and to my fellow PhD students, who welcomed me into their postgraduate community with open arms.

Most important of all, I want to give my gratitude to my supervisor, Peter Lamarque—the best supervisor any PhD could ask for.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Introduction

When reading a novel, one might be struck by how philosophical its writing sounds. Lots of novels touch on abstract questions which are and have been of interest to philosophy. These include themes of morality, personal identity, social class and mobility, power and corruption, and so on. For example, novels on social class and mobility, like Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, seem to say something significant about these philosophical-seeming themes. Indeed, *David Copperfield* would lose its essential character without the strong message of transcending social class through hard work and self-determination. In this sense, one might assume that some novels are more philosophical than others. Some literary works seem to stand out in a way that philosophers as well as literary critics take notice of. There is something about them that sets them apart and invites the postulation of a distinctive genre of novel: the philosophical novel.

Background

There are obviously philosophical aspects of literary works (like Camus's *The Stranger*) and literary aspects of philosophical works (Plato's *Symposium*), but merging these two disciplines into a single, coherent literary genre raises some difficultly as there seems to be no universally agreed definition of what constitutes this genre. This lack of a straightforward definition comes from the vagueness of what a philosophical novel—i.e. a novel belonging to that genre—is in itself.

It soon became apparent from my initial research into the conception of philosophical novels that it is too simplistic and misleading to define such works as merely a fusion between philosophy and literature. A major contributor to this conundrum is that the disciplinary norms of reading are distinct in each field. Reading a work "as literature" and "as philosophy" seem quite wide apart. One reason is that works of literature (by which I mean literary fiction) and works of philosophy have different aims, and so readers approach these works with distinct expectations which do not, and cannot, translate easily from one to the other. Does this complicate the question of how one might read a philosophical novel, if there is such a thing? Philosophers and literary critics have worried it might. As philosopher of literature and aesthetics Peter Lamarque puts it:

> There is more than a grain of truth in the naïve picture according to which a literary reading gives attention to a work's language, form, structure, plot and character development, narratorial voice, potential ironies, allusions to other works, symbolism, imagery, and thematic coherence, while a philosophical reading focuses on implicit or explicit claims made, arguments presented, clarity of exposition, relation to comparable arguments elsewhere, location within a tradition of debate, and the intrinsic persuasiveness of ideas defended. (Lamarque, forthcoming)

It seems clear that reading Plato's dialogues invites this bifurcation of attention—"as literature", "as philosophy"—with the result that quite different kinds of judgments are made. Something similar happens in our attending to novels with a strong philosophical component. This raises the question of whether it is possible to read a philosophical novel *as a philosophical novel*,

rather than alternating between reading it “as literature” and “as philosophy”. Any proposed definition must take these disciplinary differences into account, providing a satisfactory bridge to overcome this worryingly wide gap.

The ancient quarrel

The wide gap between philosophy and literature has been carved out throughout the centuries. While ancient Eastern philosophy was more accepting of poetry, embracing literary forms like poetic language and storytelling as conveyers of wisdom and truth, Western philosophy has had a more contentious relationship with poetry (later referred to as literature). The tension between the two disciplines was epitomised by Plato’s reference to an “ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry” in Book Ten of *The Republic* (1973). His treatise presents what he believes to be the perfect, utopian city-state, which is ruled by philosophers and affords at best only the most minor role for poets.

The banishment of poets was a strategic move to help bring the masses towards what Plato thought to be real truth, being led there by their philosopher-kings. For Plato, the aim of philosophy is the rational pursuit of truth, the kind of truth that is certain and unchanging, tying back to his theory of the Forms. Poetry, on the other hand, is a form of mimesis or imitation, making it inherently lesser than its truth-seeking counterparts. Its purpose is to entertain readers, not by imparting knowledge but displaying copies of the real world.

Yet not everyone agreed with Plato's criticism of poetry. Indeed his own student, Aristotle, was one of the first to defend poets against such charges, taking a much more positive view of what poetry had to offer. Like Plato, he thought that poetry was a form of mimesis, but despite this he saw poetry's potential as a source for real knowledge, one centring on universals instead of particulars. Non-fictional texts, like history, are about what Aristotle referred to as particulars; they reveal what a specific person did at a certain place and time. Poetry, by contrast, focuses on universal human traits. "The universal is the kind of speech or action which is consonant with a person of a given kind in accordance with probability or necessity; this is what poetry aims at, even though it applies individual names." (Aristotle, 1996, 16) By watching tragedies, for example, audiences expand their understanding of human nature by seeing how different kinds of people with different human traits act or react to various circumstances. It also offers a kind of emotional catharsis or cleansing through invoking and then finding relief from the heightened experience of pity and terror.

This is what differentiates poetry from other forms of writing but also where its unique value lies. Aristotle famously notes: "poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history." (Aristotle, 1996, 16) Fiction has the opportunity to edify the masses in a way that non-fiction cannot, which makes it valuable in its own right. This also suggests that some literary works can be considered as genuinely "philosophical" or at least of some value to philosophy.

The current issue

Not every philosopher has sided with Aristotle's or Plato's position in the debate, but general trends favouring one side of the conflict or the other have coincided with other historical philosophical developments and movements. The theory that some literary works can teach us something of value is still prevalent in philosophy of literature, but it is one of many proposed ways that a work may be considered as philosophical. Several philosophers, as we shall see, point to a handful of works which they consider to be philosophically significant for various reasons. Yet there is a lack of consensus on how these works are or can be considered as "philosophical".

Answering this question is the ultimate focus of this thesis. My position is that there are genuinely philosophical novels and that we can read philosophical novels *as* philosophical novels, not merely as literary works that contain some philosophy or from which can be extracted some kind of philosophical argument. But to argue that this is the case, a working definition of what a philosophical novel is must be agreed upon. Several basic, garden-variety descriptions and lists of novels are offered online, but finding a more substantial definition with clear boundaries as to what belongs in the genre has proven to be more difficult.

It might be prudent at this point to justify my decision to restrict the discussion to novels. The reasons why I am excluding other forms of literature like poetry, drama, epics, and short stories are two-fold. First, much has already been written on philosophy and novels by literary critics and philosophers alike. I will be addressing some of these theories throughout this thesis, drawing on them for my own argument. Second, I want to narrow the focus on narrative and fiction, the content of which highlights issues which are naturally within the

sphere of philosophy (human action, morality, motivation, desires, ambitions, values, etc). When discussing the term "philosophical fiction" in philosophy of literature or literary studies, the scope is usually narrowed down to literary novels when providing a list of case studies (though there are exceptions). While the boundaries of philosophical fiction are themselves unclear, an attempt to cover the vast and diverse array of examples in the whole category would distract from my original project. By restricting the focus to novels, I am better able to give a substantial, working definition and provide some much-needed structure (or boundaries) to the genre.

Of course I am not the first to attempt such a feat, but while many philosophers and critics provide philosophical interpretations of certain novels, formulating a precise definition of a "philosophical novel" is rare. It is rarer still to find a detailed characterisation of philosophical novels as a legitimate genre of literature—one that is on par with other literary genres like historical, science fiction, or fantasy. But the idea that some works can be considered as genuinely philosophical has been raised by a few philosophers, most notably the ones who interpret a selection of novels through a philosophical lens. Those philosophers who argue such a case usually include accompanying case studies to showcase how novels can be philosophical or explore philosophical ideas. How they assert that novels like those in their case studies can be classified as philosophical can be divided into three broad types of theories.

The first kind refers to the idea that a philosophical novel is one from which we can extract a philosophical interpretation. Philosophers like Peter Jones (1975) and Alan Goldman (2013) turn attention from the work to the reader based on their own personal engagement with a novel. In the case of Peter Jones, for

example, he argues that novels need not contain any real philosophy. By "real philosophy" he refers to the sort of argumentation or discussion we find in traditional philosophical treatises, and which is absent from most works of literary fiction. Instead, the work must lend itself well to a significant philosophical interpretation by the reader. He provides case studies of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, and Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, to prove that novels can be philosophical without containing "real" philosophy in the sense of engaging more traditional philosophical methods. The consequence is that a novel's "philosophicalness", as Jones puts it, depends on how the reader interprets its content (i.e. novels are subjectively, not objectively philosophical).

The second way stems from the argument that philosophical novels can be defined by how they serve the discipline or what they can teach us about certain kinds of philosophy, typically moral or political. As we saw with Aristotle, the idea that reading certain works of fiction can edify our moral character is not new but is still supported by philosophers like Martha Nussbaum (1997). A novel may not contain any philosophy of the kind we find in philosophical texts, but the fact that we can learn certain moral lessons from fiction, and sharpen our moral sensibilities, imbues it with a sort of value to philosophy. A central thesis in Nussbaum (1992) is that novels can also contribute to moral philosophy itself: "My aim is to establish that certain literary texts (or texts similar to these in certain relevant ways) are indispensable to a philosophical inquiry in the ethical sphere: not by any means sufficient, but sources of insight without which the inquiry cannot be complete." (Nussbaum, 1992, 24-5) She argues that for a distinctive ethical (i.e.

Aristotelian) conception, a complete investigation requires us to examine the "forms and structures such as those that we find in these novels." (Nussbaum, 1992, 24-5) The idea is that by giving close attention to novels by authors such as Henry James and Marcel Proust, we can use them to supplement and deepen our understanding of Aristotelian Virtue Theory.

The last way turns to the idea of philosophical novels comprising their own literary genre. While it is generally accepted that philosophical novels do constitute a genre of literature, there is no universally agreed definition of the genre. Some philosophers have sought to ground a definition in the idea of philosophical themes, the presence of which provide a unifying thread through the genre (this idea is implied in the other two theories, but philosophers supporting the idea have tried to explain more precisely how this works). Such is the case with Michael H. Mitias in his recent publication, *The Philosophical Novel as a Literary Genre* (2022). He stresses that the focus should not be on individual works on a case-by-case basis, but rather on defining and legitimatizing the genre of philosophical fiction so it is on par with other well-known genres such as romance or science fiction. Mitias offers his own account of the genre, stating that some novels have the capacity to teach and enhance their readers' knowledge and understanding of philosophical concepts, namely those centring on human nature and life. (Mitias, 2022, 6) Those novels containing such philosophical themes, and whose material is able to strengthen their readers' understanding of these abstract concepts in a significant way, rightfully belong to the genre.

Unsurprisingly there are general overlaps between the three theories. All the novels Jones, Goldman, and Nussbaum analyse in their case studies have

philosophical themes. One could also argue that these themes make the novels philosophical by lending themselves to strong philosophical interpretations (we interpret how the work handles its themes). And it might be possible to expand our ethical understanding by reading certain works with heavy moral themes like James's *The Golden Bowl* or Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. So these theories are not necessarily distinct from one another, and while they imply different conceptions of what a philosophical novel is, it is not hard to imagine an amalgamation of the three combined to form a wider description.

Yet even if we combined these three theories into one overarching conception of what a "philosophical novel" is, it would still not satisfactorily tackle the initial issue I noted at the beginning. The issue here is the same as when I compared Camus's *The Stranger* to Plato's *Symposium*, which was later amplified by the contrast I saw when reading Jean Paul Sartre's *Nausea* and Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* for my own case studies. As it became glaringly obvious when reading a diverse array of other philosophical novels, from Jane Austen's *Emma* to Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, one cannot help but take notice of the fundamental distinction between how these works treat their philosophical content. I agree with previous philosophers on two key points: one, that some novels can be significantly philosophical, and two, that the philosophical genre is a legitimate literary genre on a par with other genres. But the real issue still to be faced is a lack of systematization or categorization within the genre.

The overall intention of my project is to rectify this problem. While attempts have been made to distinguish philosophical novels from other kinds of fiction, with varying degrees of success, there is a need for some clear differentiation

within the genre. I looked at numerous cases of potential philosophical novels, with titles ranging across the spectrum. This includes novels that were written by actual philosophers (my hope was that reading novels created by philosophers might help me to better identify other legitimate philosophical literary works). However, examining these cases revealed the huge range and diversity of the works. As philosophers like Jones and Mitias have argued, the unifying force binding all these various works under one genre is their central philosophical themes and claims, and our ability to uncover these through interpretation. It does not matter what the subject content itself consists in, be it men committing criminal acts in nineteenth century Russia or going on months' long whale-hunting expeditions in the same era. Even the themes themselves need not focus on any restricted range of philosophical questions; they need only be philosophically relevant. Initially this seemed to confirm what previous philosophers and critics observed: that a novel which has any even vaguely philosophical themes and theses may qualify as philosophical, and I began to wonder about the viability of my thesis.

As I reflected on the situation, however, I could not get over the stark differences between the novels, *Nausea* and *Crime and Punishment*. Despite both novels belonging broadly under the philosophical genre of literature, it is undeniable that they present the philosophical aspects of their works in completely dissimilar ways. Seeing these differences in these two novels, among others, prompted me to reconsider the structure of the genre as a whole. It seems too basic and unhelpful to say that anything remotely philosophical belongs under the genre's metaphorical umbrella. As we will see with my case studies on *Nausea* and *Crime and Punishment*, there is a considerable difference to how these novels treat their philosophical content

and themes, and it ought to be accounted for. In other words, by taking these differences into account, we can better identify which works belong under the genre and how "philosophical" they potentially are. And that is when I realised that these differences might make for interesting generalisations about the categories.

The tier list

This thesis seeks to offer some much-needed structure, not by proposing some single strict (but seemingly arbitrary) definition of "philosophical novel", but by accepting flexibility in interpretation and application, and drawing some reasonable and plausible bounds between different kinds of cases. This solves the issue of the contrasting differences between some of the novels within the genre. My goal is to essentially create categories within the genre of philosophical novels so we can better classify and organize works deemed to be philosophical.

The main proposal is that there are three tiers (or levels) of philosophical novels – strong, moderate, and marginal – suitably characterized and illustrated (see below). This suggests a foundation which is neither arbitrary nor inflexible. The Case Studies provide paradigms for these tiers. And a supporting theoretical framework is provided through a discussion of philosophical styles (as it were, the limits of philosophy), and by examining the bounds and aims of literary interpretation.

Each tier offers its own definition of what a philosophical novel must possess, or instantiate, to belong to its ranks. I will use the terms "significantly

philosophical" and "philosophically significant" throughout this thesis when describing these tiers. For a novel to be significant in the philosophical sense alludes to a few different meanings—all of them relevant here. It refers to a work's depth of philosophical thought, notably how a work presents, develops and defends the philosophical ideas it touches upon. It also refers to philosophical relevance or importance to the discipline, notably where a novel explicitly or implicitly invokes abstract concepts which are important to philosophy. Lastly, it also alludes to how a novel's philosophical content interacts with the rest of the work's features, including its literary style, character development, setting, etc. To say that a novel is philosophically significant is to say that the philosophy it contains, in ways we shall discuss below, contributes to a significant part of the novel's identity as a work of literary fiction. We shall examine in detail how this is accomplished in my case studies.

What follows is a rough taxonomy of the three tiers comprising the genre of philosophical novels:

Tier 1 (strong)

The first tier is reserved for the strongest of the philosophical novels. It refers to novels that are deeply philosophical, to the point where they would be classified under the genre of philosophical literature before all others. They make up the bulk of prime examples of what these sorts of novels are. A novel in this Tier is strongly and essentially philosophical satisfying these criteria:

A novel counts as strongly philosophical if and only if:

- It invites an interpretation in philosophical terms (philosophical *themes*).

- It implies and supports substantial philosophical claims (philosophical *theses*).
- It contributes to a better understanding of a philosophical problem (philosophical *advancement*).
- It has an imaginatively engaging content (character and incident) with a coherent aesthetic structure (*literary merit*).

This includes the subject of my first Case Study: Sartre's *Nausea*. Other examples are listed in the accompanying Appendix.

The first tier is the smallest of the three categories. A significant number of Tier 1 novels were written by philosophers, though this is not a requirement. But the bulk of novels in this genre belong to the other two tiers, with Tier 2 making up the second-largest pile.

Tier 2 (moderate)

The second tier is for novels I consider as moderately but significantly philosophical. Their content is not as centered on philosophical themes and theses as those in the strong tier. Indeed, there is a strong contrast between the first and second tier in terms of how philosophical content is handled by the novels. But this is not to say that moderate philosophical novels are lesser than their strong counterparts. They still have quite a lot to offer in terms of philosophical importance and are a sizable chunk of the genre. These are the novels most philosophers and critics refer to when listing examples of what constitutes a philosophical novel. Like the strong tier, there is a list of criteria a work must satisfy if it is to belong to this category:

A novel counts, moderately but significantly, as philosophical if and only if:

- It is manifestly a novel of ideas (ideas of an abstract kind are integral to a proper understanding of it).
- It invites philosophical reflection of a serious kind without necessarily pursuing or developing a determinate philosophical position (thesis) of its own.
- The philosophical themes emerge, not explicitly as in Tier 1 cases, but through a process of reconstructive interpretation which the work seems to encourage and reward.
- It has an imaginatively engaging content (character and incident) with a coherent aesthetic structure (*literary merit*).

The subject of my second Case Study will be an uncontroversial moderately philosophical novel: Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. As with my first case study, other examples will be listed in the Appendix.

One might be forgiven for thinking that the majority of novels in the genre of the philosophical novel belong to these two tiers. Indeed, when one searches for lists or examples of philosophical novels online, titles in the strong or moderate categories appear most often. Even previous case studies like those offered by Peter Jones or Martha Nussbaum focus on moderately philosophical novels. These sorts of works seem to represent the genre as a whole.

Yet this picture is misleading. I would say by far the biggest—and arguably greyest—category is the third tier.

Tier 3 (marginal)

The third tier is what I call the marginal tier because its works are marginally, but not negligibly, philosophical. It also differs from the first two tiers in that it serves as the boundary between what officially belongs to the tier list and what is excluded. The consequence is a sort of greyness between the boarder, which we shall examine in more depth in Chapter Four. But this also explains why this category is so wide. It is where a work goes if we are unsure of its philosophical significance (at least whether it is strong enough to be classified as "moderate"). Some works like Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Melville's *Moby Dick* are hard to classify because they are so different from those in the moderate and especially the strong tier. It seems too determinate to say that they are not philosophical, but also too vague to say that they are philosophically significant. Consequently, this is the hardest tier to define and to formulate clear and discriminating criteria for.

A novel counts, marginally but not negligibly, as philosophical if and only if:

- It loosely, but not merely arbitrarily, offers a framework for philosophical reflection, often in moral philosophy but also in political philosophy or metaphysics or philosophy of science (e.g. science fiction).
- The philosophical themes are not its central literary or artistic purpose and emerge through interpretation that is not so much demanded by the work but nevertheless offers some rewards in appreciation.
- It illustrates a clear differentiation between being marginally philosophical and not being discernibly philosophical at all.
- It has an imaginatively engaging content (character and incident) with a coherent aesthetic structure (*literary merit*).

My last case study explores the line between where the marginal tier begins and where the non-philosophical novels start in Chapter Four: Jane Austen's *Emma*. Like the other tiers, I provide other examples of novels belonging to the marginal tier in the Appendix.

Chapters Two to Four will provide what I hope to be convincing arguments to justify the creation of my tier list. As we shall see, the differences between these novels are substantial in a philosophical and literary sense. As I hope my criteria above show, to say that a single novel from one tier represents what a "philosophical novel" looks like is misleading. It is true that Sartre's *Nausea* is a prime example of what legitimately constitutes a philosophical novel and is a strong contender for the genre. But it fails to capture why other works like Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and Austen's *Emma* are also serious contenders. The novels are simply too distinct from one another to group together under a single conception of the genre, without it becoming arbitrary upon further inspection.

It is also unhelpful to assume that we ought to examine every novel on a case-by-case basis and then locate their philosophical status on a continuous spectrum. The tiers provide a much-needed framework while also trimming down on the unnecessary task of trying to figure out where each individual novel stands on a massive, overarching spectrum spanning from very philosophical to not philosophical at all. The tiers allow for some ambiguity while maintaining a firm structure (it is unclear if Sartre's *Nausea* is more philosophical than Camus's *The Outsider* but they both belong to the strong tier).

There is still some greyness within the tiers which I am comfortable with. I am not trying to eliminate all indeterminacy across the boundaries and there will inevitably be disputed cases in a grey area between the tiers. That does not invalidate the tier divisions. What it does do is highlight certain important points about the tier structure. For example, the definitions do *not* provide any automatic (box ticking) way of categorising novels. To determine what belongs where will always be a matter of *judgement*; this follows from the essential role assigned to *interpretation* in each tier. It might be the case that under one reasonably well-supported interpretation a novel is deemed to have a primary or substantial theme that is not philosophical, while on another also plausible interpretation philosophical themes are prominent. In such a case a further judgement is needed as to whether, say, the philosophical interpretation does more justice to the contents and interest of the novel. Only at that point is it open to categorisation as a philosophical novel (in whatever tier). It is not unusual for the genre categorisation of a novel to rest on interpretative judgements. In effect the case studies that follow are exercises in interpretation. The claim now is only that while the bounds between the tiers are not hard and fast, they are sufficiently clear to give a worthwhile and theoretically useful way of categorising cases.

One final observation at this stage concerns the “marginal” tier. To classify a novel as “marginally philosophical” is *not* to make a negative critical judgment; it is not a judgment about literary merit, only a judgment about philosophical content. Not having any philosophical content is never a reason for devaluing a work of literature. Thus, for example, Jane Austen’s *Emma*, our third case study, indisputably belongs in the canon of English literature, indeed one of the most admired novels from the nineteenth century. So, categorising it as a

philosophical novel in the marginal category has no implications whatsoever for its high status as a work of literature.

Chapters One and Five provide some context both for the case studies and why the issue of philosophical literature is contentious. The first chapter is a response to a fundamental criticism against my entire project: that it is pointless from two angles, either on the grounds that on any strict conception of philosophy novels are simply not the kind of writing that could count as philosophical, or on the opposite grounds that in fact hugely diverse kinds of writing count as philosophical so there is no special problem including novels. Thus, on this dilemma, the claim that there are genuinely philosophical novels is either false or trivially true.

Once I address both these criticisms, we shall move onto each of the case studies (Sartre's *Nausea*, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and Austen's *Emma*). Finishing off the thesis is a chapter on interpretation and the role it plays when determining into which tier a philosophical novel belongs. By the end I hope to overcome the vagueness the definition of philosophical novels and its genre has previously endured.

Chapter I: Modes of Philosophy

Introduction

If you survey the countless philosophical texts at least in the Western philosophical tradition, one thing will soon become apparent. There is no single consistent writing style used across the whole canon. Consider the diversity of styles and methods among even this small sample of canonical works: Plato's *Symposium*, Cicero's *Letters*, Plotinus' *Enneads*, Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, Descartes' *Meditations*, Pascal's *Pensées*, Spinoza's *Ethics*, Pope's *Essay on Man*, Berkeley's *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, Quine's *Word and Object*. No doubt a similar diversity could be found in other academic fields too, like history, psychology, or literary criticism, so this is not a trait exclusive to philosophy. Nor is it considered to be a problem, or at least one that calls for special justification. It is true that some philosophers have sought to promote the use of a more formulaic, abstract style, and have written their work in such a way. But this sort of format is usually the exception, not the norm. Not all philosophical treatises look like or try to emulate Spinoza's *Ethics* or Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. There is no requirement for them to do so. Philosophy, it seems, is a discipline which is fairly non-judgmental over what style of writing the author decides to use. From a surface point of view, we can take from this that what is actually important to philosophers is the philosophical content and not the style in which it is written.

The fact that the academic field of philosophy has no overarching style to which all philosophers must at least try to adhere seems evident. But it is too hasty to conclude that all that matters then is its abstract content, and that style and presentation are of subsidiary importance. Philosophy, as a series of written arguments, actually shares many things in common with imaginative literature, and these are worth considering.[1] I will not argue that if we squint hard enough, the line between philosophical treatises and literary works (in the sense in which that latter designation concerns us) blurs—it does not. Philosophy and imaginative literature belong to two different camps with different goals. Yet this does not mean that these camps cannot take inspiration from each other. It is the similarities between these two fields which allow us to bring them closer together and see how they might influence one another.[2]

Before I can introduce any philosophical novels into the canon, however, I must first tackle two potentially serious threats to my thesis (the thesis, namely, that there are genuinely philosophical novels, albeit falling into different classificatory tiers). The first threat arises from a philosophically purist position

[1] It is common to distinguish at least three general senses of the term "literature". One, it is more or less any kind of writing, for example "the literature on iPads". Two, writing that is especially "fine"; this is the "belles-lettres" sense and would include things like biographies, histories, certain works of philosophy, etc. And three, a narrower sub-class of two, which can be called "imaginative literature", including things like literary novels, plays and poems. The latter sense is what concerns my thesis, but I take it one step further to single out (literary) novels.

[2] My view here was influenced by two essays which delve into the complex intersectionality between philosophy and literature. Ross 1969 and Beck 1980 examine how literature can serve philosophical purposes and how philosophers may heighten the impact of their argument by using literary devices and techniques in their texts. For a specific example of this interwoven relationship concerning a philosopher's work, Bell 2001 explores how David Hume's stylistic choice (the literary form of dialogues) affected his arguments concerning religion.

that states that no novel, to the extent that it is a purely imaginative work of fiction, primarily inviting an aesthetic response, could ever satisfy the conditions of being a serious work of philosophy. The second threat arises from a more open, philosophically pluralist, view according to which more or less anything can count as philosophy, so long as it broadly touches on philosophical topics and questions.

In brief, the threat from philosophical purism is that, if correct, it shows that my project can never get off the ground. Novels could never satisfy the strict conditions. The threat from philosophical pluralism is that, if correct, it shows that the project is redundant: it is just obvious that novels can be philosophical!

Both threats pose a serious risk to my project, and I shall address each in turn.

By tackling both objections we will ease open the metaphorical floodgates to philosophy just wide enough to let some particular novels slip in, but not so wide that every literary work will be admitted. My goal in this chapter is to come to some sort of compromise with those who assert that works of pure fiction have no place in the philosophical canon, and those who say that anything remotely philosophical is already eligible for canonical status. I aim to find a balance between these views, admitting that some works of fiction are genuinely philosophical in nature, while also restricting which novels count as philosophically significant. This will set some much-needed parameters or boundaries for my tier list as a whole.

Part One- Philosophical Purism

The idea of philosophy as a discipline which is *a priori* in nature, seeks a high degree of objectivity in examining a class of abstract concepts, is grounded in rational argument, and can be mostly pursued in an armchair might be called a purist's conception of the subject. Creative imagination plays at best a minor role in this view, apparent perhaps only in expressive or stylistic choices, or in brief illustrative passages in aid of argumentative advancement. For the purist, what philosophers ought to focus on exclusively are the arguments presented, the style of their presentation being largely irrelevant.

However, it should be conceded immediately that purists need not object to any or all uses of fictionality in philosophical exposition. After all, the canon is full of instances of fictional illustration: from Plato's allegory of the cave (1973) or the Ring of Gyges (1973) or Descartes's evil genius (2017) or Locke's prince and the cobbler (1970), right up to Bernard Williams's Jim and the Indians (1973) or Nelson Goodman's "grue" and "bleen" (1983). The purist does not object in principle to the use of thought experiments in philosophy, a topic that I will return to. But the purist does insist that thought-experiments or other uses of fiction must, in a serious work of philosophy, earn their keep by contributing to the development of an argument.

This postulated purist holds the position that philosophy only does philosophy, so to speak. Its job is not to entertain readers or to tell compelling stories. This does not mean that philosophical works cannot be entertaining to read, but this is not their primary objective. I will address this stance because such a stance is dangerous to my overall thesis. Typically, novels either do not contain any real arguments at all or at least do not put arguments at the core of their

endeavour. The threat here is, then, if the purist view is right, my thesis will falter.

Philosophical purism of this kind is related to what Berel Lang calls “the Neutralist Model” of philosophy. (Lang, 1988, 102) The Neutralist Model states that “the form or structure of philosophical discourse … is denied any intrinsic connection to its expression as philosophy; the relation is viewed as at most ornamental, at its least as accidental and irrelevant, even as a hinderance or occasion of philosophical obfuscation.” (Lang, 1988, 102) Again, what is important according to this viewpoint is the argument being presented by the philosopher, effectively stripping philosophical texts down to their bare bones which includes their premises, conclusions, and logical structure. The argumentative form must always be in service of rigour and clarity in exposition. The content rests on a relatively small number of abstract concepts and questions arising from metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, philosophy of mind, logic, etc. Anything beyond this narrowly defined conception of form and content is superfluous. This is a kind of essentialism which eliminates anything that is not direct, rational argument and the truths thereby sought in it.

However, even the strictest purist would not deny that philosophical writings can have different, sometimes unique, styles, as exemplified in the sample list of canonical works. Those who subscribe to the Neutralist Model can agree that different texts employ different literary tones and devices and even concede that these style differences need not ultimately detract from the value of their philosophical content. But many would insist that what is philosophically valuable in these works could, and perhaps should, be captured

in a more austere argumentative form.[3] Literary or rhetorical devices contribute nothing in themselves and more often than not are a hindrance to proper philosophical advancement.

A hint of some such philosophical purism can be found in early modern philosophy. One example might be Descartes's curious, not often remarked, re-formulation of the principal arguments in a formal exposition (somewhat anticipating the style of Spinoza's *Ethics*, but fundamentally drawing on the mathematical method in Euclid's Elements). Descartes titled the passage "Arguments proving the existence of God and the distinction between soul and body arranged in geometrical order" and it is appended to his *Second Set of Replies*. (Descartes, 1984, 113-120) The passage, following Euclid, lays out Definitions, Postulates, Axioms or Common Notions, preceding four Propositions (i.e. theorems) each with its formal demonstration. Although Descartes insisted that this was no substitute for reading the *Meditations* itself, he clearly believed that this condensed form captured the argumentative essence of that work, and showed the formal, quasi-mathematical rigour of the reasoning in the work. It suggests a kind of rational ideal that the purists strive for in philosophy, further exemplified in Spinoza. Needless to say, this ideal is strikingly different from what one might expect in a novel.

[3] It is important to stress that this does not downplay the role of rhetoric in philosophical arguments. Warner 1989 reasons that a degree of finesse is also important for the persuasibility of philosophical discourse. He sheds light on the intimate relationship between rational argument and rhetorical skills philosophers must cultivate for their positions to be effectively persuasive. Warner makes it clear that a sound argument is not convincing in and of itself; how such ideas are communicated is also crucial to an argument's effectiveness. He offers a more recent examination of this concept in *The Aesthetics of Argument* (2016).

Another exemplification of the purist's ideal appears in John Locke's famous attack on rhetorical and figurative excess in philosophical prose:

> … if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence has invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment, and so indeed are perfect cheats, and, therefore, however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided, and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, whether of the language or person that makes use of them. (Locke, 1970, 251)

The passage is a clear statement of further formal (linguistic) constraints demanded by strict philosophical purism.

The purist form, one might say, of philosophical purism insists that anything which lacks deep and rigorous engagement with the fundamental topics central to philosophical interest cannot be taken seriously if proper boundaries are to be enforced. These strict criteria can lead to internal gatekeeping, with works being rejected as philosophically insignificant or even somehow deceitful.

A nice, more recent, example of the gatekeeper function of philosophical purism can be found in a letter sent to *The Times* newspaper on Saturday, May 9, 1992 arguing on behalf of certain members of the Philosophy Faculty at the

University of Cambridge against the proposal to offer Jacques Derrida an honorary degree:

> Derrida describes himself as a philosopher, and his writings do indeed bear some of the marks of writings in that discipline. Their influence, however, has been to a striking degree almost entirely in fields outside philosophy – in departments of film studies, for example, or of French and English literature. In the eyes of philosophers, and certainly among those working in leading departments of philosophy throughout the world, M. Derrida's work does not meet accepted standards of clarity and rigour.
>
> We submit that, if the works of a physicist (say) were similarly taken to be of merit primarily by those working in other disciplines, this would in itself be sufficient grounds for casting doubt upon the idea that the physicist in question was a suitable candidate for an honorary degree.
>
> Derrida's career had its roots in the heady days of the 1960s and his writings continue to reveal their origins in that period. Many of them seem to consist in no small part of elaborate jokes and puns (‘logical phallusies’ and the like), and M. Derrida seems to us to have come close to making a career out of what we regard as translating into the academic sphere tricks and gimmicks similar to those of the Dadaists or of the concrete poets.

> Certainly he has shown considerable originality in this respect. But again, we submit, such originality does not lend credence to the idea that he is a suitable candidate for an honorary degree.
>
> Many French philosophers see in M. Derrida only cause for silent embarrassment, his antics having contributed significantly to the widespread impression that contemporary French philosophy is little more than an object of ridicule. Derrida's voluminous writings in our view stretch the normal forms of academic scholarship beyond recognition. Above all—as every reader can very easily establish for himself (and for this purpose any page will do)—his works employ a written style that defies comprehension.
>
> Many have been willing to give M. Derrida the benefit of the doubt, insisting that language of such depth and difficulty of interpretation must hide deep and subtle thoughts indeed. When the effort is made to penetrate it, however, it becomes clear, to us at least, that, where coherent assertions are being made at all, these are either false or trivial.
>
> Academic status based on what seems to us to be little more than semi-intelligible attacks upon the values of reason, truth, and scholarship is not, we submit, sufficient grounds for the awarding of an honorary degree in a distinguished university.

This purist stance denies that Derrida's work can count as genuinely philosophical in not living up to the standards of clarity and rigour of argument required. Interestingly, the authors insist, in effect, on peer assessment of

philosophy; serious philosophical work, they seem to argue, can only earn its status as philosophy by being debated and taken seriously by other respected philosophers, and being admired mostly by non-philosophers cannot be a mark of respectability. One could imagine that, in a similar frame of mind, and indeed expression, the purist would take a comparably sceptical view of novels that purport to have philosophical content.

Yet this need not be the case. For the rest of this section, I will argue that even with these austere criteria in play, we only need to take a few crucial steps for some novels to be deemed philosophical. While purists might reject the writings of Derrida, we shall see that they might be persuaded to concede a place in the philosophical canon for certain kinds of works that conform to slightly less stringent conditions. Two kinds of cases come to mind – aphorisms and philosophical correspondence—where paradigm examples are widely accepted in the canon but where looser kinds of argumentation are more common. This might be a route, as we shall see, to admitting certain kinds of imaginative literature, even within the broad constraints of philosophical purism.

If the purist could accept that (at least some) aphorisms can be philosophically significant, a view which they might not vigorously reject, then this opens the floodgates to what can be considered as such. Once we qualify the requirement for a clear and rigorous argument to be present, other texts such as correspondence and novels might more easily be conceded as philosophically substantial. The purist may still resist admitting works of fiction, so I will first argue why non-fiction correspondence can count as philosophically valuable. And once the purist accepts that letters, including

those which were written with intentions besides just discussing philosophical content, can provide genuine philosophical insight, it is one more step to cross the line from non-fiction to fiction. Put simply, my overall position is that if the purist is willing to accept aphorisms into the canon, then they are more likely to also accept correspondence, and the admission of letters thus allows for the inclusion of some fictional works as well.

Aphorisms and philosophical purism

We shall begin with aphorisms, which are short yet memorable statements aspiring to express some sort of abstract truth. Typically, they offer no explicit arguments in support of themselves; they are merely assertions. However, in the Western tradition, aphorisms characteristically prompt further arguments in support of or against them, but this is not a universal requirement. Prominent texts of aphorisms in Eastern philosophy, including Confucius's *Analects* and Laozi's (or Lao Tzu) *Tao Te Ching*, centre on ideas which cannot be clearly and concisely argued for as these concepts are ineffable and inexplicable by their very nature.[4]

One example of this is the Taoist (Daoist) idea of the Tao or the Way from the *Tao Te Ching*. Laozi does not tell us what the Tao is or why we ought to believe that it is the fundamental, unifying force endlessly flowing through all things.[5]

[4] The actual author(s) of the *Tao Te Ching* is unknown. Traditionally it is attributed to Laozi, though it is unclear if he actually existed and if he wrote the treatise. But because he has been historically credited as the author, I will follow the trend of referring to him as such.
[5] The idea of the Tao/Way is much more complicated than described here. Several books and articles are devoted to defining the Tao but the idea as stated in the *Tao Te Ching* is undefinable. This is not to say that other scholars have failed in this task; I am simply saying here that according to Laozi's verses in the text, it is indescribable.

Instead, we are reminded that we cannot grasp what the Tao is through intellectual study alone. Learning about the Tao requires a deep level of introspection and contemplation by the individual. It is up to them to find out what the Tao is for themselves, with the understanding that they will come to grasp the universal truth in a way that is right for them, and Laozi provides several aphorisms to start us on this journey[6]:

> The Tao is ungraspable.
> How can her mind be at one with it?
> Because she doesn't cling to ideas.
>
> The Tao is dark and unfathomable.
> How can it make her radiant?
> Because she lets it.
>
> Since before time and space were,
> the Tao is.
> It is beyond *is* and *is not*.
> How do I know this is true?
> I look inside myself and see. (Laozi, 1988, verse 21)

Verses like the one above do not invite us to make arguments in their defence but rather prompt us to turn to our own intuitions as an authority on the topic

[6] It is implied that the wisdom contained in the *Tao Te Ching* cannot be taught. Instead, one must come into this understanding in their own time. "My teachings are easy to understand and easy to put into practice. Yet your intellect will never grasp them, and if you try to practice them, you'll fail. My teachings are older than the world. How can you grasp their meaning? If you want to know me, look inside your heart." (Laozi, 1988, verse 70)

("I look inside myself and see"). Regardless, in the popular mind and for philosophical pluralists, they are still thought to say something profound about the nature of existence and how one ought to live one's life, even if it cannot be explained or taught in the traditional (intellectualist) way. Indeed, on this more open conception, it is hard to deny that these Eastern texts, including those comprised strictly of maxims, are philosophical.

The purist may push back, claiming that what they really are is a kind of mysticism, quasi-religious or even poetic, but not strictly philosophical. Yet to downplay the significance of such texts would be to neglect a rich, diverse range of philosophical practices which do not centre on argumentation. If we do accept Eastern texts like this into a broader—but recognisable—philosophical canon, then we are admitting that, to count as philosophical, an assertion does not necessarily need to prompt any further argumentation or debate on the matter.

No doubt the purist would think this is a step too far and want to say that an aphorism is only valuable to the extent that it can and does lead to further (philosophical) discussion. What they would object to in these non-Western texts is not just that they fail to provide any supporting argument but that they reject altogether the need for argument in the kinds of examples given. For the purist what is objectionable is that these ideas are essentially non-rational and for that reason cannot be admitted as philosophy. They might be profound in their own way, not as philosophy but as kinds of mysticism or quasi-theological thought or even poetry.

Like their Eastern counterparts, Western aphorisms themselves do not give reasons why we ought to accept them as true. However, characteristically Western aphorisms are coined by philosophers as a way of supplementing traditional treatises. Two key examples that come to mind are Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer, who expand on the content of their maxims in their other writings. Yet as we shall see, the author writing the aphorisms is not required to support or defend them. If what matters to the purist is that the maxims lead to further discussion or debate, then it does not follow that whoever pens the maxims must also offer an argument defending their claims. So long as someone is inspired to argue for the aphorism in question, there is no additional obligation on the author.

This is the exact case with François de La Rochefoucauld, whose sole contribution to philosophy is a book of aphorisms.[7] His *Reflections: or Sentences and Moral Maxims* contain over six hundred assertions. Each of his maxims are a few sentences long, touching on various subjects like the paradoxes of human nature, the fear of death, the follies in love, and the complexities of morality. Some notable examples include:

> 23: Few men realize the fact of death; we do not usually tolerate its existence through resolution, but rather through insensitivity and habit; and most men die because they cannot help it. (36)

[7] Marcus Aurelius is also famous for his book of aphorisms, *Meditations*. I have chosen to focus on a less well-known moralist whose maxims are more random in nature. While the Meditations has a unifying theme through the entire work—that of developing one's perspective beyond one's own and in so doing becoming a better person—La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims* have less unity, touching on various topics in no order, although patterns do emerge as one continues to read. Marcus Aurelius is also generally accepted as a philosopher while La Rochefoucauld's philosophical standing is more questionable, usually being referred to as a moralist or writer than a philosopher.

> 105: The rational man is not he who stumbles upon reason, but he who knows what it is, discerns it, and relishes it. (52)
>
> 580: The philosophers, and Seneca above all others, in no wise pulverized crime with their moral precepts: they simply used crime as a building material in the edifice of their own pride. (153)

While not all La Rochefoucauld's maxims ring true today, it is obvious how impactful his writing was during the French Enlightenment and beyond. He never offered any explanation or defence of his assertions (for example, in the form of a traditional treatise), but he still nevertheless inspired others to continue developing their content.[8] Indeed, despite his only contribution to philosophy being a book of aphorisms, philosophers have noted the importance of his insights on the complexities of human nature. Two examples stick out here. The first is Voltaire, who praises La Rochefoucauld by name in one of his own most influential works, *Philosophical Dictionary*. He particularly admires La Rochefoucauld's epigrams on self-love, saying that he "had laid bare this human motive". (Voltaire, 1972, 204) What Voltaire is referring to here is La Rochefoucauld's insistence that self-love leads us to prioritizing our own welfare above the needs of others. Yet he was hesitant to outright condemn this kind of motivation, partly because it is integral to human nature but also that it may lead to good outcomes as well as bad. La Rochefoucauld himself

[8] The man prompted to continue writing about self-love is named Esprit whom Voltaire does not consider to be a philosopher. He notes how Esprit misidentifies prudence as a virtue instead of a talent. (Voltaire, 1972, 204) This suggests that Voltaire is also guilty of gatekeeping who can be considered a philosopher, but despite his referring to La Rochefoucauld as a duke instead of a moralist or philosopher, Voltaire clearly admired his writing.

acknowledges that he is only touching the surface of the idea in aphorism 3: "Though the realm of self-love has been explored, its uncharted territories remain vast." (31)

One who would agree with La Rochefoucauld here would be Nietzsche, who also greatly admired the *Maxims*' literary style and philosophy. Nietzsche compliments—while also gently criticising—him several times by name in his work, *Human, All Too Human*.[9] "La Rochefoucauld and those other French masters of psychical examination (to whom there has lately been added a German, the author of *Psychological Observations*) are skilful marksmen who again and again hit the bullseye—but it is the bullseye of human nature."[10] (Nietzsche, 1996, 32) Despite Nietzsche's minor criticisms, primarily that La Rochefoucauld did not go far enough in his examination of moral psychology, he obviously respects La Rochefoucauld's observations enough to mention him alongside other philosophers and psychologists of the day. One could even go so far to argue that it was La Rochefoucauld who inspired Nietzsche to write his own maxims.

Yet despite how influential his writing was to Western philosophy, it is difficult to know whether to label La Rochefoucauld as a philosopher in the traditional sense of the term. He did not publish a philosophical treatise and it is unclear

[9] Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human* has aphorisms of its own, some mirroring the style of La Rochefoucauld. For example, in terms of moral psychology he writes in Entry 85: "*Wickedness is rare*.— Most people are much too much occupied with themselves to be wicked." (Nietzsche, 1996, 48)

[10] The author of *Psychological Observations* (1875) is the German author, physician, and philosopher, Paul Rée. Like his friend, Nietzsche, he was also presumably inspired by La Rochefoucauld to convey his own thoughts on human nature through maxims.

whether he considered himself a philosopher.[11] Nevertheless, we can still say that he wrote an influential philosophical text.

Let me briefly summarize my position so far before moving on to correspondence. Most purists would admit that aphorisms, or at the very least Western aphorisms, have historically been accepted into the canon of significant philosophical works. If they accept the validity of this, does it weaken their conception of philosophy? Perhaps, but only to a small degree. Rather than insisting that philosophy must of necessity involve argumentation, they can now say that aphorisms can qualify as philosophy to the extent that they consist of assertions on an abstract subject matter, of interest to philosophy, with at least the potential to encourage others to fill in supporting arguments and further developments. Aphorisms, they might say, are like enthymemes, arguments with hidden premises of a kind that a conscientious reasoner might supply, expand, and support with further debate.

Perhaps the purists might be satisfied with this conclusion. They can accept books of maxims into the canon despite their lack of explicit argumentation. But this, as we shall see, opens the floodgates more to what can be considered as valuable to philosophy. My next question here is does it matter what kind of literature the claims are made in? Must a philosophical work exclusively state or argue for its philosophical ideas? This brings us back to a fundamental distinction between literary novels and philosophical treatises I mentioned

[11] Most texts I have read refer to La Rochefoucauld as a moralist instead of philosopher. It is not clear what he himself identified as, though it is possible that he accepted the label of "moralist". He frequented French salons where philosophical conversation was rife and was friends with famous intellectuals like the historic novelist, Madame de La Fayette. His maxims were written partly to entertain his friends in these circles.

earlier. The purist could say that for a work to be philosophical, it must be written with the sole and focused intention of presenting its philosophical content. Novels, by contrast, are not intended to exclusively relay philosophical ideas but rather their primary aim is to tell an imaginative story (although as we shall see in the next section, even this needs qualification).

It is true that most traditional works of philosophy have been created with one purpose in mind—to state and defend a truth or principle. It does not follow from this, however, that the sole intention behind all canonical works must be to present a philosophical theory. It also does not follow that any other intentions the author might have had while writing automatically detract from the philosophical value of the work. La Rochefoucauld is an obvious example here, as it is well-known that he wanted his maxims to entertain as well as inform his readers.[12]

[12] The literary quality of La Rochefoucauld's maxims also inspired other writers. This seems to be the case with Nietzsche, who—during the point in his career where he rejected the writings of Arthur Schopenhauer—admired La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims* partly for its artistic qualities. As Marion J. Faber notes in 'The Metamorphosis of The French Aphorism: La Rochefoucauld and Nietzsche': "La Rochefoucauld's maxims are like the tip of an iceberg of thought. As is well known, they are the result of countless reworkings to achieve the greatest brevity and bite, shocking apercus which leave the preliminary underpinnings of each thought unstated. This aspect of the maxims must also have been attractive to Nietzsche the artist, for unlike his philosophical predecessors, Nietzsche was not only a philosopher, but a poet as well, and surely valued the aesthetic satisfaction of a formation no less than its content (given that the two can be separated). His image of the cameo to describe La Rochefoucauld's aphorisms (Aph. 35) indicates his aesthetic orientation, his assessment of the maxims as delicate and difficult works of art. Thus he is drawn to La Rochefoucauld as much for the beauty of his literary style as for his psychological acumen." (Faber, 1986, 208) The aphorism mentioned in the quote above ties back to Nietzsche's praise for La Rochefoucauld's assessment on moral psychology. His maxim is: "All men possess an equal share of pride; they vary only in their means and methods of displaying it". (La Rochefoucauld, 1974, 38)

If the purist wishes to keep La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims* in the canon, despite its intent to amuse as well enlighten its readers, then they do so on the assumption that it is strictly the content of the work which determines its philosophical value. The author of the work—whether a philosopher or not—and their intentions behind writing the text play no substantial role here. This essentially turns us away from authorial intention towards the work as an entity in and of itself, an idea we shall return to in Chapter Five. But what is important for our purposes now is the idea that a work can be philosophically significant regardless of what the author's intentions are. It does not even matter who the author is, be they a professional philosopher, moralist, poet, etc. All that matters is that the work itself offers something philosophically valuable.

Let us imagine that the purist is willing to accept my position so far, even if begrudgingly so. But seemingly they draw the line at purely fictional works like novels being admitted into the philosophical canon. Their reservations are not weakened by the examples I have been using thus far, namely the books of aphorisms like the *Tao Te Ching* and the *Maxims*. By their very nature, both works are non-fiction since they exclusively aim to state truths and principles on abstract subjects. Thus, their inclusion as canonical works does not automatically support the admittance of novels as well. Indeed, all the examples I have listed only expound ideas in the form of statements and arguments. Even fictional dialogues and thought experiments like Plato's allegory of the cave centre on their philosophical content and contribution to arguments. They are not telling a compelling story with a complex narrative and interesting scenes and characters. Rather, these fictional elements are included only to help facilitate a philosophical discussion or debate. Therefore,

the use of fictional elements in philosophical works must be strictly in service of explaining or arguing for its ideas. This allows for some fiction to be present in philosophical works while also preserving the overarching importance of the search for truth in the discipline.

Novels as thought experiments

Let us pause here, however, to consider an idea endorsed by some prominent figures in the philosophy of literature. The idea is that in certain cases a novel can be viewed as a kind of thought experiment, one which is useful to philosophy or more specifically to moral philosophy. It may be possible that novels can act as legitimate thought experiments for other branches of philosophy, like political philosophy or the philosophy of science, but the consensus seems to be that if novels can be conceptualised as thought experiments, then they are most like those performed in ethics for reasons we shall return to shortly. If this is true, then this would give novels some philosophical value. Perhaps the purist might still resist this notion, but they would have to defend against the argument that novels pose some value when it comes to ethics.

This theory's principal tenet is that some novels share key similarities with traditional thought experiments performed in moral philosophy. Paradigmatic examples from recent moral philosophy would include Bernard Williams' Jim and the Indians (1973), Judith Jarvis Thomson's abortion and the violinist (1971), and Philippa Foot's Trolley Problem (2002), etc. Philosophical thought experiments and literary thought experiments, as I shall refer to them, are essentially fictional narratives presented with the intention of eliciting some

sort of response. The logical form of a philosophical thought experiment is the question: What would or should happen in such-and-such a situation? By "narrative" I refer to a thought experiment's internal structure, its chronological order. It is a hypothetical scenario with an imaginative content and context (i.e. we are being offered at least a fragment of a fictional story).

Novels usually have a conclusive ending to their scenarios, which traditional thought experiments lack, but this does not detract from their ability to be a kind of thought experiment. A reader's reaction to a situation will depend in part on how it resolves (or in some cases fails to resolve, which will also engender some sort of reaction). But the point is that novels can facilitate both a cognitive and emotional response from its readers. The cognitive response that all thought experiments hope to facilitate is one of intellectual curiosity in addressing a specific problem. It pushes participants to test their hypotheses and intuitions on complex concepts about which they may have preconceived ideas. The hope is that their understanding will be clarified and expanded in some way. In the case of moral thought experiments, they also help to cultivate empathy which novels may also seek to do. Thus, if we accept that moral thought experiments can be intellectually valuable to philosophy, and literary thought experiments share some key similarities with their philosophical counterparts, then they too can be seen as valuable at least in moral philosophy. As Noel Carroll puts it:

> [Thought experiments] are frequently employed by philosophers to defend and/or to motivate their claims, moral and otherwise. Thus, if these strategies are acceptable forms of knowledge production in philosophy and if literature contains comparable structures, then if

> philosophy conducted by means of thought experiments is an adequate source of knowledge and education, then so should literature be. (Carroll, 2002, 7)

The purist may object here. Philosophers who ascribe to this theory are quick to point out that while literary thought experiments share some traits with moral thought experiments, they are not merely elongated examples of them. One main reason is the distinct intentions behind their creation. As mentioned above, traditional thought experiments seek to expand our knowledge on abstract ideas or concepts—they act as "intuition pumps" by prodding us to explore, appraise, and challenge our intuitions and theories on the chosen subject matter. Literary novels, by contrast, are created primarily for the purposes of telling an entertaining story which elicits an aesthetic or emotional response (although of course authors might have other intentions as well). While some moral thought experiments may also evoke an emotional reaction, and were created to facilitate such a response, they are not designed for the purposes of entertainment. This is not the only difference between the types of thought experiments, but it is a significant one the purist would undoubtedly take note of.

Yet philosophers like Carroll, E. D. Dadlez, Susan L. Feagin and Catherine Z. Elgin do not see any reason why this ought to hinder a work's capacity to educate us and even see a potential advantage here. Since novels are not characteristically written with the sole purpose to educate and are not afraid to elicit an emotional response (unlike their scientific and many philosophical counterparts), authors consequently have more artistic freedom both in length and style. The length expands as more details are added, although as I will

argue in my case studies, a good author will be very deliberate in what they include in their narrative. Styles may also differ, not just from traditional thought experiments but from other novels (the literary styles of my three case studies are entirely distinct). But both depth and literary style, as Elgin and others claim, indirectly work to their advantage. Elgin writes:

> I suggest that literary fictions are extended, elaborate thought experiments. Unlike scientific thought experiments, however, they are neither austere nor strongly dependent on fixed, shared background assumptions. Works of fiction set their own parameters. They can presuppose or provide thick descriptions of events, agents, and circumstances. They can deploy a vast range of factors to achieve their ends. Not only the plot, but the characters, their reliability and perspectives on events, even the sound, shape, tone, and sequence of the words, may play a role. (Elgin, 2007, 3-4)

The "role" Elgin refers to is the facilitation of an imaginative, immersive experience while still operating like an experiment. She argues that literary thought experiments, if they are to work correctly, need more detail than average thought experiments so that they might show readers specific features of real life which weave together into previously unnoticed trends, patterns, inconsistencies, etc.

> Like an experiment, a work of fiction selects and isolates, manipulating circumstances so that particular properties, patterns, connections, disparities and irregularities are brought to the fore. It may localize and isolate factors that underlie or are interwoven into everyday life, but that

> are apt to pass unnoticed because they are typically overshadowed by other, more prominent concerns. (Elgin, 2007, 4)

The result is that reading fiction may spur us to consider situations and realities we might never have encountered before. Philosophers like David Novitz suggest that novels have a cognitive value as they expand our knowledge of specific kinds of situations and what one might do in such scenarios. This might refer to practical knowledge, like imagining what one could do if one were washed out to sea or stranded on a desert island. But these cognitive benefits are debatable.[13] What is generally agreed is that novels have the capacity to lead to a greater moral understanding and heightened empathy. Indeed, some philosophers argue that literature serves as better thought experiments in ethics than their traditional counterparts. "Literature serves some of the same functions that thought experiments do in ethics, though often with considerably more effectiveness." (Dadlez, 2009, 6)

The actual process of how novels enhance our moral understanding is debated. Dadlez offers a specific account:

> To imaginatively engage with a fiction and imaginatively enter into its endorsements can be to accede to certain judgments – that some behaviors are permissible given a particular set of alternatives, that some forms of decision-making morally mandate an initial attempt to

[13] Various works take a deeper look at the topics of the epistemic or cognitive value of literature, learning from literature, and truth in literature. While the majority of these concepts are beyond the scope of this chapter, some notable examples which offer more insight include Carroll 2007, John 1998, Lamarque 2007 and 1990, Novitz 1983, Hospers 1960, Weitz 1955, Jacquart 1974, Putnam 1976, and Wilson 1983.

> acquire information, that one thing can count as evidence for another. We don't believe in the existence of fictional characters or states of affairs, but we have plenty of beliefs about what can count as evidence, about what is permissible in different ranges of situations, about what kind of information is necessary if one is to make a competent decision. Those beliefs may be reinforced by our perusal of a literary work. They may be undermined when a work invites us to imagine exceptions or presents us with counterexamples. A belief may even be refined, as a fiction leads us to imagine a new way of considering evidence or justifying a decision. Imagination and hypothetical thinking in general cannot be severed from their conceptual underpinnings. If we cannot imagine what we cannot conceive, then what we can imagine is something to the possibility of which we have acceded. (Dadlez, 2009, 11-12)

Dadlez's account above refers to the expansion of one's imagination and creative thinking through the process of engaging with fiction which pushes our imaginative cognition to absorb new information and develop accordingly.

Another theory of how novels can edify our moral knowledge comes from Carroll's introduction of what he refers to as the Virtue Wheel.[14] Put simply, it is the idea that literary works enable readers to compare and contrast character traits which are viewed as virtues or vices. There are typically two characters

[14] Carroll 1998 delves deeper into the theoretical side of his position: that novels can enhance moral understanding. He argues that the narrative structure of novels, plays, films, etc. fosters greater moral insight by providing concrete yet nuanced examples of ethical dilemmas. He suggests that narrative artworks are also more immersive, offering a more relatable and easier-to-understand conception of complex moral concepts than their traditional ethical counterparts.

(although there may be more) that have opposite personality traits, and readers witness how these traits interact with each other and the world around them. Carroll uses the Schlegels and Wilcoxs in E. M. Foster's *Howards End* as a case study of characters' opposing virtues and vices whose portrayal sharpens the reader's moral clarity:

> In literary fictions such as *Howards End*, these comparisons and contrasts are apt to strike any moderately attentive reader, who, in addition, is aided in this by what the author and the characters say. These variations—these comparisons and contrasts—prompt the audience to apply concepts of virtue and vice to the characters, thus exercising and sharpening their ability to recognize instances of these otherwise often vaguely defined or highly abstract concepts. In this, such virtue wheels serve the purposes of moral education by enabling readers to recognize better, as Trollope might say, things like true honesty and false love. Moreover, this is clearly a contribution to our moral lives, since a large part of our moral lives is not simply concerned with how to act, but with issuing moral judgments about others. (Carroll, 2002, 13-14)

This is a sample of the theories offered in support of the idea that novels can act as kinds of thought experiment and how they might actually edify our moral understanding. But there has been a push-back against this idea within the philosophy of literature community.[15] Gregory Currie questions the effectiveness of literary thought experiments. His concern is with the consistent

[15] Other sceptics of literature's ability to significantly convey moral truths (or truth in general) include Gibson 2007, Lamarque 2006, and Stolnitz 1992.

vagueness regarding the exact epistemological benefits one might supposedly receive by engaging with certain works.

> We cannot understand the epistemic value of TEs if we ignore their role in a larger system of socially organized inquiry. TEs in both philosophy and the sciences help us to make progress only to the extent that they generate widely shared and robust judgement about their outcomes. […] I do not know of any evidence for the existence of widespread agreement in response when it comes to the sorts of fictions most likely to be cited as sources of knowledge. On the contrary, my sense is that audiences vary a good deal in their emotional and intellectual responses to fictions of any complexity and that literary scholars focus their attention on developing new and divergent interpretations of literary works. (Currie, 2020, 146-7)

Thought experiments in other disciplines have a clear epistemic value to their respective fields that literary thought experiments have yet to establish, and this is because of the lack of consensus on the exact type of knowledge novels may impart to readers. True, the idea that we can enhance our moral understanding by reading some works is generally agreed upon, but it is unclear what exactly that enhancement looks like or even how it comes about. This, as Currie points out, is partly due to the diverse (and sometimes conflicting) reactions readers experience when reading novels.

Unlike Elgin, among others, Currie disagrees that a novel's style and depth serve to its advantage when considering them as a unique kind of thought experiment. While a work's literary style, fleshed-out characters, and complex

scenes may allow for a more immersive reading experience, the narrative and characterization of novels intentionally prompts readers not just to engage with the subject-matter on an intellectual basis but, as we know, on an emotional one as well. The result is that it is highly unlikely that two readers will have the exact same experience when reading a work. There are many aspects or features a reader may choose to pay greater attention to or be more instinctively drawn toward. Unlike traditional moral thought experiments, which have all participants focus on the same context (it is so barebones that they have no choice but to focus on it), readers can essentially pick and choose which parts of a novel speaks to them.

So the best it seems we can say about learning from novels, if they are a kind of thought experiment, is that readers *may* edify their understanding of moral concepts, principles, or theories by paying attention to specific details, noticing specific thematic patterns, and drawing inference from these relevant to their own lives or to wider intellectual issues. But it is rarely, if ever, reasonable to suppose there is some single correct interpretation demanded by a literary novel.

The disparity between literary works and traditional thought experiments is simply too great to make the parallel especially informative. Notably, literary or stylistic devices play no essential role in traditional thought experiments. The whole point of the latter is to boil down a problem to a simple premise inviting intuitions. There is no room for character development, subtleties of plot, symbolism, wider literary themes or literary allusions. There is an essential literary or aesthetic dimension to a novel which is entirely absent from

traditional thought experiments. Furthermore, the complexities of a literary novel might actually weaken the moral lessons to be derived:

> If it is said that *the Golden Bowl* traces a pathway through the complexities of a father-daughter relationship to show how a morally adequate mutual recognition might be achieved, we may worry that artful construction makes the channel of communication unreliably noisy. (Currie, 2020, 149)

If philosophers who agree with Currie are right, then the consequence of this vagueness is an inability to determine literary thought experiments' value to philosophy in any meaningful sense. Perhaps this is true; I am inclined to believe it is. There is no irrefutable evidence that one can significantly deepen one's moral understanding by reading works of literature in a manner that is substantially comparable to the more specific payoffs afforded by traditional moral thought experiments.[16]

The purist would cling to this fact, denying that literary thought experiments are on par with their philosophical counterparts. But it also cannot be ignored that if the purist allows for the usage of thought experiments in philosophy,

[16] This is not to say that readers cannot widen their perspectives or knowledge on certain social topics by reading novels. The works of Charles Dickens undoubtedly raised public awareness of the conditions of the poor in nineteenth century England which arguably helped contribute to social and legislative reforms. But exposing the masses to social injustices through literature is no guarantee that it will help lead to social reform, or the kind of reform the author had intended. Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* was meant to put a spotlight on the horrific living and working conditions of the American immigrant working class in the early twentieth century. The most expedient impact of his novel, however, was on food safety, with the "Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906" being passed the same year of his work's publication. In response to the passing of the act in 1906, Sinclair said "I Aimed at the Public's Heart and by Accident I Hit It in the Stomach." (Kantor, 1976, 1202)

even if only of the traditional variety, and sees their epistemic value to the discipline, then we cannot turn novels away simply because they are purely fictional. It seems that the real sticking point then is the superfluous detail literary works contain but, as we shall see with correspondence, this too can be tolerated by the purist if kernels of genuine philosophy are involved.

Philosophical correspondence and the purist canon

Here is where I will introduce correspondence into the philosophical canon. My argument here is two-fold. If we identify the contents of some personal correspondence as philosophically significant, we can then view letters as an acceptable literary form to present philosophical claims and debates. But if we do accept this view, then we can also introduce correspondence that is completely fictional, here meaning created by a single author. Furthermore, if we cannot distinguish between real and fictional letters, as far as philosophical content is concerned, then we have no good reason to admit one without the other. This is how our first literary novel could slip into the canon.

Correspondence is also useful in arguing for the legitimacy of philosophical novels in another way. As with La Rochefoucauld's aphorisms, many letters are written with intentions separate from discussing philosophical concepts. Indeed, sometimes the portion of the letter devoted to philosophical conversation is quite small compared to the rest of its content. But, as I will argue, these minor sections can still be philosophically significant, even if they only comprise a portion of the text, and this leads to the conclusion that the content of a work need not be exclusively philosophical in nature.

It is not hard to see why correspondence can be philosophically valuable. Many philosophers have discussed their ideas at length with one another through a series of letters. Some notable examples include Descartes and Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, addressing problems with Cartesian dualism, Spinoza discussing themes from his *Ethics* with Henry Oldenburg, the Secretary of the newly created Royal Society in London, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz developing his theory of monads in his letters, known as the "Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence", to the French philosopher, Antoine Arnauld. While these letters give us greater insight on the philosophers' theories beyond what is expounded in their treatises, it is evident that not every letter's exclusive purpose was to discuss these theories. Other material may include mentioning topical events or politics, exchanging pleasantries, giving personal updates, asking about acquaintances, and so on. Yet it would be too hasty to dismiss from the canon all letters which do not solely focus on their philosophical ideas on this account. As mentioned above, reading these letters may help us understand philosophical beliefs and how these beliefs developed over time.

The letters of Fyodor Dostoevsky are a good example of this. As with La Rochefoucauld, he is not a professional philosopher, but he did pen several philosophical essays and articles before and while writing his novels. And as we shall see in my second case study in Chapter Three, he also discussed his philosophical leanings in his personal correspondence. In fact, it is in his letters where the philosophical themes of *Crime and Punishment*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, etc. are revealed. This is particularly true of his views on political philosophy, which he both organized and analysed in his letters. In a letter written to Mikhail Petrovich—dated 26 February 1873, seven years after the publication of *Crime and Punishment*—Dostoevsky notes:

> Here is my idea and my goal: Socialism—whether consciously or in the most preposterously unconscious form, or used as a disguise for despicable acts—has affected almost an entire generation. The facts are clear and ominous. One reads in the newspapers of even ignorant yokels suddenly coming up with some catchword or other that obviously emanates from the socialist camp. We must combat this, because everything has been contaminated. My idea is that socialism and Christianity are the antitheses of one another. (Dostoevsky, 1987, 371)

Despite this view of socialism and Christianity being an integral theme in most of Dostoevsky's novels, he only mentions it briefly in his letter to Petrovich. The rest of the correspondence touches on other matters, like impending publication deadlines. But while the philosophical content does not comprise the whole letter, it is still vital to understanding Dostoevsky's philosophical theories, especially in terms of his novels.

Numerous claims like the one above are scattered throughout Dostoevsky's correspondence, and while he offers no argument in support of them in the same letter (ignoring his other publications here), we cannot overlook the fact that he had strong philosophical leanings which he made clear to his recipients.

Let us assume that Dostoevsky's letters, if only the philosophical bits, are accepted as "philosophical", or philosophically interesting. The question then becomes: what about letters that are fictional? If we are willing to accept the claims made in genuine letters, despite not everything in them being devoted to philosophical content, why can we not do the same with novels?

To make this leap, I will introduce another collection of letters which contain philosophical content. The only difference with this collection is that all the correspondence is entirely fictitious.[17] The philosopher Montesquieu penned every single letter in his epistolary novel, *Persian Letters*. It is an assortment of letters spanning from 1717 to 1720, mostly written by or to the protagonist, Usbek, on his journey to France. Usbek continuously writes to his family and friends back in Persia regarding his reflections on Western culture, politics, religion, gender roles, etc. It is through Usbek's letters (among others) that Montesquieu satirizes and criticises many facets of his own European society.[18] As such, these letters have a familiar ring to those written by real philosophers.

[17] Montesquieu's novel—a series of fictitious letters—is not the first of its kind. I examine the trend of writing those arguably first strong philosophical novels in the style of correspondence in the Appendix. Despite it not being the first strong philosophical novel written in such a way, I chose to focus on *Persian Letters* for this chapter because out of all the early novels in my first tier, it reads—in my opinion—the most like a story (i.e. an engaging plot with unique, interesting characters). Perhaps I am being too uncharitable to the other, similar works in my assessment here, and I am willing to accept that one might make a strong case for say, Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing-World* (1992). But my choosing to write on Montesquieu's work here does not devalue the other philosophical novels' literary merit.

[18] Voltaire also mentions Montesquieu by name in the *Philosophical Dictionary* in a section called "Letters, gen de lettres ou lettré: Literature and writers". He refers to a comment Montesquieu made on the Scythians in particular, but in the passage above this reference Voltaire writes: "The man of letters who have rendered most services to the small number of thinking beings scattered throughout the world are the isolated writers, the true scholars shut up in their studies, who have neither argufied on the benches of the universities nor said things by halves in the academics; and these have nearly all been persecuted." (Voltaire, 1972, 274) Montesquieu studied law before giving up the practice to devote himself to writing. This self-imposed seclusion, at least from his former work, may be what Voltaire is referencing. The persecution could mean the attack *Persian Letters* faced before Montesquieu's death, labeled as anti-Establishment. The book had to be published in Holland anonymously, though it was not banned nor put on the Vatican's Index of Prohibited Books like his *Spirit of Laws*. Voltaire's comment also could refer to Montesquieu's family being historically Huguenot in origin, with him being born four years after King Louis XIV issued the Edict of Fontainebleau, which overturned the Edict of Nantes (1598).

Granted, they also touch on other material, particularly on how Europeans view women, the law, etc. compared to their Islamic counterparts. But several entries read like the serious philosophical meditations of one man.

A prominent example is when Usbek ponders over the nature of God, His perfections, and if humans can truly have free will. In Letter 69 Usbek writes to the philosopher Rhedi living in Venice:

> In what way could God foresee things which are determined by the decision of a free cause? There are only two ways in which he could see them: by conjecture, which is inconsistent with infinite prescience; or else by seeing them as effects which are necessary, in that they inevitably follow from a cause which also produces them inevitably; and this is even more contradictory. For the presupposition would be that the soul is free, but it would not be so in fact, any more than a billiard-ball is free to move when struck by another one.[19] (Montesquieu, 1993, 145)

While the novel is packed full of thoughts like the one above, it is still first and foremost a fictional story being told to us. We come to know Montesquieu's characters in depth and learn about the world they inhabit. Indeed, there are whole scenes devoted to entertainment, not just philosophical musings.[20] The

[19] Montesquieu's novel was published before David Hume introduced his theory of causation, which also utilizes the example of two billiard balls. While I have not found any proof that Hume read Montesquieu's works, some have suggested this to be the case.
[20] This is particularly true of the ending. Montesquieu writes a dramatic climax where Usbek's youngest and favorite wife, Roxane, is suspected of adultery. Her lover dies and Roxane, in retaliation, proclaims her disdain of Usbek, takes revenge on the eunuchs guarding her and the other wives, and commits suicide. While the subject matter is gruesome, Roxane's condemnation of Usbek is framed as humorous; readers are meant to

intention to entertain his readers ought not to be a problem for the purist, any more than there being other material besides the letters' philosophical content. The main issue here would be that unlike genuine correspondence, everything besides the philosophy (and historical facts) is objectively untrue (made up). But does this detract from their philosophical claims?

I argue that their being created by one man does not diminish the significance of any philosophical assertions presented in the letters. Except for the overly dramatic ending, one might take Montesquieu's letters to be written between actual correspondents. Thus, there seems to be no reason why we ought to exclude Montesquieu's novel if we are willing to accept the real, non-fictional correspondence written by other philosophers and writers. If this is the case, then we have reached a point where the purist might be willing to accept the first fictional novel as philosophically significant.

As we saw with Montesquieu's *Persian Letters,* novels can and do make claims about abstract subjects. These claims, like aphorisms, are not always argued for but rather stated as truths or principles. And as with Montesquieu's Usbek, it is the narrator or characters making these assertions rather than the author.[21] This is not unusual with novels in my Strong Tier, as I will show with my first

find this scene of a wife dressing down her husband whom she resents and thinks poorly of as amusing.

[21] Despite Montesquieu literally writing everything his characters say, their views cannot be taken as direct mouthpieces for Montesquieu due to the censorship and religious prosecution during his lifetime. Some of Usbek's claims would be deemed unacceptable if a Frenchman made them in earnest. For instance, he states the advantages of the Muslim religion over Christianity, and how Constantinople and Ispahan are the capitals of the two greatest empires in the world. It would have been dangerous for these claims to be taken as Montesquieu's genuine beliefs, despite the novel being published anonymously.

case study on Jean Paul Sartre's *Nausea*. His protagonist, Roquentin, is constantly asserting what he thinks about existence, reality, etc.

Part Two- Philosophical Pluralism

I will be brief in this section, but it is no less important than the purist objection to my thesis. Whereas the purists are very strict with what they allow under the philosophical umbrella, others argue that there is no "umbrella" to begin with. Philosophy is not exclusionary, and we ought not to discredit anything that does not manifest a traditional philosophical argument or even a clear and direct assertion. This is the principle behind what I call philosophical pluralism.

The pluralist view is the belief that philosophy as an intellectual enquiry has no single "essence". It is precisely the opposite of the essentialism we see in the purist position. Anything even remotely considered "philosophical" counts. Pluralism is a spectrum, a continuum between a diversity of cases. In spite of their differences, the pluralist and purist might well agree on some broadly defined topics and questions as at least typical of what can count as "philosophical", even if they disagree on the legitimate ways that these might manifest themselves. But for the pluralist, nothing seems out of bounds, and they are happy to extend well beyond the familiar core.

While the pluralist's inclusion of different cultures' philosophies is to be applauded, their stance is no less threatening to my thesis. The obvious issue here is that if more or less any reflective thinking or writing can count as "philosophy", this makes my project redundant. There is no point in my arguing

that novels can be philosophical because they are already accepted as such. For the pluralist, it is simply a fact that philosophical novels exist since anything that even remotely touches on philosophical topics can, and does, belong to the continuum of philosophical content.

As I mentioned in the previous section, I want to carefully ease open the floodgates for what can be considered a philosophical novel. But my intention is not to burst the gates wide open either. If the pluralist is correct, then technically any novel could count as "philosophical", which is not what my thesis argues for. The question I must answer then, is how can we distinguish between novels which are truly philosophically significant, even if only marginally so, and which are not philosophical at all?

My answer here focuses on the relationship between a novel's story form and its philosophical themes and theses. One subordinates the other to various degrees. For instance, a novel's philosophical content can influence other aspects of the narrative.[22] While it is not what I would consider to be a philosophical novel, an obvious example of this can be found in Plato's *Republic*. The dialogue contains different settings and characters (some more interesting than others). Yet everything in the story is in service of the philosophy Plato is presenting. In other words, the story form is completely subordinate to the philosophy. Indeed, this is partly why the *Republic* is not usually considered a literary novel, or indeed a novel at all! It has no compelling

[22] There has been much consideration on literary narrative in the philosophy of literature. One area of interest is how fictional narratives relate to their real-life or autobiographical counterparts. Lamarque 2007 claims that the two kinds differ significantly. Some philosophers like Schechtman are more optimistic. Schechtman 2015 uses the film *Stranger than Fiction* to introduce her revised narrative view, arguing that the narrative constructed by an individual assumes the roles of the author, reader, and character simultaneously.

scenes purely for the sake of entertainment like Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*. Nearly every detail in Plato's dialogue has a single purpose—to present or defend a philosophical point of view. Granted, there are brief scenes which set up and conclude the dialogue, reminding us that the discussion takes place over a single day at the house of Cephalus in the port of Athens at Piraeus. But these are described in bare bones detail and are clearly present because they are required to set up the dialogue in a realistic manner. In essence, one does not read the *Republic* for its interesting story.

As I will argue in the next chapter, the same is true of *Nausea*. While it is not so single-mindedly devoted to its philosophical content as Plato's *Republic*, Sartre still does not provide many personal details of his characters to humanize them. Any extra details describing a scene or character, beyond the sometimes incoherent ramblings of Roquentin during his fits of nausea, are deliberately excluded. And as we shall see, the novel's literary style is also subordinate to its philosophical content. It is evident that Sartre's aim is to present some of his philosophical ideas through his novel.

This seems to be the case with most of the novels in my Strong Tier, where the philosophy impacts every aspect of the novel, including its plot, characters, style and structure, etc. But this does not mean that such novels must be uninteresting or unengaging from an aesthetic perspective. As we saw with Montesquieu's *Persian Letters,* some strong philosophical novels can tell an equally compelling story with imaginative characters and scenes. I admit that *Persian Letters* may put more emphasis on entertaining its readers than *Nausea* does, but this does not necessarily lower it down to my Moderate Tier. What matters for the Strong Tier is that the story's form is overall in service of its

philosophical themes and theses, and as we go down the tier list, we see this relationship start to reverse.

Such is the case with Jane Austen's *Emma*. I am reluctant to use the term "theses" here as *Emma* seems not to contain any explicit philosophical claims in the manner of *Nausea* or *Persian Letters*. While it has overarching philosophical themes, which I shall introduce in Chapter Four, they are clearly subordinate to the story in a way that *Nausea's* and even *Crime and Punishment's* themes and theses are not. Put simply, Austen wanted to write a story of a young, genteel woman who undergoes a profound character transformation. Any philosophical ideas, or any ideas at all, must work with this premise. This is a direct contrast to the role philosophy plays in strong philosophical novels. Whereas everything is secondary to the philosophical content in my first tier, everything is subordinate to the story in my last tier. Novels in the Moderate Tier fall somewhere in-between these two positions, depending heavily on which novel we are considering.[23]

My point here is that if we are to keep the metaphorical floodgates from bursting open, thereby allowing more or less any novel to count as philosophical, then we need to establish some barriers to entry in terms of novels. This is because lots of novels have literary themes which may be classified as philosophical. However, for a novel to be considered "philosophical", there does seem to be more needed. Even in cases like *Emma*,

[23] While the Strong and Marginal Tier act as two ends of a spectrum in this regard, there is still grey area within these tiers as well. How much of the story is dictated by its philosophical content and vice versa can only be determined on a case-by-case basis. This is because novels in the same tier may differ, even if marginally so, such as the case with *Nausea* and *Persian Letters*.

where the story comes before the philosophy so to speak, it is still philosophically significant as what philosophy it contains is deeply intertwined with other parts of the novel. This leaves us with the idea that for a novel to be classified as philosophical, including in the marginal sense, its philosophical themes must be integrated into the fabric of the novel even if the story itself predominates. We shall come back to this argument in more detail in Chapter Four.

Overall, the pluralist view is still nevertheless important for my theory as it makes room for those select novels which do not meet the stringent criteria for Tier 1, namely that it implies, if not explicitly states, philosophical theses like those found in Sartre's *Nausea* or Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*. It opens the gates where the purist kept them closed; now it is vital to ensure that we do not open them too much, lest the term "philosophical novel" become inconsequential.

Conclusion

None of this is to say that philosophical treatises are or can become "literary novels", and vice versa. My conclusion at this stage is that both genres have areas that the other can acknowledge, perhaps even value. At the very least, philosophical and literary works share some key components like their perennial themes. In contrast to other art forms like painting or music, authors use written language to articulate their ideas—both philosophical and literary—and that enables us to spot similarities in their content, such as style, structure, development of theme, aesthetic effect, or general plausibility.

Granted, it is not traditional for philosophers to present their ideas in the form of a novel, but it seems too hasty to say that it cannot be done, or that it is somehow commonplace.

Now that I have made the argument that at least in principle some—but not all—novels can be considered as genuinely philosophical, we can examine how this can be done in greater detail. The next three chapters are devoted to analysing a novel from each tier: Strong, Moderate, and Marginal. I will present each novel's philosophical themes and theses, show how these themes and theses weave into the narrative, and argue why they represent their specific tier. We shall start off with a deeper exploration of Sartre's *Nausea*.

Chapter II: First Case Study: J-P Sartre's *Nausea*

Introduction

Jean-Paul Sartre's first novel, *Nausea*, is arguably his most prominent novel with a philosophically-minded protagonist. In fact the protagonist and narrator, Antoine Roquentin, is not a philosopher by trade but a historian; he seems unaware throughout the novel that he is actually doing philosophy. But he spends a good chunk of the text contemplating what existence is, or what it is for a thing to "exist", and familiar idioms of philosophy recur ("contingent", "necessary", "objects", "qualities").

Roquentin is not your typical hero of a novel. He is a thirty-year-old man who is staying in a town called Bouville (literally Mud Town) after some extensive travelling in his youth. When we first meet him, he is writing a book, as a historian, on an aristocrat from Revolutionary France named Marquis de Rollebon. He has also started keeping a diary—which is the novel itself—in which he plans to capture all his thoughts "from day to day". The idea to keep a diary was triggered by an event which happened the Saturday before the story begins. Roquentin joins a group of children to play in their game by the river. But when he picks up a pebble, a new sensation overtakes him, a certain kind of nausea that "disgusts" him. From then on, Roquentin is convinced that something is seriously wrong; something has changed, either with him or the world (he is unsure). He writes his diary so that he may keep track of his thoughts and experiences, in the hope of determining what is wrong with him. It is through this process of keeping a diary that his philosophical ideas indirectly take shape and develop.

Despite being written in this unusual literary style, Sartre's *Nausea* is the ideal candidate for my Strong Tier category of philosophical novels. As mentioned previously, novels in the Strong Tier are strongly and essentially philosophical. They unquestionably belong to this genre of literature. As mentioned previously, for novels like *Nausea* to be classified as "strongly and essentially philosophical", three distinct requirements must be met. A novel belongs in the Strong Tier if and only if it invites an interpretation in philosophical terms (philosophical themes), implies and supports substantial philosophical claims (philosophical theses), and contributes to a better understanding of a philosophical theory or concept (philosophical advancement). On top of this, from a literary perspective it must also contain imaginatively engaging content (character and incident) with a coherent aesthetic structure (literary merit). In other words, it must count as a novel, not merely a philosophical treatise.

The aim of this case study is to prove that *Nausea* adequately meets these requirements. While Roquentin's diary entries may seem disjointed and unimportant on their own, we see a development emerge through the entries. Slowly we watch as Roquentin constructs his own theory of words, perception, existence, etc. until it all comes together in one key passage—arguably the most famous and philosophically significant passage in the novel—which will be the centrepiece of the discussion below. Sartre helps us understand Roquentin's frame of mind and lets us watch as his philosophical ideas unconsciously unfold. Although Roquentin never realizes that he is practising philosophy or that his ideas are philosophical ones, this is not necessary for either the literary or the philosophical aspects of the novel. This suggests a contrast between Roquentin, a fictional character, and Sartre, the author. Roquentin is not trying to persuade anyone of anything or defend a

philosophical thesis. Nor does he make any direct reference to other philosophers or attempt to locate his ideas in a philosophical tradition. Sartre, on the other hand, is self-conscious—or at least seems to be self-conscious—about his philosophical intentions, the fact that he is writing a philosophical novel, and provides enough hints in his fictional protagonist to suggest clear directions of thought.[24] This chapter will explore both Roquentin's seemingly naïve perspective, and the subtle ways that Sartre weaves his own theories of ontology, perception, and philosophy of art, through his character's agonised ruminations.

Focus of the discussion

The discussion that follows will, as stated, focus on one prominent passage, set in the local park where Roquentin has a life-changing experience in contemplating the root of a tree (henceforward labelled "the root passage"). This passage comes at a pivotal point in the narrative, about three quarters through, where Roquentin has an epiphany, a revelation. It leads to a new clarity about everything that has happened to him up to that point.[25] When

[24] The theory has been put forth that Sartre used *Nausea* as a sort of vehicle to work through his conception of words, existence, etc. Indeed, Sartre himself notes in later life his (perhaps subconscious at the time) intentions behind writing his first novel. We shall explore this more later.

[25] The motif of branches and roots, particularly from chestnut trees, repeatedly comes up in *Nausea*. That Sartre uses a root of a chestnut tree as a catalyst for Roquentin's epiphany—though a violent, unsettling one—mirrors a scene from Sartre's youth. According to Sartre's autobiography, he himself experienced a violent episode after reading a morbid short story, *Du vent dans les arbres* (Wind in the Trees), involving a chestnut branch (it should be noted that he had this experience while on a train to Limoges). He describes his immediate thoughts finishing the story: "Was it a drunkard's hallucination? Had Hell gaped? I was afraid of water, of crabs, and of trees. Above all, I was afraid of books: I cursed the tormentors who peopled their stories with these loathsome shapes. Yet I imitated them." (Sartre, 1967, 96) As we shall see, Sartre imitates these "loathsome shapes" in his first novel and gives his protagonist a notable fear of crabs and trees (he thinks the park is laughing at him, mocking

reporting the scene in his diary he writes: "I have achieved my aim: I know what I wanted to know; I have understood everything that has happened to me since January". (151)[26] It clarifies the past, it also anticipates what is to come. Nearly all the philosophical ideas hinted at earlier in the novel now come to the fore: existence, perception, the nature of things, absurdity, contingency, the superfluous, the viscous, the things that we think about but which don't exist (a circle, a colour, the popular melody that haunts him). We shall examine three key philosophical themes emerging from this discovery, starting with the nature of names and concepts. Before this, however, we will carefully analyse *Nausea's* unique literary style as this will help us better understand the context for its philosophical themes, theses, and advancement.

Part One- Literary Merit

As a pure work of literature, one does not typically think of *Nausea* alongside other literary classics like the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and others. Several reasons account for this fact, including a lack of any exciting (or arguably interesting) plot, engaging characters, dynamic dialogue, etc. Roquentin himself is not a particularly likeable protagonist (calling him an anti-hero might be more fitting). This is not a problem in itself as plenty of leading characters are unlikeable. However, what sets these apart from Roquentin, one might argue, is how they interact with other characters and push the narrative forward. None of Roquentin's

him at the end of the root passage). Roquentin does not express the same fear of books as Sartre, but one could argue that by the time Sartre wrote *Nausea*, his views on fiction—i.e. what it had to offer its authors and readers—improved.

[26] All page numbers from the novel refer to the edition of *Nausea* cited in the bibliography.

interactions are especially noteworthy, at least not when attending strictly to the narrative interest of the novel. One might think that these points actively harm *Nausea's* literary standing. Yet when we consider it as a "philosophical novel"—taking into account its philosophical interest—we see how well-written Sartre's fiction is from a literary point of view. In fact I would go so far as to say that in order to fully appreciate the novel as a work of literature, we must prioritize its philosophical content in the same way we would with a work's themes in other genes. This will lead us not just to appreciate the ideas within *Nausea* but also its unique narrative structure, being the non-traditional form of a diary.

Why is the novel presented in a diary format, a format that sets it apart from my other two case studies (Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (Chapter Three) and Austen's *Emma* (Chapter Four))? The reasons I will propose help to explain why *Nausea* belongs in the Strong Tier category of philosophical novels.

It is helpful to engage the question from two perspectives: that of Roquentin himself, within the world of the fiction, and that of Sartre the author with his own aims and aspirations for the novel itself. Why does Roquentin choose to write a diary? Why does Sartre use the diary form for this particular novel?

One theory, which has some key evidence backing it, is that Sartre himself was in a very similar position to the one he describes Roquentin in—i.e. experiencing bouts of nausea—at the time of writing. Thus the novel was penned in the format of a diary essentially because it *is* Sartre's diary. Indeed, Sartre even refers to himself as Roquentin, only Sartre's own Nausea was prompted not by holding a pebble in front of a river but by losing his faith in

the old religion (Catholicism). This troubled Sartre as he lost any sense of intrinsic meaning or purpose in life which the Church previously asserted that he (and everyone else) had, and this loss of comfort became especially worrying when he considered the inevitability of death.[27] When discussing in later years why he wrote fiction during this time of his life, Sartre says:

> For a long time, writing was asking Death or Religion in disguise to tear my life away from chance, I was of the Church. As a militant, I wanted to save myself through works; as a mystic, I tried to unveil the stillness of existence through a counteracting murmur of words, and, above all, I confused things with their names: that is belief. I was dim of sight. As long as that lasted, I was out of trouble. I pulled off this noble achievement at that age of thirty: describing in *La Nausée*—most

[27] While the topic of death makes Roquentin feel extremely uncomfortable and is the one topic he refuses to discuss directly (even with himself in his diary), death is arguably the main overarching theme of Sartre's autobiography. The violent episode he experienced on the train in his youth after reading the short story was triggered by a scene involving death. A branch of a chestnut tree comes through the window into a room where a sick woman is resting. She dies while looking at the branch, a passage which deeply upsets Sartre, particularly because—according to him—the author refuses to end the scene with any catharsis, or as he puts it leaving questions unanswered. He writes: "The story-teller dodged the issue and casually summed up: 'If the villagers are to be believed, it was Death that shook the branches of the chestnut-tree.'." (Sartre, 1967, 96) Sartre is left in a rage and throws the book away before, as we have seen, he declares his fear of books (among other things which reoccur in *Nausea*). As mentioned above, Sartre ends the root passage with Roquentin thinking that the park is mocking him, but he never tells us why he thinks this. Roquentin (Sartre) never explains his disdain for the park, but I propose that the unexplained and unsatisfactory consequence of looking at a chestnut branch (or trees in Roquentin's case) may stem—at least unconsciously—from this scene. The symbols of chestnut branches and roots are only framed negatively in Sartre's novel, and this incident may offer a possible reason as to why. They symbolize death for Roquentin, and the park is mocking him because it knows that despite the philosophical revelations he just experienced, it ultimately changes nothing. He cannot avoid death no matter how he perceives or understands his own existence; nothing he does can alter his fate. Roquentin never admits to this, but there are several hints throughout the text supporting this interpretation.

> sincerely, I can assure you—the unjustified, brackish existence of my fellow-creatures and vindicating my own. I *was* Roquentin; in him I exposed, without self-satisfaction, the web of my life; at the same time I was *myself*, the elect, the chronicler of hells, a photomicroscope of glass and steel bent over my own protoplasmic juices. (Sartre, 1967, 156)

The philosophical themes of names, existence, and dealing with the absurdity of life are all directly addressed in *Nausea*. Roquentin also hopes to accomplish what Sartre says he has done above: to pull off a "noble achievement" with his own writing, which would—he believes—save himself. "A book. A novel. And there would be people who would read this novel and who would say: 'It was Antoine Roquentin who wrote it, he was a red-headed fellow who hung about in cafes', and they would think about my life as I think about that Negress: as about something precious and almost legendary. A book." (Sartre, 2000, 212)

One could argue, thus, that *Nausea* can be thought of as Sartre's own kind of personal diary; Roquentin's story is his story. Roquentin's book is his book. Each work came about because both men began writing to understand their situations better, why such things like names and words confused them, and how they might address and overcome their unique kind of existential worries. And both come to the same conclusion: to write novels. Indeed, it is implied at the end of *Nausea* that this *is* the story Roquentin had written, or intended to write, making it literally the same novel Sartre wrote (although this is not Roquentin's stated intention at the start of the novel, which we shall return to shortly).

This may have been Sartre's true intention behind the format of the narrative; I am inclined to think it is. This intention, however, does not impact the novel's candidacy for belonging to the strong tier (we shall discuss authorial intention in Chapter Five). What matters for our purposes instead is how the work's literary style relates to its philosophical themes and theses, regardless of why the author chose that particular style. I argue here that the form of a diary works in direct service of *Nausea's* philosophical content; indeed, the novel would not be, and arguably could not be, as philosophically strong if its narrative was written any other way. I will examine how the narrative's style achieves this for the rest of the section.[28]

Roquentin's diary is an exercise in practical phenomenology, capturing what it is like to experience the world as a unique individual. Clearly only a first-person narrative could be adequate to this task. And the peculiarities of a personal diary are especially well-suited as there is no need for any systematic narrative structure in any one entry or between entries. Indeed many of Roquentin's entries are quite disjointed and rambling. For instance, he occasionally switches from contemplating one idea to something else entirely without warning. Some of his entries are merely a few words long. In an entry entitled "Tuesday" he only writes: Nothing. Existed. (123) The reader quickly realizes that there is no traditional coherent structure for the plot to follow. *Nausea* differentiates itself from other novels here, including the novels on our tier list which do utilize a traditional narrative structure. Sartre is deliberately using the diary form to loosen the restrictions of traditional narrative, allowing for

[28] Any reference to Roquentin's diary strictly refers to his own writing unless stated otherwise. It is not meant to represent or imply anything that Sartre might have thought, felt, or intended during the time of penning *Nausea*.

idiosyncrasies of the individual point of view. What this form also affords is a close proximity between the events (experiences) reported and the reports (the diary entries) themselves. This gives a phenomenological immediacy to them not always possible in standard narratives, first or third person.

If we turn to Roquentin's personal aims in keeping a diary, we find somewhat different reasons. After all, his diary is not aiming to be a work of art. People keep diaries for all kinds of reasons: to reflect on oneself, to provide an emotional outlet, to preserve memories, as a form of stress relief, and so on. While Roquentin seems to be doing all of these with his own writing, his main reason for deciding to keep a diary is to try and uncover what is different about him—or rather, the things around him—after the first instance of his nausea, and how he might "fix" it. His worry here begins when he notices that something is off, both with himself and everything else, and he wishes to return to a state of normality. Such is told to us in the very first lines of *Nausea*:

> The best thing would be to write down everything that happens from day to day. To keep a diary in order to understand. To neglect no nuances or little details, even if they seem unimportant, and above all to classify them. I must say how I see this table, the street, people, my packet of tobacco, since *these* are the things which have changed. I must fix the exact extent and nature of this change. (1)

Roquentin's diary is indeed a phenomenological exercise here in that he is describing exactly what he is experiencing in a matter-of-fact way. While he uses descriptive language like "sweet", "viscous", "warm", and "disgusting", it is only to make better sense to himself of what he is perceiving by using familiar

terms (an act which he later rejects). But these descriptions are still accurate and un-flowery because Roquentin is not systematically exaggerating his statements (and if he is exaggerating—which we might accuse him of later when he writes in a very passionate and unstable frame of mind—it is not for aesthetic reasons). He tells us what he sees as he sees it. Essentially, he is not trying to be poetic in his writing, but instead attempting to be as precise as possible to get at the root cause of his nausea.

In this way we might understand Roquentin's diary entries not as a structured narrative per se but more like sense-data collecting. A good analogy may be when we keep a record of our symptoms for the doctor. The writing here is more akin to this form, as Roquentin is literally keeping track of his symptoms, his nausea, and what he thinks may be the cause of it. And just as when we visit the doctor due to an ongoing ailment, his ultimate hope throughout this whole process is that his nausea will finally subside. We, as readers, get to read what he is perceiving and realize the negative impact this all has on his mental health and general wellbeing. Roquentin's writing is often highly emotive; he writes passionately, usually fuelled by internal torment and anguish. It is obvious that up until the very end of the novel, our protagonist is not happy, and it is debateable if he does achieve any sort of happiness by the end.[29]

[29] Sartre originally intended to call his novel *Melancolia*. This was in reference to Albrecht Durer's 1514 engraving of the same name, which is meant to depict that humans, despite being surrounded by our many tools of reason and craft, still stare forlornly off to the horizon while we sit on the shoreline waiting for inspiration to come. (Unwin, 1997, 148) My interpretation of this is that it was meant to symbolize Roquentin's disengaged state of mind regarding his previous book on Marquis de Rollebon, lacking any inspiration to continue writing.

In spite of the bitterness and disjointedness of Roquentin's own account of his life in the diary, it is possible to detect in the novel itself some sort of coherent story emerging through his scattered diary entries. Slowly a picture begins to present itself, which leads to another reason why, from the authorial perspective, the diary form is indispensable to *Nausea*.

A diary is essentially presented in a sequential order. The temporal sequence itself affords a kind of unity to the novel where certain passages build off one another as circumstances change over time. If we go back to my "recording symptoms for the doctor" example, patterns of behaviour and thought start to emerge and weave together into one bigger picture if we look at all the entries stretching through time. An aesthetic unity can be found in the strict temporality. Consequently, the only way to adequately understand this picture is to read Roquentin's diary entries in their sequential order. What happens to him on one day may affect how he feels or acts on a later date. For instance, near the start of the novel Roquentin writes in a panic:

> Things are bad! Things are very bad: I've got it, that filthy thing, the Nausea. And this time it's new: it caught me in a café. Until now cafés were my only refuge because they are full of people and well lighted: from now on I shan't have even that; when I am run to earth in my room, I shall no longer know where to go. (22)

Roquentin could not have known at the time of writing this entry he would be flushed with sudden relief from his nausea whenever he is in the café, among people, and with the song "Some of These Days" playing in the background. In this way we see patterns in his behaviour from his chronological entries which

Roquentin himself seems unaware of and even seems to deny.[30] A more poignant example of this is with the development of his philosophical theories, which I shall discuss more below.

One might ask what the point of keeping a diary is in the first place if Roquentin never analyses (or even notices) the actual patterns he is writing down. Initially his goal was to get better, but as the diary goes on, we see that he is using his writing more to process his (frankly volatile) thoughts and to vent his feelings than to end his Nausea.[31] The novel is steeped in surrealistic imagery, highlighting the fact that Roquentin's thought processes are often not so much logical in nature as psychological.

[30] Another pattern readers might notice here in Roquentin's writing is that his Nausea increases the more isolated he becomes. He pushes away everyone he knows or is acquainted with in Bouville, including the bar maid Francoise and the Autodidact. Even old friends like Anny and Mercier (who we never meet) seem to have lost contact with him, with the exception of Anny's one letter to Roquentin before coming to visit him near the end of the novel. Despite Roquentin never saying that he is lonely, clearly this emotional withdrawal from his community is not helping his condition. Marie McGinn (1997) similarly agrees in her interpretation of *Nausea*. McGinn focuses on the novel's psychological themes with its principal theme being that of alienation. Roquentin feels alienated from the class he was born into (the bourgeoisie). After his failed attempts to escape bourgeois society, which he both rejects and feels rejected by, he turns to aesthetics which does not rectify his isolation. While I read Roquentin's retreat to art at the end of the novel as cathartic and hopeful, from a psychological perspective like McGinn's, Roquentin's decision to become a writer as a means of escape is undoubtedly unhealthy and undesirable (which Sartre also realizes, contrasting Roquentin with ideal authors in *What is Literature?*).

[31] If this was the case we might rightly expect him to re-read his old entries to find what previously caused or cured his Nausea. He does recognize that the song "Some of These Days" helps, but he neglects other aspects like listening to the song in the café with people instead of being alone. Perhaps this does not matter and he would experience relief either way, but I think it is an interesting choice on Sartre's part to have his protagonist's happiest moments (or at least moments of relief) always be somewhere public like in a local café. I am not including the Root Passage here because Roquentin was not contented in any way by the end of that scene, even if his Nausea was quelled a little.

One example might be Roquentin's apparent dislike of crabs (one of Sartre's own noted fears), such that surrealistic crab images recur. What seems to bother him is the shape of their bodies, how many legs they have, and how they walk. He refers to crabs usually when he is suffering a bout of Nausea and cannot fathom the reason why, which clearly upsets him. There are three distinct scenes which are each an example of his surrealistic prose, although unlike surrealist artists and authors at the time, Roquentin is not obviously striving for artistic effect, or at least not consciously so.

One of the first times he mentions crabs is when he is in bed with the *patronne* (he italicizes her title). Rather provocatively, when analysing her body, he suddenly finds himself feeling disgusted. "Ants were running about everywhere, centipedes and moths. There were some even more horrible animals: their bodies were made of slices of toast such as you put under roast pigeon; they were walking sideways with crab-like legs." (70-1) Of course, we assume that the *patronne's* body is not actually covered with such bizarre creatures, but this is his way of describing what he perceives in a way that makes sense to him (it has the feeling of someone blurting out the first words that come to mind when asked to describe an uncomfortable feeling). He attempts to make sense of his perceptions using familiar concepts and ideas, such as how animals like crabs look or walk.

We see this again later when Roquentin is staring at his hand, trying to make sense of what he is looking at. "I see my hand spread out on the table. It is alive – it is me. It opens, the fingers unfold and point. It is lying on its back. It shows me its fat under-belly. It looks like an animal upside down. The fingers are the paws. I amuse myself by making them move about very quickly, like the claws

of a crab which has fallen on its back." (118) This is a clear example of imagination overwhelming perception, a point we shall return to. The language in these sorts of scenes is very engaging: vivid, quirky, and often humorous. Note, however, that while Roquentin is struggling with his over-heated imagination, Sartre is displaying his own lively imaginative skills as a writer (regardless of how he himself was feeling at the time of writing). Surrealism arguably works well in a diary format because it is raw, fragmented, and can be manifested as an isolated and striking image. The motif of crabs here is used disjointedly—once to describe a woman's body in bed, another time a hand—but it provides some aesthetic unity in representing Roquentin's uneasiness with the way things appear. They look bizarre to him, moving in such a way that seems unnatural. His last reference to crabs is when he himself becomes one—metaphorically. After a fight with the Autodidact, he flees from the café where they were previously eating, disgusted with his body while doing so. "All of a sudden, I lost the appearance of a man and they saw a crab escaping backwards from that all too human room." (148) I should note that this occurs right before the tram scene, which we will touch on soon.

This is just one example of the surrealism throughout *Nausea*. The use of crabs as a motif is important both from a literary and philosophical perspective. From a literary perspective it gives readers an insight into how Roquentin perceives himself (often through self-disgust) and how alive his imagination is as it intrudes into perceptual experience. This imagistic use of language is partly what sets *Nausea* apart from a traditional philosophical treatise on phenomenology. Its descriptions are not bound to conventional constraints within a discipline (such as the kind we saw in Chapter One). In essence, because Roquentin is writing strictly for himself, he can say whatever he wants,

and this gives Sartre's novel a distinct kind of freedom. But this freedom does not dampen its candidacy to be a Strong Tier philosophical novel. Rather it is because of this particular linguistic freedom that Sartre can explore his philosophical theories in new ways, diverting from the typically accepted (and expected) argumentative style in philosophy. On the contrary Sartre utilizes an imaginative style to showcase the novel's philosophical themes and theses through Roquentin's diary entries. Thus my argument here is that the novel had to be written in the form of a diary for these reasons: to emphasise the importance of the first-person perspective, to provide some sequential unity for the experiences recounted, and to offer a context for the surrealistic imagery that underscores the idiosyncrasy of the personal vision. The consequence is that although this novel is classified as a "strong" example due primarily to its philosophical themes, theses, and advancement, it also successfully meets the literary requirement as well.

Part Two- Principal Philosophical Themes and Theses

As noted above, in this case study I will identify three principal philosophical themes in *Nausea*. The identification of each theme is the result of a careful interpretation of the novel.[32] While Sartre's other texts help solidify this idea that there are these key philosophical themes that interested him in developing *Nausea's* plot, there is enough textual evidence to support this philosophical interpretation in the work itself. The same is true of my other two

[32] There are several other legitimate interpretations of *Nausea*. Along with McGinn, Arthur Danto 1975 and Iris Murdoch 1967—to name a few—offer a unique take on the novel's philosophical concepts, some of which conflict with my own interpretation as mentioned above. I will discuss incompatible interpretations in Chapter Five.

case studies and list of other philosophical novels in my Appendix. While external works like autobiographies, treatises, letters, notebooks, etc. may help one to understand a novel's philosophical themes better, any philosophical interpretation must be fully backed by the text itself regardless of what any other work may confirm (I will explain my reasoning as to why this is the case in Chapter Five).

While *Nausea's* diary entries may seem disjointed in places, these themes help to unify disparate passages into an overarching, cohesive structure (which also works well with the diary format). These passages also contain explicit theses arising from *Nausea's* philosophical themes. The theses presented are of two kinds: those related to, or inseparably intertwined with, the novel's content, and those which are abstracted, through interpretation, as independent statements (here meaning that they do not contain any particulars from the work itself). My focus here will be on the former kind, those articulated directly through particulars from the novel. In the following three sections, I shall introduce *Nausea's* principal themes and the stated theses connected to them. In each case some philosophical advancement is discernible.

The precarious nature of words and names

Roquentin has several small revelations about the nature of language before arguably his most important epiphany in the root passage. For example, right before he enters the municipal park, where the root passage takes place, he has his first major reflection on language and perception while on a tram, anticipating a central theme in the passage to come. It is a pivotal moment for him as it lays the groundwork for the revelation about existence that he will

soon have. This realization has also been a long time coming. Throughout the novel Roquentin struggles to grasp the names and definitions of certain things. He fails to identify an idea he has early on about "adventures", or the lack of such for him. Unable to describe this "unnameable idea", he refers to it looming there "like a big cat". (43-4) Though he has not fully explained this yet, names and descriptions are already losing their meaning, separating from the objects they denote. His focus is on the object rather than the label we assign to it, which he shows by continually renaming things like his hand, body, etc. (as a crab, a centipede, etc).[33]

This all comes together for Roquentin on the tram, where he finally understands the fundamental distinction between a thing and its name.

> I murmur: 'It's a seat,' rather like an exorcism. But the word remains on my lips, it refuses to settle on the thing. It stays what it is, with its red plush, thousands of little red paws in the air, all stiff, little dead paws. This huge belly turns upwards, bleeding, puffed up—bloated with all its dead paws, this belly floating in this box, in this grey sky, is not a seat. It could just as well be a dead donkey, for example, swollen by the water and drifting along, belly up on a great grey river, a flood river; and I would be sitting on the donkey's belly and my feet would be dangling in the clear water. Things have broken free from their names. They are

[33] Sartre refers to centipedes when discussing his own struggle with words and names—mirroring Roquentin's own confusion—in his youth. He mentions his fear of books early on, writing: "After a moment, I realized: it was the book that was talking. Sentences emerged that frightened me; they were like real centipedes; they swarmed with syllables and letters, span out their diphthongs and made their double consonants hum; fluting nasal, broken up with sighs and pauses, rich in unknown words, they were in love with themselves and their meanderings and had no time for me […] These words were obviously not meant for me." (Sartre, 1967, 31)

> there, grotesque, stubborn, gigantic, and it seems ridiculous to call them seats or say anything at all about them: I am in the midst of Things, which cannot be given names. Alone, wordless, defenceless, they surround me, under me, behind me, above me. They demand nothing, they don't impose themselves, they are there." (150)

Roquentin's experience has a vertiginous, surrealistic quality characteristic of his recurrent fits of "nausea". The names that concern him are general terms ("seat", "tram"), picking out concepts. Once a name begins to lose its grip, the accompanying concept becomes less determinate and meaning breaks down, as does our perception of objects as concept-laden beings. When "things break free from their names", the imagination overpowers perception, which is why Roquentin calls the seat a dead donkey or his body a crab; there is no reason why he should not. Roquentin is essentially experiencing what remains once human-made concepts are stripped away from the entity named, leaving only the being in itself. The whole point of this scene is for our protagonist to see that existence *is* independent of whatever names it has or whatever terms we use to describe it. The phrase used, which is repeated, is "they are there", which helps to emphasise the thought that objects simply exist.

This ties into the root passage where Roquentin confirms his theory of names and words. Upon entering the park, he already thinks that all descriptions of an object are hopeless as they cannot give an accurate depiction of anything. He admits this early in the passage. "Words had disappeared, and with them the meaning of things, the methods of using them, the feeble landmarks which men have traced on their surface." (151) All names and words are merely at the

surface level. They give us no indication of what a thing's existence really is. He uses the example of the chestnut tree root at his feet to showcase this.

> That root, on the other hand, existed in so far that I could not explain it. Knotty, inert, nameless, it fascinated me, filled my eyes, repeatedly brought me back to its own existence. It was no use my repeating: 'It is a root'—that didn't work any more. I saw clearly that you could not pass from its function as a root, as a suction-pump, to that, to that hard, compact sea-lion skin, to that oily, horny, stubborn look. The function explained nothing; it enabled you to understand in general what a root was, but not *that one* at all. That root, with its colour, its shape, its frozen movement, was … beneath all explanation. (155)

The argument could be made here that what Roquentin is effectively describing is the experience of a break-down or rupture in the relationship between language and the rest of the world. The point might be put like this: that language for the most part deals in generalities (concepts) but Roquentin is captured by the absolute *particularity* of the root, which he feels simply cannot be pinned down by concepts or general terms. In that sense, the root is "beneath all explanation". The implied conclusion is that all general concepts are inadequate to capture the particularity of existing objects.

Existence

By the time Roquentin has arrived at the park in the root scene he has already experienced uncomfortable revelations leading him to conclude that words naming or describing anything can all too easily lose their meanings (the tram

passage). What is left after all descriptions are stripped away from a thing? Nothing but what exists.

The second philosophical theme of *Nausea* is the nature of existence. For Roquentin this is what remains after you strip away the names, definitions, and explanations of a thing's qualities. What we are left with is simply the thing itself. It might seem that all we can say in identifying the thing is: I perceive *this* (in an indexical not a discursive identification). When we confront "this", we employ no concepts. This ties back to my previous comment on the deliverance of perceptions. Roquentin is implying that we can experience a thing's raw existence without descriptive concepts or names. These are not necessary as the object exists independently of them anyway. Moreover, they keep us from perceiving what a thing's existence really is. As Anthony Manser writes, this brute existence is usually masked by a screen of intentions and activities which are assigned to a thing. (Manser, 1966, 9) Typically we interact with a thing through the qualities and purposes we say it has. But the "thing" itself is "alien to us and exists in its own right which cannot be disposed of by any 'reduction'." (Manser, 1966, 8)

It is worth pointing out, however, that there is a price to be paid for setting aside concepts in the identification of raw existence. One of the functions of concepts is to differentiate between things, for example, in the visual field. Concepts determine boundaries between things (the cup is distinct from the saucer, the handle of the door from its hinges, etc.). Discarding names (i.e. general terms) destroys boundaries and differentiation. The trouble with the referential vagueness of "this" in a perceptual context is that it can easily lead to the sort of undifferentiated blur that so plagues Roquentin. We might ask

what determines that “this”, confronting the root, picks out just the root, not the soil, the pebbles, the bits of grass, or anything else around it? This raw presence of the particular is the cause of Roquentin’s Nausea.

Roquentin lays out his theory of existence in full for the first time in this passage. He uses the root as an example to explain what he means. He says that it is obscenely naked, to the point of embarrassing him. Staring at the root, he watches as its surface qualities vanish. “It had lost its harmless appearance as an abstract category: it was the very stuff of things, that root was steeped in existence.” (152) The harmless appearance as an abstract category Roquentin refers to here is that of calling the root “a root”. We call it such because when we look at it, we see its surface qualities which make us categorize it as a root (its shape, colour, etc.). He finally comes to comprehend this in the root passage. “The diversity of things, their individuality, was only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer has melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, in disorder—naked, with a frightening, obscene nakedness.” (152) The question, however, remains how to secure reference to a particular when boundaries dissolve.

This is in stark contrast to things that Roquentin says do *not* exist. It seems that, for Roquentin, what is not perceivable does not exist. While circular things in the world exist, and can be perceived, a circle as an abstract mathematical form, fully explained through a Euclidean-type definition, does *not* exist, according to Roquentin, nor is it “absurd”, and stands in sharp contrast to the root (155). The same is true for colours conceived as abstract universals. “You could believe that there was real blue in the world, real red, a real smell of almonds or violets. But as soon as you held on to them for a moment, this feeling of comfort and security gave way to a deep uneasiness: colours, tastes,

smells were never real, never simply themselves and nothing but themselves." (156)

A similar conclusion applies to the melody that Roquentin constantly refers to ("Some of These Days"). When we listen to the song, we hear the sounds, or when we read a music sheet, we see the paper and ink. But we cannot perceive the melody independent of these things; the melody itself is abstract. Whereas things that exist are messy and boundless, things that do not exist, of the kind mentioned, are pure, contained in a kind of "rigid" essence, complete in and of themselves. They are abstract and have meaning but are not physically in the real world. I will say more on his theory of melodies while discussing philosophical advancement.

According to Sartre, consciousness can only be described by what it is not. When I am conscious of the tree my consciousness is identified as *not-the-tree.* Any explanation of consciousness will be of a negative kind. This is because consciousness is nothing—there is no thing we can point to and identify as pure "consciousness" in reality. It is not a being-in-itself (en-soi) like other existents. Being-in-itself simply *is*. As Sartre summarizes it in *Being and Nothingness*, "Being is. Being is in-itself. Being is what it is." (Sartre, 2003, 22) Consciousness, by contrast, is being-for-itself (pour-soi), defined by Sartre with a typical paradoxical flourish as "being what it is not and not being what it is" (Sartre 2003, 21): in other words what it is is not-a-tree, not-a-root, not whatever it is directed towards, and it is not a thing in itself. It is the only part of human existence that is not material, fixed, or determined by external factors. Yet we are still affected by consciousness, despite it being literally nothing. Roquentin has perceptions which are conscious experiences, and even

slipping out of consciousness (i.e. the negation of consciousness) can be described as an experience. So while we are unable to identify consciousness, our perceptions nonetheless instantiate it. You have to be conscious in order to be conscious *of* something.

In the root passage Roquentin is reflecting less on consciousness, than on the objects of consciousness, the things he is conscious of. He is increasingly aware of their remoteness, their alienness, their inexplicability, and ultimately their "superfluousness". Some of the philosophical terminology about objects in the root passage turns up also in *Being and Nothingness*:

> An existing phenomenon can never be derived from another existent qua existent. This is what we shall call the *contingency* of being-in-itself. But neither can being-in-itself be derived from a *possibility*. The possible is a structure of the *for-itself*; that is, it belongs to the other region of being. Being-in-itself is never either possible or impossible. It *is*. This is what consciousness expresses in anthropomorphic terms by saying that being is superfluous (*de trop*)—that is, that consciousness absolutely can not derive being from anything, either from another being, or from a possibility, or from a necessary law. (Sartre, 2003, 22)

Roquentin comes to realize, in accordance with his own philosophical views, that he too is unnecessary, contingent, and superfluous, despite all these distinct experiences he has throughout the novel. He must grapple with the absurdity of his own existence, which leads to the third theme of *Nausea*.

The absurd

Roquentin's nausea is not a result of discovering what existence and non-existence are. It does not even come up when things simply break free from their names. The Nausea, as he describes it, comes from another factor surrounding existence: the absurd. The overarching dread and pain for Roquentin through the whole book is the fact that things that exist not only exist, but are "superfluous" ("de trop").[34]

The reference to the superfluous in *Being and Nothingness*, quoted above, explicitly echoes things that Roquentin says. The idea initially surfaces when he is mulling over what adventures are and if he has had any. He concludes that he has not, as real life is never as well-ordered or necessarily structured as adventures are. But this discovery has darker implications for Roquentin. If life does not play out like a story does, and stories are inherently ordered, then life by contrast is the exact opposite. This horrifies Roquentin, as it is also the exact opposite of what he wanted for himself. "I had a violent feeling that I was having an adventure. But [the girl he was seeing at the time] came back, she sat down beside me, she put her arms around my neck, and I hated her without knowing why. I understand now: it was because I had begun living again that the impression of having an adventure had just vanished." (47) Faced

[34] Camus praised Sartre's descriptions of absurdity in *Nausea*. He considered this as an artistic achievement, professing that he was unable to put the work down. (Aronson, 2004, 12) He wrote that as an author, Sartre's "art lies in the detail with which he depicts his absurd creatures, the way he observes their monotonous behavior." (Aronson, 2004, 12) Sartre also complimented Camus's own description of the absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, where in an article he penned soon after the publication of Camus's treatise reads: "The absurd…. resides neither in man nor in the world if you consider each separately. But since man's dominant characteristic is "being-in-the-world," the absurd is, in the end, an inseparable part of the human condition. Thus, the absurd is not, to begin with, *the object of a mere idea; it is revealed to us in a doleful illumination*." (Aronson, 2004, 13)

with this upsetting truth—that he will never experience a real adventure—Roquentin is forced to accept that nothing but monotony awaits him now. "When you are living, nothing happens. The settings change, people come in and go out, that's all. There are never any beginnings. Days are tacked on to days without rhyme or reason, it is an endless monotonous addition" (47).

The more Roquentin ruminates on the superfluousness of his life, the lives of others, and eventually everything, the more alienated he becomes as a person. As with his sudden outbursts when thinking about existence too much, he has the same kinds of outbursts when he contemplates the superfluousness of existence in the latter part of the novel. While discussing humanist ideas, namely those regarding love, with the Autodidact—who has been nothing but kind to Roquentin—Roquentin reveals his thoughts on existence to another person for the first time (at least directly). Growing annoyed with the Autodidact's talk of love, he suddenly cries "Of course it doesn't exist! Neither Youth nor Maturity nor Old Age nor Death……." (143) This is in response to the Autodidact asking Roquentin if such things as youth or love exist, although it is implied that the Autodidact believes that they do.

Already in a state of disgust, Roquentin comes to realize in the same scene that it would not make a difference if he stabbed the Autodidact with his cheese knife. "Only it would be necessary to make a gesture, to give birth to a superfluous event: the cry the Autodidact would give would be superfluous—and so would the blood flowing down his cheek and the jumping up of all these people. There are quite enough things existing already" (147). It is interesting and disturbing to notice here that morality plays no role in these reflections (all through the novel one may add). We can assume that morality for Roquentin

does not exist objectively in the world. Hence, if morality was to "be" in any sense, it would have to be as another creation of the human mind, not an objective truth.[35] Regardless, this is not important to Roquentin's philosophy. What matters to him is that all things—i.e. all things that exist—are not only meaningless (as we learn when language becomes disconnected from the things it is naming/describing), but also superfluous, contingent, and absurd.

All objects—past, present, and future—are superfluous. Roquentin finally relents and accepts this in the root passage.

> Superfluous: that was the only connexion I could establish between those trees, those gates, those pebbles. [……] I was aware of the arbitrary nature of these relationships, which I insisted on maintaining in order to delay the collapse of the human world of measures, of quantities, of bearings; they no longer had any grip on things. (153)

This includes even himself (not referring here to the events of his life but everything about him, including all the experiences he has). "And *I*—weak, languid, obscene, digesting, tossing about dismal thoughts—*I too was superfluous*." (153) Thus, if we put together the pieces that we have been given so far—that we exist only in the present and that all existence is superfluous—we can conclude that we are superfluous through and through. This completes his understanding of existence (or at least all that he can possibly learn about it he thinks). "I understood that I had found the key to Existence, the key to my Nausea, to my own life. In fact, all that I was able to grasp afterwards comes

[35] Sartre does have a theory of morality presented in other works (e.g. *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1987)), but it is not apparent where—if anywhere—it exists in this novel.

down to this fundamental absurdity." (154) The Nausea thus arises from the realization that our condition—the condition of any object which exists—is a superfluous, absurd one.

As well as pointing to the lack of meaning in things, discussed earlier, part of what Roquentin means by "absurdity", as he tells us himself, is the radical contingency of things. The moment Roquentin realizes this is one of profound astonishment for him, though in a terrifying sort of way.

> That moment was extraordinary. I was there, motionless and frozen, plunged into a horrible ecstasy. But, in the very heart of that ecstasy, something new had just appeared; I understood the Nausea, I possessed it. [……] The essential thing is contingency. I mean that, by definition, existence is not necessity. To exist is simply *to be there*; what exists appears, lets itself be *encountered*, but you can never *deduce* it. (156)

What is, just "is", with no necessary cause or reason. Anyone who denies this fact, Roquentin adds, is living in bad faith. Doctor Rogé and all those historical figures whose paintings were in the museum live in bad faith as they try—in vain—to think of their lives as having some sort of innate or predestined significance, which Roquentin argues is fundamentally impossible. The result of this realization is a horrific bout of Nausea; essentially this new revelation does not cure him of his persistent ailment.

Before moving on, I want to quickly note two key points brought up about this passage by other philosophers. First, Iris Murdoch reminds us that although Roquentin's problem (his Nausea) is not a typical human concern, nevertheless

Sartre is trying to show us through Roquentin's observations something more general about the "human situation". (Murdoch, 1967, 21) This seems right given Roquentin's insistence in various points in the novel that his nausea is "his" own disease, not infecting other people. Mary Warnock agrees, writing that:

> Roquentin's Nausea was his own particular disease. We do not have to suppose that everybody shares it, nor need we even think that Sartre believes this. And this is true. One cannot derive a metaphysical description from the words of the character in a novel, by themselves. But these words do in fact make more explicit and immediate what is contained, though with less detail, elsewhere, and when we turn to *Being and Nothingness* we realize that Roquentin was, in this passage at least, supposed to be speaking for all of us. (Warnock, 1965, 97)

We can conclude here that everyone has their own individual version of Nausea which they will experience at some time (there is evidence for this when Roquentin mentions that Monsieur Achille is "waiting for his Nausea or something of that sort" (78)). Regardless of when we experience it, "the three feelings which we must all of us experience when we reflect upon the world are nausea, a sense of the absurd, or of our own superfluity, and anguish." (Warnock, 1965, 97) Nausea is not a pleasant sensation for anyone but it is one we are apt to feel, in some form or other, being conscious human beings (the conception of Nausea in the novel implies that only humans can experience it).

Part Three- Philosophical Advancement

As we have seen, *Nausea* has several poignant philosophical themes and theses. It successfully meets these conditions for the Strong Tier. But as also previously mentioned it is not enough to merely contain philosophical themes and theses in the narrative, which are also the requirements for my Moderate Tier. One of the conditions for a novel to be a candidate for the Strong Tier category is that it must contribute to a better understanding of a philosophical theory. Strong philosophical novels are set apart from the rest partly because of what they supply to philosophy as a discipline. They do not further our understanding by presenting traditional arguments as pure philosophical treatises do. Yet they can still increase our insight on a subject in a meaningful—albeit indirect—sort of way.

On all three of the key themes we have discussed—words and objects, existence, and the absurd—*Nausea* can be seen to have made an active contribution to philosophy going beyond merely raising philosophical questions or vaguely "exploring" ideas. First, the intriguing thought that "things [can] break free from their names" is shown to have significant ramifications for, among other matters, language, meaning, and the role of concepts in perception. Second, the familiar but deeply obscure notion that objects might have being (existence) without being tied to human concepts or categories is given new life by imagining the kind of engagement human consciousness might have with such existents. And third, the thought that there is no inherent meaning in the world and thus there is a fundamental "absurdity" in things is shown to have not just logical but psychological ramifications.

It is true that aspects of all of these claims are treated elsewhere in Sartre's philosophy but that does not undermine the originality and value in this literary and imaginative realisation. Philosophy is advanced in the novel not just by presenting these ideas but by enacting them in a dramatic and vivid instantiation. Admittedly, it does little to soften the deep pessimism in Sartre's existentialism—its negative view of human relations, its depiction of life lived in bad faith, and its emphasis on anguish—but it provides a unique and memorable image of certain aspects of that vision in the life of Roquentin.

Finally, for a more detailed example of *Nausea's* achievement in advancing a subject of philosophical interest, we can look at how the novel supplements and clarifies Sartre's philosophy on art and ontology.

Peter Lamarque has written on *Nausea's* contribution to the philosophy of art. He identifies in his book, *Work & Object,* parallels between the ideas on art in Sartre's other writings and those found in this novel.[36] Lamarque argues that Roquentin's decision to write his own novel by the end of *Nausea* rests on two prior episodes: one of which we have already discussed at length, that being Roquentin's revelation in the root passage, the other is his considered response to hearing the tune "Some of These Days", which according to Lamarque lies at the heart of his ontological reflections. (Lamarque, 2010, 209)

The key theme in both of these scenes is the contrast between the kind of existence (or strictly non-existence) of the melody—a work of art—and that of physical, natural objects like the root. When it comes to melodies, Roquentin

[36] Though Sartre's theory of melodies is not found in *Being and Nothingness*, we can connect it to his previous work, *The Psychology of Imagination*.

rejects all elements associated with physical objects (i.e. viscousness, superfluousness, and contingency). Instead, melodies have an inherent necessary structure or order to them and "[it] is the precision of the notes, following inexorably one from another, structured, clear, and determinate that impresses Roquentin." (Lamarque, 2010, 211-212) What becomes clear is this idea of purposefulness, of inner necessity which music (and other works of art) possess, fundamentally contrasting with Roquentin's idea of physical objects, including himself. It is the clarity and necessity in the melody that helps to relieve him of the nausea induced by objects.

One might see here why Roquentin turns to art as a form of relief by the last scene. Works of art themselves do not exist, according to Roquentin, yet they are not nothing like consciousness. In fact, they share something in common with consciousness. Works of art are not fixed or bound to the present. "Roquentin constantly emphasizes the distance between the work and the physical manifestation; it is 'beyond', 'behind', 'far away' and, in the case of his own projected book, 'above existence'." (Lamarque, 2010, 212) There is a difference between the material substance which comprises the work, and the essence of the work. The distinction is clear when applied to music. A melody is not identical to either the medium in which it is being played or the sounds produced in performances; the tune itself is distinct from these, beyond or outside of time. As Roquentin puts it:

> *It* does not exist. It is even irritating in its non-existence; if I were to get up, if I were to snatch that record from the turn-table which is holding it and if I were to break it in two, I wouldn't reach *it*. It is beyond—always beyond something, beyond a voice, beyond a violin note. Through layers

> and layers of existence, it unveils itself, slim and firm, and when you try to seize it you meet nothing but existents, you run up against existents devoid of meaning. It is behind them: I can't even hear it, I hear sounds, vibrations in the air which unveil it. It does not exist, since it has nothing superfluous: it is all the rest which is superfluous in relation to it. It *is*. (208-9)

It seems that there is an implicit conception of works of art in *Nausea*, albeit not worked out in great detail. To clarify this conception it is helpful to appeal to another of Sartre's philosophical works, *The Psychology of Imagination* (completed before he began writing *Nausea*). In this philosophical treatise Sartre discusses the mode of existence of another musical work, Beethoven's 7th Symphony.[37]

> [What] is the Seventh Symphony itself? Obviously it is a *thing*, that is something which is before me, which endures, which lasts. Naturally there is no need to show that that thing is a synthetic whole, which does not consist of tones but of a thematic configuration. But is that 'thing' real or unreal? Let us first bear in mind that I am listening to the Seventh Symphony. For me that 'Seventh Symphony' does not exist in time, I do not grasp it as a dated event, as an artistic manifestation which is unrolling itself in the Chatelet auditorium on the 17th of November, 1938. [….] The Seventh Symphony is in no way in time. It is therefore in no way real. It occurs by itself, but as absent, as being out of reach. (Sartre, 1972, 223-4)

[37] It is important to note that Sartre is not referring to this melody in a platonic or idealist sense here. (Lamarque, 2010, 214)

As we have seen, Roquentin too states that melodies do not exist in time and are unreal, in contrast to physical objects. Roquentin and Sartre are at one on this.

Part of what gives *Nausea* its value as a philosophical novel is the style in which its philosophical ideas are presented to readers. I will argue as to why this is case later in Chapter Five, but we cannot definitively say that Sartre is using Roquentin as a vehicle to deliver his own philosophy to us (i.e. Roquentin is not simply a mouthpiece for Sartre). This may seem contradictory considering how similar *Nausea's* philosophical ideas are to those found elsewhere in Sartre, as just noted in the case of art, but it is important to keep in mind that Sartre is not the narrator in *Nausea*. Roquentin is the one speaking to readers; Sartre is not telling us anything directly in his novel (despite having written it). A novel's narrator is not the same person as the author. Roquentin is not Sartre. Thus it is impossible to say how much of what Roquentin thinks to be true is what Sartre claims to be true.

This is where a stark difference between philosophical treatises and novels shows itself, as mentioned in Chapter One. Reading *Nausea* and *Being and Nothingness* or *The Psychology of Imagination* are two very different kinds of experiences (speaking from a narrative perspective). Sartre is cool-headed in his philosophical treatises. They are academic in nature, mirroring the kinds of styles of works the purists in the discipline would traditionally accept. He writes like a philosopher, to put it another way. Roquentin, on the other hand, is on an emotional rollercoaster throughout the novel. He writes with passion, anger, disgust, hope, fear, and much more—all of which are missing from

conventional philosophical works. Furthermore, we ought not to expect him to write like a philosopher since that was not his original goal or intention. Roquentin is not a philosopher (at least by trade), and never intended to pen a work of philosophy.

Sartre, however, is a philosopher and clearly had philosophical intentions in writing *Nausea*. Admittedly, as stated, he cannot be said to be directly speaking to us in the novel, as in his other philosophical works. He lets Roquentin do the speaking, with all his idiosyncrasies. *Nausea* is first and foremost a work of fiction, and it complements Sartre's other writings by presenting his ideas in a new, uncharacteristic light. Roquentin shows how a fictional character might contemplate Sartre's theories, and how these revelations may impact their lives overall. *Nausea* absolutely advances the subject because it supplements and clarifies Sartre's work in a way that other pure philosophical writings cannot. *Nausea* cannot replace his treatises of course, and likewise his treatises cannot give us the same experience with the same philosophical content as *Nausea.* But it is for this reason that they complement, not compete with, each other.

Chapter III: Second Case Study: Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*

Introduction

It may be easier to find and critically analyze the philosophical ideas contained in a novel written by an actual philosopher. The philosophical themes Jean Paul Sartre discusses in *Nausea* are quite apparent to the reader upon first reading, and deliberately so. Sartre used his novel to workshop some specific ideas before going on to clarify and expand them in traditional philosophical works. But what about those cases where supposed philosophical novels are not written by philosophers nor do they accompany any actual philosophical texts? Can they contain substantial philosophical ideas like their counterparts penned by philosophers?

When we read works like *Crime and Punishment*, the answer seems to be yes. Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote *Crime and Punishment* in the 1860s; it was originally published in parts, with the first part coming out in January 1866. Despite his interest in contemporary philosophies (though siding more with the current conservative philosophies), Dostoevsky is not a philosopher like Sartre. Sartre is widely known for his philosophy, with his novel being heavily associated with that philosophy. Dostoevsky, on the other hand, is well-known for his literary output, including such novels as *The Gambler*, *Notes From Underground*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. While each of these novels have aspects which can be considered philosophical, presenting and arguing for these ideas is not their primary purpose (with perhaps the exception of *The Brothers Karamazov*).

Dostoevsky's works of literature are first and foremost works of art, contributing to his artistic vision.

One way Dostoevsky achieves this is taking his philosophical ideas, like his thoughts on psychology, religion, etc. and molding them together like clay into a uniform artistic shape. As such, any philosophical theories he does include mesh well with other elements of the work. The result is that what philosophy *Crime and Punishment* does contain is not the metaphorical "star" of the novel. Indeed, it simply becomes one of many important parts, none of which can be removed without severely distorting the complete narrative.

So we end up with a novel where philosophical ideas are important but not the whole reason for its existence, as is the case with *Nausea*. Yet it would be too quick here to dismiss the thought that *Crime and Punishment* is a genuine philosophical novel on this account. On the contrary, I think that Dostoevsky's novel can be classified as a philosophical novel in its own right, but of a significantly different type from Sartre's work. This chapter is devoted to arguing why *Crime and Punishment* is the ideal example of a moderate philosophical novel.

As previously defined a moderate philosophical novel is moderately but significantly philosophical. In other words, it must contain ideas of an abstract kind which are integral to a proper understanding of the novel. Just as with the strong tier, a moderate philosophical novel must invite philosophical reflections of a serious kind. However, it is not required to pursue or develop a determinate philosophical position (thesis). This is one way we can distinguish novels that belong in Tier 1 and Tier 2. Moderate philosophical novels like

Crime and Punishment need not give their readers any explicit theses. They may have implicit theses, as I argue *Crime and Punishment* has, but these are uncovered through a process of reconstructive interpretation (we will look more at this process in Chapter Five). The same is true of philosophical themes which emerge not as explicitly as in the first tier but also from the process of reconstructive interpretation which the work seems to encourage and reward.

In terms of literary merit, moderate philosophical novels also need imaginatively engaging content (character and incident) with a coherent aesthetic structure. As we shall see, *Crime and Punishment* is a character-driven novel, here meaning that the plot primarily progresses according to the characters' personalities, interactions, motivations, etc. While *Nausea* is arguably also character-driven (focused on Roquentin's thoughts and actions), *Crime and Punishment* draws more heavily on the emotional and moral dilemmas of its characters. There is more of an emphasis on psychological exploration—not just of Raskolnikov but of several characters—which gives the reader a profound understanding of the characters as individual people.[38]

[38] Several critics have noted Dostoevsky's quest to depict a deeper, more profound view of reality through his fictional works. He employs a unique kind of realism, intimately probing into a character's psychology (their emotions, motivations, reasoning, etc.). The character Raskolnikov, as we shall see, was inspired by real men Dostoevsky both met and read about before and while writing *Crime and Punishment*. As such, he tries to accurately, or at least realistically, portray the psychology of a young, misguided criminal who suffers extreme bouts of anger and guilt (although critics have questioned how realistic his characters are, especially his women). Dostoevsky uses this kind of narrative to examine complex moral issues in a way that is deliberately human and empathetic. Texts which further discuss Dostoevsky's realism, his unique style of depicting emotion, and how this ties together to address fundamental ethical questions include Evdokimova and Golstein 2016, and Furtak 2019.

The novel starts with Rodion Raskolnikov, a young ex-student living in mid-nineteenth century St. Petersburg, considering whether he should commit murder. His victim, Alyona Ivanovna, is an old pawnbroker whom Raskolnikov hates (yet still does business with). With mixed and somewhat unknown motives, he kills Alyona and—unexpectedly—her sister, Lizaveta, with an axe. Raskolnikov's life spirals after the murders and the novel divides its attention into two parts: the physical and emotional impact the murders had on Raskolnikov, and the police inquiry led by detective Porfiry Petrovich. Porfiry is immediately suspicious of Raskolnikov and pursues him in a friendly way. Dostoevsky uses Porfiry to unpick the psychology of a criminal, which we shall see later was of great interest to Dostoevsky at the time of writing *Crime and Punishment*. By the end of the novel Raskolnikov, exhausted by his unrelenting guilt, confesses to the murders and accepts his punishment for his crime.

It is hard to capture the magnitude of *Crime and Punishment's* narrative in a brief summary like the one above. Dostoevsky successfully weaves together many different plot threads into a cohesive, unified whole. Raskolnikov is the protagonist but there is so much more beyond him or his character journey. For the sake of space, however, this chapter will focus on Raskolnikov's journey as it ties back to the overarching philosophical theme of the novel (more on this in Part Two). This chapter will start with a brief comparison of *Nausea* and *Crime and Punishment*, followed by an overview of what I think is the more general philosophical perspective emerging from, and developing in, Dostoevsky's novel. Part Two is devoted to explaining more clearly what these philosophical ideas are, how Dostoevsky weaves them into the narrative, and the vital role they play in his writing.

Part One- The Differences Between Nausea and Crime and Punishment, and the Philosophy Contained in the Latter

One key difference a reader might notice between the novels, *Crime and Punishment* and *Nausea*, is what kind of story they are telling. From a narrative point of view, the former has a deeper richness of characterization. We barely get to know any of the characters in *Nausea*, including its protagonist, in any psychological depth.[39] Conversely, Dostoevsky takes great care to develop each of his main characters, fleshing them out into deep, impactful, and unique individuals. Each character has their own beliefs, motives, connections, etc., which all contribute to the story. This allows Dostoevsky to organically expand his story as we get to know each character on a deeper level.

This exemplifies a true distinction between the novels. While Dostoevsky is telling a story, Sartre is philosophizing through his story. In other words, Sartre is using his novel as a vehicle to explain and showcase some of his philosophical ideas. This distinction is clear when we see how much of *Nausea* is devoted to Roquentin contemplating his ideas. Whole sections, like the tram or root scene, focus entirely on these theories, with the actual plot being set on the backburner for a time. From a reader's perspective, not a lot happens in *Nausea*. Roquentin does not appear to be doing much: he visits a museum and

[39] Despite *Nausea* being written in the form of a diary, Roquentin rarely mentions his emotions or how he is feeling. Granted we know when Roquentin is angry, disgusted, or frightened, but we interpret these through his descriptions of other people and scenarios. As mentioned in Chapter Two and Chapter Five, some interpretations argue that *Nausea* is a psychological rather than philosophical novel, or at least they give greater weight to Roquentin's psychology in their interpretations. But the amount of detail told to us about Roquentin's mental health beyond his nausea or isolationist tendencies pales in comparison to the depths of raw suffering Dostoevsky describes Raskolnikov to be experiencing.

park, spends time with his girlfriend and others, all while writing a history book and contemplating life while sitting in cafes. The same is true of other characters we see in the novel, as we know even less about them than we do Roquentin.

By contrast, all the characters in *Crime and Punishment* have full and active lives. Even just comparing Raskolnikov to Roquentin, we see a massive difference not just in their thinking but also their actions. Although both have what might be called depressive personalities, we get a far more intimate look into Raskolnikov's life, giving a vivid sense of what it is like to be "Raskolnikov", in a way we seldom do with Roquentin. Dostoevsky tells us exactly how Raskolnikov feels in every scene—except ironically when he is committing the murders—so there is no doubt in our mind as to how he is being affected by his actions and the actions of others. This also gives us an idea of how his inner moral compass operates (something we shall return to in section two). He suffers tremendously because he has a conscience and we, as readers, watch how it afflicts him throughout the plot.

One may note here that what both protagonists have in common is the fact that they suffer in their novels. Both men experience a kind of mental torment which manifests into physical illness (Raskolnikov becomes sick after the murders and Roquentin suffers bouts of nausea). But Roquentin's and Raskolnikov's inner turmoil are prompted by entirely different situations. In both cases, self-reflection—often of a philosophical kind—plays a role in the suffering but Roquentin's self-disgust is radically different from Raskolnikov's anguished guilt in one distinct way: Roquentin (and Sartre) never hints that experiencing the nausea has a moral dimension. It is not an enjoyable

experience, but it is morally neutral. If anything, becoming nauseous has a positive aspect at least to the extent that it gives Roquentin an insight into reality as it is in itself. Conversely, while Dostoevsky says that suffering is necessary for true happiness, Raskolnikov's anguish is not morally neutral (Dostoevsky, 1967, 188). In a sense it is part of his punishment. One can—and should—suffer without committing horrible crimes inspired by misguided philosophies. This is why the wider scope of *Crime and Punishment's* narrative is so important.

As we know, Sartre and Dostoevsky had different aims when writing their novels. *Nausea* exists to illustrate a specific philosophical theory (the anguish of being-in-the-world); the story and characters themselves are merely a means to accomplish this. Dostoevsky, on the other hand, wanted to tell a genuinely compelling tale that would capture his readers' interest and deliver a kind of warning. This is evident when we examine his notebooks for *Crime and Punishment*. It was not the philosophical ideas he constantly altered but the characters and storyline. His objective—to write a novel about a young student who commits a murder and lives through the consequences—stays the same. Essentially the narrative of *Nausea* is driven by a movement of ideas while *Crime and Punishment* is also a movement of people in a novelistic frame.

Historical and biographical context

It might be helpful here to dive deeper into what kind of book *Crime and Punishment* is exactly. The novel covers several different topics, but at first glance two key ones stick out. First, Dostoevsky wanted to examine the

psychology of a criminal (in this case a young student). This was his goal from the very start, as we see in his letters to the Russian journalist, Mikhail Katkov. "It is a psychological account of a crime. The action is topical, set in the current year. A young student of lower-middle-class origin, who has been expelled from the university, and who lives in dire poverty, succumbs—through thoughtlessness and lack of strong conviction—to certain strange, "incomplete" ideas that are floating in the air, and decides to get out of his misery once and for all." (Dostoevsky, 1987, 221) We see here that Dostoevsky was interested in a very particular type of psychological situation; that of the—in his opinion—misguided student who acts carelessly and suffers mental anguish as a result.

Biographer of Dostoevsky, Joseph Frank, notes that this interest in criminal psychology likely comes from Dostoevsky's prison confinement in Siberia, where he presumably met real murderers. (Frank, 1995, 61) Interestingly, Frank also points out that Dostoevsky's fascination here was of a very narrow type: that of "an educated man with a sensitive conscience", which Dostoevsky details in his notebook. (Frank, 1995, 64) Thus, it is not the crime itself that is unique; indeed, murdering for money was not rare in 19th century Russia, as Dostoevsky would have well known. Rather, it is Raskolnikov's unique circumstances that are the focus of the novel. Perhaps he is not so unique in regard to feeling guilt (unconscious or conscious) after the crime, but his psychological turmoil makes him a compelling and complex character.

The second theme to immediately stick out is the discussion of contemporary issues at the time of writing *Crime and Punishment* in 19th century St. Petersburg. As Dostoevsky writes in his letter, he is addressing topical events.

There was civil unrest in Russia, with the first attempt being made on the tsar's life in April of 1866. The would-be assassin was a young radical ex-student, one of many students who committed violent crimes at the time.[40] (Frank, 1995, 42) This attack alarmed Dostoevsky and the influx of new, increasingly radical theories which these young students were drawn to deeply concerned him.[41] Having prior experience with political circles and getting involved with increasingly conservative publications after his release from prison, he was well-informed in popular philosophical ideas going around while writing *Crime and Punishment*, and he wanted to focus on the crimes being committed by those who supposedly engaged with these ideas. In his letter to Katkov he writes: "Last year in Moscow I heard of a student who, expelled from the university after the Moscow student disorders, decided to break into a post office and kill a postal employee. There is also considerable evidence in our newspapers that the extreme inconstancy of our principles has resulted in horrible acts. [.....] In brief, I am convinced that my subject will in a way explain what is happening today." (Dostoevsky, 1987, 222-3) The point of this is to say that Dostoyevsky's novel covers two important aspects for its author: his personal interest in the psychology of a criminal, particularly that of a young

[40] The same January that Dostoevsky published the first part of *Crime and Punishment* in *The Russian Messenger*, a student named A.M. Danilov murdered a moneylender and his manservant, looting the apartment afterwards. Dostoevsky's co-publisher on the *Epoch*, Nikolay Strakhov, said of the act: "it was carried out under general nihilistic conviction that all means were permitted to improve an unreasonable state of affairs." (Frank, 1995, 45)

[41] While Dostoevsky was conservative with his philosophy, he was not afraid to criticize the old elites in Russian society with their conservative social traditions and values. He mocks the upper classes political and social conservative outlooks through the character of Svidrigaylov (he is meant to represent all that is wrong with the older, wealthy generation).

student, and current social issues stemming from misguided philosophies which worried him.[42]

These are two obvious themes found in the book. But there are arguably some, if not many, philosophical ideas present as well. The problem here is that what these ideas are is not so clearcut. Several people have written on the varying philosophies allegedly contained in the pages, but there seems to be a consensus that they are hard to identify. Robert Guay, editor of *Dostoevsky's Crime & Punishment: Philosophical Perspectives* (a collection of essays discussing key philosophical themes in the novel), admits from the start that even if *Crime and Punishment* can be classified as a "philosophical novel", seeing how the novel engages with philosophy is difficult. (Guay, 2019, 2) Dostoevsky approaches the subject of philosophy in his own way, and while many examples are put forward of how he does this, the philosophical merit of the novel is still unclear. As Guay notes, if this merit depends on containing philosophical theory, then it would be judged poorly due to its lack of effectual arguments that help shape our beliefs and behaviours. (Guay, 2019, 3) In other words, the arguments in *Crime and Punishment* do not force us to re-evaluate our own philosophical thinking. Therefore, it seems that the tie between the realm of philosophy and *Crime and Punishment* is a tenuous one, dependent on external, critical examination to bring this link closer together (something not necessary for Sartre's *Nausea*).

Some passing philosophical topics

[42] The main new philosophical theories Dostoyevsky was worried about in particular were socialism, Utilitarianism and nihilism (or what he and his contemporaries called "nihilism"; not the standard definition used today). A broader discussion on this will come in Part Two.

Many people have successfully examined these links. I will briefly sketch out some avenues of thought found in the commentators. One obvious route is to dive deeper into the psychology being explored and see how that relates to the philosophy of mind. For example, Garry L. Hagberg considers the philosophical implications of how Dostoevsky presents the nature of the mind, with a particular focus on Raskolnikov's mind in certain segments of the novel. (Hagberg, 2019, 19-35) According to Hagberg, Dostoevsky's "mental portrait is of a mind distanced from itself", here meaning that it has no stable self-descriptions (i.e. it cannot describe itself in its own words). (Hagberg, 2019, 24) This results from Raskolnikov's actions (the murders) and his lack of transparency with himself, causing mental confusion and instability. Of course this is all happening internally, showing a certain kind of mental privacy regarding such situations. It is the use of language that allows us to reach out to others outside of our private minds and create interpersonal relationships with others.

Hagberg illustrates this with the dialogues between Raskolnikov and Porfiry, where Porfiry is able to successfully understand what Raskolnikov is actually saying, unconsciously revealing the inner workings of his (Raskolnikov's) mind, which he does not truly understand himself. Here we see an outsider (Porfiry) grasping the mental states of someone else (Raskolnikov) better than they can, demonstrating a lack of self-knowledge. Hagberg's theory of Dostoevsky's philosophy of mind here is just one example of the latter's theory of mind: one which postulates a mind both inherently private and yet accessible to others through their perceptive understanding of individual linguistic expression.

Another key area—arguably broader than the philosophy of mind—that is explored in *Crime and Punishment* is its moral philosophy. There are ample examples of this, some of which will be examined later. It might include, for example, Raskolnikov's desire for freedom (a specific kind of freedom which is stoic in nature and emotionally detached from others) and the consequences of such freedom (an isolation which may result in a loss of self-identity); Sonya's devotion to Raskolnikov; and the importance of suffering (or the human need to suffer, depending on the interpretation). Overarching all these examples exists a type of moral philosophizing suggested in Dostoevsky's novel, namely the connection between Raskolnikov's theory of the superior man and Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical theories. But the principal idea is that crimes committed by "extraordinary" people are not the same, nor subject to the same sanctions, as those committed by "ordinary" people.

One reason this is such an interest to moral philosophy is the fact that Raskolnikov's theory (so briefly summarised here) is inherently amoral in terms of human action. It is amoral in the sense that, according to the theory, there is no pre-determined, prescribed morally right (or wrong) set of actions. The value of an action (in a functional sense) is relative to each individual situation.[43] Of course one might say that the goal of each action is to achieve the highest good for all those involved, which itself can be considered "good". But this gives no moral standing to any action in and of itself, only its

[43] This parallels what is now called "particularism", as developed by British philosopher Jonathan Dancy in his book, *Ethics Without Principles* (2004). Particularism does not rely on universal moral principles which offer us exact solutions to ethical quandaries. Instead one's moral reasoning is particular to the individual in question, meaning that it is context-based and dependent on the particulars of a case.

consequences after the fact—something which several characters in *Crime and Punishment* vehemently disagree with.

It is not hard to see the similarities between Raskolnikov and Nietzsche's moral theory, which has been the topic of much debate.[44] In his essay, "A Criminal's Confession: Comparing Rival Ethics in *Crime and Punishment*", Giorgio Faro compares Raskolnikov's superior man to Nietzsche's Übermensch. (Faro, 2017, 273-6) The pair have a utilitarian, consequence-oriented morality in common, raising one person above human-made laws which apply to the herd-like masses. (Faro, 2017, 276-9) Faro argues that Dostoevsky manifestly does not endorse Raskolnikov's theory and uses his novel to promote a morality more akin to Kantianism, thus shifting the moral focus from the collective back to the individual. (Faro, 2017, 277) Perhaps surprisingly, given Dostoevsky's own religious beliefs, he does not insist that morality is dictated by God but rather gives the impression that there is some sort of natural law revealed to us through our conscience. (Faro, 2017, 280-1) This makes his moral message a universal one as few can escape their conscience indefinitely.[45]

Another moral, perhaps religious, theme found across several of Dostoevsky's novels is the idea of selfless, Other-oriented love. Dostoevsky's thought here is that this kind of love has existed and will always exist in the world. It cannot be learned as it is already innate to humans. Put another way, it is part of human nature. It is hinted, though never said outright in this particular novel, that this

[44] Some articles compare Raskolnikov's nihilism to Nietzsche's, but I am not going to address this here. I will discuss nihilism in Dostoevsky's work in Part Two.
[45] This excludes those individuals who are diagnosed as apparently lacking a conscience or empathy as a pathological condition. This aspect of human psychology was largely unknown or unexplored in Dostoevsky's lifetime.

love is a gift from God (Dostoevsky discusses this sort of love in his other works which makes the religious connection clearer). It is conceivable that this comes from the idea of selfless love in Christianity considering Dostoevsky's conservative philosophical leanings. One could argue that it is this connection to Christian beliefs that fundamentally separates this philosophical idea from other, more context-bound ones in the novel. As we shall see soon, Dostoevsky uses *Crime and Punishment* to give his readers a warning, specifically to young impressionable students like Raskolnikov. Yet the philosophical concept—that of selfless love—is the only exception here in that it is beyond human reason (meaning that it cannot be rationalized away).

The character of Sonya exemplifies this theme, offering some hope of redemption for Raskolnikov. Sonya is the most self-sacrificing character in the novel and arguably a foil to Raskolnikov (one might argue that Porfiry is meant to be his true foil, but Sonya illustrates this better in terms of selfless love). Raskolnikov constantly tries to reason away his empathic emotions and impulses, seeing them as weaknesses and discrediting his philosophical beliefs. Sonya, by contrast, loves others unconditionally and is always sacrificing herself for others. She is forced into prostitution because of her family's poverty, which is the result of her father's alcoholism. Yet she embraces her father and loves her family and God without any hesitation (she is the most religious character in the novel).[46] What makes her a foil for Raskolnikov is that unlike him, she

[46] Sonya displays a kind of quiet, non-argumentative rebuttal to Raskolnikov's argument here (he does not understand why she is so devoted to her family or him, a stranger she barely knows). Dostoevsky includes this exact type of rebuttal in his other novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1982). In the scene entitled "The Grand Inquisitor", the protagonist Ivan tells his brother a story of Jesus returning to earth during the Spanish Inquisition. What is important for our purposes is that the Inquisitor is trying to argue why Jesus's teachings (and actions) are wrong by using logic and examples. Jesus is silent throughout the interrogation and ends the scene by kissing the Inquisitor on the lips. The message here is

never rationalizes her actions or beliefs to anyone (not even herself). There is no doubt in her mind that she is doing the right thing. Her faith is unwavering, whereas Raskolnikov never shows the same level of confidence in his philosophical beliefs. Her presence alone makes the theme of selfless love poignant throughout Dostoevsky's novel (it would not be as strong without her).

While I agree that one can find all these philosophical themes in *Crime and Punishment*, and that these are important sub-themes in the novel, they are not enough to justify calling it "philosophical". I think for this to be considered a "philosophical novel", even in the moderate sense where it contrasts with the explicit philosophical reasoning in novels like *Nausea*, there has to be at least one coherent, unifying idea developing throughout the entire work; i.e. an overarching philosophical theme. The reason I think this is required is that it effectively gives a "philosophical" colouring to the whole work, not just certain parts of the novel. It has at least this in common with *Nausea*, even though the presentation and ambition of the philosophizing in the two cases are strikingly different.

The central philosophical idea in the novel

My central claim for this chapter is that *Crime and Punishment* is a philosophical novel in the moderate sense. It achieves this by containing the meta-philosophical idea that the novel acts as a cautionary tale against ill-

---

that despite everything he has seen and gone through, Jesus still has love in his heart for the Inquisitor, much as Sonya still has love in her heart for Raskolnikov. Rationalizing and arguments cannot destroy or dampen this sort of love.

founded philosophical theorising. I argue that this is the overarching idea stretching across the entire narrative, touching on every facet of the plot. The meta-philosophical view here emphasises the need to be critical and cautious in the face of all theories we propound or contemplate, lest we become confused and disoriented. Dostoevsky's fear is that unscrutinised philosophical beliefs—particularly those which are attractive to young, impressionable students—can lead to unforeseen, dangerous consequences when the adherents of those beliefs (radicals) become too zealous or disillusioned. Raskolnikov is an example of the latter: a student taken in by new philosophies only to be disappointed and subsequently turning to a form of destructive extremism (what Dostoevsky refers to as nihilism). The novel is thus a warning to be wary of unscrutinised philosophical theories, particularly new ones.

This theme emerges in different manifestations throughout the novel, without being explicitly stated or defended. I will devote the next part of this chapter to explaining how and why this is the case.

Part Two- Crime and Punishment as a Cautionary Tale Against Unscrutinised Philosophical Beliefs

In part two of the Epilogue, Raskolnikov has a vivid nightmare. He dreams that an infection has spread across Europe and Asia. This disease causes those afflicted to cling onto their beliefs, even violently so.

> People who were affected immediately became possessed and insane. But never, never did these people consider themselves so intelligent and

> so infallible about the truth as when they were infected. Never did they consider their pronouncements, their scientific conclusions, their moral convictions and beliefs so infallible. [.....] They didn't know whom to try and how to judge; they couldn't agree on what constituted good and evil. (Dostoevsky, 2019, 377)

Unsurprisingly, the results are disastrous. "Conflagration arose, famine followed. Nearly everything and everyone perished. The pestilence grew and advanced further and further. Only a few people in the whole world could be saved; they were the pure and chosen, destined to found a new race of people and a new life, to renew and purify the earth; but no one had ever seen these people, no one had ever heard their words or their voices." (378)

The moral is clear: the consequences of uncriticised beliefs are bad, not just for us but for others. This message comes at the end of *Crime and Punishment*, but it does not come out of seemingly nowhere. Nor is it necessary for Dostoevsky to include this in his epilogue for this philosophical theme to be apparent or complete. On the contrary, I argue that this merely highlights in intense detail the warning Dostoevsky has been implying from the start of the novel. When we examine the different characters, and the light in which Dostoevsky portrays them, we see this nudge towards critical thinking throughout. Dostoevsky reveals why it is so important to analyse any philosophical theories we may come across or think of ourselves by letting us see first-hand the mistakes and contradictions of his characters' thinking. There are four characters of note here, each representing a different philosophical idea and its

flaws: Raskolnikov, Lebezyatnikov, Luzhin, and Nikolai (a painter who believed that it was good to suffer).[47]

I shall take a moment to briefly summarize the philosophical theory each man subscribes to, with the exception of Raskolnikov (more on him soon). Lebezyatnikov is, or at least portrays himself to be, a fervent supporter of socialism. He spouts progressive ideals, as well as sympathy for those characters, like Katerina Ivanovna, who suffer because of their poverty. He represents the radical (yet ultimately hypocritical) youth who proclaim that they desire social reform but do little to advance it themselves.

Even more radical than Lebezyatnikov is the young painter, Nikolai. One might argue that Dostoevsky worried more about overly zealous individuals like Nikolai than their fair-weather socialist counterparts. He writes Nikolai as a tragic figure, led astray by his own philosophies which leads to nothing but unnecessary suffering for him. He is part of a religious sect that believes that pain is good. Why he believes this is unknown; Dostoevsky does not spend much time expanding on his beliefs. Dostoevsky makes it clear, however, that

[47] Dostoevsky believes that human suffering was necessary for happiness. In his notebooks he writes, "Man is not born for happiness. Man earns his happiness, and always by suffering." (Dostoevsky, 1967, 188) This does not seem to be the same kind of suffering as Nikolai tries to endure when he confesses to the murders. Dostoevsky seems to suggest that for suffering to truly lead us to happiness, then it must be genuine like Raskolnikov's. So while he agrees that suffering is necessary for us, it seems as if Dostoevsky does not agree with Nikolai's unnecessary suffering (that is, he cannot learn and grow from this suffering as he has done nothing to cause it. He is not a murderer). This is not to say that we ought to commit a crime to experience genuine suffering like Raskolnikov. In a way, Raskolnikov's suffering is also unnecessary as he never had to put himself in a situation where he would suffer in that specific way (i.e. unrelenting guilt and remorse). But since he has committed the murders, his suffering is now necessary in a way it was not before. He must suffer to atone for his sins.

Nikolai is misguided and apt to suffer more in the future should he not mend his ways.

Dostoevsky portrays Lebezyatnikov and Nikolai in an unflattering light, but in a way such that they appear more ignorant than malicious. This is not the case with Luzhin, however. Luzhin is the only character who is never portrayed in a favourable light. Luzhin is taken in by the new Western philosophy of Utilitarianism—a philosophical theory Dostoevsky fundamentally disagreed with.[48] He purposefully linked Utilitarianism to Luzhin's character from the start. The first mention of Utilitarian theory is made by Raskolnikov with regard to his belief that his sister, Dunya, is sacrificing her happiness by agreeing to marry a cold, calculating man like Luzhin for the sake of her family:

> "That's the way it has to be, they say. A certain percentage, they say, has to go away every year….. go away somewhere……. probably to the devil, so as to invigorate the rest and not interfere with them. A percentage!" (37)

Dostoevsky's disdain for the concept of Utilitarianism comes from the fact that he saw it as one of the most dangerous new philosophies entering Russia at the time. A possible reason for this may be that he could see that, unlike nihilism, Utilitarianism was not as openly rejected by the upper classes (Luzhin

[48] While writing *Crime and Punishment,* Dostoevsky made sure to have his protagonist justify the murder with a Utilitarian argument instead of his hatred of the old woman. (Frank, 1995, 67) This was done to showcase the inherent weaknesses in such an argument, which he also points out to real-life supporters of Utilitarianism during his time, particularly the radical publicist, N. G. Chernyshevsky. (Frank, 1995, 67-8)

himself is a well-respected court councillor (lawyer)).[49] Consequently, I think that Dostoevsky intentionally made Luzhin as unsympathetic as possible. Luzhin is one of the wealthiest people we meet and among only a few, including Porfiry, with a stable job. Yet despite these successes, it is evident that we are not meant to agree with Luzhin's self-serving philosophical views, which are not heavily explained in the novel.[50]

Lebezyatnikov, Nikolai and Luzhin are all used as examples by Dostoevsky to highlight these different, often conflicting, philosophies circulating around St. Petersburg in the mid-nineteenth century. What matters here is not the actual theories themselves but rather that they are portrayed as ultimately flawed in some way. My point here is that each man illustrates a wrong way of viewing the world, according to Dostoevsky. Thus it ultimately does not matter which of these philosophies you subscribe to since they are all inherently wrong in some

[49] It is interesting that the first reference to nihilism in the novel comes from the letter Raskolnikov's mother wrote to him about Dunya's intentions to marry Luzhin. She makes it clear that Luzhin is not a nihilist. "On his first visit, he stated that he was a positive person; he shares to a large extent, as he himself explained it, 'the convictions of our younger generation,' and he is an enemy of all prejudices." (26) The "prejudices" Luzhin refers to here are the denial of God, the soul, and traditional values (explained in a footnote on page 26). Thus Luzhin wants to make it clear to Raskolnikov's family that while he subscribes to some philosophies embraced by his generation, he is not what their society would deem a "nihilist" (someone who rejects all socially-accepted beliefs). By having Luzhin deny being a nihilist, Dostoevsky implies an even greater distance between Luzhin and Raskolnikov. I argue that Luzhin is the ultimate villain of *Crime and Punishment* (admittedly this is debatable but there is evidence for my case). If he denies being a nihilist, and Raskolnikov is Dostoevsky's example of a nihilist in the novel, then this polarizes the two men as characters, and this was likely done intentionally. We are meant to sympathize with Raskolnikov and view him as redeemable (despite committing gruesome murders). Luzhin, by contrast, has no redeeming scenes by the end of the novel. Thus we see a bit of irony here with this brief mention of nihilism in Raskolnikov's letter: Luzhin actively distances himself from nihilists, yet this does nothing to salvage his character (morally or in any other way).

[50] *Crime and Punishment* references several real-world events, people, literature, philosophical theories, etc. Dostoevsky usually does not elaborate on these references, presumably expecting his readers to already be familiar with them.

fundamental way. Furthermore, these misguided beliefs will lead to unnecessary suffering, and Dostoevsky shows us how this happens using the full plot of *Crime and Punishment*. We see notably in the character of Raskolnikov how needlessly dismal life can become when we cling onto flawed philosophical beliefs.

From the first moment we read Raskolnikov's thoughts, he is contemplating an act he is hesitant to commit. "Can I really be capable of doing *that*? Is *that* really serious?" (Dostoevsky, 2019, 4) The "that" we come to learn is murder. He quickly dismisses it as a game, but the notion is there from the start. This is interesting as it shows we meet Raskolnikov in a specific frame of mind. Using contextual clues from the novel (and the fact that Dostoevsky aimed to address contemporary issues with his writing), it is not unreasonable to infer what the journey might have looked like to get him to this point. In other words, we can broadly reconstruct how his disillusionment with his previous philosophical ideals came about.

As we noted earlier, Raskolnikov's crime is not unique in kind. He has a lot in common with some real-life criminals at the time. Presumably while he was still a student, he became acquainted with the new philosophies circulating around St. Petersburg. He must have been taken in by them as (so we discover later) he published a philosophical article of his own entitled "On Crime". (179) The detective Porfiry takes an immediate interest in this essay and cleverly uses it as a psychological tool against Raskolnikov in their cat-and-mouse game. Both men know that it casts Raskolnikov in a bad light considering the mystery of the recent murders, but Raskolnikov is quick to defend his ideas. Porfiry summarizes the article's content thus: "In his article all people are divided into

‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’. Ordinary people must live in obedience and do not have the right to overstep the law, because, don’t you see, they’re ordinary. But extraordinary people have the right to commit all sorts of crimes and to overstep precisely because they’re extraordinary.” (180) Raskolnikov clarifies himself here:

> In my opinion, if the discoveries of Kepler and Newton could in no way have become known to people other than through the sacrifice of the lives of one, ten, a hundred, and so on, people who interfered with their discoveries, or who were obstacles blocking their way, then Newton had the right, and was even obligated to…….. eliminate those ten or a hundred people in order to make his discoveries known to all humanity. From this it in no way follows that Newton had the right to kill anyone and everyone he pleased, or to rob people every day at the market. (180)

We see two key ideas in Raskolnikov’s theory emerge here. First, that in this context there are two relevant kinds of people, and second, those in the extraordinary category can commit crimes. But Raskolnikov does not consider such acts as “crimes” if they are done solely to advance the greater good of humanity. Thus, he claims that those superior men like Newton or Kepler cannot simply do as they please; they must act with purpose and that purpose must be for the betterment of society.

Another philosophical theme we see arise here is that of human conscience, which is a key theme in many of Dostoevsky’s novels. The role this theme plays in *Crime and Punishment* is to push the characters who have committed crimes

(with perhaps the exception of Luzhin) to accept their guilt and suffer the consequences of their actions. But it is heavily implied that the extraordinary man is not plagued by his conscience since his actions are not viewed as crimes, or at least they are seen as necessary evils for the greater good. In this way the extraordinary man can reason away or outright dismiss his conscience. But as Raskolnikov shall learn, this is extremely difficult to do in practice, especially when it goes against one's natural empathetic impulses (more on this soon). He seems to be convinced before the murders, however, that a person's conscience would not bother them after the fact so long as they had the best intentions, here meaning the desire to act for the good of society.

Perhaps it is not clear that this purpose must be for the good of society, rather than just for an individual. This is where we go back to the start of the novel. Raskolnikov is thinking about robbing and murdering an old pawnbroker. Initially he considers using the money to help his family, who are also living in poverty like him (hence why his sister agreed to marry the wealthy Luzhin). What gives me pause here though is that he keeps shunning the idea from his head until a particular scene. If his philosophical theory originally included assisting individuals, even relatives, then why was he so reluctant to act beforehand? His convictions alter entirely after overhearing a soldier and student talking in a bar. These men, with zero empathy, blatantly discuss the murder of Alyona Ivanova, the pawnbroker.

> A hundred, even a thousand good deeds and undertakings could be planned and performed with the old woman's money that's being left in her will to a monastery! Hundreds, maybe thousands of beings could be set on the right path; dozens of families could be rescued from poverty,

> kept from dissolution, from ruin, debauchery, and venereal hospitals—all this with her wealth. Murder her and take her money and then use it to dedicate yourself to the service of all humanity and to the common good: what do you think, wouldn't thousands of good deeds make up for one little, tiny crime? Thousands of lives saved from the wrack and ruin—for one life? One death and a hundred lives in exchange—it's a matter of arithmetic! (47)

This scene is a turning point for Raskolnikov, and I believe this ties back to the original theory he developed while at university. Right after he overhears this exchange, he takes considered action to murder Alyona. No more hesitation, no more long periods of debating with himself; in the following pages, he murders the old woman and her sister, Lizaveta. This now makes sense to him as before the bar scene Raskolnikov could only see the selfish motives behind his actions (make "his" family better off), but after the bar scene he realizes—wrongly—that murdering Alyona can make all of society better off. This sort of rationalizing tells us a lot about his character.

When looking outside Raskolnikov's perspective, however, we see how damning the rationalization in his article and his subsequent behaviour following the murders is for him as a suspect in the murders. Both Porfiry and Razumikhin are horrified by the implications of his article—that one might be able to justify such atrocious actions. Their suspicion is raised even more when considering how poorly and emotionally distant Raskolnikov behaves right after the murders, as if he is dealing with a guilty conscience. Porfiry picks up on this immediately, noting that something is off about the situation.

This is the detective part of the story where Porfiry tries to identify Raskolnikov as the murderer. Even Razumikhin starts to wonder if Raskolnikov could have committed such crimes after their discussion about his article. But from Raskolnikov's perspective he does not see himself as a villain. He suffers bouts of illness following the murders, which readers—and likely Porfiry—realize comes from this deeper but as yet unacknowledged feeling of guilt that Raskolnikov is unable to cope with. Raskolnikov does not make this connection, or he actively refuses to believe it. Put another way, he refuses to admit to anyone, including himself, that he feels guilt about committing the murders. He also does not think that the theories in his article are problematic, hence why he tries to justify them to Razumikhin. He is obviously aware that his essay makes him look guilty to outsiders—which it does—but he does not see any fault with his philosophical views themselves. To understand why this is the case we need to understand more about Raskolnikov as a person and how he got to this point in the story.

Going back to what Raskolnikov was like before we meet him, I think we have enough evidence here to start constructing a theory. I think that the philosophical theories he was introduced to at university were utilitarianism and socialism. Raskolnikov never uses those exact terms to describe himself. Indeed, he never identifies with any established philosophical movement. But what he says and does reveal to us what sort of philosophical leanings he had. This also connects Dostoevsky's writing back to real world groups of people in a way that those involved might be able to identify themselves with.

At some point before we meet Raskolnikov, it seems highly certain that he subscribed to or at least learned about utilitarian socialism. This term is a

combination of two philosophical theories. Socialism addresses political and economic policy with a focus on community, social organization and welfare. Utilitarianism—the same philosophy that Luzhin subscribed to—is an ethical theory aimed at bettering society as a whole by increasing the happiness and welfare of as many people as possible while reducing pain or suffering. Both theories, imported from the West, were becoming well-known when Dostoevsky wrote *Crime and Punishment*, and he was certainly acquainted with them.[51]

Raskolnikov's writing seems to be an amalgamation of these theories, so we know that he too must have been acquainted with them. His apparent indifference towards the old class structure (we never hear him praise the tsar or any of the old establishment), also suggests that he—at one time anyway—may have identified and/or agreed with these philosophical theories. But of course, at some point, he created his own philosophical theory which kept elements of each; classifying all ordinary individuals into one social group and asserting that the extraordinary man must act purely for the good of that group. The extraordinary man rises above others, so to speak, so he can bring everyone else up with him (or as many people as possible; as we see, Raskolnikov concedes that sacrifices must be made).

One might argue that Dostoevsky made Raskolnikov's philosophical ideas deliberately vague and complicated. This works to Raskolnikov's disadvantage, as Dostoevsky likely intended. My view here is that Raskolnikov's philosophy is

[51] Dostoevsky published articles in his own magazine, *Epoch*, on nihilism, socialism, the recent schism between the two, as well as other topics. (Frank, 2019, 486) He also first published *Crime and Punishment* in the conservative magazine, *The Russian Messenger*.

built off several different aspects drawn from other theories, but this in turn gives his theory a shaky foundation or grounding. This is because he merged ideas which he liked and which made sense to him, regardless of whether the ideas are truly compatible with one another. Now we might say that this is not his fault. He is not a philosopher, so we ought not to expect him to be able to construct strong, rational theories. But this is one of the issues making it a flawed theory.

The problem is that the only unifying thread between his ideas seems to be that they (independently) make sense to Raskolnikov, and this unintentionally gives his theory a lack of internal clarity and coherence (we never read Raskolnikov's article, but its confusions become obvious in the explanations he offers of its contents to the characters who have read it). He wants people to understand his theory the way he does, but his article does not seem to be able to convey the ideas with the clarity he hopes for. The result is that it is weak against any legitimate criticism, as we see when Porfiry and Razumikhin raise objections to it. Raskolnikov is unable to give satisfactory defences of his theory, demonstrating an underlying lack of confidence in his beliefs. Everyone, except for Raskolnikov himself, can tell that he is growing more disillusioned by the day.

We see hints of these philosophical leanings resurface throughout the first half of the book. But it is also clear that by the time we meet an older Raskolnikov, he has become disillusioned. This disillusionment could have arisen for several reasons, though I think the most probable may have been the drastic changes to 1860s' Russian society. Raskolnikov would have known about the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. Following this Russia underwent a period of

industrialization and urbanization, leading to a rise of the working class. Poverty and horrible living conditions are mentioned throughout the novel, with the most obvious example being the Marmeladovs. Raskolnikov must have seen living conditions continue to worsen all around him, despite the calls for social reform by the socialists. It is realistic to think that all this social unrest and widening class division led him to believe that a socialist utopia was getting further out of reach. Consequently, the Raskolnikov we see at the start of the novel is trying—and failing—to hold onto his old beliefs while facing the increasingly desperate situation of the countless poor, struggling St. Petersburg residents. What is more, the initial empathy he has for those living in poverty, like the Marmeladovs, begins to morph into a disdain for them.

I argue that the Raskolnikov we meet is a very different person from his earlier self. Lots of small clues in the novel point to this. He used to go to university, suggesting that at some point he had ambition; but when we first meet him he is not ambitious career-wise in the slightest. His friend Razumikhin and members of his own family love him dearly, suggesting that at some point he must have been able to keep their love (this is not the same selfless love I mentioned earlier). He did heroic acts which we only hear about in the epilogue when he goes to trial, showing that he had at least some concern for the wellbeing of others. All of these and more prove that Raskolnikov was most likely a different person in the past, but I suspect that as time went by, he turned inward and began to reject the society he once wanted to serve and belong to. This brings us to the Raskolnikov we see at the start of the novel, who is hanging onto his previous ideals by the skin of his teeth. It is here we see another new theory emerge, this one far more disturbing to Dostoevsky.

Raskolnikov never calls himself a nihilist, which makes historical and thematic sense. Reformists in 1860s St. Petersburg likely did not call themselves "nihilists", rather they were labelled as such by the more conservative members of society, to which Dostoevsky belonged. (Fusso, 2019, 123) Indeed, this term was popularized by the editor of the same newspaper in which Dostoevsky first published *Crime and Punishment*. (Fusso, 2019, 123-4) So it is understandable why Dostoevsky did not have his protagonist self-identify with nihilism as that was not the norm for someone like Raskolnikov, and we know that Dostoevsky wanted to write in such a way that young, radicalized students could see themselves—or parts of themselves—in Raskolnikov. Essentially, Dostoevsky does not sound like other conservative authors who published articles using the term "nihilism" in the same newspaper.

But this leaves us with a question: is Raskolnikov actually a nihilist then? Would Dostoevsky and other readers at the time consider him as such? Joseph Frank thinks so. He makes the good point in his article, "The World of Raskolnikov", that Dostoevsky was aiming for realism in his novels—albeit a fantastical realism—where anyone reading the novel would get the sense that it is "real". (Frank, 2019, 483) He took some ideas from reality and pushed them to their furthest extreme, showcasing what they would look like in practice and what the consequences would be. (Frank, 2019, 483) Dostoevsky at this point was well-acquainted with both socialism and nihilism, and Frank argues that we can see the schism between the two theories play out in *Crime and Punishment* in two ways. (Frank, 2019, 486)

The first focuses on the difference between Lebezyatnikov (the utopian socialist) and Raskolnikov who has become a true nihilist.[52] (Frank, 2019, 486) Lebezyatnikov is portrayed as someone who is weak-willed and contradicts his professed beliefs with his actions. After espousing his socialist views, including praise for Sonya's decision to become a prostitute, Lebezyatnikov admits in an indirect way to having Sonya removed from her previous lodgings. He makes this admission after Luzhin accuses him of doing so, revealing an inherent contradiction in Lebezyatnikov, between what he says (he respects Sonya's profession) and what he does, having her kicked out of the boarding house. He shows a genuine lack of concern for her or worse, a desire to place her in a precarious position so that she might be more compliant to what he wants. (Dostoevsky, 2019, 255-7) By contrast, Raskolnikov does not have a high opinion of socialists (anymore at least) and decides that he must act now if anything is to happen. I have already said that I think Raskolnikov is disillusioned by the time we meet him, and the disillusionment may have been

[52] It is interesting to note that we see another reference to the Grand Inquisitor scene (*The Brothers Karamazov*) in one of Dostoevsky's letters where he shows more sympathy to socialists than nihilists: "The difference is that our socialists (and you know very well that they do not consist only of the underground nihilist scum) knowingly act like Jesuits and liars, refusing to admit that their ideal is an ideal of coercion of the human conscience and the reduction of mankind to the level of cattle, whereas my socialist (Ivan Karamazov) is a sincere man who openly admits that he agrees with the Grand Inquisitor's view on mankind and with the contention that belief in Christ assumes that man is a much nobler creature than he really is." (Dostoevsky, 1987, 469) Calling nihilists "scum" does not bode well when considering how Dostoevsky viewed his protagonist in *Crime and Punishment*, though arguably his opinion of Russian socialists is not much better. But it is evident that by the end of the novel, Raskolnikov is meant to renounce all his old, problematic philosophical beliefs, instead choosing to embrace Sonya, his love for her, and Christianity. In so doing he becomes reformed, no longer sharing any traits with the other nihilists of his time. (Dostoevsky reforms the character of Ivan by the end of *Brothers Karamazov* as well. We know Ivan returns to faith but Dostoevsky leaves his actual reformation vague and implied, much like Raskolnikov's in the epilogues. It is evident when we see both characters' journeys away from these philosophies that Dostoevsky thought that reformation and embracing religion were better paths for the youths of his day).

brought on partly by waiting for a utopian future to come, while society makes no tangible progress towards this.

The second way Frank suggests comes from reflecting on the contents of Raskolnikov's article. As noted before, nothing in the article is entirely original, and Frank notes we can see in it obvious parallels to other real-life writings of other nihilists. (Frank, 2019, 486-7) A notable figure here is one Dmitry Ivanovich Pisarev, the spokesperson for nihilism in 1860s Russia. His philosophy was nihilistic in the way that he wished to dismantle old values and morality, freeing oneself from their authority and embracing personal autonomy and usefulness.[53] Those who achieve this bring themselves above the masses, which Pisarev refers to as the "emancipation of the individual." (Frank, 1995, 70) Consequently, these individuals will have a utilitarian mindset, considering what is important is what is "useful" to the masses. But there is also disdain for the masses as well. Frank notes that when we read Pisarev and others like him, there is this unmistakable contempt "for the people on whose behalf they presumably wish to change the world." (Frank, 2019, 486) There is some hint of Raskolnikov's displaying this same contempt in his distinction between ordinary people, who must face the full force of the law for their crimes, and the extraordinary ones who can be exempt.

[53] Dostoevsky makes an indirect reference to the views of Dmitry Pisarev during the conversation between Luzhin and Lebezyatnikov. After becoming enraged at Luzhin's taunting (he is mocking Sonya's work as a prostitute), Lebezyatnikov defends Sonya, proclaiming that "[i]t's simply work, a noble, useful activity to society, one worth as much as any other, and is a much higher activity, for example, than that of some Raphael or Pushink, because it's more useful!". (257) He parrots Pisarev's theory again when he states "[e]verything that's *useful* to humanity, that's noble! I understand only one word: *useful*!" (257)

It seems, then, that Dostoevsky is not presenting anything completely new with the character Raskolnikov. Lots of young students became radicalized and took more immediate action (Dmitriy Karakozov, the first man to attempt to assassinate the tsar, was a revolutionary). Raskolnikov's article, though we never get to read it, may be a stand in for Pisarev's or other nihilists' work; those familiar with Pisarev would be able to see elements of his theory in Raskolnikov's philosophy.

But none of these satisfactorily answers the question: is Raskolnikov a nihilist? It is clear that he shares certain traits with real nihilists, but this cannot tell us definitively if Dostoevsky would classify him as such. I will offer my answer and then explain why I think this to be the case. Yes, I absolutely think that Raskolnikov is what a conservative like Dostoevsky would consider to be a nihilist, for a time. We find evidence in the novel for this.

The way nihilism would be described in 19th century Russia would be essentially one of negation. It is the rejection of old customs, traditions, values, moral codes, laws, etc. (Frank, 1995, 71-2) Put very simply, it is one of destruction and (supposedly) rebirth. I take it that there is a rebirth at the end of this destruction as the nihilists—at least those like Pisarev—are destructive for a reason. It is not senseless violence but rather dismantling with purpose, as we see Raskolnikov proclaim in *Crime and Punishment*.

Part of this destruction—that is, the extraordinary man breaking free from the conventions of the world—is to create a new foundation, one that seemingly compels us to act and think in a certain necessary way. This foundation would be the new moral laws (or are the moral laws now and simply become revealed

to us through the extraordinary man), and these laws—once known—would compel us in a way the old laws never universally could. Raskolnikov says, “I conclude that everyone, not only the great people, but even those who stand out just slightly from the everyday rut, that is, those who are even marginally capable of uttering some new word, must, by their nature, necessarily be criminals.” (Dostoevsky, 2019, 181)

The meaning of what he describes as “some new word” has been debated, but I like Randall Havas’s interpretation. This new word is Platonic in nature, in that no language that exists now can fully describe what it is. (Havas, 2019, 150-2) But basically, it is the form of the new law, the moral law that compels us into obedience. (Havas, 2019, 162) It is complete, absolute, and objective on its own. Therefore, it is not dependent on any authoritative body to exist or be upheld; it simply “is”. This is entirely different from the human-made laws Raskolnikov was living under and sought to break away from. They were inferior in his opinion, as they did not compel us to act in any such way (the fear of punishment was obviously not enough to stop crime from happening).

There is more evidence of Raskolnikov’s unspoken nihilism in the text. From the start, we know that he has no regard for Russian law as he considers murdering the old woman. We also see his disregard for the welfare of individuals in and of themselves (at least those he does not know well). This is the schism between his previously held socialist views, or socialist sympathies, and his budding nihilism coming into view. There are two particular scenes before the murder where we see this conflicting duality: his desire to help others and make the world a better place, and his growing disdain for the masses.

The first is when he leaves the remainder of his money with the Marmeladovs after bringing the father of the family home in a drunken state. His impulse here was to leave the money, but his reaction after the fact is regret and self-reproach. It is important to notice that Dostoevsky uses the phrase, "once on the staircase, he reconsidered and wanted to return." (Dostoevsky, 2019, 20) The word "reconsidered" suggests one of calculation and analysing. He weighed the consequences of his actions and decided that he made the wrong choice. "What a foolish thing I just did,' he thought, 'they have Sonya, and I need the money myself." (20) He then goes on to crudely think that the Marmeladovs have found a "gold mine" with Sonya, the prostitute. He degrades this woman he does not know and her family, thinking of them with bitterness and contempt. It could be said that he is projecting the anger at himself onto them; something Raskolnikov does often. In fact, he rarely criticizes or defames himself in the novel. All anger that could be turned inward has been redirected to the other characters and society at large. Doing so also indirectly detaches or numbs him from his conscience. From the start he refuses to acknowledge any feelings of misgiving or guilt, but this does not release him from the visceral physical reaction his body experiences whenever he reasons away his natural empathetic impulses or commits crimes. This is the first of two scenes that reveal how his disdain for others causes him to suffer unnecessarily, which could be argued is caused by his conscience.[54]

[54] Dostoevsky used the motif of dreams three times in *Crime and Punishment*. Two of these dreams illustrate how our conscience reaches out to us, even before the immoral act is committed. Raskolnikov's dream before the murders showcases how this happens. He recalls a scene from his childhood (likely fabricated but with some real elements included) where he watched a man beat a horse to death in front of a cheering crowd. Horrified, the young Raskolnikov tries to save the animal but is stopped by his father. This grotesque scene is likely an example of Raskolnikov's conscience pleading with him not to murder Alyona. The old horse represents Alyona and the young Raskolnikov represents his innate, probably unconscious disgust and sorrow at the idea of her murder (especially by his own hands).

The other prominent scene is when he goes to rescue an abused girl from a would-be assailant (34-6). Once again, his instinct is to intervene and protect her. Only after taking a moment to consider the situation does he change his mind again, twice. “He’s made off with my twenty kopecks,’ Raskolnikov muttered spitefully when left alone. ‘Well, let him get some money from that fellow, too, and then he’ll let the girl go off with him, and that’ll be the end of it……. Why am I getting involved here? Let them devour each other alive—what’s it to me? How did I dare part with those twenty kopecks? Were they really mine to give away?” (36)

He has automatic concern for those he finds in need of help, but quickly rationalizes it away, usually with prejudice against those he initially felt sorry for. Put another way, he tries to muster up disdain for those he sees as beneath him while pushing against his natural inclinations to help them. This is not good for Raskolnikov’s mental (and physical) health, and we see seeds of contempt being planted here, which only germinate as the plot goes along.

As with the different kinds of love Dostoevsky portrays in *Crime and Punishment* (selfless, familial, platonic, romantic, etc.), he also illustrates different kinds of hatred through Raskolnikov, which we can assume he believed most nihilists shared. Raskolnikov actively hates two people in the first half of the novel: Alyona Ivanovna and Luzhin. He detests them for personal reasons, but he also shows animosity against society as a whole, usually

---

Raskolnikov suffers in (and from) the dream but this is not enough to dissuade him from killing the old woman, which ultimately leads to more suffering as his conscience warned would happen.

through his actions. He willingly isolates himself from the start of the book, not seeing his family in three years. This desire for isolation continues, getting stronger after he commits the murder (he tells Razumikhin and his family repeatedly to leave him alone). He calls Alyona Ivanovna a "useless, vile, pernicious louse" when he confesses to Sonya.[55] (289) And finally, near the end when he confesses his crime to Dunya, Raskolnikov becomes unhinged:

> "I'm spiteful, I see that," he thought to himself, a moment later ashamed of his dismissive gesture to Dunya. "But why do they love me so much, if I'm not worthy of it? Oh, if I were alone and no one loved me, and if I myself never loved anyone? *None of this would have occurred!* I'm curious as to whether in the next fifteen or twenty years my soul will be resigned, whether I'll whimper reverently before people, calling myself a criminal with every word I utter. Yes, that's it, precisely! That's just why they're going to exile me now, that's what they need to do…….. Look at all these people rushing back and forth on the street; every one of them is a scoundrel and a criminal by his very nature; even worse than that---

[55] Note that the justification he uses for such language here has nothing to do with how badly Alyona Ivanova treated him before. Calling her a "louse" parrots what he overheard the student and soldier say: "What's the life of that consumptive, stupid, spiteful old woman worth on the common scale? No more than that of a louse, a cockroach—not even that much, because the old woman's harmful." (Dostoevsky, 2019, 47) Instead of comparing her to a louse, Raskolnikov says that she is one, making a direct statement on the value he believes Alyona brings and is to society. This is a cold, detached calculation that erases all humanity from the old pawnbroker, effectively shown through the symbolism of referring to her as an insect (she is not like an insect; she "is" an insect). This is different from the initial hatred Raskolnikov had for her at the start of *Crime and Punishment*. He hated her because he felt exploited by her, but this cannot enter into his justification for murdering her without it looking like revenge. As such, Raskolnikov must forget his personal hatred for Alyona to make his action entirely a rational, calculated one. In so doing he comes to have a new, detached kind of revilement against her; she has lost all her individual humanity and effectively become part of the masses, and a disposable one at that.

they're idiots! And if there was an attempt to avoid exiling me, they'd all go mad from righteous indignation! Oh, how I hate them all!" (360-1)

This is where I believe Raskolnikov most strongly manifests his nihilism of the most extreme kind. Not all nihilists are like Raskolnikov, but they could presumably become like him. Dostoevsky shows us that the most severe consequence of this theory is only suffering, not just for others but for the nihilist as well. Raskolnikov is a nihilist because he has succeeded in being destructive, just not in the way he wished.[56] What he wanted was to prove that he was an extraordinary man, that he could rise above the masses and create a "new word", a new law. He wanted to prove that *he* could do it. "Here's the

[56] Raskolnikov was not going to be the only nihilistic character in Dostoevsky's first draft. As Michael R. Katz notes in his essay, "The Nihilism of Sonia Marmeladova", lots of characters were tweaked in such a way to water down (or eliminate) their nihilistic leanings in the final version of the book. No one exemplifies this more than Sonya, whom we see a major character transformation in Dostoevsky's notebooks. Whether she was a nihilist like Raskolnikov or a former nihilist is unclear, but she possessed and asserted a lot more independent beliefs in her original conception. This is because she was based on a real woman whom Dostoevsky was seeing before finishing *Crime and Punishment*, one Apollinaria Prokofievna Suslova. (Fusso, 2019, 124) Both she and her sister were "seen by contemporaries as the epitome of the nihilist woman." (Fusso, 2019, 125) Dostoevsky initially modeled Sonya after Suslova, making the exchange of ideas about the Napoleonic "extraordinary person" more mutual between her and Raskolnikov (which makes sense as this concept also appears in Suslova's personal diary at the time). (Fusso, 2019, 125) She also published short stories in the *Epoch* focusing on the "woman question", referring to a discussion of woman's role in society at the time. (Fusso, 2019, 125) But after their separation, Dostoevsky greatly altered Sonya's character, removing any traces of nihilistic sympathies in the final version; a transformation we can follow in his notebooks. The choice to remove Sonya's (and Dunya's) individual philosophical dialogue might be Dostoevsky's indirect response to the "woman question". It has been noted that Dostoevsky does not permit his female characters to have independent philosophical theories of their own which they introduce and teach to men. Rather it is the male characters who introduce any new philosophical ideas in the novel. Such seems to be the case with Sonya in the final edition as she is stripped of any independent philosophical thinking (outside the theological sphere). True, she does embody Dostoevsky's philosophical belief in a pure, selfless love, but she never articulates this in words in the way that Raskolnikov or Lebezyatnikov get to explain their theories explicitly.

thing: I wanted to become Napoleon, that's why I killed." (288) As I described earlier, he has become disillusioned and elected to act on his own. He tells Sonya:

> You see, at the time I kept asking myself: why am I so stupid, what if other people are stupid and I know for sure that they are? Don't I want to be smarter than they are? Then I found out, Sonya, that if I waited for everyone to become smart, it would take much too long……. I discovered this would never happen, that people wouldn't change, there's no one to remake them, and it's not worth the effort! (290)

Having no confidence in the collective to take the initiative, Raskolnikov acts himself. This act is clearly one of destruction—he took another human being's life. But the consequences are not what Raskolnikov anticipated, and we see here another destructive act from him. He rips his own theory apart, removing any goodwill from it (that is, the sort of twisted goodwill that supposedly comes from a murder which Raskolnikov rationalized beforehand). Raskolnikov admits, though perhaps does not truly internalize, that he is no Napoleon, Kepler, or Newton. He is not a living example of the extraordinary man as he originally described him in his essay.

> I wanted, Sonya, to kill without casuistry, to kill for myself, for myself alone! I didn't want to lie about it, even to myself! I didn't kill to help my mother—that's nonsense! I didn't kill to acquire the means and power to become a benefactor of humanity. That's nonsense! I simply killed: I killed for myself, for myself alone. Whether I became someone's benefactor or else, like a spider, caught everyone in my web and sucked

> out all their vital juices—at the time it didn't matter to me!..... The main thing, Sonya, was that I didn't need the money when I killed; it wasn't the money, so much as it was something else… (291)

Raskolnikov sees his philosophy crumble in front of his eyes, and he is the source of its destruction. It is here that we also see what Dostoevsky has done with Raskolnikov's character throughout the novel. He is meant to show us a broader argument—Dostoevsky is not simply telling his readers not to be like Raskolnikov but also what it would really be like to engage with his philosophical ideas from a practical perspective. Granted, Dostoevsky takes it to the upmost extreme with his protagonist (not every nihilist ends up committing murder). But as with Roquentin, we see what the world looks like through the eyes of someone who believes certain philosophical theories. Furthermore, Dostoevsky goes on to show us why such a life is undesirable. It is evident to readers that Raskolnikov's thinking is flawed and is the primary source of his misery.

I find it fascinating that Dostoevsky was able to show the flaws in Raskolnikov's theory without including any actual counter-arguments or debates against it in the text. Instead, what Dostoevsky does here is a character-study by a rebuttal (without having a meaningful debate in the text). He shows us through Raskolnikov's journey where this kind of flawed thinking can lead to and why we should want to avoid becoming like him. He drives the point home by essentially proving that Raskolnikov's theories offered him no protection in the end. These new philosophies he adopted in his youth have not served him well and Dostoevsky is likely implying to any readers who might be in Raskolnikov's position (a young student or ex-student who is getting involved in one of the

rising philosophical movements like nihilism, socialism, utilitarianism, etc.) that these philosophies will ultimately bring them no good as well.[57] For the nihilists and their goals of destruction, it will only lead to more pointless suffering as we see through Raskolnikov's ill-considered actions.

I argue that the biggest act of destruction he makes, aside from killing the two women, is destroying all the social ties and bonds he once possessed. As I have said, it makes sense to assume that Raskolnikov was at least more socially involved at an earlier point. His friend from university, Razumikhin, loves him and goes out of his way to care for him, suggesting they were close before. His family adores him and his protectiveness over his sister, Dunya, implies that the two were also close growing up. Even his landlady's maid, Nastasya, shows him

[57] It could also be argued here that this is why Dostoevsky refused to give Luzhin any scenes of redemption as he did with Lebezyatnikov or Svirdgaylov (an old, lecherous man who tries to seduce Dunya and is implied to have committed murders before). While Luzhin is not the only selfish character in the novel, Dostoevsky makes it apparent that his views on social reform and Utilitarianism are disingenuous and self-serving. He does nothing to help the poor (he situates his own fiancée and her mother in cheap lodgings in a dangerous part of town) and actively puts others in harm's way if it will benefit him (he frames Sonya for stealing). Like Sonya, Luzhin's character originally played a bigger role in the novel where he falls in love with Sonya, as Dostoevsky details in his notebooks. In a section he titled "Characteristics" (dated 2 January 1866), Dostoevsky writes "Despite himself he is forced all the same to notice the fine qualities of Sonia; and suddenly he falls in love with her and becomes hopelessly attracted to her. (Tragedy)." (Dostoevsky, 1967, 191) I believe he included the word "Tragedy" in brackets beside his description of the scene as Dostoevsky knew that Luzhin's love for Sonya would not end well. Luzhin may have suffered some pain for his crime against Sonya (and Raskolnikov in his notebooks) and this suffering would have been the realization that he could not have Sonya in the end, actually mirroring Svirdgaylov and Dunya's situation. But this was cut in the final edition and the only consequence for Luzhin's immoral actions now is losing a woman he did not really love. By removing his love for Sonya there was no life-altering pain for Luzhin to suffer and grow from (Dostoevsky could have had him arrested for framing Sonya, but this likely would have been too unrealistic an outcome for readers at the time). We never see him truly suffer for his beliefs or actions (he is more angry at losing Dunya than sad or remorseful), and so Dostoevsky took no chances in making someone like him look redeemable. We are meant to despise Luzhin; not identify with him as with Raskolnikov or the other characters.

kindness. Lots of people care about Raskolnikov and frankly put up with a lot of abuse from him, especially Razumikhin.

Yet despite all this love and generosity shown to him, Raskolnikov rejects everyone. He even tells Sonya to leave him alone when confessing to her. "Enough, enough, Sonya, enough! Leave me,' he cried suddenly in feverish agony. 'Leave me!" (291) It is tempting to say that this isolation is part of his theory; that the extraordinary man must be essentially alone because he lifts himself high above the masses. But I think this interpretation is mistaken. True, there is a fundamental detachment that must happen for the extraordinary man to rise up as Raskolnikov describes, as he must break away from the old laws, customs, etc. followed by the ordinary people. It does not follow, however, that this means complete isolation from the rest of society. Raskolnikov never says that isolation is essential for the extraordinary man. After all, his prime example of an extraordinary man, Napoleon, was surrounded by the French masses as he was their leader (he was also married and had a child). Indeed, being an extraordinary man does not imply total isolation at all; one is above ordinary people but not completely disconnected from them.

Raskolnikov's isolation, by contrast, is a kind of unnecessary suffering he willingly puts himself through. He neglects his relationships with others and effectively breaks himself away from Russian law too. He does this when he murders Alyona and her sister, making him a criminal of the worst kind in the eyes of society. His rejection of the law isolates him not just from his friends and family, but from the whole community. We see this in the literal sense when he is sentenced to Siberia, away from the previous world he knew in St.

Petersburg.[58] He has left no path for himself to re-join society at this time. He is not part of any religious or social group, and he rejects anyone who extends a hand to help him (he acts coldly towards Sonya for the first few months after they arrived in Siberia, not desiring to see her until the very end). This is his greatest act of destruction, and it causes him nothing but misery.

Dostoevsky wrote *Crime and Punishment* probably partly for those readers who had similar views to Raskolnikov and could identify with the character. They see that he is not perfect and that his incorrect philosophical ideas have led to senseless destruction and pain. But they also see that even a criminal like Raskolnikov is capable of redemption, happiness, and love by the end of the novel. Dostoevsky might be saying to such readers that "it is never too late for you". This final message actually lines up with his own beliefs and views on nihilists (as well as socialists). He is quite charitable in his opinion of these people. He writes in one letter to Mikhail Katkov:

> All nihilists are socialists. Socialism (especially in the Russian variety) specifically requires that all links should be cut. Why, they are absolutely convinced that, given a tabula rasa, they could at once build a paradise on it. [.....] Our poor, defenseless Russian boys and girls have their own ever-present *fundamental* attitudes, which will support socialism for some time to come, namely, their enthusiastic longing for the right and the purity of their hearts. There are plenty of students, so many whom I

[58] It is important to note that Raskolnikov did not know that Sonya would come with him to Siberia when he committed the murders, so this can still be seen as an act of total destruction to his ties to Russian society.

> have seen, have given themselves over heart and soul to nihilism in the name of honor, truth, and true usefulness![59] (Dostoevsky, 1987, 229)

We see here again the term "usefulness", which was commonly used when describing the theories of socialism and nihilism as mentioned above. Raskolnikov's initial intentions were to be useful, both to his family and to society, although he does not fully resolve to commit the murder until after he overhears the conversation of how such an act would supposedly benefit society. Although Dostoevsky does not agree with this sort of Utilitarian calculation, many in 19th century Russia would have considered this intention as "good", or at least not wholly selfish (like Danilov who murdered merely to rob the pawnbroker and his manservant). But everything changed when Raskolnikov actually committed the murder, not just of Alyona but Lizaveta too. There is absolutely no moral justification (Utilitarian or otherwise) that could excuse Lizaveta's demise, and the evidence suggests that Raskolnikov is aware of this. He rarely mentions or even thinks about Lizaveta's death. The exception is when he confesses the murder of Lizaveta to Sonya, but quickly reverts back to only speaking of Alyona soon afterwards. Thus, Raskolnikov has obliterated his own purity, his own goodwill which he is subconsciously aware of and which torments him. But Dostoevsky still has faith in his protagonist.

Raskolnikov is at his lowest point when he confesses to his sister. I call him a "nihilist" then because he has effectively destroyed and shunned everything he had and accepted before. He has denied everything (relations, the law, religion,

[59] This letter was written on 25 April 1866, when Dostoevsky was writing *Crime and Punishment* and had just published the first chapter of his novel in the same newspaper Mikhail Katkov edited for.

his motives for murder, etc.).[60] This denial isolates him and pushes him to breaking point. Luckily for Raskolnikov, Sonya is there to act as his metaphorical guardian angel, guiding him back towards the light. With the support of her love—which he initially rejects—he gradually overcomes his suffering and reaches for hope and happiness at the end of his long journey. He went from being someone with utilitarian socialist leanings, to a destructive nihilist, to someone who was on the path to learning true wisdom.

I am hesitant to say that Raskolnikov has fully seen the error of his ways by the end of the novel as he still has not admitted that his old philosophical theory was incorrect, nor even accepted the killing as a "crime". Perhaps this was done purposefully, as Dostoevsky understood how attached people like Raskolnikov are to their ideals, and so it may take more time for them to "let go" entirely. This makes Raskolnikov perhaps seem more realistic and less idealistic, as it would have been easy to make him change completely in the epilogue.

We are left with one overarching question at the end of all this: why did Dostoevsky write about a character like Raskolnikov? The answer seems obvious at first. He wanted to give a realistic (though an admittedly extreme) portrayal of someone who buys into these new philosophies and acts on them. But why? Why did he want to show us this kind of portrayal? It becomes apparent when we read the last part of the epilogue (and arguably even

[60] The phrase "deny everything" comes from "The Sources of Crime and Punishment" in Joseph Frank's *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years (1865-1871)*. A nihilist in 19th century Russia was described as someone who denies everything, according to Frank. Dostoevsky had come across other nihilistic characters while writing *Crime and Punishment*, with one of particular note being Bazarov from Turgenev's novel, *Fathers and Children*. It is not hard to see similarities between Raskolnikov and Bazarov, as the latter also suffered from an immense superiority complex, seeing himself as a rare, extraordinary person separate from other people and not bound to any external laws or the sort. (Frank, 1995, 71)

beforehand). Raskolnikov's dream is his subconscious telling him that his theory is not only wrong, but also dangerous. He sees what can happen when we are not critical of our own thinking, and the horrible consequences that can result from this. Of course the scenario Dostoevsky presents in the dream is highly unrealistic, but the overall message is still applicable: be cautious of which ideas and philosophies you believe, and examine your views critically. One might also add: listen to the criticisms of others.

Crime and Punishment is thus a cautionary tale. We see what can happen when we staunchly cling onto our unscrutinised philosophies as Raskolnikov did. He is not the only character guilty of this in the novel. Other characters like Lebezyatnikov, Luzhin, and Nikolai have inherent contradictions and weaknesses in their beliefs, which also go unchallenged by their thinking. But Raskolnikov is by far the clearest example of this warning. Arguably even before the start of the novel, Raskolnikov takes a step onto the wrong path, and then another, and then another. This path leads him only to misery and suffering, as well as the suffering of others. All of this, Dostoevsky suggests, can be avoided if we engage in critical thinking. He writes, "a healthy knowledge will, of course, eradicate all that [meaning students' misguided acceptance of socialism and nihilism]." (Dostoevsky, 1987, 229)

To embrace this knowledge and accept that one was wrong or mistaken, one must let go of one's ego. I think it is safe to say that Raskolnikov has a considerable ego which makes him more apt to hold onto his theories, particularly ones he modified on his own. Thus, admitting his philosophy was wrong will be a humbling experience for him and another source of suffering. But this suffering—unlike the kind he experienced before—is necessary for

intellectual growth. Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* is someone who is emotionally and mentally stagnant; he does not change because he will not allow himself to change. But the message Dostoevsky shows us through his horrible journey of pain and destruction is that this is not desirable; we *must* be critical of our beliefs and accept when we are wrong or mistaken because we do not want to be like Raskolnikov.

With perhaps the exception of the epilogues, it is my opinion that Dostoevsky needed the whole book of *Crime and Punishment* to fully ground this life lesson. From the start there are clues of who Raskolnikov used to be and how he got to the place where we first meet him. We see him grapple with his theory and wonder if he could go through with the murder (i.e. prove to himself that he is an extraordinary man). And we watch him sink deeper and deeper afterwards into the metaphorical hole he has dug for himself, and we know he has reached the bottom when he finally rejects everything and everyone. This is the warning Dostoevsky gives to his readers, who at the time may have shared some of Raskolnikov's beliefs. It does not matter if you subscribe to nihilism, socialism, utilitarianism, etc. What matters is if you wholeheartedly embrace these beliefs and blind yourself to their imperfections. The consequences if you do are that you may find yourself in the same hole as Raskolnikov, and not all of us will be so lucky as to have someone like Sonya to help guide us out.

Part Three- Crime and Punishment as a Philosophical Novel

Dostoevsky has an overarching philosophical theme that stretches through the whole of *Crime and Punishment*. I have made the argument that he needs the whole novel to make apparent these ideas adequately enough (again, with perhaps the exception of the epilogue). He has a "show, don't tell" (illustrate, don't state) mentality when it comes to presenting and developing his philosophical beliefs. This extends to his belief that we ought to be critical of the philosophies of others (as well as our own). The "show, don't tell" story-telling mode is a concept I have modified from Charles Larmore's "*show by argument* vs. *show by deed*" distinction (Lamore, 2016, 159) when discussing *The Brothers Karamazov*.

One way Dostoevsky "shows" his ideas is to deliberately avoid engaging in any deep philosophical debate in his novels. None of his characters offer a solid argument for their own theories or a knock-down counterargument for another's theory. Razumikhin, Zossimov, and Porfiry all think Raskolnikov's theory in his essay is wrong, for example, but none of them go into any real detail as to why they think it is wrong. It is important to note here that a philosophical debate is not necessary to satisfy the criteria for either the Strong or Moderate tiers. While some novels' characters do engage in debates, this is not the norm with philosophical (or any) novels. Strong philosophical novels like Sartre's *Nausea* analyse complex ideas without critiquing them (Roquentin never debates his theories with anyone).

I want to return once more, briefly, to the difference between Sartre's and Dostoevsky's novels. Unlike Dostoevsky, who never outright tells us what Raskolnikov's or anyone's philosophical beliefs are in any great detail, Sartre devotes many pages to elaborating on Roquentin's views (on objects,

perception, absurdity). Whole scenes focus entirely on developing and analysing his philosophical thoughts, without any progression of the actual story outside of Roquentin's perspective. Dostoevsky, conversely, has no scene where the plot is not moving forward somehow. Everything he writes is interconnected, with no one passage being devoted solely to philosophizing. Even when Raskolnikov explains his theory to Porfiry and the others, this gives Porfiry reason to believe that Raskolnikov could have committed the murders. To be sure, both authors have some philosophical ideas they discuss in their works, but Sartre devotes a lot more time to presenting his in a clear, explicit manner. In Dostoevsky's case the story comes first with everything else (his thoughts on philosophy, religion, politics, family, etc.) coming second.

This is not to say that Raskolnikov and Roquentin are entirely different from each other in their philosophical journeys. Quite the opposite, I think they are alike in several key ways. Both protagonists have incomplete philosophies when we first meet them: Roquentin's being incomplete in the sense that he has not yet developed a philosophical theory, and Raskolnikov in that he has a philosophical theory (as so presented in his essay, "On Crime") but it has flaws he does not yet see. Both men develop their theories further, here meaning that they both must acknowledge and address the errors in them. Roquentin's major error that he must overcome is finding some meaning after realizing that life is essentially meaningless and the nausea he has been experiencing will not go away. He does this by deciding at the end to write a book, although it is not clear if this endeavour will successfully give the meaning he seeks. Raskolnikov's error is that he refuses to accept that his theory is wrong, and in so doing he cannot amend or even toss out his old ideas. Consequently, unlike Roquentin, he is stuck in a sort of intellectual limbo where any growth is going

to be unwanted and painful. Raskolnikov's suffering forces him to face the reality of his misguided thinking, and even then we never actually hear him reject his previous views or renounce his crime (it is only weakly implied by Dostoevsky that he eventually will).

Sartre arguably did not give his protagonist the same specificity of characterization as Dostoevsky does to Raskolnikov, but this is not to *Nausea's* detriment. Both authors have strong yet different writing styles and these styles influence how the novels' philosophical theses and themes present themselves to the reader. Indeed, it seems that both styles actually demand to be developed in these different ways so that the novels' philosophical content can fit seamlessly into their narratives. As explained in Chapter Two, Sartre takes advantage of the diary format to weave his philosophical ideas into the overarching plot in a way that makes internal sense to every facet of the story (the first-person narrative mode acts as a kind of phenomenology). Unlike Sartre who is more direct with his ideas, however, Dostoevsky strictly utilizes the "show, don't tell" method of intellectual reflection. Thus we never see Raskolnikov lost in deep, philosophical musings as is Roquentin for pages on end; indeed, Raskolnikov rarely thinks or talks about anything philosophical except, briefly, when discussing his article. Raskolnikov never admits his past philosophical theory is wrong, but his later actions show us that he has fundamentally altered his way of thinking. Even when he finally accepts love—or comes to understand the kind of love offered by Sonya—this is shown to us rather than merely told to us by the narrator. This is much more powerful and a genuine positive skill in Dostoevsky's writing. Few novelists can convey their philosophical ideas adequately without giving textual arguments (usually between the characters), but he manages to do this and in a very organic way.

There is one more subtle difference to note in comparing the philosophical theories developed in *Nausea* and *Crime and Punishment*. We might say that Raskolnikov's theory of the "ordinary" and "extraordinary" man is presented by Dostoevsky as a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* of ill-thought-out philosophy (Raskolnikov – a new Napoleon? who can commit crimes with impunity?). It is indeed a cautionary tale. In contrast, Roquentin's views are not mocked or refuted by Sartre, but rather endorsed by him, even if at times exaggerated for dramatic effect.

If this chapter is right, then the principal philosophical theme in *Crime and Punishment* is not a first-order philosophical theory so much as a meta-philosophical warning about how not to do philosophy; and more positively how self-criticism is of paramount importance in addressing profound philosophical-moral-political ideas. The fact that its literary frame is a murder and police detective story, emphasising the reader's own efforts to detect the real motive behind the crime, makes the achievement all the more striking.

Chapter IV: Third Case Study: Jane Austen's *Emma*

Introduction

On the surface it may seem easier to identify novels which belong to the strong and moderate tiers. These tiers have strict criteria that a literary work must meet if it is to count as strongly or moderately philosophical. One positive outcome of this is that it subsequently removes several novels right away from each category. Indeed, as we move down the tier list, the volume of novels in each tier gets progressively larger. The strong tier has the smallest number of contenders by virtue of its stringent conditions. The moderate tier's less rigorous demands allow for more novels to enter its ranks. Thus, when we reduce the strictness of the criteria even further, we see more novels pouring into the tier in question: the marginal tier.

One could argue that this tier is the hardest to define. Unlike the strong and moderate tiers, whose boundaries may admittedly blur into each other on occasion, all the novels in these two categories are at least philosophical in some substantial way. The marginal tier does not have this same buffer as it acts as the barrier between the novels which have just enough to count as marginally, but not negligibly, philosophical and the rest of fictional writing. The immediate worry here is that by removing the strict criteria of the other two tiers for the marginal tier, this blurs the line as to what counts as a philosophical novel, at least in the marginal sense.

This chapter is dedicated to addressing this concern through my third and final case study, Jane Austen's *Emma*. I argue that Austen's novel is the ideal representation of a marginally philosophical novel, not just because it successfully meets all the criteria to belong to that tier, but it also highlights the integral differences between the novels which have enough philosophical substance to be classified as "marginal" and those lacking in this substance, henceforth called non-philosophical novels.

As with the other tiers, in order for a novel to belong to the marginal tier it must satisfy a list of criteria. A novel counts as marginally philosophical if it loosely, but not merely arbitrarily, offers a framework for philosophical reflection, often in moral philosophy but also in political philosophy, metaphysics, or philosophy of science (e.g. science fiction). Furthermore, the philosophical themes are not its central literary or artistic purpose and emerge through interpretation that is not so much demanded by the work but nevertheless offers some rewards in appreciation. It also must illustrate a clear differentiation between marginally philosophical and not being discernibly philosophical at all. On the literary side, it needs to have imaginatively engaging content (character and incident) with a coherent aesthetic structure.

Jane Austen's novel, *Emma*, meets all these requirements. It also has one of Austen's most interesting heroines. The plot is set in early nineteenth century England, focusing exclusively on a few families from one rural village, the fictional Highbury. Emma Woodhouse is the youngest daughter of her widowed father, Mr. Woodhouse. With no other lady to look after the family estate, Emma chooses to remain at home making it clear she has no intentions of marrying, an outlook highly unusual for a young lady in Austen's time. While

this decision keeps her close to her father—as she wishes—it leaves her feeling bored. To alleviate this boredom Emma occupies her time by playing matchmaker with her friends, visiting neighbours, and immersing herself in social situations, which sometimes can become awkward for her. Emma is deliberately created as a flawed character who must undergo a journey towards moral maturity. The whole plot of *Emma* is dedicated to illustrating this journey of moral development.

It is that journey—its aspiration and its achievement—that makes *Emma* a perfect example of a minimal philosophical novel. There is an obvious moral lesson to take away from the story, which seems very basic on the surface: do not try to influence and interfere with other people's lives beyond a reasonable level.[61] But there is arguably something deeper in the novel from a philosophical perspective than just a piece of moral advice. Unlike with *Nausea* and *Crime and Punishment*, however, if readers want a philosophical interpretation beyond the novel's basic moral message, it is up to them to construct these interpretations using the textual evidence at hand. How this construction happens and what is required for it to be considered a valid or even good interpretation will be discussed in Chapter Five. But what matters for our purposes here is that it is possible to come up with one's own philosophical interpretation of a novel which is not supported by any direct evidence from the author. This is a stark difference from my case studies on Sartre and Dostoevsky as both of their novels had ample authorial evidence grounding my interpretations of their novels' philosophical themes and theses.

[61] According to Gilbert Ryle, one of the key questions in the novel is: "What makes it sometimes legitimate or even obligatory for one person deliberately to try to modify the course of another person's life, while sometimes such attempts are wrong? Where is the line between Meddling and Helping?" (Ryle, 2009, 290).

While Austen's *Emma* is lacking in any such proof, this does not bar it from the marginal tier. I shall illustrate this with my own interpretation of what I argue is the novel's overarching philosophical theme. As with *Crime and Punishment*, *Emma* also has at least one philosophical theme extending through its entire narrative, giving the plot a kind of philosophical unity and coherence. It would be a step too far to say that the novel was written specifically with this theme in mind (indeed, I will argue in Part Two that is likely not the case). But it is one we can identify and analyse, which successfully fulfils the tier's requirement of the novel providing a framework for philosophical reflection.

I will begin this chapter with a brief comparison of *Emma* to *Nausea* and *Crime and Punishment*, arguing that *Emma's* literary style is just as critical in weaving its philosophical theme through the entire narrative as in my other two case studies. Part Two will introduce some Aristotelian interpretations of *Emma*, which my own interpretation branches off from. The last section is devoted to addressing the worry that my marginal category may be too broad, here meaning that its taxonomy is too blurry. My goal here is to harden the line between marginally philosophical novels and non-philosophical novels so we do not drift towards admitting everything to the marginal tier. By having this solid—or at least less blurry—boundary between the two we will truly distinguish what counts as a philosophical novel. Perhaps some novels may still fall into that grey, blurry zone, but overall it will be clearer as to what belongs in the genre than before.

Part 1- A Deeper Look into Emma as a Philosophical Novel

As with Sartre's *Nausea* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, the overarching philosophical theme of *Emma* demands the use of a specific literary style. Before I explain what this style is, I think it is helpful to introduce the novel's philosophical theme as it will help us to better understand how Austen utilizes her narrative structure to the theme's advantage. This will also highlight some differences between *Emma* and my other two case studies in terms of their authors, which I argue does not hinder Austen's position as a philosophical writer.

One point I will make right away is the lack of direct external evidence for any of our philosophical interpretations of Austen's novels. Unlike Sartre and Dostoevsky, who both published abstract philosophical literature, Austen gives us no such tangible confirmation of her own philosophical leanings, at least in independent philosophical writings. While this lack of proof by Austen herself may seem like a hindrance, especially considering how I tried to confirm my interpretations in my two previous case studies with appeal to non-fictional writings by the authors, I argue that this is not actually a problem here.

The inclusion of Austen into my tier list proves that the author need not have published, or even made publicly known, their own philosophical beliefs and theories. Such a requirement would be too stringent for the marginal tier at least. It also puts too much importance on the authorial intention of the novel (a topic we will explore more in Chapter Five). If we require external (authorial) evidence to confirm our interpretations of a novel, then this limits the number of titles we can include in any category, with perhaps the exception of the strong tier.

While accepting that Austen did not publish specifically philosophical works which might support a philosophical interpretation, it is important to acknowledge that she was living in a culture—and a privileged part of that culture—where certain general ideas of a philosophical, historical, religious or literary kind were widely familiar and discussed. Austen herself was highly educated, at home and with private tutors, and well read (her father, Reverend George Austen, was also well-educated and encouraged his daughters' literary and intellectual pursuits).[62] So against this deep cultural background there is nothing at all anomalous or suspect about attributing to Austen's novels thoughts and attitudes that were in circulation at the time. The fact that she did not contribute directly to the body of explicitly philosophical writing is of no consequence. Austen wrote about what interested her and these interests were heavily tied to the goings on in her society, namely that of the countryside-dwelling gentry class of Regency England.[63]

---

[62] Texts used to research Austen's personal life for this chapter include Worsley 2017 and Hodge 1972. As with Dostoevsky's personal letters, Austen's collection of letters (sent and received) around the time of writing and publishing *Emma* also provided ample insight (Austen-Leigh 1913).

[63] Austen notes that she is most comfortable writing about what she is personally familiar with. In terms of social classes, characters belonging to the classes other than the gentry appear on occasion in her novels, but all her heroines are firmly gentlemen's daughters, as Elizabeth Bennet asserts to Lady Catherine de Bourgh. The only exception is Fanny Price from *Mansfield Park*, but she is raised in a style akin to Austen's other heroines once she is adopted by the Bertrams. In terms of philosophy, religion, science, etc., Austen replied in a letter to one Reverend Clarke discussing her portrayal of clergymen: "I am quite honoured by your thinking me capable of drawing such a clergyman as you gave the sketch of in your note of November 16th. But I assure you I am *not*. The comic part of the character I might be equal to, but not the good, the enthusiastic, the literary. Such a man's conversation must at times be on subjects of science and philosophy, of which I know nothing; or at least occasionally abundant in quotations and allusions which a woman who, like me, knows only her own mother tongue, and has read little in that, would be totally without the power of giving." (Austen-Leigh, 1913, 320) Whether Austen is being ironic or sincere here is unknown, but there is ample evidence that Austen was well-read on various subjects, including philosophy. Perhaps she chose not to include any explicit philosophical discussion in her novels because of the reservation stated in her letter to Mr. Clarke, but I doubt this to be the case. Austen wrote on what interested her, and while she may have read

While her choice of subject matter—young, unmarried, genteel ladies entering and engaging with their society—was popular with other authors (both male and female) in the late 1700s and early 1800s, Austen's works sit apart from the rest in some notable ways. Her novels may be viewed in a sort of critical conversation with contemporary literature for reasons we shall discuss shortly. This is not to say that her works do not share some other key traits and interests with other Regency Era novels.

One interest several authors shared was the education of women. Indeed, Austen was not alone in her interest in female education, particularly their moral education, at the time of writing. Many novels published in Regency England focused heavily on moulding a young woman's character.[64] Belonging to a popular genre referred to as conduct literature, these sorts of novels instruct their readers' conduct both through the direct statements of the characters and narrators, and the example of the heroines themselves, who are usually steadfast in their virtues.

A classic example predating Austen's work is Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, or *Virtue Rewarded* (1740). Written in the epistolary style, the novel uses correspondence between Pamela and her parents to track her many precarious

philosophical texts (and enjoyed reading them), this does not mean that she wanted to directly write about such ideas, which obviously cannot be regarded a flaw in her works.

[64] It is likely that her father, Reverend George Austen, kept conduct manuals in his personal library as we know Austen was acquainted with some of the more famous titles in her youth. Conduct manuals differ from conduct novels as they are strictly meant to instruct one's behaviour. While there were these sorts of manuals for all sorts of people, Austen was particularly critical of those targeted at young girls. She mocks arguably one of the most popular manuals of the time in *Pride and Prejudice*, where Mr. Collins bores the Bennet sisters with his reading of James Fordyce's *Sermons for Young Woman* (1765).

encounters with Mr. B, her rakish landlord. Richardson makes it painfully clear that Pamela's virtue, and protecting her virtue, are of the upmost importance. In Letter VIII, her parents warn her about Mr. B's intentions and how, above all else, she must resist his advances. "Arm yourself, my dear child, for the worst; and resolve to lose your life sooner than your virtue." (Richardson, 2011, 18) To drive the point home, the letter ends: "It is virtue and goodness only that make the true beauty. Remember that, Pamela." (Richardson, 2011, 18)

We know that Austen read the works of Samuel Richardson, Frances Burney, Ann Radcliffe, and others.[65] She was well-acquainted with this genre of literature and, considering that she subscribed to Burney's third novel, it would be safe to assume that she liked at least some of it. Thus, there is no doubt that Austen had plenty of inspiration for her own novels.[66] But unlike her contemporaries, she refuses to sermonize to her readers. There are no direct moral statements in any of Austen's novels akin to the ones made by Richardson above. Indeed, her style is so different that I would not cast Austen's publications under the umbrella of conduct literature. Her writing is not didactic and, while many of her predecessors likely did write with the intention of educating their readers, Austen effectively removes her novels

[65] Before Austen published her first novel, she was already part of a sisterhood of growing female novelists who supported each other's work. One author, Frances Burney, published her third novel, *Camilla* or *A Picture of Youth* (1796), by subscription, with Austen recorded as one of her subscribers (recorded as "Miss J. Austen, Steventon"). (Garside, 1987, 175)
[66] Austen references Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) by name in *Northanger Abbey*. Both novels share the same overarching theme: what is real, or what is reality? By the end, we discover that all the gothic horror elements like haunted castles and the murder mysteries are misunderstandings. The only poignant difference between the two heroines, Emily and Catherine, is that Radcliffe's Emily is meant to be the ideal example of virtuous womanhood while Austen's Catherine is deliberately flawed. She neglects to see reality as it is, desiring instead to be like the gothic heroines she reads about (whereas Emily *is* a gothic heroine).

from the conduct genre by refusing to preach to her audience. She is not interested in directly instructing her readers' behaviour, either through the voice of the narrator or the characters themselves. Instead, Austen goes for subtlety, gently nudging her readers in the right direction while keeping them constantly entertained with her use of wit, irony, and engaging characters and plot development.

This is not to say that Austen is unconcerned with the manners of her heroines; far from it. But while she does portray good manners for the gentry class through some characters, her true interest seems to be on certain moral vices permeating through her society at the time. Austen's heroines show us how one overcomes these vices, with each novel focusing on a particular vice like being too proud, too persuadable, too sensitive, etc.[67] This interpretation comes from the philosopher, Gilbert Ryle, who relays how Austen makes full use of her characters and narrative to cleverly weave each moral theme into the plot. "She pin-points the exact quality of character in which she is interested, and the exact degree of that quality, by matching it against the same quality in different degrees, against simulations of that quality, against deficiencies of it and against qualities which, though different, are brothers or cousins of that selected quality." (Ryle, 2009, 288) In this way Austen does not preach to her readers; she does not tell them what to do or how to behave. Yet she is still able to write about deep moral topics. As Ryle explains:

> I am not going to try to make out that Jane Austen was a philosopher or even a philosopher *manquée*. But I am going to argue that she was

[67] Not every character morally matures by the end of the novel. Several characters experience no moral growth, which seems to be a realistic outcome for Austen.

> interested from the south side in some quite general or theoretical problems about human nature and conduct in which philosophers proper were and are interested from the north side. (Ryle, 2009, 286)

This brings us to the philosophical theme of *Emma*. The novel is about moral education. More specifically, it is about cultivating virtues in a way that betters the lives of the protagonist and those around them. I shall discuss the theme itself more in Part Two, but here I want to make the argument that *Emma's* overarching theme requires the use of a certain literary style in the same way that *Nausea* and *Crime and Punishment's* philosophical themes and theses also made demands of their styles. Indeed, Austen's style serves the moral theme of Emma in two distinct ways: through its portrayal of a middle path between extremes, as argued by Ryle, and the inclusion of the free indirect discourse method.

As we saw previously with Sartre and Dostoevsky, their novels' philosophical themes and theses benefit from the use of a specific narrative structure (e.g. the introspective diary form in *Nausea*). Put another way, the kind of story these authors want to write points towards which literary style would be most effective. The same is true for *Emma*. This novel's literary style shares more in common with *Crime and Punishment* than with *Nausea*. It is a character-driven novel as it is the characters' emotions, desires, personalities, etc. that drive the plot forward. The plot is overseen by an omniscient narrator, who guides the readers' reactions with their own commentary on the characters' thoughts, actions, feelings, etc. Just as Dostoevsky's third-person narration makes it clear that we ought to be sceptical of Raskolnikov's philosophical beliefs, Austen's narration indicates how we should feel about certain scenes, which I will

expand more on soon. I will also add here that Austen had a particular kind of protagonist in mind when drafting *Emma*. While Dostoevsky wanted to write about a young, philosophically motivated student-turned-criminal, Austen intentionally created a flawed heroine.[68] Obviously Emma is not a criminal like Raskolnikov, but, as we are told at the very beginning of the novel, she has some personal defects which need to be addressed and overcome. Thus, the philosophical theme of moral education centres on Emma herself. It is a novel about *her* moral education.

Austen's novels are also packed full of wit and irony.[69] With perhaps the exceptions of *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, her novels are comedic in nature and this plays to the advantage of their philosophical themes in a way not possible for *Crime and Punishment* or *Nausea*. We are meant to view certain characters' traits—usually ones deemed to be flaws—as humorous rather than vile or tragic. The humour here comes from Austen pushing these character flaws sometimes to the point of ridiculousness (Mr Collins, Catherine de Burgh).

Ryle puts forward the idea that Austen explores certain personal defects on a sort of spectrum in her novels. She does this by focusing on one moral defect

[68] Austen wrote privately about the character of Emma that no one would like her much except for Austen herself. (Austen-Leigh, 1913, 306) While this could be sarcasm, I think she is being honest here, or at least partly honest. Emma was unlike any of the other female protagonists in the novels being published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Whereas the typical Regency Era heroine was the pinnacle of feminine virtue, Emma has several flaws and moral failings, making her unique even among Austen's other heroines (more on this in Part Two).

[69] Much has been written on Austen's use of language. For further discussion refer to Page 1972 and Poovey 1983. For a closer examination of the conversation style in *Emma*, see Silcox and Silcox 2018.

that several characters in the same novel share to differing degrees, and this is where the extremes come into play. When looking at *Emma*, for example, we see two different kinds of extremism regarding the same character flaw when comparing Emma to her father, Mr. Woodhouse. The character flaw in question is a general lack of understanding when it is appropriate to interfere with somebody else's life. (Ryle, 2009, 290) Mr. Woodhouse never interferes with anyone's life in any meaningful way because he is too self-centred. As Ryle notes, Mr. Woodhouse is Austen's example of someone who is fully unconcerned with the needs of other people, including his own daughters. (Ryle, 2009, 291) He is not intentionally malicious but still tremendously selfish and potentially harmful with his actions. But that is the point of his character. He represents someone who is so detached from reality that he could not influence anyone in any way that is good for their wellbeing, mostly because he is ignorant to what their wellbeing requires.[70]

By contrast, Emma interferes with the lives of those around her too much. She is meant to represent the opposite extreme to her father's moral defect. One of her overarching flaws is that she is too overly involved. She does share something in common with Mr. Woodhouse though, in that they both think they know what is best for everyone around them; Emma is just more active in her interference. While both of their flaws do lead to some serious consequences in the plot, and must be rectified by the end, seeing the absurdity of some of their actions is a source of humour as well.

[70] Mr. Woodhouse constantly gives advice to those around him, but it is generic and garden-variety in the way that it is not particularly useful to anyone's specific ailments. In fact, his recommendations illustrate how oblivious he is to the real needs of others.

Part of the humour here comes from the clever narration of these individuals' thoughts and actions. While Austen's novels have compelling dialogues between the characters, it is her use of the free indirect style or discourse method of writing which truly sets her works apart.[71]

Literary critics, Angus Fletcher and Mike Benveniste, demonstrate how Austen uses the free indirect method as an ethical tool. They remind us that this style is not unique to Austen as it is suggested that she learned it from other authors such as Adam Smith and Samuel Richardson. (Fletcher and Benveniste, 2013, 7) This method lets the narrator convey what a character is thinking and/or feeling while simultaneously keeping to the third-person's frame and tense. This allows for the characters to be dramatic and intense while the narrator stays neutral and objective to a situation. While Austen did not invent the method, her writing had what they refer to as "a formal breakthrough", here meaning the way she evolved the style throughout her novels. (Fletcher and Benveniste, 2013, 7) By the time she writes *Emma*, it is not just the narrator speaking freely and indirectly but also the character of Emma herself.

For our purposes, what is important is that Austen employs the free indirect style both as a satirical device, verbalizing the sometimes ridiculous thoughts underpinning the socially unacceptable behaviour of her characters, and as a tool of restraint for both her audience and Emma herself. (Fletcher and Benveniste, 2013, 8-10) I want to note here that this is not the standard use of

[71] Dostoevsky also implemented the free indirect style on occasion in *Crime and Punishment*, but while both he and Austen may have used the same style, Austen's narration is usually sarcastic in tone. Dostoevsky had no such sarcasm in his novel, except for when the characters intentionally spoke sarcastically. His narrator was never deliberately sarcastic or humorous.

the style in her novels; we do not see this method utilized by the characters themselves until *Emma*. But it is in *Emma* where Austen uses the free indirect style to control not only her readers' responses to a morally significant scene but Emma's as well. She achieves this in two ways. The first is through the authorial voice of the narrator, using satire but also biting criticism when circumstances call for it. In so doing Austen keeps the readers' emotional response in check, acting as a moral force guiding our reactions to reasonings behind a character's actions. And even though the narrator is describing what a character is thinking, it is clear when the narrator agrees with these thoughts or not.

A prime example is when Emma cruelly insults Miss Bates at the picnic on Box Hill. Mr. Knightley rightfully chastises her, and the narrator, in the description of Emma's emotional breakdown immediately afterwards, reiterates that Emma had blundered exceedingly so.

> Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life. She was most forcibly struck. The truth of his representation there was no denying. She felt it at her heart. How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates!—How could she have exposed herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued! And how suffer him to leave her without saying one word of gratitude, of concurrence, of common kindness! Time did not compose her. As she reflected more, she seemed but to feel it more. She never had been so depressed. (Austen, 2012, 259-60)

Austen's narration makes it obvious how we ought to feel. She gently leads readers to agree that Emma's actions not only hurt others, like Miss Bates and Mr. Knightley, but also herself. Phrases like "forcibly struck," "so brutal, so cruel", etc. are meant to strike readers by exemplifying just how horribly Emma treated her friend.

The second way Austen utilizes the free indirect discourse style as a moral tool is by having Emma engage with the method herself, and more importantly, how Mrs. Weston reacts to what she says. This occurs in another scene where Emma makes fun of Miss Bates's habit of rambling (it should be noted that this scene cleverly foreshadows the incident on Box Hill, as we get a glimpse at how Emma truly views Miss Bates here; seeing her as a dithering, silly old maid). Mocking poor Miss Bates—who is not there to defend herself—Emma mimics her:

> If it would be good to her, I am sure it would be evil to himself; a very shameful and degrading connection. How would he bear to have Miss Bates belonging to him?—To have her haunting the Abbey, and thanking him all day long for his great kindness in marrying Jane?—'So very kind and obliging!—But he always had been such a very kind neighbour!' And then fly off, through half a sentence, to her mother's old petticoat, 'Not that it was such a very old petticoat either—for still it would last a great while—and, indeed, she must thankfully say that their petticoats were all very strong' (Austen, 2012, 156).

It is no surprise that Mrs. Weston is dismayed. "For shame, Emma! Do not mimic her. You divert me against my conscience." (Austen, 2012, 156)

Fletcher and Benveniste sketch out what Austen is doing here. Emma switches from a first-person to the third-person perspective, mocking Miss Bates by speaking from her direct point of view, which is meant to highlight the vapidness and stupidity of Miss Bates's inner dialogue. But, as Austen demonstrates, there is a problem here. "In effect, Emma deploys FID, revealing that she too can play the sarcastic observer. Yet in doing so, she does not invest herself with the authority of an omniscient judge, for Mrs. Weston immediately responds with disapproval. […] Far from being praised as social, Emma's satiric use of FID is thus critiqued as cruel, and at the end of the novel, Emma adjusts her behaviour to acknowledge Mrs. Weston's concerns." (Fletcher and Benveniste, 2013, 10)

While *Emma* is not Austen's first novel to utilize the free indirect style, I argue that it works the best with *Emma's* narrative on these accounts.[72] Indeed, all the facets of Austen's literary style serve the novel's overarching moral theme well, and this, along with her lack of sermonizing, is what helps elevate *Emma* beyond the conduct genre. The theme of moral education was everywhere in Austen's day, but she approached it from a different angle. One could argue that her style is also an indirect criticism on contemporary works, asserting that their targeted audience—young female readers—appreciate stories which are meant to entertain, not just educate. Unlike Richardson's *Pamela* and other such works, her novels are not meant to instruct but to tell a compelling story

[72] Some philosophers and critics have considered the cognitive value of the free indirect style in *Emma*. While this is beyond the scope of this chapter, Davies 2018 offers a compelling case. Britton 2018 goes a step further, using the cognitive science concept of thought-attribution to offer a new theory of how Austen uses the free indirect method to reveal more insights into her characters.

about a character's own moral development (and it is the heroine who is morally developing instead of the lead male counterpart).

In the next section I will discuss how we can further interpret this moral theme found not just in *Emma* but in all of Austen's novels. Several philosophers have made connections between Austen's writing and the works of Aristotle, the Earl of Shaftsbury, Adam Smith, John Locke, David Hume, and others.[73] It is not clear if Austen intended any of these interpretations for her novels. The lack of evidence leaves us with no confirmations. Yet I will argue in my next chapter that this is not an issue. One need not prove that one's interpretation is necessarily what the author had in mind. True, external proof may help one to discover what the author had intended and thereby alter one's interpretations accordingly. But this is not necessary for novels in the marginally philosophical tier. Indeed, many philosophers have successfully examined *Emma's* moral theme through an Aristotelian, Shaftesburian, Lockean, Humean, etc. lens. In Part Two I will offer my own interpretation, which expands on the Aristotelian interpretations introduced by other philosophers. The goal is to argue that such interpretations, whether intended or not, cement a novel's position into the marginal tier category.

[73] This includes the real-life clergymen in Austen's life. Collins 1994 delves into Austen's background and familiarities with the clergy. Despite Austen's self-professed belief in her letter to Mr. Clarke that she can only write clergymen well when it comes to comedy, evidence suggests that her depiction of clergymen's lives and habits were realistic (if at times exaggerated for comedic affect). She was heavily influenced by her relatives (most notably her father and her brother) and her intimate knowledge of life within the church, and this knowledge of clerical life undoubtably influenced the moral dilemmas involving these characters.

Part 2- Virtuous Friendships, Marriages, and the Moral Maturity of Emma Woodhouse

The idea that Austen's novels exemplify Aristotle's virtue theory is not new, with some philosophers even asserting that we gain a better understanding of Aristotle's virtue theory by reading Jane Austen. We better our understanding by observing how Austen's characters, namely her heroines, deal with moral dilemmas. As Valerie Wainwright puts it, these dilemmas are a sort of test which "should reveal which, if any, of the virtues are in good working order." (Wainwright, 2014, 58) These tricky tests reveal the real moral character of Austen's heroines by placing them in difficult positions where they are forced to make a critical decision. This decision, which is always the morally correct one by the end, shows readers how much the heroine has matured. In the case of Emma, her choices near the end of the novel prove how much she has developed as a virtuous individual and friend. This section will explain how and why this happens in more detail.

It would be helpful to quickly summarize Aristotle's virtue theory, which will lead us into his theory of virtuous friendships. According to Aristotle, to be virtuous is to know the right way to act in each situation. Such an action, or reaction, will come naturally to the virtuous person. "It must be stated that every virtue both brings that of which it is the virtue into a good condition and causes the work belonging to that thing to be done well." (Aristotle, 2012, 1106a) Being virtuous is a kind of disposition someone cultivates, enabling them to act in the right way and perform this action well.

This disposition is akin to a skill or habit one acquires over time. Consequently, there is no need to prescribe specific rules on how to act in every situation. This is unnecessary as the virtuous person will presumably already know what to do. In this way Aristotle is not telling his readers how to behave but rather relying on them to assess what is needed in different scenarios and act accordingly. He does give us some parameters on what is appropriate generally though. The right response is usually one that is balanced between two opposing vices, otherwise referred to as the Golden Mean:

> But I mean moral virtue, for it is concerned with passions and actions, and it is in these that excess, deficiency, and the middle term reside. […] Virtue is concerned with passions and actions, in which the excess is in error and the deficiency is blamed; but the middle term is praised and guides one correctly, and both [praise and correct guidance] belong to virtue. Virtue, therefore, is a certain mean, since it, at any rate, is skilful in aiming at the middle term. (Aristotle, 2012, 1106b)

The idea of the Golden Mean fits nicely with Austen's extreme portrayals of character defects in her novels. We can recall Ryle's idea of a moral spectrum here, with the middle representing a balanced, morally mature outlook while each side drifts into opposing, but equally destructive, vices. Alan H. Goldman also draws attention to the fact that Austen's characters showcase different degrees of similar vices or defects. He uses the example of the characters in *Pride and Prejudice*. "The entire text of the novel traces the extended moral development of its two main characters, while the minor characters represent various stages of stunted moral development." (Goldman, 2013, 116) Some characters, like Mr. Darcy, Miss Bingley, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, are

morally stunted in the way that they are too proud and conceited. Others, like Mr. Bingley and Jane, are not prideful but too passive and trusting in the intentions of others without making accurate moral discernments for themselves. In order for their virtues to mature, they must make a concerted effort to identify and address these defects, which is the moral journey we see Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy take.

The same is true for Emma. The plot is devoted to illustrating her arduous journey to becoming a virtuous individual. But unlike in *Pride and Prejudice*, where the male protagonist must morally mature alongside the heroine, Mr. Knightley already has a virtuous disposition. His moral views are balanced in most respects. For instance, he is friendly and attentive without becoming intrusive (i.e. overstepping his bounds). This makes him the prime moral teacher for Emma. Indeed, Mr. Knightley is the catalyst for Emma's journey to becoming a more virtuous person, not just so that she might be worthy of marrying him but also because cultivating these virtues will lead to her greater overall happiness regardless of her marital status (an idea we shall return to shortly).

Aristotle's theory is that to become a virtuous person, one requires a combination of factors. One needs a right disposition, an awareness of how to act appropriately under difficult circumstances, a continuous refining of these virtuous skills, and a fundamental respect for others.[74] It is this last point which

[74] Freeland brings up the crucial role of shame here. She argues that shame can help a young person like Emma develop true virtue. (Freeland, 2018, 57) One's virtuous character develops through shame because experiencing shame is painful. The Aristotelian concept of pain, and avoidance of pain, goes beyond crude punishment and reward here. Freeland claims that shame helped Emma learn moral virtue, not only because she wishes to avoid these painful feelings but also because she meditates on why she felt shame in the first

brings us to another aspect of Aristotle's virtue theory we can identify in Austen's novels.

One benefit of being a virtuous person is the ability to cultivate virtuous friendships with like-minded people. According to Aristotle, a virtuous friend is one who is essentially equal, not just in age, wealth, or social status, but also in disposition. (Aristotle, 2012, 1156b) Virtuous friendships can only be cultivated by individuals who are already virtuous (or wishing to become more virtuous), enabling them to appreciate the virtuous habits of each other. Thus these friendships are grounded in virtue, here meaning that each values the other for who they are and not merely for the utility or pleasure the friendship brings. "Those who wish for the good things for their friends, for their friends' sake, are friends most of all, since they are disposed in this way in themselves and not incidentally." (Aristotle, 2012, 1156b) It is the truest and purest kind of friendship as it is the only form of friendship which is entirely unselfish. It is not self-serving or exploitative in any way, rather each friend merely appreciates the kind of person the other is, and while this appreciation extends beyond merely the virtues one's friend possesses, both parties must at least have the capacity to become virtuous for their friendship to reach the highest quality.

Austen seems to agree that this is the fullest and best form of friendship. Neera Badhwar and Eva Dadlez argue that not only does *Emma* give readers a prime example of what virtuous friendships look like in the Regency Era, but also how

---

place, and this meditation leads to a greater understanding of what it is to be virtuous. "Often she learns in a direct way, by feeling shame and great pain at her mistakes. But she also learns more indirectly and truly internalizes moral virtue: she comes to feel pleasure at changing and behaving better." (Freeland, 2018, 79)

Austen silently argues for the vitality of such friendships for her heroine's happiness. They point to two portrayals of virtuous friendships in *Emma*:

> Emma's friendships with Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley fit Aristotle's description of virtue friendship, and illustrate also the importance of shared interests and personality traits to the pleasures of friendship. Emma is roughly equal to both friends morally and intellectually, none of them ever requests any wrongdoing from either friend, and none of them flatters either friend into thinking that he or she never does wrong. Indeed, all make both their approval or disapproval known whenever appropriate. […] Mr. Knightely, in particular, holds Emma to a high standard. (Badhwar and Dadlez, 2018, 33)

Part of what makes their friendships virtuous is that Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley both know that Emma has the capacity to be virtuous, at least when she wants to. As Badhwar and Dadlez note, they consequently hold Emma to a high standard and nudge her to act accordingly throughout the novel, slowly leading her to forgo her selfish ways and finally put the needs of those around her first. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that Emma's moral development could not transpire without these virtuous friendships existing first. This is because there is no one who can or is willing to reproach Emma besides Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley (her father does not know enough to aptly criticize her moral blunders). This sets Emma apart from Austen's other heroines who lacked the same kind of virtuous friendships. They still have virtuous relationships to be sure, but apart from Elinor and Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility* and Catherine and Mr. Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*, they lack the guidance of someone who is more morally mature than themselves. Thus,

Austen needed to include the moralizing voices of Mrs. Weston and, more crucially, Mr. Knightley for Emma's moral growth to start. She has no prompt to begin this journey otherwise.

Another feature of virtuous friendships arises here. To have a virtuous friendship, one must first be virtuous, or want to be virtuous and expect the same of one's friend, as Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley do of Emma. But as mentioned above, this alone is not enough. Virtuous friendships can only occur between equals. This means that there must be some basic, fundamental equality between the two individuals for the friendship to become virtuous.

Badhwar and Dadlez clarify what this kind of equality looks like for Austen. Virtuous friends must be equal in the way of virtue, intellect, and shared common interests and goals. (Badhwar and Dadlez, 2018, 25-6) This admittedly becomes murky when the friendship is between a Regency Era man and woman, particularly when there is a stark financial and educational imbalance. However, Austen does not demand total equality it would seem. In terms of intellect and wit, all her novels' main couples are evenly matched (with perhaps the exception of Catherine and Mr. Tilney) but for other factors there seems to be a general baseline equality pertaining to age, wealth, and social class, and even this is debatable.[75]

[75] Badhwar and Dadlez admit that Emma's friendship with Harriet, while important to Emma at the time, cannot be classified as virtuous. Unlike Emma's relationship with Mrs. Weston, there exists too great an inequality between Harriet and Emma in every important facet to Regency genteel society. Despite being close in age, Harriet idolises Emma and follows her lead without question. She does not challenge Emma's views or actions like Mrs. Weston. Harriet is also an illegitimate child with no wealth of her own. It is suggested that their difference in social status bars any such long-lasting, meaningful friendship, especially once both women are married. Yet I hesitate to say that Austen did not believe that individuals from different classes or positions in society could not become virtuous friends. Particularly

Austen's portrayal of women flourishing in her novels does mirror those of her contemporaries. Women flourish in the domestic, private sphere. Indeed, Austen's heroines have personal interests but no public ambitions and, on the rare occasion that we do see minor female characters employed, it is framed as undesirable. This is made evident with the character of Jane Fairfax. Jane is left in the precarious situation where she must find work as a governess to ensure her welfare, at least until it is revealed that she is engaged to Frank Churchill. We are meant to pity Jane's precarious situation here. As Craik put it, "Jane Austen sees it as dreadful, and intends the reader to see, the fate that threatens Jane Fairfax as governess." (Craik, 1969, 53) Granted, Miss Taylor had a seemingly positive experience as a governess, but Austen married her off at the start of the novel. Marriage, it seems to Austen, appears to be the ideal condition for a woman ("ideal" here meaning preferable to any other state a woman could be in). Thus, she has not just Emma but all her heroines flourishing while still preserving the status quo. It is notable here, however, that all her heroines do have virtuous friendships which turn into virtuous marriages.

---

in her later novels, she casts those who reject friendships based strictly on class divisions as misguided. We see two examples of this in *Persuasion*. The first is when Captain Wentworth visits his friend, Captain Harville, in Lyme. Harville lives in squalor compared to the other characters, but he and Wentworth embrace fondly. Anne also visits an old school friend, Mrs. Smith, who lives in poverty in Bath. Her father and sister are horrified that she would choose to honour her promise to Mrs. Smith than go with them to see the Lady Dalrymple. Austen makes it clear that both Wentworth and Anne are in the right, choosing to maintain connections with their friends despite the criticisms from those in their own social circles. This leads me to believe that Austen did not require similar social standings to form virtuous friendships. Thus Emma and Harriet could not be virtuous friends, not because they are too unequal from a social perspective, but because they are too unequal in terms of personality.

Looking at the case of Mr. Knightley, except for his age, he is Emma's equal in every facet necessary to cultivate a virtuous friendship that will facilitate her moral development. He provides her with a rich, fulfilling, mutually respectful kinship that blossoms into romance and eventually marriage. By Emma marrying Mr. Knightley, she is able to flourish and experience a new kind of happiness, which would not have been possible without her first morally developing. Importantly here, however, is that she flourishes in ways that are appropriate for their roles in early 1800s English society. This is true of all Austen's characters who enter into virtuous friendships and marriages.

Emma and Mr. Knightley certainly have a strong bond throughout the novel, but I am reluctant to say that before Emma's moral transformation they had a truly mutual virtuous friendship in the Aristotelian sense. It is true that Mr. Knightley saw potential for Emma to act virtuously, which is why he gently corrects her whenever her moral judgments are faulty because he knows that she has the knowledge and ability to do better. In this way, Mr. Knightley becomes her moral coach or tutor, demonstrating how to behave through example and reproaching her when she fails to consider the needs of others.

For Emma's part, she slowly takes Mr. Knightley's criticism to heart. She genuinely does not like to displease or disappoint him and holds his opinion in high regard. But she also thinks too highly of her own judgements, believing she too knows best. Indeed, Austen tells us that this is Emma's biggest flaw in the very first paragraph.[76]

[76] Something to remember about Emma is that she is in the privileged position where society is more apt to tolerate her flaws than would be accepted by Austen's other heroines. Anne and Fanny are bullied and belittled by their families and the Bennet and Dashwood sisters constantly have their futures to consider. Marriage was a serious concern for gentry

> The real evils indeed of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her enjoyments. The danger, however, was at present so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her. (Austen, 2012, 1)

Emma is a flawed heroine to be sure, but it is important to note that she is not a bad person. She is not the villain of the story; I would argue that there is no obvious villain. Emma has a multitude of good qualities from the start as well. She is witty, very loyal to her friends and family, extremely patient with her father, attentive, charming, etc. And as Wainwright reminds us, Emma's personality traits, such as her interest in others, can either be an advantage or disadvantage depending on how they play out in certain situations. (Wainwright, 2014, 67) We see Emma's qualities work to her advantage and the advantage of others on several occasions. Indeed, it is imperative that she has these positive traits so that readers become attached to her and invested in her story. We see the same potential in Emma as Mr. Knightley and Mrs. Weston do, and we know that the guidance of Mr. Knightley serves her well in this regard.

---

ladies in the early nineteenth century. Several women remained unmarried because of patrilineage customs—a custom where more money was handed down to eldest sons, leaving younger sons to either find a profession or marry and inherit substantial resources. (Kaplan, 1992, 22) This did not stop the younger sisters of these families from acting improperly, but it is certainly a concern for the older sisters and their mothers. Luckily for Emma, she is not in this unfavourable position.

Two scenes exemplify how Mr. Knightley guides Emma's conduct. In both instances he reprimands her for her thoughtless behaviour concerning the welfare of Harriet and Miss Bates. Mr. Knightley's argument in each case is that Emma's actions cause unnecessary suffering for others; her friends are the ones to bear the brunt of her carelessness. He tries to make her understand this, even when she is resistant to his arguments.

The first scene takes place after Emma persuades Harriet to refuse Mr. Martin's offer of marriage. Mr. Knightley is horrified, not just because he gave Mr. Martin his blessing but also that Emma would ruin Harriet's chances of a stable future. There is no denying that Emma acted selfishly here, which she indirectly admits to once Harriet decides to reject the proposal. "Dear Harriet, I give myself joy of this. It would have grieved me to lose your acquaintance, which must have been the consequence of your marrying Mr. Martin. While you were in the smallest degree wavering, I said nothing about it, because I would not influence; but it would have been the loss of a friend to me. I could not have visited Mrs. Robert Martin, of Abbey-Mill Farm. Now I am secure of you for ever." (Austen, 2012, 39) Harriet is aghast to hear this and, without realizing the extent of Emma's manipulation, promises to banish the idea from her mind.

While Harriet is too naïve to understand Emma's true motive behind her urging Harriet to reject Mr. Martin's proposal, Mr. Knightley sees right through her and rightly confronts her reasoning on the matter. The biggest issue here, Mr. Knightley claims, is Harriet's illegitimate birth. In Regency England she was not entitled to any inheritance or wealth; indeed, she does not even know the identity of her father for most of the novel. Consequently, Harriet faces limited

prospects on the marriage market.[77] With everything considered, she is lucky that a respectable farmer like Mr. Martin would ask for her hand in marriage—something Mr. Knightley asserts to Emma. But she remains unconvinced, believing that Harriet can find a better match for herself. In so doing she deliberately rejects the facts of the matter, proving that she is willing to ignore the reality of a situation and contort the truth if it will benefit her. This wilful neglect of facts infuriates Mr. Knightley. "Upon my word, Emma, to hear you abusing the reason you have, is almost enough to make me think so too. Better be without sense, than misapply it as you do." (Austen, 2012, 46)

Emma and Mr. Knightley part on bad terms here, but they soon make amends. Perhaps one could argue that Mr. Knightley forgives Emma a little too quickly after each blunder she makes, but we must remember that he genuinely likes Emma as a person. He calls out her mistakes, but also relents and returns to her. For Emma's part, she implements Mr. Knightley's advice gradually and tries to be a better friend and person knowing that he is ultimately on her side. When she steps too out of line though, Mr. Knightley does not forgive her so easily, forcing Emma to re-evaluate her actions and the motives behind them in earnest, such as when she is finally faced with the dilemma where she must truly change, lest she lose Mr. Knightley's respect and friendship.

[77] Statistics show that while the celibacy rate for the entire English population fell during the eighteenth century, it rose among daughters of the aristocracy and gentry, hovering between twenty to twenty-five percent. (Kaplan, 1992, 22) Even if one comes from a respectable family, such as Miss Bates or Jane Fairfax, a lack of personal wealth severely decreases a woman's chance of marriage. From the male perspective, we see time and time again in Austen's novels young men hoping to marry someone with a sizable dowry. They also usually cavort with innocent ladies whom they have no intention of marrying due to their lack of wealth (Wickham, Willoughby, Captain Tilney, etc.). Austen warns her readers against falling for the charms of these sorts of men seeking their fortune through marriage.

The climax of the novel is the previously mentioned picnic scene on Box Hill. Emma cruelly insults Miss Bates, leaving everyone in shock. This is the turning point for Mr. Knightley. He loses his temper with Emma, not holding back with his criticism and letting her know how much she has hurt him as well as Miss Bates.

> I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner. Were she your equal in situation—but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and if she live to old age, must properly sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done indeed!—You, whom she had known from an infant, whom she had seen grow up from a period when her notice was an honour, to have you now, in thoughtless spirits, and the pride of the moment, laugh at her, humble her—and before her niece, too—and before others, many of whom (certainly *some*,) would be entirely guided by your treatment of her.—This is not pleasant to me; but I must, I will,—I will tell you truths while I can, satisfied with proving myself your friend by very faithful counsel, and trusting that you will some time or other do me greater justice than you can do now. (Austen, 2012, 259)

As we saw, Emma is struck by Mr. Knightley's harsh words, and this prompts her to begin in earnest to become a more virtuous person. Unlike previously, Mr. Knightley does not return to her side until he has seen that she has made a considered effort to heal her relationship with Miss Bates and others first. Only then, after there is evidence of her moral maturity, does he ask Emma to marry him.

Despite marrying Mr. Knightley after she morally develops, I am of the opinion that Emma did not become a better person in order to "get ready" for marriage. Rather she matured as an individual because that was one of the principal drivers of the character Austen created. Tying back to Aristotle's virtue theory, those who truly benefit from becoming virtuous are the individual themselves. Acting virtuously is to do the right thing, which allows us to then flourish in whatever we do. Emma not only becomes more virtuous by the end but happier too. She finally puts the needs of others before her own and in so doing strengthens her old friendships and builds new ones. This is the real cure for her loneliness after the departure of Miss Taylor; not marriage but moral development. Austen seems to suggest that this applies equally to everyone. Becoming more virtuous has never harmed anyone in any of Austen's novels, and while we may not end up in virtuous marriages ourselves, it will still be a worthwhile endeavour.

Part 3- What Counts as a "Marginal" Philosophical Novel

This chapter has been devoted to proving why *Emma* qualifies as a philosophical novel. While the philosophical theme of *Emma* centres on moral education, the contents of the novel open up an array of different interpretations, each expanding on the philosophy it contains. Thus, it is not hard to see why *Emma* serves as a prime example of the type of novel that belongs in the marginal tier. Granted, it is a work of literature first and foremost; presenting its philosophical themes in the narrative is not Austen's central literary or artistic purpose. Yet it is philosophically significant enough to

belong on the tier list, distinguishing it from novels which are not philosophical at all.

This leads us to a question, however: why cannot all novels with a moral, or remotely philosophical, theme be included in the marginal category? How do we distinguish this boundary or define this limitation? I call this the James Bond dilemma.

Novels like those in Ian Fleming's James Bond series are full of supposedly philosophical themes. For example, when examining Fleming's first novel, *Casino Royale*, we can identify several themes touching on subjects of interest to philosophers. Perhaps the most obvious is the theme of good and evil; one of the chapters is even titled "The Nature of Evil". There are also themes of love, the duty to one's country, death, and so on, leaving us with no shortage of themes comprising topics familiar in the philosophical tradition.

So then why do I exclude novels like *Casino Royale* from my marginal tier? While I agree that these sorts of novels have themes which somewhat vaguely might be considered philosophical, the issue is that they do not present or develop these themes in any meaningful way. If a novel is to belong to any of my tier lists, its philosophical themes must be grounded in the work, here meaning that they are integral to the story being presented. Put another way, these themes lend themselves well to creative philosophical interpretations, one which considers the work as a whole and not mere parts or chapters (I will explore this idea more in the next chapter). As we saw with *Emma*, what is required is a marriage of form and function; the function of the philosophical content needs to fit the form of the novel in a way that is deeply

interconnected, hence why the entire novel lends itself well to an Aristotelian interpretation (among others).

Going back to *Casino Royale*, while Fleming includes several themes which tie back to subjects that philosophers are interested in, he says nothing about them that would be considered interesting or rewarding in a philosophical sense. Consider arguably the most philosophical part of the novel: Chapter 20, The Nature of Evil. In this chapter, Bond laments to Secret Intelligence Service agent, Mathis, how he is unsure what is good and evil anymore. He jokes, somewhat sadistically, that the existence of evil—i.e. the Soviet spy, Le Chiffre—is necessary so that goodness may flourish. "By his evil existence, which foolishly I have helped to destroy, he was creating a norm of badness by which, and by which alone, an opposite norm of goodness could exist. We were privileged, in our short knowledge of him, to see and estimate his wickedness and we emerge from the acquaintanceship better and more virtuous men." (Fleming, 2008, 172-3)

While this scene has the potential to say something unique about the existence of good and evil, it ends quickly with Mathis protesting that Bond kills people for his moral principles, but it would be better to fight protecting those he loves. "Surround yourself with human beings, my dear James. They are easier to fight for than principles." (Fleming, 2008, 175) Fleming seems to suggest here that one ought to serve one's country out of the love for those who live in it, but this moral becomes confused when Vesper Lynd, the only woman Bond has ever loved, commits suicide at the end of the book, forcing Bond back into emotional isolation with nothing but his principles to motivate his actions. It is clearly meant to be a tragic ending for Bond, suggesting that fighting for love is

superior to fighting strictly for one's moral principles. Yet this is the only reality Fleming leaves his protagonist with.[78]

Despite this chapter being included in *Casino Royale*, I am hesitant to admit it into the marginal tier for two reasons. The first is that unlike Austen's *Emma*, what Fleming actually says about his moral theme is muddled, and while this may not hurt our enjoyment of the story, the confusion begins when we try to extract an intelligible philosophical interpretation from it. Indeed, when considering the narrative as a whole, this theme does not lend well to a strong philosophical interpretation, or at least one that rewards readers with a greater appreciation of the novel. It is the exact opposite, in fact; the more one tries to work out how the theme of good and evil operates in the narrative, the more confused it appears to be.

[78] It is unclear how we are to interpret the ending of *Casino Royale* in terms of this moral. Flemings seems to justify committing abhorrent acts like killing if one does so out of love. The implication here is that loving another person stops one from becoming a heartless machine, which Bond calls Mathis in Chapter 20. "But don't let me down and become human yourself. We would lose such a wonderful machine." (Fleming, 2008, 175) Mathis, however, is clearly framed as being in the right. Fighting for one's family is implied to be morally superior to fighting for one's principles, as Bond does. In this way, Fleming turns Bond into the metaphorical machine, bringing the morality of his actions into question. If we are generous, we could say that Fleming meant that one ought to fight out of love as this is superior to all other motivations. But Bond, having no one to love, is forced to accept his principles as an inferior justification for his behavior. This brings into question—likely unintentionally so—how moral Bond's actions as a spy truly are. If Fleming wanted to, he could have given Bond a family by the end of the series, but at least in *Casino Royale* readers are forced to accept that their protagonist is more of a "machine" than human. Yet we are also meant to admire Bond for his patriotic deeds, according to Mathis which would admittedly be more heroic if he was doing it also for the sake of someone he loved. It is not even clear if this is what Mathis meant by his statement or if he was merely giving Bond a bit of off-hand advice while visiting him in the hospital. The lack of character development here stalls this part of the interpretation.

My second reason, and this one I argue is more important, is that the novel heavily relies on the use of various tropes, stereotypes, and clichés. Such is the case with the inclusion of a "philosophical" chapter. Any philosophical talk in these sorts of genres is considered to be stock. Indeed, it is not abnormal to find similar chapters in other non-philosophical novels belonging to the spy or thriller genres, for example. But this gives the impression that such chapters exist not because the authors' wish to say anything significant about the topics, but rather they were included because it is a trend in the genre. While the scenarios Fleming writes may be interesting from an entertainment perspective, he does not explore the novel's themes or ideas in any thought-provoking or reflective way. Fleming's characters and themes serve a purely narrative purpose, and what he says or implies about the theme of good and evil is confused. For these reasons, it arguably fails to be philosophically significant even in the marginal sense.

But let us say that one can interpret Chapter 20 of *Casino Royale* in a way that is philosophically significant, or at least articulate. This would still not be enough to admit it onto my tier list. As I mentioned above, my reasoning is that philosophical novels, to be classified as "philosophical" in any meaningful way, must have the philosophical themes reasonably integrated into the narrative and not merely used incidentally to bolster tired stereotypes. I am not saying here that authors must have written their novels with the sole intention of showcasing these themes or theses, as this is not the case with Dostoevsky or Austen. All I am saying here is that the philosophy contained in the novel must be a significant aspect of the story and the way the story was constructed; it must not rest merely on a few summary statements and it must offer some genuine reward for philosophical reflection.

Here again we see Austen's *Emma* emerge above the rest. As we found with *Nausea* and *Crime and Punishment*, Austen utilizes her novel's theme to its full advantage, making it evident what the narrative is saying about the theme while simultaneously revealing the novel's structural integrity. None of Austen's novels rely on the use of stereotypes, and while one may argue that the trope of marriage as a happy ending was common in Austen's time with stories starring young ladies, Austen approaches this motif in a unique way. I would argue that Austen's novels, particularly *Emma*, are coming-of-age stories. That all her heroines are married by the end does not automatically sequester them to the historical romance genre.

Indeed, this is what sets Austen's works apart from her contemporaries. Her stories are not that of typical female development. *Emma* stands out from the likes of *Pamela*, *Evalina*, *Camilla*, etc. in that Austen allows her heroine to be a real person. The cliché in Austen's day was that young ladies were often portrayed as the ideal paragons of feminine virtue in literature. This is something she deliberately broke away from and was rewarded for her efforts. Her writings were popular during her lifetime and have withstood the test of time. The novels receive critical acclaim across generations and are still influential and relevant, partly due to how she handles her moral themes.

I draw the line between non-philosophical novels and marginally philosophical novels here. Non-philosophical novels offer no philosophical reward to a close reading. Such a reward arises from a considered view which gives readers reasons to value a novel for its literary and philosophical significance. These reasons show us why Emma should marry Mr. Knightley beyond merely being a

woman, and that is how novels with female protagonists were expected to end. Instead, we understand why Emma becoming a better person is the best outcome for everyone. We see why Emma had to embark on a moral journey, not to prepare her for marriage but to enhance her life as an individual, and in so doing better others' lives as well. Novels in the marginal tier say enough philosophically for their readers to construct such valid interpretations. What makes an interpretation "valid" will be the focus of the next chapter, but we have reached the point where we can successfully identify which novels belong on the tier list and which do not.

Chapter V: Interpretations

Introduction

So far we have examined different kinds of philosophical novels in my case studies. I present my own philosophical interpretation of each novel, as a plausible, defendable interpretation is required for any novel to belong to my tier list. Indeed, if a novel fails to sustain a considerable philosophical interpretation of its content, then it does not adequately satisfy the criteria for any tier and does not belong to this particular genre of literature. Thus, a novel can count as philosophically significant only if it invites (or at least rewards) a valid (and defensible) interpretation in philosophical terms.

Since the status of a novel belonging to this genre depends on how well it lends itself to this kind of interpretation, a clear and definite description of a valid philosophical interpretation is imperative. A valid interpretation in general is a plausible and coherent reading of a work, in pursuit of uncovering its deeper layers. If done well, it can enhance our appreciation of the work as literature or art. Using this as a baseline, we can go further here to say that a good philosophical interpretation is a logical and credible attempt to root out and clarify any philosophical significance a novel may have.

In this chapter, we shall first identify the aims of a philosophical interpretation of a novel, or the reason why we interpret novels through this kind of lens.

Once we know the aims of different kinds of interpretations of philosophical novels, we shall dissect the actual methods of interpreting our case studies, with each tier inviting its own characteristic mode of interpretation. The last section will address some potential criticisms against two of my modes, which I shall respond to in turn.

Part One- The Aim of Philosophical Interpretation

It may initially be unclear what the overarching aim of an interpretation is, especially in the case of philosophical novels. While there do exist a few specific theories on interpreting philosophical novels—most notably Peter Jones's creative theory, which we shall address in the next section—these theories focus on the reader's experience or engagement with a novel. The biggest issue with Jones's and likeminded theories is that their methods of interpretation—i.e. how we go about interpreting a novel—are the same for every work within the philosophical genre. Jones's philosophical interpretations of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Elliot's *Middlemarch*, and Dostoevsky's *The Brothers' Karamazov* use the same creative model of interpretation. Yet as my thesis claims, lumping all philosophical novels together into one genre without further categorizing them according to their different levels of philosophical content, and approaching them all with one mode of interpretation, is a fundamental mistake. As we have seen in my case studies, the strength of a novel's philosophical content and its role within a text differs between different kinds of works in the genre, and these differences need to be taken into account when considering the appropriate way of interpreting a novel's philosophical themes and theses.

Once we introduce the idea of tiers within the genre, it becomes impossible for some single mode of interpretation to adequately function across every tier for reasons that will become apparent. As such, I propose that each tier invites (or at least rewards) its own kind of interpretation to identify and characterise its philosophical content. The modes are based on an existing broader conception of literary interpretation, which has been modified to fit the more specific target of uncovering a novel's philosophical themes and theses.

Once we have a solid idea of what a valid philosophical interpretation is, we will know what each kind of interpretation I shall introduce in Section Two will aim for. So, first, we must establish what the general goal of a philosophical interpretation of a novel is (i.e. what our intentions behind interpreting a philosophical novel are). I believe the answer can be found in a specific conception of literary interpretation and what it says the focus of interpretation ought to be.

This account belongs to Peter Lamarque and Alan H. Goldman. Before introducing it, however, it is useful to look at a more traditional, competing theory of interpretation. Both theories have different objectives, with one focusing on meaning and the other on appreciation and value. While I disagree with the former approach—focusing on a work's meaning—understanding it is essential to crafting my modes of interpretation for philosophical novels as it will give each mode an overall unified aim or objective. As such, I will introduce this particular theory first, along with some potential issues which can be raised. This done, I will then explain why I think Lamarque and Goldman's

theories are correct and how we can build the aim of philosophical interpretation off theirs.

In the realm of philosophy of literature, there exists an ongoing dispute colloquially referred to as "The Intention Debate". This debate revolves around the role and significance an author's intentions play when interpreting a work, otherwise known as authorial intention.

The debate can be thought of as a spectrum. At one end is actual intentionalism. At the other end is the view that the work is a separate object, independent from its author once it is complete. Moderate views fall between these extremes.[79] What matters for our purposes is that no matter to which end of the debate one subscribes, the overall aim or focus of literary interpretation remains the same—to uncover the meaning of a work.

Both sides of the debate take a key interest in the use of language comprising a text. The assumption is that novels are first and foremost modes of communication and will thus have some sort of meaning behind them that the text seeks to communicate. At the heart of the actual authorial intention side of the debate is the fact that the author communicates to their readers through a series of textual utterances, embodied in language attributed to a work's characters and/or narrator.[80] These utterances can take the form of monologues, dialogues, and narrative commentary. And as with any other kind

[79] For more information on authorial intentionalism, refer to Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946, Lamarque 2006, Carroll 2001, Levinson 2010, Iseminger 1996, and Hirsch 1967.
[80] Some theories suggest that the author can also make direct, explicit utterances to their readers in their work. But as I noted for the case of Sartre and Roquentin in Chapter Two, we cannot assume that the narrator or characters act as mouthpieces for the author's opinions or beliefs. We shall return to this idea later.

of utterance, oral or written, one can assume that it was made with some sort of intention, meaning, or purpose in mind (i.e. what does the author aim to say, or what is their purpose behind saying it?). Thus, the role of literary interpretation, according to this meaning-centred view, is to uncover what a work's meaning is and, according to the authorial intention side of the debate, this meaning is going to depend on what the author intended. It also frames the text within a personal, historical and cultural context to give us a better understanding of the author's original meaning. If we look at the theory of actual intentionalism, then this meaning is objective, referring to the fact that the meaning is unbreakably tied to what the author envisioned for their work.[81]

There are various reasons why such a heated debate around this view has developed over the years. Many criticisms have been marshalled against actual intentionalism. The overarching criticism lodged by William K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley in 1946 is known as "The Intentional Fallacy". It is the idea that the author's intentions are ultimately inaccessible and therefore should not be relevant to our understanding of a work. (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1946, 482-7) Their reasoning for the author's intentions being inaccessible are fairly straightforward; there may be a lack of empirical evidence confirming the author's intentions (as in the form of a notebook, diary, letters, autobiography, etc.), or the author may be unaware of what they intended for their work or change their intentions while writing.[82] (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1946, 477-87)

[81] It also removes the possibility of multiple subjective interpretations.

[82] Some philosophers have tried to mitigate this criticism by clarifying the distinction between what the author actually says and what the author could have meant to say. To make this clarification, Jerrold Levinson introduces two modes of interpretation: the determinative mode (what a novel *does* mean) and the exploratory mode (what a novel *could* mean). (Levinson, 2010, 275) He argues how these modes interact with one another, and how it is a mistake to get bogged down in trying to uncover what a work does mean (especially when there is no way to confirm this).

Thus, if there is no concrete way to confirm our projection of what an author's intentions are for their work, what is the point of trying to identify what they are? This is not to say that the utterances constituting a novel do not have meaning, but Wimsatt and Beardsley's anti-intentionalist theory of the work as an independent object asserts that the meaning will be self-contained within the language of the novel.[83]

Another criticism which Wimsatt and Beardsley, along with several others, makes against authorial intention is called the Humpty-Dumpty objection, or Humpty-Dumptyism.[84] Noel Carroll summarizes Humpty-Dumptyism as "the worry that the meaning of a literary text cannot be identified with what the author intends because a speaker (including an author), like Lewis Carroll's Humpty-Dumpty, cannot make a word (or a larger order of sense-bearing signs) mean whatever he wishes." (Carroll**,** 2016**,** 306) An author must still follow linguistic and social conventions, which restricts their authority over their writing. In other words, a term or phrase cannot change its conventional semantic meaning simply because the author wanted it to mean otherwise.

---

[83] Of course we can look to other linguistic resources to help understand these meanings better, but any meaning will be found in the work as it is. Wimsatt and Beardsley suggest that to find the meaning *in the work* we can quite legitimately draw on a variety of sources: 'it is discovered through the semantics and syntax of a poem, through our habitual knowledge of the language, through grammars, dictionaries, and all the literature which is the source of dictionaries, in general through all that makes a language and culture' (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1946, 477).

[84] Humpty-Dumpty-ism refers to Lewis Carroll's character, Humpty-Dumpty, in his novel, *Alice Through the Looking-Glass* (1871). Humpty-Dumpty annoys the protagonist, Alice, by playing around with the meanings of common words. "I don't know what you mean by 'glory', Alice said. Humpty-Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'" "But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument'," Alice objected. "When I use a word," Humpty-Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." (Carroll, 2009, 128) It demonstrates the absurdity of trying to impose our own distinct meanings onto words of any common language.

These two major criticisms will be significant for our purposes later on. They are not the only ones levied against authorial intention. However, one criticism which can be raised against the whole debate, regardless of which side one subscribes to, is that it misses the point by focusing exclusively on a work's meaning, as if a whole work has an overarching meaning in the same way as a sentence does. To understand what words and sentences in a work means is, certainly, an important step when interpreting a novel, but this, Lamarque and Goldman argue, is not the ultimate aim of literary interpretation. It comes down to an error of classification. If we identify novels as texts comprised of utterances which have meaning as intended by the speaker, then we will naturally aim to understand what these utterances mean just as we do with any other form of communication. Even if we look to the work as an independent object, as Wimsatt and Beardsley claim, interpretations still center around uncovering a meaning embedded within the text. But if we instead shift our view of novels to being works of art, the aim of interpretation should theoretically shift as well.[85]

Interpretation as appreciation

Lamarque and Goldman argue that the focus of literary interpretation should be not on a work's meaning but on its value as a work of art. This allows for a shift from novels being viewed as mere textual modes of communication to legitimate works of art with aesthetic value. Lamarque summarizes this re-

[85] This is not to say that philosophers like Beardsley, Carroll, Levinson, and others engaging in the intention debate do not see novels as works of art. Literature can be considered a form of art which uses the medium of language (as opposed to paint, clay, marble, etc.).

focusing nicely in his recent paper, “Literary Interpretation is Not Just About Meaning” where he offers:

> a picture of literary interpretation which breaks away from the philosophical paradigms of meaning and shifts its focus elsewhere: in a word, from meaning to value, from understanding to appreciation, from individual sentences to the achievements of whole works, from a focus on intention to reflection on the very practices of reading. (Lamarque, 2024, 4)

He elaborates on this by proposing:

> that we think of interpretation not in terms of understanding, not even in terms of meaning, but in terms of providing a perspective through which the particulars of the work, its subject, can be reflected on in at least partial explanation of why the work might afford continuing interest: in a word where its literary values might lie. (Lamarque, 2024, 16)

According to Lamarque, as our appreciation of a work increases through thoughtful interpretation as described, so too does our recognition of its value as a work of art. Indeed, Lamarque insists that if we take works of literature to be these kinds of objects, “then, as with all works of art, our interest focuses on a consonance of means to ends, the ways the resources, linguistic resources in this case, are utilized toward some realized purpose or value.” (Lamarque, 2009, 168)

Goldman agrees with Lamarque's shift in the focus of interpretation from meaning to value. While he notes that interpreting literature may consist in discovering the meaning of expressions in the correct context, the actual act of interpretation involves lots of diverse activities. (Goldman, 2013, 23) Above all else though, it is appreciation and value which ought to be at the forefront of the interpreter's mind. This means a focus on "those properties that are value relevant, how they contribute to the values of the works." (Goldman, 2013, 23) The focus on these properties may also be in the form of "explaining the place of an episode in a plot, analyzing psychological features of characters or their motives as inferred from their actions or stated thoughts, showing formal patterns implicit in plot or character developments, stating the broad theme or historical, moral, political, or religious significance of a work as a whole, or the broader explanatory scheme (Freudian, Marxist, Christian) into which it fits." (Goldman, 2013, 23) Whichever activity the interpreter chooses, though, their overall objective must stay the same: to help facilitate a greater appreciation of the novel as a work of art:

> Interpretation aims ultimately to facilitate appreciation in all the arts, and this is the key to its proper characterization. Appreciating a work is grasping its values. Hence interpretation aims to show how the elements of a work contribute to its value as art. Art and literary criticism seeks ultimately and essentially to uncover and make comprehensible to us the values of the works examined. In leading to evaluations supported by reasons in the form of accurate descriptions, interpretations indicate the sources of values in art and literary works, helping audiences to fully appreciate the works. (Goldman, 2013, 24)

My theory builds on these accounts of literary interpretation. The overarching focus of a philosophical interpretation of a novel ought to be on value, not meaning. But instead of an exclusively aesthetic value, our attention is on a novel's philosophical value. Perhaps a better term to use here is "significance", as it is the term I have used previously.[86] Thus, our interpretation's attention ought to be on how philosophically significant a novel is.

This idea based on Lamarque and Goldman's theories does not translate perfectly. One problem is that philosophical novels are first and foremost works of art. In other words, their having philosophical significance does not mean that they are/become works of philosophy. As we saw in Chapter One, works of literature are not the same as works of philosophy, even if some novels are legitimately philosophical in nature. Now I argue that this does not pose a real threat to my theory, but it is a key distinction between their and my theory to bear in mind. Lamarque and Goldman claim that we appreciate novels as works of art. We can still appreciate philosophical novels in the same way, but when I use the terms "appreciation" and "significance", it refers strictly to the appreciation and value of novels in a philosophical sense (we appreciate how a novel develops and integrates its philosophical themes/theses, which raises its philosophical significance in our eyes).

Where Lamarque and Goldman's theories do work here is the transition from understanding, to appreciation, to value. A good literary interpretation increases our appreciation of a novel. A good philosophical interpretation does the same, only it clarifies our grasp of a work's philosophical content in various

[86] I am aware that the words "significance" and "value" may have semantical differences, but that is not a concern of this chapter.

ways. This may involve discovering how a work's themes and theses weave together with other elements of the plot, or how the style of the narrative influences or is influenced by them. By seeing how deeply these themes and theses seep into other aspects of a work, we come to realize that they help to bring special interest to the story being told. What I mean here is that their impact is so great on the narrative, it would be a fundamentally different story if these themes/theses were somehow removed or altered in any way. It might make no difference which village *Emma* takes place in (presumably so long as it is an English village), but Austen could not write the same sort of story without the philosophical theme of moral maturity for its lead character, Emma. To remove the philosophy, as it were, would be to change the novel's identity. This is true of any aspect of the novel in a literal sense, but I am referring to its core themes and ideas as this is what sets philosophical novels apart from non-philosophical novels. One could remove the "Nature of Evil" chapter from Flemings' *Casino Royale* without affecting the rest of the story. On the other hand, *Emma* would lose its essential nature without its theme of moral education.

Part Two- How to Interpret a Philosophical Novel

This section will introduce three distinct modes of philosophical interpretation, each corresponding with a tier from my list. These modes are methods of how to interpret a strong, moderate, or marginal novel, while taking into account that the aim of each interpretation is to facilitate a better grasp of the novel's philosophical content and the value that confers. This in turn will increase our appreciation of these novels in their philosophical aspects, which is why it is

important to have specific methods which show the different ways that philosophical content in different kinds of novels can be identified. We shall first discuss what content of this kind looks likes before explaining each mode in turn.

When we say that we "interpret a novel", what we really mean is that we interpret what a novel is about. Returning to Lamarque's theory of literary interpretation, a work's "aboutness" can be divided into two distinct levels: "a *subject* level and a *thematic* level." (Lamarque, 2009, 150) This clear line of distinction is particularly crucial when it comes to interpreting philosophical novels. A novel may contain philosophical content at a subject level, but as we saw with the James Bond dilemma in the last chapter, this is not enough for it to belong to the philosophical genre.[87] A philosophical novel must have at least one overarching philosophical theme which is deeply intertwined with other key elements of the work, helping to shape the story into its final form.[88] This final form must also say or imply something of interest about its theme, which we uncover through interpreting what the work is philosophically about.

A novel's aboutness on a subject level refers to its characters, plot and plot setting, symbols, language, etc. These elements can be analyzed in processes

[87] As I mentioned in the last chapter, most non-philosophical novels ironically have abstract themes which are of interest to philosophy. In the case of *Casino Royale*, these include freedom vs. obligation, the duty to one's country, love vs. duty, the morality of the spy profession, etc. I am not concerned with these themes as these sorts of novels offer no new insight on such themes. Philosophical content on a subject level may seem a bit trickier on the surface because it is literal philosophical conversation (or other kinds of communication like letter writing) within the text. But as we saw with Bond's philosophical musings in *Casino Royale*, this sort of conversation may only be surface-level and unimportant to the rest of the novel.

[88] For more on how literary themes engage with philosophical ideas in novels, engendering a deeper appreciation by the reader through active interpretation, see Olsen 1983.

known as explication and elucidation. Explication falls back to the analytical side of philosophy, with a focus on a close reading of language and textual analysis to uncover verbal and sentential meaning. Elucidation also aims at clarification but concerns a delineation of the "world" of the work, what is "true" within the fictional world. (Lamarque, 2009, 145) Both processes are preliminary to interpretation, which takes a broader view of the whole, identifying themes that help to relate and give deeper significance to the particulars at a subject level.

Philosophical content can appear both at a subject level and at a thematic level. As mentioned, there might be some philosophical content (concepts, debate) explicitly in the text. We saw with the case of Ian Fleming's *Casino Royale* in Chapter Four, that a novel can say something about a philosophical topic like the morality of assassinating enemy spies for one's country. This is typically done by two or more characters engaging in a discussion on the topic, although sometimes the narrator comments on it as well. But as was the case with James Bond contemplating the morality of his profession, this itself is not enough for Fleming's novel to belong on my tier list. We can admit that a novel can contain philosophy, or philosophical thought, at the subject level without being philosophical in any deeper or significant (thematic) sense.[89]

[89] There is an entire series of books dedicated to examining the philosophical themes of novels, films, television series, comic books, etc. This body of works is called *The Blackwell Philosophy and Pop Culture Series.* The description on their website's "About" page reads: "Our goal with the Blackwell Philosophy and Pop Culture Series is to get philosophy out of the ivory tower by publishing books about smart popular culture for serious fans. With each volume in this series we seek to teach philosophy using the themes, characters, and ideas from your favorite TV shows, comic books, movies, music, games, and more." (Irwin, no date) My own experience shows that these pieces, penned by a collection of editors, are hit and miss in terms of significant philosophical discussion. Some are more intriguing than others. Overall, though, I imagine this is the kind of creative freedom Jones has in mind with his theory of literary interpretation (although I suspect that he may be slightly suspicious at

The kind of valid philosophical interpretations we are after centres on a novel's thematic content. "To speak of what a work is about, thematically, is to speak of a unifying thread that binds together incident and character in an illuminating way." (Lamarque, 2009, 150) It takes the elements of a novel at a subject level and ties them together in a way that makes some overarching sense of the whole. This is the source of the kind of appreciation we are after with literary interpretation, as this process helps us to see some deeper interest in the work beyond its subject matter of character and plot.

The same is true for philosophical interpretations. But how one goes about identifying a philosophical novel's themes, or content at a thematic level, will depend on which tier the work belongs to. To avoid a proverbial chicken-and-egg problem here, I will add that these sorts of interpretations happen after we have an idea of what kind of philosophical novel we are dealing with (of course our decision of which tier a novel belongs to may change as we interpret a novel, but once we understand the modes of interpretation, it will become clearer which mode is appropriate for which novel). As previously stated, each tier invites its own method or mode of philosophical interpretation, giving us three modes in total.

To anticipate the discussion to come I will sketch out a framework for how the different tiers of philosophical novels might invite different kinds of interpretation. The starting point is a general principle, applicable to all, that

---

the liberties some editors take when interpreting particular works like *Family Guy*, *Sons of Anarchy*, *Bridgerton* and *The Office*).

the appropriate mode of interpretation is determined by how close the philosophical themes are to the explicit subject content.

In the *strong* tier of philosophical novels, of which *Nausea* is paradigmatic, we find a very close connection between philosophical themes and subject matter. Philosophical concepts are frequently in evidence in Roquentin's account of his life and thoughts: existence, absurdity, perception, objects, meaning, superfluousness, etc. Furthermore, the narration offers frequent attempts to elaborate on these and make sense on them. So a philosophical interpretation does not need to import the concepts, merely to recognise their presence and work with them.

What is the role of interpretation for the philosophically strong cases? The interpreter, while not imposing a philosophical reading, is required to redescribe the ideas already present in more systematic and precise terms, identifying claims made, and asking what kind of support for them is offered, and how they are integrated into the literary-artistic fabric. There is philosophical work to do by the interpreter but it is largely a process of recovering what is already there, in other words a *discovery* rather than an imposition.

In the *moderate* tier of philosophical novel, of which *Crime and Punishment* is paradigmatic, a different relation between subject and philosophical theme is evident. The subject matter contains only scattered and diffuse use of philosophical terminology. There are certainly abstract ideas in evidence—utilitarianism, socialism—but seemingly no attempt to advance philosophical theses of any precise form.

What is the role of interpretation in such cases? Much more philosophical *reconstruction* is needed than in the strong cases to make sense of the whole. There are certainly hints of underlying themes, on guilt, conscience, suffering, etc, and not least in the discussion of Raskolnikov's published essay on "extraordinary" men and crime. But the interpreter has work to do to formulate a clear philosophical direction of thought and to propose philosophical theses in the novel that give the work a deeper significance.

In the *marginal* tier of philosophical novels, with *Emma* as a paradigm, there is little or no explicit philosophical thought in the subject content or any sustained use of an abstract terminology. On the face of it—and this is true of all in the marginal tier—it seems at first sight that it is an unlikely candidate for a philosophical novel. However, the very description of Emma's moral development, through the tutelage of Mr Knightley, her growing self-awareness, her ability to overcome her flaws and to recognise the consequences of her actions, does lend itself to philosophical reflection.

What is the role of interpretation in these cases? Undoubtedly some intellectual and imaginative *creativity* is called for and the potential relevance of Aristotelian virtue theory to the subject content of moral education seems to emerge, not implausibly, as a framework for thematic reflection. The novel does not force this reading on us, nor does it even invite it through hints or suggestions. But the interpretation does provide a framework that offers a deeper way of thinking about what is going on, and it is not of undue concern that Jane Austen might have had little explicit thought of Aristotle when constructing the character and plot.

The discovery mode of interpretation

Turning in more detail to the different modes of interpretation, we shall begin with what might be labelled the discovery mode, which is the most straightforward of the three modes and the one we can recommend for novels in the strong tier.

With the discovery mode of interpretation, we are simply discovering a work's philosophical themes. I call it "discovery" because there is little guesswork or creativity on the interpreter's part. It is not hard to identify these themes as they are usually at the forefront of the novel's most pivotal or climatic scenes. In most strong philosophical novels, there is typically at least one specific passage which is deeply philosophical in nature.[90] This is particularly true of passages containing explicit philosophical statements made by the characters or narrator, usually signaling a dramatic tonal shift in the narrative.[91] I will grant that not all strong novels have or must have such a climax, but it is a trend we see in the strong cases.

---

[90] This is not the same as one chapter devoted to vague philosophical musings as in the case of Fleming's *Casino Royale*. These sorts of humdrum philosophical chapters play no significant role in the rest of the plot, whereas a strong novel's story is arguably built around these philosophically charged scenes. Having one (or more) chapters focusing on a philosophical topic does not make that novel inherently philosophical; it can only be deemed as such when taking all the parts of the work into account through a thorough and coherent interpretation.

[91] It is possible for these philosophically charged scenes to occur at the very end of the novel, as is the case with Camus's *The Outsider* (1982) or Kafka's *The Trial* (2000). They can still represent a tonal shift in the narrative and/or character's perspective, as what they say may indicate a fundamental shift in their philosophical beliefs. Or in the case of Camus's Meursault, it reaffirms what he already believed at the start of the novel, so the tonal shift here is one of confirmation (and this confirmation in Meursault's philosophical beliefs ironically reassures him and sets his mind at ease before his execution. Thus, the tonal shift is one from apathy to calm, relieved acceptance of his dire situation).

Take the case of Sartre's *Nausea*. A large part of my case study focuses on ten pages known as the root passage. As we saw, this scene is a turning point for Roquentin, as he finally understands why he has been experiencing bouts of Nausea, and while he does not believe that his particular illness will improve in the future, he becomes calmer and more accepting of his reality (i.e. that *his* existence is absurd, devoid of inherent meaning, just like all other existents). We finally understand Roquentin's thoughts on existence because of his statements in the root passage. Thus, I argue that the easiest place to begin our interpretation of *Nausea's* philosophical content is to examine what Roquentin actually writes about existence, nonexistence, the nature of language, etc. These philosophical statements or musings provide us with the work's themes, which are literally the themes of existence and nonexistence, the nature of language, etc. Thus, we can be said to "discover" these themes because they are obvious at a subject level, linking directly to what the characters think and say about abstract concepts. However, as mentioned earlier, an interpretation of a strong philosophical novel still needs to do more than merely reproduce what is explicitly present. The themes and theses need to be made systematic and any support for them in the text needs to be identified; also their integration into the literary fabric must be explained.

We see lots of examples of core passages opening up philosophical themes in the Strong Tier. For instance, in Albert Camus's *The Outsider*, the pivotal scene occurs when Meursault is languishing in prison after randomly shooting a man. Sentenced to death, a priest comes to visit him, and Meursault lashes out into a verbal tirade.

> I was pouring everything out at him from the bottom of my heart in a paroxysm of joy and anger. He seemed so certain of everything, didn't he? And yet none of his certainties was worth one hair of a woman's head. He couldn't even be sure he was alive because he was living like a dead man. I might seem to be empty-handed. But I was sure of myself, sure of everything, surer than he was, sure of my life and sure of the death that was coming to me. Yes, that was all I had. But at least it was a truth which I had hold of just as it had hold of me. I'd been right, I was still right, I was always right. I'd lived a certain way and I could just as well have lived in a different way. I'd done this and I hadn't done that. I hadn't done one thing whereas I had done another. So what? It was as if I'd been waiting all along for this very moment and for the early dawn what I'd be justified. Nothing, nothing mattered and I knew very well why. He too knew why. From the depths of my future, throughout the whole of this absurd life I'd been leading, I'd felt a vague breath drifting towards me across all the years that were still to come, and on its way this breath had evened out everything that was then being proposed to me in the equally unreal years I was living through. […] Didn't he understand that he was condemned and that from the depths of my future…… I was choking with all this shouting. (Camus, 1982, 115-6)

As is the case with the root passage in *Nausea*, the philosophical themes of *The Outsider* are handed to us in this scene.[92] *The Outsider's* themes are profoundly

[92] Sartre admired Camus's "skillful construction" of *The Outsider*, particularly its ending. In a review where he compared Camus's literary talents with Kafka and Hemingway, he writes: "when we close the book, we realize that it could not have had any other ending. In this world that has been stripped of its causality and presented as absurd, the smallest incident has weight. There is no single one which does not help to lead the hero to crime and capital punishment. *The Stranger* is a classical work, an orderly work, composed about the absurd

existential. It is a novel about the absurdity of life, of our own existence, and how any lack of inherent meaning in our lives facilitates a sort of perverse freedom (I use the word "perverse" because this sort of freedom is framed as fundamentally amoral). I should also note that, as with Sartre's root passage, this scene is the climax of the novel. By identifying the most philosophically charged moments of the novel, we can then start to see how these ideas at the focal point of these scenes expand across and are developed through the rest of the work. So, if we want to interpret a strong philosophical novel, we should identify the strongest explicit statement(s), which are usually stated at the turning point of the plot and base our interpretation around these themes. If this interpretation is valid, then it should be supported by most of the work's other content, as was the case with *Nausea* and *The Outsider*.[93]

---

and against the absurd." (Sartre refers here to the defiant will in face of the absurd which Camus asserts for in his treatise, *The Myth of Sisyphus*.) (Aronson, 2004, 14)

[93] Unlike Sartre and Camus, who frame their endings as bitter-sweet for their protagonists, Montesquieu took a more humorous route with the conclusion of *Persian Letters* (but while he was clearly aiming for humour, there is nothing humorous regarding the topic of suicide. It arguably makes his writing less palatable in the twenty-first century). The philosophically pivotal scene is in the last letter of the series, sent by Roxane to her husband, Usbek, before her death. It is in this moment where we come to see just how horrible a man (and husband) Usbek is, which Roxane lays clear to us. "How could you have thought me credulous enough to imagine that I was in the world only in order to worship your caprices? that while you allowed yourself everything, you had the right to thwart all my desires? No: I may have lived in servitude, but I have always been free. I have amended your laws according to the laws of nature, and my mind has always remained independent." (Montesquieu, 1993, 280) Admittedly this is not the most poignant explicit philosophical statement in the novel. However, it is crucial for understanding Montesquieu's theory of gender and the subjugation of women, which are two prominent themes throughout the work. The anger and rebellion of Usbek's favourite wife also acts as a metaphor for Montesquieu's wider conceptions of natural freedom, personal autonomy, and human rights. For this reason, I argue that despite being a relatively short passage, Roxane's last letter is the ultimate climax of the plot (although I do suspect that others might disagree with this assessment).

The presence of explicit philosophical statements and pivotal scenes surrounding them makes the process of interpreting a novel's philosophical themes easier, but most novels on my tier list do not contain such direct assertions. Indeed, any claims based on abstract concepts made by moderate or marginal novels are usually implicit not explicit. The result is that it may be harder to identify an overarching philosophical theme in these cases.[94]

The reconstructive mode of interpretation

Of our three modes of interpretation—discovery, reconstruction, and creativity—the sharpest and most illuminating distinction is between the first and third, discovery and creativity. In strong philosophical novels, inviting the discovery mode, the prominent philosophical themes are near the surface; while in marginally philosophical novels, such themes are virtually invisible at the subject level, and it takes an interpreter to create an interesting philosophical framework which genuinely illuminates the subject matter and can be supported with textual evidence. In contrast to these opposing modes, the reconstructive mode, typically applied in the moderate tier, lies somewhere between discovery and creativity. The philosophical themes and theses are neither overtly present nor wholly invisible but are reconstructed out of a web

[94] This is going to depend on the novel. Sometimes the philosophical theme, particularly if it is a moral or political one, is easy to identify. In fact, one might say that novels in the marginal tier have themes which are easier to pinpoint than those in the moderate tier. For example, it is not hard to identify the overarching themes of Austen's *Emma* and her other novels, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Hermann Melville's *Moby Dick*, Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, etc. By contrast to these sorts of novels, I would argue that moderate novels have the most difficult themes to interpret. This is partly because they usually lend themselves very well to several different, sometimes conflicting, interpretations; an idea we shall discuss soon.

of abstract ideas that is characteristic of moderately philosophical novels but largely absent in the marginal tier.

A novel can have many different, overlapping themes; some more obvious than others. This is particularly true of novels in the moderate tier. The content of strongly philosophical novels lends itself better to some philosophical interpretations than others because the philosophy lies nearer the surface and is evident across the whole work. The strong or overarching themes connect directly to most of the work's other elements, notably at the subject level.

In the case of moderate novels, however, without any single and overt philosophical theme, it is likely that the subject content will suggest or imply several different themes. Take Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment,* for example. Aside from the ones mentioned in my case study, some obvious themes of the novel include the psychological effects of guilt, the importance of suffering, the possibility of religious redemption and salvation, alienation and existential hopelessness, and so on. Each of these themes is supported by ample textual evidence, as are many other less obvious themes.[95]

[95] One theme alluded to in Chapter Three was Dostoevsky's answer to "The Women Problem", a catch-all phrase regarding social, cultural, and political issues surrounding the—admittedly precarious—position of women in nineteenth century Russia. Some have theorized that Dostoevsky answered this question through the portrayal of his female characters. Whether he consciously intended to do so is unknown and arguably irrelevant. But it is unsurprising that his portrayal of the characters of Sonya, Dunya, and to a lesser extent Pulkheria Alexandrovna Raskolnikova (Raskolnikov's mother) and Katerina Ivanovna Marmeladova (Sonya's stepmother) are at the forefront of this thematic interpretation. Yet their status as women in society scarcely factors into my own interpretation of the novel's overarching philosophical theme. This is why it is so important to understand the novel at a subject level before moving onto a broader interpretation.

This presents somewhat of an issue for the novels in my moderate tier, which exist in a sort of limbo between the discovery mode of interpretation and the creative mode. Because most moderate novels lack explicit philosophical statements but have content—both at the subject and thematic level—which lends itself well to more complicated philosophical interpretations, they are paradoxically more difficult to interpret. I would go so far to say that moderate novels are the hardest to interpret philosophically out of all the novels on the tier list.

The difficulty here stems from perhaps too many elements inviting too many diverse philosophical interpretations. Unlike in the marginal tier where there are only few abstract ideas, thus little to convert into any obvious philosophical themes, leading to a freer creativity in interpretation, novels in the moderate tier are full of abstract ideas which jostle for philosophical attention. Perhaps surprisingly this can hinder or limit the reader's freedom of creativity when interpreting a moderate novel. The reconstruction of philosophical themes in the moderate tier is more constrained than in the marginal tier, because it is grounded in a subject matter often characterised (for example in dialogue and commentary) by the use of an abstract idiom, even if there are few, if any, overt philosophical pronouncements.

After studying the subject level material in depth, some themes will start to emerge. The particulars may lend themselves to different but equally plausible philosophical interpretations, more so than in the case of strong novels which usually have one clear overarching theme. The reader will have to select specific parts of the text where themes seem most apparent and then attempt to reconstruct the theme as something of more general significance. In the

case of *Crime and Punishment*, a reader reflecting on Raskolnikov's article, "On Crime", and the heated debate between the main characters about its key ideas, might be drawn into a wider reconstruction of the theme of nihilism in the novel. Looking at another moderate novel, Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, a reader will soon notice the implied criticism of Utilitarianism, not least through the absurdities of the character of Gradgrind and, on the strength of that, reconstruct a wider critique as a theme running through the novel.

Of course both of these scenes may function well in other interpretations, but if one wants to interpret these novels in terms of these specific themes, then the themes will have a greater say on the content readers may focus on. In this way the three modes indirectly connect to each other. At one end is the discovery mode, at the other the creative mode, with the reconstructive mode somewhere in between, binding details and themes together in ways that are illuminating, not just through discovery nor just through creative imposition.

The creative mode of interpretation

As the name implies, the creative mode involves a significant degree of creativity not seen in the other two modes. It also heavily borrows from Peter Jones's theory of interpretation from his book, *Philosophy and the Novel*.[96]

[96] Torsten Pettersson coins Susan Feagin's conception of interpretation as "a Creative Model of Interpretation". (Pettersson, 1986, 149) This differs from Jones's theory of creative interpretation, however, as Feagin and Pettersson refer to the potential diverse meanings a text's statement can be interpreted to have, and how this may lead to incompatible interpretations.

Like previous analytical approaches to literary interpretation, Jones's theory takes into account that novels are a mode of communication, which automatically endows the work with a specific kind of purposiveness. (Jones, 1975, 185) But he also notes the different kind of relationship readers of literary works have compared to other written texts like historical chronicles or scientific monographs. Reading a novel is a different kind of experience to these other texts specifically because it is fictional. The authors of non-fictional texts have the intention to convey an objective truth; we need not *interpret* the meaning of a science report or history textbook as it should already be apparent to us. We are meant to take it as it is, as it were.[97]

The authors of fictional writing obviously have a purpose or intention in mind while writing as well, but as with Wimsatt and Beardsley's criticism against authorial intention, Jones claims that these actual purposes are inaccessible to most readers of fiction. Even if we postulate what the author's intentions for a work are, there is no way to confirm if our interpretations are correct. Jones sidesteps this issue by acknowledging that novels may have actual intentions by the author, but they are not what we ought to concern ourselves with. A novel, he claims, can still have purposefulness without (actual) purpose (to adopt a phrase coined by Kant). The only difference is that this purpose relies on the reader's personal engagement with a novel. "A reader has to examine the text in light of possible, if not actual purposes, and the possibilities will be determined by his knowledge and interests. This is the sense in which a reader

[97] This is true of modern scientific and historical writings. There are examples throughout history, like Galileo's dialogues, of scientific publications which were indirect and deliberately obscure.

treats a novel as possessing the property of purposiveness without actual purpose." (Jones, 1975, 185)

Jones's creative theory rests on the idea that fictional texts operate as a sort of canvas for the reader's imagination, provided they constrain themselves to the textual evidence at hand. The freedom here refers to a reader being allowed to choose which parts of a work to focus their attention on, and their focus will be governed by their own individual knowledge, interests, and aims. (Jones, 1975, 2) As such, no two readers will likely have the same experience with one novel. What they elect to pay attention to within the work will depend on their background, and thus result in a richer, more rewarding experience for the reader. Interpretation turns inward here with a focus on what purpose the work has according to its audience. Margaret Van De Pitte gives a good summary of this theory:

> A serious attempt to understand the work, not the author's intentions, results then in a view which is necessarily conditioned by the reader's (critic's) interests and circumstances. Interpretations differ insofar as critics are determinate individuals with differing interests, differing intellectual and psychological backgrounds and differing expectations of a novel. There can thus be an indefinite plurality of legitimate interpretations of a single novel. (Van De Pitte, 1979, 163-4)

Readers can create a plethora of reasoned philosophical interpretations of a marginal novel so long as they do not contort the language in the novel to fit their theory. This avoids the reverse of Humpty-Dumpty-ism; the idea that the reader can interpret an utterance to mean whatever they want. But even if the

author had not intended for their novel to be philosophical, by identifying particular elements in a novel which support a philosophical interpretation, we can be said to appreciate that novel better from a philosophical viewpoint despite a lack of explicit philosophy within the text. “[O]ne way in which a novel may be described, justifiably, as philosophical is if it displays philosophicalness without philosophy.” (Jones, 1975, 181)

Jones’s theory works well for interpreting novels in the marginal tier. These sorts of novels are not typically written with exact philosophical intentions in mind, and readers must employ a degree of creativity when constructing a valid philosophical theory from its elements. Aside from the criticism mentioned in Section One, my only other criticism here is that Jones’s creative interpretations can be too subjective. The problem is that his theory seems to imply that novels only become philosophical once they are interpreted to be so. The ability of a novel displaying philosophicalness, as Jones puts it, depends on the interpreter’s perspective. Consequently, novels of this sort cannot be said to be intrinsically philosophical; they only become so after being interpreted as such.

This puts the novels in my marginal tier in a vulnerable position. It seems too weak a claim to say that we can only be sure that a novel belongs to the genre once we think of a valid philosophical interpretation for it. So I want to make one alteration to the creative mode of interpretation. It is not the fact that a reader may create a philosophical interpretation of a novel that places it into the marginal tier, but rather that the novel already contains elements at the subject and, more importantly, thematic level which lend themselves to valid interpretations. This allows for the freedom of creativity Jones pushes, as many

of these elements work well with different, sometimes incompatible interpretations (we will return to this in Section Three). At the same time, it removes the need for a valid philosophical interpretation to exist before a work can be classified as "philosophical". I want to clarify here that all novels on my tier list must be able to be interpreted, plausibly, through a philosophical lens. The only difference is that the novels on my list have the capacity to be interpreted, regardless of whether anyone actually interprets them this way. This is what makes them intrinsically philosophical; the potentiality for philosophical interpretation always exists because of its subject content, not the reader's aims or background. If no one ever read Austen's *Emma*, besides Austen herself, it would still belong to the marginal tier because of how its subject and thematic level content naturally opens itself to philosophical reflection, even of a kind which Austen might not have explicitly envisioned for the text. It is the presence of this deep, thoughtful content that firmly positions it in at least the marginal tier.

So if we want to interpret a marginal novel, we may focus on whatever details we like in proposing a theme, so long as the theme is supported by evidence from the text. In relation to some chosen details, certain themes might stand out to readers, particularly moral or political ones. Strictly, we cannot be said to "discover" these themes, as in the strong tier, as they may become salient to the reader only in much more indirect ways. Novels like George Orwell's *Animal Farm* do not outright say anywhere in the text what their themes are (there are no explicit statements to that effect). Yet they are undeniably political.[98] Thus, freedom of creativity comes into play in these sorts of cases by allowing

[98] However, it was—and may still be—unclear to readers what kind of political regime *Animal Farm* is a metaphor for, and maybe that does not matter.

readers to pick and choose which elements of the text they want to focus on regarding this theme.[99]

Each of the modes of interpretation is necessary for the distinctions between my tiers to make sense. Different kinds of philosophical subject and thematic content in a novel are going to affect how we engage with the reading. The freedom, or lack thereof, that one has regarding their interpretations must also be taken into account. My hope is that these three modes allow for some greater clarity to be drawn between the tiers, while considering how to approach each sort of novel to sustain a valid interpretation. But these sorts of interpretative distinctions are not without controversy. The next section shall explore three criticisms which may be raised against my discovery and reconstructive modes of interpretation.

Part Three- Potential Issues

The first objection one might lobby against my discovery mode of interpretation centers on a potential, yet fundamental, misunderstanding on my part. I have previously claimed that we ought not to concern ourselves with an author's intentions for their work. Knowing what these intentions are may come in handy when interpreting a novel, but they are not necessary for confirming our interpretations. And if we do base our interpretations on what the author had intended, this does not make our interpretations objectively superior to others. If we can learn what the author's intentions were, through

[99] It is possible to examine Emma's moral maturity through her different relationships. My case study primarily focused on her moral education with Mr. Knightley and, to a lesser extent, Mrs. Weston. However, other commentaries have addressed her interactions with Harriet, her father, Miss Bates, etc. when exploring the same idea.

notebooks or letters or interviews, then this may act as helpful aids when constructing our interpretations—nothing more.

Yet one may say that I contradict myself here, and that authorial intention in fact plays a significant role when interpreting strong philosophical novels. My supposed mistake is that what I consider the "discovery" process of philosophical interpretations is actually a "recovery" process, particularly in cases of novels written by philosophers. After all, many strong novels were written by philosophers who had obvious intentions for their works. Indeed, as I said above, there is usually one passage which highlights the overarching philosophical theme of the novel. This passage, and several more, might also have philosophical theses tying back to this particular theme. Thus, we can say that these authors intend to include complex philosophical ideas in their text. Whether readers grasp these ideas seems to be irrelevant. The authors wanted to write a piece of philosophical fiction and succeeded in their aim. The success of this intention is proven by the fact that their novels belong to my strong tier, reaffirming that they are significantly philosophical.

This objection has merit, especially when considering my own strong-tier case study. As we saw in Chapter Two, Jean Paul Sartre clearly imbued some of his philosophical ideas in *Nausea*. Indeed, it was not unusual for philosophers in the twentieth century—including those in Sartre's own personal circle—to pen literary novels before/during writing traditional philosophical treatises. Some notable examples include Simone de Beauvoir's novel, *She Came to Stay* (1943), before her treatise, *The Second Sex* (1949), and Albert Camus's *A Happy Death* (composed between 1936-8) and *The Outsider* (1942) before *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). This is not to say that these philosophers only wrote these

novels to help themselves better understand or conceptualize their own theories, but I can say that at least in the case of *Nausea*, Sartre unarguably used the text to express some of his ontological and phenomenological ideas at length.

To solidify the point even further, one could argue that because novels like *Nausea* contain explicit philosophical statements, the author deliberately intended to say something philosophical, which we can identify. Indeed, one cannot deny that these sorts of utterances in novels are definitively philosophical, and that is what makes these works such strong contenders for the philosophical genre.

My reply to the criticism above is thus. I have previously stated that authorial intention does not play a substantial role when determining if a novel is philosophical. Theoretically it makes no difference what the author intended for their work (i.e. if they intended it to be a novel of the philosophical variety). Indeed, it may make it harder to distinguish which novels are philosophical if we give any meaningful weight to the author's vision of their work.[100] But I propose that this criticism is not an issue for my theory. The discovery mode of interpretation can still work here provided we base our interpretations on what is contained within the novel. After all, Beardsley's anti-intentionalism is itself a species of the "discovery" model; for him the meaning is discovered in the

[100] Some authors are adamant that their novels are not philosophical or were not written with any specific philosophical ideas in mind. A prominent example is Iris Murdoch, who insists in a BBC interview with Bryan Magee that her novels are non-philosophical. (Magee, 2001, 241-2) Despite her claim that she did not intend to write a philosophical novel, it seems like a dubious claim as Murdoch herself is a philosopher and it is not difficult to identify philosophical themes or theses in her work. We will examine the philosophical content of her novel, *Under the Net*, in the Appendix.

work itself. Sartre wanted to write a scene discussing the absurdity of existence (among other things) in the root passage. Thus, the author's intentions are already embedded in the work, as it were. We cannot assume that the author is directly speaking to us in his own voice—what he himself thinks, feels, etc.—through his characters or narrator. But we can be confident that the author intended for his characters to have these exact philosophical thoughts. Indeed, there is no removing the "philosophicalness" from the root passage. Sartre wrote this scene to be philosophically charged, and this aim was undoubtedly accomplished. But once we understand this, we can effectively divorce the author from the work. I will take a page from Wimsatt and Beardsley's literary theory here and say that we do not need to know anything else about the author to formulate our interpretation because everything we need to construct it already exists independently in the text.

The second criticism one might pose to my discovery mode of interpretation is the potential that it may lead to a vicious circle. All philosophical novels in any tier invite (or reward) a strong philosophical interpretation, but the phrase "strong" here refers to the interpretation itself. As stated before, a strong interpretation is one that is plausible, coherent, and supported or in alignment with the textual evidence contained within the work. Moderate and marginal novels can have significant philosophical interpretations, but this does not mean that they meet the other criteria required to belong to the strong tier.

It becomes murky, however, in cases of strong novels. A strong philosophical interpretation of a strong novel will, by definition of the discovery mode, heavily rely on the novel's strong philosophical content at both a subject and thematic level. We know that strong novels usually have explicit philosophical

statements which are the focal point of whole scenes or passages. I would argue that these novels are deeply philosophical which is confirmed by our interpretations of their content. Yet one may say that we only consider strong philosophical novels as "strong" because our interpretations confirm this. It risks becoming circular: are these novels actually philosophically strong in their own right, thus enabling us to think of strong interpretations which confirm this fact? Or does our strong interpretation of a novel's philosophy elevate or enhance its philosophical content to a stronger status?

My solution to this admittedly relies on the traditional analytical view of literary interpretations of novels. Texts are a kind of one-way interaction between the author and readers. Despite not centring philosophical interpretations of novels around authorial intention but instead viewing a novel as a wholly independent object in and of itself, this does not negate the fact that textual utterances have contextual meanings. It is just like any other use of language; if we are to avoid Humpty-Dumpty-ism, then we must accept that the meaning of words automatically constrains our freedom to interpret a work. We must take what the text says at face-value, in other words.[101]

This reasoning may have the opposite effect of what I am intending. If we take Roquentin's or Meursault's utterances literally at face-value, they may appear less philosophically charged. They might seem more like the emotional ramblings of two madmen, which is not a stretch of the imagination (Roquentin has been suffering horrific bouts of incurable Nausea and Meursault is mere hours away from being guillotined. Naturally their minds would be racing).

[101] A text can still utilize metaphors, irony and sarcasm, and other linguistic devices. A good interpretation of a work will take these into account.

They certainly are not putting forward any coherent, sound arguments backing up their views, and any explicit claims they make are not the kind of clear, succinct thesis statements one would find in philosophical treatises. Indeed, we can identify Roquentin's or Meursault's statements as "philosophical" because we, as philosophers, know what kind of abstract ideas are of interest to philosophy. In other words, statements like the ones presented in *Nausea's* root passage are only philosophically relevant because these abstract concepts correspond with those found in ontology and phenomenology. But this connection requires a philosophical interpretation to be made; it is not obvious in the novel by itself. Thus, strong novels are philosophical precisely because we determine them to be so, and they are considered to be "strong" once we are able to come up with a strong philosophical interpretation of their content.

Yet I argue this is not the case. The flaw with this sort of reasoning is that it assumes that the classification of a novel being "philosophically strong" depends on its content being interpreted to confirm this fact. If we cannot rely on the author's intentions to make a novel philosophically significant—i.e. a novel belongs to the strong tier because the author intended to write a weighty philosophical novel—then we equally cannot rely on the interpreter to confirm that a work's content facilitates a strong philosophical interpretation. It is for the exact same reason that La Rochefoucauld's aphorisms only need the potential to inspire further discussion and debate around his ideas. There only needs to exist the possibility that someone will produce a strong philosophical interpretation of *Nausea's* or *The Outsider's* subject and thematic level content. It would not make sense to say so otherwise; the strength of *Nausea's* philosophicalness does not change between the time of Sartre's writing and the first interpretation of it.

Strong novels have the potentiality to engender a strong philosophical interpretation, and this interpretation exists because of the novel's content. While the climatic scenes of the root passage or Meusault's outburst in jail may read as rambling and incoherent on the surface, when taken into context with the rest of the novel, their poignancy becomes obvious, as does their vitality for the direction of the overall plot. I still assert that these scenes are explicitly (and intrinsically) philosophical, not merely becoming so after a serious attempt to interpret them from a philosophical perspective. What I will also say, however, is that the more we engage with a strong novel's philosophical content, the stronger our interpretations become. Our interpretations strengthen because we realize how deeply the novel's philosophical themes permeate through most, if not all, of the novel's other elements. Our interpretations are strong because the novel is already so.

The last objection may be lobbied against the reconstruction mode of interpretation. How is it possible for the subject and thematic level content of a work to lend itself to two different interpretations, particularly concerning a work's theme(s)? This seems to become a problem when we examine incompatible interpretations. Let us assume that these sorts of interpretations focus on some overarching theme of the novel, or one of several overarching themes extending through the entire work (the same sort of interpretations offered in my case studies). If these interpretations are looking at the same aspects—narrative style, character motivation and development, plot setting and symbolism, etc.—then theoretically it should be impossible to come up with two equally valid yet fundamentally contradictory thematic interpretations. All these parts supposedly would lend themselves better to

one interpretation, thus making that interpretation the more coherent of the two.

All the novels in my case studies have competing interpretations. The issue arises when one of these interpretations is so contradictory to my own that it seems to invalidate my account. Both cannot be true at the same time; at least one interpretation must unintentionally reveal a deep misunderstanding of the text either by them or me. This is especially true when it comes to incompatible interpretations of strong tier novels.

Marie McGinn offers a unique interpretation of *Nausea*. While she admits that Sartre's novel contains philosophical themes, she thinks it is misguided to isolate these as predominant. In contrast, McGinn states that *Nausea* is first and foremost a psychological novel. (McGinn, 1997, 118) To try and understand *Nausea* through a philosophical lens, she holds, is to miss the point, and leads to an overall unsatisfactory reading. Thus, we must shift the key focus of our interpretation to truly understand and appreciate the work.

> I want to offer an interpretation of *Nausea* that connects it not with Sartre's metaphysical views, but with his psychological interest in the question of how someone becomes a writer, and in particular, with his unresolved anxieties concerning the problem of the relation between the alienated bourgeois writer and the bourgeois society that produces him. (McGinn, 1997, 118)

Her theory poses a threat to my case study, as if her theory is correct, then *Nausea* can be considered more a psychological than a philosophical novel.

Sartre's novel was chosen to represent my strong tier precisely because it is a prime example of what a strong philosophical novel looks like. If it fits better under the psychological genre—whatever that genre consists of—then it loses its status as a strong contender for the philosophical genre of literature. I want novels in the strong tier (and arguably other tiers) to have philosophical themes which outweigh any other which may be present.

For the sake of space, I will not dissect McGinn's psychological interpretation as doing so is not necessary. In fact, her theory that *Nausea* has psychological themes may be correct. My only caveat here is that these themes run alongside *Nausea's* philosophical ones, as McGinn would agree. I will also add that there appears to be much less textual evidence supporting her theory. Even if we do get a more rewarding read by approaching the novel with the idea that its themes are significantly psychological, we cannot deny that philosophical themes are dominant.

If the use of the discovery mode of interpretation were to yield two equally plausible but incompatible interpretations, only one of which identifies philosophical themes, then the case for saying the work in question is predominately philosophical is clearly weak. But in the example of *Nausea* and indeed other strong tier novels, this scenario is simply not applicable as the evidence is overwhelming that the philosophical themes do permeate all aspects of the novel to a degree not manifested by other themes.

It becomes vaguer when we look at cases of incompatible interpretations in the moderate tier, as the textual evidence may equally support two or more interpretations. Under reconstructive interpretation it is not impossible for

there to be two conflicting but well-supported reconstructions. Philosophers like Lamarque and Torsten Pettersson, among others, subscribe to the view that incompatible interpretations of one work can co-exist without invalidating each other.[102] Indeed, Pettersson argues that such co-existence of differing themes reflects the complexity of a text, enriching the interpretative process, and confirming what he calls the "pliability" of a literary work. (Pettersson, 2002, 219-220) These different interpretations arise because the work has several layers of meaning and these meanings are not fixed at the time of writing. Different readers at different times and locations will approach the text with unique perspectives, and latch onto elements of the text which speak to them.[103]

Pettersson uses the example of two incompatible interpretations of *King Lear* to make his point. One reading of Shakespeare's play is that it is profoundly nihilistic, as lots of elements including character dialogue, plot development, etc. support this interpretation. At the same time, one can view the play as containing a sort of religious redemptive arc. The theme of redemption also utilizes several aspects of the plot to back up its claim. Theoretically, by the definition of both these terms, it ought to be impossible for the play's elements to facilitate a valid interpretation of both themes. Yet Pettersson argues this need not be the case:

[102] Stecker 1997 and Feagin 2007 take what is known as a modest intentionalist approach when it comes to incompatible interpretations. Such a position respects the author's intentions while conceding that other influences, such as textual or societal, may bear on one's interpretation of a work. They embrace this pluralistic approach to interpretation, allowing that some incompatible interpretations may coexist harmoniously so long as they are plausible. Stecker qualifies this, arguing that some interpretations are more plausible than others and maintains some rational constraints to help determine an interpretation's plausibility.

[103] For more on Pettersson on incompatible interpretations, see Pettersson 1986.

> [O]ne can see how each of them could reasonably deal with the counterevidence. The "nihilists" could say that the features the "redemptivists" call attention to are indeed elements in the play but that they only serve to inflate our expectations of a happy ending; when those expectations are defeated, the effect is all the more shattering, and so is the blow to any conception of a metaphysically based world order. The redemptivists, conversely, may grant the validity of the observations made by the nihilists; the play recognizes the fact that there is, in this world, real suffering that may seem to dash all hopes and expectations and make a mockery of the whole idea of providence. But this, the redemptivists may argue, is part of the suffering necessary for purification and, furthermore, an example of the Christian conviction that God moves in mysterious ways: He may allow everything to look irremediably bleak but nevertheless presides over the events and holds out the possibility of salvation. Both parties, then, are able to accommodate the relevant evidence, so that the worldview of King Lear … allows of two opposite and incompatible interpretations. (Pettersson, 2002, 226-7)

As Pettersson says, if both parties are able to accommodate the relevant evidence for their interpretations, then there is no reason why a work cannot allow for two conflicting readings. This is another reason why we must turn our attention away from authorial intention. By considering the work as an independent object, from which we ought to draw evidence to support our interpretations, then any interpretation has the potential to be valid so long as it adheres to the text. Does this mean that interpretations which pull more

evidence from the text will be more valid? It seems so, particularly in cases of philosophical novels in any tier.

Conclusion

My intention with this chapter has been to provide an adequate description of what a philosophical interpretation of a novel aims for and how one goes about interpreting different kinds of philosophical novels. With this understanding in mind, we can see how distinct yet similar each of the tiers are, and why such categorization of the genre of philosophical novel is required. A single mode of interpretation spanning across all works within the genre is, I argue, not possible as novels present their philosophical content differently, and these differences must be accounted for. This allows for greater inclusivity of what might be included in the tier list, while simultaneously recognising a connecting thread tying works together in a way that is philosophically relevant.

Conclusion

There seems to be consensus in the disciplines of philosophy and literary criticism, as well as with the wider general public, that philosophical fiction is a legitimate genre of literature.[104] However, there is no agreed-upon definition of what a philosophical novel is. This leaves philosophers of literature with a significant problem.

Several philosophers, like Peter Jones, Alan Goldman, and Martha Nussbaum, have selected a handful of novels which, according to them, represent the kinds of works which can be classified as "philosophical". They also offer an accompanying description of what makes each of these works genuinely philosophical, and these descriptions can theoretically be applied to every potential philosophical novel, thus operating as a unifying thread through the genre of philosophical fiction.

Yet this does not solve the overarching issue surrounding the vagueness in the term "philosophical novel". The variety of accounts of what constitutes a philosophical novel inevitably leads to disagreement among these same philosophers, and this lack of consensus of how to define a philosophical novel makes it harder, if not impossible, to determine which works legitimately belong to the genre. In order to compile a list of significant works representative of the genre of philosophical fiction, there must be some sort of

[104] There is no shortage of websites listing the best or the greatest works of philosophical fiction, some with over a thousand titles. These lists are not based on academic scholarship but show how popular the concept of a philosophical genre of literature is with the public.

universally agreed account of what these sorts of works are, and therein lies the rub.

A single description which can be applied to all philosophical novels is arguably impossible to construct, at least in a way that is meaningful and valuable to philosophy. If our account of philosophical novels is too wide or vague, then any work can technically be interpreted as a philosophical novel and, mirroring the issue of pluralism found in Chapter One, it is both unnecessary and unhelpful to "open the floodgates" in this way. As we saw with the "Blackwell Philosophy and Pop Culture" series introduced in Chapter Five, any work can theoretically be interpreted through a philosophical lens, even if there is little evidence in the work supporting such an interpretation. On the other hand, if our description of philosophical novels is too narrow, then we face the same issue as with the philosophical purists in Chapter One and risk expelling works which may genuinely belong to the genre. This is a criticism constantly lobbied against those philosophers of literature who present their own accounts of philosophical fiction and accompanying list of examples. The phrase "philosophical novel", when given a single, overarching description which can be applied to all candidates equally, is ultimately unusable. Different works approach their philosophical content differently.

One possible solution is to think of all philosophical novels as existing on a kind of straight-line spectrum which employs a single definition for all works belonging to the genre, yet simultaneously considers that some novels are more philosophically inclined than others. This would still allow for a single unifying thread through the genre as all works still share, even if loosely, one definition. One serious problem, however, with a single spectrum of cases is

that it suggests there is a meaningful discrimination between works on a scale of “X is more philosophical than Y”. But in reality, as the tier structure implies, there are different ways of being “philosophical” so comparisons are not always commensurable, and being philosophical is not obviously a measurable quality. The mere quantity of philosophical themes in a novel does not make it a stronger philosophical novel; everything depends on what the themes are and how they are integrated into the whole. Also simply putting novels on a spectrum of philosophicalness reverts to the requirement of an overarching definition covering the whole genre. The tier system is a much more flexible and nuanced way of characterising the genre. If we admit that there is some variance in philosophical content, then it is not a stretch to also admit that such works invite different kinds of interpretation depending on how a work integrates this content into the narrative.

I have proposed that there are not one but three kinds of philosophical novels—strong, moderate, and marginal—which can be categorized in the form of a three-tier typology. These three tiers are not radically distinct from one another but they each invite a unique kind of interpretative practice, that the work meets a set of criteria, etc., and while this gives the tiers some sort of unity, it also distinguishes them. This framework accepts flexibility in interpretation and application, allowing for a wider net to be cast, as it were, across works with significantly different subject matter, themes, literary style, etc. My tier structure takes a holistic view of a work’s diverse parts. I am not only concerned with a novel’s philosophical content but also with its literary merit, and how these different aspects intermingle with and influence each other. My case studies prove that significant structural differences regarding the relationships of these various parts do exist between philosophical novels,

and that these relationships can help determine whether a work is strongly, moderately, or marginally philosophical.

I should note again that this typology simultaneously removes the issues raised with the concept of a straight-line spectrum. There is no meaningful order within each tier; the purpose of the three tiers is to permit some comfortable flexibility in terms of a novel's philosophical strength. So we can say it is unclear whether Jean Paul Sartre's *Nausea* meets the criteria for the strong tier better than Albert Camus's *The Outsider*. As each tier encourages the kind of interpretation employed, there is no 'more' or 'less' in membership of a tier. The tiers are meant to facilitate some clear, distinct boundaries in the genre while still allowing for some grey areas.

According to my theory, most philosophical novels will clearly belong to a specific tier, sufficiently meeting all that is required to belong to that tier. Of course there is still room for differing interpretations of certain works, including non-philosophical interpretations, but this does not invalidate the categorisation. Thus my overall position is that the three-tier typology offers a productive and illuminating framework for sorting through cases and clarifying the very concept of a 'philosophical novel'.

We saw how this is achieved in my three case studies. By examining all three novels—Sartre's *Nausea*, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and Austen's *Emma*—I have shown the key distinctions between each work at a fundamental level. Even the subject matter of the three novels indicates differences of emphasis. Each choice Sartre made when writing *Nausea*, from the literary format of a personal diary to the uninterrupted pages devoted to Roquentin's

philosophical contemplations, be it about a tram seat or a root, serves the work's philosophical theses and themes, which were undoubtedly at the forefront of its creation. *Crime and Punishment*, by contrast, was undoubtedly written with the intention of examining the psychology of a young, radical criminal. Dostoevsky's novel's philosophical themes were indeed vital to the narrative, but also acted in service of this end and had to work in harmony with the complex characters and engaging plotline. *Emma* is the journey of Emma's moral development. Unlike *Crime and Punishment*, however, *Emma* is different again in being about more realistic, relatable matters of human relationships. Austen wrote engaging stories of young, unmarried gentrified ladies, outlining their hopes, aspirations, anxieties, dilemmas, and friendships, and every part of her novels, from the witty, free indirect style of writing to the moral themes, had to fit this premise.

As I argued in Chapter Five, to offer a single account of how to interpret these three distinct novels would be as fruitless as trying to come up with a definition which adequately encompasses all of them. We know that each tier recommends its own distinct method of interpretation which considers the salient differences in how novels approach and incorporate their philosophical themes and, in cases of the strong and occasionally moderate tiers, theses. To identify a philosophical theme is not enough; one must see how that theme integrates with the work's literary style, plot, language, characters, other themes, etc.

If we were to summarize this theory in a way that is valuable to philosophy, the strength of a philosophical novel—whether it belongs to the strong, moderate, or marginal tier—is going to depend on how its philosophical content operates,

as it were, holistically within the work. As we saw in the case of *Nausea*, if everything is in service of the philosophical themes and theses, pushing them to the forefront above all else, then it is most likely a strong philosophical novel. If, however, the philosophical content is made to complement another idea, like another theme or concept for the work, then it probably belongs in the moderate or marginal tiers. This will naturally lead to some questionable cases, but the greyness in-between the tiers allows for minor variance in interpretation and opinion.

This thesis has strictly focused on novels. My solution of a three-tier system may not apply to other forms of literature or art. It is unclear if it may translate well to short-stories, epics, films, fables, plays, poetry, etc. This provides an area of opportunity for further research.

Appendix

What follows in a further clarification and substantiation of the three Tiers, supplying new illustrative examples in each Tier, with justification for their inclusion.

Tier One: Strongly Philosophical Novels

Pinpointing the first philosophical novel to be published is difficult. Philosophers employed the literary device of fictional dialogues to debate philosophical and theological ideas for centuries, but these traditional works are not considered to be philosophical novels. A philosophical novel must, at the very least, have an actual plot with engaging characters, even if the novel is an obvious vehicle to explore abstract concepts. One possible contender for the first strong philosophical novel may be Thomas More's *Utopia*. It is a series of fictional correspondence between More and several characters discussing a fictional island society called Utopia; it also contains poems, a made-up alphabet in the Utopian language, and maps of Utopia. More's writing is satirical and heavily critical of sixteenth century Catholicism, among other facets of European politics and society. Yet while the argument can be made that it is a strong philosophical novel, the argument can also be made that it has too much in common with previous philosophical dialogues, including most notably Plato's *Republic*.

I argue that More's *Utopia* is nevertheless important for tracking significant trends in the evolution of philosophical fiction. Even if it is not a strong philosophical novel, or even strictly a novel at all, *Utopia's* publication saw the

start of a new trend for how philosophical fictions were conceived until the late eighteenth century, including Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*. Like *Persian Letters* and *Utopia* (another example might be Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*), early philosophical novels characteristically centred on travel. Characters would either travel from Europe to fictional lands or would travel from abroad to Europe. Consequently, novels were written in the form of correspondence or personal accounts. The format of correspondence gave authors like Montesquieu an indirect way to criticise their society's religion, politics, traditions, gender norms, etc. through the use of satire (although serious dialogue was also occasionally included). The same is true of the first philosophical novel (arguably also the first work of science fiction) published by a woman, Margaret Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing-World* (1666).

In terms of strong philosophical novels, there was a notable shift away from the long-used motif of traveling to (or from) a distant land and satirical dialogue to a more serious reflection of one's own society by characters who lived in—and were harmed by—that society. Fyodor Dostoevsky arguably began this new phase with his novels, finishing with his masterpiece, *The Brothers Karamazov*. This work brings to the fore what Dostoevsky saw to be the social and philosophical ills plaguing the intellectuals, among others, living in eighteenth century St. Petersburg. This particular work, I argue, is more philosophical than his earlier novels, including *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoevsky's other works belong to the moderate tier as his philosophical and theological beliefs are not displayed as clearly and succinctly in them as in *The Brothers Karamazov* (which is understandable as there is a thirteen-year gap between the publication of *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and *The Brothers Karamazov*

(1879)). The consensus is that Dostoevsky grew more firm in his philosophical beliefs with age, which we find evidence for in his personal correspondence.

This brings us to *Nausea* and the other strongly philosophical novels published in the early-to-mid twentieth century. While there is arguably some influence from Dostoevsky's writing (notably *Notes from Underground*) on the works of twentieth century authors (Kafka, for example, and some existentialists), we see another trend emerge following *The Brothers Karamazov*. Strong philosophical novels still usually centred on individuals living in a broken or corrupt society—Sartre and Camus, for example, were heavily influenced by the wars, the rise of Nazism and the German occupation of France, French colonialism, and so on—while also exploring new kinds of philosophical themes.[105] These included existentialism, absurdism, postmodernism, psychoanalysis, modern theories of consciousness, etc. But as the twentieth century advanced, there was a shift of focus to primarily abstract philosophical concepts without outright political or social commentary, as is the case with *Nausea*.

While this trend was on the rise, however, other novels still discretely addressed the social and political issues plaguing the authors' home countries. Kafka and Camus, for example, were vocal in their novels, even if only indirectly, about the oppression they personally suffered (Kafka was an Austro-Hungarian Jew) and the oppression they witnessed in others (Camus was born

[105] There is a notable difference in Camus's political views and attitude toward his concept of the Absurd between the publication of *The Outsider* (1942) and *The Plague* (1947). His shift towards a more humanitarian outlook is said to be the result of living through World War II and learning of the atrocities committed by the Nazis. Other reasons have also been proposed, but these are the two overarching factors alluded to when explaining his shift in philosophical and political thinking.

in French-occupied Algeria and lived through the German occupation of France). The trend of strong philosophical novels highlighting social issues and anxieties continued after World War II, but the trend to also explore other philosophical concepts in a plot which is not socially or politically critical continued as well, carrying on into the twenty-first century.

With this context in mind, I shall list some key examples of strong philosophical novels in chronological order. My aim is to show a diversity of philosophical content and subject matter. Each title has two justifications for belonging to this list. First, it satisfactorily meets the criteria for Tier One mentioned in my introduction. It invites an interpretation in philosophical terms, implies and supports substantial philosophical claims, and contributes to a better understanding of a philosophical problem. The criteria for literary merit have also been met.

The second justification refers to the first criterion for this tier. Each work has philosophical themes and theses which can be made precise through interpretation. The kind of interpretation performed primarily on strong philosophical novels is what I have called the “discovery mode”. Essentially one “discovers” a work’s key overarching philosophical themes where these lie near the surface of the text in explicit description or strong implicit suggestion. I have used this mode of interpretation with each of these examples of strong philosophical novels. Thus, these novels not only represent works which adequately meet the tier’s criteria, but more importantly, lend themselves to a strong philosophical interpretation. I will briefly summarize how each novel achieves this:

Margaret Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing-World* (1666).

Cavendish's *Blazing-World* explores many philosophical questions, from natural philosophy (questioning the Cartesian view of a mechanical world), metaphysics (analysing mind and body dualism), political philosophy (defending Cavendish's belief in an absolute monarchy), and feminist philosophy (the protagonist is an intellectual empress with complete authority over her kingdom. Her rule is framed in a positive light, a highly unusual idea in the seventeenth century). Out of all the strong philosophical novels on this list, Cavendish's work is arguably the most philosophical as it contains many full pages of philosophical discussion and debate. Indeed, there is no shortage of explicit philosophical dialogue throughout the text, with Cavendish cleverly weaving other implicit ideas within these discussions. The Empress, for example, has conversations on science and philosophy with Ape-men and Worm-men, representing Cavendish's critical views of anthropocentrism. Not only does it advance the philosophical theories discussed in the novel by expanding our understanding of Cavendish's own philosophical ideas on materialism, political philosophy, etc., but it is also undoubtedly a strong feminist work—arguably the first of its kind. It is the first philosophical novel written by a woman, and she wrote a plot where women take the lead on deep philosophical discussions. Her work proves that women are as intellectually curious and able to engage in robust philosophical debates as men (while this is a truism now, it was a very controversial idea in Cavendish's time; one that was not obvious to her male—and some female—counterparts).

Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721).

As I detailed in Chapter One, Montesquieu discusses at length topics of religion, politics, gender roles and norms, the concept of freewill, etc. in his epistolary novel. It differentiates itself from works like *Utopia* and *The Blazing World*, which have ample philosophical discussion by characters who travel abroad, through in this case switching the narrative towards foreign characters coming to Europe. This change enables Montesquieu to directly criticize European politics, religion, customs, etc. through the guise of Muslim travellers, who have their own views on freewill, religious devotion, and so on (while some of his Muslim and European characters are overly exaggerated, Montesquieu had some core knowledge of Islam and Eastern geography which he displays throughout the text). The philosophical contribution of the novel is in providing a realistic external perspective on European philosophical thought.

Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879).

Dostoevsky began writing this work at age fifty-eight when he had a solid idea of both his philosophical and religious beliefs. As such, *The Brothers Karamazov* can be interpreted as his most religiously inclined novel, while also criticising the new philosophies circulating among the intellectual youth in 1800s St. Petersburg (he gives the same meta-philosophical warning against these philosophies in several works). The Utilitarianism-leaning Ivan can be considered as a more level-headed, rational version of Dostoevsky's earlier protagonist, Raskolnikov from *Crime and Punishment*. The book includes explicit philosophical discussions (although it is framed as Ivan preaching his ideas to his alleged half-brother, Smerdyakov) on the subjectivity of morality if, as

Ivan believes, there is no God to dictate what is right or wrong. However, its strongest contribution to philosophy, which has been referred to many times following the novel's publication, is the Spanish Inquisitor scene. I interpret this scene to represent the theological notion that philosophical ideas—ones that Dostoevsky views as objectively wrong and dangerous like nihilism and Utilitarianism—cannot be defeated by rational argument. Religion vs philosophy is a theme we see time and again in Dostoevsky's writing, and it is sharpest and most poignant in his last novel.

Franz Kafka's *The Trial* (written between 1914-1915, published in 1925).

The Trial is an unusual case. Meant to symbolize social oppression and arbitrary justice, the protagonist Josef K. has no idea why he is arrested on his thirtieth birthday or why he must go to trial. It has barely any explicit philosophical dialogue, so its key philosophical theses are implied.[106] But this was likely intentional on Kafka's part, as philosophical dialogue would fit unnaturally in the plot (no one is willing to talk to Josef about anything substantial, and Josef is too emotionally distracted to seriously contemplate anything abstract in any real depth or detail). The point is instead to show the mental disorientation, and later panic and physical exhaustion, of being unfairly targeted by a force stronger than oneself. As in *The Outsider*, the main philosophical themes of

[106] Kafka's overarching thesis of *The Trial* becomes clear with Josef's last words "Like a dog!". (Kafka, 2000, 182) The reference to a dog, and being shot dead like a dog, depicts the inhumane treatment of the Jews in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe. Josef referring to himself as a dog shows how dehumanized the authorities made him feel by the end of the novel. Yet, as Kafka crystalizes throughout the plot, there is no legitimate reason as to why Josef should be made to feel less than human; there is no reason why he should be put on trial when he has committed no crimes.

absurdism and alienation from one's own society spread throughout the whole narrative and come to a head at the end of the novel, right before Josef is killed. Consequently, this work lends itself well to a discovery mode of interpretation. Particularly at the end, the theme of absurdity is directly represented in the lack of consequences of his actions; Kafka makes it clear that Josef would have died no matter what he did, or did not do, because the authorities wanted him dead (not for what he did but for who he was, giving his ending a sense of morbid inevitability). In terms of philosophical advancement, *The Trial* is a pioneer work in exploring existentialist and absurdist concepts (among others) through the perspective of someone deemed to be an outsider, actively dehumanized by their own society. This does not refer to the same sort of outsider as seen in *Nausea* or *The Outsider*, whose protagonists represent the norm (young, white, bourgeois men). Both of Sartre's and Camus's protagonists feel like outsiders from their societies, but at least initially, that is not how their societies view them. Kafka's protagonist, on the other hand, is regarded as a literal "other" by his own society for reasons he cannot understand.

Albert Camus's *The Outsider* (1942).

Camus published *The Outsider* between his first philosophical novel, *The Happy Death* (1936-1938), and his philosophical treatise, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). The argument has been made that Camus wrote *The Outsider* to fully grasp his concept of the Absurd before writing his treatise, and there is ample evidence supporting this theory. Thus the novel's significant contribution to philosophy is its enabling Camus—and us—to envision what the world would realistically look like to someone

who wholly believed and understood the theory of the Absurd. It also gives readers, or is meant to give readers, some sort of solace in the face of the Absurd. When we first meet Meursault, he has already realized the absurdity of life (that life has no inherent meaning) and has come to terms with it. One can interpret Camus's writing as urging his readers to do likewise, so that we might experience real happiness (or at least contentment) again. He wanted his philosophical writing—his novels and his treatises—to offer some genuine help to its readers. He reasoned that a philosophical theory which is of no use to real people is pointless, and the aim of philosophy should not be to examine abstract questions but to make life better, or at least more bearable. This aim is put on display in the infamous first line of *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide." (Camus, 1955, 1) Meursault's explicit thesis at the end of the novel is that nothing matters, and while this realization may lead some to contemplate suicide—hence the first line of his treatise—it is better to be like Meursault and understand there is always the option to accept the absurdity of reality and still find some modicum of contentment in defiance of the human condition. Thus, although a philosophical thesis in the novel might be that life is absurd but can be met with acceptance and defiance, for Camus an overriding aim is to offer to readers some kind of illuminating catharsis in their effort to grasp the very conception of the absurd.

Simone de Beauvoir's *She Came to Stay* (1943).

The first volume of Beauvoir's treatise, *The Second Sex* (1949), begins by asking the question "what is woman?". As men have chronicled the

history of humanity, thus telling it through a strictly male perspective, women have consequently been relegated as the "Other". As with Camus's *The Outsider*, which was published before his philosophical treatise, Beauvoir delves into this concept of the Other in her novel alongside other philosophical themes like existentialism, the complexities of relationships (particularly on the woman's side), the fear of losing one's identity within these relationships, and so on, before researching and writing *The Second Sex*. As such, her philosophical thesis of women being considered as Other—i.e. the answer to her question posed in *The Second Sex*—makes a meaningful appearance here: one revealed through interpretation in the discovery mode. And as with Cavendish's *Blazing-World*, Beauvoir's novel's significant philosophical contribution is not only to seriously contemplate deep philosophical questions, but to do so strictly from a female perspective (notably one that separates herself from her society further by going against societal expectations of female behaviour when she engages in a non-traditional relationship with two men).

Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954).

A main plotline in *Under the Net* centres on the struggling roguish writer, Jake Donaghue, seeking guidance from his old friend, Hugo Belfounder. It has been theorized that Hugo is either a stand-in for Ludwig Wittgenstein or exemplifies the philosophical theories found in his writings. Accordingly, the key philosophical themes focus on language, or more specifically the potential for misunderstanding and miscommunication. Murdoch's overarching thesis on this theme can be found in a line from Jake's own book, *The Silencer* (a retelling of the long philosophical

discussions between him and Hugo). "All theorizing is flight. We must be ruled by the situation itself and this is unutterably particular here. Indeed it is something to which we can never get close enough, however hard we may try as it were to crawl under the net." (Murdoch, 2002, 91) My interpretation of her thesis here is that language is clearly useful, as it can reveal the truth, yet it is also limited in this very use, obscuring genuine understanding since, as Jake notes, there is a limit on linguistic representation capturing the real essence of a thing or experience. In terms of philosophical advancement, *Under the Net* is a unique case. It is one of, if not the first, strong philosophical novels published after World War II; it is also arguably the first one written in Britain in the twentieth century. As such, Murdoch's work is one of the first to heavily focus on analytical philosophy, introducing Wittgenstein's theory of language into the realm of fiction. It also broadens the scope of strong philosophical novels beyond the confinement of mainland Europe, where most works emerged in the first half of the 1900s. Robert M. Pirsig would continue this trend, penning his novel in America.

Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (1974).

The subtitle of this book reveals its overarching philosophical theme. The narrator (the father and main protagonist) realizes that one can view a motorcycle journey through two mindsets. Someone with a romantic mindset would live in the moment and enjoy the experience of riding a motorcycle (thus being in a state of Zen). On the other hand, someone with a classical mindset would be preoccupied with the logistics of the journey like maintaining one's motorcycle. This key overarching

philosophical theme of romantic vs. classical thinking is alluded to by the narrator and his past self, Phaedrus, who states this novel's first explicit philosophical thesis: what is good, or what he refers to as "Quality", is like the Tao in that neither has—or can have—a concrete definition. This concept flows into another philosophical thesis, which is presented at the end of the novel. The romantic and classical or rational ways of thinking are not antithetical to each other but exist together in harmony (mirroring another Taoist concept of Yin and Yang). The philosophical consideration of this novel is presenting a myriad of abstract ideas together from differing historical schools of thought into an updated, cohesive entity.[107]

Jostein Gaarder's *Sophie's World: A Novel About the History of Philosophy* (1991).

As with Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Gaarder's novel employs fantastical elements throughout the plot. It is arguably the most confusing novel on any tier list as it is a work of meta-fiction. *Sophie's World* is both the work Gaarder wrote and is also implied to be the novel Hilde's father, Albert, wrote within the narrative. The character of Albert aims to teach his daughter about the history of philosophy, with some chapters also focusing on the history of religion. Such chapter names include "Socrates", "Descartes", "Spinoza", "Kant", "Hegel", and "Freud". Albert's explicit philosophical thesis, which he repeats so as to

[107] Pirsig includes concepts from Eastern Taoism (the Tao and the idea of dualist harmony) and Buddhism (Zen), Platonical philosophy with the character—and implications behind the character— Phaedrus, and the idea of representing the classical vs. romantic mindset as two distinct individuals in a work of fiction, as is the case with Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*.

drive the point home, is that humans have previously believed their knowledge, or what they believed to be knowledge, to be sound, representing reality as it is. But, as Gaarder emphasises with each new chapter, there has always been more to learn throughout history. Thus he is not introducing his own original philosophical theory here, but rather examining past theories while indirectly arguing for the meta-philosophical idea: to be critical of our philosophical theories and not become contented but rather to strive for more and better knowledge. The philosophical advancement consequently comes from framing old concepts in a new, interesting, and accessible way, while also pushing readers to maintain a level of intellectual curiosity, something we have not seen so directly put at the forefront of a philosophical novel before.

Tier Two: Moderately Philosophical Novels

If it is unclear which work might be considered as the first strong philosophical novel, then it is even more doubtful what may be viewed as the first moderately philosophical novel. There are plenty of contenders, but potentially one of the strongest is Voltaire's *Candide*. A satire on Leibnizian optimism, it cleverly depicts Voltaire's criticism of Leibniz's theory of the best of all possible worlds not by argumentation or even witty dialogue, but by placing the protagonist, the unfortunate Candide, in a series of events where he needlessly suffers and meets individuals whose trials are even greater than his. Both Candide and the reader are forced into a position where it is impossible to rationally accept that Candide is living in the best possible world. Mirroring how Dostoevsky shows that Raskolnikov's nihilistic beliefs are wrong in *Crime*

and Punishment, Voltaire never explicitly states that Leibniz is wrong, but rather he shows us why Candide's previously held philosophical beliefs are mistaken.

Moderately philosophical novels in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century followed this notion of "show, don't tell" (illustrating rather than stating ideas). The use of satire also dropped off around this time, being replaced by serious introspection and reflection by the characters. Despite this, philosophical ideas are usually not outright discussed in the narrative, or at least to any great extent. Instead these works compelled readers to consider such abstract concepts as personal freedom and identity, human consciousness and what it is to be alive, the absurdity and hypocrisy of social conventions, etc. But, with perhaps the exception of *Candide*, they also tackled other themes and subjects which were of interest to the author such as real historical events, places, social structures and etiquette, religion, the birth of the industrial age, the ravages of war, and so on. Like *Crime and Punishment*, part of what makes them moderately philosophical is that they were not written exclusively to promote philosophical ideas.

Novels preceding *Candide* admittedly sit in a grey area between the strong and moderate tiers. I picked *Candide* as a prime example of the first moderately philosophical novel precisely because it lacks any explicit philosophical dialogue between the characters (except for Dr Pangloss who ironically self-identifies as the greatest philosopher in the Holy Roman Empire). However, regardless of whether or not *Candide* is the first moderately philosophical novel, it exemplifies the concept of showing rather than telling while still engaging with

its philosophical theme, which we see in nearly all moderately philosophical novels.

As with my list of strong philosophical novels, this list of examples is not an exhaustive collection. These titles are meant to represent a wide diversity of subject and thematic content. Each was picked according to how well it lends itself to a moderately philosophical interpretation, what I refer to in Chapter Five as the reconstructive mode of interpretation. The philosophical themes in moderate novels, while still significant, are less prominent than in novels from the strong tier. This is reflected in the criteria for Tier Two: it must be a novel of ideas of an abstract kind, invite philosophical reflection of a serious kind without necessarily developing a philosophical position of its own, and lastly, philosophical themes will emerge through a process of reconstructive interpretation. The following list of works adequately meet these criteria and lend themselves well to this particular mode of interpretation:

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818).

> It is interesting that Shelley first told the tale of *Frankenstein* to her friends during a contest to tell the scariest horror story. The fact that *Frankenstein* was originally told as a horror story reflects the growing social anxieties regarding the boom of scientific advancements at the early start of the industrial age (a trend which would continue in literary works through the nineteenth century, including Robert Lewis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886)). The key philosophical questions Shelley explores centre on life, what it means to be alive, and what responsibilities one has towards one's—in Victor Frankenstein's case, grossly unnatural—creations. While these topics are

not discussed outright, Shelley makes her position on these questions clear, and as with how Dostoevsky indirectly warns his readers against uncriticized philosophical beliefs in *Crime and Punishment*, she uses her text to warn readers about the dangers of pushing the bounds of science. Despite this warning being prominent (implicitly) in her novel, however, the purpose of its original creation was to entertain her friends at Lake Geneva (i.e. she did not write *Frankenstein* with the strict intentions of it being a philosophical novel, rather its philosophical elements serve its real intended purpose—to tell a compelling tale of horror, albeit with some moral underpinnings). Thus the full force of any warning it offers about the unfettered hubris of scientists like Frankenstein needs to be reconstructed through interpretation.

Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854).

Dickens's novel is, above all else, a criticism of Benthamite Utilitarianism. While not as overtly political as works like Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Dickens offers a glimpse of the working class's plight—in the soulless industrial setting of Coketown—and how such moral theories evidently fall short when it comes to considering the realities of everyday life. His theory of social mobility—or the futility of it—is explicitly summarized by one of his characters, Stephen Blackpool, who states that a poor man born with nothing will stay in poverty. Aside from this one scene, the novel's scathing critique of Utilitarianism is not directly argued for, but rather as with Dostoevsky's criticism of nihilism and Utilitarianism in *Crime and Punishment*, Dickens merely shows his readers why the theory is flawed. The nature of the critique can be identified through interpretation in the reconstructive mode. By illustrating some of the absurdities of Thomas

Gradgrind, in his obsession with 'facts', Dickens seeks to persuade his readers why there is an inherent need for imagination and creativity in education, and why happiness for everyone is unachievable through mere calculation. Consequently, *Hard Times* makes its contribution to ethics, not by offering any solid arguments but by showing through specific situations the errors and defects of the philosophical theory of Utilitarianism.

Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855).

Ironically written in the period of the Victorian Era coined "The Golden Age", Gaskell also sheds light on the harsh living conditions of Britian's working class. Social injustice and inequality are two key themes, but there are others, like religion, the role of suffering, empathy and the need for human connection, etc. The reason why the Hales move to the north is that Mr. Richard Hale, a scholar interested in metaphysical works, becomes disillusioned with the Church of England (he had been a parish vicar). Mr. Hale's questioning of religion indirectly prompts the plot into a new philosophical direction when Margaret Hale is forced to confront the gruelling realities of factory life. Gaskell's *North and South*, as with Dickens's *Hard Times* and many of the works in this tier, also makes its own philosophical contribution to ethics, forcing readers to recognise these grim realities. Despite this being a clear message in her work, its ethical theme still needs to be reconstructed in interpretation. The romantic subplot, as well as other character-driven subplots, show that this novel is more than a didactic tale; while it has a strong moral message, Gaskell wanted to write an engaging story, no more seeking to preach than are Jane Austen's novels.

George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-1872).

The dangers of projection and clinging onto one's ideals are themes which show up early in Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Every key event in the novel can be interpreted to revolve around the theme of shortsightedness in some way, from mismatched marriages to judging an individual's moral character and trustworthiness based on their position and influence in society. As such, *Middlemarch* also makes a significant contribution to ethics, with Eliot examining the many characters comprising the community of Middlemarch, showing readers exactly how their flawed beliefs and misled or selfish actions affect not only themselves but everyone. It is a deeply interwoven narrative with one overarching philosophical theme, involving the high cost of moral idealism in personal relations. As several authors did before her, Eliot offers a warning, not just about the demands of marriage, but also the need to seriously reflect on one's own ideals and values. It urges us to question our beliefs before we act lest we risk the disappointing fate of those like Dorothea Brooke, Tertius Lydgate, and John Raffles. But also like Austen and Gaskell, her novel is so much more than merely presenting its moral message; Eliot does not preach to her readers but lets the narrative demonstrate why such shortsighted, misguided actions are harmful.

Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1878).

One theory literary critics have put forward is that Tolstoy had a broadly optimistic view of both Russian society and its future when he wrote *War and Peace* (1863-1868). His social optimism diminished, however, by the time *Anna Karenina* was published. Unlike Natasha from *War and*

Peace, who receives somewhat of a happy ending, Anna sees no way out of her dire situation (one way to read this would be as a kind of punishment for her adultery, but another interpretation is that she represents Tolstoy's despair at Russia's social climate before and during the time of writing *Anna Karenina*. He had lost hope that the cries and protests for social change would bring any meaningful reform). Consequently, Tolstoy has his character, Konstantin Dmitrievich Levin (a stark contrast to the other two lead characters and a stand-in for Tolstoy himself), forgo the pursuit of personal happiness and instead devote himself entirely to serving God. This is the key philosophical theme (and reconstructed thesis) of *Anna Karenina*: that searching for one's own happiness will at best lead to dissatisfaction. Even philosophy, as Levin discovers, cannot bring long-lasting contentment. Thus the philosophical contribution Tolstoy's works offer is the understanding that there is a limit to the comfort external distractions, including philosophy, can bring an individual, especially in the midst of an emotional crisis. According to Tolstoy, religion can bring a sense of goodness and purpose when all else fails. Of course this is only one philosophical theme of *Anna Karenina*, and but it is arguably the most significant one.

George Orwell's *1984* (1949).

Orwell's last novel is his most philosophical. Drawing on such elements as censorship, propaganda and torture utilized in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany, Orwell asks the question: what would it be like living under the most extreme version of totalitarianism? *1984* makes its most significant contribution to political philosophy, with Orwell both directly criticizing while also warning against such regimes. The overarching

philosophical thesis of the novel is clear: all oppressive regimes aim for complete power over their citizens' minds and bodies. Winston Smith, the protagonist, declares that his spirit will not be broken. This is where the horror aspects of the novel are on full display, as the impossibility of freedom is personified by Room 101, where Smith's mind is emptied so The Party can fill it with whatever they want, and subsequently do so. A reconstructivist interpretation of Orwell's warning here can be summarized as thus: do not let it get to the point where Big Brother is allowed to exist, because it is impossible to topple the system once it has this extreme level of control. This warning makes it a moderately philosophical novel, but also a horror novel in its own right. Orwell deliberately played into readers fears and anxieties as he wanted to speak directly to the public consciousness. Yet unlike *Animal Farm*, whose allegory left readers more confused than scared, *1984* is more explicit with its dystopian horror, which Orwell was only able to accomplish by telling a very compelling—and frightening—story.

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952).

Ellison's *Invisible Man* was his only publication throughout his lifetime, winning the National Book Award in 1953. An important voice in the civil rights movement, Ellison wanted to directly address what he saw to be the core issue behind American racism, that white people did not see their black counterparts as having a fully formed identity of their own. Consequently, the work's overarching philosophical theme centres on the problem of personal identity. Ellison aims to address this problem through the perspective of a black man; something largely new at his time of writing, setting his novel apart not just in the literary canon but

the philosophical one as well. One can interpret Ellison's protagonist—a young, unnamed, black man—as conquering his own invisibility by telling "his" story, thus carving out a sort of original identity for himself.[108] Thus Ellison's philosophical contribution is to introduce a new, unique kind of identity for black Americans.

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985).

Atwood said about her novel in a radio interview with Studs Terkel: "In the book I simply extended trends that are already with us. I didn't invent anything. I didn't add anything new in. I took things that are really happening now." (Terkel, 1986) *The Handmaid's Tale* is a dystopian novel told from a female perspective. The trends Atwood alludes to above are ways in which women have been viewed and mistreated in the past (their lack of personal and sexual freedom, deliberate attempts to limit or stop female education, women being legally viewed as property of men, etc.). In terms of philosophy, it is both an ethical and feminist work. Unlike Orwell's *1984*, which offers a more general overview of the collapse of society with no particular regard to gender, Atwood's novel focuses on what living in a dystopian country would be like specifically for women. She calls her work "speculative fiction" rather than science fiction, as while the reality of Gilead ever becoming true is highly improbable, one cannot say that it is not entirely impossible when looking at historical views of women. Atwood's chief goal here is thus to give these oppressed women a voice by allowing us to read their

[108] Fittingly, Ellison's only novel was not "invisible", as it were, to the masses, gaining immediate literary acclaim and success.

perspectives (assuming that if a society like Gilead ever did arise, then women's voices would be oppressed). It is a philosophical novel, but it is also one which aims to tell a woman's personal (albeit fictional) story first and foremost; any philosophical content arguably must come second to this, as it is not up to Offred or any other female character to morally educate anyone but to focus on her survival while living in an oppressive regime.

Tier Three: Marginally Philosophical Novels

There is no point in trying to identify the first marginally philosophical novel. This category has by far the most contenders, and potential room for disagreement regardless of which text one picks. It is also hard to pinpoint any trends within the marginal tier akin to the other kinds of philosophical novels. Besides the lack of a starting point, marginally philosophical novels have a vast array of subject matter and themes, philosophical and otherwise. This makes constructing a list of examples easier, but also potentially less valuable as these titles are so distinct from one another. To rectify this concern, this list will focus on novels I can say with confidence are philosophical, albeit marginally so, not just because they meet the criteria for the tier but more importantly because they seem to reward a plausible philosophical interpretation, under what I have called a creative mode of interpretation (Chapter Five). Unlike with the previous tiers, novels in this tier require a more creative effort on the interpreter's part, as the role of the philosophical themes are the most muted in this category. They are in service of the story being told; the author has an idea for a narrative and everything included in the work must serve that

specific narrative. As a reminder, the criteria for this tier are that a work must loosely offer a framework for philosophical reflection, its philosophical themes are not its central or artistic purpose and emerge through a creative interpretation and can be clearly differentiated from non-philosophical works. The last criterion means that this list of examples requires the most amount of justification out of all the tiers. Whereas strong and moderate philosophical novels have some tangible evidence within the text supporting their position on the tier list, we are left more to our own devices when it comes to marginal novels.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1779).

> Written during the proto-Romantic movement in German literature, Goethe was only twenty-four when he penned *The Sorrows of Young Werther.* It is assumed that he took inspiration from his own life, particularly his ill-fated romantic feelings for an engaged woman. As such, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is a cautionary tale of the perils of blindly giving oneself over to romantic ideals and follies. Though unlike Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* or Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Goethe's warning to his readers is merely, and arguably too lightly, implied. It is only extracted through a creative interpretation, but as with Jane Austen's *Emma*, there is enough textual evidence to support this interpretation. Despite this, his work ended up having an unforeseen influence on the public. Instead of reading his work as a cautionary tale (as Goethe intended), many young men were inspired to emulate the

romantic ideals and actions of Goethe's protagonist. Thus Goethe's work only reads as a warning if one is inclined to interpret it as such.[109]

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).

Arguably Austen's greatest literary work, *Pride and Prejudice* is a step above the romantic novels of her period (the Regency Era). Many philosophers, including Alan Goldman and Gilbert Ryle, have interpreted Austen's novel through an ethical lens, showing how *Pride and Prejudice* lends itself well to differing philosophical (ethical) interpretations. Ryle (2009), for instance, hypothesises that each character of *Pride and Prejudice* represents a certain vice on a sort of spectrum (some are too proud while others are too prejudiced, hence the title). The story is one where the two lead characters, Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, must adjust their outlooks and in so doing, become better people as they realize their personal flaws and mistaken beliefs. But as with Austen's other novels, this theme of growing into moral maturity, with its perils and gains, sits quietly among the many other interesting facets of the work, from Austen's witty dialogue, to her complex social scenes, to her engaging characters. As with *Emma*, she wrote *Pride and Prejudice* as a story of a young genteel lady first, with everything else, including its philosophical theme, fitting around this subject matter.

Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847).

Bronte's novel was one of the first to truly break away from the old model of female characters, and particularly heroines. Critics have called

[109] The spike of male suicide rates following the publication of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* caused Goethe to reflect negatively on his first novel in later life.

her work the “first feminist novel”, but this is debatable. What is clear is that Bronte had a strong and determinate feminist message for her novel. She wanted to write a female character who, despite not being like traditional heroines of her time, was equal to her male counterparts and knew it. While the idea of female equality was not new in the mid-1800s, it was highly unusual for a woman to declare she was equal (at least in spirit, not social ranking) in a work of fiction. Bronte’s feminist views are on full display when Jane confronts Mr. Rochester: “Do you think I am an automaton? a machine without feelings?... Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong—I have as much soul as you,—and full as much heart... I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh;—it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,—as we are.” (Bronte, 2019, 246) While Bronte’s strong feminist views certainly shone through in her work, perhaps a little more so than in other marginally philosophical novels, they still had to work around the core ideas of her story: that being a coming-of-age tale for a young, poor, orphan girl with some gothic elements thrown in. Because of these many extra details, the feminist interpretation of her work—if it is to be identified through the entire narrative—requires a creative effort to characterise it in well-supported detail. I am aware that some philosophers (including myself) may say that such an interpretation ironically becomes difficult to defend when we analyse the whole story (the “Otherness” of Bertha, Mr. Rochester’s first wife—who is notably a coloured woman—has been rightly criticized in the twenty-first century, and puts Bronte’s feminist message into question when we look at her

work through an intersectional lens). Indeed, this is why I included Bronte's novel on this list: it reminds us that what might be seen as radical or significant from an ethical or feminist perspective in one era of history may not hold true in other eras as views, considerations, and sensibilities are apt to change. Her work still undoubtedly has an overarching feminist theme to be sure, as the theme of female equality and empowerment (for white women anyway) is vital to the kind of story Bronte wanted to tell; it only falls short from an intersectional feminist perspective (although the novel, while not directly criticising Mr. Rochester's treatment of Bertha, does not exactly endorse it either. It could be argued that his house burning down and his physical injuries, including his blindness, are a kind of divine punishment for his actions).

Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851).

Moby Dick tells the story of a young man who finds work aboard a whaling ship in nineteenth century Massachusetts. It is first and foremost a tale about the whaling industry and life on a whaling vessel, giving readers a fascinating (and at times, gruesome) look at what real-life experiences might have been like, particularly regarding the hunting and harvesting of sperm whales. Melville includes the philosophical themes of seeking revenge and blurring the lines between human and perceived animal intention. Captain Ahab takes personal offence to the White Whale (Moby Dick) biting off his leg and seeks revenge, not just by wearing a prosthetic made of whalebone but by relentlessly hunting him down. Members of his crew, meanwhile, are uncomfortable with Ahab's obsession with revenge. Stardusk, a Quaker, has the most serious moral reservations to the point where he almost kills Ahad (Ahab's quest for

revenge implies that Moby Dick, a whale, had sinister intentions behind his actions; an idea which makes Starbuck deeply uncomfortable). While these philosophical themes on the nature of good and evil, and the inherent intellectual and moral differences between humans and animals, are imperative to the narrative Melville wishes to tell, they are ultimately in service to the overarching subject matter of whaling and traveling aboard a whaling ship.

Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* (1855).

One way to read the ending of Trollope's novel is as a double tragedy. Mr. Harding, the previous warden of Hiram's Hospital, leaves his post following a character-assassinating dispute concerning his income. The second part of the tragedy is that the lawsuit against Mr. Harding was raised with supposedly the best intentions. John Bold is on a moral crusade to right the wrongs he sees—or at least thinks he sees—at the hospital, determined to use its donations more beneficially. Thus one could view Trollope's work to be a cautionary tale against becoming over-zealous with one's ethical beliefs, especially when their ill-conceived behaviour can have a real negative impact on one's own community. As with Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, this is a meta-philosophical interpretation, but unlike cautionary works in the other tiers, Trollope's warning is only ever implied, fully comprehended through a creative interpretation of the entire text (and one could say the warning is compromised since John presumably gets a happy ending when he marries Harding's daughter. Everyone else suffers a greater loss because of his actions). Yet the ending could be part of what makes the novel a tragedy; one creative interpretation could be that it shows the

injustices of the world, some being irreversible even if we realize our mistakes.

Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* (1960).

When she was a child, Lee's father, Amasa Coleman Lee, tried unsuccessfully to defend two black men accused of murdering a white clerk. As a result, both men were hanged in the state of Alabama.[110] This event clearly had a significant impact on Lee's work, *To Kill A Mockingbird*. It is hard to overemphasise how influential her novel was and still is. Not only does Lee put a spotlight on the racial injustices of mid-1900s Alabama, but she also urges her readers to adopt the practice of trying to imagine other people's perspectives. There are many ways one can interpret this theme in the novel, and indeed there are other valid philosophical interpretations of the work. Regardless of how one interprets it, however, its ethical themes, particularly the theme of anti-racism, are at the core of the work's identity. Yet while it does make a significant ethical contribution, Lee clearly wrote a semi-biography of her childhood which all other themes and material had to work around.

Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993).

Parable of the Sower is the most recent novel in any tier list. It is not the most recently published marginally philosophical novel overall, rather I chose this work as my most modern example because the protagonist, Lauren, sees first-hand the negative impact on climate change, new

[110] I was unable to verify the names of the men or the date/location of the trial and execution through any official court records or documentation. The claim that the trial took place comes from biographer, Charles J. Shields, in his work *Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee From Scout to Go Set a Watchman* (2007).

diseases emerging, and corporate greed stemming out of control while Los Angeles's homeless population continues to skyrocket (the novel ironically takes place in 2024). All its warnings are topical to modern readers, but Butler offers hope through Lauren's spiritual journey. She finds solace in her new religion called Earthseed. Thus the work lends itself nicely to a theological interpretation. Butler borrowed the title from St Matthew's Gospel, chapter 13, verses 1-23: The Parable of the Sower. Lauren's outlook throughout the plot represents a glimmer of hope in a situation where not every seed landing on the earth will grow, but some will still land in fertile soil and thrive. Her story can be interpreted as an allegory of this parable. It also lends itself well to an intersectional feminist interpretation, as it is the first dystopian novel told from a young, black girl's perspective. Indeed, everything in Butler's narrative had to work around the central premise of a black, American girl coming-of-age in deeply turbulent times.

Bibliography

Aristotle. (2012). *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated and edited by Bartlett, R.C. and Collins, S. D. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Aristotle. (1996). *Poetics*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Heath, M. London: Penguin Books.

Aronson, Ronald. (2004). *Camus and Sartre: the Story of a Friendship and the Quarrel that Ended it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Atwood, Margaret. (1996). *The Handmaid's Tale*. London: Vintage.

Aurelius, Marcus. (2011). *Meditations*. Translated by Hard, R., with an introduction and notes by Gill, C. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Austen, Jane. (2019). *Pride and Prejudice*. Edited by Kinsley, J., with an introduction and notes by Lupton, C. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Austen, Jane. (2019). *Sense and Sensibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Austen, Jane. (2012). *Emma*. 4th ed. Edited by Justice, G. New York: W. W. Norton.

Austen, Jane. (2004). *Persuasion*. Edited by Kinsley, J., with an introduction and notes by Lynch, D.S. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Austen, Jane. (2003). *Mansfield Park*. Edited with an introduction and notes by Sutherland, K. London: Penguin Books.

Austen, Jane. (2003). *Northanger Abbey*. Edited with an introduction and notes by Butler, M. London: Penguin Books.

Austen-Leigh, William. (1913). *Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters, a Family Record*. London: John Murray.

Badhwar, N.K. and Dadlez, E.M. (2018). Love and Friendship: Achieving Happiness in Jane Austen's *Emma*. In Dadlez, E.M. (Ed). *Jane Austen's Emma: Philosophical Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 25-54.

Beardsley, Monroe C. (1981). *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*. 2nd ed. Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company Inc.

Beck, Lewis W. (1980). Philosophy as Literature. In Lang, B. (Ed). *Philosophical Style: An Anthology about the Writing and Reading of Philosophy*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Inc., pp. 234-255.

Bell, Martin. (2001). The Relation Between Literary Form and Philosophical Argument in Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. *Hume Studies,* 27, pp. 227-246.

Berkeley, George. (1954). *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*. Edited with an introduction by Turbayne, C.M. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

Boethius. (2001). *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Relihan, J.C. Cambridge: Hackett.

Britton, Jeanne M. (2018). "To Know What You Are All Thinking": Riddles and Minds in Jane Austen's *Emma*. *Poetics Today*, 39(4), pp. 651-678.

Bronte, Charlotte. (2019). *Jane Eyre*. Introduction and notes by Atkinson, J. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burney, Fanny. (1983). *Camilla, or a Picture of Youth*. Edited with an introduction by Bloom, E.A. and Bloom, L.D. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Butler, Octavia E. (2007). *Parable of the Sower*. New York: Grand Central.

Camus, Albert. (1955). *The Myth of Sisyphus, and Other Essays*. Translated by O'Brien, J. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Camus, Albert. (1991). *The Plague*. Translated by Gilbert, S. New York: Vintage Books.

Camus, Albert. (1982). *The Outsider*. Translated by Laredo, J. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Carroll, Lewis. (2009). *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*. Edited with an introduction and notes by Hunt, P., illustrations by Tenniel, J. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carroll, Noël. (2016). Interpretations. In Carroll, N., Hutto, D., and Gibson, J. (Eds). *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Literature*. London: Routledge, pp. 302-312.

Carroll, Noël. (2007). Literary Realism, Recognition, and the Communication of Knowledge. In Gibson, J., Huemer, W., and Pocci, L. (Eds). *A Sense of the World*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 24-42.

Carroll, Noël. (2002). The Wheel of Virtue: Art, Literature, and Moral Knowledge. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 60(1), pp. 3–26.

Carroll, Noël. (2001) *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carroll, Noël. (1998). Art, Narrative, and Moral Understanding. In Levinson, J. (Ed). *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 126-160.

Cavendish, Margaret. (1992). *The Description of a New World Called the Blazing World: and Other Writings*. Edited by Lilley, K. London: William Pickering.

Cicero. (2014). *Letters to Atticus/Cicero*. Translated and edited by Shackleton Bailey, D.R. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Collins, Irene. (1994). *Jane Austen and the Clergy*. London: Hambledon Press.

Confucius. (1956). *Analects.* Translated and introduced by Pound, E. London: Peter Owen Limited.

Craik, W. A. (1969). *Jane Austen In Her Time*. London: Nelson.

Currie, Gregory. (2020). *Imagining and Knowing: The Shape of Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dadlez, E.M. (2009). *Mirrors to One Another: Emotion and Value in Jane Austen and David Hume*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Dancy, Jonathan. (2004). *Ethics Without Principles*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Danto, Arthur C. (1975). *Jean-Paul Sartre*. New York: Viking Press.

Davies, David. (2018). Misreading Emma. In Dadlez, E.M. (Ed). *Jane Austen's Emma: Philosophical Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 184-215.

Descartes, René. (2017). *Mediations on First Philosophy*. Translated and edited by Cottingham, J. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Descartes, René. (1984). *Second Set of Replies*. In Cottingham, J., Stoothoff, R., and Murdoch, D. (Eds). *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes.* Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 113-120.

Descartes, René, and Elisabeth, Princess of Bohemia. (2007). *The Correspondence Between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes*. Translated and edited by Shapiro, L. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

de Beauvoir, Simone. (2006). *She Came to Stay*. Translated by Moyse, Y. and Senhouse, R. London: Harper Perennial.

de Beauvoir, Simone. (1972). *The Second Sex*. Translated and edited by Parshley, H.M. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Dickens, Charles. (2016). *David Copperfield*. Edited by Burgis, N. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dickens, Charles. (2003). *Hard Times for These Times*. Edited with an introduction and notes by Flint, K. London: Penguin Classics.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. (2019). *Crime and Punishment*. Translated and edited by Katz, M.R. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. (2006). *Notes From Underground*. Translated by Coulson, J. London: Penguin.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. (1987). *Selected Letters of Fyodor Dostoevsky*. Translated by MacAndrew, A.R. Edited by Frank, J. and Goldstein, D.I. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. (1982). *The Brothers Karamazov*. Translated with an introduction by Magarshack, D. New York: Penguin Books.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. (1967). *The Notebooks for Crime and Punishment*. Translated and edited by Wasiolek, E. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Elgin, Catherine Z. (2007). The Laboratory of the Mind. In Gibson, J., Huemer, W., and Pocci, L. (Eds). *A Sense of the World*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 43-54.

Eliot, George. (1998). *Middlemarch*. Edited with notes by Carroll, D., with an introduction by Bonaparte, F. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellison, Ralph. (2016). *Invisible Man*. Introduction by Callahan, J. London: Penguin Books.

Evdokimova, S. and Golstein, V. (2016). *Dostoevsky Beyond Dostoevsky: Science, Religion, Philosophy*. New Haven: Academic Studies Press.

Faber, Marion. (1986). The Metamorphosis of the French Aphorism: La Rochefoucauld and Nietzsche. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 23(3), pp. 205-217.

Faro, Giorgio. (2017). A Criminal's Confession: Comparing Rival Ethics in *Crime And Punishment* (F. Dostoevsky). *Church, Communication and Culture,* 2(3), pp. 272-283.

Feagin, Susan L. (2007). "How *Could* You?": Deeper Understanding Through Fiction. In Gibson, J., Huemer, W., and Pocci, L. (Eds). *A Sense of the World*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 55-66.

Feagin, Susan L. (1982). Incompatible Interpretations of Art. *Philosophy and Literature*, 6(1-2), pp. 133-146.

Fleming, Ian. (2008). *Casino Royale*. Introduction by Deaver, J. Leicester: W.F. Howes Ltd.

Fletcher, A. and Benveniste, M. (2013). A Scientific Justification for Literature: Jane Austen's Free and Indirect Style as Ethical Tool. *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 43(1), pp. 1-18.

Foot, Philippa. (2002). The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of the Double Effect. In *Virtues and Vices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Frank, Joseph. (2019). The World of Raskolnikov. In *Crime and Punishment*. Translated and edited by Kats, M.R. New York: W.W. Norton &Company Inc., pp. 482-490.

Frank, Joseph. (1995). *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years 1865-1871*. London: Robson Books Ltd.

Freeland, Cynthia. (2018). Emma's Pensive Meditations. In Dadlez, E.M. (Ed). *Jane Austen's Emma: Philosophical Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 55-83.

Furtak, Rick A. (2019). Love, Suffering, and Gratitude for Existence: Moral and Existential Emotions in *Crime and Punishment*. In Guay, R. (Ed). *Dostoevsky's Crime & Punishment: Philosophical Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 46-69.

Fusso, Susanne. (2019). The Family in *Crime and Punishment*: Realism and Utopia. In Guay, R. (Ed). *Dostoevsky's Crime & Punishment: Philosophical Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 123.148.

Gaarder, Jostein. (1996). *Sophie's World: A Novel about the History of Philosophy*. Translated by Moller, P. London: Phoenix.

Garside, P. D. (1987). Jane Austen and Subscription Fiction. *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 10(2), pp. 175-188.

Gaskell, Elizabeth. (2008). *North and South*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gibson, John. (2007). Beyond Truth and Triviality. In *Fiction and the Weave of Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 81-120.

Goethe, Johann W. (1982). *The Sorrows of Young Werther and Selected Writings*. Translated by Hutter, C., with a foreword by Weigand, H.J. New York: Penguin Books Ltd.

Goldman, Alan H. (2013). *Philosophy and the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goodman, Nelson. (1983). *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Guay, Robert. (2019). Introduction: *Crime and Punishment* as a Philosophical Novel. In Guay, R. (Ed). *Dostoevsky's Crime & Punishment: Philosophical Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-17.

Hagberg, Garry L. (2019). Portrayals of Mind: Raskolnikov, Porfiry, and Psychological Investigation in *Crime and Punishment*. In Guay, R. (Ed). *Dostoevsky's Crime & Punishment: Philosophical Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 18-45.

Havas, Randall. (2019). Raskolnikov Beyond Good and Evil. In Guay, R. (Ed). *Dostoevsky's Crime & Punishment: Philosophical Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 149-172.

Hermann, Melville. (1999). *Moby Dick*. Introduction by McGrath, P. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hirsch, Eric D. (1967). *Validity in Interpretation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hodge, Jane Aiken. (1972). *Only a Novel: The Double Life of Jane Austen*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Hospers, John. (1960). Implied Truths in Literature. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 19(1), pp. 37-46.

Irwin, William. (n.d.). About. In *AndPhilosophy.* [Online]. [Accessed 15 May 2024]. Available from: https://andphilosophy.com/about/

Iseminger, Gary. (1996). Actual Intentionalism vs. Hypothetical Intentionalism. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 54(4), pp. 319-326.

Jacquart, E.C. (1974). Can Literature Convey Knowledge? *The French Review*, 48(2), pp. 291-297.

John, Eileen. (1998). Reading Fiction and Conceptual Knowledge: Philosophical Thought in Literary Context. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56(4), pp. 331-348.

Johnson, Samuel. (2009). *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*. Edited with an introduction and notes by Keymer, T. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jones, Peter. (1975). *Philosophy and the Novel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Kafka, Franz. (2000). *The Trial*. Translated and with an introduction by Parry, I. London: Penguin Classics.

Kantor, Arlene F. (1976). Upton Sinclair and the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906. “I Aimed at the Public's Heart and by Accident I Hit it in the Stomach”. *American Journal of Public Health*, 66(12), pp. 1202-1205.

Kaplan, Deborah. (1992). *Jane Austen among Women*. Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press.

Katz, Michael R. (2019). The Nihilism of Sonia Marmeladova. In *Crime and Punishment*. Translated and edited by Katz, M.R. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., pp. 439-447.

Lamarque, Peter. (forthcoming). Philosophy and Literature. In Böhm-Schnitker, N. and Hartner, M. (Eds). *Handbook of Interdisciplinarity: Paradigms and Practices in Literary and Cultural Studies*. Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter.

Lamarque, Peter. (2010). *Work and Object: Explorations in the Metaphysics of Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lamarque, Peter. (2009). *The Philosophy of Literature*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Lamarque, Peter (2007). Learning from Literature. In Gibson, J., Huemer, W., and Pocci, L. (Eds). *A Sense of the World*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 13-23.

Lamarque, Peter. (2007). On the Distance between Literary Narratives and Real-Life Narratives. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 60, pp. 117-132.

Lamarque, Peter. (2006). Cognitive Values in the Arts: Marking the Boundaries. In Kieran, M. (Ed). *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 127-139.

Lamarque, Peter. (2006) The Intentional Fallacy. In Waugh, P. (Ed). *Oxford Guide to the Theory and Practice of Literary Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 177-188.

Lamarque, Peter. (1990). Reasoning to What is True in Fiction. *Argumentation*, 4, pp. 333-346.

Lamore, Charles. (2016). Dostoevsky as Moral Philosopher. In Evdokimova, S. and Golstein, V. (Eds). *Dostoevsky Beyond Dostoevsky: Science, Religion, Philosophy*. New Haven: Academic Studies Press.

Lang, Berel. (1988). Literary Philosophy: The Anatomy of Philosophical Style. *Colby Quarterly*, 24(02), pp. 101-112.

Laozi. (2006). *Tao Te Ching*. Translated by Mitchell, S. I. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

La Rochefoucauld, François. (1974). *The Maxims of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld*. Translated by Gibbon, C.F. London: Millington Ltd.

Lee, Harper. (2020). *To Kill a Mockingbird*. London: Arrow.

Leibniz, Gottfried W. and, Arnauld, Antoine. (1967). *The Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence*. Translated and edited by Mason, H.T., with an introduction by Parkinson, G.H.R. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Levinson, Jerrold. (2010). Defending Hypothetical Intentionalism. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 50(2), pp. 139-150.

Locke, John. (1970). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, *1690*. Menston: Scolar Press.

Lucretius. (1947). *De Rerum Natura*. Translated and edited by Bailey, C. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Magee, Bryan. (2001). Philosophy and Literature. In *Talking Philosophy: Dialogues with Fifteen Leading Philosophers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 229-250.

Manser, Anthony. (1966). *Sartre: A Philosophic Study*. London: Athlone Press.

McGinn, Marie. (1997). The Writer and Society: An Interpretation of *Nausea*. *British Journal of Aesthetics,* 37(2), pp. 118-128.

Mitias, Michael H. (2022). *The Philosophical Novel as a Literary Genre*. Cham: The Palgrave Macmillan.

Montesquieu. (1993). *Persian Letters*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Betts, C.J. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.

More, Thomas. (2012). *Utopia*. Translated by Baker-Smith, D. London: Penguin Books.

Murdoch, Iris. (2002). *Under the Net*. London: Vintage.

Murdoch, Iris. (1967). *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist*. Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. (1996). *Human, All Too Human*. Translated by Hollingdale, R.J., with an introduction by Schacht, R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. (1966). *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Translated with commentary by Kaufmann, W. New York: Vintage Books.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. (1956). *The Birth of Tragedy, and the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Golffing, F. Garden City: Doubleday.

Novitz, David. (1983). Fiction and the Growth of Knowledge. *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 19(1), pp. 47-68.

Nussbaum, Martha. (1992). *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha. (1997). *Poetic Justice: the Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Boston MA: Beacon Books.

Olsen, Stein H. (1983). Thematic Concepts: Where Philosophy Meets Literature. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements,* 16, pp. 75-93.

Orwell, George. (2014). *1984*. London: Oberon Books.

Orwell, George. (1996). *Animal Farm*. Harlow: Longman.

Page, Norman. (1972). *The Language of Jane Austen*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Pascal, Blaise. (1966). *Pensées*. Translated with an introduction by Krailsheimer, A.J. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Pettersson, Torsten. (2002). The Literary Work as a Pliable Entity: Combining Realism and Pluralism. In Krausz, M. (Ed). *Is There a Single Right Interpretation?* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 211-230.

Pettersson, Torsten. (1986). Incompatible Interpretations of Literature. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* 45(2), pp. 147–161.

Plato. (1986). *Phaedrus*. Translated with commentary by Rowe, C.J. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.

Plato. (1973). The Republic. In *The Republic and Other Works*. Translated by Jowett, B. New York: Random House, pp. 7-316.

Plato. (1973). The Symposium. In *The Republic and Other Works*. Translated by Jowett, B. New York: Random House, pp. 319-365.

Plotinus. (1993). *Enneads*. Translated by MacKenna, S. Charlottesville: InteLex Corporation.

Poovey, Mary. (1983). The True English Style. *Persuasions: the Jane Austen Journal*, 5, pp. 10-12.

Pope, Alexander. (1753). *An Essay on Man*. London: Knapton.

Pirsig, Robert M. (1991). *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: an Inquiry into Values*. London: Vintage.

Putnam, Hilary. (1976). Literature, Science & Reflection. *New Literary History*, 7(3), pp. 483-491.

Quine, Willard V. (2013). *Word and Object*. Foreword by Churchland, P.S. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Radcliffe, Ann. (2008). *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Edited by Dobrée, B., with an introduction and notes by Castle, T. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Richardson, Samuel. (2011). *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. Edited by Rivero, A. J. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ross, Stephen D. (1969). *Literature & Philosophy: an Analysis of the Philosophical Novel*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Ryle, Gilbert. (2009). Jane Austen and the Moralists. In *Collected Papers: Volume 1*. London: Hutchinson, pp. 287-301.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. (2003). *Being and Nothingness*. Translated by Barnes, H. London & New York: Routledge.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. (2000). *Nausea*. Translated by Baldick, R. London: Penguin Random House.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. (1987). *Existentialism & Humanism*. Translated and introduction by Mairet, P. London: Methuen.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. (1972). *The Psychology of Imagination*. Translated and introduction by Warnock, M. London: Methuen.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. (1967). *Words*. Translated by Clephane, I. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. (1950). *What is Literature?* Translated by Frechtman, B. London: Methuen.

Schechtman, Marya. (2015). Art Imitating Life Imitating Art: Literary Narrative and Autobiographical Narrative. In Cowley, C. (Ed). *The Philosophy of Autobiography*, pp. 22-38.

Shelley, Mary. (2018). *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*. Edited with an introduction and notes by Groom, N. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shields, Charles J. (2007). *Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Silcox, Heidi and Silcox, Mark. (2018). The Many Faces of Gossip in *Emma*. In Dadlez, E.M. (Ed). *Jane Austen's Emma: Philosophical Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 134-157.

Sinclair, Upton. (1985). *The Jungle*. Introduction by Gottesman, R. New York: Penguin Books.

Spinoza, Benedictus de. (2000). *Ethics*. Translated and edited by Parkinson, G.H.R. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Spinoza, Benedictus de. (1995). *The Letters*. Translated by Shirley, S., introduction and notes by Barbone, S., Rice, L., and Adler, J. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co.

Stecker, Robert. (1997). *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value*. University Park: the Pennsylvania State University Press.

Stevenson, Robert L. (2005). *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Edited by Danahay, M.A. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press.

Stolnitz, Jerome. (1992). On the Cognitive Triviality of Art. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 32(3), pp. 191-200.

Terkel, Studs. (1986). Margaret Atwood Discussing "The Handmaid's Tale". Interview with M. Atwood and E. Fromme. *Studs Terkel Radio Archive*, 13 March 1986, n.p.

Thomson, Judith J. (1971). A Defense of Abortion. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 1(1), pp. 47-66.

Tolstoy, Leo. (2016). *Anna Karenina*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Bartlett, R. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tolstoy, Leo. (1957). *War and Peace*. Translated and with an introduction by Edmonds, R. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Trollope, Anthony. (2001). *The Warden*. Edited by Harvey, G. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press.

Unwin, Timothy A. (1997). *The Cambridge Companion to the French Novel: From 1800 to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Van De Pitte, M.M. (1979). Reviewed Work: Philosophy and the Novel by Peter Jones. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy,* 9(1), pp. 163-178.

Voltaire. (2000). *Candide and Related Texts*. Translated with an introduction by Wootton, D. Cambridge: Hackett Pub. Co.

Voltaire. (1972). *Philosophical Dictionary*. Translated and edited by Besterman, T. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.

Wainwright, Valerie. (2014). Jane Austen's Challenges, or the Powers of Characters and the Understanding. *Philosophy and Literature*, 38(1), 58-73.

Warner, Martin. (2016). *The Aesthetics of Argument*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Warner, Martin. (1989). *Philosophical Finesse: Studies in the Art of Rational Persuasion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Warnock, Mary. (1965). *The Philosophy of Sartre*. London: Hutchinson & Co.

Weitz, Morris. (1955). Truth in Literature. *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 9(31), pp. 116-129.

Williams, Bernard. (1973). A Critique of Utilitarianism. In Smart, J.J.C. and Williams, B. (Eds). *Utilitarianism: For and Against*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 75–150.

Wilson, Catherine. (1983). Literature and Knowledge. *Philosophy*, 58(226), 489-496.

Wimsatt, Jr., W.K. and Beardsley, M.C. (1946). The Intentional Fallacy. *The Sewanee Review*, 54(3), pp. 468-88.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. (2001). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by Pears, D.F. and McGuinness, B.F., with an introduction by Russell, B. New York: Routledge.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. (1968). *Philosophical investigations*. Translated by Anscombe, G.E.M. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Worsley, Lucy. (2017). *Jane Austen at Home: A Biography*. London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd.