Academia, Philosophy, and Apparent Understanding

Ward E. Jones

Abstract
This paper is part of a larger project exploring the roles and responsibilities of academics and their communities towards those outside of their communities. It is important to appreciate, in approaching this topic, that most academic communities are 'inward-focused', in that members of those communities share their work initially and primarily with other members of the same community. Accordingly, I suggest that the best way in which to establish the responsibilities of philosophers – members of my own inward-focused community – is to ascertain the ways in which the work internal to a philosophical community can improve the lives of those outside of those communities. The bulk of this paper is concerned with developing the claim that when someone's life is improved by exposure to philosophical work, it is likely to be in virtue of an increase or improvement in what I call her *apparent understanding* of some topic.

Key Words: Academic communities, inward-focused, responsibilities of academics, philosophy, marginalization, apparent understanding.

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1.

While it is possible for someone to be both an intellectual and an academic, their coincidence is by no means necessary. The intellectual is perceived as having broad interests and as being widely-informed and read. This sets her apart from any one field, and she is not easily characterized as being occupied by any single activity and concern. As a result, she has a certain independence from any single community of writers or creators. The intellectual may also have a public face, and as a result may enjoy an amount of fame and authority. In her public persona, the intellectual is often critical of events, policies, or behaviour of public concern, which may give her a certain level of notoriety.

The academic, by contrast, may have none of the distinguishing features of the intellectual. He may not be widely-read, he may have narrow interests, and he may be generally uncritical of the world around him. Indeed, he may have no public face or authority *at all* outside of his own field, and may see himself as having and deserving no audience other than members of his own community. The vast majority of work prepared for publication by academic scientists, philosophers, historians, scholars of literature and art, as well as by academics in most other fields, is targeted at other members of

their own field. In contrast to the intellectual, the academic researcher is, we might say, 'intra-community focused'.

This, it seems to me, is a defining feature of the working members of fields most properly called 'academic'; *qua* academics they belong first and foremost to their community. Intra-community work is the academic's principal product and core concern as a researcher and writer.[1] In this respect, academic communities differ fundamentally from, say, literary and artistic communities, the members of which create work primarily for an audience wider than that of their peers. While she may care a great deal what her peers think of her work, the painter or composer is not creating fundamentally for her peers; the same is not true of the greater part of academic creativity. This is not to say that there is not a significant amount of writing on or from academic communities that is targeted at a wider, non-specialist public. On the contrary, there is a great deal - especially in the areas of science and history - written for public consumption. However, much of this latter work is written by not by academic researchers, but by observers of the academic scene - specialist journalists, for example - and the vast majority of such work derives its content from previously published work from within the appropriate academic community. In contrast to artistic fields, there is almost no original academic work which is not presented first to an academic audience, and the vast majority of the work shared within a community is never re-presented to a wider audience. The usual academic, in short, writes for and responds to other members of his own community.

2.

It is important to recognize that academic communities are intra-focused when one turns consider whether academics have what I will call 'outward responsibilities', responsibilities to those outside their own fields. As a member of a community, there will be norms dictating the academic's behaviour *within* that community. However, what about his responsibilities, *qua* academic, to those outside his academic community? Many academics, of course, will be sceptical of the thought that they have any outward responsibilities; citing academic freedom and other concerns, they will voice resistance to the thought that their work should be in anyway dictated by the concerns or happenings outside their communities. I have previously addressed many of these objections,[2] and I will not repeat those responses here. My present concern is not to fight the sceptic about outward academic responsibilities, but to explore and defend one place in which they may lie.

One position regarding the responsibilities of an intra-focused community would be to advocate that the community and its members adopt a more *outward* focus: philosophers, scientists, and other intra-focused

academic researchers have a responsibility to create more popular work, to consult, or to otherwise take steps to share their work with those outside their fields. This position is often accompanied by the disparaging declaration that academic work is esoteric and inaccessible. According to this position, the academic should have a more public face, and he should see contact and involvement with those who are not members of his field as a part of his responsibilities *qua* academic.

The suggestion that academic communities should take on a more public face does not strike me as misguided,[3] but those who make it must not ignore the *purposes* of the intra-focused community. Members of such communities write for each other, and (at least initially) share their work with each other, for at least two reasons. First, in doing so, their work gets an initial vetting by those who are most qualified to do so - specialists in their own field. If work is going to have a wider impact or hearing, it is important that it first gets a hearing among the specialist community. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the existence of an intra-focused, specialist community can make *theoretical progress* in a way that a more outward-focused community could not. In scientific communities this progress has tangible, technical results, as scientists correct and build upon each others' findings. In philosophical and other communities, this progress will be conceptual or discursive, as the members push each other to explore new conceptual connections, reasons, and ways of expression. In both cases, such progress would be seriously hindered if the members had to spend a significant amount of their time sharing results with a wider audience. While one would not want to discourage the public sharing of academic work, one should not do this at the expense of intra-focused work and the promise it has. There truth to the image of the vernacular-speaking, inward-looking academic community; more importantly, though, these much-maligned features have *a point*.

Those who advocate that academics have a more outward focus are ignoring the possibility that intra-focused work may have more thorough and important effects outside the field *without* any official, formal, or explicit help from academics themselves. If one takes this possibility seriously, the prospect arises that the most promising route to establishing and understanding outward academic responsibilities will proceed via a consideration of the positive effects that work *within* a community can have on the lives of those outside the field. In this paper, I will be exploring this route. My suspicion is that we should be exploring the responsibilities of academics *given* the assumption that work within an academic community (with or without the help of the members of that community) can have a positive effect outside of it. In short, I will be exploring the thought that we should be advocating intra-focused work that is likely to have such effect.

If work within an academic community can have positive effects outside of that community, then this fact could provide the basis for an argument, like the following, for the responsibilities of intra-focused academics. This argument, like the rest of my paper, is restricted to my own field, that of philosophy. Much of what I say will be applicable to other intra-focused communities, but as certain differences between philosophy and other fields will arise in subsequent discussion, not all that I say here will be germane to the responsibilities that other academics may have.

> *Premise 1*. Work internal to philosophy can improve the lives of non-philosophers.
> *Premise 2*. If we can behave in some way such that this behaviour can bring about an improvement in some people's lives, then it can coherently be said that we *should* behave in this way, and we can coherently be accused of neglect were we not to behave in this way.
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> *Therefore*, a philosopher can be coherently accused of neglect should she not be sensitive, at some points in her career to ways in which their work might improve people's lives; similarly, a philosophical community can be coherently accused of neglect should its members be insensitive to ways in which their work might improve people's lives.
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> *Therefore*, philosophers have responsibilities; philosophical communities and individual philosophers should be sensitive to - attuned to and concerned with - the practically and theoretically relevant issues that are salient in their non-philosophical surroundings, and at least some of their work should be motivated by a concern for those issues.[4]

On the account spelled out in this argument, philosophers have responsibilities not (or not only) to share their work outside the community, but rather to encourage or contribute to an intra-communal discussion of topics that are directly relevant to concerns outside their community.

Much philosophical work is spurred on by concerns that arise internal to the community. The current state of discussion in a philosophical community, its members may think, is on the wrong track, or needs filling out, expansion, or exploration. The conclusion of the above argument is that discussion in a philosophical community should also be spurred on by factors external to the community. A broader public controversy, event, or issue should, in many cases, be introduced into the philosophical discourse. This is because, says the first premise of the argument, such discussion will (at least potentially) have a positive effect outside the community.[5] It is on the nature

of this effect that I will concentration in what follows.

I will not, in what follows, expand on the meta-ethical claim made in the Premise 2. It will perhaps suffice to say that I conceive of the responsibilities of philosophers as a Kantian *imperfect duty* - a duty that (like, say, giving to charity) gives us leeway about when and how to fulfil it without allowing us never to fulfil it. Rather than speaking of responsibilities and duties, we could equally well speak of *norms*; the upshot of argument above is that one of the norms by which we judge the success or health of a philosophical community or an individual philosopher's career, should include a consideration of whether that community's or philosopher's work is motivated by a concern for issues that are salient to the community of non-philosophers. There will be a range of ways in which individual philosophers can introduce topics or contribute to discussions of outside relevance, depending on the individual philosopher's interests, concerns, and expertise. We cannot predict from what part of our lives—political, social, medical, spiritual, etc.—that philosophical issues of will rise to importance in a non-philosophical community. Nor can we predict into what sub-field of philosophy these issues will properly belong. Recognizing a salient philosophical topic in one's surroundings may take a good deal of attentiveness and ingenuity, and I think that they will in many cases surprise us when they appear on the philosophical scene.

3.

The claim that I wish to explore in this paper is Premise 1 of the argument in the previous section: Work internal to a philosophical community can improve the lives of non-philosophers. By 'work internal to philosophy' I mean any of the tasks that are normally thought of as being part of the job of a philosopher: academic publishing, giving presentations to colleagues, joining reading groups, having informal discussion with colleagues, and teaching. This list excludes public speaking and popular writing. Three questions about Premise 1 arise.

(Q1) *What are the mechanisms by which work within a philosophical community affects individuals outside the community?* Such mechanisms will range from the very direct - e.g., a non-philosopher reads philosophical work - to the very indirect - e.g., a non-philosopher is affected by philosophical work, without knowing that is such, through, say, informal conversation or mass media.

This is, broadly speaking, a sociological question, as it concerns the patterns of movement of ideas and commitments between individuals and across groups.

(Q2) *What kind of effect can this work have on these individuals?* This, as we will see, is a psychological question, broadly speaking, and its answer will depend upon the kind of 'products' that philosophers create.

(Q3) *How can this effect improve the lives of these individuals?* This is an ethical question, broadly speaking, and its answer will depend, as with the previous question, upon the nature of the products of philosophy.

I will set aside Q1 for another place; I will be simply assuming that discussion within the philosophical community has effects beyond its boundaries, via teaching, collaborations, and informal conversations, as well as by philosophical work being read by non-philosophers. In what follows, I will focus on Q2 and Q3: What effect does work internal to the philosophical community have on non-philosophers, and how can that work improve their lives?

4.

There are various ways in which someone outside the philosophical community can be affected by philosophical work, and so I want to proceed by imagining someone - I will call her 'Jones' - being affected in one way by work that has gone on in the philosophical community. It seems to me that the way in which Jones is affected is not idiosyncratic, that it is one of the main ways in which people are affected by philosophy.[6]

Through some route or another - reading a philosophy book, novel, or newspaper, a dinner conversation, advice from a friend - Jones is exposed to a theory, model, claim, or speculation that had its origin in philosophical work. What Jones is exposed to is a *theoretical* entity of some kind. It is something with a claim to *truth* or *correctness*; it is the kind of thing that Jones sees as a candidate for fitting or reflecting the world.[7]

If the claim to which Jones has been exposed derives from the philosophical community, it will have associated with it considerations in its support; much (although perhaps not all) philosophical work is concerned with *grounding* or *defending* claims and positions. However, standing outside the community, someone like Jones may not have access to this support. This may be because she does not *understand* the grounds for the position. However, it may also be because she simply has not come across these considerations; she may have been exposed to some position without having been exposed to any of the arguments for it.

In science this is not a problem, as we can - indeed, in many cases

we *should* - accept what scientists tell us without attempting to understand their evidence for it.[8] Part of the reason for this is that scientific communities go through a process leading to *community-wide* acceptance of a claim or position. This, I think, is one of the most important lessons about scientific practice to be learned from the work of Thomas Kuhn.[9] The end of the process of investigation, publishing, and debate is a remarkable unity among the members of the scientific community in their acceptance of theories. One manifestation of this unity is the severity with which 'dissident' scientists are marginalized from the community. The 'creationist biologist' and the HIV-denier do not have access to the same kind of jobs or places for publication as those members of the biological or biochemical communities that toe the party line. Scientific communities are unified in their endorsement of theories or claims, and have strict mechanisms for banishing proponents of dissident positions. As a consequence, were Jones to come across a published and non-contested scientific claim, she could trust that it has the backing of a whole community of scientists behind it.[10]

The same is not true of philosophical communities. While mechanisms for banishing dissidents may exist at the sub-community level, in individual departments or journal editorial boards, they are not utilized by the community as a whole. Many significant works of philosophy are explicitly concerned with re-raising positions or debates that have not been on the philosophical agenda for centuries.[11] Philosophical positions perennially exist alongside, and in many cases gain their identity from other, *prima facie* competing positions. Indeed, disagreement is not only accepted in philosophy, it is encouraged, such that many philosophers become suspicious of areas in which there is unanimous agreement on a claim. A new and groundbreaking philosophical claim does not supersede a currently-available position; the former more or less takes a place next to the latter. This is not to say that certain philosophers will not see a groundbreaking work as superseding previous positions. However, in contrast to the scientist, the philosopher recognizes adherents to positions radically alternative to their own as still being part of the philosophical community; there are very few idealists or ethical relativists in philosophy, but they are nonetheless considered members of the philosophical community.

If Jones had been exposed to a claim endorsed by the scientific community, then she would be justified in accepting it without having access to any primary evidence for it. However, given that Jones has come across a philosophical claim, she is not in the same epistemic position. Her claim is unlikely to come with the unified endorsement of any community. It may have the backing of one or more professional philosophers, but unless she has a good deal of knowledge of who they are and why their work might be trustworthy, it would not be rational for her to accept it solely in virtue of that

backing.

It looks as if Jones is left to her own devices in determining whether to accept the position she has come across. If she understands some of the 'official' support for this position, then she can consider it. If she does not have access to any existing support for this position, she is left to reflect upon its fit with what she knows and experiences of the world. In either case, it would seem that Jones's assessment of the philosophical position she has newly encountered is a matter of considering how well it integrates with her view of herself, her life, her relationships, and the world around her. In sum, after she is exposed to this philosophical position, Jones's next step is to reflect upon it, and to consider how well the proposition coheres with what she already believes.[12]

5.

I want to imagine that, subsequent to reflecting upon the philosophical position that she has encountered, Jones *accepts* it as true or correct. As a result, Jones can be said to have a new belief or attitude, one which replaces or sits alongside other of her beliefs or attitudes.[13] With this in place, the next question on my agenda arises: how can Jones's life be *improved* by this acceptance? We know *how* Jones was affected by this philosophical claim, now we want to know why her doing so is a good thing.

One possibility is that the benefit to Jones arises from her *actions* being improved by this acceptance. Her new attitude may lead her to have more nuanced, more productive, more rational, or more ethical actions. While I have no doubt that Jones's actions may be improved in this way by an exposure to philosophy, I think that it is neither the most pervasive nor the most fundamental way in which people's lives are improved by philosophy. I suspect that the acceptance of many (or even most) philosophical claims will have no tangible effect on an agent's actions, and that philosophical work is be responsible for a more common benefit to non-philosophers.

Given that Jones has accepted a claim about the world on the basis of its fit with what she knows, it may be that Jones's life is made better because she now *understands* some topic or the phenomenon better than she did before accepting it. While I believe that this thought may be on the right track, it will not do as it stands. The problem with the thought that Jones's betterment is a matter of her simply gaining understanding something is that understanding is *factive*. In order for 'Jones understands that *p*' to be true, *what* Jones understands (i.e., *p*) must be true.[14] But we do not want the good-making effect of the products of philosophy to depend upon their being true. Given the ever-presence of disagreement in philosophy, most philosophical positions are going to be false. If a non-philosopher could only benefit from

accepting a *true* philosophical position, this would put a serious restriction upon the good-making potential of philosophical work.

The kind of benefit that philosophy can provide looks as if it should be *something like* understanding, but since understanding - a state that must be true - looks to be too narrow a state to represent the benefit that philosophy can provide, I want to explore the suggestion that the beneficial product of philosophy is non-factive or *apparent* understanding.

The recent upsurge in the discussion of epistemic value has brought about an interest in the importance of understanding. Here are two representative descriptions of understanding, the first by Wayne Riggs and the second by Jonathan Kvanvig. In addition to facticity, both writers emphasize the coherence, unity, and integration involved in understanding:

> An important difference between merely believing a bunch of true statements within subject matter M, and having understanding of M (or some part of M), is that one somehow sees the way things 'fit together'. There is a pattern discerned within all the individual bits of information or knowledge … The epistemological notion of 'coherence' and the idea of 'explanatory coherence' in particular seems to be getting very close to something characteristic of understanding.[15]

> The central feature of understanding, it seems to me, is in the neighborhood of what internalist coherence theories say about justification. Understanding requires the grasping of explanatory and other coherence-making relationships in a large and comprehensive body of information. One can know many unrelated pieces of information, but understanding is achieved only when informational items are pieced together by the subject in question.[16]

According to Riggs and Kvanvig, a person who understands something has a set of true beliefs or attitudes characterized by coherence, integration, and unity. In line with their claims, I will take it that *apparently understanding* a topic involves having a more or less coherent, integrated, and unified, but not necessarily true, depiction of that topic, and that *better* apparent understanding is a function of one or more of these three features being improved. All three of these notions - coherence, integration, and unification - need a great deal of clarification, and certain questions about them need answers: How can we identify the difference between apparent understanding that is superficial, and that which is deep? How

compartmentalized, or local, can an instance of apparent understanding be? Answering such questions will help us to elucidate better from worse instances of apparent understanding, but I will not address such issues here.

After accepting her new philosophical position, and incorporating it into her view of herself or some aspect her world, it is likely that Jones, if asked, would assert that she now better understands the topic at hand. Whether or not she *really* has understanding is, as we have seen, dependent upon whether her new view is true. However, her *seeing herself* as now having understanding will be determined by the fact that she has a more unified or coherent view of the topic at hand. Jones, in this case, can have (an improved) apparent understanding of the topic at hand, whether or not she has true understanding of it. I want to look now at the ways in which Jones's life can be improved by the kind of apparent understanding that she has gained from her exposure to philosophical positions.

6.

While I have imagined Jones accepting a philosophical position, and gaining apparent understanding by doing so, I have not yet looked at the kinds of philosophical claims that Jones might be adopting. I am inclined not to look at examples at all, as I think doing so may give the impression that only a small subset of philosophical fields can have such benefit. On the contrary, I suspect that all fields of philosophical research have the potential to improve (or worsen) someone's life, and, as a consequence, I suspect that all philosophers are susceptible to the responsibilities argued for in Section 2 above. Nonetheless, I will in this section look at some areas in which it is fairly easy to see how mainstream philosophical work can directly improve Jones's apparent understanding of herself and the world around her.

An immediate concern for anyone who reflects upon the responsibilities of philosophers is their scope. Are those who work in all fields of philosophy susceptible to such a duty, or are such norms only applicable to those who work in fields like political theory, feminism, race theory, or one of the many areas of so-called applied philosophy? While it seems to me that those who work in these fields are meeting the responsibilities established by the argument of Section 2 above, I must emphasize that those in other, and perhaps all, fields of philosophy have similar duties, and must find ways to fulfil them.

Perhaps the clearest way to see how exposure to philosophical work that is close to its mainstream can improve someone's life is by looking at how philosophical work implicitly explores the ways in which many of us are marginalized or alienated from those around us. Philosophy has, both implicitly and potentially, a great deal to say about marginalization, much of

it about the features, events, and norms that are responsible for the kinds of separation that we experience.

One way in which someone can be marginalized is by to be going through a life-stage that precedes or follows that of an autonomous, fully-capable adult. Philosophical work on language and the learning of values, for example, can potentially tell us much about *children*, who are going through the vulnerable process of learning a language and the values of those around them. Work on responsibility and autonomy will, if it is so focused, tell us much about *adolescents*, who are going through the difficult transition to adulthood. In the same vein, philosophical work about death, meaning in life, and reflection upon the narrative of life, will have much to say to and about the *aged* and *terminally ill*.

Philosophical work also, potentially, has a great deal to say about other ways in which we can find ourselves distant from the ideal of a healthy, independent, interactive human being. Work on mental and physical *illness* and *disability* can say much to us about what it means to suffer from such. Theoretical work directly on illness and disability often proceeds via more fundamental work on human nature and the proper functioning of human traits; the latter work provides a framework within which the nature and significance of illness and disability becomes clear. Work in philosophy of language and mind has the potential to help us understand the nature and wrong of *oppressive* (e.g., racist and sexist) *beliefs and speech acts*. Recent work on *poverty*, much of it influenced by the work of Amartya Sen, flows out of deep philosophical discussions in meta-ethics on topics of well-being, capability, and reasons. Lastly, philosophical work on sex, sexual identity, and gender relations has, potentially, a good deal to tell us about the significance of *sexual violence*, about what it is and means to be a victim of rape or sexual abuse.

These are only a handful of examples, and they are not representative, leaving untouched many fields in philosophy. I have chosen these examples because they make clear that, with very little stretching, philosophical work addresses challenging features of our lives and the lives of those around us. Furthermore, these examples show that such work need not be at the fringes of philosophy, nor need it belong to one of the few areas of philosophical work that has clear practical application. On the contrary, the potentially beneficial work mentioned above belongs to a diverse range of philosophical areas: philosophy of language and mind, metaphysics, moral psychology, rationality, value theory, issues about meaning, human nature, well-being, identity, among others.

7.

The examples in the previous section provide a hint of how work central to philosophy is particularly well-placed to have something to say about ourselves our world. These examples reveal that there are areas in which Jones may come across a philosophical claim, consider it, accept it, *and* see herself or a particularly salient part of her world in a new way. In considering and accepting such a position, Jones will make *connections* between persons of some kind, e.g., children, or victims of sexual abuse, and other aspects of those persons, e.g., the nature of value-formation, or their sexual identities. The final product of Jones's reflection and acceptance will be that she finds herself with a larger, more unified picture of children and victims of sexual abuse. As a consequence, she may have a more sophisticated apparent understanding of children and victims of abuse.

So, my final, and I suspect most difficult, question arises. How, precisely, is Jones's life improved by an increase in her apparent understanding? My answers to this question will be no more than mere suggestions. I will divide my suggestions into the benefit achieved from an increased apparent understanding of *someone else*, and that derived from an increased apparent understanding of *myself*.

How is it that coming to form a more coherent, unified picture of someone else is a good thing? How does this improve Jones's life, the other person's life, or both? If indeed it does, then it seems to me that the answer will involve reference to the fact that apparent understanding can improve our *relationships* with others. Jones's gaining a more integrated, unified picture of another person (or persons) will result in more nuanced, interconnected attitudes towards him (or them), and this will have the consequence that any *actions* that she carries out in relation to the latter will be, equally, more nuanced and informed. Jones will have recognized connections between, say, someone's *being an adolescent* and his *struggle with autonomy* - and all that struggle brings with it - and Jones's treatment of him will be informed by those connections.

Apparent understanding, however, can have a more direct effect on a relationship, as improved apparent understanding can *by itself* constitute a better relationship between persons. Our attitudes towards other persons are partly - and in some cases wholly - constitutive of one's relationship with them. We can bring harm to someone by improperly representing him.[17] That this is true is manifested in the fact that friends or acquaintances can be upset upon learning that we have certain attitudes towards them, and can approve of us when those attitudes are, in their eyes, corrected. Indeed, similar interactions can occur between people who do not know each other at all. On my *first* meeting someone who has heard that I have a narrow or improper

understanding of her or her people, she is likely to greet me with indifference or coldness. Her response indicates that she thinks that *even before we met* something was wrong with me in my relation to her, and that were my understanding to be broadened or corrected (according to her), this relation could be remedied.

This broadening of understanding is exactly what we have imagined Jones gaining in her improved apparent understanding of another person or persons. She has made connections among certain features of other persons, such that she can grasp how and why certain of his features are in place. The kinds of approval and disapproval that other persons may have of Jones in the light of her attitudes indicates that apparent understanding can improve not only our actions, but also that it can, by itself, improve Jones's relationship with others.

Turning, lastly, to the first-person point of view, we can ask: Why might it be a good thing for Jones to form a more unified, coherent picture of, say, the nature and significance of her own illness or disability, or of her own victimhood? I am sympathetic to the thought that the answer here will be analogous to the one above: coming to have improved apparent understanding of oneself can improve one's *relationship with oneself*. In particular, it can lead one to be in a position to better *care* for oneself.

An improved apparent understanding of myself is, as I have said, at least partly a matter of grasping new connections among certain features of myself. Some of these connections are going to show me new ways in which things that are important to me are connected to things that I had not previously taken to be of importance. So, for example, in becoming aware of the intimate relationship between adolescence and nascent autonomy, a teenager may come to have a better apparent understanding of the pain and confusion she is experiencing in her struggle to achieve autonomy. In recognizing this relationship – that her struggle for autonomy is bringing her pain and confusion - she exposes to herself the cause of her pain, and in doing so, exposes its importance in her life. In general, to recognize that Ø is causing me pain is to come to recognize the importance of Ø in my life, namely its importance as a cause of my pain. Recognizing causes of pain is only one of the many ways in which exploring connections among one's own characteristics can reveal values that one had not previously acknowledged.

In his recent work on caring, the philosopher Harry Frankfurt emphasizes that to care for someone requires caring for the things she cares about.[18] Caring for someone means that one's own well-being becomes dependent upon hers, and her well-being is dependent upon the status of that which she herself cares about.

> The heart of [love] is that the lover cares about the good of

> his beloved for its own sake. He is disinterestedly concerned to protect and to pursue the true interests of the person whom he loves.[19]

The same, Frankfurt then points out, is true of caring for oneself:

> The most perspicuous characterization of the essential nature of self-love is simply that someone who loves himself displays and demonstrates that love just by loving what he loves.[20]

However, as the example in the previous paragraph - of discovering what is causing one pain - shows us, there may be an element of effort and achievement involved in coming to properly care for oneself. One may not *know* what one loves, in the sense that one may not know what one's interests really are. This is something that must be acknowledged by any plausible theory of value or importance: in some instances at least, my self-knowledge of what I value is neither obvious nor immediate. Thus, coming to properly care for oneself requires coming to understand what is important to one, and this latter, epistemic, project may require a good deal of effort. Indeed, as Frankfurt points out, putting in such effort is itself a sign of one's caring for oneself:

> A person who … does not know what his true interests are may nevertheless demonstrate that he loves himself by making a determined effort to understand what is fundamentally important to him - to become clear about what he loves and what that love requires.[21]

It is here, I suggest, that Jones's exposure to philosophical work can become worthwhile, in that it can point to things that Jones may not have realized are important to her. Philosophical work can suggest relationships between what Jones knows she cares about and other things in her life, and in doing so, it may show her something else that she cares about, something that is important to her.

To recognize that something is important to one is to see, in part, the kind of life that one should lead - namely, a life in which the thing of importance is newly respected, and perhaps addressed in some way. In recognizing, for example, that Ø is causing her pain, Jones's attention is drawn not only to something in the world that she *does* care about, it also points to some aspect of *herself* that she *should* care about; she should care

about the aspect of herself that Ø is hurting. It is this self-recognition, I suspect, that explains the feeling of being *liberated* by the recognition of what brings us pain: one sees what has been causing the hurt, what is being hurt, and one can now give one or both the attention it needs. In this way, we can see how an improved apparent understanding of myself - the kind of understanding to which philosophy can contribute - can lead, ultimately, to one's caring more for oneself. In revealing hitherto unknown connections among features of myself, it can reveal hitherto unrecognized features of importance, and a life in which one respects and addresses things of importance will be better than one in which one does not.[22]

The claim explored in this paper has been that work internal to a philosophical community can improve people's lives by increasing their apparent understanding. I close with two brief comments. First, my suggestion has not been that *any* apparent understanding will improve one's life. On the contrary, we must allow for the possibility that a change in apparent understanding may not be an improvement over the understanding one already has; we must also allow for an increase in apparent understanding that has no effect on one's life, or that makes one's life worse. My claim merely been that apparent understanding *can* improve our lives; that claim raises the likelihood that when access to philosophical work does improves someone's life, it does so via an increase in her apparent understanding. With that likelihood in place, then the argument of Section 2 for the responsibilities of philosophers (and, perhaps, other academics) becomes a live option.

Secondly, given that apparent understanding need not be true understanding, I must allow for the possibility that *incorrect* apparent understanding can improve our lives. I do not have the space to argue for this here, but it is perhaps worth making one point in this regard. It seems plausible that whatever story we give about how apparent understanding can improve our lives, the same story will apply, more or less, to the goodness and usefulness of *cognitive therapy*. Cognitive therapy is concerned with increasing a patient's apparent understanding of herself; she strives to make connections among past experiences, mental states, attitudes, and tendencies to behaviour. There is an enormous range of psychological theories and traditions about what kinds of connections can and should be made, and it is *prima facie* unlikely that all of these theories are correct. Nonetheless, each theoretical approach can be, and has been, of help to some of its patients. It looks, then, as if a given cognitive therapist's drawing attention to certain kinds of connections can help a patient, even though the theory behind the therapist's approach or the connections the theory is pointing to may be off the mark. While this view of cognitive therapy needs exploration and defence, the analogy between it and the benefit provided by philosophical

work is worth further exploration.[23]

Notes

[1]. And his teaching is, by and large, concerned with sharing intra-community work with those who are not (yet) members of that community.
[2]. See my 'Philosophers, their Context, and their Responsibilities', *Metaphilosophy* 37:5 (2006), pp. 623-45.
[3]. I will not consider the possible response - which seems to me to carry some weight - that that the public presentation of academic work is best carried out by those (e.g., specialist journalists) who are outside the field.
[4]. Defending this argument is the main concern of my 'Philosophers, their Context, and their Responsibilities'.
[5]. Its effect may, of course, be negative.
[6]. I will mention, in notes, certain significant variations or complications that I am ignoring.
[7]. One variation that I am ignoring: philosophy also (i) generates theoretical *questions* and (ii) introduces *concepts* for identifying salient features of the world.
[8]. For a defense of this, see John Hardwig's articles 'Epistemic Dependence' and 'The Role of Trust in Knowledge' both in *Journal of Philosophy*, volumes 82 (1985) and 88 (1991), respectively.
[9]. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, Second Edition).
[10]. For a further discussion of the claims of this paragraph, see Ward E. Jones, 'Dissident Versus Loyalist: Which Scientists Should We Trust?', *Journal of Value Inquiry* 36:4 (2002)
[11]. G.E.M. Amscombe is responsible for two striking examples from the twentieth century: 'Modern Moral Philosophy' (1958) and 'Causality and Determinism' (1971), which have been enormously influential in bringing Aristotelian ethics and the non-Humean account of causation, respectively, back into current discussion. Many other examples could be cited.
[12]. It is perhaps worth noting at this point that it is inevitable that philosophers themselves sometimes find themselves in a position like that of Jones, in which they come across and consider a philosophical position without (yet) having heard any defense for it. An extreme example: I understood the basics of Berkeley's metaphysics, and was challenged by it, long before I understood his arguments for it.
[13]. A second variation that I am ignoring: it may be that someone can be positively or negatively affected by merely *considering* a philosophical position, in so far as (i) she becomes aware of an issue/feature of the world of

which she was not previously aware, (ii) she becomes aware of a possible understanding of an issue that is alternative to her current understanding of it, or (iii) her current attitudes loosen or weaken, because of an awareness of alternatives.

[14]. Other factive states: *sees* that *p*, *knows* that *p*, and *remembers* that *p*.

[15]. 'Understanding "Virtue" and the Virtue of Understanding', in *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, eds. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, 2003, p. 218

[16]. *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 192

[17]. If this were not true, we could not account for the wrong of slander, libel, and rumour, each of which involves the spreading of harmful beliefs. For a defence of this, see Ward E. Jones, 'Rumour, Reproach, and the Norms of Testimony', *Public Affairs Quarterly*, 19:3 (2005), pp. 195-212.

[18]. *The Reasons of Love*, Princeton University Press, 2004.

[19]. *The Reasons of Love*, p. 85.

[20]. *The Reasons of Love*, p. 85.

[21]. *The Reasons of Love*, p. 88.

[22]. The claims of the previous four paragraphs are applicable to any theory of value or importance - whether it be realist or anti-realist - that properly acknowledges that, in some instances at least, my self-knowledge of what I value is neither obvious nor immediate.

[23]. Thanks to helpful comments from audiences at Rhodes University and at the Inter-Disciplinary.Net conference on Intellectuals in Budapest, 2008.

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Ward E. Jones is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Rhodes University (South Africa) and Editor of the journal *Philosophical Papers*.