

PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

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Editor

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Interview, in Memoriam

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Articles

Skye Cleary and Massimo Pigliucci
How to Live a Good Life — Two Examples

John Tambornino

Finding Our Way About: Philosophical Practice in Religious Community

Tianqun Pan

Philosophical Solutions to Dispute-Conflicts between Humans

Book Reviews

The Philosophy of Metacognition: Mental Agency and Self-Awareness
Reviewed by Fernando Salvetti

Ambivalence: A Philosophical Exploration
Reviewed by Andrei Simionescu-Parait

Another Finitude: Messianic Vitalism and Philosophy
Reviewed by Helen Douglas

Well-Being as Value Fulfillment: How We Can Help Each Other to Live Well
Reviewed by Peter Vernezze

Biographies of Contributors

Book Review

Agata Bielik-Robson, *Another Finitude: Messianic Vitalism and Philosophy*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-3500-9407-9. 312 pages.

REVIEWED BY HELEN DOUGLAS
PHILOSOPHY IN PRACTICE, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Part 1

Mortality presents a troublesome paradox: how are we to live well, knowing we are bound to die? Philosophers and theologians also puzzle over the relation between finite lives and the infinite source of life, whether understood as God or nature. *Another Finitude: Messianic Vitalism and Philosophy* takes up the writings of 20th- and 21st-century Jewish philosophers to critique Christian and Western thinking-towards-death and then to open an unexpected view of infinity within finitude—of love strong as death.

Agata Bielik-Robson, who is a professor of Jewish Studies at both the University of Nottingham and the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Science in Warsaw, has referred to *Another Finitude* as the first volume of her life project.¹ Since her field of study includes psychoanalysis, subjectivity, and the intersections of Judaism and modern philosophical thought, this is a dense, wide-ranging and bountiful work. My review will present a rough sketch of the territory to suggest the book's significance for a philosophical practice with mortals.

The target of the first, polemical, section is the deathbound or thanatic view of subjectivity in Western philosophy that ties the significance of human life to the inevitability of death. While religion offers refuge from mortality in the divine promise of immortal life after life, a rejection of theism has tended to reduce human life to the laws and order of biological and biopolitical necessity. Since the ancient Greeks, such variations have been framed as *kata phusein*, living according to the natural order (albeit as interpreted by the prevailing social order). In the modern period, being-towards-death is associated with Martin Heidegger's analysis of human existence as *Dasein*, a situated being that is conscious of and cares for its singular being and finds itself thrown into circumstances and moods, subject to falling into the anonymity of the everyday. Resolute towards its own authenticity, *Dasein* must willfully take up its possibilities before the imminence of death.

Yet all of these strategies foreclose the possibility of a human life lived well on and within its own terms. At the same time, as Bielik-Robson notes, much of "late-modern thought practices a secret denial of the finite life within the officially accepted condition of finitude" (xviii). This repression of finitude serves to sweep away the problem of finite life "in the absolute categories of the infinite, eternal ... 'unscathed'" (xviii), while Heidegger's overestimation of death and concomitant obsession with self-preservation through self-purification opens the road to sacrificial violence and again precludes any affirmation of life itself. Quoting Jacques Derrida, Bielik-Robson calls this "a strange kind of *mortality without life*" (xvii, original emphasis). Alternately, religious beliefs that are set on a higher plane of everlasting life both devalue and take the sting out of mortal life, "turning life and death into merely relative events" or "*immortality without life*" (xvii, original emphasis).

The task of *Another Finitude* is to think finitude positively, to tease out a vision of human life that neither denies death nor dispels the aporetic contradictions and hazards of life. As the subtitle suggests, Bielik-Robson counters this “philosophy” with “messianic vitalism”. Drawing on *torat hayim*, the Jewish principle of life, she depicts it as a “*religion of the finite life*: the more modest post-atheistic kind of faith which does not promise immortality, but only (only!) *singularity*” (xvi, original emphasis). “Conceived in terms of messianic vitalism,” she explains,

the finite life derives its meaning and inner rule *neither from death nor from nature*—that is, neither from the sovereign power of mortality which dictates its inexorable law of finitude, nor from the naturalist norm of *kata phusein*, which regulates life according to the biological “measure” of the cycle. Deliberately in/de/finite, elastically maintaining itself in the paradox, life tests and expands its finitude from within and creates its own element: *the middle*. For, as Goethe says, “if you want to step into infinitude, just go in all directions into the infinite ...” (xiv, original emphasis)

Her allies in this cause include Franz Rosenzweig’s New Thinking, Sigmund Freud’s early theory of drives, Hannah Arendt’s concept of natality, and, most importantly, Derrida’s teachings on *torat hayim*: a “doctrine of life’s self-preference or ... self-belief” (xv) which, she contends, offers “a new foundation for thinking practically everything: religion, law, social bonds, ethical responsibilities, neighbourly love, the definition of humanity and—last but not least—finite life itself” (103).

All four allies “resort to a similar maneuver in the face of mortality: they summon the counteractive forces of love” (xv). This maneuver is like a martial-arts feint, an adventitious swerve that changes the state of play by changing the game itself. Otherwise than the *mere life* of a positivist naturalist order of self-preservation or the *more-than-life* fantasy of unscathed immortality, messianic vitalism revels in *more life*, the invigorating freedom of survival in the midst of a vexed and vibrant life. Referring back to its Latin roots (*super-* “above, over, beyond” + *vivere* “to live”), “survival” here signifies a choice for life and an affirmation of life. In Derrida’s view, survival is “not simply that which remains, but the most intense life possible” (in Bielik-Robson, 2019: 35).

As Bielik-Robson elaborates,

survival is not a spontaneous biological know-how... but a complex symbolic ratio between life and death which we all must learn ourselves ... [A]lways posed “between life and death,” it is a finite singular life which must cope with its limitations, yet does not lose ontological significance because of its limits ... On the contrary ... a tautological affirmation of life which, in order to live, must affirm itself and *believe in itself*—again and again ... emphatically, insistently, *religiously*. (26, original emphasis)

Derrida’s *torat hayim* recalls God’s directive to the Israelites—“I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the cursing. Choose life, that you and your seed may live” (Deut. 30:19)—recast as a deliberate and conscious turning towards life “in an apotropaic gesture against the thanatic *Shoah*” (25). Survival is won neither by instinct, design nor fate. Each survivor must *learn* to live, *again* and *finally*. This singular personal life is negotiated by way of “an incessant symbolic affirmation/assertion: no living-on without loving-on which can only *go with saying*—saying Yes to life, always confirming the original choice” (27, original emphasis). Surviving means coming through; it entails

an ordeal, a brush with death. No survival without a disaster. And it means living on, remaining in the midst of life after all. Such a life is by no means unscathed or secure, and yet it may “nonetheless be *accepted*, and even quite lovingly so” (xv, original emphasis). And it is through this assertion that living, loving and language become synonymous.

Franz Rosenzweig is set up as the first respondent to Heidegger. While both thinkers believe that human life has no predetermined essence, they react very differently. Heidegger sees death as the ultimate limit that curtails the hubris of Dasein. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger declares that “[t]he human being has no way out in the face of death, not only when it is time to die, but constantly and essentially. Insofar as humans are, they stand in the no-exit of death” (in Bielik-Robson: 53). Or, in Bielik-Robson’s gloss: the “*Nichts* [nothingness] of human life can only be matched by the *Nichts* of death that helps to disclose the abyssal *Nichts* of being” (54).

Rosenzweig’s *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy* counters Dasein’s nihilism by allowing the open indefinite question of human essence to make its own peripatetic way as “a meandering story with many twists and turns ... ‘a life which is content to be an in-between state, merely a *transition* from one thing to another’” (in Bielik-Robson: 54, original emphasis). Death here is not an absolute beyond but approaches life dialogically “as life’s brother” (55). In the same text, Rosenzweig acknowledges that “[t]here is no remedy for death; not even health. A healthy man, however, has the strength to continue towards the grave. The sick man evokes death and lets himself be carried away in mortal fear. In health, even death comes at the ‘proper’ time” (in Bielik-Robson: 42). Death is a boundary limit, but it is not to be overestimated. One may indeed “[a]ccept the verdict but not the authority” (42).

The survivor puts up a healthy resistance to death without denying its inevitability. Life goes on, remaining both fluid and whole in its transience. It does not “succumb to passing *away*, but it is the lively passing *from one thing to another* ... beyond any fixed identity, towards ever richer self-differentiation” (57, original emphasis). The vital appropriation of life’s transience is precisely what it is *to live*: “a properly distinct category in which ‘living’ means something else than ‘dying’ and thus turns into an argument of its own” (57). Rather than a privation or flaw, human indefiniteness may now serve “as the canvas for a new narrative philosophy” (54). We don’t have an essence, we have stories.

Here, Bielik-Robson produces the first of two neologisms for messianic vitalism. *In/de/finitum* marks the redemptive transformation of what first appears to be a strange deficiency of essence in the human condition. *In/de/finitum* finds itself an opening in the middle of life, where death may be inevitable but is not yet. Mortal finitude is split by the indeterminate indefinable non-essence of this life. Here is a possibility of conversion, fresh life, the twist in the tale, the nudge or swerve that changes everything. The *in/de/finite* being is in with a chance for more life—life within life, life against life and life for life—where “life” does not reduce to biology or nature, and Derrida’s “learning to live, finally” is the work of a lifetime.

In light of Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition*, Bielik-Robson explores this conversion as a birth or nativity. Taking up Augustine’s distinction between a “beginning” from fundamental principles (*principium*) and a “creation” that breaches natural causation (*initium*), Arendt argues that humans are “natals” as much as mortals, “not born in order to die but in order to begin” (in Bielik-Robson: 84), commending natality as “a creative disruption ... a revolution of newness” (78).

“[S]een from the viewpoint of automatic processes which seem to determine the course of the world”, Arendt writes, it “looks like a miracle” (in Bielik-Robson: 84).

Life is given as a gift in “the fact of birth which cannot be witnessed, known, or remembered, but precisely because of that must be believed in” (78). Bielik-Robson brews Arendt’s theo-political intuitions about creatureliness and freedom into “the strongest antidote possible to the biopolitical renaturalization of humankind” (230) that reduces human life to ineluctable physical processes. And the proper content or affect of Rosenzweig’s appropriation of life’s transience and Arendt’s natality is *love*. “In this manner ...”, Bielik-Robson quips, “the rhetorical reversal that constitutes the guiding theme of my book [is] an affirmative twist on the Heideggerian notion of *Verfallenheit* ... Yes, we are fallen and still falling—in love” (58–9).

The loving of this living is first of all life’s self- or auto-preference, prior to the divisions of reflective subjectivity, such that subjectivity could be seen as “an autoteleological process of *centring* and resistance” (5, original emphasis) and individuation as an internal process which “takes place in the space between the living, conceived as a centre, and its milieu” (5). Seeking connections in all directions, this *biophilic* process is innovative, deviant, monstrous. It “goes from one neighbor to another and paces the whole world in restless transition, oblivious to its own ‘essence’” (57). Yet it is also the seed of Pauline *agape*, the long-suffering love that connects without totalizing, creates community, and endorses the freely chosen self-limitation of one who loves. It is the Derridean living-loving and loving-living of those who suffer and carry on. Love strong as fear, strong as death.

But what on earth does such a life look like? Scheherazade is given as one example, with her storytelling strategy that makes space for more life by continually deferring the ending, and then allows the storyteller to meet the end on her own terms “at the proper time”. Socrates, Jesus, Hallaj, Joan of Arc, Michel de Montaigne and Victor Hugo are also named as “heroes who revealed the theo-political double bind” (123) of the sacrificial “death penalty” and the absolute right to life of “Thou shalt not kill”. Testifying in the name of life, they defer and counteract the Greco-Judeo-Christian law of sacrifice.

The survivor-for-life is not a classical hero. Bielik-Robson’s preferred exemplar is Jacob, “the most paradigmatic of all Hebrew heroes” (167). This is primarily Jacob at Penuel, wrestling the angel until daybreak, who is wounded and yet refuses to let the angel go without receiving the blessing of “more life.” As the sun rises, he will go out “limping: living on, yet damaged, altered, compromised” (182). But it is also the cunning Jacob who, scrambling for advantage, usurps his brother’s birth-right—and yet must find a way to wipe away Esau’s tears, lest the Messiah not come (182).

Another survivor figure is Derrida’s life-loving “rogues”, who are “deviant, idiosyncratic and law-bending—but not criminals *tout court*” (129), thriving in a space that is neither-here-nor-there (the *khôra*) with a disruptive vitality that is immune to sovereignty and its exceptions. All of which carries a messianic political potential:

In *Rogues*, Derrida defines democracy to come in terms of ... “the *khôra* of the political” ... a strictly horizontal “republic of the living” in which nothing and nobody will ever be able to assume the exceptional position of the unscathed ... [E]mbodying scathedness and vulnerability itself, [*khôra*] is here a “principle of life” that will have liberated itself from the

rule of death as an enigmatic signifier obliquely referring to the transcendent dimension of something “more-than-life” ... which dwarfs any actual life in comparison. (117)

To characterize the mobilizing force of life, Bielik-Robson introduces a second neologism: *Erros*, which at once suggests *Eros* as living desire and the desire for life, the *errancy* of life’s peripatetic exploration, and the *error* that uncertain and indeterminate living is prone to. *Erros* represents the vital messianic drive that would draw us from bondage into exodus and self-emancipation.

Bielik-Robson uses a psychoanalytic frame to describe how the conversion for life takes place. To again condense her complex arguments, it happens dialectically. Taking up the work of Eric Santner, Jonathan Lear and others, she offers an against-the-grain reading of Freud’s 1905 hypothesis on the libidinal economy. Since Freud sought to understand the intangible libidinal drive scientifically, by studying its material objects, the initial objectlessness of libido appeared to defy reason. Noting that sexual energy can connect contingently with all sorts of objects while self-preservation creates a strong attachment of necessity to only one, Freud postulated “a conflict between sexual energy and [the] vital order of self-preservation” (xix). As Bielik-Robson remarks, it is “not at all accidental that the first theory of human libido is thus also the first Freudian tractate on the infant as a ‘polymorphous pervert’” (167).

The key point of her rereading is Lear’s thesis that the libidinal drive may not be originally sexual, but indefinite and aimless: “that is, perhaps sexuality is a manifestation of a fundamental force permeating nature” (in Bielik-Robson: 163). Thus, beginning from an involuntary “amorphic night of *jouissance* whose only manifestation ... is violent and destructive ..., libido annihilates every single finite object it attaches itself to” (195). From this nebulous state, as its purpose shifts from self-preservation to self-reproduction, libido enters the next stage. “[M]arked by distortion and self-oblivion” (195), it submits its energy to the vital biological order. However, it is “only due to this truce, negotiated by the ego, that the objectless drive ‘without qualities’ undergoes the dialectical conversion” (195, original emphasis) by which libido “for the first time enters the light of day ... The self-contained autotelic joy which knows nothing apart from itself is not overcome and defeated; rather it *converts* into a biophilic love” (195, original emphasis). And only through this final unprecedented *conversion* does the finite become capable of the infinite: “before, the excessive drive could only have destroyed the finite vessel of the psyche; now, the drive’s in/de/finiteness can be reconciled with its finite ways. From *objectlessness, through fixation, to relations*” (195, original emphasis).

Another Finitude thus presents a positive narrative of human life that rejects Western philosophy’s vindication of the authority of death while speaking from within the less-traveled corridors of that very tradition. It is a difficult book, and necessarily so, largely because the author refuses to simplify, reduce or release the tension of paradox and aporia in our mortal human condition.² Bielik-Robson runs a fine line and the fine risk to keep faith with what the text would defend.

Part 2

Turning now to the question from philosophical practice, are the ideas presented in *Another Finitude* useful for working with the real people who approach us for help in their real lives? Given that philosophical practice is a diverse profession involved with diverse populations, the answer

is, well, it depends. In my case, it is decidedly yes. I found the book delightful, challenging and thought-provoking.

To set the scene: my work is theoretically and practically grounded in the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas's philosophical writings, where one finds oneself infinitely responsible before the face of the other; the pedagogy of Jacques Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, in which the master–student relation is not a hierarchy of authority but the equality of co-conspirators, with the master having nothing to teach and the student everything to learn; and the interpersonal-phenomenological psychotherapy of R.D. Laing, particularly through long association with Andrew Feldmár, Laing's colleague and my master in apprenticeship. In Laing's view, as expressed in *The Politics of Experience*, therapy “must remain the obstinate attempt of two people to recover the wholeness of being human through the relationship between them” and any failure to treat human beings as human beings promotes “violence and mystification”. I have previously outlined my approach in twelve practice slogans that begin with “First of all, do no harm” and end with “Love, and do as you will.”³

So, yes, from these coordinates, Bielik-Robson's assessment of philosophy's hidden reluctance to affirm life seems timely and on point. In the big picture, as evidenced by the current morass of global crises, the dominant Western mode of thinking is overdue for deep critique and possible renewal, and her attention to being-towards-death highlights a key aspect for consideration. Closer to home, *Another Finitude* provides fresh theoretical resources from within the tradition to frame what it is that my guests and I are up to.

As with Aristotle's description of practical wisdom (*phronesis*), philosophical practice is not concerned so much with scientific *épistémè* or the craftworker's *techne*, but the ability to think and act appropriately on the spot. Philosophical practice takes up with a particular someone in a particular world with a particular difficulty. Let's imagine Maria. She arrives miserable, dissatisfied, at odds with herself and her life. She doesn't believe there is anything wrong with her but can't help suspecting there must be. It is just one example of all the things about which she no longer knows how to think or what to believe. She wants to be a good person. She wants help to understand what is happening and how to go on, and she needs some kindness and care as we set out. Our dialogue begins with her introducing me to her world and me finding my way into it, listening and asking questions, like this, like that. If all goes well, the relationship between us develops and deepens into something trustworthy and helpful. In a supportive relational field of dialogue, she learns to connect with, articulate, and affirm her own experience. If all goes well, she will come to her senses, get her bearings, find her way—and off she goes.

The paradox of mortality as such doesn't figure large in this picture. Heidegger's concerns are not hers. Maria worries more in terms of the clock ticking down on her ambitions. She considers suicide, she acts like she's immortal. She finds the idea of an afterlife ludicrous. Her immediate problem is not death but her unlivable life. What has interrupted or impeded her? Perhaps she is tangled up in family values and social worldviews that are now untenable, or perhaps she has been shamed and excluded for reasons she cannot fathom or accept. Contradictions and double binds abound. When she tries to relieve them by suppressing or surrendering herself, it's as if she must die in order to live. Her way of life is no longer endurable. It is not good enough. We are not looking at a mental disorder but precisely the opposite: a will to flourish. She wants to be well, whatever it takes. We talk

through the particulars of her past, the demands of her work, the damage done to her and the damage she has done, all her relations and what she makes of it. As we go, we discover interpretations and meanings that could legitimately be made differently, and what difference could come of that.

This leads to more talk about how to live well, what is reasonable or not, what is good or not, what is true or not, how to love well and to be well-loved. The therapeutic practices of dialogue and companionship expand to these more obviously philosophical topics, but the practice is still personal, just between us. I offer ideas and stories from philosophy and elsewhere that might prove useful. I pay attention to how new ideas or images resonate with her. How she lights up when something takes hold, when her sails fill and waves break against her bow. We reach the heart of philosophical practice, where she learns to cultivate that sense of resonance, comes to know what draws or repels her, what is worthy or honest or true, and to use that good sense as her compass. With discipline over time, she comes to trust and to keep faith with herself, her intelligence, her basic goodness, and with life itself. More or less.

It is a project of self-development. My visitors wouldn't have heard of *Bildung*, so I speak of *learning to connect*, with a loose gesture to E.M. Forster's "Only connect!" and the clear sense that our troubles generally spring from isolation and separation. I also use *learning how to learn*—borrowing the title of Indries Shah's book on Sufi psychology and spirituality—to express philosophical practice as honing one's own capacity to think and to know for oneself without reification or dogma, to think "without a banister", as Arendt says. Because this education is self-directed, intimate and experiential, they have to do it themselves; because it is relational, they cannot (and should not be left to) do it by themselves.

The arguments, ideas, doctrines and narratives that Bielik-Robson weaves together in *Another Finitude* have refocused and extended my view of my own work and practice. *Learning how to learn*, *learning to connect*, *learning how to live* and *to love*, and *learning to die* are all part of the same course of life. Her description of life-loving, erotic, in/de/finite subjectivity is in fine accord with my work with people like Maria. I recognize the redemptive dialectical conversion that is tripped by a small, unexpected "lucky break" that changes everything. And how, to any "viewpoint of automatic processes which seem to determine the course of the world"—and even to me—it "looks like a miracle" that someone should so survive and begin to live again. And how that conversion is met with shouts of laughter and earth-soaking tears. I can see Maria as the scarred and scathed survivor who wrestles and grabs for blessing, this first-person singularity, this one who will never be the same, the rootless rogue going on their living-loving way, a strange and stranger loving-living that goes everywhere unhindered.

Or, of course, not. Some visitors come to take just what they need to in order to go home, to live among their own with the "freely self-chosen limitation" of a lover, but never again to violate or sacrifice themselves. This is not failure or cowardice. It is another figure of survival, of "not simply that which remains, but the most intense life possible". It is Dorothy's return to Kansas and Auntie Em, another way of living-on and another love strong as death.⁴ Western philosophy's contempt for everyday common lives, as in Heidegger, is just another symptom of its fear and denial of finitude. I am a bit cautious about the possibility of that contempt in Bielik-Robson's celebration of roguery.

I am also dubious about the “naturalism” that she attacks in terms of “living according to nature” (*kata phusein*). It seems a straw man. The positivist, deterministic, scientific view of human nature is more an emblem of neoliberalism than philosophical naturalism. Her use of “vitalism” adds an additional whiff of idealism. She doesn’t need to go down this path. Indeed, many leading scientists acknowledge the religious, spiritual and moral significance of life. In their view, science is perfectly compatible with a many-storied or “nested” naturalism that ranges from particle physics through chemistry and biology to religion, poetry and democracy.⁵ I very much like Bielik-Robson’s messianic vitalism as a positive and dynamic alternative to the impoverished economic-rationalist view of human nature. But if we are going to think differently about the anthropogenic difference—to tell a story of what sets humans apart from other forms of life, yet without dissociation or alienation—it has to be grounded in the natural universe. We simply do not have any choice about living according to nature, whatever we might imagine. We do need to do it better, to make a “deliberate and conscious” choice for life, now in an “apotropaic gesture” against the thanatic *shoah* of overproduction, consumption, waste populations and extinction.

Finally, I found the psychoanalytic narrative of libido’s journey unpersuasive. For the book’s purposes, I suppose that Freud must have his place, even if he has to be read cross-eyed. But there are other Jewish ways to solve the contradiction between self-preservation and the opening of self in relation, such as Levinas does with alterity and diachrony in *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence*. But then, I am no fan of psychoanalysis. Any theory preceded by “psych-” —whether psychoanalytic, with its objective to bring what is hidden to light; or psychiatric, with its medical model of diagnosis and treatment; or psychological, with its goals of prediction and control—is already deeply implicated in the dead-certain philosophy that *Another Finitude* wants to unseat. I mean no disrespect to the good work of the rogues and radical critics and their influence within those disciplines, but a philosophical therapeutic practice can avoid psycho-narratives altogether. Now is the time for experiments in all directions.

More positively, *Another Finitude* invites conversation with many other traditions and schools of life. As I read, I was reminded of Edouard Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation*, with its considerations of colonial suffering and survival, relational belonging and, intriguingly, the parallels of his “errantry” and her “erros”. I was also kept in mind of Taoist, Buddhist, African and indigenous ways of thinking about subjectivity, essence and change. And of emerging movements in other fields that are turn us towards “more life.” This ongoing imaginary symposium is keeping my own thinking and practice fresh and lively. I do warmly recommend this book and am looking forward to the next.

Notes

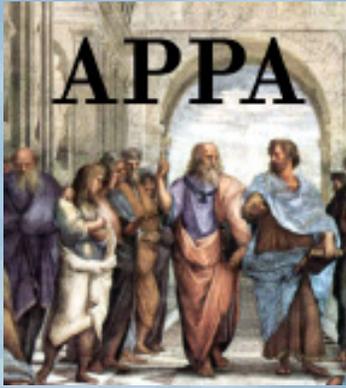
1. University of Nottingham. (2018). Why Study Another Finitude? Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCrJCRCBBYk>
2. Unfortunately, the book and its readers have not been so well served by the publisher. There is an appalling number of editing and proofreading errors. Also, the inclusion of a glossary of Greek, Latin, German and French terms would have been a kindness for non-philosophers and monolingual or non-European English readers.
3. Douglas, H., “Philosophical Counselling as a Practice of Emancipation”, *Philosophical Practice*, March 2014, 9.1: 1312–19. Along with my other publications, it is available at <https://philosophy-practice.co.za/publications-philosophy-theory>.

4. I refer to the original book, which never suggested that Oz (or life) was but a dream.
5. For example, physicist Brian Greene's *Until the End of Time: Mind, Matter, and Our Search for Meaning in an Evolving Universe* (New York: Knopf, 2020); biologist Ursula Goodenough's "religious naturalism" in *The Sacred Depths of Nature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); and the work of Michael Polanyi, physical chemist and critic of reductionism, who posits the emergence of several levels of reality and causality with different degrees of freedom that "are determined by higher-level realities, whose properties are dependent on but distinct from the lower level from which they emerge" (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Polanyi). As I understand it, this view of naturalism would explain why no human court can violate the laws of physics and no law of physics can account for justice.

Helen Douglas opened her philosophical counseling practice in Cape Town in 2002. Publications include *Love and Arms: Violence and Justification after Levinas* (Pittsburgh: Trivium, 2011) and various articles on philosophical practice in critical times, which can be found at www.philosophy-practice.co.za.

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Aims and Scope

Philosophical Practice is a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the growing field of applied philosophy. The journal covers substantive issues in the areas of client counseling, group facilitation, and organizational consulting. It provides a forum for discussing professional, ethical, legal, sociological, and political aspects of philosophical practice, as well as juxtapositions of philosophical practice with other professions. Articles may address theories or methodologies of philosophical practice; present or critique case-studies; assess developmental frameworks or research programs; and offer commentary on previous publications. The journal also has an active book review and correspondence section.

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