

Truth and Art: A Discussion between Two Philosophical Traditions

by

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BA, University of Ottawa, 2011

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ABSTRACT

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Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, in *Truth, Fiction, and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective* (1994), advance a "no-truth" theory of literature, which has become highly influential in the analytic tradition of the philosophy of art. However, in considering the historical precursors that have influenced Lamarque and Olsen and the strand of analytic philosophy to which they belong, it becomes apparent that their particular philosophical tradition has been defined largely without considering certain strands of Continental philosophy. In particular, they do not consider the tradition of Heideggerian phenomenology, which has much to offer a discussion of whether there is truth in literature (as well as art, generally speaking). In this thesis, by delving into this historical background and relying ultimately on the philosophy of Heideggerian thinker Hans-Georg Gadamer, I argue that Lamarque and Olsen advance their no-truth theory of literature because they and their strand of analytic philosophy consider the concept of truth too narrowly. Furthermore, there are, surprisingly, key elements of Lamarque and Olsen's theory that come very close to a Heideggerian/Gadamerian view of art but cannot be satisfactorily explained by appealing only to the fundamental tenets of their strand of analytic philosophy. I conclude by opposing their theory insofar as it is a no-truth theory of literature, but by supporting their theory insofar as it reiterates certain insights that are provided by Gadamer and the Heideggerian tradition concerning the truth of art in general.

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EPIGRAPH(S)

“With regard to knowledge of the true, the being of the representation is more than the being of the thing represented.”

- Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 114

“My great desire is to learn to make such inaccuracies, such variations, reworkings, alterations of the reality, that it might become, very well—lies if you will—but—truer than the literal truth.”

- Vincent Van Gogh

“Words alone cannot deliver us to insight.”

- Jan Zwicky, *Plato as Artist*, p. 89

INTRODUCTION

Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, in their 1994 book, *Truth, Fiction, and Literature*, defend what they refer to as a “no-truth” theory of literature. Specifically, their “principal debate is with those who want a ‘stronger’ sense of ‘truth’ and ‘falsity’ applied to literature; i.e. those who see the aim of literature as conveying or teaching or embodying universal truths [...] in a sense at least *analogous* to that in which scientific, or psychological, or historical hypotheses can express general truths” (Lamarque & Olsen 6). This formulation may leave one, as it leaves me, with a few questions. Principal among them is: What do Lamarque and Olsen mean by “stronger”? This is a question about their understanding of truth and of how one may gain access to it. We need to ask what, according to Lamarque and Olsen, the truth is. One problem I see in answering this question is that their full understanding of truth is established only with difficulty.

There is much that is valuable in Lamarque and Olsen’s theory, including their justifiable insistence on distinguishing between literary appreciation itself and truth-evaluation in disciplines like science, history, and philosophy. However, ultimately their understanding of literary fiction’s limited relation to truth suffers from a conception of truth that is too skeletal. In my first chapter, I will describe in depth the theory of literature that Lamarque and Olsen present in *Truth, Fiction, and Literature*. I will also indicate certain problems in their theory caused by their refusal to engage in metaphysical considerations. Their theory relies on an anti-metaphysical understanding of truth that appears to limit truth to the considerations of logic in the analytic tradition and the kind of fact discovered by the methodology of modern science. I will spend much of the rest of this thesis investigating the interrelated nature of these two elements of Lamarque and

Olsen's possible understanding of truth. In my second chapter, I will consider some historical antecedents to Lamarque and Olsen in an attempt to better understand some aspects of their definition of truth, particularly its emphasis on the logical form of truth. In connection with this, I will consider a debate that took place in the early 20th century between Rudolf Carnap and Martin Heidegger concerning the viability of metaphysics and the efficacy of a logical conception of truth. This will allow me to consider both Lamarque and Olsen's antecedents in the analytic philosophical tradition as well as introduce Heidegger as someone from the Continental philosophical tradition with something to offer this discussion of truth's relation to literature, as well as art in general. I consider Heidegger because the Heideggerian tradition has the potential to suitably expand the logical emphasis in Lamarque and Olsen's conception of truth. Finally, in my third chapter I will explore the Heideggerian tradition further, particularly in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer offers an opportunity to explore and critique not only the logical emphasis in Lamarque and Olsen's theory of truth, but its implicit reliance on the kinds of facts or truths discovered by the methodology of modern science. However, there are certain conclusions Lamarque and Olsen reach about the value of literature that, regardless of the problems with their conception of truth, are important to preserve. But these conclusions are poorly supported by their theory of truth and I believe that Gadamer provides the best possibility for supporting these valuable aspects of their theory.

CHAPTER 1

“Truth is a property of... something said.... It is not a property of objects or facts, nor is it something ‘out there’ in the world ... it is the content, specifically the propositional content, of what is said, and by analogy what is stated, believed, or thought, that is the proper bearer of truth.”¹

- Lamarque and Olsen (1994)

In this first chapter, I will begin by reviewing Lamarque and Olsen’s view of truth, their definitions of fiction and literature, and their arguments against three forms of “pro-truth” views of literature (the Theory of Novelistic Truth, the Propositional Theory of Literary Truth, and the notion of metaphorical truth). I will devote a section at the end of this chapter to a discussion of some of the weightier critiques, as well as my own criticisms of Lamarque and Olsen’s theory. My overall aim in this chapter, however, is to present Lamarque and Olsen’s views with relatively few overt criticisms of their theory of *literature*. I find much that is to be appreciated in the aspects of their theory concerning what they find valuable about literature, that is, their depiction of literature as something that presents us with perennial themes of human interest. However, I find the ways they relate these themes of human interest to questions of *truth* troublesome. Towards the end of this chapter, I explore the possibility that Lamarque and Olsen, because they attempt to set aside or bypass deeper, more metaphysical notions of truth, ultimately propose a theory that has troubling implications.

LAMARQUE AND OLSEN’S DEFINITION AND DEFENCE OF TRUTH

Lamarque and Olsen devote a great deal of attention in their book to engaging literary theorists on the subject of postmodern attacks of the notion of truth itself. The position against which they argue is one that states that “truth” is not a substantial concept, i.e.

¹ (Lamarque and Olsen 8).

there is no *truth* as we may naturally, unreflectively, or innocently conceive of it: objective, universal, timeless, *found* rather than *made*, etc. Those postmodern thinkers who are sceptical about this sort of substantial notion of truth do not necessarily maintain that there is no truth whatsoever. Instead, they usually maintain that truth (or, more aptly, what human beings call “truth” or deem to be “true,” at least in *name*), even in disciplines such as natural science and history, is *constructed*. Furthermore, this process of constructing scientific or historical “truths” does not differ, essentially, from the process of inventing fictions in literary works. Lamarque and Olsen write that “[t]he whole practice of enquiry, which gives the concepts of truth and knowledge their meaning, is under serious challenge from those who would reduce it to something like the practice of fiction (or story telling)” (161). One of Lamarque and Olsen’s primary aims in *Truth, Fiction, and Literature* is to establish that making the distinction between creating fictions (as an artistic practice) and describing reality (as a scientific, philosophical, or historical, etc. practice) is always possible and is independent of, or unaffected by, one’s metaphysical views of reality (i.e. even if one considers reality to be in some sense *constructed*). This establishes what is at stake concerning Lamarque and Olsen’s project. However, before exploring further this issue further, I ought to outline the basic conception of truth that Lamarque and Olsen define for their project.

Lamarque and Olsen operate with a simple notion of truth taken in part from Aristotle and in part from Tarski; they refer to this as their “minimal theory” of truth (6). They take from Aristotle what they refer to as “[t]he safest, least controversial” theory of truth, which derives from “Aristotle’s seemingly platitudinous dictum [...] ‘to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not’” (6). They take from Tarski the

following tenet: “[T]he necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of any given sentence can be specified by the simple expedient of ‘disquotation’: [...] [e.g.] ‘snow is white’ is true if and only if snow is white” (6). Lamarque and Olsen admit that though this minimal definition of truth may fail to deal with some features of truth or leave some questions about truth unanswered, it nevertheless establishes the core of the meaning of truth, which they will use to guide their subsequent investigation of truth as it relates (or does not relate) to literature (7).² They draw from Aristotle’s dictum that “truth is a property of [...] *something said* [...] [i]t is not a property of objects or facts, nor is it something ‘out there’ in the world” (8). Later, they write that “it is the content, specifically the propositional content, of what is said, and by analogy what is stated, believed, or thought, that is the proper bearer of truth” (8).³ Lamarque and Olsen hold that belief and judgment both imply concern with truth. To believe something is to

² The examples they give of some questions that this theory of truth leaves unanswered are: “[H]ow to *discover* [truth], why it matters to *belief*, what facts are or the *objective* world, whether *realism* is a tenable theory, how *meaning* relates to truth, whether *progress* towards truth is an aim of science, whether *literature* seeks truth and so forth” (Lamarque & Olsen 7). However, their belief that, by choosing such a minimal theory of truth, they can legitimately avoid addressing such (predominantly metaphysical) questions in their subsequent theory of literature is contentious. One’s definition of truth is essential in a project such as Lamarque and Olsen’s. While selectivity is necessary and even desirable, I contend that they leave too much out, especially when one considers that it is the subject of *truth* in literature that they are addressing. Their rationale for choosing such a definition of truth consists in their thinking that, no matter what definition of truth one has, this “core” will form a part of it and so can be used in their subsequent discussion without concern or worry regarding ways in which thinkers diverge with respect to more “peripheral” questions. However, this definition, though it may form *a part* of any definition of truth, is not necessarily an appropriate *core* or *foundational* conception of truth. Indeed, much of my criticism in later chapters will be based on the fact that Lamarque and Olsen’s definition of truth is narrow because it is anti-metaphysical (as they explicitly aver), but that owing to this it does not provide an acceptable *foundation* for their claims about literature. Their theory ends up being contentious precisely in virtue of being “minimal.”

³ Strictly speaking, it is this specific notion that Lamarque and Olsen say is not involved in literary appreciation (thus leaving the matter open for an alternative conception of truth, which may indeed be involved in literary appreciation); literary fiction cannot *say* things in this way (like science or philosophy) and thus cannot convey truth, or *one form* of truth, as I will argue. However, as will be discussed further, they do not say that questions of truth, even as they have defined it, never arise in the midst of literary appreciation, just that assessing the truth-values of the statements of literary fiction is not a constituent part of literary appreciation.

believe that it is true and to judge something is, by and large, to form a belief about something (Lamarque & Olsen 10). Furthermore, Lamarque and Olsen think it is crucial to distinguish belief from imagination. According to them, “[i]magination does not aim at truth. We can imagine, ponder, entertain thoughts, or speculate about something without any commitment to the truth of our ruminations” (11). This establishes the starting point from which Lamarque and Olsen begin their theory.

To return to the discussion of the postmodern view of truth, Lamarque and Olsen claim that the modern movement in philosophy (i.e. philosophy beginning with Descartes), ultimately, has allowed postmodernism-, subjectivism-, or relativism-based criticisms of the notion of truth itself. They begin making this point when they write that “[b]y the time we get to Kant we find something like Descartes’s mind-independent things-in-themselves relegated to a shadowy noumenal existence beyond human knowledge” (166). A chief result of the modern movement in philosophy has been that many of the philosophical systems arising within it drive a wedge between the human subject’s experience of things and the actual world of things. Especially under the Kantian conception, in which the noumena are, as Lamarque and Olsen write, relegated to the realm of the absolutely unknown, and the subjective experience that all humans undergo is constituted according to the categories of the mind, there is a radical issue surrounding the notion of *world-accurate representation* in the mind. Lamarque and Olsen remark that it is easy to recast these worries (about the human subjectivity’s incapacity to reach the world or the things-in-themselves, and the issues surrounding accurate representation) in terms of fiction. One principal way in which theorists describe that wedge between the human subject and reality is to see it as caused by

language. Against the background of philosophy under the influence of Descartes' evil demon thought-experiment and Kant's Copernican Revolution, various literary theorists, according to Lamarque and Olsen, have made attempts to generalise "the lessons learned from literary fiction," that is to say, "[a]ll writing involves some degree of rhetorical contrivance; there is no pure unmediated representation of extra-linguistic fact" (171). This bears obvious similarities to the Kantian opinion that there is no pure, unmediated access to things-in-themselves; through mediation, of whatever variety, Descartes' evil demon may be at work. This line of thinking, typical of many literary theorists, is well summarised by Lamarque and Olsen; according to such literary theorists:

[E]pistemologically all discourses are on a par with fictional discourse. Indeed literary (i.e. novelistic) writing is held [by literary theorists] to be paradigmatic because it draws attention to its fictionality while other – less honest – modes (philosophy, history, even science) try to conceal their fictionality. (172-3)

Lamarque and Olsen take issue with this type of privileging of fictional discourse. Crucially, they do not argue against such theorists by trying to disprove the metaphysical/epistemological view that holds an essentially sceptical stance on the existence of the objective world and our capacity to describe it without distorting it. Instead, they attempt to show that, even assuming the conception of reality of the anti-realist or constructivist, there is still a clear distinction to be made between literary fictions and "epistemological fictions": "Both are of course 'constructs' but [the fictions proposed from a literary stance] [...] are [...] [not] posited as 'real'" (Lamarque & Olsen 183), while the fictions of the stance occupied by those proposing epistemological fictions are. When telling or listening to a story, when engaging in make-believe, we, precisely, do not believe that this has any bearing on what the world is like. When

constructing epistemological fictions, we do believe this has a bearing on what the world is like, at least as we know it.⁴

BULLINGHAM VS. "BULLINGHAM"

Let us consider an example that Lamarque and Olsen use to illustrate how literary fictions have no bearing on the world in the sense that they are not *about* the world (and, by contrast, epistemological fictions are). They refer to Jilly Cooper's 1988 novel *Rivals*, which features an unpleasant fictional character, Lord Anthony Bullingham, who is an adulterous, corrupt TV magnate. As Lamarque and Olsen cite from an article in *The Times*, Jilly Cooper was taken to court for libel by William Bullingham, director of Cotswold Cable Television (119). The article that Lamarque and Olsen cite states that "[s]imilarities [between the fictional (Anthony) Bullingham and the real (William) Bullingham include:] a large house in the Cotswolds, a taste for BMW cars and Rottweiler dogs, a shareholding in a Cotswold television company, being born in Cheltenham and a wife who is an expert gardener" (119). However, the similarities end there. Crucially (for the libel case), the character defects of the fictional Bullingham appear not to have been applicable to the real Bullingham. In any event, the stated similarities were enough for the real Bullingham to receive a settlement as a result of the libel case he launched and Transworld Publishers agreed to change the name of the character in Cooper's novel (120). Lamarque and Olsen use this example to illustrate some of the inner workings of the "aboutness" of novels in that they want to demonstrate how *similarity* does not secure *reference* (aboutness). Lamarque and Olsen chose this

⁴ In connection with this notion of epistemological fictions, Lamarque and Olsen describe the theories of Locke, Kant, Russell, and Quine, which all incorporate epistemological fictions, but are still considered to deal with truth because their theories are put forward from a stance that intends the theory in question to have a bearing on the what the world is like.

specific example precisely because the real Bullingham won the libel case, and this is clearly problematic because Cooper's novel did not actually make any comments about *him*. That is, *Rivals* was never *about* William Bullingham, regardless of the fact that many of (the formerly named) Anthony Bullingham's characteristics appear to also describe William Bullingham perfectly well. This is because, for all intents and purposes, Jilly Cooper knew nothing of the real Bullingham (Lamarque and Olsen explicitly assume this, for the sake of argument) (120). Lamarque and Olsen conclude that, when it comes to the difference between fiction and reality, even if reality is constituted or constructed (à la Locke, Kant, Russell, or Quine, etc.), "[m]ake-believe fictions are not assigned roles in any explanatory theory" (183); "the determining factor [with respect to make-believe fictions] is not existence or 'correspondence' [even if it does *appear* to occur, re: Bullingham] but *mode of utterance*" (189; my emphasis).

"FICTION" AND "LITERATURE"

FICTION

This "mode of utterance" is ultimately the principle on which Lamarque and Olsen's definition of fiction depends. Lamarque and Olsen "argue that fiction must be defined not semantically but pragmatically, in terms of a rule-governed practice. Fictive utterance is identified by reference to the utterer's intention that the audience adopt the fictive stance, an imaginative attitude" (Neill 242). Furthermore, consider that "[s]entences in fictive utterances when construed non-contextually might be true or false or lacking in truth-value"; however, "[t]he fictive stance [...] determines how they are to be 'taken'. Truth and falsity are indifferent to what it is possible to imagine, entertain, or make-believe" (Lamarque & Olsen 60; cf. Neill 242). Also: "[A]ll sentences of a work

of fiction might [...] turn out to be true [but f]ictional status is determined by *origin* not by truth” (Lamarque & Olsen 59; my emphasis). This is simply another way of stating the idea expressed by the example of Bullingham: Even though the real and fictional Bullinghams have similar or identical traits, even if they are called by the same name, they have no relation to one another because fiction is not constrained by relation to the real world. At *origin*, the fictional Bullingham is constituted by Jilly Cooper’s intention that the audience take up the fictive stance towards him, to understand him as a part of the work and, precisely, *not* as a part of the world.

LITERATURE: SIMILARITY TO FICTION

Lamarque and Olsen make a point of distinguishing and relating literature and fiction. In one sense, they view them as being quite similar. Noël Carroll summarises these similarities in Lamarque and Olsen’s position as follows:

Like fiction, literature is a social affair, and what makes a work literary is a certain relation between readers and authors that is grounded in our practices of social communication. A work is literature if and only if it is a text or utterance presented by an author with the intention that the reader adopt the literary response toward it on the basis of the reader’s recognition of the author’s intention that she do so. (Carroll, “Review” 298)

Lamarque and Olsen themselves write that they are trying “to locate the relevant conception of fiction [and literature] within a social practice rather than within a theory about the world, objects, facts, etc.” (192). In relation to this, they write that this “bears certain affinities to the version of ‘pragmatism’ developed by Richard Rorty” (192). However, Lamarque and Olsen’s opinion “is that the practice of fiction [and literature] [...] is indifferent to theories of truth, be they correspondence, pragmatist, or anything

else” (193). Ultimately, Lamarque and Olsen believe that assessing the meaning of literary texts, “does not presuppose a theory of what the world is like, or objects, or facts” (193). Thus, both fiction and literature are defined by a theory which dictates that they are characterised by a particular, *independent*, social practice, and not by any other philosophical or metaphysical theory regarding other aspects of life. Fiction and literature are defined *only* by one’s theory of *fiction and literature*.

LITERATURE: DISTINCTION FROM FICTION

Lamarque and Olsen distinguish literature from fiction in that fiction, in itself, does not have an inherent value; it is merely an “invitation to make believe” (443). Its value is defined after the fact, depending on the purpose to which it is put. For example, one can make a work of fiction didactic (e.g. a fable), and it can perform such a function well, but it is not necessary that all works of fiction be didactic. Fiction is merely the result of making fictive statements; it is very close to (but still somewhat distinct from) straightforward lying. Literature, on the other hand, has an inherent value according to Lamarque and Olsen.⁵

Adopting the literary stance is a process that involves looking for an interesting or impactful theme that organises or unifies the work in question. For example, “[t]he concepts of freedom, determinism, responsibility, weakness of will, [etc.,] organize *Hippolytus* for the reader and enable him to bring its elements together and see it as a presentation of a general conflict” (Lamarque & Olsen 402). These thematic concepts that organise the work often have to be brought to the work by the reader; “the literary stance or response is, in large measure, a readiness to interpret” (Carroll, “Review” 299).

⁵ Their view on this matter has been noted by several of Lamarque and Olsen’s reviewers (cf. Carroll, “Review” 299; Mothersill 217; Neill 242).

Also, Lamarque and Olsen consistently refer to things such as “mortal questions,” “perennial themes,” as well as “general, universally interesting theme[s] which would appeal to all reflective people” (423). These are the things for which the interpreter is looking when he or she reads a work of fiction. If such things are found in a work of fiction, we may then confer on it the label of “literature.”

INTERESTING THEMES

We ought to consider, in some depth, these things found in literary works that lend literature its inherent value. Lamarque and Olsen write that “*perennial thematic concepts* define [...] *mortal questions* [which are] concerned [...] with ‘mortal life: how to understand it and how to live it’ (406). They contrast these “perennial themes” with “topical themes” saying that:

Perennial themes [...] are constant focuses for various types of culturally important discourses over the history of a culture. They are not technical or specialist concepts in the sense of being defined exclusively within some discipline which has come into existence at a specific time. (417)

On the other hand, “[a] topical theme is a formulation of problems and issues of a particular interest to a group of people [...] for a certain period” (425). Lamarque and Olsen’s decision to define perennial themes as superior to topical themes is not at issue here, nor is it something that I find particularly contentious. We do naturally seem to value things more if they stand the test of time, which is one of the elements that marks the difference between perennial and topical themes, i.e. topical themes become less compelling when the period of history that is concerned with them passes. However, there is one issue, which Noël Carroll raises about this distinction: “[I]t [appears] nearly

impossible to draw the line [between perennial themes and topical themes] for the simple reason that, for any topical theme [...] there seems to be some perennial theme that we can abstract from it” (Carroll, “Review” 300). Incidentally, this criticism may actually work with, rather than against, Lamarque and Olsen’s opinion of perennial themes as being more valuable than topical themes. If Carroll is right (and I believe that he is), then the fact that we can draw a perennial theme from any topical theme indicates that we really do value perennial themes more than topical ones. A topical theme will be saved in virtue of the perennial theme it belies.

On Lamarque and Olsen’s conception, finding these sorts of interesting and weighty themes artfully engrained in a work of fiction makes that work of fiction valuable, thus making it “literature”; “[t]o adopt the literary stance to a text is to read it for literary aesthetic value, that is, with an expectation of finding humanly interesting content presented in a complex and coherent form” (Gaut 84). Ergo, there are two qualities that make a work of fiction into a work of literature: 1) The perennial or humanly interesting theme; 2) The skilful or adept integration of that theme into the particulars of the work.

The proposal, that when we discover a theme aptly or even cleverly engrained in a fictional work, we confer on that fictional work a higher artistic value, is easy enough to understand. Furthermore, it does not appear contentious to propose that we do and ought to value such a formal feature, not just of literature, but of art in general. However, understanding these “humanly interesting” themes is a somewhat complicated affair. Much of the complication comes from trying to understand how concepts come to be considered “humanly interesting.” Lamarque and Olsen refer to concepts (such as those I

mentioned earlier in the example of *Hippolytus*: freedom, determinism, responsibility, etc.) that have widespread appeal, that is, “[t]hey are permanent focuses of interest in a culture because they are unavoidable [...] When they change, the culture itself changes” (406). This may be the case, but it does not explain what about the themes is interesting, merely that they are interesting and engrained in and constitutive of culture. This raises the question: *Why are they constitutive of culture?* This difficulty in understanding what makes a fictional work humanly interesting is compounded given that Lamarque and Olsen consider that one appreciates these thematic concepts by way of recognising how an author has successfully intermingled the mode of presentation of the theme and the theme itself: “It is this merging of theme and form, this emergence of theme from form, that makes literary appreciation of a literary work necessary and literary appreciation possible” (Lamarque & Olsen 436). Furthermore, this “emergence of theme from form” not only allows one to appreciate a work but to understand it: “[thematic concepts] bring into focus aspects, or universals, through which the content [of the work] can be conceived” (402). That is, much relies on knowing what is humanly interesting and what is not, but, thus far, Lamarque and Olsen offer us only a meagre account of what counts as humanly interesting. However, for the time being, it will be important to continue with the summarisation of Lamarque and Olsen’s theory and I will return to this matter of the definition of interesting themes in the final section of this chapter.

THE “PRO-TRUTH” THEORIES

Lamarque and Olsen consider and criticise several theories that all stipulate that literature, in some way, provides us access to some form of truth. They are systematic in denying the success of all of these theories. Before they assess each individual theory,

Lamarque and Olsen give arguments in support of the idea that, in general, literature ought to be kept distinct from philosophy or science or history (i.e. those disciplines that *do* deal with truth as they define it). When comparing these various disciplines, Lamarque and Olsen concede the point that all writing, including scientific texts, can employ the use of narrative. They write, periodically citing Donald N. McCloskey,⁶ that “just as it is naïve to seek a simple ‘message’ in a poem, so it is mistaken to suppose that scientific texts are mere ‘transparent’ conveyors of ‘theoretical results’ [...] Scientific texts [...] involve selectivity of material, the ‘sense of an ending’, a requirement to ‘supply what’s not there’, and other such features familiar in literary texts” (Lamarque & Olsen 228). However, Lamarque and Olsen deny that on the basis of such “structural or rhetorical similarities” one can do what many theorists attempt to do, which is, “weaken the distinction between fiction and non-fiction” (228-9) and this they defend on the basis of the fact that, independent of what rhetorical or narrative devices are used, it is the stance that the reader is intended to take up (i.e. the fictive stance or non-fictive stance) that determines whether the narrative in question can be considered referential or not, to deal with truth or not. Furthermore, Lamarque and Olsen make the point that “simply and obviously [...] it is always possible to ask of a narrative, however complex or simple its structure, whether the events represented actually took place, what the names stand for, what the narrative is about, what allusions to people or texts are present, and other such ‘referential’ questions” (230). One of their ultimate points in considering narrative is to conclude that “[t]here is nothing about narrative *per se* that raises any special

⁶ McCloskey’s article, “Storytelling in Economics,” is found in: Christopher Nash ed., *Narrative in Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences* (1990). Lamarque and Olsen’s use of McCloskey’s article comes before 1995, at which time McCloskey began to be referred to as Deirdre N. McCloskey.

difficulty for reference [...] that mistaken notion only arises from the illicit conflation of narrative and fiction” (231). They wish to show that such similarities do not warrant the conclusions of certain theorists (e.g. Richard Rorty) who say that the widespread presence of narrative in various forms of writing favours the loss of the distinction between fictional and non-fictional discourses. Lamarque and Olsen specify that considerations of *genre* (e.g. fiction vs. non-fiction, literature vs. history/science/philosophy etc.) are key to understanding the purpose of any specific narrative (232).

Beyond such structural similarities and the potential ubiquity of narrative, Lamarque and Olsen note that sometimes philosophers and historians (whose styles or forms of writing are often much closer to that of the literary author than that of the scientist) may engage in fictions for “perhaps illustrative” purposes (232-3). This would appear to cause trouble for a no-truth theory of literature. If philosophers and historians can use fictions to convey truths, why can literary authors not do so? However, Lamarque and Olsen use a simple argument in order to respond to such worries: “[O]ne characteristic of the practice of philosophy, which would distinguish it from poetry or fiction, is precisely the use of logical argument assessable through established canons of deductive reasoning” (234). Literature makes no overt arguments that can be systematically *tested*, thus it does not deal with truth. Once again, the matter of *social practice* is the crux of their argument because they base their point on the *established* canons of deductive reasoning; the *social practice* of philosophy (or history, or science) is simply distinct from that of literary fiction.⁷

⁷ I will return to this point in the final section of this chapter when I consider the criticisms of Lamarque and Olsen by Eileen John and Noël Carroll, as well as in later chapters.

However, later in *Truth, Fiction, and Literature*, Lamarque and Olsen's pronouncements on the disparity between literature (poetry, fiction, etc.) and philosophy (as well as other disciplines that deal, as social practices, with truth, including history and religion) become even starker. They note that philosophy and literature tend to deal with the same sorts of themes (consider those ascribed to *Hippolytus*: "[t]he concepts of freedom, determinism, responsibility, weakness of will"); however, even given this similarity, they write that:

Literature exercises the intellect as well as the imagination, but it does not instruct in the sense in which philosophy can be said to instruct. *Literature does not compete with philosophy, nor does it complement it.* Literature and philosophy meet in thematic concepts, but it is not a meeting which leads to marriage or even to holding hands [...] literature and philosophy are neighbours in the same important area of culture. (410; my emphasis)

It is somewhat curious that literature and philosophy are neighbours who do not compete, complement, marry, or hold hands. They are neighbours who do not even appear to be on speaking terms. Perhaps this makes sense if one recalls that Lamarque and Olsen emphasise that literature is defined by the social practice of adopting the literary stance and other disciplines that deal with truth (philosophy, history, religion, etc.) are defined by adopting an alternative stance that claims to deal with truth. But this basic distinction becomes puzzling when Lamarque and Olsen consider a common origin to these various forms of discourse but they still conclude that there is a current separation. Consider: "[T]here is nothing surprising about a special connection [between literature, philosophy, and religion,] [...] [they] all developed in their different ways from myth" (410). Lamarque and Olsen are not clear on the implications of this for myth's potential fact-

stating ability; i.e. if the fact-stating disciplines came from myth, was myth a fact-stating discourse? Given that they leave this ambiguous, one can interpret this assertion in various ways. One could say that myth *was* a fact-stating discourse because the *stance* of those writing the myths would, presumably, have been one that proposed to deal with truth. However, this would include things like fanciful, mythic creatures in a fact-stating stance. It is most likely uncharitable to interpret Lamarque and Olsen in this way, but this leaves open a crucial question: How does one then define fact-stating (and, for that matter, fiction-making) merely as a stance of the author? This implies certain metaphysical assumptions that are implied in Lamarque and Olsen's theory. This becomes a matter of particular interest in their discussion of interesting themes and, therefore, I will return to this topic in the final section of this chapter, which deals with such matters.

I will now survey some of the explicit theories of artistic truth against which Lamarque and Olsen argue.

THE THEORY OF NOVELISTIC TRUTH

There are two forms of the Theory of Novelistic Truth: the traditional form, and the postmodern form. In describing the traditional Theory of Novelistic Truth, Lamarque and Olsen rely on some of the work of Graham D. Martin. As Martin presents it, the Theory of Novelistic Truth considers works of fiction as having "referential components." In this respect, Martin's understanding of fiction is in direct opposition to Lamarque and Olsen's (recall the discussion of Bullingham). Martin maintains that all the aspects of a novel or fiction are "collages of 'familiar bits and pieces'" (Lamarque & Olsen 292). Martin's theory amounts to saying that it is impossible to actually or

radically *invent* the contents of fictions; thus, in some way, all the elements of fictions refer to things in the world. He writes:

[T]here are unfortunate limits to the human imagination. As a matter of fact one has always suspected this. The creations of science fiction are manifestly exaggerations, distortions and recombinations of features of the real world. (Martin 229)

To illustrate his point, Martin writes that if one were to take “Bedouin tribesmen, cave-dwelling and a variety of customs such as blood-drinking, [then] you [would] have the natives of the planet Dune” (229). Thus, the entities depicted in fictions, on this conception of the Theory of Novelistic Truth, have clear ties to the entities in the world that they resemble. Fictional entities (even if they are exaggerations, re-combinations, etc.) make some sort of comment, assessable in terms of truth or falsity, on the entities in the world that they resemble or to which they, in some way, refer.

Lamarque and Olsen’s principal criticism of this theory is that they believe it is a mistake to “assume that reference is sufficient to define a piece of work as fact-stating” (293) and to “[assume] that life-likeness is sufficient to secure reference and therefore truth” (294). Furthermore, they state that reference itself is neither true nor false. “Referring components” as they call them, “yield truths and falsehoods only when incorporated into propositions or assertions” (293-4). This is in keeping with Lamarque and Olsen’s definition of truth, which says that only propositional content can be deemed true or false; other kinds of (fictional) statements, even if they contain “referring components,” thus, cannot be said to be true. However, “similarity, or even complete matching does not entail reference or denotation, far less the aim to state truths” (again, the case of Bullingham) (294). Thus, Lamarque and Olsen’s argument against the

traditional Theory of Novelistic Truth is based on maintaining that literary statements do not *ultimately* denote or refer, even if they may appear to do so.

There is also a postmodernist version of the Theory of Novelistic Truth. It bears mentioning that this theory is not quite a pro-truth theory of literature (the operative term being: pro-“truth”), considering what has already been discussed with respect to the postmodernist view of “truth.”⁸ Regardless, this version of the theory boils down to the assertion that historians and novelists produce essentially the same sorts of works. It is dependent on a postmodern conception of history, which Lamarque and Olsen illustrate very well by using the example, from Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, of the Ministry of Truth:

The historical truth of which Winston Smith is aware exists only in his own consciousness. It is subjective because the only authority behind this knowledge is his individual memory. To transcend this individual, subjective memory, to establish a description as historically true, some other authority is needed. But since the past, as a series of events, is forever gone, all that exists are descriptions of the past. That means that the one thing needed to establish a description as historically true is to make others share it.
(303)

Making others share a certain view or description of the past is one of the chief aims of Big Brother and the Ministry of Truth, who can force, at least the citizens of Airstrip One, all to believe the same thing concerning the past, thus creating “historical truth.” This example shows that the Theory of Novelistic Truth takes historical truth and turns it into “novelistic truth”⁹ by insisting that the actual historical truth, as an *event* which is

⁸ However, it is significant that Lamarque and Olsen do not make this distinction.

⁹ Whereas, one may add, the traditional account of the Theory of Novelistic Truth performs the opposite move; as Lamarque and Olsen write, it attempts to make novelistic truth into historical truth or “the truth of fact-stating discourse” (306).

past, *does not exist anymore*. The theory, therefore, takes “fact-stating discourse” and reduces it something that is not relevantly distinguishable from make-believe. The postmodernist version of the Theory of Novelistic Truth depends in part on the postmodern understanding of history, which is reliant on this notion that since the past has *passed away*, an historical fact is not distinct from or may be reduced to its interpretation by an individual historian (Lamarque & Olsen 307).¹⁰

In order to provide an alternative to this view, Lamarque and Olsen make a distinction between the “description sense” and the “object sense” of history. The description sense of history is a form of construction, it is an interpretation by an historian, “a product of human intelligence and imagination” (308). However, the object sense refers to the actual events of the past. The conflation of these two senses is the problem that Lamarque and Olsen see in the postmodern version of the Theory of Novelistic Truth. The postmodernist view insists that history is nothing but a series of descriptions or constructions; however, though there is such a thing as the *description* sense of history, the distinction between history and fiction still holds, for:

History in the object sense is constituted not by a series of descriptions but by a series of past events, which are not the kind of thing that one can *construct*, though the author of a

¹⁰ The passage from *Nineteen-Eighty Four* discloses a relevant problem: There is a serious danger in simply *calling* such things, like *that which is widely believed or enforced*, “truth,” i.e. in engaging in a conflation of terms, even just in practice. Obviously, Orwell enacted such a conflation as a form of critique, but that critique, to its credit, relies on a more innocent conception of the truth, a conception that Lamarque and Olsen appear to appeal to when arguing against the postmodern version of the Theory of Novelistic Truth. However, there are aspects of Lamarque and Olsen’s theory that run counter to some aspects of such a conception, particularly when they say that truth, as previously quoted, “is not a property of objects or facts, nor is it something ‘out there’ in the world.” It is also problematic that Lamarque and Olsen engage in the opposite action concerning the term “truth”; that is, as I will consider in the final section of this chapter, they say that even if literature deals with something like truth, it ought not to be called “truth.” This division (as opposed to conflation) of terms may be equally as damaging to the truth.

historical account will of course *reconstruct* a sequence of events. Fictional events, on the other hand, are constructed and not reconstructed [...] If past events were constructed, they would no longer be the past but simply fictional events. (Lamarque & Olsen 309)

Thus, though, of course, there are such things as interpretations of past events, and all historians do produce such interpretations, these depend on the existence of actual past events; the description sense would not exist if not for the object sense. The trouble with the postmodern view of history is that it has an empty conception of *the past* (in the object sense) and our access to it, but it relies on that very notion in postulating the description sense; “the post-modernist view of history cannot be stated without presupposing the distinction that it denies” (Lamarque & Olsen 307). Thus, Lamarque and Olsen conclude that the distinction between fiction and history can be upheld, and this provides one with a reasonable alternative to the postmodern version of the Theory of Novelistic Truth, and indicates, once again, that history deals with truth, reference, facts, etc., whereas fiction does not.

THE PROPOSITIONAL THEORY OF LITERARY TRUTH

Lamarque and Olsen consider many authors who have developed some form of a Propositional Theory of Literary Truth¹¹ but ultimately they conclude that those theorists do not develop “[a] coherent and strong formulation of the Propositional Theory of Literary Truth” (324) and so, they devise their own formulation of the theory. It is as follows: “[*T*]he literary work contains or implies general thematic statements about the world which the reader as a part of an appreciation of the work has to assess as true or false”; alternatively put: “[A] literary work develops not only a theme but also a thesis

¹¹ Including, in particular, Gerald Graff, A.D. Nuttall, and Raymond Tallis. (See: Lamarque and Olsen 321-4.)

and [...] part of the appreciation of a literary work as a work of art is an assessment of the truth-value of this thesis” (325).

One of Lamarque and Olsen’s principal objections to this theory is based on what they consider to be the vague notion of implication that it involves. They take from M.J. Sirridge the idea that all attempts to account for how one may gather the implicit thesis in a literary work run into trouble. Sirridge writes, “whereas the meaning of ‘explicitly present [reports or reflections]’ is tolerably clear, the meaning of ‘implied’ [...] is very murky indeed” (459, cf. Lamarque & Olsen 327). Lamarque and Olsen insist that “[a]ll the loose conceptions of implication – like ‘suggests’, for example – are much too vague to give the theory any substance” (327). However, they do maintain that there is a way to find a relevant sense for “imply”; that is, “[a] literary work ‘implies’ general propositions only in the sense that the practice of literary appreciation makes use of such propositions to organize into an intelligible pattern the events and situations described literally in a work” (327). Thus, Lamarque and Olsen do not deny that one can gather something that is implicit in a work, but they deny that it ought to be assessed for its truth-value. This is because they maintain that the implicit “thesis” is in fact the unifying *theme* that allows one to understand *the work*. In addition, they claim that most general propositions concerning what the work “shows us” (which is a common phrase in writing on propositional theories of literary truth) are about the work itself and “the subject descriptions of a literary work, construed fictively, can be understood and assigned significance without any requirement that they be referential or involved in truth claims” (328). Thus, they conclude that “[t]he question of truth is separate from the question of intelligibility” (329).

Most importantly for this criticism, Lamarque and Olsen maintain, strongly, that aesthetic or literary criticism, in and of itself, stops short of the assessment of truth or falsity. One may be inclined to assess the truth of something one has gathered from a literary work, or something that has been brought to mind after one has assessed the meaning of the work by recognising a unifying theme, but this activity is not germane to *aesthetic criticism* itself.

METAPHORICAL TRUTH

Lamarque and Olsen point out that the expectations for metaphor, in the multitudinous theories on the subject, are very high. The specific claim, by most who believe that there is such a thing as metaphorical truth, is that metaphors “convey a special kind of truth [...] not accessible by other means” (339-41).¹² However, Lamarque and Olsen believe that the reasons for rejecting such claims are roughly the same as those reasons that lead them to propose the no-truth theory of literature in the first place (341). They cite David Cooper, a theorist who holds an “anti-truth” view of metaphor, who writes that we appraise metaphors with:

[A] battery of terms of appraisal. [...] [Words like:] ‘rich’, ‘insightful’, ‘imaginative’, ‘inspiring’, ‘provoking’, ‘deep’, ‘mind stretching’ [...] We do not need [...] to add ‘true’ to this list. (Cooper 251; cf. Lamarque & Olsen 341)

This view that metaphor does not contain truth is, plainly enough, almost identical to Lamarque and Olsen’s view that we do not assess literary works for their truth, but

¹² In connection with this idea, Lamarque and Olsen mention Nelson Goodman, whose theory of metaphor they do not consider in any depth, but whose work on the subject is considerable, and whom they consider elsewhere in *Truth, Fiction, and Literature*. For further information, see: Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, and *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*.

merely for what themes in them we find *interesting*. Words like “rich,” etc. convey interest in, but not *belief* in what has been stated.

Lamarque and Olsen note that, because of the wide variety of metaphors, “[m]etaphorical utterances vary enormously in quality, purpose, and context [...] it is perhaps a forlorn hope, if not actually a misguided one to suppose that any substantive uniform account could be given” (342). Their consideration of metaphor is, nevertheless, quite wide-ranging. What concerns this thesis most, however, in their criticism of the notion of metaphorical truth, is their rejection of metaphorical content.

Lamarque and Olsen mention that talk of content or “containment” is common in discussions of language and meaning, in the sense that we often say we “‘discover’, ‘uncover’, or ‘dig out’ meanings” (351). However, they deny that “aesthetically relevant properties of literary works have an objective existence ‘within’ words and sentences,” and state that this view, “embodies a misconception of the nature of literary works” (351). This misconception is said to arise, once again, because those proposing such views of meaning do not consider that literature is defined in terms of social practice, that is, as an institution: “[T]he ‘content’ that is identified or characterized by literary interpretation is dependent on the very same institutional rules that define a work as ‘literary’” (351). Thus, this “content” is not considered as meaning independent of the work; it “explain[s the work’s] purpose and interest”; it is the organising principle of the work (352). Thus, we look for such content to understand and organise the work, not to seek a work-independent meaning or something that could thrive *outside the context of the work* (that would involve some species of reference, which Lamarque and Olsen consistently eschew with respect to literature). However, they allow that metaphors

could be used to convey truth because “the conveying of a determinate propositional content might be a context-specific aim of a metaphor, but it is not part of the constitutive aim of speaking metaphorically” (363). They stress that context-specificity is a crucial aspect of metaphor, the principle reason being that, depending on where one encounters a metaphor, the amount of effort one will put into one’s attempts to understand it will vary. For example, if someone merely utters something clichéd, like *I was only pulling your leg*, “a hearer recognizes a simple information-imparting aim for [the] metaphorical utterance [and, consequently,] he will probably not devote much effort to the metaphorical interpretive process” (362). However, in the context of, for example, a poem, this metaphorical interpretive process becomes, obviously, more demanding and quite crucial.

In opposition to this theory of metaphorical content, Lamarque and Olsen also mention a theory of metaphor, largely associated with Davidson,¹³ in which it is said that metaphors may *cause* us to hold true beliefs but that “this is merely a contingent, causal consequence, not part of the metaphor’s content” (Lamarque & Olsen 364). Lamarque and Olsen point out that to propose that metaphors may cause us to hold true beliefs strains the idea that *the metaphor is true*, especially given the fact that:

[N]ot just any, or anyone’s true beliefs prompted by a metaphor could be sufficient to make the metaphor itself true. Wildly idiosyncratic response [*sic*] should be ruled out and perhaps only beliefs associated with an ‘authorized’ response admitted. But that might soon slide back into ‘content’ and context-specific intention. (364)

Crucially, however, when encountering a metaphor, “further beliefs are ‘brought to mind’ as a result of the imaginative response [...], there is no special difficulty in explaining

¹³ See: Donald Davidson, “What Metaphors Mean.”

how a speaker can convey a belief through fiction or metaphor that marks them off from other cases of indirect speech acts – hints, insinuations, suggestions, and so forth” (367). Therefore, Lamarque and Olsen hold that metaphors do not have any *special* connection to truth, in contradistinction to what is often maintained by those who uphold a theory of metaphorical truth.

SUMMATION

Each of these three “pro-truth” theories,¹⁴ denied by Lamarque and Olsen, accentuate key aspects of their no-truth theory of literature. First, their criticism of the traditional form of the Theory of Novelistic Truth denies that literature has any referential aspect and, even if it did, it is not reference itself but propositional content that involves a referential relation between a statement and a thing that is assessed as true. Second, in connection with their discussion of the Propositional Theory of Literary Truth, aesthetic criticism itself is not concerned with the truth of a work’s implied statements, but only with their meanings insofar as they help one to understand the internal coherence of the literary work. And, with respect to their consideration of metaphorical truth, it is the institutional/social practice of the literary entity (metaphor, fictional work, etc.) that tells us how to understand it, not any objective content contained within the artistic entity in question, for it has none. These three tenets form the basis of Lamarque and Olsen’s theory. It will be profitable to consider criticisms of these.

¹⁴ I exclude, here, the postmodern version of the Theory of Novelistic Truth, because it is, as I have said, not exactly a theory of “truth” in literature.

CRITICISMS OF LAMARQUE AND OLSEN

ROWE

M.W. Rowe, in his article “Lamarque and Olsen on Literature and Truth,” presents many arguments against Lamarque and Olsen’s no-truth theory of literature. He considers Keats’s famous line: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty, —that is all / Ye know on earth and all ye need to know,” writing that these last two lines of “Ode on a Grecian Urn” are “an instance of a general proposition in literature that has been widely discussed, and a great deal of this discussion centres on whether the lines are true” (Rowe 326). He concludes that, because of aesthetic discussions like this, “it is frequently impossible to separate questions of meaning from questions of truth” (326). This idea has a good deal of intuitive support, especially in contrast to Lamarque and Olsen’s claims that one need *never* turn to truth or falsity when considering the meanings of literary texts. Assessing the truth-value of a sentence such as Keats’s would clearly have an impact on one’s understanding of its meaning, in and of itself. However, this is precisely that against which Lamarque and Olsen argue. They are clear that it is not the case that one cannot assess the truth of a line of poetry, but that it is not (or, at the very least, should not be) a part of literary appreciation and criticism. That is, considering the *actual* truth of Keats’s claim, in order to understand the work, is not part of literary criticism. In interpreting the internal coherence of the poem, the line may be taken as true (or false), but that is still *in the context of the poem*. If considering the line as true makes the poem make sense, then one has probably understood the line (and the poem). But whether or not the line is *actually* true does not put any constraint on what reading of the line will make the poem make sense.

The heart of Rowe's criticism, which seems, ultimately, misguided in its formulation (but not entirely in its *aim*), may be brought out best by the following passage: "[R]eading a historical novel because you want to find out what living in a certain era was like strikes me as a perfectly reasonable *literary* reason for reading it" (Rowe 340). However, Lamarque and Olsen would say that this is simply false, for it is to treat literature as history. Lamarque and Olsen argue that literature has value that is other than the value of history (or the other truth-telling disciplines insofar as they are valued for conveying facts) and they do not deny that one *can* read an historical novel for such reasons, but then those are simply *not literary* reasons for reading it. While I do not agree with Lamarque and Olsen that every sense of the word "truth" ought to be kept outside aesthetic assessment of works of literature, their distinction (in and of itself) between the literary/fictional and the (broadly) scientific/factual is strong. The way Rowe has phrased his criticism leads one to believe that his is more a simple denial of Lamarque and Olsen's distinction than an argument against it (much like the Theory of Novelistic Truth).

Furthermore, Rowe's article runs into trouble when he asserts that, "if an important line is false then it damages the poem [or generic literary work] that contains it" (327). This trouble is illustrated well when Rowe considers an example from William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. In *Lord of the Flies*, "Jack's group of hunters [...] steal the short-sighted Piggy's glasses so that they can light fires. Without his glasses Piggy can hardly see, so he fails [...] to see and avoid the rock with which Jack and his gang finally murder him" (334). The "serious error" (as Rowe refers to it) here is that short-sighted people require concave corrective-lenses, which would have no fire-starting capacity

(they disperse light rather than concentrate it). The murder of Piggy is momentous in the context of the novel and it is based on a scientific falsity or error. Rowe may be suggesting that perhaps Jack and his gang would not have stolen Piggy's glasses to make a fire if they had noticed he was short-sighted, or, once trying to light the fire and failing, perhaps they would have given Piggy back his glasses (this seems unlikely). Instead, in the novel, they steal the glasses and successfully create a fire. However, even with this scientific impossibility, one should not conclude as Rowe does that these kinds of errors:

[Are] damaging because [the] work no longer harmonizes with the world as we know it [...] Somehow, we can never be quite comfortable with these works again because, while we read, we have to make a conscious effort to suppress the knowledge that what they describe is impossible. (335)

Ignoring the somewhat amusing comment at the end of the last quotation (since fiction regularly requires that we suppress knowledge that what is described is impossible), the significant issue does not centre on the technical features of making a fire but on the characters' intentions and motives. The issue seems to be that Jack and his gang stole the glasses for their own advantage, did not care that Piggy could not see and, as a result, then used those stolen gains to their own, selfish uses. Even if we grant Rowe that this is "[an] error [that] is almost impossible to put right" (334) (which is incorrect, Golding could have simply made Piggy far-sighted, in which case, without his glasses, he still would not have been able to see and, therefore, avoid his murder), the story does not suffer substantially.

However, one may grant Rowe that the sort of reaction that he is describing does happen. But again, Lamarque and Olsen seem to be arguing precisely that such reactions *should not* happen. It does not matter what kind of lenses Piggy had, perhaps it only

matters that he had *lenses*, or *something that could start a fire without which his eyesight would be damaged* (which could have been some sort of *entirely* fanciful device) because this is the kind of analysis that matters for fictions (at least, for *Lord of the Flies*). One *ought* not to think that such particular, factual errors, are damaging to a work overall, for their place within the work is obvious and the themes with which the work deals are not necessarily harmed by them.¹⁵ It appears to me that Lamarque and Olsen are right and literature does not access truth through fact-stating and, furthermore, we ought not to try to match the individual facts of a work of fiction with the individual facts of the world. Therefore, factual errors, in a literary work, would be ultimately unimportant; if literature can be said to deal with some sense of “truth,” it is at some other level or in some other way.

MIKKONEN

A more successful attempt to criticise Lamarque and Olsen is made by Jukka Mikkonen. However, Mikkonen defends a “conversational philosophical approach” to literature and he maintains that “literary works should be considered utterances in a conversational approach which aims at examining the illocutionary actions conveyed through the work” (Mikkonen 69). I have reservations concerning the degree to which Mikkonen relies on authorial intentions in his theory, for it leads him to a somewhat strong concluding position: “[T]here could be the conversational interpretation (or ‘truth-targeting

¹⁵ In connection with this, H.G. Wells’ *The Time Machine* arguably operates on a simplistic or plainly incorrect understanding of time. If time is, in fact, not as he describes (simply the 4th dimension, exactly like the other three dimensions), then the eponymous *time machine* could not function, and the whole of the novel’s events could not have taken place. But this is nit-picking; it does not matter how time works, only that the Time Traveller travels through it in order to disclose (among other things) something about human nature and class interactions. All this goes to show that scientific “errors” are not at issue *in works of fiction*.

interpretation') which would aim at revealing the actual author's intentions concerning the meaning of the work and be assessed in terms of truth" (81). This avoids Lamarque and Olsen's no-truth position seemingly by stating that there may be *yet another* socially defined arena in which, contrary to Lamarque and Olsen's position, we say that the truth evaluation of literary works (insofar as they disclose an author's intended meaning) does matter. There is simply something unsatisfying about such a view. One reason for this is that it accepts Lamarque and Olsen's minimal conditions for truth, given that such a conversational approach to literary truth would still seem to be a matter of merely logical assessment of propositional content. There seem to be other, much stronger reasons to contest Lamarque and Olsen's no-truth thesis and their definition of truth, but I will discuss these in depth later in this chapter as well as in subsequent chapters.

In any case, Mikkonen does offer a perspicacious argument against Lamarque and Olsen that does not rely on his position noted above. Referring to some of Lamarque's later works, which present identical theses to those in *Truth, Fiction, and Literature*, Mikkonen notes that Lamarque believes that "extra-literary" pursuits, i.e. pursuits that are concerned with the truth or philosophical merit of literary works, simply are *extra-literary*, they lie outside aesthetic appreciation. However, unlike Rowe who appears to outright deny Lamarque's (and Olsen's) disciplinary distinctions, Mikkonen argues that such considerations of truth are perhaps not *extra-literary* when he shrewdly attacks Lamarque's conception of the discipline of philosophy. He writes:

[W]hen Lamarque speaks of philosophical works and philosophical interpretation, he means works of professional philosophy. Moreover, his conception of philosophy, which he contrasts with literature, seems to be limited roughly to the methods of analytical philosophy and the journal article form. (79)

Mikkonen refers to the works of certain philosophers, including some (his words) “trite examples” of Plato’s dialogues, Descartes’ *Meditations*, and the various prose works of Voltaire, Diderot, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Borges, as well as the (presumably less trite) works of writers like “Bataille, Blanchot, Levinas and Derrida” (79). These examples indicate, for Mikkonen, that the institutions of philosophy and literature are not so “static and universal” as Lamarque and Olsen suggest. Rather, their institutional definitions come to seem narrow and limited: “Lamarque and Olsen’s proposed ‘literary point of view’ turns out to be [...] astonishingly scanty as it requires the suspension of other social functions a literary fiction might have” (Mikkonen 80).¹⁶ One may also consider their definition of philosophy to be limited for failing to account for the scope of its own institutional or social practice. Lamarque and Olsen may respond to this criticism by saying that although not all philosophy has traditionally followed the analytic route, it should have (at least with respect to the questions they raise). They may argue that analytic philosophy is *true* philosophy and it is so precisely because it tends to purge itself of more literary types of writing, leans towards more direct or scientific prose, and operates under their minimal theory of truth. The question of the scope of philosophy

¹⁶ Mikkonen, in footnote 24 of his article, refers to an article by Anders Peterssen, “Three Problematic Aspects of Analytical Aesthetics,” in which Peterssen writes that “Lamarque and Olsen offer their characterization of the literary stance without citing any empirical evidence in its favour – as a reader of their book, one gains the impression that their basis is their own inside knowledge of the practice and philosophical reflection. It is as if empirical evidence about the attitudes actually adopted by readers of literature were superfluous – but an account of the conventions of the literary practice cannot very well be independent of facts about how the practice is actually performed” (Peterssen 61; cf. Mikkonen 80n). Peterssen goes on to cite an empirical study, which asked people: “For what reasons do you read novels” and were offered eight possible grounds; 57.9% agreed that they read novels “To learn something about people” (Peterssen 61; cf. Mikkonen 80n). One could argue that people are systematically wrong and though they think they learn such things from novels, they do not. But all that is required in order to respond to such an objection is an elucidation of one way in which people *can* derive actual knowledge of the world or people from literature or art in general (which is something for which I hope to provide some explanation and justification, primarily in Chapter 3).

and the way it approaches these fundamental issues will be addressed later, particularly in my discussion of the Carnap-Heidegger debate in Chapter 2.

CARROLL AND JOHN

Another critique of Lamarque and Olsen that I will consider comes from both Noël Carroll's "The Wheel of Virtue" and Eileen John's "Reading Fiction and Conceptual Knowledge." Both writers argue that literature has a function that is similar to philosophical thought experiments: "[P]hilosophy employs a gamut of techniques to produce knowledge and learning that are analogous to those found in literature [...] specifically [...] thought experiments" (Carroll, "Wheel" 7); "[w]e can [...] think of some works of fiction as functioning like philosophers' thought experiments" (John 332). Both of these writers frame their theories as responses to Lamarque and Olsen's position that literature is unlike philosophy (in the truth-conveying sense) because literature offers no arguments, and the argument is germane to philosophy's capacity to convey truth.

Consider this from Carroll:

[A]rtworks, where they contain or suggest general truths, do not argue in [*sic*] their behalf; at best they merely assert or imply them [...] Lamarque and Olsen do not deny that literary works may contain or imply general beliefs. However, they do deny that the purpose of said beliefs in the works that advance them is to impart knowledge and education. ("Wheel" 6)

And this from John:

I take [Lamarque and Olsen's] view of the goals and values implicit in philosophical practice to be that philosophy has a 'commitment to analytical argument,' it aims to advance 'truths about human concerns by means of general propositions' [...] [W]ith this view of philosophical practice in mind, Lamarque and Olsen grant to works of fiction the limited power to expose us to different concepts,

to give us an understanding of different ways of thinking, but they argue that this exposure through fiction neither aims nor has any special power to lead us to *accept* those concepts. (332)

This final point by John seems well focused, for she has put her finger on Lamarque and Olsen's puzzling reticence to admit that the connection between the application of concepts or themes inside literature and those concepts or themes as applied in the fact-stating disciplines is a matter of literature's connection to *truth* (philosophy and literature do not complement one another; they are not "married"). She expresses this idea even more forcefully when she writes:

I do not see how [the unusual way a concept is used in establishing a literary theme and interpreting a work] could have no implications for other applications of the concept. If the special thematic use reflects the general nature of the concept what else can it do? (332)

However, it is apparent that Lamarque and Olsen allow for this type of value in literature.

Consider:

[F]iction can provide an occasion for imaginative reflection that perhaps otherwise would not be available to us. Even being in the position of bringing to mind certain imaginary states of affairs can enrich, as we might say, our conceptual repertoire. Through reflecting *on* certain conceptions in works of fiction, we learn to reflect *with* those conceptions in other contexts. (136)

However, the emphasis for Lamarque and Olsen is still, as John and Carroll state, that one *need not* perform this action in order to understand the literary work, it is simply a function that works of literature *may* perform. Literature's value is found outside of these considerations. John may have a point in saying that it seems to make no sense to insist that this is not proper to the work as *literature* if *literature* regularly provokes this

response, and does so well.¹⁷ However, the issue here is, in fact, a complicated one. Carroll and John seem to posit something undeniable: Literature and philosophical thought experiments have similar functions. Furthermore, from the previous quote, it does not appear that Lamarque and Olsen deny this (hence John's previous expression of puzzlement). Thus, in admitting this similarity between literature and philosophical thought experiments while, nevertheless, separating literature from matters of truth and separating philosophy from the unique value of literature, Lamarque and Olsen must be making a more involved point.

There is, in fact, a very minor, but oddly significant issue to consider with respect to John and Carroll's basic point that there is a similarity between literary works and philosophical thought experiments. This issue comes to the fore when considering the precise ways in which Carroll and John present their theses in their respective articles. There is, potentially, a problematic *anachronism* in what John presents, though, interestingly, not necessarily in what Carroll does.¹⁸ That is to say, though their positions appear identical, a very close scrutiny of their respective introductory claims reveals the underlying philosophical issue in this matter and disambiguates Lamarque and Olsen's position. John does not just say that literature and philosophical thought experiments are similar, she says that *literature* acts like *philosophical thought experiments*. Carroll, on the other hand, writes that *philosophy* acts in a way that is analogous to *literature*. Though this is, admittedly, a matter of fastidious textual interpretation and I would not, in the grand scheme of things, want to criticise John for this nor strongly maintain that

¹⁷ This also seems similar to some of the points made by Peterssen and Mikkonen.

¹⁸ Recall: "[P]hilosophy employs a gamut of techniques to produce knowledge and learning that are analogous to those found in literature" (Carroll, "Wheel" 7); "We can [...] think of some works of fiction as functioning like philosophers' thought experiments" (John 332).

Carroll and John are making wholly distinct points, what I believe to be the crux of the issue is revealed by attending to these textual minutiae. John's formulation, as opposed to Carroll's, implicitly gives prominence or precedence to philosophical thought experiments as defining the way in which any fictional illustration can deal with truth. *Philosophy* defines the rules of the game of truth. Lamarque and Olsen's whole project is based on asserting this.

Let us consider again Lamarque and Olsen's statement that philosophy and literature both come from myth. We may say now that it is clear from the rest of their theory that Lamarque and Olsen would think that myth is not a fact-stating discourse, in the same way that literature is not a fact-stating discourse. Both tend to imply that certain things exist when *day-to-day experience* suggests that such things, as a matter of *fact*, do not. Both utilise what Lamarque and Olsen would (almost certainly) consider *fictional entities*¹⁹ as their subject matter. Thus, literature, in retaining this element of what could be called fictionality, is clearly closer to myth than all the fact-stating discourses. In this sense literary practice is *older* (hence John's potential *anachronism*) than all of the fact-stating discourses. Therefore, Lamarque and Olsen implicitly contend that what has distinguished myth and literature from the fact-stating disciplines is the historical development of the "established canons of deductive reasoning" (Lamarque & Olsen 234) that allow us to logically assess propositional content. This is the *only* connection to "truth," as the minimal theory defines it. Literature's value, therefore, cannot be a matter of "truth." Though Lamarque and Olsen would not necessarily say it this way, "truth" is

¹⁹ This would most likely include anything from the Greek Gods, to Sherlock Holmes, to Lumpy Space Princess from *Adventure Time with Finn and Jake*, etc. However, it is noteworthy that there is immense debate surrounding the issue of whether ancient myths can be faithfully thought of as *fictional*.

something that, in the entire course of human history, only began to be dealt with at a disciplinary level when people set down the rules for logical assessment of propositional content. Before that, when things were not so systematically defined, we did not deal with “truth,” we dealt with something “interesting,” and literature continues to do so. Literary assessment does not deal with themes in any way that allows clear, logical testing; if one did approach literary works in such a way, that would be to treat a piece of literature as a piece of analytic philosophy, and literature, Lamarque and Olsen contend, has an alternative value (which is framed as a matter of “interest”; this is critiqued in the final section of this chapter).

Thus, one who argues against Lamarque and Olsen, while potentially giving precedence to philosophical thought experiments, may experience difficulty in successfully arguing against their no-truth theory of literature. One must expand the definition of truth itself if one is to argue for its place in literature. Furthermore, accepting Lamarque and Olsen’s philosophical definition of truth, while arguing for its place in literature, covers up the unique value of literature that Lamarque and Olsen are trying to elucidate. Even though Carroll’s formulation, as opposed to John’s, appears to avoid these problems, I find it important to side with Lamarque and Olsen on forcefully maintaining that literature has its own, unique value. Thus, any comparison with philosophical thought experiments may miss the mark with respect to literature’s value (which is potentially, as I will argue, a connection with an alternative, broader conception of truth). One ought not to look at philosophy (especially modern philosophical thought experiments) in order to explain literature’s value, especially if that unique value is to be considered a matter of literature’s unique access to truth. One ought, instead, to look at

literature itself. This kind of investigation of the unique value of literature (as well as art generally speaking), and the potential involvement of truth in this unique value, is found in the Heideggerian tradition. (This consideration forms the basis of Chapter 3.)

A FURTHER CRITIQUE

I would like to begin to recast the way of approaching Lamarque and Olsen's no-truth theory, for there is a sense in which all those who have critiqued Lamarque and Olsen, whom I have considered, fail to put their finger on the most crucial issue. Lamarque and Olsen are correct to say that there is no sense in trying to accord literature a connection to what is considered "true" by their minimal definition, and all of the critics I have considered seem to, at least, come close to doing so. Only Mikkonen unveils a true problem with Lamarque and Olsen's theory in his criticism of the narrowness of the strand of the analytic philosophical tradition to which Lamarque and Olsen belong. However, even Mikkonen seems to miss the point in his subsequent proposal that *truth-assessment* finds its way into literary criticism by considering the "truth-targeting" intentions of the author. The issue is that "truth-assessment," in the way that Mikkonen presents it, is indistinguishable from the kind of truth-assessment that Lamarque and Olsen describe, which is a characteristically analytic philosophical notion based on the minimal definition of truth. But literature, as implied by its continued resemblance to myth, existed *before* Lamarque and Olsen's minimal definition of truth came to be, as I discussed in our considerations of John and Carroll. Thus the issue is, instead, is there another, perhaps *older*, less systematic or broader method of investigation, with which literature operates, that can still be connected to *truth*?

A particularly problematic aspect of Lamarque and Olsen's theory is the way in which they address this issue of literature's possibly being related to truth, if it were defined more broadly than the minimal theory allows. They write:

One may, of course, question how far it is useful to distinguish between what is universally interesting and what is true. The concept of "truth" [...] is a chameleon concept that blends easily into a number of different discursive environments. It does not sound strange to talk about 'imaginative truth', nor need it be objectionable if all that is meant is that literature realizes themes. Certainly there is one grave drawback with dismissing the notion of 'truth' and cognate terms such as 'insight' and 'knowledge' as possible characterizations of the cognitive function of literature. These are honorary terms that would increase the value and prestige of literature as a cultural practice, placing it firmly among a group of other activities the value of which no one would doubt and the prestige of which no one would attack. [...] However, the adoption of these terms to characterize a mimetic aspect of literature would not change the realities as we have tried to outline them [...] that literature is not *about* the world]. There are, moreover, also good reasons for avoiding [these] terms [...]. These concepts invite the theorist to assimilate the cognitive value of literature to that of philosophy, history, and science, and it raises the temptation to see imaginative truth and literary insight as having the same logical constraints as philosophical, historical, or scientific truth. Consequently, the better way is to dispense with the use of these concepts altogether. (437-8)

This passage deals with several complex issues, some of which will be addressed in depth in later chapters.²⁰ However, as concerns us now, in this passage Lamarque and Olsen do appear to say that literature's dealings with themes may consist of a kind of relation to truth, but that because of its confusing associations, "true" is left as a technical term that

²⁰ Whether "[t]hese concepts invite the theorist to assimilate the cognitive value of literature to that of philosophy, history, and science," and whether considering there to be truth in literature or art more generally "raises the temptation to see imaginative truth and literary insight as having the same logical constraints as philosophical, historical, or scientific truth" is a topic that I take up primarily in Chapter 3, but I provide the groundwork for it in Chapter 2.

is only attributable to things such as themes with a lack of analytic clarity. Thus, Lamarque and Olsen supplant the question about the potential *truth* of works of literature and their themes with mere *interest* in “universally interesting themes” because “[a] theme is not the kind of entity that can be true or false.” Instead, “it is *interesting* or *uninteresting* and thus fits with the intuition of an ‘interesting content’” (Lamarque & Olsen 437).²¹ “Interesting” is meant to confer a similar degree of reverence on a literary work as “true.” However, as Lamarque and Olsen potentially admit but then try to obfuscate, *nothing* accords something a similar degree of reverence as the word “true.” The mere use of the term matters greatly. Furthermore, Lamarque and Olsen’s worries about potentially confusing associations with the method of truth-assessment of the fact-stating discourses do not apply to one whose understanding of truth is simply more expansive. It is in no way obvious that allowing “truth” a place in literature will lead people to think that we must assess the truth of literature in the same, small-scale, systematic way as one does in the logical assessment of propositional content.²² Furthermore, even if according “truth” a place in literature does lead to this sort of confusion, what does it matter? Is what literature deals with in appealing to certain themes perhaps a less systematic kind of connection to truth (understood more broadly than their minimal theory allows), but a connection to truth nonetheless? Or is it simply unrelated to truth? Lamarque and Olsen seem to be saying that, even if literary themes

²¹ Though I recognise why Lamarque and Olsen say that a theme is not the kind of entity that can be “true” (because of their commitment to their minimal definition of truth as a property of propositional content alone), rather than coming across as a faithful and dogged application of their analytic principles, such a statement comes across as showing a lack of appreciation for alternative, perhaps more sophisticated, understandings of truth, ones that appeal to more in order to define “truth.” One such sophisticated view of truth is Heidegger’s, which I will discuss in Chapter 2.

²² This worry is clearly not applicable to Gadamer, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

have a sort of connection to a broad sense of truth, one ought still to avoid calling that “truth.” However, it should be asked what further reasons cause them to see this restriction of the term “truth” as advisable.

Let us consider how Lamarque and Olsen understand the way in which the humanly interesting themes of literature come to be defined. They write that:

Literature is not merely a response to already defined existential problems, nor an expression of already felt and accepted moral and social values. It is one of the ways in which these existential problems, as well as social and moral values, are defined and developed for us. (451)

This comment seems to indicate that the reason we find the themes instantiated in literature interesting (and also, quite possibly, the ultimate reason why Lamarque and Olsen believe that they cannot be considered “true,” nor to correspond or refer to the world) is (at least in part) because these themes are *developed* by, *created* by literature itself. They are interesting because in some sense we cannot find them elsewhere.

Literature, “develops themes that are only vaguely felt or formulated in daily life and gives them a ‘local habitation and a name’” (452); “[t]here is no similar order in the real world that will make these concepts meaningful in this way [...] the ideas constituting the large themes of our culture, the mortal questions, are in part literary ideas” (454). These comments give the themes that literature develops an air of *fictionality* and *imagination*. Lamarque and Olsen portray these themes as exaggerations of real life, or perhaps as *ideals* (“only vaguely felt in daily life”; “no similar order in the real world”). Literary themes are presented without the potential complications or vicissitudes of the real world and, in being so presented, they cannot be said to truly exist in the real world. However,

because of their reticence to engage in metaphysical considerations, Lamarque and Olsen have not given any overt indication of what decides what the *real world* is.

In order to make an attempt to uncover what Lamarque and Olsen consider to be *real*, consider the following example: Lamarque and Olsen mention that one of the key themes in *Hippolytus* concerns the Ancient Greek notion of miasma (pollution, or human corruption), which is a notion that was once but is no longer of philosophical (theological, scientific, etc.) significance (i.e. significance to the *fact-stating* discourses); it is now only of literary interest (409).²³ They write that the notions surrounding our understanding of human corruption have changed: “The concept of human corruption has been reinterpreted and the view of human corruption as a stain which can spread, as pollution which can contaminate like a disease, today appears as a metaphorical way of construing human corruption which makes no claim to literal truth” (409). This may raise the question, however, about whether other themes found in *Hippolytus*, like free-will, determinism, and responsibility, are on par with themes like pollution. Both kinds of themes (those which are still philosophically relevant and those which are not) would, insofar as they are found in literary works, be presented as idealistic, imaginative creations, and not as things to be taken as *true*. However, Lamarque and Olsen write that: “[L]iterary practice is embedded in the value-scheme of our culture in the sense that it is *one of the practices* that define what we hold to be important and valuable” (455-6; my emphasis). Thus, literature, along with other practices (presumably this means

²³ It does not appear to be the case that the concept of pollution is to be considered a topical theme. Lamarque and Olsen say that the concept of pollution is, “[c]entral to a thematic analysis of the play” and that “the concept of pollution still has interest as a thematic concept in literary appreciation. Interest in this concept is sustained by the fact that it is applicable in appreciation of works like *Hippolytus*” (409). Thus, our interest in pollution, though strictly speaking topical for the ancient Greeks, and not topical for us, is still relevant. One may say, perhaps, as Carroll seems to allow, that there is something perennial in the topical theme of pollution.

philosophy, history, science, etc.), develops “important and valuable” themes. This implies that the themes as defined by literature overlap to some degree with the study of those themes by other disciplines, for instance: philosophy. Philosophy certainly studies themes such as free-will and determinism, but thus far Lamarque and Olsen have said that such literary themes have no real order in the real world. This implies two distinct but related elements in Lamarque and Olsen’s theory.

The first is that the themes, as given “a local habitation and a name” by literature, are something like foggy approximations of real life. Presumably, in dealing with the same themes, the fact stating discourses reduce, as in a chemical reduction, literary themes until they can assess what aspects of them are indeed real. Once again this raises the problem that Lamarque and Olsen have given no explicit indication of how to determine what is real. However, to return to the example of miasma, in one sense it appears as though Lamarque and Olsen are saying that if literature aimed at truth, then themes such as miasma would have disappeared or ceased to be relevant *even* in literature, just as they have in philosophy, theology, or science (fact-stating disciplines that have eliminated miasma like phlogiston). That is to say, if literature deals with *truth* (as Lamarque and Olsen define it), then the value of works such as *Hippolytus*, insofar as one of its organising themes is that of miasma, make no sense, for the concept of miasma is based on what we now consider false. Though implicit, it appears as though miasma is an empty concept only in the context of modern science; that is to say, miasma’s falsity is ultimately *modern scientific* falsity. Thus, literature does not deal with truth because its themes do not partake in the vision of truth of the modern scientific era. The unfortunate

consequence of this is that it potentially leaves Lamarque and Olsen presenting an implicit metaphysical view that amounts to scientism.

Let us consider the second element implied by the overlap of themes in literature and the fact-stating discourses. Literature develops themes, they occupy no similar order in the real world, but they are still *interesting*. Some themes, those that are still considered scientifically viable (i.e. those that a scientific conception still considers partially true), are interesting enough to be taken up and studied by the fact stating discourses. However, and this reveals the importance of the term “true,” the term “interesting” does not have much potential to connect literary themes to reality. Miasma is potentially just as *interesting* as free-will. If the fact-stating discourses study the themes that literature develops, what makes whatever the fact-stating discourses study any more connected to reality, any less dependant on imagination than what is found in literature? Lamarque and Olsen could say that it is the use of the established canons of deductive reasoning, but the use of the established canons of deductive reasoning does not connect one to reality if one is merely using those canons to analyse products of the imagination. The ultimate answer we find in Lamarque and Olsen for how fact-stating is connected to reality is that fact-stating is a matter of having the appropriate *stance*. This does not present fact-stating as a true connection with reality. Philosophy deals with free-will and determinism *truthfully*, but primarily because that is philosophy’s stance towards its subject matter. Given this, Lamarque and Olsen are in danger of slipping into something akin to the postmodern position. The postmodernist is, fundamentally, one who disregards the human connection to the world as such, in an ultimate form of the Kantian surrendering of the noumena. The postmodernist says, “Who cares what is *real*?”

All we have is *talk*,” and, given this, the postmodernist sees no reason to maintain the distinctions between fact-stating and fiction-making. However, the postmodernist has a point; “truth,” as we may innocently consider it, does suffer if it is defined without any appeal to a connection with reality as it is in itself. But Lamarque and Olsen insist that a full repudiation of the postmodernist can be achieved without any consideration of what one believes the world to be like and our connection to it. By relying only on social-practice based definitions of fiction, literature, and fact-stating, even if they maintain that within the postmodernist’s *talk* there are distinctions to be upheld, Lamarque and Olsen do not argue against the strongest element of the post-modernist deconstruction of truth: the ultimate lack of connection between “truth” and reality as it is in itself. To re-quote a passage with which I began this chapter, Lamarque and Olsen say that “[t]he whole practice of enquiry [...] gives the concepts of truth and knowledge their meaning” (161). This already fails to ground their definition of truth in any substantial way. In order to do so, it should have been said that the *truth* gives *the practice of enquiry* its meaning. In thinking that it is possible to argue against the postmodernist by grounding truth in the stance of an author or the social practice of an entire discipline, Lamarque and Olsen locate truth as being within discourse, not as something outside discourse (something “out there in the world”) that guides, informs, or meaningfully restricts discourse. Instead, Lamarque and Olsen are the ones putting the restrictions on truth. Thus, they propose not a full, metaphysical conception of truth, but a minimal, logical theory that allows them an empty semantic victory over the postmodernist deconstruction of truth.

It may be that I am criticising Lamarque and Olsen unfairly, for they explicitly state that they do not want to engage metaphysical theories of truth, they merely want to

show that one can still make the distinction between fiction and fact, regardless of one's metaphysics. However, what good is such a distinction when it leaves aside the most important aspect of truth? What is *true* is wedded to what is *real*. Lamarque and Olsen do not necessarily disagree with this point, but their *implicit* conception of what is real, *exactly like their conception of what can be considered true*, appears too narrow.

Therefore, it may be that the two ways in which I have considered Lamarque and Olsen's considerations of the lack of truth of literary themes are related. In continuing my project, the philosophical issue I will consider is the efficacy of a definition of truth that implicitly accepts both a broadly Kantian conception of the human connection to reality and an overly scientific (or scientistic) understanding of the fact-stating discourses.

Nevertheless, it is important to restate that Lamarque and Olsen, in insisting that literature has its own value, hit upon something promising. One cannot treat literature like philosophy, history, or science. However, it appears to be entirely in literary themes' lack of precision, their idealistic or exaggeratory nature, and inability to provide overt, argumentative evidence for themselves that leaves them out of touch with truth and in touch only with what is *interesting*. But if through literature one discovers *interesting* themes that are so in virtue of their *truthfulness*, even while being exaggerations or ideals, then another realm of investigation is opened, one that Lamarque and Olsen have tried to close. Furthermore, if one may take inspiration from the *truth* discovered by literature, then this *truth* that comes from literature would not be limited to a certain stance of *fact-stating*, nor would it be limited to propositional content, nor any minimal, scientific definition of truth.²⁴

²⁴ As Lamarque and Olsen say, "it is naïve to seek a simple 'message' in a [literary work]" (228).

Ultimately, I see it as necessary to establish a persuasive, metaphysical conception of truth in opposition to Lamarque and Olsen's minimal or scanty conception of truth. That is, in order to bolster Lamarque and Olsen's claims about the value of literature, to insulate those valuable distinctions and arguments that they make against the postmodernist, and to establish the meaningfulness of the relations between literature and the fact-stating discourses, a richer notion of truth needs to be incorporated into their theory. It is with this motivation that, in Chapter 2, I will begin by investigating the philosophy of Carnap, in order to examine in greater detail why Lamarque and Olsen may neglect to consider more metaphysical considerations of truth and consider the truth largely as a logical matter. I will also present an alternative theory of truth, that of Heidegger, who provides a compelling criticism of Carnap. In addition, my consideration of Heidegger will lead into the discussion of Gadamer in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

“Metaphysicians are musicians without musical ability.”²⁵
 - Carnap (1930)

“Nothingness itself Nothings.”²⁶
 - Heidegger (1929)

Lamarque and Olsen’s project is informed by the fact that the way in which one assesses the value of literature is, or at least should be, very different from the way in which one assesses the value of works in the fact-stating discourses. However, they also frame their project around the concept of *truth* (or *no-truth*), indicating that this concept is what distinguishes the value of literature from that of the fact-stating discourses. They further qualify the truth as something that is addressed in philosophical discourse, predominantly of the *analytic* variety.²⁷ They put forward their no-truth theory of literature for potentially numerous reasons, but one principle reason is that they state that “truth” is only applicable to propositional content, which underscores a logical conception of truth. They do so believing that this statement is uncontentious and that its use in their theory will not result in any critical repercussions. However, I believe that Lamarque and Olsen cannot use this minimal definition of truth in their theory without further argument because it has many repercussions, some of which I described at the end of the last Chapter.

It will be important to take a look at why Lamarque and Olsen view the minimal, propositional (or logical) conception of truth as sufficient, particularly in philosophical discourse. This is a question concerning Lamarque and Olsen’s (implicit) belief about

²⁵ (Carnap 80)

²⁶ (McGrath 259)

²⁷ Recall Mikkonen: “[Lamarque’s] conception of philosophy, which he contrasts with literature, seems to be limited roughly to the methods of analytical philosophy and the journal article form” (79).

where to locate the human connection with “truth.” *Where does our belief in the truth come from?* Although many philosophers accept Lamarque and Olsen’s minimal conception of truth, many others do not and, what is more, many non-philosophers would not accept such a conception either. That is, some choose instead a more innocent view of truth, one that incorporates the idea that truth is, in some sense, “something ‘out there’ in the world,” and not merely a logical value of propositions. I believe there are reasons to accept such a view, or at least to consider the arguments behind it, which Lamarque and Olsen do not do. However, it is sometimes considered acceptable in Lamarque and Olsen’s analytic philosophical tradition to dismiss such arguments. Thus, in order to understand Lamarque and Olsen’s dismissal, as well as an alternative conception of truth to the minimal one, it will be valuable for me to detail some of the historical factors that help to explain why Lamarque and Olsen accept such a definition and believe it sufficient for philosophising about literature. Furthermore, there is a strand of what is called the “Continental” tradition in philosophy that I believe provides a rich conception of truth with respect to both what the truth is and where it comes from (i.e. how we, as human beings, find a connection to truth). This is the Heideggerian conception of truth, which it will be fruitful to compare and contrast with the minimal theory of Lamarque and Olsen.

ANALYTIC AND CONTINENTAL

There is an important issue to consider at this point in my project. The analytic and Continental traditions in philosophy, as they exist today, are by and large opposed and tend not to mix. Simon Glendinning has convincingly argued that it is essentially impossible to establish any philosophical tenet that holds the entire Continental philosophical tradition together (and the same can be said for the analytic tradition as it

exists currently). However, historically, analytic philosophy seems to have arisen in the early twentieth century as a reaction of predominantly British philosophers against what they held to be *philosophy as it was done on the continent*. Thus, one sense in which all the strands of Continental philosophy can be said to be similar is that they are a collection of philosophies that the *original* analytic philosophers did not like (Glendinning 93).

Nevertheless, even though there is no key intellectual difference between the two traditions, relations between them have potentially gotten worse. Consider this, from Continental philosopher Jacques Derrida: “[Differences between the analytic and Continental branches] are sometimes so serious that the *minimal conditions* for communication and cooperation are lacking” (Glendinning 8; my emphasis). It is common enough, nowadays, to think of the analytic and Continental branches of philosophy as not only distinct, but even as somewhat incommensurable. However, it is worth noting that analytic philosophers and Continental philosophers tend to view one another differently. Analytic philosophers tend to view Continental philosophy “as simply unintelligible, [...] hardly dangerous, nonsense: one is by no means surprised by [...] obvious absurdities coming from [...] fuzzy-minded ‘continental’ thinker[s]” (Friedman, “Overcoming Metaphysics: Carnap and Heidegger” 45). Conversely, when Continental thinkers consider what analytic philosophers think of them, they see, “a case of simple blindness [...] one cannot expect a narrow-minded ‘analytic’ philosopher even to begin to grasp such profundities” (“Overcoming” 45). In this conflict the criticism of analytic philosophers is more extreme than that of their counterparts: Continental philosophy is essentially erased as philosophy, whereas analytic philosophy is merely considered limited.

For my purposes, this general opposition and separation is only relevant with respect to certain ways in which these two traditions have given rise to different conceptions of *truth*. I do not mean by this that the entire analytic tradition currently has its own, singular, identifiable definition of truth and that the entire Continental has its own respective definition. There are multiple, varied strains and conceptions of truth within both traditions. I mean simply that Lamarque and Olsen, on the one side, have a conception of truth that is, nevertheless, distinctively analytic. It is so particularly in the sense that it seems to arise out of those strains (historically constitutive of analytic philosophy), which attempted to do away with metaphysics and emphasised a strictly logical understanding of truth. Looking ahead to Chapter 3, Gadamer, on the other side, has a conception of Truth²⁸ that is identifiably Continental, in the sense that it follows from a Heideggerian phenomenology and ontology and implicitly rejects the developments of Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy, at least on the subject of truth.

The issue of the place of logic in defining truth is germane to the debate about whether there is truth in literature. In order to argue against Lamarque and Olsen's no-truth theory, I believe it necessary to first target this aspect of their minimal theory of truth. The Heideggerian tradition provides a compelling critique of the logical conception of truth. However, I do not believe it would not be entirely fruitful to use

²⁸ In this chapter, though this is not necessarily Heidegger's method nor the method of his translators, in order to accentuate what I think is crucial in Heidegger's philosophy, I have used "Truth" (with a capital "T") to refer to a singular, foundational experience (the disclosure of Being) that forms Heidegger's conception of the foundation of his metaphysics. In contrast, I will use "truth" (with a minuscule "t") to refer to all other instantiations of "truth." Similarly for "Being"; "Being" will be used for a singular kind of metaphysical element of the world, Being itself. All other times, "being" will be used. To illustrate: "*The disclosure of Being*" is an experience of "Truth"; "*The disclosure of the manner of Being of some individual being*" is an experience of "truth." "Disclosure" is used in both cases because it is absolutely fundamental for Heidegger; that is, the latter experience of *truth* depends on the former (more primordial) experience of *Truth*, which is already also an instance of disclosure.

Heidegger's critiques of a logical understanding of truth to engage Lamarque and Olsen directly. It appears to me that, in order to fruitfully continue my current project, it is vital to show a possible intersection point between the Heideggerian, Continental strand of philosophy and Lamarque and Olsen's analytic one. The differences between these strands, as Derrida's comment indicates, may give rise to conceptual confusions because some key terms, like "truth," "metaphysics," "being" or "existence," even "philosophy," are used with radically different meanings and significances. That is to say, they speak on nominally the same subjects, but with essentially different languages. For my project, it will be essential to consider the philosophical background that gives rise to these differences in philosophical language. Thus, I would like to engage in an historical consideration of a debate, which took place around the year 1930, between Martin Heidegger²⁹ and Rudolf Carnap. This debate has been interpreted by Michael Friedman, in *A Parting of the Ways*, as a crucial factor in the origination of the general schism between the analytic and Continental schools of philosophy.³⁰ In any case, Carnap's philosophy can be used to elucidate crucial elements of Lamarque and Olsen's position on truth, in that (as I will spend this chapter trying to establish) both incorporate a significant Kantian background that makes the truth largely a matter of logical consideration. This Kantian background is something that Heidegger will critique.

²⁹ Heidegger is the actual, immediate precursor to Gadamer, Gadamer having been a colleague and follower of Heidegger's. This will become relevant when we turn to Chapter 3.

³⁰ Friedman's writing on this subject will inform much of this chapter. I agree with Friedman that this debate plays a large role in the general schism between the two traditions, but my concern is not with the schism in general, but with the respective conceptions of our connection to truth (and Truth) that develop from the debate.

CARNAP AND HEIDEGGER: SETTING THE STAGE

The idea of an analytic-Continental split resulting in incommensurability is based, at least partly, on the popular understanding (or, as I will argue, misunderstanding) of the lengthy debate between Carnap and Heidegger that began in 1929 (Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways* ix-x). This debate included as a focus Carnap's critique of certain aspects of Heidegger's philosophy,³¹ in particular his *metaphysics*.³² I believe that the current idea of an incommensurable split arose out of the, arguably, mistaken interpretation that Heidegger does "metaphysics" while Carnap *eliminates* (see the title of Carnap's article) "metaphysics," i.e. they have diametrically opposed, originary, philosophical moments. Furthermore, that popular misunderstanding incorporates the belief that Carnap's originary moment is legitimate, while Heidegger's is not. However, I do not believe that

³¹ I will emphasise this aspect of the debate because it is central to my project. Friedman's book covers a much more elaborate complex of events surrounding Heidegger and Carnap's interactions in the 1930's, including the discussion of a third philosopher, who was equally involved in the interaction: Ernst Cassirer. Friedman also deals with the political climate of early 1930's Europe and the effects it may have had on this interaction, a discussion with which, for my current project, it is simply not feasible to engage, despite its relevance to the issues of the debate.

³² There is already a conceptual or terminological problem here. Crucially, Heidegger would not have, straightforwardly, called his philosophical pursuits "metaphysics." Daniel O. Dahlstrom writes: "According to Heidegger, failure to maintain the distinction [between the fact of something's existence and what it means for it to exist] [...] is symptomatic of Western thinking or, more precisely, what he calls 'being's forgottenness' (*Seinsvergessenheit*) in the West. This obliviousness to being is supposedly evidenced by the way in which Western thinkers repeatedly collapse a consideration of being itself, that is, ontology, into metaphysics, that is, an ontic science of entities and relations, typically causal relations, among them" (xxiii). Thus, Dahlstrom says that Heidegger primarily pursued what he claims Western thinkers have forgotten: "fundamental ontology." For my purposes here, I have tried to deal, conceptually, with Heidegger's fundamental ontology, but calling it "metaphysics," because Carnap does so. The central issue in their debate is that Carnap will, at best, only admit a certain form of ontic consideration, and rejects Heidegger's "ontology." Thus, when trying to *eliminate metaphysics* (re: the title of Carnap's essay: "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language"), Carnap is, more specifically, trying to eliminate Heidegger's "fundamental ontology." In addition, it is "fundamental ontology" that leads Heidegger to present, as we will see, troublesome statements about "Nothing" and that draws out Carnap's critique of Heidegger's philosophy. Regardless, because Heidegger's terminology is not widely used, I will be referring to, but generally not mentioning, "fundamental ontology" in what follows and my term of choice will be "metaphysics."

Carnap *successfully* eliminates metaphysics, nor do I believe that these two thinkers—and the strands of the analytic and Continental traditions that they represent—have *no* common ground (even if that common ground is located rather far back, conceptually speaking). In their debate, at the very least, Heidegger and Carnap appear to have spoken the same language; therefore there was once a place where the analytic and Continental strands of philosophy were focused on the same subject, not only nominally, but substantially.

However, one may not stress commonality here without recognising the importance of difference. The latter becomes apparent when one considers Heidegger's understanding of the historical basis of this difference. As Friedman notes, Heidegger characterised the difference between himself and Carnap as the result of forces that came “with the collapse of German idealism in the second half of the nineteenth century” which, in turn, resulted in “the philosophical understanding of Being [degenerating] into a consideration of the ‘is’ – that is, a logical consideration of the propositional copula” (Friedman, *Ways* 21). Heidegger sees this change as one that crucially limits philosophy, but, in contrast, many analytic philosophers, including Carnap, viewed it as progressive. Thus, the issue at hand is that these two philosophers conceive of what it means *to be* or *to exist* in radically different ways, thus affecting their respective understandings of *reality*. For Carnap and the popular strand of the analytic tradition to which he is antecedent, the notion of being is notably binary, non-mysterious, and, overall, it is a *logical* matter: either something exists or it does not. This is what Heidegger means by “consideration of the ‘is.’” But it remains to be established *why* Carnap's strain of the analytic tradition views being or existence in such a way. What allows Carnap to

consider only the “is”? And what distinguishes Heidegger from this position? Before addressing these questions, I will begin with Carnap’s specific critique of Heidegger and then move on to the background philosophy behind this critique, then consider the matter from Heidegger’s side of the debate.

CARNAP

“*THE ELIMINATION OF METAPHYSICS*”

It may be easy to misunderstand or oversimplify the specific problem that Carnap, in his essay “The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language,” had with certain sentences representative of Heidegger’s metaphysics. Similarly, one may oversimplify the project of the philosophical movement of which Carnap was a part, that is, Logical Positivism. Consider:

The Logical Positivists were not, as philosophers [as is often believed], concerned with the truth or falsehood of scientific statements; for this they held, rightly, to be the affair of scientists. Their proper concern, as philosophers, was held to be with *meaning*.” (Warnock 35)³³

One particular concern that Carnap expresses in his essay has to do with the meaning (or lack thereof) of Heidegger’s phrase, “Nothingness itself nothings.”³⁴ Friedman writes, “Carnap’s criticism [when considering Heidegger’s phrase: ‘Nothingness itself nothings’] [...] is not that the sentence in question is unverifiable in terms of sense-data; nor is the most important problem that the sentence coins a bizarre new word [‘nothings’] and thus

³³ However, the Logical Positivists did postulate empirical confirmation or disconfirmation as being the source of factual meaningfulness; for an excellent encapsulation of the historical evolution of this notion, see: William P. Alston, *The Rationality of Theism*. Nevertheless, this element of Logical Positivism has dissipated, while the element that Warnock identifies, the specific preoccupation with meaning (based on logical analysis, as we will see), has remained dominant in analytic philosophy.

³⁴ This phrase comes from Heidegger’s inaugural address on assuming the chair of philosophy at the university of Freiburg, in July 1929 (McGrath 259).

violates ordinary usage” (*Ways* 11) (Friedman is here making reference to two tenets on the basis of which it would have made sense for Carnap to disagree with Heidegger, given his and other Logical Positivists’ stances on such issues). Carnap’s critique of Heidegger, on this specific issue, consists, rather, of an attempt to show that Heidegger’s metaphysics is meaningless because his way of writing violates the logical structure of meaningful language (Carnap, “Elimination” 69). Carnap’s precise problem was that Heidegger uses the concept represented by “nothing” as both the individual constant and the predicate in the sentence “Nothingness itself nothings”; he uses it “both as a substantive and a verb” (Friedman, *Ways* 11), and nothingness, Carnap contends, can be neither.

Carnap, as he presents the matter in “The Elimination of Metaphysics,” believes that nothingness is explained by the logical construct of the negation of an existential quantifier. That is, something’s being, something’s existence, is explained entirely by the existential quantifier ($\exists x$), and something’s non-existence is explained by the negation of the existential quantifier ($\sim\exists x$). Carnap writes:

[T]he mistake [...] [is] employing the word ‘nothing’ as a noun, because it is customary in ordinary language to use it in this form in order to construct a negative existential statement. *In correct language*, on the other hand, it is not a particular *name*, but a certain *logical form* that serves this purpose. (“Elimination” 70-71; my emphases)

But Carnap’s precise meaning may not be entirely clear in this quotation. His problem is not, as it may appear to be, that Heidegger *follows* the custom of ordinary usage, i.e. simply using “nothing” as a noun. Carnap, at heart, does not have a problem with the custom of ordinary language to use “nothing” as a noun because he believed that such a metaphorical (i.e. non-logical) *appearance* of the word would ultimately obey the logical

form (i.e. $\sim\exists x$). Heidegger, Carnap recognises, is using the word “nothing” (as both a substantive and a verb) in a much more serious or conceptually radical way, a way in which, with respect to “correct language,” it is *impossible* to use the word. The issue is not that Heidegger uses “nothingness” and “nothings” metaphorically in Carnap’s sense (i.e. reducible to logical language); it is that Heidegger (in Carnap’s sense) is precisely *not* using these words metaphorically. Heidegger is trying to say something *true* about nothingness (that it *nothings*) and the metaphorical appearance of his phrase cannot be changed or analysed. Heidegger’s phrase cannot be reduced to a logical reading; it must be taken as it is. Carnap understood this, but he disagreed with it. According to Carnap, the only place we can situate “nothingness” is in the logical *there is not* (Carnap “Elimination” 69).

Carnap goes on to say that Heidegger’s metaphysics is meaningless in the sense that the pseudo-sentences it incorporates are neither true (representing *existing* states of affairs) nor false (representing non-existing states of affairs) (“Elimination” 78). One may appreciate, even if one does not agree with Carnap’s criticism, that such pseudo-sentences ought to be considered meaningless if they are neither true nor false. If Carnap is correct to say that such statements represent neither existent nor non-existent states of affairs, then these statements, precisely, represent *nothing*; or, to put it in a way more in keeping with Carnap, they *do not* represent. But it is contentious to say that Heidegger’s phrases do not represent. It is *not* contentious to say it, however, at this late stage of Carnap’s reasoning; at such a stage, given all that one has already accepted, Heidegger’s meaninglessness seems incontrovertible. One must go farther back in the debate, conceptually speaking, in order to re-establish how Heidegger could possibly make such

statements and intend them meaningfully and how Carnap could understand what it was that Heidegger was saying. The question, as we will see, becomes: What allows one to say that something exists or does not exist? What is reality?

LOGIC, CERTAINTY, & "EMPIRICISM, SEMANTICS, AND ONTOLOGY"

Because Carnap has such a biting criticism of Heidegger's thought (as being *meaningless*), one might assume that perhaps Carnap did not understand what Heidegger was actually saying and that this is what informed his critique. Carnap, however, according to Friedman, understood precisely what Heidegger was doing. Heidegger was able to write the sentences he did because he denied the primacy of logic with respect to meaning, a primacy that Carnap upheld. As Friedman writes, "Carnap [...] clearly [recognised] that [his own] kind of criticism would not affect Heidegger himself in the slightest; for the real issue between the two lies in the circumstance that Heidegger denies while Carnap affirms the philosophical centrality of logic and the exact sciences" (*Ways* 12). Friedman's comments suggest that Carnap understood and could explain why Heidegger thought of his metaphysics as meaningful; he could occupy Heidegger's stance, if just provisionally. What is noteworthy at this juncture, in order to establish some moderate commensurability between their two positions, is that Carnap, *after* understanding Heidegger's philosophy, *then* disagrees with and rejects Heidegger's more expansive view of meaning.³⁵ He did not reject it because he could not understand it as

³⁵ In connection with this, it is relevant to note that, taking evidence from Carnap's journals, Friedman writes, "[i]t is clear... that Carnap was very impressed with Heidegger." In particular, Carnap, who met Heidegger in both academic and personal settings, compared Heidegger to Cassirer, with Heidegger coming out more favourably, as a philosopher and debater. Carnap also wrote, in his journal: "'Heidegger, serious and objective [*sachlich*], as a person very attractive'" (Friedman, *Ways* 7).

many analytic philosophers after Carnap did. In a sense, Carnap only rejected Heidegger's position as having no meaning *from his own perspective*, not *altogether*.

I would like to fill out what “the centrality of logic” means for Carnap. It is important to note that this centrality of logic and the exact sciences is an alternative way of saying that only logic and the exact sciences have access to truth, or, that the only conception of truth that is ultimately feasible is the one that is found within a logical construct. (One may find this reminiscent of Lamarque and Olsen's view of truth.) Truth, on this conception, is a value *within* logic, not defined by any appeal outside of the system (to reality or the world as such). But why does Carnap decide on such a conception of truth? Given that Carnap believes that one quality of the human grasp of truth is *exactitude* or, put alternatively, *clarity* and *distinctness* (i.e. this appeals to Descartes), one can already tell that Carnap conceives the connection to truth as involving *certainty*. Indeed, Friedman writes that Carnap,

aims to explain how the objectivity of knowledge is possible on the basis of what he calls ‘purely structural definite descriptions’ – definitions [...] that individuate their objects in purely formal-logical terms making no reference whatsoever to their intrinsic or ostensive phenomenal qualities [...] objective (that is, intersubjectively communicable) knowledge is possible, *despite* its necessary origin in purely subjective experience. (*Ways* 74-5)

Carnap, here, is clearly motivated to secure a very strong kind of certainty as a necessary condition for *knowledge* or the human grasp of truth (as many other philosophers have done). Our purely subjective experience can be purged of all that threatens the objectivity of such knowledge, by appealing to the formal-logical structures of our thoughts, not to the “phenomenal” contents of those thoughts. But, again, why is it that

Carnap sees truth in this circumscribed way? Why does he see it as necessary to avoid any appeal to the phenomenal qualities of our thoughts?

In his essay, “Epistemology, Semantics, and Ontology,” Carnap establishes, what is for him, an important distinction between, what he calls, *internal* and *external* questions. He prefaces this distinction by defining what he calls a *framework* (to which questions are either *internal* or *external*): “If someone wishes to speak in his language about a new kind of entities, he has to introduce a system of new ways of speaking, subject to new rules; we shall call this procedure the construction of a *framework* for the new entities in question” (“Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology” 21). This notion of a framework refers to a logical or formal construct, a system that employs certain concepts and rules for relating those concepts, independent of what those concepts are. Carnap continues, “we must distinguish two kinds of questions of existence: first, questions of the existence of certain entities of the new kind *within the framework*; we call them *internal questions*; and second, questions concerning the existence or reality of *the framework itself*, called *external questions*” (“Empiricism” 21-2).³⁶

With respect to *internal* questions, when considering what he refers to as the framework of the “*World of Things*,” Carnap writes:

The concept of reality occurring in these internal questions [e.g. ‘Is there a white piece of paper on my desk?’; ‘Did King Arthur actually live?’; ‘Are unicorns and centaurs real or imaginary?’] is an empirical, scientific, non-metaphysical concept. (“Empiricism” 22)

³⁶ Carnap considers in this essay many different specific frameworks, including those that deal with properties, numbers, propositions, i.e. abstract things whose existence or non-existence was (and still is) hotly disputed in certain strands of, particularly, analytic philosophy. Carnap’s whole essay is framed by “*The Problem of Abstract Entities*.” In particular, he and other philosophers were worried that the use of certain abstract terms would necessitate a problematic (in the sense of being unverifiable) “Platonic” variety of metaphysics (“Empiricism” 20-1).

What Carnap means here is that any questions concerning the existence of certain *things* are defined by the very nature, or the logical rules, of the framework of the world of things itself. From within the framework of the world of things, we know exactly how to figure out, e.g., whether or not King Arthur actually lived: empirical investigation. The question of the existence of *things* is a question of whether they are or ever have been empirically detectable. When one asks “Are centaurs real?” one generally means: “Could I, in principle, go out and see one?” Carnap generalises this: It is with reference to the concepts *within* frameworks (it does not matter which one) that questions of *existence* make sense. To use another example, if one asks: “Do numbers exist?” for Carnap, this question means simply: Is there a framework that makes use (in a sense, this is merely *grammatical* use) of the concept of numbers? The answer, then, is “Yes: Mathematics.” But can one ask if numbers, or things, or propositions, etc., *exist* in a more robust and absolute sense? This is to ask what Carnap calls an *external* question.

Let us return to the example of the framework of the world of things.

Importantly, to simply *use* the language of the world of things, to merely *talk* about King Arthur, pieces of paper, or centaurs (and the same goes for numbers, propositions, etc.) is not to posit any absolute existence of any of these things, i.e. it is not to make any *external* claims about the reality of things (or, again, numbers, propositions, etc.). To use the language is merely to say that there is a framework in which “things” are a “grammatical” element, which is to say that they have *meaning* within the framework; “[t]o accept the thing world means nothing more than to accept a certain form of language, in other words, to accept rules for forming statements and for testing, accepting, or rejecting them” (Carnap “Empiricism” 23). Truly *external* considerations,

on the other hand, are considerations of the existence or legitimacy of any framework itself. Crucially, Carnap says that there is no genuine way to ask these external questions, or, external questions are not what they appear to be. Carnap writes that “[t]hose who raise the question of the reality of the thing world itself have perhaps in mind *not a theoretical question* as their formulation seems to suggest, but rather a *practical question*, a matter of practical decision concerning the structure of our language” (“Empiricism” 23; my emphases).³⁷ Thus, one cannot be seeking the *truth* about the existence of the thing world (or any other framework). It is merely a practical consideration of whether or not one should adopt a certain framework. Since one cannot seek the truth (or falsity, for that matter) of such external questions, Carnap writes that:

An alleged statement of the reality of the framework of entities is a pseudo-statement without cognitive content. [...] The acceptance cannot be judged as being either true or false because it is not an assertion. It can only be judged as being more or less expedient, fruitful, conducive to the aim for which the language is intended. (“Empiricism” 31)³⁸

This eliminates any need for these frameworks to have a connection to reality as such.

Carnap will insist that one cannot ask the robust question of the actual existence of any framework because one needs to be within a framework where there is a concept such as existence to ask such a question, for such a question to *have meaning*. Existence only makes sense within certain frameworks that contain a place for the concept of

³⁷ However, Carnap adds to this that “there is usually no deliberate choice [to accept the framework of the world of things] because we all have accepted the things language early in our lives as a matter of course” (“Empiricism” 23).

³⁸ Moreover, Carnap maintains that “it would be wrong to describe this situation by saying: ‘The fact of the efficiency of the thing language is confirming evidence for the reality of the thing world’; we should rather say instead: ‘This fact makes it advisable to accept the thing language’” (“Empiricism” 24). This will come up again in my consideration of Quine, at the end of this chapter.

existence. One cannot ask if, like King Arthur, the entire thing world exists; the framework of the thing world is not itself a thing like King Arthur; “this concept [existence] cannot be meaningfully applied to the framework itself” (Carnap “Empiricism” 22-3). This is because Carnap believes that all the various frameworks are not contained within any sort of absolute framework (which, Carnap recognises, would be a *metaphysical* belief about the frameworks).³⁹ The question I see as necessary to ask, in order to bring out the crucial point of disagreement between Carnap and Heidegger, is: Why not?

Carnap recognises (just as, as we will see, Heidegger does) that existence as applied outside of frameworks requires an unchanging, overarching framework with a supreme concept of existence (what Heidegger will call “Being”) that is accessible from this ground of the absolute, overarching framework. That is, it would require a true, concrete connection with reality. In establishing such a conception of the various, self-contained, logical frameworks, Carnap comes to a sort of clearing, defined as the ground on which the human being is at his or her most fundamental connection with reality. Carnap sees that clearing as darkened, and, in this way, he follows Kant. Carnap’s proclamation that external questions cannot be answered, or can be answered only in a pragmatic sense, relies on the belief that all the individual frameworks do not rest in any space capable of veridically informing one’s decisions about them; that is to say, for all

³⁹ Carnap’s claim that external questions cannot be answered in terms of truth appears to be, itself, an external claim. However, Carnap, in principle, is not denying that one could establish a language whose task it is to describe other frameworks. Carnap, in “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology,” is doing just that; he is, so to speak, using a language whose basic building blocks are frameworks. There is nothing illegitimate about such a language, however, for Carnap, such a framework would only be another framework among frameworks. A framework about frameworks is no more privileged than any other. For Carnap, they all operate by internal coherence not connection to reality as such.

intents and purposes, the frameworks rest in nothing. That is, nothing that we, as human beings, can establish with any certainty. The only thing that would be capable of veridically informing the system of frameworks would be things as they are in themselves. But, at this point, Carnap implicitly adopts the Kantian position; we have a sense that there is a clearing, that there are things in themselves, but we do not know what they are actually like, only what they appear to be, and appearances are not enough (this is why, for Carnap, we cannot rely on the “phenomenal qualities of our thoughts”). Thus, Carnap retreats into internal questions; if the clearing is darkened, the only answers to which we have access are those that do not depend on *seeing*, but on (logically coherent) thinking. Therefore, in this way, Carnap maintains Kant’s insistence that at our most basic connection to reality, we have no idea what is actually the case.

In establishing such (to take an adjective from John McDowell) *frictionless*⁴⁰ frameworks, Carnap, is in effect giving all his attention to the *logical* structure of our thoughts, that is, as Friedman wrote, to *formal* considerations, to that which can gain us intersubjective certainty. Carnap believes that we have no contact with things in themselves and so the internal, logical form of truth is all we have and his philosophical tradition’s desire for certainty (beginning, essentially, with Descartes) informs his decision to reject human access to things-in-themselves. Therefore, logic enjoys an all-important place in Carnap’s conception of the philosophical universe. This conception of truth is not about what *things are*, what *reality is*, it is just a formal conception of truth;

⁴⁰ McDowell uses the phrase “frictionless spinning in the void” in connection with his attempts to secure the legitimacy of human empirical experience. If experience is “frictionless,” then it is not “subject to control from outside our thinking.” McDowell wishes to make a case for *friction*, with respect to experience, while eschewing what he calls “The Myth of the Given,” which is essentially a connection with reality as such. Thus, McDowell’s *friction* remains solidly within the Kantian philosophical tradition and it is therefore appropriate for me to use it in describing Carnap’s frameworks (McDowell 11, *et passim*).

truth, for Carnap, means *sayable* or *allowable* based on the framework one is using, and there is no external measure of any framework because we do not have access to meaning external to a framework. Thus, “truth” is restricted to being a value of statements and sentences and it contains no place for a connection to reality itself.⁴¹

TRANSITION

In order for us to better understand Heidegger’s response to Carnap, I will say at this point that Carnap’s understanding of truth involves a conflation of the truth itself and the human grasp of truth. But, from such a, roughly, Kantian position, one does not have access to external truth, one only has the form or framework of the mind. Thus, *truth*, on this conception, *is* just the human grasp of truth. However, if one were in even *partial* connection with things-in-themselves, then truth, *as grasped by the human mind*, would not always require the qualities of exactitude and logical certainty because the truth would potentially exceed or transcend our frameworks.⁴² The Kantian position implies that we cannot but understand a thing in *our* way, not (so to speak) in *its* way, and thus we cannot see it for what it is. However, though this is a debate that will most likely never be settled, one can see Heidegger as disputing Carnap’s position on this point. For Heidegger, there is something *external* that truly transcends our thoughts, that exceeds human grasp, and yet informs it.

⁴¹ I will argue this more fully below, but this position is very close to the minimal theory of truth of Lamarque and Olsen.

⁴² Let me be clear, it is not *truth itself* that can be inexact, or logically confused. However, Descartes’ appeal to clarity and distinctness, though potentially trying to appeal to this facet of truth, was, in fact, an appeal to a requirement for *human thought containing truth* to be exact and unconfused, clear and distinct. This, already, before the onset of Kantian idealism, subordinates truth to a formal quality of human thought.

HEIDEGGER

RESPONSE TO CARNAP

Friedman points out that Heidegger was well aware of Carnap's criticism of his work and he responded, quite knowingly, to it. Heidegger writes:

“Here [in Carnap's critique,] the last consequences of a mode of thinking which began with Descartes are brought to a conclusion: a mode of thinking according to which truth is no longer disclosedness of what exists and thus accommodation and grounding of Dasein in the disclosing being, but truth is rather diverted into *certainty* – to the mere securing of thought, and in fact the securing of mathematical thought against all that is not thinkable by it.”
(Friedman, *Ways* 22)

Thus, in the same way that Carnap understood Heidegger's position, Heidegger also understood Carnap's position: Carnap asserts the primacy of logic in philosophy and insists that the only meaningful, and thus potentially truthful, philosophical declarations rely on mathematical, or Cartesian-like certainty. He is also admitting, implicitly, that the sentence “Nothingness itself nothings” is *unthinkable* with respect to a logical or mathematical conceptualisation. By implying that the experience of truth *should not* be “diverted into *certainty*,” Heidegger is saying that his statement on “Nothingness” does not and *should not* follow from a philosophical system which posits a mathematical conception of truth, or the truth as certainty, as its limit and ideal.

However, it bears mentioning that Heidegger was not blind to the sense of Carnap's critique. Including, in one's conception of truth, statements that are unthinkable within the realm of logic, is clearly a somewhat bold, if not hazardous, philosophical

move, and it appeared so even to Heidegger. Gadamer discusses Heidegger's comments on "Nothingness";⁴³ he writes that:

[Heidegger's] discussion of 'nothing' [das Nichts] was the explicit target of an extreme, logical critique presented by Rudolf Carnap [...]. In his critique, Rudolf Carnap repeated and critically sharpened all of the objections *Heidegger himself had discussed* in the section of the lecture where he prepared for the question concerning 'nothing' and expressed doubts about such a question. (Gadamer, "What is Metaphysics" 46; my emphasis)

From this, it is reasonable to conclude that Heidegger had a certain degree of understanding and perhaps sympathy for Carnap's critique, since he had similar self-criticisms. Needless to say, Heidegger's comments on nothingness, upon first viewing, *appear* nonsensical.⁴⁴ And yet, Heidegger makes such comments anyway, clearly believing that they are required. His possible motivation may be elucidated by something Gadamer says in one of his other essays: "There is nothing that cannot mean something to [man's understanding]" ("Aesthetics and Hermeneutics" 103). It is part of being human, Gadamer is implying, that we can find meaning, possibly truth, even in notions that might not present with logical clarity. Heidegger's project is not to abandon logical meaning, but to say that philosophy, as a discipline, must be allowed to operate outside of merely logical meaning and truthfulness. Essentially, Heidegger is saying that philosophy must exceed Descartes; the evil demon is not the test of meaningfulness, and thus not the measure against which Truth must prove itself. If the evil demon were such

⁴³ Heidegger originally made his comments on "Nothingness" in his inaugural address at Freiburg, but that speech was later published in essay form as, "What is Metaphysics." It is also interesting to note that Heidegger published numerous revised editions of the speech, sometimes changing certain statements and replacing them with their conceptual opposites (Gadamer, "What is Metaphysics" 46). Thus, Heidegger appears to have been sensitive to the conceptual difficulties involved in this matter.

⁴⁴ And they continue to appear so from a Carnapian point of view.

a test, then it would appear that Carnap's position has stronger reinforcement. But in elucidating his conception of Truth, Heidegger rejects such a test.

TRUTH AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL TURN

Heidegger's conception of Truth cannot be dealt with fully here, but I will try to go through some facets of it that I find key, at least with respect to my project. In metaphysics, as Heidegger sees it, one begins with an engagement with Truth, that is, Truth itself, not with individual truths (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 29), or the logically inscribed truth (which gives rise to individual truths contained in statements based on entities existing ($\exists x$) or not existing ($\sim\exists x$)). In doing this, Heidegger rejects the Kantian separation of the human being from the noumena or things-in-themselves. It remains to be seen how and why Heidegger believes this is possible.

Heidegger (after much conceptual work, which I will not go over) says that the way to begin metaphysical inquiry is to contemplate the manner of Being that is characteristic of humans (or "*Dasein*").⁴⁵ What characterises us as humans is that we ask about Being, or we *do* metaphysics; "to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity—the inquirer—transparent in his own Being" (Heidegger, *B&T*

⁴⁵ The meaning of *Dasein* is difficult to encapsulate. "*Dasein*," literally translated, means, "being-there," or "being-here," "*da*" being translated as both "here" and "there." However, Dahlstrom has commented on the fact that this is not necessarily a full or complete translation. He also writes that Heidegger himself indicated that although "*da*" does mean "here" or "there," "the proper synonym for '*da*' in the term '*Dasein*' is 'disclosedness'" (xxiv). However, as Dahlstrom also notes, "disclosedness" is, confusingly, the common translation for another one of Heidegger's technical terms, '*Erschlossenheit*.' Dostal gives an interesting elucidation of the translation of *Dasein* when he renders it: "there (*Da*) where Being (*Sein*) appears." Dostal also reminds us that "*Dasein*" is a term that is explicated by an *incomplete* work, that is, *Being and Time* (Dostal 51). Ultimately, Dostal also notes, Heidegger said that *Dasein* is *care* (*Sorge*) (Dostal 52; cf. Heidegger, *B&T* 225-73).

27).⁴⁶ Heidegger continues: “This guiding activity of taking a look at Being arises from the average understanding of Being in which we always operate and *which in the end belongs to the essential constitution of Dasein itself*” (B&T 27-8). Thus, metaphysics becomes the attempt to understand the manner of Being of that entity (*Dasein*/the human being) who studies Being, to whom Being is *disclosed*, to whom being *matters*. This relates to Truth in that, as Tugendhat writes, “Heidegger uses the term ‘truth’ for what is for him the originally given—the disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*] of *Dasein* (i.e., the clearing of being)” (96).⁴⁷

In describing how Heidegger, in his earlier writing (specifically in *Being & Time*), differs from his precursor Husserl, Tugendhat writes that “[w]hat is most originally given [for Heidegger] is no longer characterized by the evidence of an absolute subjectivity [as it was for Husserl] but by the disclosure of the finitude of *Dasein* and—insofar as this disclosure stands out in an open field of play—through the clearing of this very field itself” (84). Schmitz speaks to this same point when he writes: “[W]hereas for Husserl, the justificatory account lies in the constitutive activity of transcendental (as distinct from the merely *a priori* Kantian) consciousness, for Heidegger it lies rather in *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world” (Schmitz 546). Thus Husserl and Heidegger differ in the way they ground, “the origins of [...] naively realist attitudes” (Schmitz 558), that is, they differ with respect to the specific thing that makes our connection with objects or reality potentially veridical. Husserl still grounds it in an aspect of the mind (absolute subjectivity or consciousness, or *justification* to that consciousness), whereas Heidegger steps outside

⁴⁶ Reminder: Heidegger’s tendencies with respect to capitalization (e.g. “Being” vs. “being”) are not consistent from translator to translator. Furthermore, neither are they necessarily consistent with the rules for capitalization that I outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

⁴⁷ I will return to this notion of a “clearing of [B]eing,” later in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 3.

the mind and grounds the human being's access to Being in the fact that our Being (as finite, that is: *Being-in-the-world*) is simply disclosed to us, and not necessarily conceptually.⁴⁸ Heidegger's foundation for metaphysics is devised as outside the mind.

Tugendhat makes much of the fact that Heidegger initially aligned Truth, in a fashion that was much closer to Husserl, with the disclosure of Being *as it is in itself*, but then moves away from this phrasing, eliminating the "as it is in itself." This marks that Heidegger, "abandons the standpoint of certainty and evidence" (Tugendhat 84). That is, Husserl's main goal was to provide the justification (or evidence) for true belief. But, for Heidegger, the paragon of the experience of Truth is just the disclosedness of Being. Heidegger is aware of the fact that to establish one's ultimate connection with reality as being a matter of *evidence* or justification is to subject the truth once again to the requirement of certainty, to conflate the Truth with truth as it is grasped by the human mind. Thus, Heidegger rejects the notion that the ultimate experience of Truth, the disclosedness of Being, requires any recourse to evidence or justification. Heidegger seems to imply that if Being is to be disclosed, that is already truthful engagement with Being. But what is this disclosure of Being? What effect does it have on us and on philosophy? In order to answer these questions, I will have to delve a little further into Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of *Dasein*.

⁴⁸ The idea of non-conceptual understanding, as it relates to art and literature will be elaborated in Chapter 3, but in connection with the idea of non-conceptual understanding or disclosure in general, Heidegger's analysis of the manner of Being of tools is relevant. In using, e.g., a hammer, one is not theorising or building concepts ("concepts" defined in the standard sense, at least) about the hammer (which is one way for the hammer to disclose aspects of itself), one is simply *using* it. For Heidegger, this *use* is a way to, finitely, *understand* a manner of Being of the hammer. This does not even happen at a conscious level; simply in its being used, the hammer discloses an aspect of its Being to the user.

It appears that *Dasein* has “three temporal dimensions,” i.e. *Dasein*’s Being is characterised by future, past, and present (Dostal 51-2).⁴⁹ However, *Dasein* generally lives (and thinks) giving the priority to only one of those three temporal characters: the present. Therefore, *Dasein* generally lives inauthentically (Dostal 52). By contrast, authenticity, for Heidegger, comes when we face the future in the form of our own mortality (which is one form of our *finiteness*) typified by contemplating the nothingness of death.⁵⁰ Recognising that finiteness is an aspect of every part of *Dasein*’s Being is an essential step on the path to understanding Truth. Given a further aspect of our finiteness, there is no opportunity for *Dasein* to have a complete view of any individual thing; “Heidegger claims that any revealing of the truth is at the same time a concealing,” and that “[t]o bring something into the light is to cast an aspect of it into shadow” (Dostal 49-50). This implies that, for any individual thing, there is always more to be learned about it; one will never exhaust what a thing has to offer, no matter how much one knows about it or how long one studies it. Thus, any time we consider a thing, we necessarily consider only a piece of it; we do not only experience the uncovering of Being, but also its being covered up. However, unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*) or disclosure is the key experience for Heidegger.

To elaborate, no matter what we do, the very first experience we have, in principle, is that of disclosure. This is where any idea of truth whatsoever comes from, for Heidegger. The very first experience is that of Being and the only thing one needs in

⁴⁹ That is: ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in (future and past), and Being-alongside (present).

⁵⁰ Dostal’s summary of this is quite interesting and particularly clear (see: Dostal 52); it is unfortunate that I cannot go into more detail on this Heideggerian tenet here. However, one important thing to note is that, given the essentiality of the acceptance of our own mortality or the nothingness that is death, we can see yet another reason why Heidegger resists Carnap’s critique concerning nothingness.

order to “experience” Being is to be. Thus, *to be* is to be *disclosed*. This experience of disclosure is what our phenomenological experience is; it does not matter *of what*. To exist, for a human being, is to have something disclosed to you, and this holds even if that thing is an individual truth or falsity. Even falsities are *disclosed*; this is what allows one to say, “It is *true* that that is false.” Heidegger is saying that, if a human being exists, something is being disclosed to him or her, and this forms the basis of his or her way of existing *and* it provides the basis of our most fundamental understanding of “truth.” Furthermore, for Heidegger, “the skeptic cannot be refuted and need not be refuted since [T]ruth is undeniably an aspect of our experience,” that is, “[w]e find ourselves *inevitably presupposing* truth” (Dostal 49; my emphasis). For Heidegger, our understanding of any individual truth is informed by a *prior* ontological experience. We come to things already with an idea of Truth, with the idea of disclosure or unconcealment itself, thus we presuppose Truth in all matters concerning truths.

One cannot fail to notice the reliance here on phenomenological experience of Truth; Truth is something that is disclosed *to Dasein*. But Heidegger grounds his reason for trusting his phenomenological experience by contrasting it with the position that requires strict certainty as expressed in propositions. In fact, Heidegger grounds the propositional truth-as-certainty or knowledge-as-certainty (i.e. the Carnapian view of truth) in the Truth as, as he defines it, “an event of unconcealment” (Dostal 48) or disclosure/disclosedness. Heidegger writes:

[T]he fact must show itself to be fact if knowledge and the proposition that forms and expresses knowledge are to be able to conform to the fact; otherwise the fact cannot become binding on the proposition. How can a fact show itself if it cannot itself stand forth out of concealedness, if it does not itself stand in the unconcealed? A proposition is

true by conforming to the unconcealed, to what is true. Propositional truth is always, and always exclusively, this correctness. The critical concepts of truth which, since Descartes, start out from truth as certainty, are merely variations of the definition of truth as correctness. This nature of truth which is familiar to us – correctness in representation – stands and falls with truth as unconcealedness of beings. (“Origin” 50)

This quotation speaks to the idea of the *presupposition* of Truth: Even when assessing facts expressed in propositions, we already have and apply the experience of unconcealedness as a measure of individual, factual truth. In connection with this notion of unconcealedness, we also see in the above quotation similarly conceptualised notions to the “clearing of [B]eing” mentioned by Tugendhat. Even “the fact,” expressed in some proposition, must *stand*, as if in an open field, in a clearing. And in that clearing, part of it is unconcealed. Truth as unconcealment is Truth as *whatever is not covered up*. Furthermore, what is not covered up is what appears to us, finitely, in our phenomenological experience.

This conception of Truth inherently involves a *spatial* metaphor: We see that which is unconcealed within a greater space. Thus, Truth is, for Heidegger, a matter of something *in which we stand*, something given, something “out there in the world.” We exist as if in a clearing where we recognise ourselves as Being or existing *in the world*. The spatial aspect of Heidegger’s understanding of truth also speaks to the notion of finitude: there is not only a disclosure of Being, but Being *in a certain place* (the world).

Heidegger continues, speaking more pointedly to the potentially problematic subjectivism inherent in this phenomenological stance:

[I]t is not we who presuppose the unconcealedness of beings; rather, the unconcealedness of beings (Being) puts us into such a condition of being that in our representation

we always remain installed within and in attendance upon unconcealedness. Not only must that in *conformity* with which a cognition orders itself be already in some way unconcealed. The entire *realm* in which this “conforming to something” goes on must already occur as a whole in the unconcealed; and this holds equally of that *for* which the conformity of a proposition to fact becomes manifest. With all our correct representations we would get nowhere, we could not even presuppose that there already is manifest something to which we can conform ourselves, unless the unconcealedness of beings had already exposed us to, placed us in that lighted realm in which every being stands for us and from which it withdraws. (“Origin” 50-1)

Unconcealedness is presupposed, not merely subjectively, but as a matter of the necessity of Being’s unconcealedness. That is what it means to be Being, to be unconcealed. That is required before we even talk about something being true. This is why Dostal does not write simply, “We presuppose Truth,” but, “*We find ourselves inevitably presupposing [T]ruth.*” Everything takes place within the unconcealed, within the clearing where Being is disclosed. Heidegger sees every attempt to talk about truth, whether it be truth as a value of propositions, or truth as an aspect of things (i.e. genuineness, reality), as relying on unconcealedness, not merely as a matter of human psychology but as a function of reality as such. To see the fact contained by a proposition, or even to recognise an untruth or falsity, relies upon the *ontologically* prior notion of unconcealedness. We cannot help but be attuned to what is unconcealed to us, disclosed to us. It is a matter of what it means to be *Dasein*.

By emphasising finitude and maintaining that Being-in-the-world is the foundation of all truth, I see Heidegger as saying that a fundamental aspect of how we go about seeking Truth is that we are here at all to ask about it; we *are* in the world, the world is something we find ourselves within and it is something with which we must

contend.⁵¹ The point of this is expressed by one translation of Heidegger's word for the human being, *Da-sein*: being-*here*. *We are here*. This is the bare truth, so to speak, that there is something rather than nothing⁵² and, along with this, that there is a *something*, a human *being*, located (finitely) *in the world*, to whom Being (or the truth of there being something rather than nothing) itself is unconcealed, *to whom Being matters*. What Heidegger says is that we rest in the very truth that there is Being, or in Being's disclosure itself, not in the mere awareness of our own existence, as Descartes' *cogito* implies. We rest in the Truth of existence or Being, which precedes, in principle, our consciousness of Being. Thus, it is not the proposition, "*that there is being in the world*," it is that which allows a proposition to be meaningful, the *Being* that confronts us, even bewilders us. Thus, Heidegger's notion of Being's disclosedness or unconcealedness is a way of recognising what is fundamental: There is *something*, and not *nothing*. And if this experience of the disclosure of *something* finds its way into our most fundamental connection to reality, perhaps that experience is extended to some aspects of the things themselves. Perhaps, that clearing that Kant and Carnap saw as darkened, has a certain degree of light shining on it.

IN RELATION TO CARNAP

When we ask what it means to *be*, or to exist, what is it that frames or informs our discourse? How do we speak *meaningfully* about existing? Because of his Kantian disbelief in the human connection with anything outside the mind (thus his focus on

⁵¹ I believe that even Kant would have to concede this point, even though he and those who follow him, including Carnap, establish their philosophical systems with something other than this, and fail to see importance in such a point.

⁵² One can go through this entire chapter and replace every instance of "Being" with "the truth that there is something rather than nothing."

internal questions), Carnap would answer this question with: “logic.” There is a logic to the language of existence and it is internal to a framework, not external. Therefore, it is not dependent on the experience of the world as it is in itself (which is all the better, because, for Carnap, there is no meaning to be found in such experience or there is no such experience at all). An opinion emerged in the middle of the twentieth century that took Heidegger as a figure who was simply absurd,⁵³ that is, he came to be seen as someone who, as opposed to Carnap, did not take questions about the meaning of statements seriously. But:

[T]he question of the meaning of the words we use, and of our understanding or non-understanding of them, is absolutely central to [Heidegger.] The question Heidegger wishes to ‘raise anew’ is precisely ‘*the question of the meaning [Sinn] of Being [...] [W]hat is understood in ‘any understanding of Being whatsoever’[?]*’ (Glendinning 76)

The problem with this is that “one might [like Carnap]... balk at the assumption that there *is* some ‘what’ that is the ‘what is understood’ in the particular case Heidegger is concerned with” (Glendinning 76). Carnap has, precisely, rejected this finite, phenomenological connection to reality as such, to Being, as meaningful.

However, one could say that the recognition of the relevance of Being (that there is something, not nothing), for Heidegger, is the non-existent Carnapian external framework that subordinates all the other frameworks and allows one to ask true external questions. In one sense, functionally, it makes sense to describe the disclosure of Being to *Dasein* as an overarching logical framework, in that it allows us to speak meaningfully about existence in that external and absolute sense. Though, in a sense, Being requires no

⁵³ This was largely as a result of a certain reception of Carnap’s critique of Heidegger. I will discuss this further later in this chapter.

framework, it is intelligibility itself. What allows us to speak meaningfully for Heidegger is not a “framework,” but the world itself, Being itself. But that is precisely the function of Carnap’s frameworks, they provide us with intelligibility, meaningfulness. However, in another sense, Carnap’s language of frameworks is clearly ill-suited to describe the disclosure of Being, because the endorsement of frameworks is to be determined on the basis of pragmatic-metaphysical considerations, and the disclosure of Being precedes and eliminates the necessity of pragmatic-metaphysical considerations.

Heidegger tries to get as close as he can to saying that what grounds meaning, what allows the human being to speak about Truth, to access Truth *is the very nature of Truth itself*. Of course, he finds any actual verbal formulation of this to be insufficient and unsatisfactory, as well as, practically speaking, unpersuasive. Thus, he, later in his life, turned to art as a way of more directly accessing and expressing Truth.⁵⁴ Heidegger was trying to move beyond the sceptical attitude behind Cartesian or Kantian thought. Carnap, on the other hand, seems to accept the doubt and the gap between the human being and reality by giving no importance to the realisation that there is something, not nothing. Thus, Carnap cannot locate truth in the connection between the whole human being (*Dasein*) and reality that Heidegger calls the disclosure of Being, and this informs Carnap’s fundamental understanding of truth as a logical value of statements. Certainly, this shows that Carnap and Heidegger diverge drastically, but it is, nevertheless, here that I see Heidegger and Carnap as both standing on the same ground. It is at the level of deciding the human connection with reality as such. This calls for a reinterpretation of the Carnap-Heidegger debate.

⁵⁴ The editor of the collection of Heidegger’s later essays on art titled, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, writes that as Heidegger progressed in his philosophical career, his writings “increase[d] in the poetic quality of their language” (Hofstadter xi).

CARNAP AND HEIDEGGER: THE DEBATE ABOUT WHAT IS MEANINGFUL

COMMONALITY

I would like to make explicit one important facet of Heidegger and Carnap's philosophical commonality before moving on to detail how, historically, it came to be thought that Carnap and Heidegger lacked all common ground. Independent of the effects of the differences between the two thinkers, Carnap may be reasonably interpreted, in one sense, as saying that logic informs *metaphysics* in much the same way that the disclosedness of Being does for Heidegger,⁵⁵ since logic for Carnap, and Being's disclosedness for Heidegger, both ground whatever meaning the world can be said to have. Heidegger refers to the open clearing of disclosed Being, and Carnap refers to the enclosure of logic. At this level⁵⁶ their philosophies bear a strong formal resemblance to one another, even though there are major differences in *what* each of them says grounds meaningfulness (and these differences are crucial). Furthermore, though Carnap accuses Heidegger of writing metaphysical pseudo-sentences, this involves a philosophical pronouncement of the primacy of a mathematical logic *over* Heidegger's pronouncement of the primacy of the disclosedness of Being and this is, ultimately, a metaphysical pronouncement. Thus Heidegger and Carnap are engaged in a similar process: They both

⁵⁵ Consider what, in 1960, R.M. Hare says of the analytic tradition at Oxford: "We *do* metaphysics at Oxford; but we call it something else—usually 'logic'" (48).

⁵⁶ One may speak here of a *meta-metaphysical* level of analysis, but such a perspective assumes positions beyond the metaphysical from which one may generate various, alternative, metaphysical positions. But this is part of what is at issue in this chapter. Heidegger would say that, given the disclosedness of Being, we have an absolute measure or reference for all varieties of truth, and that is Truth. For Heidegger, one's metaphysics is fixed or directly informed by the experience of Truth or disclosedness. Thus there would be no meta-metaphysical level for Heidegger. Carnap, as I have said, allows for frameworks about frameworks; these would be, essentially, meta-metaphysical frameworks or frameworks that decide the structure of reality *as we know it*. Again, this is what is at issue: Heidegger and Carnap are attempting to establish what ultimately founds reality *as we know it*. Is it reality itself (Heidegger), which gives a clear delimitation for metaphysical inquiry, or it is logical frameworks (Carnap), which have the potential for an infinite regress of logically equivalent "meta" positions?

want to discover how it is possible for human beings to engage *meaningfully* with the world, to engage with that to which we *actually* have access, not with mere flights of philosophical fancy.

REINTERPRETATION

In a crucial way, what Carnap and Heidegger debated was not whether “Nothingness itself nothings” was meaningful or meaningless. Instead, Carnap and Heidegger’s debate was more fundamental; it was about whether, with respect to *truth*, we have access to reality as it is in itself or only to the interiors of mental frameworks. But this is not the way the Carnap-Heidegger debate was perceived. Consider this from Michael Dummett: “[T]he enemy, at the time when I [Dummett] was a student [at Oxford], was not Heidegger; Heidegger was perceived only as a figure of fun, too absurd to be taken seriously as threat to the kind of philosophy practiced in Oxford” (189). And this opinion of Heidegger, in analytic philosophy, has remained largely unchanged. This quote shows the way in which the analytic philosophers at Oxford endorsed Carnap’s critique of Heidegger. He is not even someone to be debated or proven wrong because he is neither right nor wrong, his tenets neither true nor false, but meaningless. Crucially, the analytic tradition considered Heidegger meaningless *without understanding how he could be meaningful*, as Carnap did. By, historically, not rejecting but *neglecting* Heidegger, analytic philosophers failed to attend to the nuances of Heidegger’s position. They failed to consider that what Heidegger was trying to do was overcome Kantianism (whether or not those analytic philosophers believed that this was possible). In opposition to this common interpretation, I have tried to illustrate that each side of this divergence of opinion between Heidegger and Carnap (that is, as I have conceptualised it: metaphysics

founded in access to reality as such vs. metaphysics founded in logical frameworks) should be seen as having a legitimate claim to meaning.

LAMARQUE AND OLSEN

Unfortunately, given the acceptance of Carnap's "elimination" of metaphysics, full stop, Carnap's influence seems to have generalised in the analytic tradition, to the point that it has given writers like Lamarque and Olsen the impression that truth is a simple, binary, logical concept that requires no metaphysical unpacking, no recourse to "the world, objects, facts, etc." (Lamarque & Olsen 192). They have accepted Carnap's position as the only seminal philosophical moment one may responsibly adopt, with respect to truth. In fact, Carnap's influence in contemporary analytic philosophy in general is rather strong, but, at times, unacknowledged. Dummett, in the continuation of the passage I quoted earlier (in which he says that the enemy when he attended Oxford was not Heidegger), writes: "The enemy was, rather, Carnap" (189). This is obviously somewhat surprising, however, Dummett goes on to say that analytic philosophers' opinion of Carnap changed drastically:

[I]n the United States Carnap was accepted as the leader of the analytical school, and the most influential American practitioners of analytical philosophy, from Quine down, *are people whose philosophical formation was Carnapian* and whose thought can be understood as the outcome of a painful effort to scrutinize and correct certain of Carnap's fundamental doctrines. (189-90; my emphasis)

In particular, Carnap's influence, according to Dummett, caused many analytic philosophers to consider philosophy as "at least cognate with the natural sciences, as part of the same general enterprise" (190). (This is reminiscent of Lamarque and Olsen's depiction of science and philosophy (as well as history) as equivalent fact-stating

discourses.) The “effort to scrutinize and correct” Carnap’s philosophy is left ambiguous by Dummett, but what appears to be beyond contention is that, in saying that many practitioners of analytical philosophy are essentially *Carnapian*, Dummett is indicating the acceptance of the place of logic at the foundation of analytic metaphysics, which tries to make analytic philosophy, in Dummett’s words “systematic,” i.e. “[its] aim is to arrive at and establish *truths*” (190).⁵⁷ However, it is crucial that “*truths*,” here, is pluralised. There is no attempt here to consider a more absolute or broad sense of *Truth* as is shown by Dummett’s and the analytic tradition’s rejection of Heidegger.

In order to elucidate this distinction I am making between Heidegger’s *Truth* and Dummett’s *truths*, and tie this into Lamarque and Olsen, let us consider Quine, whom Dummett mentions and who was greatly influential with respect to the re-emergence of “metaphysics” in analytic philosophy. Quine was also clearly influenced by Carnap,⁵⁸ which is interesting, considering Quine’s role in reintroducing “metaphysics” to analytic

⁵⁷ Dummett concludes his article in favour of saying that analytic philosophy can be “systematic,” saying that at its foundation is a Fregean analysis of language (215). However, it bears mentioning that Dummett identifies a divide in the analytic camp, i.e. those who accepted a more Carnapian, systematic view and those who followed the later Wittgenstein and Austin, who rejected such a proposition, saying that philosophy was not a matter of establishing truths but disambiguating certain misunderstandings (190). This divergence, in these two strands of analytic philosophy that Dummett identifies, is obviously to be distinguished from the issue in the debate about truth between Carnap and Heidegger.

⁵⁸ Carnap and Quine actually seem to have influenced one another mutually, though, as Dummett implies, Carnap is the older philosopher. Quine had criticisms of Carnap, mainly concerning the analytic-synthetic distinction and they also differed on their opinions of the relationship (or lack thereof) between philosophy and science. Nevertheless, their influence on one another is undeniable, some of their ideas being roughly identical, such as Quine’s notion of metaphysical relativity resulting in pragmatism (I detail this in what follows), and Carnap’s internal/external distinction as applied to ontological questions. Quine’s criticisms can be seen as developing Carnap’s tenets to their extremes, not undercutting them. They come as a result of accepting the place of logic that Carnap appears to establish. See: Willard van Orman Quine, “On What There Is,” & “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”; Rudolf Carnap, “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology.” Also, for more concerning their debate and similarity, see (especially Section 3): Hylton, Peter, “Willard van Orman Quine,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2012 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/quine/>.

philosophy and Carnap's attempt to "eliminate" metaphysics (which I have already argued was not entirely successful).

There is a crucial difference between this modern day analytic, logic-centred metaphysics established by Quine and other varieties of metaphysics, particularly Heidegger's variety. Heidegger's metaphysics is one in which the foundation is proposed to be a connection with the things themselves, i.e. Truth. Quine's is encapsulated by the conjunctive phrase that is often used to describe this new analytic metaphysics:

"metaphysics-epistemology," or "*ME*." It is a metaphysics that is overtly relativised to the human mind. Quine's relativistic metaphysics is known for requiring only internal coherence, a web of beliefs that are consistent with one another, and the connection to the world or the appeal to absolute Truth is made a non-issue. Quine, notoriously, wrote: "Physical objects are conceptually imported into the situation as convenient intermediaries—not by definition in terms of experience, but simply as irreducible posits comparable, epistemologically, to the gods of Homer" ("Two Dogmas" 44).⁵⁹ Quine is saying that there is no deciding on the basis of *truth* between a metaphysical system based on physical objects and modern physical science or one based on the Ancient Greek pantheon. However, some back-tracking is done: "For my part I [Quine] do, quailay physicist, believe in physical objects and not Homer's gods; and I consider it a scientific error to believe otherwise." Though this may appear to be some sort of firm stance with an absolute belief in physical reality underneath it, Quine immediately

⁵⁹ Though the notion of things-in-themselves captures or refers to more than merely physical objects, the somewhat easy nature of, innocently, believing in physical objects and their apparent reality and a (Quinian or otherwise) denial of the ultimate reality of physical objects makes the question of the reality of physical objects a good stand in for the question of our veridical access to things in themselves. This also ties into our discussion of Carnap's framework of the world of things, which is essentially identical to Quine's "myth" of physical objects.

undoes such back-tracking: “But in point of epistemological footing [one might have instead written: epistemological *certainty*] the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conception only as *cultural posits*” (“Two Dogmas” 44; my emphasis). Quine goes on to say that the “myth” of physical objects seems to have had more explanatory power. This is a reason one may believe in a metaphysical system that incorporates such a myth over one that does not.⁶⁰

This should bring to mind Lamarque and Olsen’s distinction between literary fictions and epistemological fictions. Recall that Lamarque and Olsen give a very succinct encapsulation of modern philosophy, from Descartes to Kant. They conclude that after Kant there is a widespread loss of the belief in the possibility of straightforward realism. Furthermore, from Kant arises, in mainstream philosophy, what Lamarque and Olsen refer to as many different philosophical systems that all incorporate “epistemological fictions.” Lamarque and Olsen write: “Kant’s ‘Copernican Revolution’ was the first systematic attempt to see the empirical world as to a large extent a product of human intellectual and sensory faculties” (166). As detailed in my first chapter, Lamarque and Olsen are focused on distinguishing epistemological fictions from literary fictions. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that Lamarque and Olsen say that they take no stand on the aptness of systems that incorporate epistemological fictions, because, they claim, their view of literature does not depend on any such metaphysical considerations. However, in merely *disregarding* metaphysical considerations, Lamarque and Olsen, in adopting their minimal theory of truth, seem to imply that there is no important difference between a metaphysical belief in epistemological fictions (i.e.

⁶⁰ Bafflingly, just as it is in Carnap, for Quine, such greater explanatory power does *not* indicate a reason to pursue this matter, by possibly trying to establish that greater explanatory power may have *something* to do with a greater connection to reality.

Carnap's *frameworks*, Quine's *myths*, and, potentially, Dummett's *truths*) and a metaphysical belief in connection with reality as such (i.e. Heidegger's Being).

However, there is an important difference. Even though I have said that both positions (Carnap's and Heidegger's) are attempting to answer the same questions and thus stand on the same ground, the divergence of those answers, as I have also said, has an immense impact. From Heidegger's standpoint, the one that tries to re-establish contact with things-in-themselves, epistemological fictions of Quine's or Carnap's variety no longer count as *fact-stating*.⁶¹ However, from Quine's or Carnap's side, because there is no belief in the connection to the things-in-themselves, everything, even Heidegger's Being, becomes a mere logical framework (but one that appears not to have internal coherence, and so, on pragmatic grounds, is rejected). Consequently, "truth" can be a matter of accessing "*reality*," but *reality* in this case is still posited as something that is ultimately inside the mind. Because Lamarque and Olsen accept epistemological fictions as a kind of fact-stating, even if it is only to distinguish the practice of fiction-making, they reveal an implicit devaluation of the necessity of establishing a veritable connection with reality *as such* in order to deem one's actions as aimed at speaking the *truth*. At the very least, they do not guard against this interpretation of their work.

However, there is one way in which Lamarque and Olsen's theory may still involve an aspect of truth as a veritable connection with reality as such. As Lamarque and Olsen say, the idealistic or exaggeratory themes of literature cannot be described as "true" because they do not match *exactly* what is found in the world. But *the world* in this case, as I detailed at the end of Chapter 1, seems to be *the world as discovered by natural science* (recall their comments on miasma). However, this requires a certain

⁶¹ Furthermore, from this position, Quine's *stance* in making those statements is immaterial.

quality for all truth-claims, that of *exactness*. This is a view of truth that begins with Descartes and relies more upon the tenor of human thoughts *about* certain subjects than the disclosure of subjects themselves. The minimal theory of truth emphasises the *form* of truth (and it is a limited form), not the content (e.g. some aspect of the things-in-themselves). This will be detailed more in the upcoming chapter; however, it is a potentially problematic aspect of Lamarque and Olsen's theory because even this variety of fact-stating that they rely on to distinguish truth and fiction seems to be in danger if it relies on a logical, broadly Kantian understanding of "truth." As Gadamer will discuss, the methodology of natural science is itself one that arose out of the same strand of Cartesian and Kantian thinking that, as a result of the need for certainty, relies on the renunciation of the human connection to things-in-themselves. Thus it incorporates a very limited conception of "truth" that may need to be expanded.

Owing to these considerations, I believe that there is a necessity to discuss not only the potential place of *facts* or *truths* in literature, as Lamarque and Olsen do, but Truth. Even with the historical considerations detailed in this chapter, Heidegger's position on Truth need not appear to one as absolutely convincing, but I have, at least, presented it as a legitimate position from which to argue. If Carnap could accept Heidegger's position enough to argue against it, then a Heideggerian like Gadamer can occupy the same basic stance and argue against Lamarque and Olsen. One can at least argue from the position that the truth can legitimately be seen as encompassing more than Lamarque and Olsen's minimal definition does.

CHAPTER 3

*“It is now said, not that poets tell lies, but that they are incapable of saying anything true; they have only an aesthetic effect....”*⁶²

- Gadamer (1975)

One of the more important claims that Lamarque and Olsen make with respect to our understanding of literature is that no one reads literature thinking it is literally *about* the world; fictional works are about fictional worlds. Lamarque and Olsen say that works of literature are self-contained; one reads a work of literature in order to understand the work. They demonstrate this by showing that the similarities between the contents of literary works and aspects of the real world that they may resemble ought not to be given much significance or weight. However, Lamarque and Olsen also say that when literature deals with the same themes as dealt with in the fact stating-discourses, literature is not seen as having the same instructional value as the fact-stating discourses. This is, seemingly, because the themes as presented in literary works do not match the themes as presented in the fact-stating discourses. The themes of literature are too streamlined, too perfect or ideal. They should not, according to Lamarque and Olsen, be taken to make any truthful claims on the world because it cannot readily be seen how they correspond to any distinct element of the natural world. Given that the use of literal, referential propositions that clearly correspond to elements of the world is one obvious way in which the fact-stating disciplines make claims to truth, the absence of this in literature needs to be addressed.

Though it seems to be the case that many people, including all those I considered in Chapter 1 who critiqued Lamarque and Olsen, want to accord some kind of truth to

⁶² (Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 276.)

literature, they do so while accepting too much of Lamarque and Olsen's analytic position and their theory of truth. However, as also seems to be recognised by many of their critics,⁶³ one ought to give Lamarque and Olsen their due: Their proposal and insight that literature is not *simply* about the world and that its value is to be found, in some sense, elsewhere is correct. To merely counter or oppose this, as some have done (including Rowe and those who put forward the traditional Theory of Novelistic Truth), fails to do justice to their insight.

Their assertion, that fiction is not *about* the world, however, requires one to understand the narrow scope they give to the word "about." If one accepts the minimal definition of truth, Lamarque and Olsen's exclusion from the domain of literature of scientific-type fact-stating or literal, propositional reference would appear to be damning with respect to literature's connection to the world and, therefore, "truth." However, as I suggested in Chapter 1, presumably Lamarque and Olsen would have trouble applying their minimal conception of truth, perhaps not when assessing the *fact-stating* merit of

⁶³ Many of Lamarque and Olsen's reviewers express much admiration for Lamarque and Olsen's book: "[M]uch of what Lamarque and Olsen have to say in diagnosing and criticizing some of the excesses of recent literary theory has considerable force" (Neill 243); "L&O's bold and unencumbered claim will be more apt to rekindle that debate than a dozen more cautious formulations would [...] the book is a compendious guide to much that has been influential in recent theorizing about literature. It is clear, it is fair, it is lively" (Currie 913); "[*Truth, Fiction, and Literature*] is a clear and sustained defense of a number of distinctions crucial for thinking intelligibly about the relation of language and the world, and an effective antidote to a wide range of arguments of poststructuralist stripe against the viability of such distinctions [...] It is sure to be consulted, and rightly so, by those who essay these topics in the future" (Levinson 968); "The critical portions [of *Truth, Fiction, and Literature*] are masterly. What is admirable and even moving is the tone and spirit of the work—patient, even-tempered and far-removed from the hectoring and Nietzschean rhetoric that has come to characterise literary theory. A solid achievement" (Mothersill 217-8). "*Truth, Fiction, and Literature* [...] is an immense book, both in its size and its ambitions. It is an exemplary work of great depth and rigorous scholarship" (Carroll, "Review" 297); "Dismayed by literary theorists who blur disciplinary boundaries, challenge the canon, deny external reality, and threaten traditional humanist conceptions of literature, Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen advance clear and distinct ideas of truth, fiction, and literature in this lucid contribution to the culture wars" (Janes 715).

“Plato’s dialogues, Descartes’ *Meditations*, Voltaire’s, Diderot’s, Kierkegaard’s, Nietzsche’s and Borges’s prose works,” as well as the works of “Bataille, Blanchot, Levinas and Derrida” (Mikkonen 79), but certainly when considering these sorts of works more broadly as works of literature. Also, because of their hidden, potentially scientific, metaphysical prejudices, it seems difficult, at this point, to unequivocally accept what Lamarque and Olsen would consider the “facts” of such works to be, for even that may be too narrow. In any case, on Lamarque and Olsen’s conception, it would appear that the literary aspects of these sorts of works would not contribute to their fact-stating ability, and thus would have no association with truth. This allows me to summarise a key question of this chapter as follows: Is there more to truth than fact-stating as Lamarque and Olsen seem to define it?

In this chapter, I would like to continue to consider the ways in which Heidegger’s understanding of Truth as the disclosure of Being supplies a rebuttal to Lamarque and Olsen’s arguments against there being a place for truth in literature. However, while Heidegger himself may be well-suited to this purpose, I believe that Heidegger’s follower, Hans-Georg Gadamer, is better suited to secure a place for the truth in literature and art and to effectively critique those elements of Lamarque and Olsen’s theory I have argued are too restrictive. Thus, I will begin by considering what Gadamer says a theory of truth should entail. I will consider, with special attention, his distinction between the natural sciences and the human sciences (a position that differs notably from Lamarque and Olsen’s) as well as detail Gadamer’s defence of prejudice. I

will then note an important difference between Gadamer and Heidegger,⁶⁴ while also pointing out that this difference actually stems from a fundamental *agreement* between the two on the nature of truth.⁶⁵ Next, I will delve into some relevant aspects of Gadamer’s philosophy of art, including his analysis of the concept of play. I will conclude by indicating how Gadamer’s philosophy may resolve the problems I indicated in my critique of Lamarque and Olsen at the end of Chapter 1 and provides a place for the truth in art.

GADAMER: WHAT IS TRUTH?

One of Gadamer’s main concerns across his writing is to elucidate the operations of the human sciences—especially, to distinguish them from those of the natural sciences.

Gadamer is worried about this distinction because he recognised a growing trend, a trend arising out of the idea that the natural sciences have an easier time displaying their worth. (This idea clearly seems implicit in Lamarque and Olsen.) Natural science’s truths (that is: scientific *facts*) are, currently, more evident to people, whereas “[w]hat truth is for [the human sciences], what disseminates from them, is [currently] difficult to make visible” (Gadamer, “Truth in the Human Sciences” 25). This difficulty arises in part from the fact that the *objects* of study of the various human sciences are not clear.⁶⁶ If one were to

⁶⁴ My interpretation of the relation between Heidegger and Gadamer is indebted to Robert J. Dostal’s article, “The Experience of Truth for Gadamer and Heidegger: Taking Time and Sudden Lightning.”

⁶⁵ I use “truth” here with a minuscule “t” to refer to Heideggerian conceptions of truth because I will now use “truth” to refer to the general sense of truth, i.e. *any* experience of truth, not just the foundational, primal experience of *Truth* that I was trying to elucidate and contrast with the Carnapian conception of truth, in the last chapter. However, there will be the odd time in this chapter when it will be necessary to bring up a contrast between the general sense and the primal sense, and in those cases I will continue to use “Truth.”

⁶⁶ This relates to our discussion of Carnap. Consider this, from Alston, when he writes about the Logical Positivists: “Being struck by what they took to be the *unprogressive* state of philosophy in contrast with science, and with what they considered to be the puzzling nature of typical

phrase this borrowing terms from Lamarque and Olsen, one could say: If the human sciences are fact-stating disciplines, the *facts* that they potentially state (their “objects”) are constituted and ascertained in crucially different ways than those of the natural sciences. It is, in fact, misleading to consider history, philosophy, etc. as fact-stating discourses in the same sense as physics, chemistry, etc., at least according to Gadamer. But this is not because the human sciences do not seek truth; it is because they seek a distinct manifestation of truth from natural science.

Gadamer emphasises that the attitude that caused many in the human sciences to see their disciplines as needing to be more “scientific” arose out of an historically contingent context in which being “scientific” and seeking the definiteness associated with the results of natural science was overtly contrasted with the supposed inexactitude of the results traditionally delivered by the human sciences. This inexactitude or lack of quantifiable results, according to Gadamer, has been mistaken for a lack of objectivity and, consequently, a lack of access to truth in the traditional methodologies of the human sciences. Gadamer remarks on this issue in the following passage:

The modern concept of science has been formed by the development of natural science in the seventeenth century. We have it to thank for the growing control of nature and

philosophical pronouncements, they took it as obvious that the reason for the contrast of traditional philosophy with science in these respects stemmed from the fact that the statements of the former were not, as scientific hypotheses were, subject to empirical confirmation or disconfirmation. And since they took science, along with its roots in commonsense [*sic*] empirical thought and discourse, to be the paradigm of factual meaningfulness, it seemed apparent to them that capacity for empirical confirmation and disconfirmation was what factual meaningfulness amounted to” (26, my emphasis). Although, as I mentioned in the last chapter, the influence of *empirical* confirmation and disconfirmation has diminished in philosophical circles, the idea that all meaningfulness or stances require some variety of established scientific confirmation (usually logical or rational) has remained and is visible in Lamarque and Olsen’s emphasis on truth as found in propositional content. As previously mentioned, propositional content is precisely the form the truth must take in order for it to be scientifically assessed by the “established canons of deductive reasoning.”

so one expects the sciences of man and society to achieve a similar control of the human-historical world. Indeed, thanks to natural science, we expect even more of the human sciences, since the growing control of nature has increased rather than decreased our uneasiness with culture. The methods of natural science do not encompass everything that is worth knowing, namely the final purposes that all control of nature and human beings must serve. In the human sciences and in philosophy it is knowledge of another kind and order that one expects. And so it is to the point to speak for once, instead of what is common in the use of scientific methods for all science, of that which is unique and makes the human sciences so significant and worthy of questioning for us. (“THS” 25-6)

Thus, Gadamer is not saying that there is no place for scientific methodology in the human sciences, nor is he downplaying the importance of those methodologies and their connections to certain truthful aspects of reality. However, he does not focus on these elements, trying to show instead that the ways in which the human sciences are not exact, straightforward, *scientific*, do not interfere with a certain kind of connection to truth. In fact, the truth accessed by the human sciences in non-scientific ways is, in keeping with Heidegger, a fundamental access to truth. Furthermore, “[t]he fruitfulness of a knowledge-claim in the human sciences appears to be more closely related to the *intuition of the artist* than the methodical spirit of research” (“THS” 26; my emphasis).

It may appear as though, in appealing to this statement from Gadamer, I have begged the question of this thesis. That is, it may seem to be question-begging to simply accept Heidegger’s conception of the experience of truth, then claim that art is the paradigmatic example of such an experience, and then conclude that the human sciences (i.e. some of Lamarque and Olsen’s fact-stating disciplines) incorporate that kind of experience of truth. That is to say, it is one thing to prove that there is truth in art; it is another to merely say that what art does to us should be called an experience of truth. In

order to defend myself against this possible criticism, let me recapitulate some of what I have said in this thesis thus far.

Lamarque and Olsen have said that there is no truth in literature and they argue from an analytic philosophical standpoint to explain their claim. This standpoint boils down to the claim that the fundamental access to truth is, at best, the Cartesian conception of truth as subjective-certainty and what is generally considered certain is that which is obtained through a methodology akin to that of modern science. However, much like Lamarque and Olsen do in asserting that miasma has no truth to it, it remains to be established why the kind of precise facts ascertained by methodology similar to that of modern science are to be privileged over less overt presentations of truth in art or, potentially, in the human sciences. In discussing the arguments of Heidegger, I have presented the alternative position that Being provides the fundamental access to truth. Furthermore, scientific as well as Cartesian truth owe their access to truth to something that Heidegger and Gadamer will say is revealed in the experience of art. Recall that Heidegger says that even the *fact* must *stand* in the unconcealed, “the fact must *show itself* to be fact” (“Origin” 50; my emphasis). This identifies a crucial issue in the debate about whether or not there is truth in art (that I already have mentioned): Whether there is truth in art depends on what one believes the truth is and where one thinks the belief in truth comes from. I have argued against Lamarque and Olsen’s minimal theory by saying that they, in their general reliance on analytic philosophy, make certain ultimately unsubstantiated assumptions concerning the two aforementioned considerations. These are assumptions that Gadamer has opposed by pointing out the historical factors contributing to the adoption of the scientific method and the truth-as-certainty as the

measure of every discipline's access to truth. Thus, there is something significant in the historical progression of this question of the truth in art. What thinkers, like Lamarque and Olsen, assume about how the debate ought to be carried out (i.e. beginning with an "uncontentious," minimal, scientific theory of truth) is not necessarily correct. Rather than begging the question in making the experience of art our starting point, I am trying to bring attention to what I think is the inadequacy of their starting point.

One of the main problems currently with viewing art as a discipline with an access to truth is (as I just mentioned), as Gadamer says, that science (or perhaps just the influence of modern science since the seventeenth century in philosophy), due to the compelling or obvious nature of its results, has overtaken the role of defining the condition by which any discipline or discourse can ascertain truth. However, this admits of a problem I raised in Chapter 2, that of the Kantian lack of connection between the human and things-in-themselves and the analytic philosophical need for certainty. Both of these notions form a part of modern science's attempt to circumscribe the understanding of truth. But, if Heidegger is correct and one ought not to appeal to the need for certainty inaugurated by Descartes—by affirming an innocent connection to things-in-themselves via an appeal to the disclosure of Being—then there is legitimacy in claiming that what art does is give us an experience of truth. Heidegger contends that what art does is *grant* us an experience of truth, in a way that is similar to the disclosure of Being. (Elaborating this will be a key focus in the upcoming sections of this chapter.)

Consider, furthermore, that the question of whether art provides truth is not something we have always been asking. Gadamer writes:

[A]s far as we know, it was in the context of the new philosophical outlook and the new claim to knowledge

raised by Socratic thought that art was required to justify itself for the first time in the history of the West. Here, for the first time, it ceased to be self-evident that the diffuse reception and interpretation of traditional subject matter handed down in pictorial or narrative form did possess the right to truth that it had claimed. (Gadamer, “The Relevance of the Beautiful” 3)

This indicates that artistic truth was criticised precisely from the philosophical perspective, which insists on the illegitimacy of “the diffuse reception and interpretation of traditional subject matter,” and insists on the necessity of intersubjective, isomorphic representation in the mind as the model for truth. The model is that everyone must think the same thing, rather than seeing the “diffuse reception and interpretation” as indicating another aspect of truth, one that is located outside the mind and may exceed our precise, scientific or analytic conceptualisations. It was, in fact, this philosophical perspective, according to Heidegger, which began with Plato⁶⁷ to cover up the truth as disclosure, and caused us to descend “into the forgetfulness of Being,” in the West (Dostal 61-2). In addition, this philosophical tradition, as one that ultimately *forgot* Being, is one that sees more value in scepticism and doubt than any other mode of thinking. Such scepticism culminates in those dominant strands of philosophy that do not see any relevance to the encounter with Being, to the potentially transformative realisation that there is something rather than nothing. Conversely, those who do see some relevance to this, begin their philosophy in a different place (in the innocent experience of Truth as disclosure).

Furthermore, there is a sense in which artists have never doubted their connection to truth, though they may doubt their connection to that which philosophers or scientists

⁶⁷ Even though Heidegger has this criticism of Plato, it would be a mistake to think that Plato’s philosophy is, therefore, entirely misguided. Heidegger sees this trend beginning with Plato, but Plato’s influence is multifarious. In fact, one of Gadamer’s principal sources of inspiration concerning his conception of truth and art is Plato (even given his unkind treatment of poets in his *Republic*).

reductively consider to be “truth.” The whole project of Heideggerian (and Husserlian) phenomenology was precisely an attempt to go back before such sceptical thinking arose, and develop the connection with reality at a more innocent or primary level, because modern scepticism had gone too far and obscured such a connection.

Nevertheless, it has come to be seen as necessary to reject this more innocent standpoint and to adopt the scientific conception of truth. Thus, as Gadamer wrote, at a certain point in history, the human sciences, those disciplines with an alternative connection to a fundamental kind of truth, began to forsake that connection and sought instead the truth as certainty, in an attempt to ensure their continued relevance. However, the human sciences, through the adoption of scientific methodologies, rather than see themselves flourish, in fact had those scientific methodologies turn against them. For example:

Historicism, which sees historical determination everywhere, has destroyed the pragmatic meaning of historical studies. Its refined art of understanding weakens the strength to value unconditionally, in which the ethical reality of life consists. Its epistemological culmination is relativism, its consequence is nihilism. The insight into the conditionedness of all knowledge by the historical and social powers that move the present signifies not only a theoretical weakening of our belief in knowledge [or truth] but also a factual defenselessness of our knowledge against the arbitrary powers of the age. (Gadamer “THS” 27)

In connection with the notion of our belief in knowledge’s *defencelessness* against the arbitrary powers of the age, we may even recognise that currently, under the influence of something like Kuhnian relativism,⁶⁸ science itself is not thought of by some as a

⁶⁸ This variety of relativism is something that Thomas Kuhn himself did not believe or intend in formulating his theory about scientific revolutions. Freeman J. Dyson quotes Kuhn as having said, ““I am not a Kuhnian!”” (Dyson 16).

discipline in which one appeals to absolute truth. It is assumed, at least in some philosophical circles, that everything that scientists discover will one day be overturned, thus making even scientific findings *doubtful*. Thus what they discover is not truth, but pragmatic models of the world (which confusingly come to be called “truth,” because it is assumed that this is the best we can achieve). They discover truth in a Carnapian or Quinian sense. With respect to natural science’s “knowledge” of the world, we pass through ultimately arbitrary paradigms; we do not progress toward or within *truth*. This, again, invokes the Kantian idea of truth as not submitting to reality itself, but as the ultimately subjective framework in which we operate *only* conceptually. It also reveals a danger in the scientific conception of truth, *if it is thought of as foundational*. It is a danger that is well articulated in this quote from Christopher Dawson: “We cannot [...] be sure that the world which science has made will be as favourable to the production of scientific genius as the world that made science” (219). That is, what allowed us to establish the rich and powerful resource that is modern science was not a culture based in the sceptical and reductive principles of modern science. Gadamer appears to have a similar worry to Dawson. Of course one loses a robust definition of truth (*one forgets Being*) if one begins in doubt. But we did not begin in doubt, as Gadamer’s historical considerations propose. We did not always find it reasonable to consider science as the arbiter of truth. Therefore, Gadamer, following Heidegger, rejects such a foundational conception of truth (truth as needing to be purged of doubt) and he, consequently, proceeds via a trusting analysis of art and the fundamental experience of Being in order to explain the truth that is ascertained in the human sciences.

TRUTH IN THE HUMAN SCIENCES

The notion of fact-stating, as found in Lamarque and Olsen, is particularly relevant in this discussion of Gadamer, especially what distinguishes fact-stating, so conceived, from the connection to truth of the works produced in the humanities. Gadamer considers the kind of fact-stating to which Lamarque and Olsen refer, that which is found, paradigmatically, in the natural sciences, to be *teleological*, whereas the human sciences ought to adopt a different approach in pursuing truth.⁶⁹ He writes, “the object of the natural sciences can be described idealiter [ideally] as what would be known in the perfect knowledge of nature,” i.e. this is the telos of *natural* science, which it established for itself in the seventeenth century. However, “it is senseless to speak of a perfect knowledge of history.” This is because, “in the human sciences the particular research questions concerning tradition that we are interested in pursuing are motivated in a special way by the present and its interests,” that is, “[t]he theme and object of research are actually constituted by the motivation of the inquiry” (Gadamer, *TM* 285). This passage clearly requires considerable unpacking, but what is immediately evident is that this distinguishes Gadamer from Lamarque and Olsen, who group natural science, philosophy, and history as being among the fact-stating discourses, due to their view that there is a common fact-stating *stance* that the authors of such works take up with respect to their writing. Gadamer’s analysis is more complex, focusing on the deeper level: Within that writing, what is the “fact” of history? What is the “fact” of philosophy? And how are they best accessed? Whatever these “facts” may be, some objects of study will

⁶⁹ One may recall Dummett’s claims from Chapter 2 concerning whether analytic philosophy can or should be “systematic,” i.e. produce “truths.” This is an attempt to adopt the methodologies of the natural sciences in a human science like philosophy; it is not a similar project to that of Gadamer.

not be sought by the fact-seeking stance of the natural sciences, nor by the logical analysis of propositional content. But, in dividing the human sciences as well as their self-understanding from “the model of the natural sciences,” Gadamer hopes to show that this is not an “impairment of [the human sciences’] objectivity, but [...] something of positive value” (*TM* 286).

THE DEFENCE OF PREJUDICE

“Since the human intellect is too weak to operate without prejudices, it is at least fortunate to have been educated with true prejudices” (Gadamer, *TM* 275). This quote displays, in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek way, Gadamer’s stance on prejudice; he wrote this about his own education in Germany. In defending prejudice, Gadamer, particularly in *Truth and Method*, is reacting against a mode of thinking that he identifies with the Enlightenment and modern science, which involves saying that in order to understand reality (whatever that may be), one must eliminate all one’s prejudices, and think in an “unbiased,” “objective” way. This involves the repudiation of the past. The Enlightenment established a concept of reason that was (and still is) thought of as, precisely, *ahistorical* in order to, ostensibly, establish a culture based on principles that are held with the certainty afforded by “objective,” “unbiased,” and, above all, *self-certain* reason. The point was to radically reinvent ourselves and our culture, eschewing all our previously “unfounded” beliefs stemming from: religion, tradition, authority, that is, anything but reason (defined by the Enlightenment) in and of itself. This stance may produce results, in particular for the natural sciences, but the problem Gadamer sees with the Enlightenment and its powerful historical influence is that it was not limited to just

one discipline (i.e. natural science). It was put forward as a universal demand that would shape all understanding.

In response to this, Gadamer would say that our relation to our past in the humanities cannot be given over to the scientific model with its quest for the “perfect knowledge” of nature. Gadamer denies that this ideal renunciation of all prejudices is even possible, let alone desirable. The scientific model requires a certain conception of objectivity, it requires that one look at objects in a so-called “unbiased,” “removed,” “completely unprejudiced” way. Gadamer does not dispute the importance of a scientific understanding of objects, but he does not believe that it provides complete knowledge of a thing, nor would he qualify such understanding as *actually* unprejudiced. In fact, the scientific outlook is an example of particularly extreme prejudice. Gadamer’s notion of prejudice simply means that we consider certain disclosed aspects of a thing and erase the relevance of others. But these other aspects, that may potentially become disclosed, are not irrelevant, just irrelevant to the perspective in question.

There is no view free from prejudice, according to Gadamer, but Gadamer sees this as a reason to give up this false ideal of the Enlightenment to devalue and distance oneself from one’s prejudices. For Gadamer, the fact that we cannot escape our perspective does not eliminate our connection to reality. Rather, it is *through* our perspectives, our prejudices, that we access truth. On this issue, Gadamer writes:

The overcoming of all prejudices, this global demand of the Enlightenment, will itself prove to be a prejudice [...] Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms—i.e. it is not its own master but remains constantly dependant on the given circumstances in which it operates [...] Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, in society, and the state in which we live.

The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror [...] *the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.* (Gadamer, *TM* 277-8)

Very importantly, Gadamer, by saying that reason only exists in concrete historical terms, is not denying the importance of reason, in a kind of postmodernism. Saying that reason is dependent on its “given circumstances” is to say that in any application of reason there is an operation of prejudice (this is precisely what the Enlightenment denied), one that grants us a certain, circumscribed access to reality. But this is still access to reality. Reason itself is empty and must be filled; thus it operates *through* prejudices. Therefore, rational, philosophical self-examination yields truths (as the Enlightenment maintained), but so does viewing oneself as a member of one’s society or family, as a part of one’s tradition (as the Enlightenment denied). Reason does not belong only to the model of thinking devised by the Enlightenment. One actually understands the truths afforded by reason better in conceiving of reason as relying on the historically situated and finite, rather than thinking that Enlightenment-reason gives the once-and-for-all truth of the matter. Gadamer writes:

A person who believes he is free of prejudices, relying on the objectivity of his procedures and denying that he is himself conditioned by historical circumstances, experiences the power of the prejudices that unconsciously dominate him as a *vis a tergo*. A person who does not admit that he is dominated by prejudices will fail to see what manifests itself by their light. (*TM* 354)

For Gadamer one must be aware of one’s prejudices, but prejudices are not themselves problematic, “[i]t is the tyranny of *hidden* prejudices that make us deaf to what speaks to us in tradition” (*TM* 272; my emphasis).

It is relevant to stress here how science has a limited sense of its own history.

One must examine the prejudices of the scientific stance in order to understand this more fully. Consider, from Gadamer:

The history of mathematics or of the natural sciences is also a part of the history of the human spirit and reflects its destinies. Nevertheless, it is *not* just historical naivete [*sic*] when the natural scientist writes the history of his subject in terms of the present state of knowledge. For him errors and wrong turnings are of historical interest only, because the progress of research is the self-evident standard of examination [...] This [historical] interest does not affect the epistemic value of discoveries in those fields [...] But scientific research as such derives the law of its development not from [its historical] circumstances but from the law of the object it is investigating, which conceals its methodical efforts. (*TM* 284; my emphasis)

In “conceal[ing] its methodical efforts,” science sets itself up not as a prejudiced stance among many, geared towards discovering certain aspects of reality, but as no stance at all; it styles itself as the perspectiveless, “pure” understanding envisioned by the Enlightenment. Science cannot understand its own history but, within the limited ways in which it approaches its subject matter, it does not need to. However, a student of the human sciences, like the historian, cannot afford to ignore history’s own past and the diverse ways in which the discipline of history has been carried out. The “facts” of history do not operate by a discrediting of the past that has been handed down. It is required, in fact, that one pay close attention to what is disclosed in the perspectives of past historians, because history studies something of which all historians are a part. Science can take for granted the adoption of the “perspectiveless” stance because science, as a prejudice, is set up as that which does not care about and consistently repudiates its own past perspectives. History cannot follow suit.

Gadamer is saying that our prejudices are those aspects of our mental life that we do not criticise. If we unearth our prejudices, instead of placing them, in the style of the Enlightenment, under erasure (thus limiting ourselves to holding *only* the prejudices of the Enlightenment), we may find something there to preserve. In the human sciences, we may deal with truths (at the level of disclosed being) discovered long ago; such truths remain true today if we understand from what prejudice they were presented. Thus, such truths are justified in a way that differs notably from the justification in Lamarque and Olsen's minimal theory of truth, which is based entirely on the established canons of deductive reasoning. This makes Lamarque and Olsen's position similar to that of the Enlightenment-type thinker that Gadamer is criticising. The method of Enlightenment-reasoning, through which critique has become dominant, requires that we submit all the methodologies of the past to the one that is currently held. It is a method that tends to separate us from our history and requires that we doubt what we have been given. Such a method has limits, however, because, "history does not belong to us; we belong to it" (Gadamer, *TM* 278), and, by being *a part* of history, there are things that our history has given us that we do not doubt, that we cannot treat as scientific objects up for scientific scrutiny. A critical theory of truth, as found in much philosophy following Descartes' evil demon thought-experiment (from Kant, to Carnap, to Quine, to Lamarque and Olsen), insists that the true is only what survives such a test. Gadamer is saying that clearly the unwavering critical stance itself is just one stance among many, one with a relevant history and origin—and one that we do not tend to critique! Clearly doubt has its place, but there is no less rationality in trust than in doubt: "Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in

a self-evident way in the family, in society, and the state in which we live.” None of these self-understandings is complete, but all contain truth. Thus, Lamarque and Olsen’s proposal that history is primarily a fact-stating discipline is not so easily maintained because, in the history of history, one did not always operate with the modern prejudice for literality. For example, we still consider Herodotus (c. 484 – 425 BC) an historian, and correctly, even though Herodotus writes history including fanciful elements.⁷⁰ Thus one cannot take the modern historian as constitutive of *the* historian. It is only with a theory like Gadamer’s that we can understand how Herodotus and the modern historian can both be considered historians, thus understanding more fully what it means to be an historian. The prejudice for literality of the modern historian accesses some important aspects of reality, but so too did Herodotus’ prejudice.

Part of what it means to be an historian is to let certain aspects of texts speak for themselves. Such research is in significant ways closer to artistic or literary interpretation than modern analysis. Attuning oneself to the prejudices of authors in order to discover the truths they present will change, not just from author to author, or text to text, but from prejudice to prejudice. Thus, the kind of truth revealed through prejudice cannot be given a systematised method of discovery. Each prejudiced text, in an odd way, speaks for itself, in the sense that its prejudice establishes its own unique rules of comprehension. The modern/Enlightenment view of truth is based on, ostensibly, the repudiation of all prejudices. But what occurs instead is the establishment of a specific *method* for ascertaining truth, and those establishing such a method do not realise that this method is itself only attuned to certain kinds of disclosures of fact. Such a method of analysis does

⁷⁰ Unlike his contemporary Thucydides (c. 460 – c. 395 BC) who wrote much like the contemporary historian.

not cause one to consider each text as speaking for itself. It says instead that the only truth a text can speak is what is established by *this* method. It requires that everyone artificially accept the same prejudice and the fullness of the truth will be lost if one does not accommodate the utter variety of legitimate prejudices.

HEIDEGGER & GADAMER: LIGHTNING & LINGERING

I would like to point out some interesting similarities and differences between Gadamer and Heidegger. This will help to explain why I believe Gadamer is more appropriate than Heidegger for addressing the problems concerning Lamarque and Olsen's definition of truth. It also will help us to make the transition into discussing Gadamer's specific views on art. The similarities and differences between Gadamer and Heidegger are interesting in that Gadamer, throughout his writing, modestly presents himself as a continuer of Heidegger's work, as opposed to presenting himself as a more original thinker. Gadamer does this because he felt that Heidegger had "successfully broken through the impasse of modern philosophy" (Dostal 48).⁷¹ Gadamer clearly saw himself as a Heideggerian thinker, operating, particularly, with Heidegger's understanding of the primal experience of Truth. In his essay, "What is Truth," Gadamer states quite directly, "Truth is unconcealedness" ("What is Truth" 36; cf. Dostal 48). However, Gadamer wished to make Heidegger's thought (particularly the later Heidegger's thought) accessible in new ways (Dostal 55). It is primarily in the description of the processes through which this event of unconcealedness affects us that these two thinkers diverge. For Heidegger, "truth overcomes us suddenly, in a moment, like a flash of lightning," whereas for

⁷¹ I believe it is reasonable to understand the "impasse of modern philosophy" (as it relates to my project) as those philosophical notions that connect with the sceptical stance of Kant on the human connection to the things-in-themselves and the requirement that truth be a logical matter of certainty.

Gadamer, “the exemplary experience of truth comes when we take time to dwell on the matter at hand (*Sache selbst*) in conversation with another” (Dostal 49). Before considering this difference in more depth, we ought to consider the common foundation on which this difference is based. This will also allow me further to elucidate some elements of Gadamer’s understanding of truth.

FINITUDE AND SEEING: SIMILARITIES BETWEEN HEIDEGGER AND GADAMER

As I have already mentioned, Heidegger eschews the stance that requires that truth incorporate the modern philosophical value of certainty. According to Dostal, this is one of the reasons Gadamer follows Heidegger in his conception of truth; Heidegger describes human access to truth, “[rejecting] any implicit divine model of self-certainty, complete clarity, total transparency, e.g. any god’s-eye point of view”; instead Heidegger “affirms [...] human finitude” (49). This concept of finitude is absolutely central for both Heidegger and Gadamer. Importantly, this finitude does not result in scepticism and the dominance of subjectivity, which Gadamer saw as leading to the aforementioned problems of modern philosophy. Human finitude, as mentioned last chapter, requires that any revealing of the truth also be a concealing:

Things always present a profile of themselves to us. As we move around a thing, different profiles are presented. [But w]e can never see the ‘backside’ [...] There is no view that is without perspective. (Dostal 50)

However, “this perspectivism is not subjectivism” for the very reason that it is the things themselves that present themselves in our perspectives (recall that Heidegger, as well as Gadamer, all following Husserl, reject Kantianism). It is this that establishes a focus on realism and distinguishes Husserl’s (and, following him, Heidegger’s) phenomenology

from subjectivist positions like “the transcendental idealism of Kant or the perspectivism of Nietzsche” (Dostal 50). This emphasis on finitude is also the basis of Gadamer’s defence of prejudice. Thus, Gadamer faithfully adopts this element of Heidegger’s vision of truth.

One other crucial similarity between Heidegger and Gadamer is that, in their sharing the conception of the experience of Truth, both see this as requiring that there be no distinction between theory and practice; “[t]he thought of Being, made possible by its ‘openedness,’ *should transform one*” (Dostal 56; my emphasis). Consider that Heidegger gave up on what he called “metaphysics,” or the scientific, systematic, or “philosophical” attempt to discuss Being. This is the attempt to discuss Being in established philosophical concepts and terms. This is why *Being and Time* remains unfinished; it was a work of “metaphysics.” But clearly Heidegger did not actually abandon the project he began in *Being and Time*. He seems to have simply changed his style of writing about his subject matter. However, the way in which he changed his style of writing is relevant to our consideration of Gadamer and the question concerning the nature of truth.

One of the problems Heidegger had with “metaphysics” (or even “philosophy”) was that it argued for an experience that he saw as ultimately receptive. “Metaphysics,” as Heidegger saw it, relies, for all intents and purposes, on what Lamarque and Olsen call “the use of logical argument assessable through established canons of deductive reasoning” (234).⁷² But, ultimately, Heidegger seems to have decided that the understanding of the primal experience of Truth cannot be forced upon people, because no matter how strongly one argues for it, nothing necessitates that one’s interlocutor

⁷² Recall that these established canons are present in philosophy, but absent in literature, and that this absence is one of the reasons Lamarque and Olsen argue against there being truth in literature and for literature’s ability to instruct in the way that philosophical thought experiments do.

experience the pull of Truth. The words may pass in one ear and out the other, as it were. Truth's relevance to philosophy relies on people *seeing* it, and one cannot make another person see Truth, even through logical argument. One can guide others as far as possible, but the final step is taken by them, or, better, it is effected by the "openedness" of Being itself. Heidegger recognised that the established canons of deductive reasoning, for all their ability to access certain truths, have come to be seen as the *only* convincing method of argumentation by professionals involved in the trade of philosophy. Furthermore, that trade is one that conceives of truth as certainty, Cartesian truth. It is a trade that resulted in the destruction of the understanding of truth as disclosure as well as the logicism of Carnap. The "philosophical" endeavour of "metaphysics," for Heidegger, came to be (to borrow a term from Lamarque and Olsen) a *socially defined discipline*. It was not, thereby, necessarily false or arbitrary but severely limited in that it no longer had the means to access the most fundamental Truth, on which the Cartesian view of truth as certainty is based. A "philosophical" study of Being is based on a logic that belies *Dasein's* fundamental ontology and ultimately results in the Kantian separation from Being. For Heidegger, it is Being that makes sense of *true* metaphysics, and Being relies on no humanly established canons; Being is disclosed. Furthermore, we understand the disclosure of Being, that is, we have the opportunity to *see* the relevance of Truth, from our engagement with works of art. Art, for Heidegger, is true metaphysics.

Heidegger abandoned "philosophy" stating that the poet is the one who understands Truth or the disclosure of Being best. On this conception, one need not argue for the Truth (even if, in disciplines like philosophy, one must still argue for *truths*), because the most primal experience of Truth is a matter of paying attention to the

disclosure of Being, *seeing* it for what it is (and not subsequently *forgetting* Being, as Heidegger says the West did). It is a matter of “letting beings be” (Dostal 56; 57), not a matter of seeking certainty and gaining control. Such experiences of truth, involving certainty and control, come later, as it were. We may understand Gadamer as one who saw Being in exactly the same light. Gadamer speaks of Heidegger as one who recognised something fundamental, something that overcomes the underlying sceptical currents of modern philosophy. Moreover, Gadamer speaks, in his own voice, as one who *saw* in the same way Heidegger did, not as one who was actively *convinced* by Heidegger’s arguments on this matter. Argument has its place, but not at the origin. Heidegger believes it necessary to begin *true* metaphysics with this experience. Truth as disclosure relies on Being working upon you. It relies on the contingency of your *seeing*. This Heidegger and Gadamer hold in common. Thus one does not find Gadamer, even in his magnum opus, explaining his adoption of, or actively arguing for, the conception of truth that Heidegger used (Dostal 47). He simply adopts it, and tries to explain it in new ways. After these initial agreements, the two thinkers go in somewhat different directions.

LIGHTNING

Heidegger refers to the “event of truth” by the word *Lichtung*, “which is often translated as ‘lightning’ [but, l]iterally, a *Lichtung* is a clearing in the forest, an opening amidst the trees that allows the light to penetrate” (Dostal 57).⁷³ The word *Lichtung* sometimes comes with the connotation (as it would, describing a forest clearing) of stillness or quietness. However, the experience of truth for Heidegger also comes to be referred to

⁷³ This is the term of which Tugendhat made use in “the clearing of being,” which I mentioned last chapter.

by the starker flash of *lightning*, that is, “*der Blitz*” (Dostal 57). This apparition of truth is abrupt, it only lasts a second, and Heidegger describes it while emphasising the lack of mediation that is involved in such an experience. This emphasis on the lack of mediation can be seen as stemming from or contributing to Heidegger’s rejection of “philosophy,” “metaphysics,” as well as the place of argument in metaphysics, these being endeavours that are essentially mediatory.

One of the reasons that I do not believe that Heidegger is the best thinker to most convincingly secure a place for truth in art is because his conception of the experience of truth leans toward being overly individualistic: The *lightning* tends to appear to one in solitude and carries with it a sense of being incommunicable. It is no wonder that Heidegger eventually privileged the poet, who is a writer who tends to create his or her own methods for communicating, often marked by a fair degree of idiosyncrasy. Heidegger seems to have thought of himself as essentially a poet, which is why he “leaves philosophy behind for thinking” (Dostal 58), why he abandoned the philosophical project in *Being and Time*. Later in his career, Heidegger also abandoned his earlier “methodological atheism” and came to talk often of the *gods*. Furthermore:

He presents the event and truth of Being as the fourfold – sky and earth, gods and mortals. The meeting of these four, as in Greek mythology, is *lightning*, Zeus’ thunderbolt. (Dostal 58; my emphasis)

One must see the poetic quality of such statements and realise that understanding them requires something like aesthetic, rather than analytic philosophical or logical

interpretation. This is, of course, something that Heidegger would have thought of as vindicating his conception of truth, rather than counting as a mark against it.⁷⁴

In and of itself (in relation to my project) Heidegger's decision to express himself more poetically and praise the poet for his access to truth is not problematic. The issue is that he often appears to do this at the expense of other discourses, in particular, philosophy. In this sense he adopts a position that is opposite to Lamarque and Olsen's. This is problematic in that it does not seem fruitful to deny philosophy its access to truth, even if it is Cartesian-variety truth. Furthermore, part of the argument of this thesis is that if one operates with a more innocent understanding of truth, i.e. truth that is defined by access to that which lies outside Carnap's logical frameworks, there is no sense in denying one discourse's access to truth (as Lamarque and Olsen do with literature) or to radically privilege the methods of one discourse over those of others (as Heidegger does with poetry). That is, if truth is defined as something that affects us as (human) beings concerned with Being, then all human discourse would appear to have something to do with truth, because Being is just such an expansive notion. The most attractive quality of Gadamer's philosophy is that he manages to use Heidegger's understanding of Truth, as well as his obvious deference to art and the artist, in order to see philosophical dialogue as a fruitful method for ascertaining truth. Crucially, Gadamer did not just accept Heidegger's disclosure of Being; he tried to show how philosophy and dialogue were ultimately tied to and reliant on it, thus redeeming what Heidegger saw as worthy of abandonment. But in so doing, the experience of truth must become one that, rather than partaking in the abruptness and immediate change of *lightning*... takes time.

⁷⁴ This is something with which Carnap clearly disagreed.

LINGERING

For Gadamer the experience of truth does not necessarily require suddenness. Gadamer's main analogy for the experience of truth is the back and forth of conversation. It is not the case that Heidegger gives no importance to conversation; however, for Heidegger, "[t]he conversation [...] is that between gods and mortals [...] a holy, religious, and poetic conversation" (Dostal 61). Once again, these terms carry with them an image of the experience of truth taking place in isolation or solitude, possibly that of the reclusive poet or the mystic. Dostal mentions that Heidegger valued the work of Sophocles, "[the] poet who listens to the gods and responds to their call in language" (61). On the other hand, for Gadamer, "the exemplary conversations are those of Socrates who is not concerned in the first place with naming the gods but with human questions about human matters (for which the gods may well be relevant)" (61). This statement from Dostal shows an interesting element of Gadamer's thought, and it is well explained by (once again) quoting a line from one of Gadamer's essays: "There is nothing that cannot mean something to [man's understanding]" ("Aesthetics and Hermeneutics" 103). Heidegger's presentation of the experience of truth seems to potentially exclude or diminish the apparent relevance of some more ordinary experiences, whereas Gadamer's goes back to ordinary conversation, where "human matters," the elements of life that are close to the ground, so to speak, are the focus. However, "the gods" may well *also* be relevant. Thus, there is nothing that cannot be a gateway to truth for Gadamer. And whereas Heidegger saw it as necessary to emphasise the lack of mediation in the experience of truth, "we find throughout Gadamer's work an affirmation of mediation, conversation, of transition, and the dialectic of concepts" (Dostal 62). Gadamer sees no need to assert that

it is best that one accesses the truth directly, an indirect or mediated access is still an access. Furthermore, because of Gadamer's redeemed view of such mediatory endeavours, immediacy no longer seems as important as it did in Heidegger's writings. Thus, one need not focus only on the artist as one who accesses truth. Therefore, Gadamer's writing remains largely philosophical in style, whereas Heidegger's becomes more obscure and poetic. However, for Gadamer, the artist nevertheless provides us with the example of the fundamental experience of Truth, and it is this that informs philosophical dialogue. The experience of art is a particularly apt heuristic that philosophers can use to understand and explain elements of truth.

Truth, for Gadamer, is experienced through "tarrying" or "lingering" (*Verweilen*) (Dostal 62). This is, in one sense, clearly opposed to the immediacy or abruptness of Heidegger's description of the experience of truth because, obviously, the idea of experiencing something while *lingering* is the opposite of experiencing something abruptly. But it ought to be mentioned that there is a sense in which Gadamer's and Heidegger's descriptions of the experience of truth come together. That is, each may be describing different parts of the same experience: Heidegger's abrupt flash of *lightning* seems to be the possible end result of Gadamer's *tarrying* or *lingering*. One has perhaps had such an epiphanic moment after hours of standing in front of a painting or after a few days of reviewing a film in one's mind. Gadamer does, at times, seem to propose such a connection, as he does here:

"The true experience of thinking is [...] the sudden flash of understanding. From unrelenting effort toward understanding comes insight suddenly." (Dostal 64)

Thus, Gadamer agrees with Heidegger's basic understanding of such matters, but he also investigates some further implications of this understanding of the experience of truth.

Gadamer's analysis of art as festival displays his somewhat distinct conception of the experience of truth. In considering festival, Gadamer reflects on what festive celebration has in common with our experiences of artworks. Gadamer writes, "[a] festival is an experience of community and represents community in its most perfect form"; "[festive experiences] allow no separation between one person and another"; "when someone fails to take part, we say that he excludes himself and sets himself apart from the festivities" ("Relevance" 39). Thus, this is a communal experience, one that joins people together. This is one way in which Gadamer differs from Heidegger: The experience of truth is described as happening not only for a solitary individual but also on a much grander scale; whole communities of people all experience the same thing when they are taken up in something like a festival. However, in saying that a whole community experiences the same thing, this is not the modern notion of truth, i.e. isomorphic, intersubjective representation in the mind. There is variation in the thoughts of each person, but all are in attendance on the same thing, and all receive pieces or profiles of it. This, for Gadamer, mirrors the communal experience of art; everyone is joined in their experience of an artwork, even if it affects us all in somewhat different ways from a subjective standpoint (re: "the diffuse reception and interpretation of traditional subject matter"), the experience is, nevertheless, the same.⁷⁵ Furthermore,

⁷⁵ This may sound somewhat controversial or even naïve; however, although it is beyond my scope here to engage this matter in more depth, consider the following quote in which Gadamer deals with this complicated matter of how multiple people interact with works of art, all experiencing the same thing: "What [...] is the evocative function of a story? I shall take the famous example: *The Brothers Karamazov*. I can see the stairs down which Smerdjakov tumbles. Doestoevsky gives us a certain description. As a result, I know exactly what this staircase looks

Gadamer says that this communal interaction is an intentional gathering together, but one in which “no one can say exactly for what it is that we have come together”; in this sense, we do not decide before it happens what the experience will be and we may even have trouble adequately describing it in straightforward terms afterwards. Nevertheless, it is one in which “the intention [...] unites us and prevents us as individuals from falling into private conversations and private, subjective experiences” (“Relevance” 40). This notion in Gadamer also departs from Lamarque and Olsen’s minimal theory of truth, in which propositional content is assessed by the established canons of deductive reasoning, which makes truth something that is univocal for all individuals because it is located in the rules for assessing the simple proposition, rather than issuing from the thing itself in a complex (or “diffuse”) way, as it does for Gadamer.

like. I know where it starts, how it gets darker and then turns to the left. All this is clear to me in the concrete way and yet I also know that no one else ‘sees’ the staircase the way I do. But anyone who is receptive to this masterly narrative will ‘see’ the staircase in a most specific way and be convinced that he sees it as it really is. This is the open space creative language gives us and which we fill out by following what the writer evokes. And similarly in the visual arts. A synthetic act is required in which we must unite and bring together many different aspects. We ‘read’ a picture, as we say, like a text. We start to ‘decipher’ a picture like a text. It was not cubist painting that first set us this task, though it did so in a drastically radical manner by demanding that we successfully superimpose upon one another the various facets or aspects of the same thing, to produce finally on the canvas the thing depicted in all its facets and thus in a new colourful plasticity [... T]here is always some reflective and intellectual accomplishment involved [...] The challenge of the work brings the constructive accomplishment of the intellect into play” (“Relevance” 27-8). Thus, Gadamer says that even in realist paintings or portraits, if one merely looks at them as though they referred, in the style of something like crime-scene photographs, one has not engaged with such paintings as works of art. Therefore, our personal or idiosyncratic constructions of certain evocative elements is not what one is assessing as true in art. Though everyone does not “see” the same thing, it is our role to construct these aspects of artworks, for we, as receivers of the artwork, are part of the artwork; it is part of art that it should inspire the multitudinous constructions of every receiver. What it evokes is not to be considered in standard philosophical or conceptual terms and thus the differences between the different sets of stairs we all see are inconsequential. We are united in attending to what the art evokes and what it evokes (all its multitudinous instantiations) is what is true. The diversity does not diminish but enhances the truth of the work of art.

This special, communal unification involves another essential aspect of the festival, its temporal character, which “does not dissolve into a series of separate moments” (“Relevance” 41). Gadamer explains this by referring to the fact that festivals *recur* and “[w]e do not describe a festival as a recurring one because we can assign a specific place in time to it, but rather the reverse: the time in which it occurs only arises through the recurrence of the festival itself” (“Relevance” 41). By this Gadamer means that we do not assign a festival a certain measure of time, which is to say that we cannot really force a true festive celebration to happen, just as one cannot force interpretive insight when viewing a work of art (nor can one, to recall Heidegger, force the transformative experience of Truth). The festival arises when this protracted time arises, when celebration comes about. Obviously some festivals do recur on a strict annual basis, but Gadamer is considering those festive celebrations where:

[W]e do not calculate time abstractly in terms of weeks and months. Such moments represent the primacy of something that happens in its own time and at the proper time. (“Relevance” 41)

Thus, the kind of experience of time to which Gadamer is referring is not our ordinary conception of time as a fixed measure, indicated by the clock. It is clear that time passes during a festival, but it is not this kind of measured time. Also, one would have a hard time indicating the exact beginning or end of a festive celebration. Even if one sets a strict time-frame for a party, e.g. from 8:00 p.m. until 12:00 a.m., nothing necessitates that festive celebration will occur within that kind of designated window.

What has been described thus far implies two somewhat different conceptions of time: 1) That which is indicated by the festival or art; 2) Our ordinary conception of time. Our ordinary conception of time is one in which “time is at our disposal,” and boredom is

an extreme example of this: “When bored, we experience the featureless and repetitive flow of time as an agonizing presence”; this is “empty time that needs to be filled” (Gadamer, “Relevance” 41-2). In saying that these are two somewhat distinct conceptions of time, Gadamer is indicating that it is illegitimate to say that such a conception of time (as experienced in boredom), as a sequence of discrete, measurable fractions of the clock, is *more real* than the one indicated by the experience of time characterised by art and the festival, what Gadamer calls “autonomous time.” Though autonomous time seems less natural than ordinary time, it is not clear that what Gadamer is describing is all that strange. With respect to “autonomous time,” we do not “simply add up a gradual sequence of empty moments to arrive at a totality of time,” but we consider time in a more arrested way, we consider the *time* of, e.g., “childhood, youth, maturity, old age”; “[t]he continuity of the uniform temporal flow that we can observe and measure by the clock tells us nothing about youth or age” (“Relevance” 42). By this, Gadamer seems to mean that one does not explain, e.g., *youth* by saying how long it takes to go through it, particularly because youth cannot even be given a definite length of time. And yet, everyone *has* a youth, everyone goes through it, youth is still a period *of time* in everyone’s life. But it is not one that admits of calculation, for it is often the case that “[s]uddenly we become aware that someone has aged, or that someone is ‘no longer a child’” (“Relevance” 42). We may also identify people who had a very *long* youth, or those who “grew up fast.” Furthermore:

It is the nature of the festival that it should proffer time, arresting it and allowing it to tarry. That is what festive celebration means. The calculating way in which we normally manage and dispose of our time is, as it were, brought to a standstill. (“Relevance, 42)

Thus, a whole festival is a single *event*, which is clearly still a measurement of time, but has little to do with seconds, minutes, and hours. An event is a unity that is not broken up. It does not appeal to our scientific conception of time, hence it is “autonomous.” Gadamer appears to be trying to identify a paradox in our conception of time because he implies that this autonomous time is perhaps more fundamental than or just as fundamental as clock-time.

To illustrate the paradox Gadamer may be indicating, consider the experience of a single moment. How long does a moment last? Normally, we may say that a moment lasts only a second; this seems to be a very regular understanding of the passage of time. But sometimes we would consider a moment to last a very long time. Gadamer seems to be asking whether it is correct to give the moment that lasts a second priority over the longer moment (i.e. to give clock-time priority over what may appear to be the more subjective experience of autonomous time, as is often done). It seems we experience time as discrete events and *normally* those correspond to second, minutes, etc. but sometimes a discrete event, a single, unified moment takes longer. But this is the paradox: how can such a single moment “take longer”? In terms of *what* do we measure the length of a *longer* “autonomous” moment? One could say we measure such experiences by the segments of the clock (e.g. seconds), but the experience of a single segment of the clock, one tick of the second hand, seems, in turn, to be informed by the phenomenon of autonomous time, by the unity that is a discrete event. Thus, the *unity* that is an *event*, what Gadamer feels is indicated best by the festival or the experience of art, seems to inform a core reality of time, and the measure of the clock may indicate a regular experience of such events, but not an absolute one. Thus, how does one measure

a single unit of time? As the term “unit” designates, one measures it in *unities*, wholes that do not admit of further analysis. It is in this way that Gadamer gives as much objective reality to autonomous time as to clock-time, that is, both are experiences of an *event*. One is more common than another, but both are aspects of time itself.

It is clear that the abruptness and urgency of Heidegger’s moment of truth is removed and replaced by this arrested, still time. One may consider the span of time it takes for lightning to strike, and clearly this is a very quick moment. However, what Gadamer in fact does is take the very same experience of time that Heidegger implies and protract it. He brings it to a standstill. But even though time is “brought to a standstill,” thus negating time itself, Gadamer is describing an experience that is, paradoxically, an experience in which one lingers. It is an experience that takes time while one does not feel compelled to fill time. You reflect on the *time* of your youth; at a festival, you *tarry*; in the presence of great art, you *linger*, and yet time, in these events, is not *wasted* nor even *spent*. This is the time that is also indicative of the experience of truth.

Therefore, Gadamer’s consideration of festival distinguishes Gadamer from Heidegger in two ways: 1) The experience is not that of the lone poet or mystic; it is one in which the near-mystical experience that Heidegger describes is, in a sense, extended to a whole community, attending to the same activity; 2) The experience is not all of a sudden; in some ways it, paradoxically, defies the ordinary conception of time altogether, or defines time itself. With these distinctions, Gadamer recognises the capacity of Heidegger’s truth to find its way into many different activities, mediatory activities that take time, not just the sudden disclosure sometimes characteristic of the experience of works of art. The experience of truth is not relegated to only a single second in, e.g., a

conversation; the whole conversation can end up being a realisation of some truth, no one moment being more important, or even readily distinguishable, from another. Therefore, our various disciplines, stances, or perspectives—philosophy, history, and science—all our established mediations with reality now seem capable of disclosing some important aspect of reality. However, Gadamer still sees Heidegger’s insight into Truth as fundamental and, as mentioned, he considers there to be something essential in the experience of art. One of the other key ways in which Gadamer tries to explain the truth in art is through his analysis of *play*.

PLAY

Gadamer sees hermeneutical significance, that is, significance with respect to a human being’s capacity to understand and interpret the world, in the phenomenon of *play*.⁷⁶ His analysis of play will provide us with a crucial insight into Gadamer’s understanding of our connection to things as they are in themselves (or truth) and its place in art. Much like his analysis of festival, Gadamer’s consideration of play is one in which he recognises similar qualities between the phenomenon of play and that of the experience of art. Gadamer begins by saying that play is not a matter of “the orientation nor even the state of mind of the creator or those enjoying the work of art, nor the freedom of a subjectivity engaged in play” (*TM* 102). Play for Gadamer is a true objective phenomenon; it exists even “where there are no subjects who are behaving playfully” (*TM* 103). He considers play, instead, as “the to and fro of constantly repeated movement [...] such a constant coming and going, back and forth, not tied down to any goal” and in connection with this he brings up the examples of “the play of light” or “the play of

⁷⁶ It is correct to notice the partially metaphorical use of the word “play” that Gadamer often employs. He also makes interesting use of the homonymy of “play.”

waves,” as well as “the play of gears or parts of machinery [...] the play of forces [...] even a play on words” (Gadamer, “Relevance” 22; cf. *TM* 104). The important aspect of play is that:

[N]either pole of the movement [neither to nor fro] represents the goal in which it would come to rest. Furthermore, a certain leeway clearly belongs to such a movement [...] This freedom of movement is such that it must have the form of self-movement. (“Relevance” 22-3)

Furthermore, “[t]he players are not the subjects of play; instead play merely reaches presentation (*Darstellung*) through the players” (*TM* 103). This notion of “presentation” is, in fact, essential to understanding play.

Gadamer stresses the connection between play and presentation, saying that “[f]irst and foremost, play is self-presentation,” for “performing a task successfully ‘presents it’” and in the case of a game (that is, something being played), the game presents itself precisely in being played. In fulfilling the presentation, the game is not aimed at any purpose other than presentation, thus “[p]lay is really limited to presenting itself [...] and] self-presentation is a universal ontological characteristic of nature” (*TM* 108). We can see a link here between play or *being in play* and the Heideggerian notion of disclosure. In disclosure, a being (partially) presents itself. *Being in play*, in a way, simply seems to mean that something exists and is in a natural relationship with those things around it. It is natural for things to be *in play*. It is fundamental that beings present themselves. However, Gadamer distinguishes the natural play that goes on in, for example, the play of light or even the idle playing of children, in that these are “closed worlds” of play. The players are not presenting their play for anyone, however:

All presentation is potentially a representation for someone.
That this possibility is intended is the characteristic feature

of *art* as play. The closed world of play lets down one of its walls, as it were. (*TM* 108; my emphasis)

Art takes these natural elements of the world and interrupts the self-containment of their play and gives play a direction: towards an audience. To rephrase this while bridging Heideggerian and Gadamerian terms: Being is there; Being is *in play*. It invariably presents itself, discloses itself. However, it is also a fundamental aspect of Being that it can be *represented* (or disclosed) *to someone*. It is already in its nature to present but it is also in its nature to be capable of letting down one of its walls to represent its own presentation. Thus, the being of the work of art, the clearest example in this context being the drama or the *play* (which, in taking place on a stage, literally has one of the four walls of a closed room missing), “is not exhausted by the fact that [it] present[s itself],” as all play does, “for at the same time [it] point[s] beyond [itself] to the audience which participates by watching” (*TM* 108). In a *play* or drama, the actors on the stage are no longer absorbed in their playing (as they would be if they remained audience-less, as a child does in play), for they now have roles to fulfil for the audience members:

A complete change takes place when play as such becomes a *play*. It puts *the spectator* in the place of the player. He—and not the player—is the person for whom the play is played. (*TM* 109; my emphases)

In the event of play, art also takes advantage of the fact that, “[in] the work of art [...] we invariably seek to recognize or to interpret something *as something*” (Gadamer, “Relevance” 30). However, it is also a part of Heideggerian phenomenology that we do this for the objects in nature as well. In being finite we always see a thing *as something*; that is to say that we see one profile of a thing at a time. In understanding this, art need not present beings, in play, *as themselves*, but may represent them as something *other*

than themselves. This still makes use of the fundamental ontological act of presentation or disclosure, and therefore has a relation to truth.

Gadamer sees great significance in this phenomenon of human play or playing becoming a drama or work of art, that is, *a play*, for “human play comes to its true consummation in being art” (*TM* 110). We can understand this as an alternative way of approaching Heidegger’s view of the artist as the one who understands truth. In particular, art carries forward the truth of Being, and the event of experiencing an artwork is very close to what Gadamer calls the self-presentation of beings in play. There is an authenticity or genuineness to art in the sense that Being transforms itself into art by simply letting down one of its walls and carrying on as usual. However, there is also a radical transformation that takes place here and Gadamer calls this the “*transformation into structure*.” This reaffirms Gadamer’s trust in mediation. In fact, it presents a very strong view of mediation in that, in being transformed into structure, in becoming a work of art, play “comes to its true consummation.” The mediatory act of representation fulfils some aspect of Being for Gadamer. It is not alienating for Being to have an audience, to be represented *for* someone. This undercuts modern scepticism, which sees knowledge itself as a problem, and casts doubt on what it calls representation in the mind. The Gadamerian position, on the other hand, sees representation for someone in art as a perfectly natural aspect of Being.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ However, it is not right to describe the representation of beings in play, which is constitutive of artworks, as equivalent to the conception of truth as representation in the mind, that is, what Heidegger describes as truth as “correctness.” It is more accurate to say that this artistic representation makes possible the truth as representation. It gives us the measure. Gadamer writes, concerning the general experience of truth: “[I]t is not an arbitrary act of revealing, an act of robbery, by which something is torn out of hiddenness. Rather, this is all made possible only by the fact that revelation and hiddenness are an event of being itself. To understand this fact helps us to understand the nature of the work of art [...] truth is not simply the mere presence of a

Furthermore, Gadamer uses the word “transformation” here in a radical sense, “what existed previously exists no longer”; transformation implies that:

[T]his other transformed thing that it has become is its true being, in comparison with which its earlier being is nil. When we find someone transformed we mean precisely this, that he has become another person. (*TM* 111)

Thus, in becoming art, play becomes, entirely, representation. The players involved leave themselves behind insofar as the representation is concerned and it is this representation with which the audience is wholly concerned. In a drama, one cannot explain the playing from the subjectivity of the players; “[i]f we describe from the point of view of the actor what his acting is, then obviously it is not transformation but disguise”; however:

[T]his subjective distinction between oneself and the play implicit in putting up a show is not the true nature of play. Rather, play itself is a transformation of such a kind that the identity of the player does not continue to exist for anybody. Everybody asks instead what is supposed to be represented, what is ‘meant.’ The players (or playwright) no longer exist, only what they are playing. (*TM* 111)

It is in this way that Gadamer gives the meaning and truth of the work of art an almost natural self-sufficiency. In being representation, it is no longer the fictive aspects

being, so that it stands, as it were, over against its correct representation. Such a concept of being unhidden would presuppose the subjectivity of Dasein that represents beings. But beings are not correctly defined in their being if they are defined merely as objects of possible representation. Rather, it belongs just as much to their being that they withhold themselves” (“Heidegger’s Later Philosophy” 226). “Mere presence” is that on which the notion of “correct representation” is based, but, the representation of art is a foundational experience in which we recognise that it is fundamental for beings to disclose themselves, but not all of themselves. In art we recognise the *fundamental act of Being* as both a revealing and a concealment; art tells us both that we know something, but not everything, there is more. This is why it is not the same as a representation of a presence in the mind that needs to be matched to the world; knowledge as *presence* forgets that there is always more. However, the stance of the truth as correct representation in the mind nevertheless sees all mediation as worthy of doubt, while Gadamer here outlines a different kind of mediation that is fundamental in establishing our access to truth.

that concern us in a work of art. Its fictive aspects (those that would be considered as disguises from the subjectivity of the player, author, painter, performer—all of these being equivalent for Gadamer) have in fact disappeared and all that is left is the very reality of its representation and, as audience members, we are consumed by this aspect of the work of art, the *represented* play of beings. In this disclosure of meaning, there is no sense in distinguishing the fictive elements from the factual elements, no use in saying that really these are just actors, or just fictive statements, or just colours of paint, for in the relevant sense this is not what they are; they *become* something else in their representation. It is not controversial to say that much art does this (represent something by the presence of something else), but it may be surprising to suggest that such a representation is in keeping with the fundamental conveyance of truth. However, in that he believes it is the characteristic of art to carry forward or double the fundamental disclosure of Being, it is not difficult to see why Gadamer calls this experience of the representation in art an experience of truth.

LAMARQUE AND OLSEN

This way in which Gadamer frames his thought is directly contrary to Lamarque and Olsen's, who frame their entire theory around the ways in which fictive statements are utterly distinct from factual ones. Gadamer instead, focuses on the fundamental ways in which the two kinds of statements or disclosures are, at their foundations, the same. Interestingly, Gadamer (in keeping with Lamarque and Olsen) does not then maintain that artistic representation is, therefore, referential. If it were, then it could be judged by scientific or logical standards. But Gadamer can see a way for literature to, nevertheless, have dealings with truth, while Lamarque and Olsen cannot. The mistake, according to a

Gadamerian view, that Lamarque and Olsen make is that they *begin* with the emphasis on this disconnect between the artistic (or *fictional*) representation and the description of the scientific (or *factual*) reality. They begin with the idea that the scientific conception of truth is foundational. Gadamer, following Heidegger, does not say that scientific truth is not truth, just that it too relies on Truth, the disclosure of Being, and the disclosure (or *rediscovery*) of Being is the level at which art operates. It is, precisely, *pre-scientific*. One does not learn anything about the power of art by focusing on how it is not *about* the description of reality provided by science, which is Lamarque and Olsen's focus in their discussion of literature's lack of connection to truth. From the Gadamerian perspective, adapting the play of natural objects to disclose a new vision of objects at play is fundamentally in keeping with the very way of being of all things. Thus, when experiencing a work of art, one asks, as Gadamer says, "What is *meant*?" Insofar as one is concerned with art and the way art conveys its meaning, the *only* things present are the representations, the transformed beings in representative play. And these *representations*, taken altogether to form the whole meaning of the work of art, do make a claim on us to assess them as true because it is no longer obvious, as it was for Lamarque and Olsen, that they are in no way about the world. Granted, we may not want to use the word "about," but this may simply be because the word "about" is often too closely associated with a modern scientific view of reality. But clearly art is concerned, in some sense, with the world taken more broadly, for Gadamer's way of looking at things allows for more than the modern scientific view of the world to be taken as real. Art appeals to this greater reality by tapping into a completely different realm than that appealed to in the stance of fact-stating.

But how exactly does one assess the *truth* of works of art? Consider this, from John M. Baker Jr., drawing on Gadamer's opinions of the kind of writing that is involved in poetry:

For [...] philosophy the evidence of the work of art is "too little" in that the work refuses to yield its truth in conceptual terms. It is at the same time "too strong" in that the work of art is, unlike philosophy, marvellously self-sufficient. It does not ask to be compared to anything and does not require comparison with anything else in order to convince us of its rightness [...] Gadamer calls poetry [...] "eminent text" [...] The term "eminent" does not designate a higher or purer form of speech, but rather paradigmatic speech [...] it redirects the initiative or force ("*Stoß*") of signification back to language itself [...] However, this] must be kept distinct from the structuralist and post-structuralist view that literary speech [...] is fundamentally concerned only with itself. (409)⁷⁸

Rather than being a structuralist point, for Gadamer the reference back to itself is a matter of poetic language's realisation that it is, in a sense, self-sufficient, and it must say the unsayable; "manifestation gets its point as the counter-thrust to its non-manifest; that is, as the counter-thrust to something unsayable, something that does not come to speech" (Baker 410). This, once again, incorporates the idea that any disclosure is only partial. We get a view of something but it is contrasted with all that remains undisclosed behind it. Baker aligns this with Heidegger's highly obscure notion of "Earth" that he presents in "The Origin of the Work of Art." For Heidegger, in any unconcealment there is also a concealment, but this is to say:

What is expressed is not everything. The unsaid first brings the said to the word that can reach us [...] The concepts in which thinking is formulated stand against a

⁷⁸ Baker draws this from two of Gadamer's works: *Truth and Method* as well as his later essay, "On the Contribution of Poetry to the Search for Truth."

wall of darkness. (Gadamer “Contribution of Poetry” 112;
cf. Baker 410)

Furthermore, “[i]n Heidegger, ‘earth’ is the unsayable—itsself articulate in the way of silence or occlusion and not a mere opacity or blindness—that sustains the work of art in its very saying” (Baker 410). This is the fullness of truth as experienced by a finite being; truth is not just the unconcealment, but the knowledge that the unconcealment is not everything, it is a piece. But the duality of unconcealment and concealment, in being a fundamental aspect of Being, makes what art does particularly unique. Art reproduces the act of Being (finite disclosure) that *tells us what truth itself is*. The scientific statement of fact, on the other hand, in an attempt to be exhaustive and presenting itself as the only reasonable prejudice from which to make statements, gives us the impression that it contains the full truth, when it does not, it contains a piece. Art, in portraying the unsayable *as still unsayable*, “in the way of silence or occlusion,” seems to say more than it possibly could, thus giving us a fuller view of the truth it presents by replicating the fundamental experience of Truth itself.

In seeming to say more than it possibly could, the truth of art is also not conceptual, for conceptualisation is a way of reducing something to merely one of its aspects or profiles. Art, in being true, is representation of Being that has no concept, just as the primal experience of Truth itself is not a conceptual matter.⁷⁹ In art one is tasked with representing what has never been said *yet*, that which can never fully be brought to concepts. Thus, in the interpretation of works of art, one does not have the rules for how to proceed before one begins.⁸⁰ It is difficult to approach and understand what has never

⁷⁹ The experience of Truth is pre-conceptual by being that which allows conceptualisation.

⁸⁰ A corollary of this element of Gadamer’s thinking is that it provides a comment on the Propositional Theory of Literary Truth that Lamarque and Olsen critique. According to

been understood and, as Gadamer presents it, poetry potentially discloses ideas that no one has understood before; it presents something that is radically new:

[T]he nature of art does not consist in transforming something that is already formed or in copying something that is already in being. Rather, art is the project by which something new comes forth as true. (Gadamer, “Heidegger’s Later Philosophy” 228)

Thus, there is a sense in which the truth of art is beyond what any person can know and intentionally present; “the being of art cannot be defined as an object of an aesthetic consciousness because, on the contrary, the aesthetic attitude is more than it knows of itself” (Gadamer, *TM* 115). Remarkably, this is similar to something Lamarque and Olsen write. They say, as previously quoted, that literature “is not merely a response to already defined existential problems, nor an expression of already felt and accepted moral and social values. It is one of the ways in which these existential problems, as well as social and moral values, are defined and developed for us” (451). Gadamer, too, would say, for example, that poetry *presents* concepts like free-will, determinism, responsibility

Gadamer, the problem with the Propositional Theory of Literary Truth would be that it seems to require the encapsulation, in concepts (a proposition), of the whole meaning of a work of art. The whole meaning of the work of art has no concepts to explain it as of yet and, in some sense, can never be *fully* rendered in concepts. Such a conceptualisation, that is, the implied proposition (put forward by the Propositional Theory, to be assessed as true or false) may capture an aspect of the work of art (as any act of philosophising, according to Gadamer, can), but not all of it. Thus, there may actually be a virtue in the indefinite nature of the Propositional Theory’s notion of *implication* that is a focal point of Lamarque and Olsen’s criticism. If the proposition implied by the work is indefinite in the same way as, for example, a metaphor, then it remains crucially *artistic* in that it is still trying to say the unsayable, the truth of sheer Being that will not come entirely to concepts. Furthermore, this reliance on Being, in order to make meaningful, non-conceptual pronouncements, detracts from Lamarque and Olsen’s rejection of metaphorical content. A metaphor, on the Gadamerian view, contrary to Lamarque and Olsen, does contain some objective content. A metaphor’s meaning is not supplied by “the very same *institutional* rules that define a work as ‘literary’” (Lamarque and Olsen 351; my emphasis), for in being pre-conceptual, there are no rules for how one is to invent, nor interpret, a metaphor. A live metaphor relies on the fundamental act of Being as presentation or disclosure to make its point, and that point cannot be reduced to a single conceptualisation, but remains diffuse and is only found, in full, *in the metaphor*. The metaphor draws us back to itself as eminent text.

for the first time, in an unfettered form, or presents what will eventually be reduced to those concepts. But this is not mere invention, as Lamarque and Olsen suggest.

Gadamer explains this in his analysis of art as symbol:

What does the word “symbol” mean? Originally it was a technical term in Greek for a token of remembrance. The host presented his guest with the so-called *tessera hospitalis* by breaking some object in two. He kept one half for himself and gave the other half to his guest. If in thirty or fifty years time, a descendant of the guest should ever enter his house, the two pieces could be fitted together again to form a whole in an act of recognition. In its original technical sense, the symbol represented something like a sort of pass used in the ancient world: something in and through which we recognize someone already known to us. (“Relevance” 31).

Understanding the truth in experiencing art is not based on invention, even if it may appear so because we cannot immediately recognise the themes art presents as matching anything we already know. There are no established canons and no pre-formed concepts that will ensure, before it happens, that we will recognise the truth of art. But if art is like symbol, as Gadamer implies, something in the artwork will fit or reconcile itself to us. It depends more on what art *is* than what the human mind *does* in experiencing art. This locates the truth not in any method that an individual can apply, but as a force “out there in the world.” This also implies a fuller conception of reality than what Lamarque and Olsen seem to allow.

Lamarque and Olsen’s theory of truth incorporates one aspect that ties it to reality, but this may be merely reality as investigated by natural science. The key issue in this matter is that the themes as developed by literature are considered not to make any claims to truth because they do not correspond to, they occupy no similar order in the “real” world (i.e. the world as discovered by natural science). However, in displacing natural

science from the privileged seat with respect to the definition of reality, by making it just one perspective among many and considering instead Being, as Heidegger and Gadamer do, we may find a place for idealistic presentations of themes as making claims to *truth*. Furthermore, there may be an easy way to find a place for such a conception of things in Lamarque and Olsen's theory.

Lamarque and Olsen understand literature to be essentially *evaluative*. This is significant. Literature, in itself, is lauded. If it is the case that their interesting themes are interesting precisely in virtue of their ability to tap into the fundamental experience of Truth, then there is something in this fundamental experience of Truth that we naturally laud. This makes the recognition involved in the representations of beings in play a recognition not only of something true; we cannot help but describe it as *beautiful*. However, it is often considered that the beauty typical of works of art is, precisely, *too good to be true*. It is not found in the world on a regular, day-to-day basis.

In response to this, consider the story from Plato's *Phaedrus* that Gadamer recounts in which human souls rise up to glimpse the eternal orders, then lose their wings and plunge back toward the earth, with only the vaguest remembrance of what they had experienced. They leave truth behind them, because "[t]hese souls who, so to speak, have lost their wings, are weighed down by earthly [scientific?] cares." But there is one experience that causes their wings to grow once more, the experience of love and the beautiful. Gadamer goes on:

The important message that this story has to teach is that the essence of the beautiful does not lie in some realm simply opposed to [scientific] reality. On the contrary, we learn that however unexpected our encounter with beauty may be, it gives us an assurance that the truth does not lie far off and inaccessible to us, but can be encountered in the

disorder of [scientific] reality with all its imperfections, evils, errors, extremes, and fateful confusions. The ontological function of the beautiful is to bridge the chasm between the ideal and the real. (“Relevance” 15)

Lamarque and Olsen appear to see literary fiction as a realm simply opposed to reality; however, according to Gadamer and Heidegger, art reveals Being. It is the innocent interaction with reality as Being. It is with a scientific eye that we see literary fictions as simply opposed to reality. Unlike the aesthetic stance, which is, as Gadamer says, “more than it knows of itself” (*TM* 115), the scientific stance came to be by refusing to look beyond itself. Fictions will not yield their truth if one gazes upon them only with a scientific eye and their beauty will be reduced to a subjective taste of that eye. If Gadamer, and Plato, are correct—in order not to lose something as essential as that which bridges the chasm between the ideal and the real—then the beautiful, its claim to truth and its overall significance—not only with respect to art, but to philosophy, history, even to science—must be preserved. At the very least, in opposition to the possible implications of a project like Lamarque and Olsen’s, the discussion of artistic beauty’s, or interesting themes’, connection to truth must remain open.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have attempted to show, via an analysis and criticism of Lamarque and Olsen from a Heideggerian/Gadamerian position, a way for there to be truth in literature, as well as art in general. Lamarque and Olsen's theory has valuable elements that ought not to be lost, in spite of the fact that, insofar as they follow their philosophical tradition as established by figures like Carnap and Quine, they, potentially, unduly limit what can be considered real, or worse, drive a wedge between what is true and what is ultimately real. When they write, as previously quoted: "One may [...] question how far it is useful to distinguish between what is universally interesting and what is true" and proceed to insist on doing so anyway, they almost seem to disregard literature's access to reality. However, remarkably, in their conclusion, Lamarque and Olsen still outline a way for literature to have a potentially exceptional sort of value. But they put that value in jeopardy when they insist that, for ultimately practical considerations, we ought still to keep literature and "truth" separate.⁸¹ They make a seemingly terminological distinction into one that has substantial ramifications. The word "truth" has an unmatched power. Lamarque Olsen are correct, "truth" is an "honorary [term] that would increase the value and prestige of literature as a cultural practice, placing it firmly among a group of other activities the value of which no one would doubt and the prestige of which no one would attack" (437). But this, contrary to what they decide, is a reason to *continue* referring to literature as giving us a connection to truth. In separating literature from it, they leave

⁸¹ That is: "These concepts [truth, knowledge, etc.] invite the theorist to assimilate the cognitive value of literature to that of philosophy, history, and science, and it raises the temptation to see imaginative truth and literary insight as having the same logical constraints as philosophical, historical, or scientific truth" (Lamarque & Olsen 437-8).

their theory open to critique in that the notion of truth may become arbitrary. I do not believe that making a broadly postmodernist point, i.e. making what is “true” potentially arbitrary, was Lamarque and Olsen’s intent. But it is a failing of their theory that they do not guard against this interpretation because of their reticence to engage in overt metaphysical considerations and leave their metaphysical prejudices to be unearthed only with difficulty. One may escape this potential charge of arbitrariness by allying the experience of constitutive literary themes and a pre-scientific understanding of truth. Gadamer and Heidegger provide ways to escape the dangers Lamarque and Olsen see in conflating the value of literature and science; however, they do so while insisting on the importance of the connection to truth in all discourses by making Truth the origin of all discourse.

However, Lamarque and Olsen’s work is varied and complex and deserves further study. I have tried, in this thesis, to outline critical risks associated with their minimal definition of truth and their belief that such a treatment of truth is sufficient for discussing its place in literature. But, given the value I have tried to outline in their theory of literature, it would be important for their theory of literature to be considered in greater depth.

A topic that has not been dealt with in this thesis overtly, but has been in the background, is that of the hermeneutic circle: How can one begin in truth or with truth when trying to define or discover what the truth is? Gadamer’s work on this topic—and how the hermeneutic circle can be entered virtuously rather than viciously—is extensive. Relating more explicitly the work I have done in this thesis to the concept of the hermeneutic circle could be the basis of a fruitful future project.

Other future projects, which may develop from this thesis, could involve more historical research into what I have called the innocent notion of truth as pre-conceptually disclosed and its relation to the scientific conception of truth as unearthed only through established testing and analysis. Given that these two conceptions of truth are well-engrained in certain philosophical strands that tend not to reconcile easily, much like the differences between the analytic and Continental strands of philosophy, a potential future project could be to try to understand the historical relations between these two conceptions. This would be one way of continuing the work I began in Chapter 2 in understanding the gap between the analytic and Continental strands of philosophy. Some work has already been done in trying to find figures who “bridge the gap.”⁸² However, it is my opinion that such research does not pay close enough attention to the utterly foundational differences between the analytic and Continental branches. For example, analytic thinkers, even though they have begun to read and utilise the work of Continental philosophers, tend still to understand those Continental philosophers *analytically*. They appear not to have enough understanding of the history of the divide they have supposedly bridged and, therefore, their analytic foundations still significantly colour their theories. Surface similarities between analytic and Continental philosophy as they exist currently would, consequently, have little significance without an investigation of what lies beneath.

⁸² See: Jack Reynolds et al. ed. *Postanalytic and MetaContinental: Crossing Philosophical Divides*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010.

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