Interview with Nathan Salmon,
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Nathan Salmon is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he has taught since 1984. His research focuses on the philosophy of language and metaphysics, but he has written in many other areas of philosophy, including the philosophy of mind, epistemology, the philosophy of mathematics, and the philosophy of logic. He is perhaps best known for his work on direct reference theory and modality. In addition to numerous papers, Salmon has written several books: *Reference and Essence* (1981, 2005 with new appendices); *Frege's Puzzle* (1986, 1991); *Metaphysics, Mathematics, and Meaning: Philosophical Papers Volume I* (2006); *Content, Cognition, and Communication: Philosophical Papers Volume 2* (2007). Together with Scott Soames, Salmon co-edited *Propositions and Attitudes* in 1988.

This interview was conducted for the *Yale Philosophy Review* by Leslie F. Wolf, a graduate student in the Department of Philosophy at Yale University.

LESLIE WOLF: *When, and how, did you first become interested in philosophy? How did you come to focus on the philosophy of language and metaphysics in graduate school?*

NATHAN SALMON: The earliest philosophical thought I remember—at around age 6—concerned whether God was omnipotent. (I argued not.) After that I considered whether objects of thought had a kind of existence, whether the sense we have of making free choices was illusory, whether the present is more real than the past, what it was in virtue of which mathematics and logic are necessary. I thought about these metaphysical issues well before I heard anyone talk of such things and well before I learned the terms in which philosophers express them.

As a kid, I also had a very good grasp of grammar—the sort involving analysis of sentences into subject, predicate, direct or indirect object,

prepositional phrases, gerund phrases, etc. I quickly became more adept at doing this sort of analysis than my grammar teachers were. Not infrequently I corrected their mistakes and raised subtle grammatical perplexities not mentioned in the textbook, and of which my teachers were completely unaware and had no idea how to answer.

It wasn't until I went to college, though, that I took my first course in logic and learned to think philosophically in a very rigorous way. I transferred to UCLA from a community college in the academic year of 1971-72. That year my philosophical education made a quantum leap. I was extremely fortunate. I took a course from Tyler Burge on Frege, a course from Alonzo Church in the philosophy of mathematics, a course from Keith Donnellan on the later Wittgenstein, a course from Donald Kalish in set theory, a course from David Kaplan on logic, and a course from Saul Kripke in the philosophy of language. I performed sufficiently well in the set-theory course that several non-logic-oriented graduate students asked me to tutor them, both in that course and in its sequel course on meta-mathematics. By my senior year I knew that I would be going to grad school and focusing on the philosophy of logic and language. I retained a strong interest in metaphysics, however. I never took an actual course in metaphysics, not even in grad school. Metaphysics was downplayed until more recently, even despite Kripke's contemporary classic, *Naming and Necessity*. It was only after I studied that marvelous masterpiece that I combined my interests in the philosophy of language and metaphysics. Church, Kaplan, and Kripke were my greatest philosophical influences, three of the finest minds I've known.

LW: *You have argued that merely past objects and merely future objects, as well as merely possible objects, do not exist—but can nevertheless have properties. In particular, you argue that they can have the property of being referred to or being thought of. So, while Socrates does not exist (since he is merely past), we can still refer to him in English by means of the name "Socrates"—or so you claim. Many philosophers, though, insist that an object can have a property only if it exists. How do you respond to these philosophers? If Socrates does not exist, how can I refer to him and think about him?*

NS: I summarized my doctrine with the slogan, '*Predication precedes existence*'. One of the earliest occasions on which I advocated the position in public was at a 1986 conference in Dubrovnik. In my talk I argued specifically that, although Sir Walter Scott no longer exists, he nevertheless presently has the property of having written *Waverley*. During the discussion following my talk, Tim

Williamson observed that some philosophers object on the ground that Walter Scott doesn't currently have properties, precisely because he doesn't presently exist. I replied that this retort is really a kind of concession. If Walter Scott lacks the property of having written *Waverley*, it isn't because he didn't write *Waverley* (since he did). Bob Dylan currently lacks the property of having written *Waverley*, because he never wrote *Waverley*. But it is as true of Victor Hugo as it is of Bob Dylan that he didn't write *Waverley*, and it is equally true of Scott that he *did* write *Waverley*. To admit that Scott wrote *Waverley* while denying him the authorship of *Waverley* merely on the ground that he doesn't now exist, is to concede what really matters about Scott: that he indeed wrote *Waverley*. To insist that he nevertheless lacks the property of having written *Waverley* is like trying to put the toothpaste back into the tube. The property has just been ascribed to him. Disavowing one's commitments is a way to obfuscate, but it isn't a way to avoid those commitments. The position that Scott wrote *Waverley* but lacks the property of having written *Waverley* has all the marks and trappings of an *ad hoc* prejudice rather than a reasoned conclusion.

LW: *Let's pursue this topic, but shift focus slightly. In your paper "Nonexistence," you argue that there are some genuinely vacuous names—i.e., names that refer to nothing, not even to a nonexistent object. For example, you suppose that the name "Nappy" is introduced into English via this stipulation: "Let 'Nappy' refer to the present emperor of France, whoever that might be, if there is one, and to refer to nothing otherwise." You then argue that "Nappy" is a genuinely vacuous name that denotes nothing whatsoever. On your view, what distinguishes a name like "Nappy" from a name like "Socrates" or "Sir Walter Scott"?*

NS: There are several different sorts of proper names that might all be classified as *non-referring* (or *non-designative)*. A term might be classified as *non-designative* if there does not exist anything that it designates. The class of non-designative names, in this broad sense, is much more diverse than one might be inclined to think. 'Socrates' is non-designative not in the sense that it doesn't designate, but in the sense that what it designates does not exist. I call this a *weakly non-designative* name. What 'Socrates' presently designates used to exist but doesn't presently exist. Analogously, David Kaplan's 'Newman 1'—a term whose referent is fixed by the description 'the first child to be born in the 22nd century'—designates something that will exist but doesn't. It too is weakly non-designative. I have argued that it is possible for a name to designate a composite

object that never exists, though each of the components sometimes exists. I also invented a name, 'Noman 0', which designates something that has never existed and never will, though it might have. I argue that it is even possible to name a composite object that itself could not exist—an impossible object—although each of its components might have existed. The most radically non-designative kind of name is one like 'Nappy', which simply doesn't designate at all, since nothing at all—no possible object and not even an impossible object—is actually, presently emperor of France.

A true singular negative existential is a sentence equivalent to '*a* doesn't exist', where the term '*a*' is non-designative. Some true negative existentials, like 'Socrates doesn't exist', 'Newman 1 doesn't exist', and even 'Noman 0 doesn't exist', are true because the object designated by the subject-term (e.g., Socrates) is something that doesn't exist. This is in sharp contrast to 'Nappy does not exist', a horse of a different color entirely. I argue in a forthcoming paper that this last sentence is true only insofar as it is read in a special way, as expressing that a certain structurally challenged proposition (the "damaged" or "gappy" proposition that ___ exists) is untrue.

LW: *Analyticity continues to be a hot topic in analytic philosophy. In several of your papers, you distinguish between pure semantics and applied semantics, and you define an analytic sentence as a (true) sentence whose truth-value is a logical consequence of pure semantics alone. Can you explain your distinction between pure semantics and applied semantics? What role do you think analyticity has in philosophical methodology and philosophical knowledge? How does linguistic competence relate to analyticity on your view?*

NS: We can say of a proposition that it is true, or that it isn't. It is true that snow is white, for example, and not true that snow is blue. A proposition's being true or not isn't a matter of semantics; it is a matter of metaphysics. We can also say that sentence is, or isn't, true (in a given language). That is to ascribe, or to deny, a semantic property. However, that 'Snow is white' has the semantic property of truth isn't *merely* a matter of semantics. It depends equally on what color snow is, an issue having nothing whatsoever to do with language. What is a matter of pure semantics is the following: that 'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white. To infer the left side of this bi-conditional from the right side is to invoke a non-linguistic fact (the color of snow) to establish a linguistic fact (the truth-value of a certain sentence). That 'Snow is white' is true is partly semantic, partly non-semantic. Assuming that definite descriptions are singular terms, the fact that

'the author of *Waverley*' designates whoever uniquely wrote *Waverley* if anyone did is pure semantics; that it designates Walter Scott is partly semantic, partly non-semantic.

Insofar as linguistic competence involves knowledge of the pure semantics of a language, a linguistically competent speaker of a language is in an epistemic position to be able to infer of any analytic sentence in the language that it is true in the language. Whether the competent speaker knows the truth expressed by the analytic sentence is another matter. In rare cases, a competent speaker will know of an analytic sentence that it is true and yet be in no position to know the particular truth that the sentence expresses. An example of this is Kaplan's 'Newman 1 will be born in the 22nd century'.

Historically the notion of analyticity has been extremely important in philosophy. It continues to be important, despite the semantic skepticism of a recent generation of behaviorists. Descartes, a rationalist, relied heavily on analyticity in his epistemological foundationalism, although the concept had not yet been articulated as such. In the 1970s David Kaplan argued that the '*I am*' in Descartes' '*I think; therefore I am*' is analytic and consequently *a priori*. By contrast, Descartes intended to establish his existence *a posteriori*, on the basis of his experiences. (There is considerable confusion on this point even among historians of philosophy. In a certain sense, for Descartes *all* human knowledge is *a posteriori*—including mathematical knowledge—even though not all of our concepts are derived from experience.) Hume, a nearly complete empiricist and a skeptic, relied on a precursor of analyticity ("relations of ideas") in setting out his epistemological challenge. From Hume right up until the 20th century, empiricists have rested great weight on analyticity to reconcile their epistemology with the evident apriority of logic, mathematics, and fundamental philosophy. Quine was a radical semantic skeptic who rejected analyticity. He attempted an alternative empiricist tack, but in my judgment that tack is no more successful than the logical positivists'. In fact, I find Quine's semantic skepticism a good deal less palatable than the positivists' verificationism. I think these contributions of Quine's were unfortunately seriously retrogressive.

It has generally been assumed that all analytic statements are *a priori*. I argue to the contrary that most of Kripke's examples alleged to be contingent *a priori* statements are in fact, and contrary to Kripke's assessment, analytic *a posteriori*, whereas most of Kaplan's alleged examples of the contingent analytic are in fact neither analytic nor *a priori*. I'm currently working on a paper in which I argue that Quine, in proposing his criterion of ontological commitment, unknowingly implicitly committed himself to analyticity, which he tirelessly opposed. I'm

working on another paper in which I rely heavily on analyticity to argue against Kripke's favored response to his famous puzzle about belief.

LW: *What is your view of the role of intuitions in philosophy?*

NS: Intuitions are absolutely vital to philosophy. Philosophical theses are assessed in part by subjecting applications (instances) to intuitive judgment. Philosophical assessment isn't just this, however. I don't advocate the "experimental" approach of canvassing or surveying non-philosophers about particular actual or hypothetical cases. In a very broad range of cases, such a survey is undoubtedly philosophically worthless. In some cases one must also assess other theses related to the target thesis in a similar manner, then balance the results from a meta-perspective. Sometimes one must address the meta-question of whether and to what extent our object-theoretic intuitions might be misled or confused. In a great many cases, maybe in most cases, only the tutored and reflective intuitions of an unbiased but philosophically educated agent are of any value. But even meta-level investigations are ultimately governed by intuitions of one sort or another, as well as by considerations of overall plausibility.

I think the significance of overall plausibility to philosophy, and to knowledge in general, is typically unduly neglected. When deciding among opposing views, other things being equal, the most plausible view overall is decidedly preferable. I also think that in many hard cases for epistemology (our knowledge of other minds, of the existence of an external world, and the like), mere plausibility will suffice for knowledge in lieu of evidence or proof where the latter is unattainable. Even where other things aren't equal, overall plausibility should count for a great deal. In a very broad range of cases, overall plausibility is much more significant than such traditional pragmatic considerations as theoretical simplicity, ontological economy, making successful predictions, explaining a wide range of phenomena, and the like.

Intuitiveness and plausibility are, of course, closely related. As with intuitions, what is relevant is what is overall plausible to that idealized agent—the tutored, reflective, unbiased, philosophically educated agent. This is nicely illustrated by a famous anecdote. (The anecdote is included in Tom Stoppard's philosophical play *Jumpers*. Elizabeth Anscombe personally assured me that the anecdote is absolutely true.) Wittgenstein asked his students why it was once believed that the Sun goes around the Earth. What made this such a plausible hypothesis? Well after all, the students replied, it *looks* as if the Sun goes around

the Earth. In response Wittgenstein asked how it would look if it looked as if the Earth rotated around a stationary Sun.

An idealized agent would have recognized that the way things look doesn't favor either hypothesis over the other. We irrationally tend to see ourselves always as the centerpiece, and to a large degree, as unchanging. Intuitiveness and plausibility must be offset against humanly irrational cognitive tendencies. Heraclitus is often represented as having said that one can't step into the same river twice, because the water is continuously replaced with other water. He didn't actually draw this conclusion, which undoubtedly goes too far. Plato evidently misinterpreted Heraclitus' observation that when one steps into the same river twice one steps into different water. But something like this is true of being in the *same place* twice. When one thinks of oneself as being in the "same place" as before, it is eye-opening to recall that the Earth is continuously hurtling in its orbit around the Sun, the Sun is moving around the galactic center, the Milky Way itself is on the move relative to its neighbors in the Local Group. The universe itself is expanding. Where the Earth goes, we ourselves go along for the ride. The universe is like Heraclitus's flowing river, and we are as single hydrogen or oxygen atoms in that river—even assuming that space is relative. From a very large perspective we never return to the same location. It is unusual to view things from such global perspectives. Philosophy encourages us to do so. Reliance on intuition and plausibility in philosophy not infrequently requires adopting a very large perspective.

LW: *In your paper "Two Conceptions of Semantics," you describe physicalism and functionalism—two popular theories of the mind—as "philosophically timid doctrines." What is your view of the mind? Do you subscribe to, or are you sympathetic with, some version of dualism?*

NS: In the original manuscript I described those doctrines as "philosophically wimpy." The editor or the referee objected that this sounds unscholarly. Rather than simply omitting the phrase altogether (as I think the editor proposed), I modified the wording, replacing 'wimpy' with 'timid'. I wanted to go on record (even though this wasn't my main topic) observing that a wide range of reductionist and deflationary theses and programs in philosophy—including nominalism, the deflationary theory of truth, physicalism, and a host of reductionisms—although they are very popular, are in my view ultimately based on a kind of prejudice, motivated more by a lack of intellectual vision or imagination than by reason, philosophical courage, and an uncompromising quest

for the truth. As an undergraduate I went through a physicalist/nominalist phase. I thought the entire world—including not only physics and chemistry but also psychology, literature, mathematics, humor, emotions, beauty, philosophy, everything—ultimately consisted of nothing but matter, physical forces, fields, energy, and the like. But the indiscernibility of identicals kept messing things up. Descartes' arguments for dualism are but the tip of the iceberg. To insist, despite overwhelming conceptual evidence to the contrary, that there are no numbers, or that a thought is somewhere literally inside the thinker, or that there is no metaphysically significant difference between the propositions that snow is white and that snow is blue, or that the humor of a Woody Allen joke is really just a matter of sound waves and their effect on our brains, is to retreat into a simpleminded fantasy, That fantasy is comforting to some who prefer to keep their heads in the sand over dealing with an enormously rich, complex, and only partially understood reality.

That said, I do think that mental phenomena—as well as institutional facts, aesthetic phenomena, and much else—modally *supervene* on such brute facts as molecular configurations, force fields, and the like. That is, it is metaphysically necessary that if all the brute physical facts are such-and-such, then the mental facts (and the institutional facts, etc.) are thus-and-so. But this is very different from saying that mental facts conceptually *reduce* to physical facts, let alone that they *are* physical facts.

Let me add here that to me, the most repugnant of philosophical doctrines is the general doctrine that truth (of a proposition) is no big deal. This is something about which I feel passionately. There are numerous variations on the central deflationary theme: truth is unreal, or subjective, illusory, redundant, politically incorrect, insignificant, irrelevant, or not an intellectually worthy pursuit. Frequently adherents of the doctrine misidentify truth with some relatively lame surrogate, typically a pragmatist or socio-political ideal. I once attended a talk by a prominent philosopher who admonished that one should never assert a proposition in an intellectual discussion, even if the proposition is true, if one's doing so might be misused by others to promote some politically incorrect end. I was appalled. That a philosopher would say something as suppressive as that is quite inexcusable. The doctrine that objective truth is unreal or of little value isn't just silly, or sophomoric, or inconsistent (although it is all those things). I believe it is a kind of intellectual disgrace. If the doctrine were correct (that is, paradoxically enough, if it were *true*!), history, mathematics, and even science would have little or no value beyond purely instrumental value. There could hardly be any point *at all* to philosophy—other than the benefits of false

advertising. The doctrine is especially insulting to those to whom humanity is intellectually most indebted—extraordinarily insightful thinkers like Archimedes, Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Einstein, Gödel. To this extent, the doctrine soils the cosmic legacy of humankind.

LW: *You defend Millianism, according to which the meaning of a proper name (or other simple singular term) is just its referent. On this view, the names "Phosphorus" and "Hesperus" must have the same meaning, since they have the same referent. However, it seems that these names do not have the same meaning, since John may assent to the sentence "Phosphorus is Phosphorus" while dissenting from the sentence "Hesperus is Phosphorus." What is your response to this objection?*

NS: I dubbed this problem 'Frege's puzzle' in my book of that title. In a nutshell my response to the puzzle comes down to this: our cognitive dispositions toward propositions are tempered by how we take those propositions, and especially by whether we recognize them. If one fails to recognize a proposition when apprehending it in different ways, one might agree to it when taking it one way (under one proposition guise) and yet reject the same proposition when taking it another way. On this conception, it is possible for a single person to harbor conflicting attitudes, rationally and without realizing it, toward what is in fact a single proposition, mistaking it for two independent propositions. Strictly speaking, the attribution 'Jones believes that Hesperus is the same thing as Phosphorus' states simply that Jones believes the proposition that Hesperus and Phosphorus are the same thing. This will be true if Jones agrees to the proposition when taking it at least one way or another. If Jones agrees to the proposition when it is presented as a trivial truism (as by the sentence 'Venus = Venus'), then the belief attribution is strictly true even if Jones fails to assent sincerely to the sentence 'Hesperus is the same thing as Phosphorus' because he does not agree to the proposition when stated that way.

I believe my response to Frege's puzzle has become the canonical Millian position—although, of course, several Millians do not accept my position and offer rival responses of their own.

LW: *Many philosophers claim that the notions of necessity and possibility are analyzable in terms of possible worlds. According to such an analysis, what is necessary is what holds in all possible worlds, and what is possible is what holds in at least one possible world. In several of your papers, you argue that the*

notions of necessity and possibility cannot be analyzed in terms of possible worlds. Can you explain your argument briefly? Do you think that modal notions have any analysis at all, or do you think that they are brute?

NS: I think it is clear that modal notions, such as we express by 'has to', 'mere accident', and so on (as in 'It has to be that the sum of two and three is an odd integer' or 'It is no mere accident that $2 + 3$ is odd'), are not analyzable in terms of Leibniz's notion of a *possible world*. Those who, like David Lewis, propose to analyze modality in terms of worlds in Leibniz's sense need to drop the modal qualification 'possible' or 'might have' in their conception of a world, on pain of circularity. They are committed to saying that something is possible if and only if it obtains in at least one world, in at least one way for all things to be, and that something is necessary if and only if it obtains in every way for all things to be whatsoever, *whether or not things might have been that way*. The main problem with this analysis is that a great many ways for things to be are such that things couldn't be that way. For example, one way for all things to be—one "world"— includes my being a credit-card account. Since I'm actually a human being, I couldn't instead have been a credit-card account. (This is essentialism.) It follows that any way for things to be that includes my being a credit-card account is a way things couldn't be.

In fact, the analysis goes in precisely the opposite direction. A *possible world* is a world that *might have* obtained; it is a total scenario, or way for things to be, such that things genuinely *might have* been that way. It then emerges—just as Leibniz held—that something is possible if and only if it obtains (holds) in some *possible* worlds (at least one), necessary if and only if it obtains in each and every *possible* world. This is an analysis of a *possible world* in terms of modality, rather than *vice versa*.

Possible worlds don't provide an analysis of modality. I suspect that the basic modal notions themselves are un-analyzable. But the converse analysis of a possible world in terms of modality is far from useless. With it we obtain the result that something is possible in a world w if and only if it obtains in some world w' that is a possible world in w, and something is necessary in a world w if and only if it obtains in every world w' that is possible in w. The notion of one world w' being possible in a world w is what modal logicians call 'accessibility' between worlds. There is a great deal of conceptual confusion about this in the literature. Even someone as clever as David Lewis was confused about this. He didn't understand what modal-logical accessibility is. (He admitted as much, and concluded that there is no content there to understand. Lewis seriously

misunderstood modal notions in general.) Yet the idea is really quite simple: To say that w' is *accessible to w* is just to say that w' is possible in w, no more and no less. The modal-logical accessibility relation is a reflexive binary relation. Most modal metaphysicians, by far, believe that accessibility is in fact an equivalence relation. I've argued to the contrary that it isn't transitive. I've also argued that logic is neutral about whether it is even symmetric. I continue to trust that my position will someday become the conventional wisdom, but at the present time it is excessively unpopular to render the issue even as much as controversial. To most modal metaphysicians, accessibility is an equivalence relation, end of story—without so much as a footnote acknowledging my opposing view. That accessibility is an equivalence relation remains the prevailing view even though the arguments for it are demonstrably fallacious. (Those who criticize cherished doctrine must learn to derive satisfaction in ways other than through reasoned persuasion.)

The identity relationships between possibility and truth in some possible worlds, and between necessity and truth in all possible worlds, enable us to read the logic of modality off of the logic of 'some' and 'all', which we understand through the logic of existential and universal quantification (which, in turn, may be understood in terms of the logic of 'or' and 'and'). In a sense, this is exactly the cornerstone of what is known as modal logic, what I call *the logic of what might have been*.

LW: *Let's talk a bit about the day-to-day of your being a philosopher. My question is, How do you determine which projects to tackle?*

NS: At any given time I typically have several projects at various stages of completion, and I can honestly say that I've never been at a loss for ideas for possible future projects. There is a reason why I have so many projects going at the same time. I recall being enormously impressed when I saw Michelangelo's statue of David in the Accademia Gallery in Florence. It is exceedingly rare that any human being creates something as exquisitely beautiful. Through his masterpiece the artist still speaks to us. Besides being awed, humbled, moved to tears by the statue itself, I was also equally impressed by the number of the artist's unfinished statues along the corridor leading the way to David. I think there is a potential lesson there for all of us lesser mortals. The physical arrangement of Michelangelo's works in the Accademia is like a message handed down to generations through the centuries from the master himself: "To create *this* [the awe-inspiring masterpiece], one does so by repeatedly doing *that* [the

unfinished statues].” To achieve the best one is capable of, it can be important to set a project aside and to concentrate one’s efforts on a different project entirely—perhaps even one after another after another. After a time, one can return to the original project with a fresh eye and improve upon what one has already done. I’m no Michelangelo, of course, but I endeavor in my work to follow his implicit advice.

LW: *It is clear from your books and papers that you are greatly interested in literature and music. And you play the guitar. Has your interest in the arts influenced your approach to philosophy in any way?*

NS: I’m much more into music than literature. (Although I work on the philosophy of fictional objects, I seldom read fiction. In fact, I’ve never much liked reading in general. I force myself to read.) I’m a self-taught guitarist, and I sometimes play semi-professionally. I play entirely by ear. I learned to play by listening to the Beatles’ recordings which I had (and still have) on vinyl records, and figuring out the chords. I was very fortunate in two ways when I began teaching myself to play. First, I inherited a very good musical ear from my grandfather, who was a superb self-taught musician (unlike me). Second, the gifted pianist/composer, James Newton Howard, was my classmate and friend, and lived only a block or so from me. Although he was a child prodigy, as far as my classmates and I were concerned, “Jimmy” was a regular guy whom we hung out with—when he wasn’t practicing piano. He downplayed his musical talent, and although his friends were aware of that talent we set it aside as irrelevant. But when it came to music, Jim seemed to know everything there is to know. He taught me most of what I know about music theory. In 1966 I played a new Beatles album for him—the American-released *Yesterday ...and Today* (culled from the British version of *Revolver* and earlier recordings). Although he was by that time already a very accomplished classical pianist, he responded with obvious enthusiasm for the melodies, harmonies, chord structure, and creative skill displayed on that album. Jim was uncanny in his ability to analyze the songs on the spot. He was in fact a great inspiration to me. To this day I enjoy figuring out a song’s chords entirely by ear, especially when those chords aren’t obvious. But I don’t play nearly enough to be genuinely accomplished.

I keep my interest in music mostly separate from my interest in intellectual matters. I treat music more as a way to clear my head when I become excessively analytical, or when the demands of the profession occasionally become excessively unpleasant. Music is a refuge. Whenever I watch a movie I listen to

the score. (I rarely listen to lyrics.) I love the music of Bach, especially when things in my life are in disarray. I think this is because Bach combines great beauty with orderly, analytical precision. But I'm equally fond of the music of Puccini, probably for its combination of great beauty with unrestrained, go-for-broke passion. I'm fond of the music of Ennio Morricone for the same reason.