

**SYMPOSIUM: THE PARMENIDEAN  
ASCENT BY MICHAEL DELLA ROCCA**

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# Back Down

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Michael Della Rocca's project in his bold and iconoclastic book<sup>1</sup> is to reject all distinction and multiplicity: there is only being. He calls this view strict monism.<sup>2</sup> And, as the title of his book indicates, he sees his project as Parmenidean. There are accordingly references to Parmenides throughout the book, as well as a more focused discussion of Parmenides' views in Chapter 1. This is in line with something on which Della Rocca insists in Chapter 7, in keeping with such monism, namely that we should reject any distinction between doing philosophy and doing its history.

I share Della Rocca's mistrust of that distinction. But I do not share it for the same reasons nor to the same extent. There seems to me a clear sense in which his project is more fundamentally philosophical than historical. Partly I have in mind the fact that his primary aim is simply to defend strict monism. And I think that the philosophical challenges that he thereby presents us with are more significant than any lessons that he has to teach us about where any given philosopher stands in relation to the view.<sup>3</sup> My own focus in what follows will therefore likewise be on the issues themselves, though I too will engage with the work of other philosophers to the extent that I think it is relevant to do so.

A preliminary before I proceed. Even the two short paragraphs that I have written so far contain material that is question-begging in this context. An obvious case in point is the very reference to 'other philosophers'. That is illegitimate in strict monist terms. So too, come to that, are the references to 'Chapter 1' and 'Chapter 7'. My excuse for begging questions in this way is something to which Della Rocca's book itself bears ample witness: anyone who wants to engage seriously with his views has no alternative. One of the issues that we shall need to confront is what this means as far as Della Rocca's own text is concerned. But there is no equivalent issue as far as my text is concerned. True, I would prefer not to beg questions. But, since I am not a strict monist, I feel no other compunction about writing in the way that I have; and I am reassured that I am at least not begging questions against myself.

## 2 | THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Della Rocca's starting point is the Principle of Sufficient Reason, or the PSR to use his own abbreviation. This is 'the principle according to which each fact or each thing has an explanation' (p. xiv). That this is his starting point

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straightway illustrates what I said in the previous section. For Della Rocca takes the PSR to serve as a basic principle for Parmenides too. As it happens, here already I have exegetical qualms: passages which, on Della Rocca's interpretation, show Parmenides to be rejecting distinctions that, if real, would involve things that could not be explained seem to me to show Parmenides to be rejecting distinctions that, if real, would involve things that could not so much as be.<sup>4</sup> But I will not dwell on that. My focus, as I have already indicated, is on the issues themselves.

Della Rocca has much to say about the kind of philosophical work that the PSR can do. But the principal work that he wants it to do is to yield strict monism. This is clearest in Chapters 2 to 6 of the book, which he describes as '[i]n many ways... [its] heart' (p. xv). It is Bradley, rather than Parmenides, who plays the rôle of chief mentor in these chapters: Della Rocca uses the PSR to argue, in a broadly Bradleyan way,<sup>5</sup> for the unreality of all relations, and thereby for the unreality of all distinctions. The argument assumes different forms in different contexts, but there is a core argument to the effect that any relation must be grounded in its relata, and thereby in the relation of grounding between itself and its relata, and thereby in the relation of grounding between the relation of grounding and itself and its relata, and so on *ad infinitum*, in a way that the PSR precludes.

### 3 | OBJECTIONS

Objections to the project fall under three main heads. First, there are objections to the PSR. Second, there are objections to the contention that the PSR yields strict monism. Third, there are objections to strict monism. I shall devote a subsection to each, focusing in the third case on one specific objection to strict monism (that it is subject to a particular kind of self-refutation) which will enable me to segue into what follows.

#### 3.1 | Should we accept the PSR?

Whether we should accept the PSR obviously depends on how exactly it is construed. The formulation that I quoted in the previous section left much unresolved. In particular, it did not specify standards of explanation. The higher the standards, the more vulnerable to objection the PSR is. This is significant because Della Rocca's standards are very high.

Thus in Chapter 5, which is on knowledge, Della Rocca argues that there is tension between the demand for an explanation of what knowledge is and a willingness to accept that we have 'a kind of brute understanding' of knowledge (p. 137). The thought is that a satisfactory explanation of what something is must itself furnish whatever understanding we have of that thing; anything less, and in particular anything that depends on some prior brute understanding of that thing, will involve a circularity, or an infinite regress, or a simple dogmatism, whereby it cannot be said to be genuinely explanatory. This seems to me to set extraordinarily high standards of explanation. We have a *kind* of brute understanding of sphericity. But we also have an explanation of what sphericity is: a sphere is a solid figure bounded by a surface every point of which is equidistant from a given point. This explanation may not furnish our understanding of sphericity, but it does illuminate it. There are surely grounds for the complaint that the PSR is unreasonably exacting if it is construed in such a way that nothing of this sort is allowed to count as an explanation.

There may indeed be *some* things of this sort that should not be allowed to count as explanations, say because what is at stake is precisely what furnishes our understanding of some given phenomenon. But that is not enough to address the complaint. Della Rocca's espousal of the PSR needs to involve a single, unrestricted, metaphysically demanding notion of explanation if it is to do the work that he wants it to do.

Here it is worth emphasizing that, although Della Rocca describes the journey that he is taking us on as 'designed... to wreak havoc throughout... philosophy' (p. xv), it actually wreaks havoc throughout a much wider terrain than that. It is not only works of philosophy that betray a commitment to distinction and multiplicity. So do physics textbooks, cook books, train timetables, first aid manuals, snippets of casual conversation, you name it. If the

PSR is going to call all of that into question, nay if the PSR is going to call *any* of that into question, then it had better not do so by placing explanatory demands on it that it cannot reasonably be expected to meet—which is what it will do if it places explanatory demands on it that are so high that its failure to meet them is more of a reason to reject them than to reject it. Thus the fact that the PSR, construed in a metaphysically demanding way, can be used to reject a first aid manual is itself a reason to reject the PSR construed in that metaphysically demanding way. A more restrained version of the PSR may still hold. And the first aid manual may well conform to it: the manual does after all save lives. But then all the more reason to reject whatever metaphysically demanding resources can be used to reject the manual. (This anticipates ideas to which we shall return in §5.)

To be fair, Della Rocca has an answer to the question of why we should accept the PSR, in the metaphysically demanding and unrestrained version that he espouses, which is bolstered by the very point that I have just made, namely that a more restrained version of the PSR may hold. This answer comes in Chapter 10, where Della Rocca argues that any restrained version of the PSR yields his version. (In fact he also argues that any restrained version of the PSR already yields strict monism. My concerns about this argument will emerge in the next subsection.) But, as before, the sheer fact that his argument in Chapter 10 is an argument for that havoc-wreaking version of the PSR is a reason to reject it.<sup>6</sup>

Della Rocca will of course demand more: he will demand that we say what exactly is wrong with his argument. '[T]ell me,' he says in a related connection, 'where my argument goes wrong. Merely invoking intuition or common sense just tells me that you (and perhaps I) don't like where my argument goes. OK, but why should what you and I like matter?' (p. 81, emphasis in original). But it is not a question of what anyone likes. True, we do eventually need to say what exactly is wrong with his argument. But even before we are in a position to do that, we can invoke the basic principle that no valid argument from any given premises to any given conclusion is in itself an acceptable argument for that conclusion, as opposed to an acceptable argument against those premises. How to decide which of the two it is (if either) may be a very delicate matter. But there is no more rationale for Della Rocca to dismiss our having decided one way because it just shows that we dislike his conclusion than there is for us to dismiss his having decided the other way because it just shows that he likes his premises.

Not that the material in Chapter 10 is all that Della Rocca has to offer in defence of his version of the PSR (henceforth, all my references to 'the PSR' will be to this version). In Chapter 8, where his focus is specifically on metaphysics, he nails his colours to the mast of a rationalistic 'concern to avoid brute facts' (p. 201), a concern whose very hallmark is the PSR. '[M]oves within one's metaphysics,' Della Rocca writes, 'should not be made without reason. This seems to me to be a non-negotiable feature of any metaphysical... system,' (p. 209).

Really? Suppose a metaphysician claims that all and only those things that are both  $F_1$  and  $F_2$  are  $G$ , as a way of defining his use of 'G'. There is a sense, clearly, in which the metaphysician has made this move for a reason—to let the reader know how to interpret his use of 'G'. But in the relevant sense, that is in the sense that is relevant to the PSR and that concerns the *content* of his claim, he has surely made the move without reason: all and only those things that are both  $F_1$  and  $F_2$  *just are*  $G$ . (Or it might be said to be its own reason. But that would sit ill with Della Rocca's recurrent animadversions against unilluminating explanations: see e.g. pp. 32–34.) Definitional moves of this kind may seem something of a quirk and easily accommodated. But let us not forget how much of what metaphysicians claim serves, in effect, to define their terms.

There are further, related grounds for suspicion about Della Rocca's rationalism. 'Who wants an arbitrary or irrational metaphysics?' he asks rhetorically (p. 209). At least as far as arbitrariness goes, I am not afraid to admit that I do. I see nothing wrong with deliberately making metaphysical moves for no reason, certainly for no reason that favours them over incompatible alternatives. This can be done in a spirit of exploration.<sup>7</sup> For that matter, it can be done in a spirit of play, perhaps—who knows?—the very spirit of play that Della Rocca himself goes on to celebrate (e.g. p. 225). I have done it myself.<sup>8</sup> And I think some of the greatest metaphysicians have done it, quite self-consciously. Consider, for example, the following account that Fichte gives of the metaphysical system that he adopts:

I have found the means to apprehend [the reality revealed in this system]... Knowledge is not this means; no knowledge can be its own foundation, its own proof; every knowledge presupposes another higher knowledge on which it is founded, and to this ascent there is no end. It is *faith*... It is not knowledge, but a decision of the will...

... All my conviction is but faith; and it proceeds from feeling, not from understanding... I will not suffer myself to entertain the desire of pressing this conviction on others by reasoning.<sup>9</sup>

Someone might protest that making a metaphysical move ‘in a spirit of exploration’, or ‘in a spirit of play’, or in a Fichtean spirit, *is* making it for a reason. But this protest can be met in the same way as the point about definition: it is not making the move for a reason *in the relevant sense*. In so far as it means accepting something as true, it does not involve acknowledging any reason for whatever is accepted. Admittedly, it does not involve denying that there is any such reason either. The fact remains that it leaves the PSR, along with the use to which Della Rocca puts it, under threat.

Similarly, someone might protest that at any rate one ought not to *adhere* to a metaphysical move for no reason. If one makes a move to see what comes of it, for instance, then one has no rationale for adhering to the move unless what comes of it is somehow to one's advantage. But—even if we put to one side the awkward question of how long is long enough to see what comes of it—this protest can be met in the same way. The fact that what comes of it is somehow to one's advantage need not, *in the relevant sense*, count as a reason for adhering to the move. In so far as adhering to the move means continuing to accept something as true, any advantage that accrues from doing so may be entirely practical: it may have no bearing on the truth of whatever is accepted (which is not to deny, incidentally, that it can be overridden by the subsequent discovery that whatever is accepted is false). The PSR, along with the use to which Della Rocca puts it, remains under threat.

Note that Della Rocca bolsters his opposition to metaphysical arbitrariness by talking about reasons in quantitative terms. He takes it that, although there can be reasons both for and against making any given metaphysical move, either these reasons are ‘equally good’, in which case ‘whatever one does is at best arbitrary and thus unacceptable’, or ‘one has to go where the preponderance of reasons points’ (p. 211). This is all part of his opposition to ‘reasons that are reasons but nonetheless give one leeway’ (*ibid.*). But this is bound to leave us wondering about the possibility of reasons that are incommensurable, that is to say reasons that are neither equally good nor preponderant in one direction or the other. Moreover, anyone who is the least sympathetic to the idea that devising a metaphysical system is a creative exercise, to the extent that it is even in part an artistic exercise, is liable to think that the reasons that a metaphysician confronts for or against making any given metaphysical move are very often, precisely, incommensurable.

Let us return to Della Rocca's claim of non-negotiability. What grounds this claim? It sounds very much like an appeal to intuition on Della Rocca's part. But it cannot be. It is the burden of Chapter 11 of his book that intuition is no guide to truth, since whatever guidance intuition gives is arbitrary. Presumably what grounds the claim, in Della Rocca's view, is the PSR. Nevertheless the claim *is* made to sound like an appeal to intuition. Indeed it is made to sound like an appeal to intuition that gives the PSR independent support. And this signals a more fundamental issue. *What reason is there, on Della Rocca's view, to accept the PSR itself?* This question must of course have an answer if the PSR is correct, as indeed must the question of what reason there is to accept anything that is said in answer to it. And I do not myself see how there can be an answer that does not appeal to intuition, or involve circularity, or launch an infinite regress—in short, that does not violate the PSR in some way.<sup>10</sup>

As for Della Rocca's suspicion of any appeal to intuition, that brings us to another matter.<sup>11</sup> Even if he himself never appeals to intuition, he does appeal to logic. (Even if his conclusions are unorthodox, his way of arguing for them is utterly orthodox. This is indeed a significant part of the force of his book.) And his appeal to logic raises issues that are not dissimilar to those that an appeal to intuition would have raised, though they cut much deeper. Suppose Della Rocca is right that there cannot be any relations; and suppose it follows from this, as a matter of logic, that there cannot be distinction or multiplicity. Why should there not be, even so, logic-defying distinction and

multiplicity? *What reason is there, on Della Rocca's view, to accept logic?* I do not deny that there is reason to accept logic. The issue is whether there is reason that is consonant with Della Rocca's strict monism, whereby there is not even any such thing as a relation of inconsistency, still less any such thing as a set of beliefs that can be appraised in the light of that relation.<sup>12</sup>

I have one final point to make in this subsection, of an entirely different character from what has preceded it. It merits a much lengthier discussion than I can proffer here; but it is worth making, however sketchily. If the PSR is correct, then one of the things that has an explanation is the existence of suffering. Indeed it was in this connection, more than any other, that the great proponent of the PSR, Leibniz, wanted to put the PSR to work.<sup>13</sup> But to take seriously the idea that the existence of suffering has an explanation is already to incur a commitment of sorts, a commitment with an ethical dimension as well as a metaphysical one. It is to take seriously the possibility of something that will bring suffering under a certain kind of intellectual control, and perhaps even make it more bearable.<sup>14</sup> As far as one's own suffering is concerned, there is no reason why we should balk at anyone's thinking in such terms. But as far as the suffering of another is concerned, particularly when there is little or no prospect that any explanation that can be found for the existence of suffering will have any purchase on the person whose suffering it is, say because that person is an infant, it is a real question what *right* one has to think in such terms. There seem to be—the words are inadequate, though I can think of none better—an insensitivity and a lack of due respect about it.<sup>15</sup> And if Della Rocca opposes this point by denying that any suffering is that of 'another', that will merely strengthen the suspicion that there is not only a deep metaphysical error at the heart of his project, but a deep ethical error there too.

### 3.2 | Does the PSR yield strict monism?

This subsection will be much briefer than the previous one. There is an objection to Della Rocca's argument that the PSR yields strict monism that is in my view, and in its own way, quick and decisive. Not that I expect this objection to make Della Rocca change his mind. Nor should it. The issues that arise here are as difficult as they are deep, and Della Rocca would be well within his rights to refuse to change his mind without far more than I am about to provide. However, no-one at this juncture is trying to make him change his mind: he is trying to make us change ours. In this context, it is we who are within our rights to ask for more. In particular, we are within our rights to ask for more when Della Rocca makes such claims as the following:

[R]elations are—by their nature—not free-floating, that is, relations are—by their nature—grounded in (at least) one or more of their relata. By its nature, a relation depends on (at least) its relata... One can see this rejection of free-floating relations as a manifestation of the PSR: a free-floating relation would be without a sufficient reason and, as such[,] must be rejected (p. 246).

The objection, which finds sustained and redoubtable support in a prodigious body of work by one of the greatest twentieth-century philosophers, Gilles Deleuze, is that we can and must understand the relation of *difference* as a counterexample to these assertions, that is as a suitably 'free-floating' relation that is ontologically prior to its relata.<sup>16</sup>

It is perhaps a moot point whether this objection really is an objection to Della Rocca's argument that the PSR yields strict monism, or whether it rather casts difference as a relation that cannot be suitably explained and therefore belongs to the previous subsection as a further objection to the PSR itself. It is worth noting, however, that even if the latter is the case, there are less demanding ways of construing the notion of explanation whereby to say that difference is ontologically prior to its relata is not at all to deny that it can be explained. In any case all that matters, at this point, is the ontological priority. Difference, on Deleuze's view, is irreducibly 'that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given *as diverse*.'<sup>17</sup>

It would be absurd for me to try to summarize Deleuze's ideas in these confines. For current purposes I am content to advert to them and, thereby, to advert to what I see as one of the most fundamental flaws in Della Rocca's entire project. But it will be helpful, I think, to close this subsection by pitting one of Della Rocca's principal contentions against relevant material in Deleuze. The final sentence of Chapter 3 of Della Rocca's book is: 'There is, simply, being.' In a sense, Deleuze agrees. This would be one way of conveying one of his own principal contentions, namely that being is 'univocal', in other words that there is no distinction or multiplicity so profound as to force us to acknowledge radically different senses of being. But Della Rocca intends his contention as a way of denying that there is any distinction or multiplicity, whereas, for Deleuze, the being that there simply and univocally is *is that* of distinction and multiplicity. Deleuze writes:

[T]he essential in univocity is not that Being is said in a single and same sense, but that it is said, in a single and same sense, of all its individuating differences... The essence of univocal being is to include individuating differences, while these differences do not have the same essence and do not change the essence of being—just as white includes various intensities while remaining essentially the same white. There are not two 'paths', as Parmenides' poem suggests,<sup>18</sup> but a single 'voice' of Being which includes all its modes, including the most diverse, the most varied, the most differentiated. Being is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs: it is said of difference itself.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.3 | Is strict monism self-refuting?

I have already indicated various objections to strict monism. In this final subsection I shall consider one more, namely that it is subject to a particular kind of self-refutation. Of all the objections that I am considering to Della Rocca's project, this seems to me the easiest for him to rebut. But rebutting it raises further issues which I will go on to address in §4.

A model for the objection is provided by Michael Dummett in his essay on McTaggart's argument for the unreality of time.<sup>20</sup> Dummett writes:

[McTaggart's conclusion that time is unreal] seems self-refuting in something of the way in which, as McTaggart himself points out,<sup>21</sup> the view that evil is an illusion is self-refuting: that is, if there is no evil, the illusion that there is evil is certainly evil. To say that time is unreal is to say that we apprehend relations between events... as temporal when they are not really temporal at all... But just what does our 'apprehension of these relations as temporal' consist in? Which apprehension is McTaggart thinking of—I mean, the apprehension at which time? Clearly, even if the world is really static, our apprehension of it changes.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, the objection runs, only what exhibits distinction and multiplicity can constitute an illusion of distinction and multiplicity.

The rebuttal to the objection is comparatively straightforward. Unlike those who believe that evil is an illusion, and who thereby face the question of why the illusion is not itself evil, and unlike those who believe that time is an illusion, and who thereby face the question of why the illusion is not itself temporal, Della Rocca does not believe that distinction and multiplicity are an illusion. He does not believe that anything is an illusion: there is only being.

This rebuttal is fine as far as it goes. As I have said, though, it raises further issues. If Della Rocca does not believe that distinction and multiplicity are (even) an illusion (let alone real), then what business does he have exploiting, in however disingenuous a way, the capacity of language to evoke distinction and multiplicity—as he does, for example, on page 60, when he refers to the 'four exhaustive and mutually exclusive options' for understanding what

makes substance substance? Della Rocca claims that he is at liberty to carry on using words as he did before 'though without the incoherent metaphysical accretions that [he has been] trying to identify and eliminate,' (p. 224), and perhaps he will invoke this claim in response to that question. But it gets increasingly difficult to know what weight to attach to such claims, given that they too, on Della Rocca's view, are not so much as illusions. Moreover, one does not have to be all that Wittgensteinian to think that if he is using words as he did before, then he must be using them with the same significance as they had before, including whatever metaphysical accretions may or may not have been part of that significance.<sup>23</sup>

Admittedly, this Wittgensteinian thought loses its force if Della Rocca is not using words exclusively as he did before, but only as part of a haphazard use of them that also includes what he would previously have rejected as nonsensical, and I take it, though it is hard to be certain, that one of the points of Chapter 13, which consists of a single incomplete sentence, is to illustrate just such a free rein in his use of words (see p. 224 again). But his book contains very little of the sort that we find in Chapter 13. For the most part, the sentences in it look like standard contributions to philosophical dialectic; and they have the effect that they have, and that they seem to be intended to have, precisely on account of that. If it is part of Della Rocca's project that these sentences should eventually be recognizable as nonsensical, then he may ultimately confront the same irony as, arguably, Wittgenstein confronts in the *Tractatus* when he explicitly claims, towards the end of his book, that anyone who understands him must eventually recognize what he has written as nonsensical.<sup>24</sup> The irony is that, while many books include many passages which, despite their authors' intentions, simply do not make sense, both Wittgenstein and Della Rocca may be involved in a mirror image of this: their books may include many passages which, despite their authors' intentions, do make sense.

As these remarks testify, and as has in any case been obvious since the opening section of this essay, one of the fundamental issues raised by Della Rocca's book is what its implications are for its own status. That is the issue that I shall address in the next section.

#### 4 | WHAT IS THE STATUS OF DELLA ROCCA'S OWN TEXT?

One implication, clearly, is that we can accept hardly any of the claims, or apparent claims, in the book, since if we did we would be accepting what was illegitimate in strict monist terms. There are two things of which this is reminiscent, each of which is worth considering as a possible model for what Della Rocca is doing. The first is proof by *reductio ad absurdum*. In the course of such a proof, at least on a standard account, claims are made which follow from an assumption that is ultimately to be rejected as false and which are themselves ultimately to be rejected as false.<sup>25</sup> A well-known example is the mathematical proof that there is no fraction equal to  $\sqrt{2}$ , which begins with the assumption that there is such a fraction and then derives a contradiction from this. The second thing of which the implication is reminiscent is the thing that I referenced towards the end of the previous section: Wittgenstein's rejection of what he has written in the *Tractatus* as nonsensical, which, in the same context, he famously likens to throwing away a ladder after having climbed it. Call the first of these the Reductio Model and call the second the Tractarian Model. They are similar. Even so, there are differences between them that look as though they may be important. How does what is rejected in each case serve its purpose? To what extent is it legitimate in each case, when we are commenting on what appear to be claims accepted *in propria persona*, though they are not really, to adopt the pretence that they are really? For example, if we say that, in the course of the proof that there is no fraction equal to  $\sqrt{2}$ , we show that the numerator of the fraction is even, or if we say that Wittgenstein holds pictures to be facts, have we ourselves said something true? How much, in each case, is really what it appears to be, and needs to be what it appears to be for the whole operation to succeed?<sup>26</sup> It is not clear that the answers to all such questions will be the same in both cases. And this in turn means that there seems to be a significant issue about which of these models, if either, is the correct model for what Della Rocca is doing.

Concerning the question of how much is what it appears to be, one might think, given Chapter 12 of Della Rocca's book, which contains no main text, and given the rôle that this chapter appears to play in the book (see e.g. pp. xxii and 223–224), that Della Rocca does not want us to construe any of the rest of the book as what it appears to be; hence that he himself is not proffering anything else in the book *in propria persona*; and that, had he been totally ingenuous and only proffered what he thought he *could* proffer *in propria persona*, then he would have written nothing at all.

But I think this would be wrong. For one thing, Chapter 12 is not as radical as it may seem. It has a position in the book, a title, and even a footnote (albeit the footnote includes a concession that what he has done in the chapter is ‘imperfect’—a concession that must apply, in part, to itself, if only because of that reference to ‘this chapter’). As it stands, Chapter 12 is more like an empty frame in an art gallery than, say, the twenty-first painting in an art gallery whose exhibits comprise just twenty paintings. But also, much more importantly, there seems to be nothing wrong, on Della Rocca's view, with claiming that there is only being—or, to pick some reformulations of this claim that he adopts elsewhere, that all is substance or that all is explanation (see e.g. p. 218). True, every one of these formulations involves a multiplicity of words, which may give pause. It is not obvious, however, that this matters as far as the strict monist content of what is being claimed is concerned.<sup>27</sup> It is noteworthy that, at the very beginning of Chapter 4, having reiterated his strict monist view that all is being, Della Rocca says that ‘there is... nothing *more* to say’ (emphasis added).<sup>28</sup> And later we find him claiming that we cannot say anything ‘*as long as such saying presupposes relations and distinctions,*’ (p. 223, emphasis added).

It seems to me, then, that Della Rocca would be happy to endorse a little of what he says in the book; and that all the rest is material that is somehow designed to help us appreciate this little. If I am right, and if we call the little that he would be prepared to endorse the Goods and all the rest the Packaging, then the issue of whether either the Reductio Model or the Tractarian Model is the correct model for what he is doing is primarily an issue about the nature of the Packaging.

It follows, of course, that Della Rocca's view prevents the issue from even arising: in strict monist terms, there cannot be any distinction between the Packaging and the Goods. Nevertheless, the Packaging contains material that is pertinent to the issue. On page 220, for example, Della Rocca describes the arguments that he has been relying on as ‘incoherent or—to use a Wittgensteinian term—nonsense.’ And much earlier, on p. xv, this time in connection with Parmenides, he writes that ‘just as Wittgenstein invokes certain propositions... but also transcends them and rejects them as nonsense, so too Parmenides invokes certain distinctions... but also transcends them and rejects them as unthinkable.’ Della Rocca clearly has the Tractarian Model in mind, albeit he never, even in the Packaging, explicitly says, or for that matter suggests, that it is the correct model for what he himself is doing.<sup>29</sup>

One thing that helps to show that he has the Tractarian Model in mind is his appeal to nonsense—although it is worth noting that this is not the linchpin for distinguishing between the Tractarian Model and the Reductio Model that it may appear to be. There is a view, with its origins in the later Wittgenstein, whereby a proof of impossibility is itself a proof of nonsense. On this view, the upshot of the proof that there is no fraction that is equal to  $\sqrt{2}$  is that ‘There is a fraction that is equal to  $\sqrt{2}$ ’ is nonsensical, not false.<sup>30</sup> Again, anyone who accepts a Strawsonian view of presupposition will regard claims made on a false presupposition as truth-valueless, not false.<sup>31</sup> And although there is scope for debate about whether the nonsensicality or lack of truth value at stake in these views is the same as that involved in the Tractarian Model, as of course there is about whether these views are correct in the first place, this indicates that the difference between falsehood and nonsense is not especially critical in this context. In particular, it is not especially critical to the question of whether the Tractarian Model is the correct model for what Della Rocca is doing.

What is critical, and what shows that it is ultimately *not* the correct model for what he is doing—albeit the Reductio Model fares no better in this respect—is something to which I shall return in the next section, namely the fact that Della Rocca, unlike Wittgenstein, not only repudiates almost all of his own text; he repudiates almost all of what has ever been written or spoken by anyone.

Let us for now ignore what attitude Della Rocca intends us to have towards all of that other material. The important question, for now, is what attitude he intends us to have towards the material that he repudiates in his own text—the Packaging. The Packaging is somehow designed, as I said earlier, to help us appreciate the Goods. And I take it that he intends us to see this. I also take it that what he thinks there is in the Goods to be appreciated is *truth*.<sup>32</sup> Thus consider the comment that he makes about what happens when we have made what he calls ‘the Parmenidean Ascent’, that is when we have exploited the Packaging as a way of coming to embrace strict monism. He writes:

[W]e do not lose the finite, related things we know and love, for those things could never coherently be conceived anyway. Rather, ... we finally see the world aright (p. 82).

His use of the first-person plural pronoun here consigns this comment to the Packaging; but the use of ‘aright’ looks as though it is intended to be taken at something close to face value. And later Della Rocca explicitly characterizes his monist view as ‘true’, with a use of ‘true’ that likewise looks as though it is intended to be taken at something close to face value (p. 245).

But am I not now overanalyzing? Several times Della Rocca suggests that the whole book is a kind of game, or even a kind of joke (see e.g. p. 223). Moreover, in expending energy on trying to ascertain exactly how to construe his text, am I not forgetting his advice towards the end of the Proem: to ask, not what he is doing, but what we are doing?

Very well. Here is what I am doing. I am trying to make sense of this book. In so far as there is any suggestion on Della Rocca's part that it has nothing to do with truth, that sounds straightforwardly disingenuous to me. And if the book really does have nothing to do with truth—if it is nothing but a philosophical game, or a philosophical joke—then I am sorry to say that I personally find it unrewarding and unfunny.<sup>33</sup> There is a wonderful passage in which Bernard Williams disparages philosophy that is ‘phony, mechanical, unengaged, or kitsch’.<sup>34</sup> Unless Della Rocca is trying, at some level, in some way, to guide us to truth, then I do not see how he can resist the charge of phoniness, mechanization, lack of engagement, or kitsch.

## 5 | WHITHER NOW?

### 5.1 | What is the Value to Us of Truth?

I noted in the previous section a critical difference between what Della Rocca is doing in this book and what Wittgenstein is doing in the *Tractatus*: Della Rocca is repudiating almost all that has ever been written or spoken. ‘[T]here is a sense,’ he writes, ‘in which, in... throwing away the ladder, we are no longer able to articulate anything,’ (p. 223). This is in marked contrast to Wittgenstein who writes, ‘[A]ll the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order.—That utterly simple thing, which we have to formulate here, is not a likeness of the truth, but the truth itself in its entirety. (Our problems are not abstract, but perhaps the most concrete that there are.)’<sup>35</sup>

Della Rocca thereby faces a question that Wittgenstein does not. What exactly is supposed to happen, not just in the philosophical study but in the market place or at the railway station or in the doctor's surgery, once we have thrown away the ladder? Just after the passage that I quoted in the previous paragraph comes the passage that I had in mind earlier when I spoke of the suggestion that Della Rocca's book is a kind of game or joke: ‘[W]e and our words are no longer obligated to stand in a certain relation to the world. Instead, we and our words are... now free, free to play, perchance to joke,’ (p. 223). That may be all very well where philosophical work is concerned. But does Della Rocca really think this when he checks the train timetable or when he visits his doctor?

It seems to me that these questions are an embarrassment for Della Rocca. But is this simply unfair? What if he is trying to guide us towards truth, and what if, contrary to what I have been arguing, he is right about what it takes to get there? Then he has no alternative—does he?—but to write a book of the kind he has written. Train timetables, medical records, and the rest do not come into it, do they?

Well, these counter-questions raise some awkward questions of their own. How, if Della Rocca is right, can there be any such thing as writing a book, or indeed any such thing as Della Rocca? And how can anyone be guided to truth, given (what strict monism entails) that truth is nothing but being, that it cannot stand in any relation to any belief, and that there cannot even be anyone with any belief to be guided anywhere? But let us waive these awkward questions and let us suppose, to whatever extent we can, that Della Rocca is indeed trying to guide us towards truth and that he is indeed right about what it takes to get there. *Why should we follow him?* In the previous section I quoted one of a number of passages from Della Rocca's book in which he speaks of seeing things 'aright'. But let us not be seduced by the evaluative connotations of the word 'aright' into thinking that the question thereby answers itself. Even if what he is guiding us towards can be characterized as seeing things aright, why should we follow him? What is the value to us of seeing things aright? What is the value to us of truth?<sup>36</sup>

I am far from suggesting that there is no good answer to the question what the value to us of truth is. The issue, like the issue that I raised in connection with logic in §3.1, is whether there is a good answer that is consonant with Della Rocca's strict monism. Once havoc has been wreaked to this extent, all bets are off.

But does this not work to Della Rocca's advantage? Not only are all bets off; this entire dialectic is nonsense. I have been posing what I take to be a series of questions that threaten Della Rocca. But if strict monism is true, then I have not been posing any questions at all and there is no threat to him, is there?

Well, certainly, if strict monism is true, then I have not been posing any questions that are not nonsensical; and there is no threat to him that is not nonsense; and I, now, am trafficking in further nonsense, much as I have been doing throughout this essay. But if what I have been doing throughout this essay is trafficking in nonsense, then trafficking in nonsense is something that I am content to have been doing. After all, it is what I do whenever I say anything, not just when I am trying to critique strict monism. It is what I do when I am in the doctor's surgery describing my symptoms. It is what the doctor does when offering a diagnosis. If this somehow distances me (and the doctor) from truth, so be it. Other things, it now appears, matter more.

Does Della Rocca have any way of reclaiming the value of truth to us in counter-response to this response—trafficking, as he must on a strict monist conception, and as he does throughout his own work, in his own similar nonsense? I cannot see a way. If he reverts to the idea that truth is of value to us because seeing things aright is of value to us, then either he will be involved in a circularity that offends against the PSR or he will still owe us an explanation of why seeing things aright is of value to us. If he argues that seeing things aright is of value to us because it tends to serve our purposes, then he will have made it that much harder to factor out the nonsensicality of what he is saying ('tends'? 'serve'?), never mind that what tends to serve our purposes is not in fact that, but rather seeing things in accord with train timetables, the medical expertise of doctors, and suchlike. If he proclaims the capacity of seeing things aright to free us, as he does at the end of Chapter 9, then he will merely have presented a significant new obstacle to factoring out the nonsensicality of what he is saying ('free us'?)—as evidenced by his own brave attempts to do precisely that, which have him glossing our being freed in this way as our becoming, or no longer being distinct from, the world ('becoming'? 'no longer'?).<sup>37</sup> If, finally, he follows Aquinas by identifying truth with God, then he will also, as he acknowledges at the end of Chapter 6, have to distance himself from Aquinas by construing God as all there is, and *then* we shall find ourselves back where we started, with an unresolved issue about what the value to us of truth is.

I, meanwhile, in my own nonsensical way, can appropriate my own nonsensical notion of 'truth', which can be found in the train timetable or the first aid manual and whose value to us, I can nonsensically say, is precisely that believing it tends to serve our purposes. And I can nonsensically add that anything that is designed to be an impediment to our believing it, such as Della Rocca's book, is thereby to be resisted. And, while I am at it, I can resolve—since it makes no difference what I say on a strict monist view—to drop those scare quotes around 'truth', along with

the suggestion that this is only *my* notion of truth; to represent myself as thereby being in straightforward disagreement with Della Rocca about what truth is like; to remove the caveat that what I am saying is nonsense; and to insist, on the contrary, that what I am saying makes perfectly good sense. And then I am free to carry on as I did before, thinking and saying the various commonsensical things that I previously thought and said, and subscribing to the various philosophical views about these things to which I previously subscribed.

It is irresistible for me to close this subsection with a half-quotation from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*:

Here it can be seen that strict monism, when its implications are followed out pragmatically, coincides with common sense. Truth shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the multiplicity of 'things we know and love' co-ordinated with it.<sup>38</sup>

## 5.2 | The Spectre of Contradiction

The previous subsection was in part an attempt to answer the question 'What if Della Rocca is right about what it takes to reach truth?' And the proposed answer was, in effect, that by following him we shall not only reach truth, but our momentum and our sense of what matters to us will carry us along and we shall arrive back where we started.

But cannot this answer be elaborated as follows? If Della Rocca is right about what it takes to reach truth, then he is right, in particular, about why there cannot be any relations. The doctor may tell me that my symptoms mean such and such; but Della Rocca (if he is right) has presented us with a decisive argument that my symptoms cannot mean anything. And even if the place where we started merits the label 'common sense', there was always provision there to reckon with troublesome metaphysical arguments of this kind. Something like the Reductio Model of §4 now applies. The place where we started turns out to be a place of contradiction and we cannot rest there after all. Our momentum must carry us along once again, this time back to strict monism (and thereby into a perpetual loop).

I think this elaboration of my proposed answer can be resisted. The very point of that answer was that there is nothing on a strict monist view to prevent us from wielding whatever nonsense tends to serve our purposes. Admittedly, our purposes are liable to be frustrated by having to contend with contradiction, but not to the extent that we have to give up: we just have to negotiate the contradiction. Wittgenstein once said in a lecture, 'If you can draw any conclusion you like from [a contradiction], ... I would say, "Well then, just don't draw any conclusions from a contradiction"'.<sup>39</sup> This may seem literally laughable: it is reminiscent of the Tommy Cooper joke in which a patient tells his doctor that his arm hurts whenever he raises it and the doctor replies, 'Well then, don't raise it.' But the laughability of the doctor's response could hardly count against it in a context where 'our words are no longer obligated to stand in a certain relation to the world' but are 'free to play, perchance to joke'. And to whatever extent advocating the negotiation of a contradiction is likewise laughable, the same applies. Such bullishness, in such a context, is entirely reasonable. What is wrong with the doctor's response in the Tommy Cooper joke is not that it is laughable, but that it does not serve the patient's purposes. If my doctor tells me something that does serve my purposes, in particular if my doctor tells me, on the basis of medical expertise, that my symptoms mean such and such, and if this is contradicted by Della Rocca's metaphysical argument, then I do well, at least while I am in the surgery, to pay attention to what the doctor tells me and to ignore Della Rocca's argument—even if his argument is decisive. And I do not see what provision there is, within strict monism, to suppose otherwise.

Nevertheless, there is a passage very near the end of Della Rocca's book in which he does appear to suppose otherwise. '[D]on't run from skepticism,' he writes, 'and, in particular, don't, in desperation, do ultimately incoherent things in order to avoid a skepticism that you might initially find unattractive,' (p. 289). To be sure, this recommendation, on Della Rocca's view, is just more nonsense. Even so, it sounds as though it is an attempt on his part to make a serious point. And this in turn means that it sounds hollow, coming as it does from someone who has, up to then, been both advocating and practising the doing of 'ultimately incoherent things'. Why should it bother Della Rocca if

we do likewise? And in any case we can turn the tables here: we can urge Della Rocca to ask, not what we are doing, but what he is doing.

## 6 | CONCLUSION

Although the previous section was concerned with what follows if Della Rocca is right about what it takes to reach truth, I remain convinced, for reasons given in §3, that he is not right about that. I also remain convinced, for reasons given in the previous section, that, even if he is, this just shows that some things matter more to us than reaching truth.

I have earlier quoted both Deleuze and Williams. I think it will be helpful to conclude by recruiting them both again, in connection with these two convictions. There is a hint of the second conviction in the following passage from a work written by Deleuze in collaboration with Félix Guattari:

The notions of relevance, necessity, the point of something, are a thousand times more significant than the notion of truth.<sup>40</sup>

In fact, however, this is not advocacy of the pursuit of various desiderata at the expense of truth. It is important how the quotation continues: ‘Not as *substitutes* for truth, but as a *measure* of the truth of what I’m saying,’ (emphases added). Deleuze and Guattari are making the point that the mere truth of whatever one says or thinks counts for relatively little, and in particular for too little to compensate for its irrelevance, unimportance, lack of interest, or lack of clarity as far as its being something worth saying or thinking is concerned. From that point of view, saying or thinking something false is sometimes better than saying or thinking something true. Thus Deleuze and Guattari later urge that a worse fate can befall thought than to issue in falsehood: it can issue in ‘remarks without interest or importance, banalities mistaken for profundities, ... badly posed or distorted problems.’<sup>41</sup> To that extent, these considerations are in line with my second conviction. But none of this is meant to gainsay the fact that best of all is to say or to think something that satisfies *all* these desiderata, something that is clear, relevant, important, interesting, *and* true.<sup>42</sup> Deleuze and Guattari could quite reasonably go on to insist that, whenever it is better to say or to think something false than to say or to think something true, it is better still to say or to think something else true.

But so could I. It would be quite compatible with retaining the second conviction to insist that our best state could not possibly be one in which we were cut off from truth in the way described in the previous section. To insist on this would be to take a stance on the very nature of philosophy, since only philosophy is capable of suggesting that we are cut off from truth in that way. It would also have as a consequence that the second conviction bolsters the first. For it would mean that whenever, as philosophers, we find ourselves counting something as true whose truth cannot ultimately commend it to us, then we need to go back to the drawing board: such a thing cannot be true.

This is a package of ideas to which I do in fact subscribe, and this goes a long way towards explaining the approach to Della Rocca’s book that I have taken in this essay. And, although that approach has been fundamentally hostile, I see it as a great merit of Della Rocca’s book that it forces us into such self-conscious reflection on the nature of our discipline. I close with the following quotation from Williams, in which the attitude to philosophy that I have just described finds memorable expression:

[There is] a quality which is essential to [philosophy], whatever questions it is addressing: an intense attention to what it is saying, and to the question whether what it is saying is not only true, but rings true.<sup>43,44</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Della Rocca (2020). All unaccompanied references will be to this book.
- <sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking, what he calls strict monism is just the view that there is no distinction or multiplicity (p. 1). This leaves open the possibility that what there is is non-being, not being. However, given that Della Rocca argues against this possibility (pp. 81–82), it is a harmless convenience to construe strict monism as already requiring that there be only being.
- <sup>3</sup> I confess that this is in part because I am unsympathetic to much of his exegesis. One notable example of what gives me pause is a claim that he makes on p. xxiii: ‘the spirit of Spinoza [hovers] over much of my thinking in this book.’ That seems to me a travesty of anything in Spinoza. But this raises enormous issues on which Della Rocca himself has of course written authoritatively and extensively, so I shall do no more in this context than register my disquiet.
- <sup>4</sup> See e.g. p. 15.
- <sup>5</sup> Only broadly: see p. 76.
- <sup>6</sup> For the record I note that some of the material in Chapter 10 is a source of further exegetical qualms for me. I have in mind material in which Della Rocca discusses Kant’s attempt, in his Second Analogy (Kant (1998), A189–211/B232–256), to show that there cannot be temporal relations unless a restrained version of the PSR holds. Della Rocca urges that this attempt can be extended to relations of any other kind. This seems to me seriously to underestimate the rôle that peculiarities of time play in the Second Analogy.
- <sup>7</sup> There is a *hint*, on p. 289, that this is the very spirit in which Della Rocca adopts the PSR: he urges us to ‘give full rein, as [he has] tried to do, to the PSR.’ But it is no more than a hint. Della Rocca has tried to give full rein to the PSR because he subscribes to it. Or at least I think he has: see further §4 below.
- <sup>8</sup> This is a reference to what I call the Basic Assumption in Moore (1997). For discussion of the arbitrary character of this assumption and of what I build on it, see Moore (2024). And note a connection with the point that I made in the previous paragraph: in adopting this assumption I take myself to be, in effect, and among other things, defining my terms.
- <sup>9</sup> Fichte (1956), pp. 88–89.
- <sup>10</sup> There is later work, namely Della Rocca (2023), in which Della Rocca offers a reason to accept the PSR. But it is noteworthy that in the course of doing so he has recourse to plausibility in a way that sounds, as before, very much like an appeal to intuition (p. 223).
- <sup>11</sup> And for the record it is something else with which I disagree. I think that intuitively based judgements must carry some authority, however defeasibly. This is for broadly Wittgensteinian reasons: it is a precondition of our communicating with one another (see Wittgenstein (1967), Pt I, §§240–242). Not that this will cut any ice with Della Rocca: he is at liberty to deny, in his havoc-wreaking way, that we ever do communicate with one another. But it does serve as a forceful reminder of how much is at stake, and how deeply. I do not deny, incidentally, that there may be good debunking explanations, of a psychological or a sociological or an anthropological kind, for why people have some of the intuitions they have. That shows the importance of the clause ‘however defeasibly’, and it leaves open the possibility that *sometimes*, when we think we are communicating with one another, we are deluding ourselves.
- <sup>12</sup> Della Rocca may say that all that matters for his purposes is that his opponents can give what counts, at least in their own terms, as reason to accept logic—whereas they cannot give what counts, even in their own terms, as reason to accept intuition—and that this is enough for them to be vulnerable to a *reductio ad absurdum*. (This anticipates ideas to which we shall return in §§4 and 5.) But even if that is so, strict monism needs to make sense in its own terms.
- <sup>13</sup> See Leibniz (1985).
- <sup>14</sup> Cf. Nietzsche (1967), Essay II, §7 and Essay III, §28.
- <sup>15</sup> We must take very seriously Adorno’s question of what the prospects are for metaphysics after Auschwitz: see Adorno (1973), esp. Pt 3, §III. Cf. also Dostoevsky’s novel *The Brothers Karamazov* (Dostoevsky (1982)), in which Ivan Karamazov’s heart is rent by stories of suffering among innocent children. He proclaims that he does not want the harmony whose price this suffering is: he does not want that explanation for the suffering. ‘I don’t want it, out of the love I bear to mankind,’ he says, ‘...Too high a price has been placed on it,’ (p. 287).
- <sup>16</sup> See esp. Deleuze (1994).
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222, emphasis added.
- <sup>18</sup> This is a reference to the division of Parmenides’ poem *On Nature* (Parmenides (1987)), into two parts: ‘The Way of Truth’, concerned with how reality must be; and ‘The Way of Opinion’, concerned with the multifarious ways it seems to be.
- <sup>19</sup> Deleuze (1994), p. 36.
- <sup>20</sup> See McTaggart (1993).

- <sup>21</sup> This is a reference to McTaggart (1906), p. 209.
- <sup>22</sup> Dummett (1978), p. 356.
- <sup>23</sup> Among the many passages in Wittgenstein that are relevant here, Wittgenstein (1967), Pt I, §402 merits special attention.
- <sup>24</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein (1961), 6.54. I say ‘arguably’, although this is not, as it happens, something that I myself would argue. Among the many passages in Diamond (2019) that are relevant to this issue, see in particular pp.185 and 199–200.
- <sup>25</sup> This account is not entirely uncontroversial. It is challenged, notably, by Gottlob Frege (1979), pp. 244–247. See also below, in the main text, for another way to challenge it.
- <sup>26</sup> What Wittgenstein rejects as nonsensical in 6.54 of the *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein (1961)) are what he calls ‘my propositions’. But what is the scope of this? All of them? All but that one? All but that one and a few other similar meta-propositions about what is at stake in the rest of the book? Just whichever are of a metaphysical cast? For that matter, are the answers to such questions even determinate? Does Wittgenstein perhaps mean that there is no way of making sense of the book as a whole, though there may be of any sufficiently small part of it, rather like an Escher drawing?
- <sup>27</sup> Cf. also the very interesting point that Adrian Haddock makes in a related connection in his Haddock (2021), §36. Haddock credits the point to Elizabeth Anscombe; but I think he thereby somewhat undersells his own contribution to it.
- <sup>28</sup> He also appends a footnote which reads: ‘And I will attempt to not say it in [C]hapter 12.’
- <sup>29</sup> See e.g. pp. 7 and 221.
- <sup>30</sup> Cf. Wittgenstein (1978), Pt V, §28, and Diamond (2019), Pt II (revealingly entitled ‘Wittgenstein, Anscombe, and What Can Only Be True’).
- <sup>31</sup> See e.g. Strawson (1993).
- <sup>32</sup> I omit the definite article to accord with the strict monist view that the only legitimate use of the term ‘truth’ is as a kind of mass noun: see e.g. pp. 179–180. But it is interesting to note that one of Della Rocca’s own first references to truth, on p. xviii, is in terms of ‘a true proposition’ and must therefore be viewed as part of the Packaging. So too, come to that, must the bulk of his discussion in the section entitled ‘Truth’ (pp. 176–181): see e.g. his claim on p. 177 that he has no commitment as to what the ‘bearers’ of truth are.
- <sup>33</sup> I like to think that I enjoy games and jokes as much as the next philosopher. But games and jokes have their place; and they need their context. Thus in Deleuze and Guattari (1994), where there is talk of philosophy getting the giggles, it is important how this is contextualized, and it is striking how it is immediately qualified: ‘It gets the giggles, which wipe away its tears,’ (p. 11).
- <sup>34</sup> Williams (2006), p. 210.
- <sup>35</sup> Wittgenstein (1961), 5.5563.
- <sup>36</sup> Nietzsche was famously prepared to ask what the value to us of truth is. And he spoke revealingly, and relevantly in this context, of ‘those Greeks’ who ‘knew how to live’ by ‘[stopping] courageously at the surface’; ‘those Greeks who were,’ as he put it, ‘superficial—out of profundity,’ (Nietzsche (1974), Preface, §4, emphasis in original). For discussion and further references see Deleuze (2006), esp. Ch. 3, §§11 and 15.
- <sup>37</sup> To be fair, there is a promise on p. 224 of future work on these issues, which may help his cause.
- <sup>38</sup> Wittgenstein (1961), 5.64. Here it is worth remembering that even Parmenides, in *On Nature*, had his ‘Way of Opinion’ as well as his ‘Way of Truth’ (see above, n. 18). Near the beginning of his poem he writes, ‘You must learn all things, / both the unwavering heart of well-rounded truth/ and the opinions of mortals in which there is no true trust./ But nevertheless you will learn these things too—how what seems/had reliably to be, forever traversing everything,’ (Parmenides (1987), p. 131).
- <sup>39</sup> Wittgenstein (1976), p. 220.
- <sup>40</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1994), p. 130.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.
- <sup>42</sup> Cf. the following quotation from Williams (to whom I shall return shortly): ‘[It is false] that trying to say something true is not as interesting as trying to say something interesting... in particular, because about most interesting things, what is interesting is that they are true,’ (Williams (2006), p. 202).
- <sup>43</sup> Williams (2014), p. 369.
- <sup>44</sup> I am very grateful to Filippo Casati for help and advice concerning this essay.

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