
**Liberal Arts Education and the World:
Inquiring into, Preparing for, and Living
in the Real World through Core Texts**

**Patrick T. Flynn
Alfred Martin
Anthony Wisniewski
Editors**

*Selected Proceedings from the
Eighteenth Annual Conference of the
Association for Core Texts and Courses
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
March 29–April 1, 2012*

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Introduction

Liberal Arts Education and the World: Inquiring into, Preparing for, and Living in the Real World Through Core Texts

Recent media, public, and academic discussions have called into question whether the humanities and liberal arts have any significant role to play in the future of education, our understanding of the future, and the real world of this future. The Association of Core Texts and Courses (ACTC) tends to see it very differently. We believe that a liberal arts education—in virtue of its wide scope of disciplines and traditions, the seminal texts it relies upon, and the capacities it builds in students—is more of this world and its future than many narrower forms of education. Yet this case can often appear hard to make to students, specialized educators, potential employers, and, of course, parents. And making this case can often appear further complicated because the liberal arts tradition of core text education admits of a very wide variety of understandings and viewpoints about what makes up the real. This includes many classical topics and dichotomies: the role of the sacred, the apparent vs. the concrete, permanent laws vs. constant change, ideas vs. wisdom vs. daily opinion, the practical vs. the speculative, the political or cultural vs. the natural, and the artistic vs. the scientific, to mention only a few.

Yet if liberal arts inquiry and education have prepared countless generations for any of these real worlds, why should we think they cannot do the same for the future? If we are to clearly know where we are going, do we not need to also know clearly whence we have come? Generally, philosophical and rhetorical liberal arts education inquires into the character of citizens and the soundness of cultural productions. It also looks into the interpretation of sacred scriptures, as well as into the bases, establishment, and influence of contemporary science and technology. Does not all of this attest to an extraordinary exploration of what is real in the world, and what we can

continue to fairly count as real for the future? Is it possible that liberal arts, humanistic education—particularly in the form of core texts—has contributed more to the development and understanding of freedom within democracy than any other form of education?

Similarly, liberal arts education often explores practical-world situations in eras or times that clearly appear to have some measure of analogy to our own. This is not to say or make the claim that history repeats itself or that we can necessarily learn from history what we need to know about the present or future. What it is to say is that history, and/or historical understanding, can be a unique insight creator and that these insights can then be applied with some sapience to the present or future. Because of an earlier era's unfamiliarity or circumstantial differences, we can sometimes see in the past what we cannot but need to see in the present.

Whatever the scope of the liberal arts, there can be little question that it was meant for leadership (at least according to Plato and Cicero and many other pivotal core text figures). In the United States, the justification for liberal arts programs nearly always involves, at least partially, the goal of leadership development. This stated justification, however, is by no means unique to American or even Western thought. In China, for instance, the humanistic tradition of scholarship profoundly influenced the political leadership that significantly shaped that civilization's development.

Nor should the realms of theology, sacred and secular literature, or the arts be thought of as removed from the real world. Granted, such realms propose worlds we do not yet perceive, worlds that appear to have never been, or perhaps, will never be. But even if they are nothing more, if such realms do not have an external or higher or deeper reality, they still have significance and to some degree an important measure of reality, simply as human creations. This is not to say that such realms do not have an external higher or deeper reality. Nevertheless, following Vico, a strong case can be argued that we know who we are by what we have made. Indeed, it may be just such core text works as that of Giambattista Vico that will allow us to imagine and possibly create a better future than the past would seem to admit. Whatever else the future is, it is a reality that must be made—primarily by those of us in the present.

Finally, core text education, as well as education for the future, cannot be fairly tied to any one intellectual tradition. Core text curricula have shown again and again how the liberal arts are an interdisciplinary effort capable of helping us negotiate, shape, and understand the shifting lines of intellectual disciplines—both for the present and for our emerging future. These include manifold core texts of whole ranges of worlds of traditions: what we call the West, the African, the Indian, the Middle and Far East's, the many minority traditions that intersect increasingly, and the traditions of indigenous people that also increasingly intersect. The list is by no means exhaustive. We look to all these resources in an attempt to find and create a real world, a real world of and for the future, and hopefully a real world of and for a better future.

The editors of this collection of papers believe that we should less lament any lost position of the liberal arts in the world, or in higher education, in favor of finding fresh and creative ways to use ancient, modern, and expansionist-exploratory classic texts in our curricula as a probing way to think anew about our own efforts as educators to prepare students for the future. All of the papers submitted for publication in this collection were of very high quality—all aimed at considering how we should inquire into, prepare for, and live in the real world through core texts. The editors of this volume regret that space and resources limited the selection choices that were made. The papers from the eighteenth annual ACTC conference included in this volume are those that we, the editors, have judged to be most fitting to the overall spirit of the conference and most in line with the description of themes outlined above. It is our hope that this short collection of papers may go some small way to capturing in writing the intellectual vitality, intensity, conceptual plurality, and fundamental excellence of the Eighteenth Annual Conference of the Association of Core Texts and Courses.

The papers in this volume are divided into five sections: (1) Liberal Arts Core Text(s) Education for Real-World Living, (2) Reading Ancient and Early Classics for Real World Living—Earliest Texts, (3) Reading Ancient and Early Classics for Real World Living—Later Texts, (4) Reading Modern Classics for Real World Living, and (5) Expanding the Core Text Canon for Real World Living. The papers in the first section deal with what might be called the general theory of liberal arts education as applied to the conference theme and specific core texts. Four papers are in this first section: “A Liberal Arts Curriculum and the Goods of the Soul,” by James Arieti; “Through the Looking Glass: The Impact of Area Studies on the Study of Core Texts,” by Candi Cann; “Why Teach Heidegger’s ‘Memorial Address’?” by Patrick Malcolmson and Borys Kowalsky; “What in the World Is Art? Heidegger on the Being of Things and Works of Art,” by Richard Velkley. Core text authors and book groups in these papers include Aristotle, the Bible, Confucius, Heidegger, Las Casas, Phan, and Plato.

The second section deals with discussions from the chronologically most ancient core texts devoted to the conference theme. Five papers are in this section: “Care of Self in Plato’s Alcibiades I,” by Michael Ivins; “Laying Down Life for God? 1 Maccabees as a Core Text Preparing for Our Post-9/11 World,” by Jason Ripley; “The Good in Teaching Plato Through Service Learning,” by Melissa Shew; “In the Field with Herodotus: Reading Books 2 and 4 of The Histories as Travelogue,” by Jennifer Speights-Binet; and “Aristotle in Business: The Nichomachean Ethics and Business Ethics,” by Stephen Varvis. Core text authors and books in this group include Aristotle, Herodotus, Maccabees, and Plato. A striking aspect concerning this group of papers is how interestingly relevant these most ancient texts appear to be to the most current of twenty-first-century issues.

The third section discusses core texts of the later Ancient and Classic period, the Middle Ages, and the Early Modern Period. Six papers are in this section: “Cicero’s On Duties and Liberal Arts Education: Ancient Lessons for Our Predica-

ments,” by Jarrett A. Carty; “Longing for Preeminence: Living in the Real World with Cicero’s *On Duties*,” by Emma Cohen de Lara; “Study and Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent,” by Bernd Goehring; “Montaigne, Schopenhauer, and the Wisdom of Living Well,” by Nicholas Margaritis; “Augustine and the Reinvention of Natural Philosophy,” by Brian Schwartz; and “Transcendence to Reality in Plato and Dante,” by James Wood. Core text authors in this group include Aquinas, Augustine, Cicero, Dante, Montaigne, Plato, and Schopenhauer. A significant feature of this group of papers is the range of core texts applied to contemporary real-world issues.

The fourth section covers core texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, in the classical modern period. This section has four papers: “Reading Darwin in the Real World: Descent v. Ascent,” by Patrick Flynn; “Seeing in Literature, Art, and Nature: Tying Thoreau into the Aesthetics of Environmental Issues,” by Jean-Marie Kauth; “Reading Darwin in the Real World: A Meditation,” by Alfred Martin; and “Teaching Adam Smith on Wealth, Common Wealth, and Common Good,” by Darra Mulderry. Core text authors in this group include Darwin, Smith, and Thoreau. An important quality of this group of papers is the remarkable relevance of these modern authors to pressing contemporary issues.

The fifth section explores the many ways that the corpus for primary core text courses can be enlarged and extended. Six papers are in this final section: “Guilt and Innocence in Koestler’s *Darkness at Noon*,” by Thomas Bateman; “Marvell’s ‘Mower Against Gardens’ and Poetry for the Obdurate Pragmatist,” by Richard Burke; “Teaching the American Protest Novel: Meridel Le Sueur’s *The Girl and Its Pedagogy of Protest*,” by Wilson Chen; “Home and the Real World: Vilém Flusser’s *Migrant*, Crito’s Athens, and Tim Winton’s *Trailer Park*,” by Kathleen Kelly; “The Fourth Amendment as a Core Text: A Pedagogy for the Citizen-Philosopher,” by Irfan Khawaja; and “Education and Love of the World: ‘The Crisis in Education’ by Hannah Arendt,” by Ellen Rigsby. Core text authors in this group include Arendt, Flusser, the Fourth Amendment, Koestler, Le Sueur, Marvell, Plato, and Winton. A notable characteristic of this group of papers is the remarkable social and cultural diversity of core texts applied to current real-world issues.

Finally, as editors of these selected readings, we wish to thank all the readers and assistant and associate editors of this volume of proceedings, without whose very significant efforts this volume would never have come together: Zubair Amir, Jean-Marie Kauth, Alfred Martin, Joaquin Montero, Martin Tracey, and Anthony Wisniewski. The diligence, selflessness, wisdom, and editorial managerial skill of all these people in the creation of this text were both awe-inspiring and at times personally overwhelming. Their contribution to this work was enormous and absolutely essential to its completion. I also want to mention and thank all the support personnel, friends, and family of the editors who helped with this project, both directly and indirectly. Many thanks for their long-suffering assistance, compassion, and tolerance in facilitating the completion of this project through support for its compilers. Finally, we, of course, want to thank the authors of the papers included in this volume. They provided the content, substance, creativity, and high quality

of what our editorial group truly believes has turned out to be a very fine collection of papers. To sum up, we want to thank everyone who contributed so mightily to the creation and completion of this collection of essays.

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Liberal Arts Core Text(s)
Education for Real World Living

A Liberal Arts Curriculum and the Goods of the Soul

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Aristotle's threefold classification of human goods line up in a hierarchical order, with psychic goods first, bodily goods second, and external goods last, and it is toward the psychic goods that a liberal education aims—things like justice, moderation, wisdom, a due adaptation of means to ends in words and deeds, and a respect for the dignity of all one's fellow human beings and for the world of nature. For decades, we have heard platitudes about how a liberal arts education engenders the morally and civically good individuals who manifest these virtues. But even those who have eloquently asserted this *outcome* have not described with any specificity whatsoever the *means* by which the required elements of a liberal arts curriculum achieve this end. I shall try to fill this gap.

Let me begin with the requirement in composition. A human being is an animal capable of reason or, in Aristotle's definition, capable of receiving knowledge. Reason manifests itself most perfectly in discourse and speech, that is, in observations of truth expressible in sentences. The unit of discourse is the sentence; the unit of the sentence is the word, of which there are various kinds. The relationship the words have with each other is grammar. To study grammar, then, is to study one's core humanness. By learning to speak and write well, students learn to formulate and then to organize their thoughts so that they become clear to themselves and to others. The ability to think and communicate with clarity renders their interaction with other people fulfilling and their *inner lives* gratifying and rich—and these are qualities that make them good human beings and good citizens. I should emphasize that the contribution to a superior inner life is no small part of the benefits of the requirement. Were

liberal arts graduates to find themselves stranded on a lonely island in the middle of the ocean, because of their proficiency in composition they would be able to enjoy intelligent reflection and to provide themselves no small consolation from this possession of an articulate, stimulating mental lucidity.

The foreign language requirement provides all the advantages of the composition requirement and more. It enables students to look at language from outside the familiar and hence yields more insights into, and understanding of, the nature of language. And, of course, as almost everyone who has studied a language other than his own has discovered through the humbling process of learning it, foreign languages are very difficult. The Bible recognizes this difficulty in the story of the Tower of Babel, where the multiplicity of languages is a punishment for presumptuous pride, and the sheer handicap of communicating across languages is intended to tame the arrogance that human beings feel because of their intelligence. When students consider how hard it is to learn a foreign language competently, they become sympathetic to the plight of those who come to our shores as immigrants speaking foreign tongues. Cognizant of how disconcerting it is to communicate even in the safety of a foreign language classroom, they realize just how hard it is to communicate across borders. As the chief operation of a good person is to feel moral sympathy for others—as enshrined in the famous rules of Hillel, Jesus, and Adam Smith—it is clear that the study of a foreign language will contribute to the goal of forming a humane, compassionate human being, quite apart from any occupational or travel benefits that may accrue.

Though the mathematics requirement, after the foreign language requirement, is probably the one most dreaded, it is fundamental to forming good persons. When students learn a theorem and have understood its formal mathematical proof, they have arrived at as persuasive a conclusion as possible. A mathematical proof requires definitions, a small number of axioms (self-evident truths), and a string of propositions made deductively in accordance with the rules of logic. When students have reasoned their way to a mathematical conclusion, they are persuaded that they have achieved a level of knowledge (and the knowledge that they have) that they acquire from no other intellectual exercise. The contribution from mathematics to their psychic excellence is a standard by which they can assess the degree to which they know. What I mean can be illustrated with an example. When students have been through the geometrical proof that the interior angles of a triangle equal two right angles, they are absolutely convinced of the accuracy of the conclusion. They have a canon, or ruler, by which they can easily calculate the degree of their knowledge about other matters—the excellence of this or that novel, the moral or practical benefits of this or that policy, the accuracy of these or those experimental data. Math offers a yardstick, as it were, to assess knowledge in general. Using this yardstick, persons can then be appropriately skeptical or appropriately certain. As good persons will know when to affirm with certitude and when not, and as the latter will in the course of things be far more frequent than the former, they will be suitably cautious or confident according to the varying circumstances.

I take up the requirements in literature and history together. The often repeated assertion that a mere knowledge of history will keep us from being doomed to repeat

the mistakes of the past, alas, is false. Indeed, what history shows is that the same mistakes are made over and over again, just as Thucydides predicted they would be so long as human nature remained the same. It is, in fact, a question whether an acquaintance with history actually causes a repetition of mistakes. Did the calls to remember the appeasement of Hitler at Munich elicit the war in Vietnam, a war that perhaps repeated some of the errors of World War I (which the appeasement at Munich was intended to avoid)? We would be better off looking elsewhere for the benefit of history to our souls. I suggest that the value of history is that it forces us to imagine times and places unlike our own and thus obliges us to exercise our imaginations, to put ourselves in the situations of others, to try to conjure times and places removed from our direct experience, and to compare the values, motives, and manners of people different from ourselves. It enables us to be as spectators in conflicts in which we have no part so that we can reflect with a disinterested clinical detachment on the totality of actions and arrive at disinterested verdicts. This exercise may not inoculate us completely against repeating the same mistakes as our forebears, but it is the preventive medicine most likely to achieve the result. Literature adds to history an even greater variety of experience and also allows us to penetrate into the psyches of characters and—unlike history, which lets us gaze on persons from the outside in—lets us gaze on them from the inside out. We read their thoughts and feelings, we watch them devising schemes and carrying them out. Along with the characters, we can rehearse reactions to crises; we can exercise our emotional responses and compare them to those of the characters; and, with the help of our teachers, we can refine our responses. We thus train ourselves for the crises that we shall encounter so that we shall be more likely to act correctly when the time comes. By enlivening our imaginations, history and literature offer a very direct preparation for the challenges of life. I should like to add that at colleges in the United States, we should require knowledge of *Western* culture as distinct from *any* culture whatsoever, and my reason for this claim would emphatically not be that the West has a monopoly on greatness. It is a principle of education that we begin with what is familiar and *then* move to what is unfamiliar. The idea enshrined on a tablet at the holiest of ancient Greek places, the Oracle at Delphi, was “Know Thyself.” Part of knowing ourselves is knowing about the culture in which we live. After we have mastered this task, we can more profitably move to unfamiliar territory. For students attending an *American* college, familiar territory is what we find in the collection of the great works that constitute the subject matter of a western culture course.

The aim of philosophy is understanding through reasoning, and, of course, a high level of reasoning is the distinguishing characteristic of the human animal. As in any natural activity, the tendency is to attempt the activity in as complete, efficient, and effective a manner as possible. Philosophy trains our reasoning to understand the world by means of the tool called *logic*. Like the requirement in composition, philosophy aims to render students to be adept at this quintessentially human quality. Liberal education, and philosophy in particular, embodies the dictum of Aristotle, that all human beings by nature desire understanding. A human without understanding, then, is like a body without food: it will wither and die. The ancients called this subject *philosophy* because it aims at wisdom or understanding (*sophia*), one of the

chief goods of a rational soul. The requirement in fine arts aims punctiliously at the appropriate and the beautiful. In theater, it aims principally at the emotions appropriate to an occasion and to a character.

In the visual and musical arts, the goal is an understanding of the appropriate and the beautiful as apprehended by the senses of sight and hearing. In addition to an appreciation of the appropriate and the beautiful, the arts promote both ethical and epistemic values in the soul, as may be illustrated by a single example. A dramatic role—say, Hamlet—may be acted by several actors who portray the character very well even as they portray it very differently. Each actor may plausibly enfold his own creative interpretation in his portrayal and highlight a different dimension of Hamlet. When examining various performances, students can realize that within the overarching constraint of a script (or, in the case of art, an image), there can be great variability. The ethical effect of this realization will be the students' extension of respect to people who have plausible, intelligent views different from theirs. The epistemic effect will be the consignment of genius and value to multifarious interpretations, as each of these underscores a different feature of reality—and the result will be for students to recognize that diversity in the interpretation of complex things (e.g., the character of Hamlet) expands their comprehension of the range of human nature. We need only think how in paintings, the myriad versions of a springtime scene have each captured an aspect of the season, or how in music, thousands of melodies have each evoked a particular expression of the tenderness or frenzy of romantic love.

Human beings live in a material universe and are themselves made of matter, and self-knowledge therefore includes an understanding of the material world. Human reason has been able to unlock the mysteries of the natural world, to discern the relationship of parts to wholes, to investigate things smaller than an atom and vaster than galaxies, to examine phenomena that happened billions of years ago and that will happen billions of years hence. The requirement of classes in natural science yields the dual and perhaps paradoxical ethical benefit of letting students recognize how small a particle a human being is in the scheme of things and yet how magnificent is the human mind that can survey the cosmos.

There is no need to discuss in detail the benefits from the other requirements, which largely recapitulate the benefits already described. Religion as an academic discipline, for example, reveals the common quest of human beings to understand what, if anything, may be beyond nature. When students put themselves in the minds of people of other faiths who have struggled with the same issues, they develop that sympathy that lies at the heart of moral goodness.

Now perhaps someone may object that not every class in these subjects will consummate the goals that I have sketched. Students may choose a course in mathematics in which formulae are memorized rather than deduced, or an art class in which they learn nothing but the names and dates of artists, or a theater class in which they are compelled to slavishly obey the interpretation dictated by a director, or a history class where they memorize dry facts with no engagement of the imagination, or a language class where the difficulties of the foreign language are brushed away and all they confront are anecdotes and PowerPoint slides of the professor's summer travels. Whatever can be taught *can* be taught poorly. And, of course, for those in whom

there is no inclination for learning, no amount of education, even with the most excellent of teachers, will bring about the desired results of moral and civic goodness. We should not forget that Socrates had the miscreant Alcibiades as his student, and Aristotle, Alexander the megalomaniac.

The essential benefit of a liberal education, then, consists of the goods of the soul. But they are not, of course, the only goods; and at liberal arts colleges, students may derive benefits that they can obtain also at a non-liberal arts institution. These are collateral goods—goods to be sure, but ones not essential to the education that I have described above. From composition comes an ability to persuade—a skill that is practical in law and politics and advertising; from mathematics comes numerical competence and the skills necessary for balancing a checking account, for keeping books, and for running a business; from learning a foreign language comes a facility in traveling to countries where the language is spoken, and so on. But these are *secondary* or even tertiary goods—collateral benefits of the subjects but *not* the goals of liberal education. Let me illustrate my meaning with an analogy. Let us say that a physician instructs a patient to exercise in order to improve his vascular or respiratory functions. If the patient dutifully goes through the torturous regime, he may discover that he has also become more physically attractive, and as a result he may become more confident in social situations. The improvement in appearance is a secondary effect attributable entirely to the exercise; the increase in confidence, a tertiary effect. The patient may take great delight in his increased bodily tone or self-confidence, but to confuse a secondary or tertiary effect with the primary one would be an error. Persons who exercised with the primary goal of beauty would aim at those exercises that improved their appearance rather than their vascular or respiratory condition. They would be like the person who studied mathematics to be able to keep books rather than to have a canon of what it is to know with certainty. Keeping books is a good, to be sure, but it is not a good of the soul; knowing about knowledge is, and it is a much greater good.

What, then, is the greatest challenge to liberal education in the current century? The challenge is the same, I would argue, as it has always been—no greater, no less. It is the challenge illustrated with great force in Plato's *Gorgias*, where the young men Polus and Callicles desire an education in rhetoric for the purpose of acquiring political power for themselves. It is the challenge Augustine describes in the *Confessions*, when he upbraided his own parents for their insouciant neglect of his moral goodness so long as he continued to pursue an education for a legal career. In short, the challenge has been in the past, continues to be in the present, and will be in the future to persuade prospective students and their parents that the goods of the soul are not only real but also the most important goods. Again, let me illustrate my meaning with an analogy. One might ask, what is the greatest challenge to human nutrition in this century? The challenge is to *persuade* people to eat healthy foods in the right amounts. Persuading people to put nutrition first and pleasure second is, like the challenge to liberal education, not an easy one to defeat. Why are goods of the soul so frequently discounted? As the answer to this question is not the focus of this article, I shall briefly sketch the principal cause and then set it aside. The cause principally has to do with the limitation of human vision. Moral excellence, sound

judgment, appreciation for the beauty in the diversity of nature and of human insight, a sense of order, and humility are all invisible, while fine houses, automobiles, dining in cordon bleu restaurants, jewelry, shoes, and the like, since they are visible, are easily measured and compared. In a market economy, the esteem placed on things is indicated by their monetary value. That we generally pay the highest salaries to those whose work is the farthest removed from the invisible goods of the soul reflects the dismal fact that as a society we do not perceive the value in the ends of liberal education. For social animals like human beings, it is to be expected and, for the most part, it is socially useful for people to adopt the values of their community. The great challenge to liberal arts institutions is to resist the pressures to conform to the prevalent love of material goods and to adhere steadfastly to the traditional values in their hierarchical order, with psychic goods, or goods of the soul, first, bodily goods second, and external goods third.

Should liberal arts colleges teach or foster only those subjects and activities that aim at the goods of the soul? Here, I think, we need to keep in mind, as mentioned earlier, that there are goods other than those of the soul. So long as institutions provide a strict mechanism for maintaining the proper *hierarchy* of goods, it does not seem to me inappropriate to provide some access to the lower goods. We need not adopt the severity of our forebears who excluded the pastime of athletic competition on the grounds that it distracted from piety. We need not forbid sports, so long as they maintain their place as a secondary good and do not usurp the liberal arts. (And this means, of course, that practices and games not encroach on the academic schedule and that funds for the institution *not* go disproportionately to athletics.) Shall we allow a smattering of courses whose ends are vocational—courses, say, in automobile mechanics, typing, cookery, nursing, and accounting? These subjects, while they do not aim at the goods of the soul, nevertheless *do* aim at goods. Here, I would suggest, we encourage students to make use of the opportunities that already exist as curricular parallels, as we do, for example, with ROTC, or to use the summer months for these subjects. They might be taken not as substitutes for, but as add-ons to, their liberal education. For colleges to offer majors in these subjects, however, would not be compatible with liberal education. The term *major*, from the Latin, means *more* or *greater*. And when students undertake a major, they devote more time and greater energy to it than to the rest of the curriculum. Were we to offer a major in nursing or accounting, these would be the foci of a student's activity, and these are subjects that aim at bodily or external goods, not at the goods of the soul. Such majors would thus be antithetical to the goals of liberal education. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote: "If it be true that the human mind leans on one side to the narrow, the practical, and the useful, it naturally rises on the other to the infinite, the spiritual, and the beautiful. Physical wants confine it to the earth; but, as soon as the tie is loosened, it will unbend itself again" (ii.40). The job of *liberal* education is to untie, to free the human mind from the physical and to let it take flight. While pre-professional training for a job produces the gold that jingles in a pocket, an education in the liberal arts produces a spiritual gold that brings harmony to a human soul.

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Through the Looking Glass: The Impact of Area Studies on the Study of Core Texts

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When area studies began to emerge in American academia in the late 1960s,¹ many in the academy criticized the lack of discipline specificity and questioned the ability of area studies to probe deeply rather than widely. The strength of area studies, though, was its ability to provide a way in which to view culture with various disciplines (religion, history, economics, anthropology, sociology, etc.) grouped under a particular umbrella so that university departments could offer expertise in a particular world region. Also, it must not be forgotten that large government grants helped stimulate this trend, and money could be garnered when the area was a place of national security interest, benefiting university and government alike. However, these area studies departments tended to have little dialogue with one another, without overlap except through specific academic genres, and comparative enterprises tended to focus on a comparison of “us” (North America) and “them,” rather than area discipline to area discipline. To illustrate this point, I want to briefly compare the discipline of Latin American Studies with Asian Studies and illustrate how a comparison, even across two very different areas, can contribute to a deeper analysis of both areas that may not have emerged alone in isolation.

Latin American studies tend to emphasize economic issues, and structural oppression in relation to issues of dependency theories, beginning with the understanding of Latin America as portrayed through Las Casas’s text *History of the Indies*, which emphasizes the view of Latin America through the lens of cultural and eco-

conomic dependency on Europe. Las Casas writes that the fact (*hecho*) of the untimely, unjust death of the poor contradicts the right (*derecho*) that the poor have to life. Las Casas's interpretation of Latin America constructed a dialectic of agency, which, while true, has since focused nearly all disciplines in the area of Latin American studies—economics, history, religion, and others—into a colonialist and postcolonialist critique. Even today, the field of Latin American studies continues to stress this aspect of its history, though from the opposite side of the coin—a liberationist postcolonial lens. Whether in relation to its cultural dependency on Europe or in its emancipation from European and North American colonialism, the story continues to be told in relationship to other powers rather than through its own story of agency and independence.

The problem with this viewpoint is the hegemonic discourse inherent in this sort of critique: painting the natives as the oppressed and the colonial European powers as oppressors has become the overarching narrative for all aspects of the Latin American story and has helped to create such popular figures as Che Guevara and Evita (both viewed as “European enough” to be taken seriously as symbols of some values of a liberative discourse, yet neither fully representational of Latin American diversity), promoting theologies of liberation for the poor. While these narratives, both popular and structural, are not problematic in and of themselves, they have helped to displace colonialist agency and prevent the postcolonialist critique from being taken seriously enough. The central narrative thus becomes “what we did to those people” (over there), rather than the story of a people. Sadly enough, the main character in these oppression narratives is still us, rather than them, and this has become a central problem with Latin American studies in general.

On a different note, the field of Asian studies tends to emphasize the importance of Confucianism and its tendency toward a humanist interpretation of the world, resulting in a consequent emphasis on the importance of history (as opposed to narrative or individuals). The silences of Confucian history are rarely engaged and, when they are, often contribute to the master narrative rather than challenging it. The history of China, even today, is a path that tells the story of a great nation rather than many fractured Chinas, and the myth of the Han Chinese goes largely unchallenged. Women, Chinese minorities, religious fringe groups—all must struggle to make their voices heard, but always through the dominant discourse. China is never deconstructed, and Communism has been most effective in bolstering the China myth.

The essential premise of Chinese Confucianism is the Confucian social order—hierarchical, rational, and corporate—maintained through Confucius's rational system of ethics. Confucius's views are thus concerned with maintaining a continuity—with heaven and humanity, within governments and families—and creating a stable world in which the goal of history is creating a master narrative that illustrates heaven's pleasure or displeasure with human actions. One example is the concept of *tianming* (天命, heavenly mandate), through which Chinese dynastic cycles come to be understood and the Confucian view perpetuated. This makes critiques of class, power, and status very difficult to sustain, as ruling changes are told through the lens of a master narrative explained by losing or gaining the mandate of heaven.

Placing the bias of Latin American studies (economic and colonialist depen-

gency theories) next to the bias of Asian studies (a grand historical narrative largely dependent on Confucian humanist theories) allows one to question how we as teachers of narratives, core texts, and curriculums approach the disciplines of area studies. Too often we accept master narratives of area studies and forget to challenge their underlying assumptions. Each area—Latin American studies and Asian studies—sees itself as “particular” and emphasizes different aspects repeatedly, and often unknowingly. While Said’s “orientalism”²² may be consciously avoided, other aspects of area studies remain embedded and become integral to the way in which disciplinary phenomena are understood, explained, and studied, preventing a true dialogue that transcends bias.

Catholic theologian Peter Phan points to this cultural bias in his examination of theology, noting that theology in “Latin America has focused on economics and politics (liberation), Africa on cultures (enculturation), and Asia on religions (interreligious dialogue). However, theologians in all these three continents are well aware that these three aspects are deeply intertwined with one another and that one cannot be achieved apart from the other two.”²³ Theology, like area studies, is determined and interpreted by the lens through which a culture views itself, but it is the theologian’s—and the scholar’s—job to recover and resituate each region within its discursive web.²⁴ Essentially, the job of the area studies scholar is not to reduce or essentialize phenomena but to locate them within the larger discourse of politics, history, literature, economics, etc. Though it is difficult—if not at times impossible—to escape the totalizing influence of the way different area studies construct their own narratives, a comparative framework between area studies’ departments, while simultaneously situating the discourse in a larger global framework. Ultimately, comparative analysis of area studies means attempting to situate texts so that they transcend the (academic) discourse of area studies, and our own “self-portraits” of culture can be surpassed, if not left behind. This is an important function of the comparative enterprise—not only that comparison reveals the enduring categorical, inherent similarities, but also that it helps deconstruct academic generalizations that may or may not be universally valuable.

World historians (as opposed to area specialists) are now engaged in how to address phenomena of distinctly different cultures in such a way as to simultaneously construct valuable categories without being simplistic or reductive. While area studies departments have contributed to the field through promoting awareness of their particular geographical areas, without adequate dialogue between these different disciplines each geographic area’s primary assumptions go unchallenged. This brings to mind the restrictive nature of discipline as seen by Foucault, even in such broad fields as area studies. In order to transcend discipline and truly engage in interdisciplinary discourse, it is important to question traditional assumptions of area studies. We must challenge not only the perspectives held by peoples of particular geographical areas, but also the way we, as academics, buy into, perpetuate, and collude with area studies’ own myth-making enterprise.

Imagine this: If Las Casas were to meet Confucius, he would probably point out the huge class differences in China and challenge traditional hierarchical rela-

tions held in families and in society. Conversely, Confucius might point not toward cultural and economic dependency, but to a rich master narrative of Latin American history that reveals a deterioration in society and a breakdown in the ethics and morality of local rulers, yet gives agency to the rulers in their own eventual oppression. Trading traditional narrative viewpoints and assumptions inherent in the discipline of area studies would broaden the ways in which we study and learn from these various disciplines and perhaps allow us to use new ways to interpret and understand phenomena.

Notes

1. Area studies first emerged in the United States in part because of funding from Title VI of the National Defense Education Act (renamed the Higher Education Act in 1965) in 1958, which gave schools and universities federal funding for studying other areas and foreign languages.

2. Said 1978.

3. Phan 2008, 27–28.

4. I use the term “discursive web” to be the intricate interconnection of many intersections, which, rather than a binary construction of opposites, represents a sort of scatter plot of variables that intersect in a four-dimensional way. This, in my opinion, layers Foucault’s concept of “discourse” with Geertz’s “thickness” of description (allowing it to include the dimensions of ethnographic description), while also allowing for the necessary dimension of time (Asad’s historicity). In other words, the point in the web is not a static and unchanging point but rather a dynamic point referential only in time and place. This idea of a discursive web allows for an escape from the limitations of categorical parameters and an expansion of the many variables present in comparative analysis, while at the same time, locating such a comparison in a constantly changing and movable place, allowing the comparison to remain dynamic and constant rather than stagnant and fixed.

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Why Teach Heidegger's "Memorial Address"?

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The case for liberal education today seems to fall on ears growing evermore deaf. The reasons for this go beyond the utilitarian and business perspectives so often blamed. The deafness may be due to a deeper and more profound cause, our growing inability to "think" and hence to see the value of an education in "thinking." Martin Heidegger's 1955 "Memorial Address," which constitutes the first half of a short book called *Discourse on Thinking*, is an excellent core text for students embarking on a program of liberal education for this very reason. It brings students to an awareness of the essential distinction one must make when thinking about thinking: the distinction between calculative and meditative thinking.

Arguably, no single work by Heidegger gives us a better sense of his philosophy than his monumental *Being and Time*. But it is formidably long and formidably technical—rather like Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. By contrast the "Address" is exceedingly brief and exceedingly accessible. It was crafted for delivery at a gathering of the citizenry in Messkirch, Swabia, on October 30, 1955, to celebrate the 175th birthday of composer and fellow-Swabian Conradin Kreutzer. Intended to speak to fellow townsfolk in language they can easily understand, it is, with a few exceptions, remarkably free of specialized, rarefied language.

At the same time, Heidegger's "Address" has a powerful and immediate impact. Bluntly put, Heidegger wastes no time in hitting you right between the eyes—with

the fact that contemporary life is marked by *growing thoughtlessness*. “Man today,” he contends, “is in *flight from thinking*” (Heidegger, *Discourse*, 45). The emphasis is Heidegger’s! “How can that be?” we protest. “Don’t we have science, and is not our science steadily advancing, conquering ever new frontiers?” Heidegger certainly anticipates such an objection from his listeners and concedes something of their point: Have there ever been “such far-reaching plans, so many inquiries in so many areas, research carried on as passionately as today”? Doubtless never. And as Heidegger also allows, “This display of ingenuity and deliberation has its own great usefulness. Such thought remains indispensable” (45–46). And here lies the crux of the matter: this is thinking of a special kind and is not to be confused with thinking *per se*; moreover, this “thinking of a special kind” may in fact be exactly what leads us away from thinking.

Heidegger calls this peculiar kind of thinking *calculative thinking*. According to him, the phrase covers everything we ordinarily mean by it and more. It denotes reasoning such as assessing the probability of success in any given endeavor, e.g., Milwaukee Bucks’ chances of making the NBA finals; computing changes in U.S. divorce rates or global temperatures; or the thinking that goes on in the economic sphere, e.g., about how to stimulate consumer demand. Any such reasoning involving any form of mathematics, however rudimentary, falls into the category of calculative thinking. Yet thinking need not be mathematicized to be calculative. Considering how best to win the heart of one’s beloved or to ingratiate oneself with one’s boss is no less calculative for being primarily qualitative. Planning, organizing, computing, weighing of probabilities, problem-solving, prudential reasoning, any sort of consideration of *means* to given ends—all qualify as calculation. Thus, all trades and virtually all professions are forms of calculative thinking. And hence, from a Heideggerian perspective, any kind of research or investigation that is directly drawn upon in them, e.g., any science such as physics, engineering, economics, or political science, even the political science of the *Federalist Papers*, belongs in that category, too.

Heidegger does not dispute the fact that calculative thinking is both “justified and necessary.” All the same, calculative thinking is emphatically to be distinguished from what he calls “meditative thinking.” For Heidegger, *meditative thinking* is reflecting on “the meaning which reigns in everything that is” (46), on “what concerns each one of us immediately and continuously in his very being” (44). However difficult it may be, meditative thinking, unlike mathematical physics, requires no special expertise, no training in arcane technical concepts. To reflect upon, to dwell on and ponder, to meditate—it is this capacity to which we refer when we say human beings have the capacity to think (56), for what is essential to our being, the being of each and every one of us human beings, is that we ask about the meaning of things.

Nothing could be further removed from thinking in this way than calculative thinking. Calculative thinking is governed by concern with how to achieve pre-given ends under conditions that it also takes as given. Unlike meditative thinking, it never pauses to reflect on the deeper meaning of our everyday projects and pursuits for us, for our world and everything in it, as well as on the whence and whither of our fundamental commitments, and indeed of our whole “world.” We frantically race from

one thing, one task, one business matter to the next, and calculative thinking, which is how we think virtually all the time, does nothing to change that. "Meditative thinking?!" we, most of us, would exclaim incredulously and indignantly, "What does it profit us to be meditative?" In our present near-total "flight from thinking," we risk complete self-alienation, for again, we human beings are, each of us, at the "core of our being," "meditating beings."

If, Heidegger intimates, in contrast to the thought-poor kind of commemoration of past accomplishments to which we have grown accustomed, we for once pause to reflect on what the day's celebration of Kreutzer's great achievement suggests, we find ourselves on a particular path of meditative thinking. Heidegger, we recognize, is our guide on this path. Each step on it is marked by a question, which he opens with the words "we grow more thoughtful and ask." Each question emerges from reflecting on the preceding question. The starting point of this path is the center of the essay, and a turning point for us—the listeners. We either follow his lead, and ask these questions with him, and hence engage in thinking meditatively about what this celebration suggests—or we do not.

The path of thinking on which Heidegger leads us may be summarized as follows: Kreutzer's art flowered in the ground of the Swabian homeland. Perhaps, then, for his art to flourish, the artist must be firmly rooted in his native soil. There may be an integral relation between any human work that is "joyous and salutary" and its rootedness or *autochthony*. But that element of autochthony is threatened today by a globalized popular culture purveyed by means of a globalizing communications technology, such as radio and television, and of course now, the Internet. We often know more about events in distant lands like Russia and the Middle East than we do about what is going on in our own neighborhoods. And thanks to the wondrous power of modern communications technology, we can find out about those distant happenings, obtain entertainment to our taste, and so on from various sources around the world almost any time we want. Our attachments to and dependencies upon local customs and traditions and upon the rhythms of our natural habitats are weakened accordingly. Barriers of convention, time, and space are broken down. Progressive thinkers, whether Marxist or liberal, might call this liberation from necessities and constraints both cultural and natural. But the flip side is an ever-more pervasive uprooting of human life.

Modern technology, thus, seems to be at the root of both modern "freedom" and modern rootlessness. This rootlessness begets a leveling, flattening homogenization on a global scale, accompanied by a rising tide of mediocrity and superficiality and a sweeping away of all sense of rank and greatness in human life; a condition wherein all of our best energies and gifts are expended on "planning . . . organization and automation," all, naturally, tied to calculative thinking. Heidegger thus reminds us of Nietzsche's nauseating depiction of the "last man."

What, one wonders, is really happening here? Modern science and technology, true, have been advancing on many different fronts. One of those signal advancements is the splitting of the atom, which "great industrial corporations" are scrambling to exploit as a source of nuclear energy. In all of this hyperactivity, however, the decisive question remains unasked: "What is the ground that enabled modern

technology to discover and set free new energies in nature?" (50).

The answer calls to mind the philosophical revolution in seventeenth-century Europe, from which springs "a completely new relation of man to the world and his place in it." In this new philosophy (originating with Bacon and Descartes), the world comes to sight as "an object open to the attacks of calculative thought." "Nature becomes a giant gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry" (50). The point of the conquest of nature is to extract the energy necessary to construct the world as we will.

This new, technological way of relating to nature, utterly without precedent hitherto in any part of the world, has become dominant worldwide. It is entirely beyond man's ability to control, perhaps even to comprehend. It, and all that it portends, is our fate. With each new technological innovation, which in our present alienated and debased state cannot but excite our admiration, the grip of technology on us grows stronger.

The greatest danger in this development is not that humankind may end up destroying itself physically, as in a nuclear war. Deploying calculative thinking, we can find ways to prevent such catastrophes. Rather, the greatest danger is that we will use science to remake ourselves, thus still further tightening the grip of technology and calculative thinking on ourselves to the point where all capacity and desire for meditative thinking and also the autochthony of human works are utterly lost. Man's existence will then have been utterly degraded and irretrievably estranged from the core of his being: posthumanity becomes subhumanity.

The scenario sketched by Heidegger is indeed profoundly disquieting, but he points toward a possible way out. We are still capable of meditative thinking and hence capable of pitting it "decisively against merely calculative thinking" (53). The thrust of our technologically governed way of life opens up for the first time to such thinking the prospect of a different relation to the world and of a different ground for a new kind of autochthony, one that would make possible a renewed flourishing of humankind and its works.

In one of the most important parts of his speech, Heidegger offers a brief characterization of meditative thinking and follows that with a demonstration, which he calls a "trial," of how we might then think about that prospect. "Meditative thinking demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea, nor to run down a one-track course of ideas. Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all" (53).

In this way, technology and thinking can perhaps be brought together. Heidegger offers the following possibility: what if we learn to "comport" ourselves toward technology in a different way? Need we fall into "bondage" to the technical devices that now figure so prominently in modern life? No. We can maintain our freedom by learning to say both yes and no to technology.

But will not saying both yes and no this way to technical devices make our relation to technology ambivalent and insecure? On the contrary! Our relation to technology will become wonderfully simple and relaxed. We let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher. I would

call this comportment toward technology which expresses "yes" and at the same time "no," by an old word, (*gelassenheit*) *releasement toward things*. (54)

What this means is that we must think about what technical devices to use and how we ought to use them. Their use need not be unavoidable. This comportment allows us to ponder the profound change that continues to take place in our relation to nature and to the world (55). The meaning of this change, and of technology itself, is hidden from us, bound up with the mystery at the foundation of all things. We must remain open to this mystery. And for Heidegger these two elements—*releasement* and *openness*—hold the possibility of allowing us to live in the world of technology without losing our essential nature as the beings who can think about the meaning of being—or more narrowly, the meaning of being in a world in which the meaning of technology remains hidden, shrouded in mystery. It is not possible to enter here more deeply into the meaning of these oracular sayings, "releasement toward things" and "openness to the mystery"—Heidegger himself does not expand on them greatly in the "Address."¹

What, then, are students who are embarking on a course of liberal education to gain from this text? First is a new awareness that arises from understanding the distinction between calculative and meditative thinking. This distinction, when applied to their own thinking, can bring about an awareness that they are not in fact thinking but only calculating. Does this awareness square with their experience? Second is the sense that what is so very close to them, the world of technology, is far from being known by them—that what they take to be familiar and obvious is perhaps unknown and mysterious. The rapid progress of technology seems second nature to them, and the way in which it leads to human happiness all too obvious. But this supposed knowledge that human happiness is the result of technological progress—what is its source or origin, where does it come from? And third is the inkling that perhaps more thought needs to be given to how we comport ourselves with technology. Perhaps we can learn to think about technology and, stemming from this thinking, to decide when we are to say yes and when no to any particular technical device. Simply understanding that these questions now stand in the place of what were shortly before unquestioned certitudes is a good beginning on the path of liberal education.

Note

1. The works of Albert Borgmann may be read as one noteworthy attempt to illuminate, refine, and extend them. See, for instance, his seminal work, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984).

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What in the World Is Art?

Heidegger on the Being of Things and Works of Art

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Near the beginning of his essay “The Origin of the Work of Art,” written in 1936 and first published in 1950, Martin Heidegger makes the following observation: “Beethoven’s quartets lie in the publisher’s storeroom like potatoes in the cellar” (3).¹ Heidegger has a gift for pronouncements that are humbly commonplace and yet richly suggestive of vast, often elusive meaning. Yes, the string quartets of Beethoven—that is, the scores of the quartets—are reams of paper covered with black markings, and they lie in a plain storage place just as do potatoes in a cellar. They are objects or things that occupy space, and as perishable they require maintenance. They are stacked on shelves, and when purchased, they are packaged and shipped. The handling of potatoes is both brusquer and more summary, but not essentially different. The employees of the publishing house do not have to love music, much less love these particular works of Beethoven, to perform their tasks well. Yet we know, even if we have little knowledge of classical music, that the Beethoven quartets are different from potatoes. All the same they, like all works of art, have a physical existence, what Heidegger calls a “thingly” character. And the question he poses is this: how does the thingly character of the work of art relate to its artistic character? Is a work of art just a thing with certain added attributes called “aesthetic” qualities? If so, what are these attributes, and how can they exist in an ordinary material base, such as paper, bronze, wood, canvas, and oil? Or is it the case that, contrary to appearances, the work of art is not at all a mere thing, and the musical score’s way of existing in

the storeroom is quite unlike the potato's way of existing in the cellar? But perhaps we do not even know, with genuine certainty, what a "thing" is.

No doubt many in the audience hear in this expression "way of existing" a reference to the topic to which Heidegger dedicated his philosophical inquiries from his youth until his death in 1976 at the age of eighty-seven—namely, the question "What is being?" How do we enter into that inquiry with the present case before us? We have before us the questions "What is the way of being of a work of art, and how does it relate to the way of being of an ordinary thing?" In the course of pursuing the questions in this essay, Heidegger takes up, at least in a preliminary way, some other questions. What is truth? What is language? What are "world" and "earth"? In all these ordinary words Heidegger finds extraordinary meanings.

With the mention of "world," I have cited a word in our conference theme: "Liberal Arts Education and the World: Inquiring Into, Preparing For, and Living in the Real World through Core Texts." The relations between art, education, and the world are at the heart of Heidegger's thinking. But he would be puzzled, I suspect, by the expression "real world," as though a world in any meaningful sense could be anything other than real. The expression "real world" in the conference theme plays on the widespread conviction that liberal arts education fails to address the concerns of the world that "really matter," that its erudite and subtle researches are luxuries that only serve to promote an empty self-importance without world-shaping consequences, or, as some of our politicians would say, college is for snobs. Steve Jobs and the Milton scholar seem worlds apart. Yet Heidegger in this essay makes a remarkable claim about the role of works of art in the world. He claims that they *found* worlds. By this he does not mean that they found imaginary and fanciful worlds, but instead worlds that we live in and much care about. He relates the creation of art to the grounding of history, of worlds that are historical, and thus he requires us to think of "world" as something other than a collection of physical objects. A historical world is the way of living of a particular people, Greek, Chinese, German, or American—a people that sees itself as having a peculiar history and destiny that sets it apart from other peoples. One can speak of the world of the Greeks and the world of the Germans. Certainly, Heidegger writing in 1936 had much occasion for reflection on the world of the Germans. One cannot claim that his thinking on this subject was free of distortion and confusion. I will say something later on this important issue.

Heidegger did raise questions that could not and should not be dismissed. We have to consider briefly his thinking about the relation between world and Being before we return to the questions about works of art and ordinary things. In his first major work, *Being and Time* of 1927,² Heidegger thrusts us into the philosophic task of recovering the meaning of the question of Being—the regaining of the genuine understanding of a word that in the course of Western history has lost its depth. The Greeks began this tradition with a profound reflection on Being but also failed, Heidegger claims, to maintain the high level of the original questioning. For Heidegger, the history of the Western tradition is one of increasing flattening and emptying of the significance of Being. The word "is" now means in academic philosophy the mere "copula" connecting subject and predicate. Heidegger seeks traces of the lost depth in the roots of ordinary words, in the poetic use of language and in the great texts of

philosophy. At the same time, he uncovers a deeper sense of world, for these notions, Being and world, are intimately related. Heidegger begins with a common but by no means simple experience. Taking a survey of things or beings around us, we note that beings are of different kinds. Heidegger distinguishes between three modes of being: things as implements to be used or “the ready-to-hand,” things as simply observed without any use in view, or “the present-at-hand,” and the human way of being, termed *Da-Sein*, which can be roughly translated “here-being” or “there-being.” Heidegger takes a familiar old word (*Dasein*) meaning “existence” and suggests a new sense by inserting a hyphen between the syllables. The human mode of being is characterized by a stance toward the world as a whole, unlike the other two modes, which simply are ways of being parts of the world, albeit in different ways. *Dasein*’s stance toward the world is one of having projects, of being concerned about existing. Only for *Dasein* is its own existence a project, an object of concern. As Heidegger also says, only *Dasein* finds that its existence is a question for itself. Therefore, it cannot relate to itself as a mere thing, whether as an entity to be used as an implement or one to be observed detachedly. In its concern for itself or “care” (*Sorge*), *Dasein* considers its future possibilities as these depend on its actions. *Dasein* has projects to be realized, and so it projects itself into the future, considering itself a temporally extended being, uniting at every moment the dimensions of past, present, and future. *Dasein* as self-projecting always has awareness of this total temporal horizon of its existence. It never thinks or acts without placing its thought or action within this temporal framework. Other animals, Heidegger claims, do not exist this way, even though they show concern for themselves as they follow their biologically determined paths of growth, self-maintenance, and reproduction.

Their lives are not projects, as they do not regard their present state in the light of unrealized possibilities or think of their existing as shaped by an unknown future in which only one fact is absolutely certain, one’s own death. The human way of being as living toward death is oriented toward the distant reaches of the temporal horizon. Therefore, only *Dasein* can question how it should live, what plan of life is worth following, and ask why and for what end it exists. This means that only *Dasein* in the true sense has a world, as the conceived totality of unrealized possibilities, and not just a sensibly perceived habitat. *Dasein*’s mode of being can be called being-in-the-world. In the strong sense, world exists only when there are beings like *Dasein* that are able to take the stance of care toward the totality of things. Of course, we are accustomed to the approach of modern science that understands the world as only the totality of things in which the human has an accidental or secondary place. But precisely in taking that approach, science does something that only *Dasein* can do. At the same time, science forgets itself as it overlooks its own intrinsic rootedness in the self-projecting possibilities of *Dasein*.

We can now turn to the theme of Being itself. Heidegger claims that only in the stance of care—*Dasein*’s basic structure of projecting itself toward the temporal horizon—can beings as beings be thought. To apprehend an entity as a being is quite different from a neurological response to something physically present. Heidegger’s thought might be restated by saying that humans apprehend beings in conceptual space. To apprehend that something is *is* to see it in the light of its possibilities, its

possible relations to other beings within the horizon of Dasein's projects. It could be objected that the human is not the only being that can regard things in terms of their potential for being other than what they are in the present. A primate can see in the stick the implement for shaking fruit from the tree. But what is an isolated act for the primate is Dasein's way of relating to the world as a whole, of seeing all beings in the light of unrealized possibility. All beings point beyond themselves to a framework, mostly unarticulated, of purposes and assignments, on which their own character is contingent. In the end, every being's existence is contingent on the existence of the world as a whole, about which Dasein can ask, why does it exist at all, rather than nothing? Dasein approaches the world as a realm of interpretation in which all beings have significance within contexts. Being for Dasein comes to light through language. The references of beings to other beings and to the world as a whole, made possible by language, are invisible to all beings except Dasein. The conceptual open space in which beings are subject to interpretation in terms of their unrealized possibilities is what Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, means by Being. In this conceptual space Dasein can transform the relationship of one being to another—for example, by taking the predicate "human" in the sentence "Socrates is human" and using it as the subject of another sentence "The human is an animal"—while making no physical change to the beings themselves. Dasein's ability to enter into this conceptual space reveals that it has a certain freedom from beings around it, and that in thinking of "what is," it takes a distance upon the beings that allows them to appear as what they are and as what they might be.

Does this account of Being shed any light on the question of the nature of the work of art? Let us take the case at hand, the musical work of art. It is not merely a sequence of pleasing sounds but a mode of thinking in the conceptual space available to humans. Music could not be written, performed, and interpreted if humans did not have their way of projecting possibilities within the horizon of possible relations. It is a remarkable thing that when we know a piece of music, even moderately well, we can identify the whole piece on the basis of hearing a fragment. When we listen with pleasure to a piece of music, we look forward to hearing it as a whole. If, in a performance of a piece we know well, a passage or movement is cut, we are displeased. We might say, "They really did not play Mozart's *Jupiter* symphony." Of course, at every moment of the performance, we were hearing that piece, insofar as we were hearing parts of it. We heard it and did not hear it, at the same time. Of course, this is always the case, even when the performance is quite satisfactory, since in fact we never hear a piece of music as a whole, taking it in with one act of apprehension. The sense of the piece as a whole is always a matter of anticipation and recollection, and for that reason the musical work is never simply an object present at hand, to use Heidegger's terminology. The musical work belongs to the space of projected possibilities. The scores on the shelves point beyond their presence as reams of paper toward an event involving skilled musicians and attentive listeners seated in concert halls. I find there is always something magical and moving about the moment when an orchestra, after the arrival of the concertmaster on the stage, tunes up like a single instrument. The chaos of the audience chatter and the uncoordinated practicing of the players give way to a shimmering, twisting ribbon of sound that creates a new space

around everything, full of expectation of the marvelously complex order of tones that is soon to follow. Something similar happens at the theater when the curtain rises and the lights bring the characters on the stage out of their shadowy, potential existence and into a vital one whose first signs and gestures are clues to an as yet unknown history. On a smaller scale, the same thing happens every time someone we meet begins to utter a sentence. Our attention is not focused on just the given sounds but on the entirety of an anticipated thought. As the sentence begins, the end is already present to us, for otherwise we would grasp only dimly intelligible fragments of speech. That is just our experience when we try to follow someone speaking in a foreign tongue we know inadequately. We can correctly say that we are unable to enter the world of that speaker's language, although bodily gestures help to overcome the chasms we encounter. Such ordinary experiences help us to grasp Heidegger's claim that language and works of art found worlds and that they have a special relation to Being.

Being as the open space that we encounter beings is not itself one of the beings.

Therefore, it is largely hidden from us, as we favor the beings that we observe, calculate, and manipulate. This space is inseparable from our humanness, and thus in a way closer to us than all beings, and yet it is strangely absent from our thoughts most of the time. Indeed, Heidegger claims it has been mostly ignored by the philosophic and scientific tradition. What he calls the forgetting of Being by the tradition is evident in its approach to truth, in which correspondence between thoughts to things or states of affairs have been the dominant account of truth. For such correspondences to be noted, the world has to be already given as revealed and interpretable. The opening up of the world as such, the appearing of the space in which beings are encountered, is the primordial event of truth. This opening tends to be hidden. Heidegger claims that the early Greeks understood this sense of truth, expressed by their word *aletheia*, which in his etymology denotes coming out of hiddenness. What comes out of hiddenness tends to fall back into it, as did the early Greek understanding of truth, which was soon overlaid by accounts of truth as correctness and correspondence. Heidegger's enterprise of uncovering the forgotten sense of Being buried beneath the fallen language of tradition is central to his version of phenomenology, the enterprise founded by his teacher, Edmund Husserl, that seeks to disclose the appearances of things covered over by the sedimentations and constructions of philosophic and scientific thought.

Heidegger in *Being and Time* notably did not give attention to works of art as ways of revealing Being. Starting in the mid-1930s, he turned with intense vigor to the reading of poetic texts (Sophocles, Hoelderlin, Rilke, Trakl, and George) as part of a major reorientation of his thinking. I cannot expound here on the significance of that turn, but I will give an account of how the essay on the origin of the work of art argues for a preeminent place of such works in the disclosure of the essence of Being, truth, and world.

Hans-Georg Gadamer proposes that "[Heidegger's] essay on 'The Origin of the Work of Art' developed, with the greatest urgency, the conceptual inadequacy of so-called aesthetics"³ With this judgment Gadamer points to the importance of this essay for one of his own primary endeavors, the hermeneutical critique of the subjectivizing of the experience of art in the "modern aesthetic consciousness" as

grounded in one work above all others, Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. Heidegger's essay certainly bears witness to a project of rethinking art and beauty as bound to truth that rejects the aesthetic accounts of art and beauty. For in such accounts "art has to do with the beautiful and beauty—not with truth . . . Truth, by contrast, belongs to logic" (Heidegger, 16). The separation of art from truth is grounded in the metaphysical tradition's account of the thingness of things, or the being of beings, according to which things are either present-at-hand for theoretical knowing or ready-to-hand as equipment. A work of art is a mere piece of equipment with a certain "aesthetic value" attached to it. The contrast between the thingly substructure of the work and its aesthetic aspect is understood in terms of the distinction between matter and form. Beauty is regarded as a subjective formal property, not the objective property of a thing. The approach to things in terms of matter and form has deep roots in the Greek beginnings of metaphysics, but in its modern transformation it supports aesthetic thinking. More generally in modern thought, the thinking and knowing subject is the ground of the formal element in the awareness of things, since the subject supplies formal structure to the given matter of sense. Aesthetic form is that subjectively apprehended form that has no bearing on cognition of the object, as it provides a pure pleasure of sense perception. In this way of looking at things, the work of art is a mere object that occasions a peculiar subjective experience (*Erlebnis*). Heidegger writes that experience is the element in which art dies, for genuine art is an essential way in which truth happens—truth as transcending the private experiences of the individual self or subject. He scorns the "much-vaunted aesthetic experience" and, not denying that art is concerned with beauty, he requires one to consider that "beauty belongs to the advent of truth" (3, 52). Truth is the unconcealment of beings (*aletheia*) whose essence has remained unthought in the Western metaphysical tradition. Although truth was present in a concealed way in Greek existence, Greek philosophy failed to measure up to the essence of truth. Aesthetics is an indicator of the extremity of modern philosophy's falling away from the essence of truth. The fates of truth and beauty are essentially linked in the West such that "to the transformation of the essence of truth there corresponds the essential history of art" (52). The modern subjectivist interpretation of artistic creation as "the product of genius or the self-sovereign subject" (48) seems to be a prime expression of this correspondence. With the turn to the subject in modern philosophy, there is a corresponding stress on the artistic creator as the source of the meaning of the produced work. But Heidegger writes "in great art the artist is inconspicuous in comparison with the work" (19). The most influential and perhaps philosophically most fundamental account of fine art as the creation of genius is Kant's "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment," and in all of Heidegger's statements on the aesthetic, one cannot miss overtones of Kant's account, although in the essay Kant is nowhere explicitly linked to any topic in aesthetics or the philosophy of art. All the same, one could feel justified in thinking that the entire essay is directed critically against Kant's understanding of art and beauty, insofar as Kant is the greatest of the original founders of "aesthetics."

Three major themes of the essay require closer examination: (1) the work of art as revealing the thingness of things that eludes determination of things as equipment or objects of use and as objects of scientific calculation; (2) the work of art as reveal-

ing “world” as transcending the individual subject and as arising from “earth” as withdrawing from conceptual determination; (3) the work of art as grounding human history and marking out the higher destiny of the human as providing a space for the holy. Opening with the question of the origin of the artwork, that is, the question of the source of the nature of the artwork, Heidegger turns to actual works and their thingly character. This provokes the question “What is a thing?” and in pursuit of it Heidegger examines three traditional notions of the thing that have become self-evident. Each notion, Heidegger claims, does violence to the thing, blocking access to its undistorted presence. The thing itself, if allowed to be itself, is self-sustaining, self-containing, and resting within itself. The decisive step in Heidegger’s argument is the disclosure that the work of art enables one to move beyond the familiar pre-conceptions that stand between one and things. Prior to this, he characterizes the three traditional notions: the thing as bearer of qualities (or substance as bearer of accidents), the thing as object of sensation (or as sensory manifold), and the thing as compound of form and matter. The third notion of the thing has acquired a particular dominance. It is derived from the experience of producing equipment, whereby having a given purpose is followed by forming a design and choosing material to realize the design and produce a thing that is serviceable. The matter-form structure is preferred among the notions of thing since productive humanity is involved in the bringing forth of the piece of equipment. What humans bring forth deliberately is presumably most intelligible to them. On the other hand, things understood in this light are not allowed to rest in themselves.

Heidegger claims, however, that the form-matter distinction fails even to get hold of the essence of equipment. It regards the piece of equipment as a mere thing that has been fitted to have an additional use-character. When serviceability (*Dienlichkeit*) is removed from the equipment, what remains is a mere thing. In this case, equipmental character is understood too narrowly as utility, and thingness is conceived merely negatively. Heidegger says one can follow the lead of a great work of art, Van Gogh’s presentation of peasant shoes, to grasp that reliability (*Verlaesslichkeit*) is the more fundamental feature of equipment in disclosing its nature and shedding light on things in general. Reliability encompasses the belonging of the shoes to a world of human purposes, the peasant’s world of life and work, birth and death, worry and hope, and their belonging to the earth, as it makes steady pressure upon the human world and also withdraws from its mastery. In the shoes, all of this is gathered together in a way that is experienced by the peasant, yet unnoticed and not reflected on. But the work of art brings to light the whole range and depth of this mode of being of reliability, the struggles, failures, and victories of the constant effort of the human world to realize itself in the earth, whereby the earth is disclosed as it is. The truth of being is disclosed in the work of art, and not merely imitated or represented by the work. The truth of equipment does not consist in a description of useful function that corresponds to the equipmental thing. The truth is rather its belonging to a particular historical world that both emerges against and rests sheltered within the earth. Truth is the happening or event disclosing this belonging, an event that can occur only if the work of art has its own character as both worldly and earthly. The work cannot be just the sensual realization of a general essence. Such a

view misses the crucial historical aspect of the work, its belonging to and disclosing the totality of world and earth in its particular historical form. By disclosing the totality, the work helps to ground it; the disclosing is not a mere representing that leaves untouched what has been represented. As all things belong to such totalities (which are never determinate and finished wholes), the work of art is a clue to the nature of all things. The thingly being of things must be thought out of the work-being of the work. "The thingly reality of the work runs not from the thing to the work but from work to thing" (18).

It is necessary to explore a bit Heidegger's account of the work of art as a figure (*Gestalt*) set into a given medium and thereby embodying the opposition within unity of world and earth. The work of art has a relation to its work-material that is different from the relation of a piece of equipment to its material base. The stone of the ax vanishes into the usefulness of the ax when the ax is pressed into service. But the stone of the sculpture shines forth more fully as what it is in the work of art. The earthly materials of color, sound, metal, stone, and other media are disclosed by works of art as that which cannot be used up, forced, and mastered. The work of art brings these earthly materials into the world of human concerns and yet shows them as self-closing and self-secluding. World and earth belong together in strife, the harmonious strife of contestants that need each other. The work of art, disclosing this harmonious strife, thus also reveals the historical existence of a people whose decisions arise out of an earthly ground that as self-closing cannot be mastered. The work shows that concealment belongs to the essence of truth as unconcealment, or it reveals the primal strife inherent in truth. The work of art is one way, an essential way, in which truth as unconcealment comes to presence. Truth itself thus has an essential impulse toward the work, toward the creation of unique disclosures of world and earth, which is to say, toward grounding the historical existence of peoples. The primal strife at the basis of historical existence is expressed in a design that is set back into the earth as figure. As the structure of the rift of world and earth, set forth in the work, the figure is always to be thought in the particular place where it comes to presence. As belonging to that place, the work calls for a preservation that is just as essential to what it is, as its original creation. The work's origination in one individual, a particular artist, is not essential to its being.

Heidegger's account of truth, art, and historical worlds necessarily reminds one of another major German philosopher: Hegel. Heidegger, in an afterword to his essay, turns to Hegel, whose *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Heidegger says, are "the most comprehensive reflections on the nature of art possessed by the West" (51). Heidegger considers Hegel's famous claim that "art is and remains, with regard to its vocation, a thing of the past." Hegel like Heidegger regards art as expressing a vital need of the spirit, manifest in the life of a people, when it is able to fulfill its vocation. But in Hegel's view, spirit has reached a point of development in the modern age, the attainment of absolute knowing, that has negated and surpassed the revelatory power of art.

New art and art movements can still be created in the modern world, according to Hegel, but art will no longer serve the highest purpose of advancing human self-knowledge. Heidegger expresses a related doubt when he asks: "Is art still an

essential and necessary way in which that truth happens which is decisive for our historical existence?" (51). He suggests that if art is once again to be the founding event of historical existence, this will occur only when truth itself, and therewith the whole metaphysical foundation of the Western way of being, has been rethought.

I conclude with a comment on what is profound and what is disturbing about this powerful essay. Heidegger's account of the conditions of our encounter with beings in a primordial disclosure of the space of our possibilities undoubtedly helps us to think in a more original and penetrating way about such terms as Being, truth, and world. At the same time, his reflection on art in connection with such disclosure surely enriches our appreciation of what works of art are and how they differ from ordinary things. But nowhere in Heidegger's account is there a place for the individual artist or poet who stands apart from the historical world, and who through irony, direct critique, or subtle indirection shows the limits of that world as they must come to view to the most thoughtful individuals. The inevitable tension between the great thinkers and artists and their historical worlds—a relation that always has some quality of the antinomic—is suppressed by Heidegger in favor of the anonymous, monumental strife of world and earth. The artist is the servant of a historical destiny in which the fate of a people unfolds as the epic contest of cosmic forces. That such a view of the essence of art was penned in Germany in 1936 must produce some unease about the meaning of this brilliant and challenging investigation.

Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge UP, 2002), 1–56. The translation is of the German original "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main, 1950). Print. All remaining citations in the lecture are to this translation.

2. *Being and Time*, translation of *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, 1927) by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). Print.

3. H.-G. Gadamer, "Der Weg in die Kehre." in H.-G. Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 280. Print.

**Reading Ancient and Early Classics for
Real World Living—Earliest Texts**

Care of Self in Plato's *Alcibiades I*

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The promise of education in the liberal arts is, in the simplest terms, self-knowledge so that we may freely choose what we believe to be the good, for ourselves and for the community. Plato's dialogue *Alcibiades I* directly addresses this question of the relation among the self, education, and life in community. The dialogue offers three concepts of self that arise directly from a consideration of what it means to be a member, and even a leader, in a political community.

It is impossible to overlook the fact that Socrates' intervention into Alcibiades' life was in some way a failure. Could Socrates have prevented Alcibiades' self-destruction? It is tempting to say Socrates' failure was that he could not convert Alcibiades to the dialectical pursuit of wisdom, a life like his own, and turn him away from political life. It is hard to imagine, though, that Socrates, especially with Plato's hindsight, could have had this expectation. Alcibiades was not going to be a philosopher; so what did Socrates think he could do for him?

Socrates approaches Alcibiades for the first time just after his suitors have abandoned their pursuit and just prior to Alcibiades' initiation into political life, that is, his first appearance before the Assembly (105b).¹

Socrates very candidly reveals Alcibiades' true interest in politics. He desires to rule over human beings, as many as possible; not just in Athens or Greece, but those in the entire known world (105b–c). Alcibiades wants to be a tyrant because he wants to be happy. He thinks power over others will make him happy because he misunderstands who he really is and what it means to be a human being (134c–135b). Over the course of the dialogue, Socrates guides Alcibiades through a consideration of what it means to “care for himself” and what the *true self* is that he should care for. The hope is that Alcibiades will cultivate excellence in himself and in those he governs.

It is necessary to obey the Delphic imperative to “know thyself” to care for oneself and in turn *to rule*, that is *to care for*, other human beings (124b, 129a, and 132c). It should be emphasized that Socrates advocates self-knowledge not merely for its own sake but also for the sake of “caring for oneself,” which in turn, at least in Alcibiades’ case, is the preparation to govern (134d, 135b).

Socrates shows Alcibiades that he is ill-prepared to enter politics because he lacks knowledge of when it is just or unjust to go to war (107d ff.) and ignorant of how to prevent faction or strife within the city (124e–127d). That is, he is not competent regarding the internal or external affairs of the state. Socrates manages, rather quickly, to get Alcibiades to recognize and admit his confusion about justice. Socrates also manages to illustrate to him his relative lack of education and preparedness relative to those with which he will compete, both his fellow statesmen and rulers of foreign nations. Thus, Socrates shows Alcibiades that he must first improve *himself* if he is to have any chance of succeeding (121a ff., cf. 105d).

Socrates’ first lesson is that Alcibiades is not even clear about the subject matter of political discourse. Alcibiades quickly realizes that the proper subject of political deliberation is war. This means with whom, and when, and why to go to war (107d ff.). This also means why it is *better* to go to war, and why it is *just* to go to war (109c). Alcibiades immediately recognizes the trickiness of having to advise going to war against a “just enemy” and not being able to admit it: “You ask a terrible thing; for even if someone thought it necessary to go to war against those acting justly, indeed he would not say the same [as what he thinks]” (109c).

Alcibiades must admit that he has not been taught what justice is, has not even discovered justice for himself, but has learned it from “the many” whom he quickly recognizes are confused, never agree with one another, and are therefore poor teachers (109c ff.). However, he immediately rejects the relevance of this since the Athenians and Greeks in general rarely worry about whether decisions are just but rather only whether they are advantageous (113d). Socrates can now reveal Alcibiades’ confusion about the relation between what is just and what is advantageous.

Socrates shows that the just is, or should be, always advantageous. He does this by capitalizing on Alcibiades’ commitment to the idea that courage is most noble and therefore most advantageous even if it results in the greatest apparent disadvantage, that is, death (115a ff.). Alcibiades wishes that the noble and the advantageous were coextensive. Once he sees that they are not, he recognizes that he is no longer sure exactly *what* it is he wants: unlimited self-benefit or the nobility of being just. He does not know what he wants because he does not know himself.

Alcibiades is also ignorant about the internal affairs of the city because he does not understand friendship. He does not understand friendship because he does not yet know *what the self is*. Alcibiades claims that justice is each citizen tending to his or her own affairs (127b). Yet he also understands how important it is to have harmony among the citizens to prevent faction. Socrates shows that these two lines of thought contradict one another.

What is the common object of agreement among those who, strictly speaking, mind their own business? If each person knows *only* the business that is proper to

him or herself, there cannot also be a *common* business. Justice then cannot be tending to one's own affairs and at the same time agreement about something in common. What Alcibiades fails to see is that there *is* in fact something in common that each person tends to when he or she tends to, or cares for, what is proper to him or herself.

Socrates introduces the distinction between body and soul to begin an investigation into *what* the soul is (130a). Socrates and Alcibiades agree that the body cannot rule itself. Socrates asks if body and soul can rule together, which Alcibiades thinks might well be so. Socrates strongly asserts that ruling *cannot* be shared. Alcibiades reluctantly concedes. (We should ask ourselves whether *we* would concede.) Socrates concludes, by process of elimination, that it is necessary that the soul rule over the body.

Socrates is concerned that this argument is not completely precise since they were looking for the "self-itself," that is, the self as such, and they have given an account of the individual self insofar as a soul rules over a body (130c–d). Socrates offers an image: if you told your eye to "See thyself!" your eye would look for a mirror. The most suitable mirror for an eye to see itself would be in a mirror most like itself, that is, in the eye of another person. More specifically, it would look to the part of the eye of the other that is most properly speaking the eye, the part that sees, the very power of sight. The eye sees itself as an eye in the pupil of another person, just as "If the soul is to know itself, it must consider the soul itself, and consider that best part of it, in which the excellence of soul, i.e., wisdom, resides" (133b).

A passage of disputed authenticity opens the possibility of even a third conception of the self. Several lines in the dialogue (133c) are present only in quotations by two neo-Platonic, and possibly Christian, commentators (Eusebius and Stobaeus). The important line is this:

Socrates: "Then just as mirrors are clearer than the reflection in the eye, brighter and purer, so also God is more brilliant and purer than what is best in our soul" (133c). The soul sees itself as itself when it sees itself in God. Do we still need the eye of the other? This highest form of self would seem to transcend the political and even the intersubjective altogether.

If liberal education requires learning who we are, Socrates makes clear that there is a practical purpose of self-knowledge. Education is the cultivation of self-knowledge for the sake of self-care, that is, individual excellence, and for the care of the other, that is, the excellence of the citizens and of the whole city: "If you are to manage the affairs of the city nobly, you must give excellence to the citizens, which means you must first have excellence yourself" (134b).

The difference between Socrates and Alcibiades is that Alcibiades needs to take care to rule himself *and govern others*. Socrates *refrains* from ruling others in this sense, though he may rule himself and others in a different sense. Socrates must recognize that Alcibiades will not refrain, and perhaps should not. Therefore, the lesson for Alcibiades is not meant to turn him toward the life of dialectical self-reflection, or mysticism. The Delphic imperative to "know thyself" does not simply mean a life of intellectual contemplation of self, intellects knowing intellects through speech. Nor does it necessarily mean transcending human intellect altogether to participate

in the divinity of God. Self-knowledge, philosophy in a wider sense, can also be understood as a way of caring for oneself for the sake of political action, governing and caring for others.

Note

1. Citations for all quotations and paraphrases are according to the standard Stephanus pagination from Burnet's Oxford Classical Text, *Platonis Opera* (Oxford, 1900–1907). All translations from Burnet's text are my own.

Laying Down Life for God? 1 Maccabees as a Core Text: Preparing for Our Post-9/11 World

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To prepare for living in a world where religious violence has the potential to destroy us all, students need practice critically analyzing texts that advocate violence as an expression of faithfulness. In this paper I argue that 1 Maccabees is a core text suited to prepare students to engage several crucial issues confronting our post-9/11 world. 1 Maccabees is an intertestamental work (noncanonical for Protestants and Jews, deuterocanonical for Catholics and Orthodox) written around 100 BCE. It tendentiously narrates the Jewish revolt led by the Hasmonean family (also known as the Maccabees) against the Hellenistic Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV. It also acknowledges a diversity of Jewish responses to Antiochus's prohibition of Jewish religious practices (Goldstein 3–26). I begin by suggesting ways in which this work overlaps with contemporary debates regarding religious violence. I then describe some pedagogical strategies that help students probe the ideological conflicts within both this text and the whole Hebrew Bible, enabling them to evaluate critically contemporary rhetoric involving faith and violence.

One issue haunts the practice of religion in the modern world: does faithfulness to God require laying down of life? On the morning of September 11, 2001, this question tore open the crisp, blue sky of lower Manhattan, demanding a response from the world watching below. For the terrorists who gave their own lives to bring down this consuming fire from the heavens (cf. Luke 9:54), the answer was an emphatic “Yes.” For the first responders whose own visions of faithfulness and duty

impelled them to rush into the burning towers and ultimately lay down their own lives aiding those in need, the answer was also “Yes.” For many of the American, Iraqi, and Afghani soldiers—Christians, Jews, Muslims, and others—who died or continue to fight in the wars set in motion by 9/11, the answer to this question yet again was (and is) “Yes.” Finally, for nonviolent peacemaking teams—Christians, Jews, Muslims, and others—who are risking their lives in these same war zones, the same answer is offered up: “Yes.”

As these examples illustrate, this singular answer masks diverse conceptions of faithfulness to God among the children of Abraham, cutting across the hearts of these faiths (Nelson-Pallmeyer). Which vision of faithfulness is correct (if any), and how in this world would we know? While atheists find reason for rejection in this propensity for violence across religions (chapter 2 of Christopher Hitchens’s book *God Is Not Great* is provocatively titled “Religion Kills”), the faithful look to their sacred writings and traditions for guidance and grounding. While a full discussion goes well beyond the limits of this paper, at this point it will suffice to say that the plurality of contemporary positions within each religion indicates in part the conflicting diversity of perspectives within each group’s writings and traditions (though often expressed in broadly common forms across these religions). Given this diversity, how, then, can one decide the proper expression of faithfulness? On what basis can these actions be internally justified, as well as critiqued?

Jews suffering persecution under Greeks and later Romans faced issues similar to those of our post-9/11 world, and they also grappled with the complexity of their authoritative writings and traditions, as the first chapters of 1 Maccabees illustrate. When Antiochus IV, the ruler of the Hellenistic Seleucid empire, plundered Jerusalem and sought in 167 BCE to achieve governing unity by outlawing on pain of death the Jewish beliefs and practices that set them apart from the non-Jewish, Gentile world, an intra-Jewish crisis also emerged (Sievers 21–25). Jews were forced to decide whether their faith compelled them to comply and live or to resist and risk death (1 Macc 1:41–50). Many, including some influential Jewish leaders who had already embraced Greek cultural institutions such as the gymnasium (1 Macc 1:11–15; cf 2 Macc 4:7–50), readily complied with Antiochus, positioning themselves to become officials within Antiochus’s kingdom. 1 Maccabees does not provide the biblical justification for this accommodationist response, dismissing them as traitorous apostates. One possible example is the patriarch Joseph. Genesis 37–50 tells a story of a descendent of Abraham who successfully served in the polytheistic Egyptian kingdom. Contrary to the book of Daniel, a similar narrative of Jews serving under foreign empires, the Joseph story does not specify a hostile rejection of idolatry or any conflict between Joseph’s religious practices and those of Egypt. Though Joseph’s own dreams of divinity (Gen 37:5–11) are subtly critiqued (Gen 50:19; cf. Levenson 154–69), no condemnation of Pharaoh’s claims to divinity are found (contra Dan 6). Joseph’s own personal morality in rejecting the advances of Potiphar’s wife (Gen 39) is affirmed, but Joseph’s service to Pharaoh is never criticized, nor is Joseph’s protection of the Egyptian priesthood from enslavement by exempting the priestly land from Pharaoh’s acquisition (Gen 47:20–26). Genesis even depicts Joseph adopting an Egyptian name (Zaphenath-paneah) and marrying Asenath, the daughter of an

Egyptian priest (Gen 41:45, 50–52; 46:20). Thus, the Joseph story plausibly provides patriarchal precedent for those seeking justification for faithful service in an accommodating way under a polytheistic ruler (cf. Jer 29:5–7).

Those whose understanding of faithfulness compelled them to risk their lives in rejecting Antiochus's decree, however, faced an array of difficult decisions. Should they stand forth and refuse to eat pork sacrificed to idols, hoping for divine protection from death in the way that the book of Daniel advocates in its stories of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan 3)? Or should they flee to the wilderness to keep the commandments, even to the point of choosing death before dishonoring the Sabbath by defending themselves? Yet what would the laying down of their own lives in this way accomplish? Would they purify, refine, and cleanse the people, as the book of Daniel insists (Dan 11:35), providing the basis for Michael the angelic prince—and not human hands (Dan 8:25)—to deliver the people and for God to vindicate the righteous through resurrection? Or would these deaths force God's hand into action to utilize the heavenly armies to avenge their blood, as hoped for in Moses' song in Deuteronomy 32 (especially 32:43)? Antiochus's army, resolutely indifferent to the various theological understandings of their opponents, simply waited for the Sabbath and proceeded to kill a thousand men, women, and children who refused to fight, according to 1 Maccabees 2:29–38. While the later works of 2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees characterize these deaths resulting from obedience to Torah as atoning sacrifices (van Henten 140–63), 1 Maccabees omits this notion altogether. Instead, 1 Maccabees focuses on the militaristic option embraced by the Maccabees, a Jewish priestly family, who concluded that if the Jews and their covenant were to survive at all, they would need to “give their lives for the covenant of the patriarchs” (1 Macc 2:50) by laying down the lives of Gentile oppressors with human hands (1 Macc 2:39–68).

Once the military option was embraced, however, other questions of faithfulness ensued. Was military action limited to self-defense, or were preemptive military strikes also allowed? Did “true” faithfulness to Israel's God require them to pursue “regime change,” dictating outright revolt and destruction of the occupiers of the land promised to the heirs of Abraham by Israel's God, in the manner of the story of Joshua's conquest of land? Perhaps even more problematically, those Jews who fought and survived were faced with subsequent questions about whether faithfulness to the commandments also required them to lay down the lives of those fellow Jews whose collaboration with Antiochus was perceived as traitorous apostasy, lest the continued presence of faithless idolatry within the covenant community invite the wrath of God promised in the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28:15–68. In other words, how far should the embrace of violence extend? Should those perceived to be Jewish apostates be executed, as dictated in Deuteronomy (17:2–7, 17–26) and modeled in the Scriptures by the priest Phinehas (Num 25:1–13; cf. 1 Macc 2:23–26), the priestly sons of Levi (Exod 32:25–29), and the whole community in its stoning of Achan in Joshua 7? Mattathias Maccabee gave his answer to these questions in the form of sword plunged through a fellow Jew who had obeyed Antiochus and offered a sacrifice to an idol (1 Macc 2:15–28). For the author of 1 Maccabees, this act—and not the nonviolent resistance unto death by the Jews upholding the

Sabbath—is the true atoning sacrifice (Nickelsburg 523–26). Moreover, Mattathias subsequently killed the Gentile officer observing the sacrifice, beginning a revolution that eventually recaptured the Temple (the basis of the Hanukkah festival) and won a limited independence from their Greek overlords. Equally importantly, the Maccabees established a paradigm of laying down the lives of Jewish and Gentile idolaters that proved influential for the next two centuries. Their resistance inspired in various ways the *Sicarii* and the Zealots, two of the most prominent groups agitating for the wars of freedom from Rome. Their rhetoric appears among the prosecutors of both Jewish wars with Rome of this period (66–73 CE and the Bar Kochba revolt of 132–35 CE), and it forms the ideological matrix within which were formed the New Testament writings proclaiming the crucified rabbi Jesus as God’s liberating Messiah. These methods of using religious violence to provoke mass insurrection are precisely those used by modern terrorists (Rapoport 5), and hence critically evaluating the religious justifications of these shared practices prepares students for analyzing the ideological rhetoric and practices of our post-9/11 “real world.”

Studying 1 Maccabees offers an excellent exercise in critical reading and historical analysis for students. Because 1 Maccabees is situated between the two canons, including it in a core text program works nicely to summarize and synthesize the diverse ideological perspectives in the earlier Hebrew Scriptures, and/or lay the groundwork for the first-century debates engaged in by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament.¹ This liminal canonical status also helps to reframe student expectations in ways that foster critical analysis. Religious students often have a lessened sense of “divine authority” to overcome in reading 1 Maccabees, and thus they more readily acknowledge its ideological biases and the need for critical interpretation.

One assignment I have used toward this end is a student debate, which brings out the implicit debates and hidden polemic within this text. Two teams of four students debated the prompt “The Maccabees demonstrate proper faithfulness in their revolt against the Greeks and their execution of Jewish apostates.” Students not on either debate team wrote a one-page position paper using logical and scriptural arguments to support the accommodationists, the nonviolent resisters, or the revolutionaries (and preemptively address the counterarguments of the other groups). As a creative alternative to the paper, I also offered students the option of adopting the persona of a figure from one of the three groups and writing an open letter to the other two groups in an effort to persuade them of the superiority of the selected persona’s response to the crisis.

The in-class debate and subsequent discussion were vigorous and enlightening. For many students, this exercise transformed their understanding of the way the biblical materials engage the life-and-death issues of the real world, rather than simply providing “timeless truths” transported from the spiritual utopia of “Bible land.” It revealed to them the ideological diversity of the biblical texts, as well as the complexity of basing moral and political arguments on the Bible. These activities also forced students to begin thinking about the criteria by which certain biblical texts are elevated above others in constructing biblical justification for held positions, as well as the justification for those criteria. More broadly, this assignment was an effective way for students to synthesize their study of the Hebrew Bible along the lines I have

already suggested. Likewise, it prepared students for the early Jewish debates engaged by the New Testament over how Jews should respond to Roman imperialism. Study of 1 Maccabees helped students understand the ideological implications of the claim that Jesus' crucifixion was the model of nonviolent faithfulness meriting the title of atoning sacrifice (1 John 2:2, 4:10; Heb 2:17; Rom 3:25). It illuminated Paul's rhetoric as well, especially Paul's rejection of his earlier Maccabean-like "works of the law" that divide and destroy (Gal 1:13–4; cf. 1 Macc 2:44–51) and his subsequent embrace of the "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2) that fosters love (5:14) and unity (3:28).

Obviously, preparing students in their first semester of college for this complex task requires some planning. In earlier classroom discussions, I began asking students to consider the ideological positions of biblical texts (especially Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, and Daniel) as we studied them. This approach proved quite helpful, providing not only specific content useful for the later debate but also necessary practice in reading texts for their ideological implications. Greek and Roman texts—especially the histories of Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, and Tacitus—likewise provided ample opportunity for similar critical investigation of the causes and justification of warfare. By the end of the semester, when this debate occurred, students showed themselves more than capable of insightful analysis and lively debate regarding issues that still hold powerful contemporary significance in our post-9/11 world. In a world where American presidents, Islamic terrorists, and violent Jewish Zionists all mobilize the rhetoric of religion to advance conflicting ideological programs, study of 1 Maccabees can help to prepare us to scrutinize and judge their arguments.

Note

1. I teach 1 Maccabees at the end of our study of the Hebrew Bible, which is paired with the study of ancient Greece in a course titled "Greeks and Hebrews." We cover the New Testament in "Romans and Christians," the second course (of five total) in St. Olaf's Great Conversation Program. Both classes are in the students' first year in the program (and in college).

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The Good in Teaching Plato Through Service Learning

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Service learning emphasizes the interplay between theory in the classroom and practice in the local community. This paper examines the strengths and challenges of service learning in teaching core texts in philosophy, with an emphasis on Plato. It centers on Socrates' statement in Plato's *Crito* that "the most important thing is not life, but the good life" (48b)—an assertion that ultimately makes three calls: first, for *continual interrogation* of "the good" in the classroom regarding students' service learning experiences with underserved communities, particularly in light of students' preconceived notions of these communities; second, for discussion with students of the importance of an (Ignatian) *enduring contemplative stance* in their lives, spirited by Socratic questioning; and third, for a deep understanding of the importance of the liberal arts in *shaping students' attitudes* toward and in the world.

Plato's *Crito* is a short but powerful dialogue. It takes place during Socrates' stay in prison and thus is dramatically situated between Plato's *Apology* (the trial of Socrates) and Plato's *Phaedo* (Socrates' death scene). This dialogue opens with Crito bribing a prison guard to gain entry to Socrates' cell in an attempt to convince Socrates to flee from prison, noting that he and others are willing to pay for Socrates' escape (Plato, *Crito*, 45b). But as is his way, Socrates refuses, instead offering counterarguments to Crito regarding why he should submit to the judgment of the Athenians who condemned him to death. In fact, the dialogue concludes with Socrates speaking in the voice of Athens to combat Crito's charges that Socrates wrongly goes to his death, and he does so by taking himself (Socrates) as an interlocutor for Athens.

This dramatic backdrop—Socrates' trial, Crito's arguments, Socrates' counter-

arguments, and Socrates' ensuing death—contextualizes the passages under consideration in this paper because the topic of the *Crito* has an immediate urgency for both Socrates and Crito. Accordingly, the topic of this dialogue is justice and its relationship to goodness and beauty, culminating in Socrates' claim that “the most important thing is not life, but the good life [or a life well lived]” (Plato, *Crito*, 48b). Countering Crito's argument to Socrates that they must attend to the injustices committed by Socrates' accusers, Socrates says that “[w]e should not . . . think so much of what the majority will say about us, but what he will say who understands justice and injustice . . . and the truth itself” (Plato, *Crito*, 48a). Moreover, Socrates says, “the good life, the beautiful life, and the just life are the same” (Plato, *Crito*, 48b). In these statements, three things become clear: (1) For Socrates, a good life trumps the mere facticity of a life lived without examination (a point that Socrates makes time and again throughout the dialogues); (2) Socrates' appeal to those who attend to truth demands continual interrogation of what the truth of a situation or idea is, without which we are not able to live a worthy life; and (3) Socrates, at least in this dialogue, conflates goodness with beauty and justice—a point that appears as problematic from the standpoint of Socrates' statements in the *Republic* concerning the good being “beyond being” (Plato, *Republic*, 509b) but makes sense regarding the ways that each of these ideas fixes Socrates' (and our) gaze throughout the dialogues.

In fact, we learn in the image of the cave from Plato's *Republic* that the most difficult idea to grasp is that of the good (Plato, *Republic*, 517b) for a freed prisoner may catch only a glimpse of it after much adjustment of her eyes in order to discern it. Yet, Socrates says, it's the good that allows for rightness and beauty to be recognized as they are (Plato, *Republic*, 517c). But a very important point follows these Socratic statements—that is, Socrates' firm assertion that prisoners who catch such a glimpse of goodness, beauty, or justice itself must not be allowed to remain outside the cave; rather, they must be persuaded to return to the cave in order to bring harmony to its members, even under the threat of death.

This moment of descent into the cave is not often emphasized in Plato scholarship. Instead, what's usually seen as significant is the movement up and out of the cave, and there's good reason for this—after all, the image that Socrates gives us is one of our human nature in its education and lack of it. And given our human condition, it seems that coming to dwell in the light of beauty, or goodness, or justice would be a great boon to us all. However, I submit that the nature of goodness *itself* demands a return to the cave, as does the nature of justice or beauty. That is, readings of this image that deemphasize this return fail to attend to the nature of goodness as that which is bound intimately to the ways in which it illuminates things for others. After all, the sun (the good) does not illuminate itself but makes visible that which can be seen. Likewise, the nature of justice is such that its essence is bound to its appearance in the world, for one cannot “know” justice in a way that divorces its essence from its activity. Too, no knowledge of virtue as such can occur without attending to the manner of its appearance. In other words, that which is apprehended outside the cave—if these things are truly to be apprehended—demands our human response, for the natures of these things are bound to their activity, or manner of appearing. As such, we are called to respond.

Given these Socratic claims, I will now turn to the relationship between service learning and a pursuit of the good. A few words about my own experiences as a philosophy professor who uses service learning are thus in order. I have used service learning as part of my pedagogy in seven classes over the last four years. Six of these classes have been part of a special program at Marquette, which is called the Dorothy Day Social Justice Living Learning Community (DDSJLLC) and began in 2009. The community is composed of up to forty-four students (half men and half women) who apply to live together, take a course together each semester, and demonstrate a shared concern for social justice issues, broadly construed. As such, they take my Philosophy of Human Nature course each fall, which is a core required course for all students at Marquette. But it receives a twist for students in this program because they are required to perform three hours of service learning each week while enrolled in the course, attend community retreats, and participate in service opportunities as a community outside of the class. In the course, service learning functions as a text, and as we work our way through the history of primarily Western philosophy, students are asked to connect key course concepts with their experiences in service with others in Milwaukee's various communities and to see how their experiences illuminate the ideas we discuss. Students work in a variety of placements with community partners, from the AIDS Resource Center and the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility to placements that allow students to help diverse populations work toward their GED or citizenship. In both writing assignments and class discussion, students are asked to integrate their experiences into their intellectual understanding of course texts—in an effort of coming to a deeper understanding about themselves, each other, and the world.

However, integrating service learning into courses is not a seamless enterprise. In fact, service learning poses real challenges to teaching any class, but teaching core classes in this way is especially challenging. Service learning, as a relatively new institutional phenomenon at colleges and universities across the country (being coined as a term in 1967, but really taking off in the 1990s), is widely considered to be part of a high-impact pedagogy that actively seeks experiential connections between course materials and the "real world." And service learning *can* provide these things, but service learning is not *in itself* good. I will return to the good of service learning in a moment, but first let me propose three main challenges to incorporating service learning in teaching core classes:

1. Students sometimes experience an immediacy of return at their service sites (e.g., a fruitful exchange with a community member, the feeling of satisfaction that can occur when students are helpful to a client, or—as they sometimes say—a "eureka!" moment that crystallizes their thinking) in a way that mistakes an encounter for the whole, or in a way that suggests that further reflection about their experiences is not necessary.
2. Students who elect to take courses or join programs of which service is a part are sometimes inclined to see the service as the "real world" and course texts as part of an ivory tower, effectively reinforcing the distance between the classroom and their experiences at their sites.

3. Students occasionally express their opinion that their preconceived notions about the clients they are working with (typically, underprivileged communities with very different backgrounds than most students at Marquette have) are reinforced—thus perpetuating stereotypes rather than working to overcome them, and effectively thwarting the movement from charity to justice in their thinking and actions.

These challenges in incorporating service learning into classroom pedagogy are real and substantial, suggesting that service learning is not a good in itself but is a good insofar as professors and students alike try to see the good as it applies to service learning, which can happen in a few ways. To my mind, and stemming from Socrates' statements and disposition in the *Crito* and other dialogues, professors who incorporate service learning into their classes, particularly in core courses, ought to impress upon their students the importance of the following three things, which also help combat the challenges outlined above:

1. The idea of “the good,” insofar as pursuing it remains a constant in Socrates' life, must remain the subject of continual interrogation with students in the classroom. That is, while students may think, through their service learning experiences, that they come to know the good immediately, Socrates reminds us that while we may catch a glimpse of the good, reflection is necessary to understand it more thoroughly.

2. This reflection with students highlights the importance of an enduring contemplative stance (in the spirit of Ignatius and Socrates) to break down the artificial divide between the “real world” and the ivory tower—a point that speaks to our praxical nature as being both active and reflective beings in the world with others.

3. Professors and students who teach in the core must recognize that core texts speak to the ways in which students' attitudes can be shaped in meaningful ways. The Platonic dialogues *as* dialogues provide a perfect platform from which to investigate meaningful philosophical ideas in dialogue with each other. Attending, for example, to Socrates' comportment with his interlocutors opens the door for students to converse with Socrates, his interlocutors, and each other to see how their own attitudes and interests shape the things that they care about in their lives.

Given these responses, let us return to the guiding question of this paper: Where, if anywhere, is the good, as it applies to service learning and in incorporating service learning into a classroom? Following Socrates' statements in the *Republic* that catching a glimpse of the good mandates a return to the cave, we can say that whatever the good may be, it is not attainable by one person alone but instead requires a return to the cave to bring harmony to its members. We can also say that pursuing the good requires an active attunement to reality, not a removal from it, and service learning can thus provide a way to thematize this Socratic point in one's classes. We might also add that the intriguing status of the good as “beyond being” might gesture to an unknowable realm of Platonic forms removed from our human place.

However, regarding this last point, we may fare well to remember two things: first, Aristotle's reminder in the *Metaphysics* that the difficulty of pursuing/knowing truth (or “what is”) does not happen because truth is obscured from us, but instead

because it's everywhere—and the cause of the difficulty is *in us*. As Aristotle says, the eyes of bats are related to the light of midday in the way that the intellect of our soul is related to those things that are by nature most evident of all. (page no.) That is, like bats, we do not see very well. Second, remembering Socrates' elision among beauty, justice, and goodness in the *Crito*, we might think along with Hans-Georg Gadamer, who says,

the essence of the beautiful does not lie in some realm simply opposed to reality. On the contrary, we learn that however unexpected our encounter with beauty may be, it gives us an assurance that the truth does not lie far off and inaccessible to us, but can be encountered in the disorder of reality with all its imperfections, evils, errors, extremes, and fateful confusions. (15)

In other words, the truth of the good is that it makes possible our inquiries into it, not as it is removed *from* reality, but as it is constitutive of it. Our job, then, is to see the ways that catching a glimpse of the good—in service learning, in our classrooms, and beyond—requires from us that we attend to it steadfastly and as it informs our actions, as Socrates reminds us in the *Crito*.

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In the Field with Herodotus: Reading Books 2 and 4 of *The Histories* as Travelogue

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In the spirit of full disclosure, I am a geographer by training. In spatial terms, geography is at best a peripheral consideration in most discussions about core texts. Recently, scholars from various disciplines have tried to promote the *geohumanities*, that is, the interaction between geography and the humanities, which is producing new topics of inquiry that mandate a rich transdisciplinary approach. Exciting new issues and creative methodologies are emerging: visual artists explore cartography, and novelists consider the spatial imagination of their fictitious worlds. One of the most rewarding and enjoyable aspects of being a geographer is spending time in the field. In fact, “being in the field”—the love of traveling, exploring new places and landscapes, and learning new ideas outside the traditional setting of the classroom—is what compelled many of my colleagues to pursue geography at the graduate and professional level. Many geographers at heart are frustrated world travelers who will do anything to get to the next stop. When we finally reach the point at which we can teach our own geography courses, designing and implementing field experiences is both an exciting and overwhelming prospect.

Teaching and learning in the field can be unsettling for students and teachers. Students may be uncomfortable out of the classroom landscape in which their world makes sense. Students who feel this way will ask questions such as “What do you want us to do?” “What do we need to know about this place?” “What do you want me to say?” The organic, sometimes unorganized flow of a field experience at which

students are asked to observe, be still, and think is too slow, too quiet, and too *uncomfortable* for them. Likewise, there are moments of discomfort for the instructor as well—taking a wrong turn on a hike, or crashing a university van, or not being able to answer the questions being asked. Nevertheless, as geographers, we keep exploring because we know that an extraordinary kind of learning can occur in the field—where students learn about the world, but also about their place in the world. Since I’ve been teaching in my university’s core text program, I have realized, of course, that this kind of experiential learning isn’t unique to field trips. The nature of reading and understanding core texts is another kind of journey. Indeed, we use the journey motif often when we teach Homer, *Candide*, Equiano, or countless others. We even equate the quest for a liberal arts education as a journey.

Now to my own journey with Herodotus. Last summer, I participated in an interdisciplinary faculty seminar on Herodotus’ *The Histories* (2007). Let’s call it my own field trip with Herodotus of Halicarnassus. I confess I had read very little Herodotus before the seminar. To be honest, my most immediate connection to Herodotus was from Michael Ondaatje’s novel *The English Patient*, in which the patient travels around with an old copy of *The Histories* and throughout the story weaves his own history into the pages of Herodotus with photographs, paintings, and letters that help the reader follow the nonlinear narrative of the exquisite story. As I delved into *The Histories*, I found a compatriot in Herodotus, a fellow traveler, another intrepid geographer in the field. In short, I liked him. This is not always the case with Herodotus, even in the classical world. In an era when poetry was the ultimate form of literary expression, Herodotus’ style of prose was dismissed early on, called *pedzos logos* (words that walk on their feet, i.e., pedestrian, pedantic). Marozzi (2008) reminds us that while Cicero called him the “father of history,” Plutarch dubbed him the “father of lies.”

In my university’s seminar, it was evident that everyone interprets Herodotus through her own disciplinary lens. The historian looks for the tales of revolution and warfare; the English professor compares the structure of *The Histories* to other great works; and the classicist struggles to situate the work into other tales of the ancient world. And I did this as well. I looked for the geography—the description of the world and connections between places, the *why* behind the *where*. However, I am convinced this is not the best way to read Herodotus. Certainly, Herodotus is predisciplinary. I have come to appreciate *The Histories* as a piece of travel literature, which according to scholars of travel writing must be narrative, descriptive, and instructive.

In this paper, I draw attention to the second and fourth Scrolls of Herodotus, the tortuously long expositions about, first, Egypt to the south of the Greek city-states, then Scythia to the north. Commentators often struggle with how to fit these two books into the larger framework of Herodotus. It is as if they are commercial breaks amid the drama of the Persian Wars, and the reader (or audience, as the original was probably read aloud) is on the edge of his seat waiting to get back to the action of the story. However, if we just focus on these two books, we are presented with a compelling worldview and travelogue that Herodotus is giving to the Greeks. In his fourth scroll, on Scythia, he takes some time to explicitly map out this world in the text. He writes:

And it makes me laugh when I see so many people nowadays drawing maps of the earth and not one of them giving an intelligent representation of it. They draw Ocean flowing around the whole earth, portray the earth to be more perfectly circular than if it were drawn with a compass, and make Asia the same size as Europe. I, however, will show by a brief description the actual size of each, and what they should look like and how they should be drawn. (Herodotus, Book 4.36)

And he goes on for several pages to define all the peninsulas of the Mediterranean Sea. Certainly, the greater detail is around Southern Europe. In fact, as he describes the world to the east of Persia, he writes, “Asia is inhabited as far as India, but the territory east of India is uninhabited, and no one can say what sort of land exists there” (4.40). To the south, he speculates as to the size of Libya—known as Africa today. He does this through hearsay and cannot believe some of the tall tales he has heard about the size of Africa, since there had been no known circumnavigation of the continent at that point. Here, we have the limits of Herodotus’ world—described in detail based on his travels, hearsay, and perhaps much conjecture.

The narrative of Herodotus spans four generations of Persian Kings—from Cyrus the Great—founder of the empire that overthrew the Medes, Lydia, and Babylon—through the reigns of Cambyses, who added Egypt to the empire; Darius, who expands Persia east toward the subcontinent of Asia; and finally, Xerxes, who invades Greece in the last three books of *The Histories*. Herodotus presents a complex view of the Persian culture, not a celebratory triumph narrative for the Greeks. Seemingly wise leaders become increasingly corrupt and forget their place in the world. Herodotus and his audience already know the outcome of the Persian Wars—Persia will be defeated. This is not about how great it is to be Greek, but rather what it means to be Greek at this moment in time using recent history as a barometer of what could be.

Herodotus is incredibly curious about all the things he sees along the way. He takes us to the mysterious world of the Lydians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Scythians, and, of course, the Persians. He desperately wants to know who these people are, where they came from, and how they are different from the Greeks. This component of his, the constant return comparison to the Greeks, makes Herodotus such a good travel writer. Consider this excerpt about his travels in Egypt:

I am going to extend my account of Egypt at some length here and give additional details about it, because this country has more marvels and monuments that defy description . . . [and later—he points out explicit differences between Egyptians and Greeks]. For example, the women . . . go to the marketplace and sell goods there while their men stay at home and do the weaving. . . . Here the men carry loads on their heads and the women bear them on their shoulders. Women urinate standing up, men sitting down. (2.35).

Implicit in these comments is that Greeks do the opposite. Herodotus is saying, “You are never going to believe this, but it’s true.” Any good travel writer must offer scintillating differences between home and the place that is not home.

If Egypt is the southern boundary of Herodotus’ world, then Scythia is the northern edge. He spends many pages unfolding these two cultures because they are so distinct, so self-contained, and so different from Greece. For example, nature is won-

derful in both places but for different reasons. In Egypt, it never rains. In Scythia it rains in summer, not in winter. Scythia has a complex system of unchanging rivers that creates discrete districts of settlement, with the Danube dominating; whereas Egypt is held together by the Nile. The Scythians are nomadic—which Herodotus argues protects them from conquest. Egypt builds great cities and monuments to impress the world. Egypt remembers its past in detail; the Scythians know little of their origin and consider their culture young. These two lands are opposite extremes of Herodotus' world. He admits that there are places beyond his own worldview, but he is not sure what is there.

When a travelogue is good, the reader spends little time deciding if the writer is relating fact or fiction. The reader knows that a traveler's story is told through the lens of the traveler. In fact, travel writing is often more about revealing the writer than the place. This is what frustrates historians and classicists about Herodotus—he is writing both fact and fiction. As Edward Gibbon wrote, "Herodotus sometimes writes for children and sometimes for philosophers" (quoted in Marozzi 2008,12). The trick is trying to know the difference. Another commentator calls Herodotus both an investigative journalist and a tabloid hack. Herodotus tells us as much when he is explaining his methodology of hearing these tall tales. "I am obliged to record the things I am told," he writes, "but I am certainly not required to believe them. . . . this remark may be taken to apply to the whole of my account" (2.123).

In the larger narrative of *The Histories*, Herodotus is also trying to be instructive. We see Herodotus' value of world travel in two characters: Hecataeus, the writer and mapmaker, and Solon, who has spent his life traveling the world. When the tyrant of Miletus is debating with his advisers as to whether he should revolt against the Persian King Darius, Hecataeus brings in a map of all the lands under Persian control, showing him the vast empire. He uses a map of the world to discourage a revolt. They do not take his advice and are ultimately defeated. Second, with the character Solon, Croesus asks him:

My Athenian guest, word of your wisdom and travels reaches us even here. We hear you have wandered through much of the world in the search for knowledge, so I really can't resist asking you now whether you have yet seen anyone who surpasses all others in happiness and prosperity? (1.30)

The wisdom gleaned from his travels makes Solon wise. James Redfield (1985) argues that Solon is Herodotus' alter ego in the stories he tells—warning the Greeks not to be like the Persians, not to reach too far, not to think they are undefeatable, the great mistake of Xerxes. Herodotus' travels give him the experience, the wisdom of Solon, to warn the Greeks about what may come. The thoughtful Greek traveler—be it Solon or Herodotus—can give a meaningful account of the non-Greek world. Through travel comes wisdom—a defining component of any good piece of travel literature.

The Great Persian War is the end of the story for the Persians (and where Herodotus concludes his story), but it is only the middle of the Greek story. Their moment of success—defeating the Persians—is their most dangerous moment as well. Will they unite in their shared Greekness and become distinct cultures like the Egyptians and the Scythians, realizing their own worldview, or will they reach too far beyond the

edges of the world, where, as all geographers know, “Here, There Be Dragons”? Like Hecataeus, Herodotus is holding up the map of the world to the Greeks and warning them. Be careful. Maybe Herodotus was a geographer after all.

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Aristotle in Business: The Nicomachean Ethics and Business Ethics

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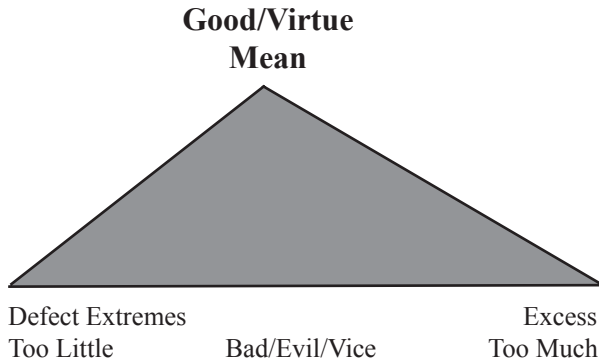
The common conception of ethics in business, in both popular presentations and textbooks, is focused around “decision-making.” Hard questions that require decisions present themselves. How does one react in a particularly difficult situation? The textbook I assign in my undergraduate Business Ethics course, a standard, even advanced book in the field, begins each chapter with a couple of such scenarios. After this, the chapter will outline data, studies, legal and regulatory requirements, and so forth (Ferrell, Fraedrich, and Ferrell 2011). But rarely is there a clear connection between the difficult situations and how the information in the chapter helps to resolve or contribute to understanding an ethical question. Business leaders face decisions daily. They weigh data, test markets, prepare bids, respond to personnel requests or problems, invest resources, work with customers, and make sure their products and services function as they should and provide what they claim—in each of these situations they make, it appears, decisions. But this is a simplistic way of understanding the work of business leaders. A more perceptive way of understanding the kinds of considerations and actions in which a business person engages is to see these activities as making judgments about responses or actions that do not lend themselves to simple choices between possible options. They do lend themselves to deliberation and judgments about how much to invest or risk, why and how a request might be accommodated and what the limits of accommodation might be, how it might be fair or just, and what its results might be for the good or ill of a person, product, or organization (Varvis, “Ethical Business”).¹ “Too much” and “too little,” “justice,” “fairness,” and “deliberation”—the considerations that the business person makes

can be understood in the language of Aristotle's ethics. We attempt to move beyond the simplistic ethics of decision-making, to the richer language of virtue as a way of understanding the work of business.

In the next few pages, I will outline how I have adapted Aristotle's teaching in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to develop an Aristotelian model for business ethics and will present some observations and findings on student learning. I present Aristotle's ethical theory as more comprehensive than other theories examined in the class, able to incorporate the best of the other theories (duty, for instance), and hence more practical and rewarding for business persons.² Students and scholars of Aristotle's practical philosophy will recognize the sources of my interpretation.³ I outline our procedure in a step-by-step fashion.

Step 1. Before we begin the discussion of Aristotle, I give my students an assignment. For the week prior to the discussion, they must attempt to be good, or act well according to whatever they individually understand goodness to be. I explain it thus: "*Beginning at the end of class . . . and continuing for the next week, attempt to live as morally or as ethically as you can. By this I mean, according to your highest values, what you know, believe, think, have been raised to believe are good ways of thinking, speaking, and acting or behaving. You can think of simple basic goods or values—for example: truthfulness, honesty, fairness or justice, respecting others and the rights of others, meeting your obligations, maintaining a good 'work ethic.'* . . . Attempt to live your values, what you believe or know to be good, and as you do so, pay attention to your thoughts, moods, feelings, and whatever else you experience. You might want to keep a brief journal of your experience(s). What does it feel like when you succeed, or when you fail? How hard is it to live and act ethically? What goes on in your mind?" With this assignment I attempt to introduce students to the understanding of Aristotle that becoming good or virtuous begins with the formation of moral habits (NE II, 1.1103b, 20–26)⁴ and to awaken consciences to our daily moral habits. I note that Aristotle explains that those who are not habituated toward the good will not be perceptive in their understanding of ethics and virtue (NE I, 4.1095b, 3–12). Each student sends me an email note describing their experience. I read an anonymous selection of them to the class. The students experience the difficulty of living according to what they understand to be good. It takes effort. We have to deny ourselves what we sometimes want. The small things trip us up—telling the truth, showing up when we have committed to something we would rather not do. We have to think of others and their needs. It takes practice and requires consistency. One does not just "decide" to be good. Some are shocked at their habitual misbehavior. A few are self-satisfied, not always the ones who should be (Varvis, "Ethics Experiment").

Step 2. To begin the discussion I start by noting that Aristotle states that all humans desire what is good and want to understand it. But what is this good, we ask, and how do we achieve it and understand it? We go on to discuss the meaning of virtue as "excellence" and in this case moral or ethical excellence, becoming and being good. As Aristotle noted, virtue makes both the worker good and the work well done. The goal of an ethical life is flourishing or happiness. We may see this under many categories of goodness or virtue, such as justice, courage, liberality, truthfulness,



ness, self-control, or wisdom. Here we explore the language that we will need to continue the discussion.

Step 3. Next we examine Aristotle’s explanation that virtue is a state of character that enables a person to deliberate about actions understood to have the quality of being “means” or intermediate between excess and defect. We use business examples to illustrate. For instance, what is a just salary or wage? It is a mean between paying too much and too little. Either too much or too little, they learn to see, is unjust in some way. Those who contribute to the business enterprise must be compensated fairly. If the pay I offer is too low, I do not compensate employees for their energy and creativity upon which the business depends, and I lose partners in the enterprise. If I pay too much, something else is shorted. If I cannot offer a reasonable wage, people starve, and I cannot see myself as good or my enterprise as either successful or good. If I offer too much, the enterprise might not survive. I use a diagram to illustrate the mean (see Figure 1).⁵

Students see graphically that the good is higher and better, and the bad lower, but that bad, evil, or vice may take a number of forms as they fail to reach a mean. The mean as Aristotle explains is an “extreme” in relation to what is good, but a “mean” in relation to possible actions or passions (NE II, 6.1106b.6–9, 1106b 36–1107a.7). We test several topics that can be considered as means—compensation as already noted, but also transparency in business strategy and disciplinary matters.

Step 4. Next we consider how ethical action and understanding are like the practice of a craft, drawing on *Nichomachean Ethics* II.6.⁶ How do we know when a work of art or any particular craft is done? As Aristotle says, “so we often say of good works of art that it is not possible either to take away or to add anything, implying that excess and defect destroy the goodness of works of art, while the mean preserves it; and good artists, as we say, look to this in their works” (NE II.6. 1106b 9–15). An analogy here can be made to athletic training, especially since the department has a large group of athletes. Athletes have to recognize just how much training they should do in any one situation. The right amount is a mean, but, as Aristotle notes, it is a mean relative to us, with our different abilities. The well-trained athlete knows how much is too much or too little practice before a contest. Similarly a good student gains practical knowledge about what is too much or too little study before a test, and so with many other “crafts.” Soon students begin to supply their own examples—

how much should one work while in school? What amount of play is too much or too little? Thus the ethical businessperson must be something of an artist, or have practiced his or her craft long enough to have a sense or perception of what is good and what produces good effects.

Step 5. The choice of a virtuous person is then an inexact calculation, “by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it,” as Aristotle says (NE II.6. 1106b, 36–1107a, 2). Or the good choices a person makes are those which are most easily discerned by someone who has had long practice and experience in doing well and acting virtuously, and perhaps has had a mentor to observe, question, and imitate. In Eric Voegelin’s terms, this person is the *spoudaios* or the “mature” person. For our understanding of our roles as leaders, according to Voegelin, “these reflections of Aristotle are perhaps the most important contribution to an epistemology of ethics and politics that have ever been made” (*Plato and Aristotle*, 301; “What Is Right by Nature?” 65ff). Knowing how to achieve what is good, in life or in business, takes experience, maturity, and ultimately wisdom (NE VI.5. 1140a 24–1104b 30).

Step 6. Eventually someone will observe that Aristotle’s teaching seems relativistic, that the good is defined as that which is really not too good or too bad. Or they might say we simply prefer certain actions or responses, and we simply call them good or bad—our fundamental moral commitments are subjective. I point to Aristotle’s response to the question: “But not every action nor passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness, e.g., spite, shamelessness, envy, and in the case of actions adultery, theft, murder; for all of these and suchlike things imply by their names that they are themselves bad, and not the excesses or deficiencies of them. It is not possible, then, ever to be right in regard to them; one must always be wrong. Nor does goodness or badness with regard to such things depend on committing adultery with the right woman, at the right time, and in the right way, but simply to do any of them is to go wrong” (NE II, 6. 1107a 9–17).⁷ They get the point immediately. Finding a mean is the way of pursuing what is right in cases in which our actions may be excessive or defective, too much or too little. It is not right or virtuous to lie to customers or to sell products that do not perform as advertised. One cannot make a dangerous or defective product or bilk investors in the right way, to the right extent, with the right materials and for the right price. To do so is simply wrong. But in a whole host of activities—most of the decisions that business people make daily—virtue or excellence is found in a mean.⁸

Step 7. Students are now ready for a conclusion. Aristotle claims that virtue makes the person and their actions good. As he puts it, “the virtue of a man also will be the state of character which makes a man good and which makes him do his own work well” (NE II, 6. 1106a, 22–24). This, too, is the goal of ethics in business: to make the organization good and to do its work well. We review that we discussed this in the introductory discussion of the purpose and nature of virtue. By now the class understands how both the person, through the practice and understanding of virtue, becomes good, and how this affects their organization’s character if the same patterns are embedded in its habitual practices, in its policies and corporate culture. To further develop the language of moral experience, I explain that for the person who pursues the good states of character that we call virtue, their “values” become

a part of them. Their values become their virtues. They do not hold them in some notional way. Virtues are values that have become a part of us, they characterize us, and similarly they can characterize organizations.

Step 8. The elements are now in place for understanding a comprehensive business ethics model. The first half of the semester has raised philosophical issues, asked questions about wealth and poverty, vice and virtue, the temptations and rewards of good business. The second half is devoted to developing the steps of the model, following Aristotle, of a business ethics program. It is simple and derives directly from the foregoing discussion.

A Virtue Ethics Model for Business Ethics

Aristotle	Business Ethics
Basic or Ultimate Values	Core Values (Common, Agreed Upon)
Habits and Practical Experience	Policies, Procedures That Encourage Good Business Practices/Habits
Development of Virtue Through Education and Practice	Corporate Codes of Ethics, Corporate Governance and Culture
Mature Person as Guide	Leaders/Leadership as Standard-Bearers and Mentors
Goal: Happiness/Flourishing	Ethical and Successful Enterprise

On occasion we go on from here to discuss how the *Nichomachean Ethics* might offer insight into other ethical questions that arise in our experience in business. For instance, Book IV discusses the virtue of liberality as a mean in our use of money. We have previously discussed this topic as the great temptation of business people, especially given the habits of calculation, strategy, and acquisition that the discipline of being a business person reinforces daily. The discussion in Book III of courage might be used to discuss “risk-taking,” when risky investments become foolhardy, and when cowardly (too risk-adverse). Along with the topic of justice, which we earlier discussed as an example for our discussion of the mean, we can turn to the discussion in Books VIII and IX of friendship for insight into human resource questions like hiring, development of teams, and commitment to each other. And finally we can turn to Book VI, where we can use the discussions of intellectual virtues to understand leadership, “decision-making,” and just how it happens that we find organizational leaders who understand in a deep, if sometimes inarticulate, way how to guide an organization to flourish.

Step 9. Finally, throughout the semester I look for “outcomes.” I want to see what students are learning. Have they understood in practical ways the nature of ethics for themselves and for their future work? I ask them to reflect (in an ungraded question that I read after the semester grades are submitted) on what has been meaningful for them as they think about themselves and their current or future professions. This question comes some two months after we have discussed Aristotle. Often enough they reflect clearly that they have learned to use an implicit Aristotelian framework.

Some understand that how they practice business will depend on their personal character. I ask their permission to quote them and have posted their answers anonymously on a blog I write for the university. Typical answers are: “the most important one was that it is harder than we think to be an ethical person . . . it takes time and practice . . . we need good role models.” “It’s the small choices made early on which show who you are and how to change if needed.” “In order to be an ethical person, I must practice ethical behaviors. By making an effort to practice generosity, you are less tempted by greed.” “It [being ethical] won’t happen if you do it just some of the time.” “Being an ethical person is a challenge because it not only challenges your values, but it also questions who you claim to be” (Varvis, “Ethical Learning”). In discussions of these kinds of questions throughout the semester, students reflect on their own work experience, the good and bad “characters” they have experienced, how the policies and corporate cultures they have worked under have been shaped, and how they have experienced personal and organizational flourishing and success. Occasionally one will confess that he or she has decided that the business they work for is not an ethical business and that they are looking for another job. Occasionally they have stories to tell of virtuous bosses or colleagues. The Aristotelian framework provides them a rich language and deeper understanding than the typical decision-making paradigm.

I hope I have illustrated how one of the most classical of great books, a standard core text, can be used in a department and subject that are sometimes seen as the antithesis of the liberal arts and classical traditions. But as Peter Drucker noted many years ago, management or business may well be one of the subjects where the liberal arts will find a home and are most fruitful (277). Drucker explains that management is, like medicine or law, a “practice.” It draws upon the sciences, history, mathematics, philosophy, and the arts to understand complex organizations, the people who inhabit them, and the patterns and actions that lead to personal and organizational success. Ethics, too, is a practice of this kind, and those of us who teach this practice and theory might do well to seek to do so in those practical disciplines like business upon which our society depends for its own good.

Notes

1. I refer students to an op-ed piece I wrote for Fresno Pacific University’s “Scholar’s Speak” program, which describes the difference between “decision-making” and more complex ethical judgments.

2. For a clear example of the theories that dominate the discussion of ethics in business, see Frederick, Part I, where Kantian, Utilitarian, Pragmatism, Postmodern, and Virtue ethics are discussed; Darwall has a good selection of primary texts and contemporary essays. See also Moore on virtue ethics and business and the recent interchange on MacIntyre’s economic thinking between Robert Miller and MacIntyre himself.

3. I discuss interpretive questions regarding *Aristotle and the Nichomachean Ethics* in the notes.

4. All quotations from Aristotle are from the Ross, Ackrill, and Urmson translation of the *Nichomachean Ethics*.

5. Copleston, 79, has a similar illustration and a clear outline of Aristotle’s theory.

6. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?* 110–118, where he emphasizes experience, prac-

tice, and habit; in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*, 59–60, he elaborates on the theme of “craft.”

7. I follow Finnis, 31–37. For other sources for this kind of argument, see Lewis, and Kreeft, chapter 4, for a Thomistic elaboration of Lewis’s argument. See Wilson for a social scientific treatment of Adam Smith’s “moral sentiments.” See also an anthropological reconstruction in Brown; and the popular treatments of Lennick and Kiel, and The Institute for Global Ethics, “mission and values.”

8. This is a contentious philosophical issue. For older and newer responses, see Veatch; Kraut, chapters 2 and 3; Lear, chapter 5. This topic is related to the question of the Platonic origins of Aristotle’s ethical theory. See the contrasting interpretations in Nussbaum, 373–77, and Gerson, 252–60; for references to Nussbaum, see 256 n.77. Voegelin provides a more sophisticated reading in two illuminating essays, “What Is Right by Nature?” 66, and “Reason the Classic Experience,” 103.

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Cicero's *On Duties* and Liberal Arts Education: Ancient Lessons for Our Predicaments

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Cicero's *On Duties* is a classic text that, among other things, describes the power of liberal arts education to strengthen civic duty. This paper will discuss Cicero's teaching on this relationship and the contemporary lessons that *On Duties* holds for our own predicaments in liberal arts education. Though the text offers a general deliberation on human action and how the best action contributes to the happy life, our duty to the public good is considered paramount, Cicero argues, for it ultimately reconciles any apparent conflict between what is honorable and what is beneficial or useful, a conflict that Cicero considered a primary source of civic destruction and unhappiness. Without seeing that what is truly honorable is also what is truly beneficial, human action is unmoored from the anchor of Nature's standard exhortation to consider *all of humanity* its subject and its end.

In *On Duties*, Cicero contends that coming to discern the honor and use of action requires education. Quite unlike that of the philosopher king in Plato's *Republic*, in which understanding metaphysical reality is the goal of a long, arduous education necessary to govern the best city through knowing the Good, Cicero's version in *On Duties* of the education necessary for honorable and beneficial action is nearly devoid of metaphysics. Though Cicero's "Nature" certainly points to a cosmic reality beyond human choices and actions by which they are best understood, he does not offer a very substantial account of this reality. Instead, he believes the education necessary for discerning honor and benefit is one that develops the mind into a critical and discerning judge.

At crucial junctures throughout the work, notably at the beginning of each book, Cicero praises the kind of education his son Marcus has been receiving under the tutelage of Cratippus in Athens. Cicero's praise is not for the specific Peripatetic doctrines that the teacher has been imparting; in fact, Cicero insists that his son consider his father's own ideas to "combine things Latin with things Greek" (Cicero 1) so that he, too, might employ the freedom of thought that Cicero himself applies so clearly and abundantly in the work. Moreover, Cicero avows that proclaiming this kind of education will be the greatest legacy he could give to his son, and that in his exclusion from all political affairs in this last year before his execution at the hands of the Second Triumvirate, it is also the most honorable and beneficial duty he could perform for Rome.

In our own context as teachers and scholars of the liberal arts, one of our crucial challenges is to answer how such an education can be of use to our students. Cicero's *On Duties* presents us with a strong defense of liberal arts education and civic duty that is worthy to consider for our own apologia. Foremost, of course, is precisely the kindred relationship between generating the critical abilities of our minds and discerning how to act to truly benefit ourselves during our lives in general, without having to wholly adopt a specific philosophical point of view but taking several points of view seriously as part of one's own education. For it is not true that Cicero abandons the search for metaphysical truths or finds these searches superfluous to human action. *On Duties* all the while assumes metaphysics to be worthy of our consideration but leaves it for another time; instead it shows the power of the liberally educated human mind to analyze and discern the everyday human realm and its constant pursuit of living well. Such a defense of liberal arts is not confined to a certain epoch or context; it applies to human action in aristocratic Rome as much as it applies to human action in a liberal democracy. To be sure, Cicero's list of what constitutes the honorable in *On Duties* is inseparable from his Roman aristocratic point of view, even if as a "new man"; yet his apology for liberal arts education, and more particularly his encouragement of the philosophical education for his son, provides a compelling model for our own defense of the value and role of great ideas and Great Books in the formation of citizens' minds.

On Duties also teaches several concomitant lessons with its apology for liberal arts education, lessons that are particularly relevant to our own challenges in promoting and defending our commitment to higher education. Though this is not meant as an exclusive list, I offer for your consideration three lessons directly related to Cicero's apology for liberal arts: the undeniable bond between philosophical education and the common good, the benefit of eloquence, and finally the unexpected humility that *On Duties* offers its audience.

First, let us briefly examine the bond between liberal arts education and the public good. This relationship is perhaps best shown by Cicero at the start of Book II, where, in beginning his discussion of the useful, he laments the state of the republic and his inability to partake in any more direct political action to salvage it. Nevertheless he asserts that this very work is an effort of public service. To Cicero,

philosophy as the love of wisdom can do no other than profit its students by inevitably turning them to the public good. Book II is a demonstration of the argument: Cicero's "Academic" method, the fruit of his rich philosophical thinking, shows itself able to negotiate through the often tangled opinions of what is considered beneficial or useful to oneself and to demonstrate that self-interest best understood is public interest. Nothing is more beneficial or useful than human support. Cicero argues that an education in philosophy helps one perceive what is true and clear, what agrees or disagrees, and what are the causes of all being (Cicero 69). Its good use therefore upholds good faith, and this faith, Cicero argues, is essential to the health and survival of political communities. By contrast, Caesar's breaking of good faith by an unwise view of personal and public benefit demonstrated his want of good education and the serious public consequences in the end of the republic.

Second, Cicero believed that fostering eloquence through a liberal arts education is a related and powerful lesson, one sorely neglected in our age by too easily and cynically dismissing its importance. This lesson on eloquence also follows from Cicero's reasoned argument that self-interest is public interest, as so many other means of moving human beings to action betray humanity's nature. Eloquence gained from a good education holds the power to persuade the public to take beneficial and honorable actions while at the same time advancing the power and dignity of reason to govern the lives of those who are persuaded. Far from a disjunction between eloquence and reason, the education Cicero commends to his son and his readers becomes the crucial means by which true use and goodness can be promoted. For eloquence derived from a liberal arts education is not merely speaking or writing well, it is also the ability to move others toward the best actions that aim to allow individuals and communities to flourish.

Third and last, *On Duties* gives us a lesson in humility. At least in the years after its composition, this Great Book faced the failure to save the republic and the failure to adequately form Marcus into a statesman and philosopher like his father. Moreover, shortly after completing the work, Cicero himself would suffer the deadly consequences of his long-standing opposition to Mark Antony. Cicero's exhortation to enact the honorable and the beneficial did not save himself, his son, or his republic from destruction. But this lesson in humility is, in fact, directed at his readers and their expectations of what effects liberal arts education can have. Cicero did not claim that his book would save Rome, or even that his son's education was quite complete. He also seemed cognizant that his stance against tyranny would soon bring on his death. Thus, Cicero wrote this book when he could do little else and was facing almost certain doom. This fact ought to humble our pretensions that our own apologies for liberal arts education will surely solve our own immediate conflicts and dilemmas, whatever these may be, crises in education, crises in civilization, etc. An apologia for liberal arts perhaps ought to better stand with Cicero in believing that the ground we defend is not our present-day end but instead the transcendent dignity of reasoned reflection on human actions nurtured through fine education.

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Longing for Pre-Eminence: Living in the Real World with Cicero's *On Duties*

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Cicero's *On Duties* was one of the core texts of a gentleman's education up until the eighteenth century. Modern students, however, are barely familiar with it. One could explain this by arguing that *On Duties* was written in the context of an ancient, hierarchical society where men were motivated by the pursuit of honor and glory. As such, the text would have less appeal in the context of modern democratic societies. And yet, in this paper I will argue that Cicero's text still has something to say to the young today. Cicero's argument in favor of a natural foundation of what constitutes honorable behavior may have a liberating effect on those who seek preeminence and are living in societies reluctant to recognize distinctions. This means that Cicero's *On Duties* deserves a place in the curriculum for the young. In this paper, I will first explore what I think is Cicero's chief motivation for writing *On Duties*. I will then analyze Cicero's argument about the natural foundation of honor. Finally, I will explain how Cicero's argument retains its relevance today.

Cicero's *On Duties* (44 BC) was written in the context of, as one author calls it, "a society of unequals" (Kinneing 168). The Roman mind was preoccupied with virtue, honor, splendor, and, above all, praise and glory (Long 216). At several places in the text, Cicero defends Roman social hierarchy by appealing to the harmony of classes, and he showed a great deal of ambition and passion for glory himself throughout his life and political career (Long 214–5). At the same time, Cicero's drive to write *On Duties* is motivated by his awareness that the Roman urge to distinguish oneself may come at the expense of justice and the community. Cicero has someone such as Julius Caesar in mind when he writes that "men are led most of all

to being overwhelmed by forgetfulness of justice when they slip into desiring positions of command or honor or glory” (I.26). The problem that Cicero anticipates is that great men who enter positions of power are susceptible to regarding their own actions as standards of excellence. The more they are praised for their actions, the more they imagine their own actions to be the standards of actual merit (Long 217). In other words, on their path to glory they turn their noble ambition of benefiting the greater good into the egoistic ambition for self-aggrandizement, in terms of power or otherwise. In this way, great men may easily lose respect for their community and act as if they are a law unto themselves, at which point the community is no longer benefited but damaged. Once again, Cicero has in mind Julius Caesar, who “overturned all the laws of gods and men for the sake of the pre-eminence that he had imagined for himself in his mistaken fancy” (I.26).

In response to this perverted pursuit of human greatness, Cicero develops an argument in *On Duties* that reconnects glory to *honestum*, that is, to the morally right thing to do. In part I of *On Duties*, he means to give an account of actions that are genuinely honorable, that is, honorable according to nature. Here, “nature” is best understood in distinction to convention; a genuinely honorable action is an action that is honorable whether it is praised by anyone or whether anyone even notices (I.15). This means that Cicero’s argument detaches honor from social approval and instead reconnects honor to what is *inherently* the right thing to do.¹ It thus becomes possible to achieve genuine honor in relative isolation from the whims of the masses or the given structure of a society.

What, then, according to Cicero, is the inherently right thing to do? What are naturally good standards of behavior? Before turning to the text, we should note that these questions bring us closer to the relevance of Cicero’s text to our lives today. In the text, Cicero consciously separates the morally right thing to do from context and, rather, develops an argument based on nature. By referring to standards that transcend place and time, the text essentially defies historical contextualization, and its interpretation lends itself to a more immediate engagement with the argument. The questions about the inherently right thing to do and about naturally good standards of human behavior are *enduring* questions, and Cicero provides answers that create a frame of reference quite different from the egalitarian principles espoused today.

To answer the question about the inherently right thing to do, Cicero starts out with observations about human nature. Two aspects are crucial here. First, human beings have an impulse toward sociability that is based on their natural ability to reason. Cicero connects reason to speech and, in turn, connects speech to community. According to Cicero, it is natural for human beings to socialize with others, to develop a common discourse, and to practice sociability in relationships of obligation and respect (I.12). Humans’ natural ability to reason is inextricably bound to their inclination to build and maintain community. Building and maintaining community requires the performance of duties, which is, of course, what *On Duties* is about.

Second, humans’ ability to reason extends to an impulse to “search for truth” (I.13). This impulse tends to lead them to seek understanding of what is “true, simple, and pure” (I.13). By this activity, Cicero does not mean what the Greeks called *theoria*, which is the contemplation of the universals. Rather, Cicero means by the search

for truth the pursuit of practical wisdom, which results in the ability to perceive order, beauty, and correctness in action as part of a life that is shared (I.17; I.28). The impulse to search for truth develops into the ability to perceive order, beauty, and correctness in action and in a life that is shared, and this leads to understanding the correct thing to do in given circumstances. The human being, according to Cicero, is “the only animal that has a feeling for order, for propriety, for moderation,” and moral goodness consists in achieving “beauty, consistency, order” in thought and deed (I.14). In other words, reason properly used (*recta ratio*) leads to action in accordance with the natural order.

Cicero insists that there is a natural order constituting the proper object of mankind’s natural impulse to seek truth. The natural order is objective, rational, and eternal rather than subjective or temporary. In this way, the natural order understood by right reason dictates human behavior in the same way as laws of physics dictate the movement of objects (cf. III.69). A person who departs from this order in the choices that govern his life and relationships with the community makes as much of a mistake as an engineer who disregards the laws of physics when building a bridge. A man who uses right reason to order his actions correctly performs his duties (*officiis*). This, according to Cicero, is the path to genuine preeminence.

Of course, modern society differs markedly from Cicero’s Rome. We pride ourselves on living in societies that recognize everyone as equal; this is at least our aspiration. As a result, our societies today are less prone to nurture characters as ambitious as the Roman Julius Caesar or—as one of the ACTC conference participants reminded me—the Roman hero Coriolanus, immortalized by both Plutarch and Shakespeare.² If Cicero were to write about duties today, he would probably be most surprised by the lack of ambition, especially in terms of manly prowess and military achievement.³

Therefore, it may be that in modern societies we must guard ourselves less against the destructive ambition of the few and more against the lack of ambition of the many. Nevertheless, if it is true, as Cicero argues, that humanity has a *natural* impulse toward preeminence (I.13), then surely the young—even today—must have the urge to distinguish themselves still. If this is the case, then it is also likely that they are willing to debate what exactly constitutes preeminence, what kind of behavior leads to genuine honor, and, following Cicero’s text, what are the duties that we owe to our fellow human beings today.

Notes

1. Others have already pointed out that Cicero appropriates the Stoic thesis that only the morally good is unconditionally worthwhile, while honor and glory are to be desired on the condition that they are pursued justly (Long 226).

2. See Plutarch “Coriolanus,” in *Plutarch’s Lives*, vol. 1 (New York: Modern Library, 2001); and W. Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* (New York: Norton, 2008). The hero Coriolanus benefits Rome by achieving victory in military pursuits. However, he disdains the honor that the Roman populace attempts to confer on him. Exasperated and unwilling to stoop down to the masses, Coriolanus joins the enemy—the Volscis—to be recognized by those whom he considers his equals. The pact does not last, but it raises our attention to the uneasy relationship

between, on the one hand, human excellence and, on the other hand, one's relationship to and embeddedness in the community.

3. The Roman word for virtue or excellence, *virtus*, is derived from *vir* meaning "man." The principal way to demonstrate one's manliness was through courage on the battlefield.

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Study and Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent

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In this paper, I examine the notion of *studium*—in the sense of study as the means to fulfill our natural desire for knowledge—in the works of Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) and Henry of Ghent (ca. 1217–93), two medieval thinkers who taught at the University of Paris in the second half of the thirteenth century. In their extensive philosophical and theological discussions, these two Parisian masters reflect on the purpose of study and the acquisition of knowledge in our life. Both Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent considered knowledge a fundamental good, a “basic value,” as John Finnis puts it in *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (59). Thomas Aquinas states in his *Summa Theologiae*, in the first article of question 166 of the *Secunda Secundae* on studiousness, that “properly speaking ‘study’ signifies the keen application of the mind to something, but the mind is only applied to something by knowing it. Thus, the mind is first applied towards knowledge and then towards those things to which a human being is directed through knowledge” (342). Aquinas concludes that study primarily regards knowledge and secondarily those things for whose realization we need the direction of knowledge. Henry of Ghent argues in his *Summa*, in his discussion of study and knowledge in article 5, question 6, that “one should not study for the sake of knowing itself, but rather in the practical disciplines in such a way that the knower . . . may be directed towards action, based on what is cognized,” and Henry adds that one should study “in the theoretical disciplines in such a way that the knower may be further kindled towards love” (358). Following these insights from Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent, I explore how study and the acquisition of knowledge are not ends in themselves but ultimately ordered toward the perfection of a human being.

Why do we seek knowledge? In his *Commedia* Dante Alighieri calls Aristotle “I maestro di color che sanno,” that is, “the master of those who know” (*Inferno* IV.131). Indeed Aristotle, and Aristotle’s teleological explanatory framework, serve as a major source for Thomas Aquinas’s philosophical reflections on study and knowledge. In his *Commentary* on the opening claim of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, namely the claim that “all human beings by nature desire to know” (I, 1, 980a21), Aquinas stresses two things: first, the fundamental principle that everything naturally desires its own perfection, and secondly that the human intellect or mind is what makes us human, and that this essential human capacity is only perfected through knowledge (6). Human beings differ from other creatures by their characteristic human function, which is thinking or understanding or, in other words, exercising their minds. Thus, the drive toward study and knowledge is grounded in our essential human nature (*natura*, Greek: *physis*). Aquinas acknowledges that some people do not expend effort (*studium*) toward the acquisition of knowledge, especially knowledge for its own sake. Yet, he argues, this does not contradict Aristotle’s fundamental claim about our nature, since people are often hindered from pursuing a desired goal (*finis*, Greek: *télos*), either because it is difficult to achieve or because they are occupied with other matters (6). They are held back by pleasures or the necessities of life, or they avoid the effort of learning because of their laziness. Thomas affirms with Aristotle that a natural desire is never pointless. In commenting on Book VII of Aristotle’s *Physics*, he adds that the development and exercise of the moral virtues, through which human beings rein in their passions, is especially important for the focused acquisition of knowledge (344).

Knowledge is about what is the case, about what is true; it is an intrinsic good connected to truth. We prefer knowledge to ignorance, and we value knowledge more than mere opinion. Accordingly, in his exposition of the first book of Aristotle’s work *De caelo et mundo*, Aquinas points out that “the study of philosophy does not aim at knowing the opinions of human beings but rather at knowing the truth of things” (“studium philosophiae non est ad hoc quod sciatur quid homines senserint sed qualiter se habeat veritas rerum,” 109). However, as Aquinas points out in his *Sententia libri De anima*, when commenting on the views of Aristotle’s predecessors, there is no guarantee that our efforts to acquire knowledge will be successful. Rather, it is often necessary that people “be taught by others so that they may know the truth; again, the soul is more often in a state of deception than in a state of knowing the truth, because it only comes to a knowledge of the truth after long study” (“ad hoc autem quod veritatem cognoscant oportet quod ab aliis doceantur; et iterum pluri tempore anima est in deceptione quam in cognitione veritatis, quia ad cognitionem veritatis vix pervenitur post studium longi temporis”; 189). According to Aquinas, this supports the conclusion that by nature we have a capacity for knowledge but no innate knowledge that we could just call up. At birth, our mind is blank like an erased board; we acquire mental content and genuine knowledge through a life of experience and learning.

How shall we conceive of the relation between study and other aspects of our life and character? In question 166 of the *Secunda Secundae* of his *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas discusses the notion of *studium* as part of his reflections on human

virtues, and he asks whether diligent study, studiousness in the best sense, can be considered a virtue, as a mean between the extremes of utter neglect and vain curiosity. He concludes that studiousness falls under the scope of moderating temperance. As I have already indicated, in article 1 Aquinas stresses that the goal of study goes beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge:

Properly speaking “study” signifies the keen application of the mind to something, but the mind is only applied to something by knowing it. Thus, the mind is first applied towards knowledge and then towards those things to which a human being is directed through knowledge. And therefore, study primarily regards knowledge and secondarily those things for whose realization we need the direction of knowledge. (342)

Human beings live and orient themselves in the world through their intellect and will, through their cognitive and appetitive capacities, through their beliefs, their knowledge, and their desires. While we seek knowledge for its own sake, we also seek knowledge because it has a directive function, since we rely on our insights into the world around us and into ourselves for all our human activities.

As Aquinas points out in article 2 of this question, knowledge is a good. However, as he explains in his reply to the second initial point, about the interplay between intellect and will, a further good is the cognitive act itself when it is indeed directed *rightly*, that is, at the right kind of objects. Hence the evaluation of knowledge includes a reference to our rational appetitive capacity, namely to our will, and to the kinds of objects it desires:

The act of the cognitive power is governed by the appetitive power, which moves all powers. . . . And therefore, with respect to knowledge there is a twofold good: One concerns the act of knowledge/cognition itself. And this good pertains to intellectual virtues and consists in man’s having a true judgment about each thing. The other good pertains to the act of the appetitive power and consists in man’s appetite being directed rightly in applying the cognitive power in this or that way to this or that thing. And this pertains to the virtue of studiousness. Therefore, studiousness is counted among the moral virtues. (344)

Knowledge is inextricably linked to truthful thinking, to true judgment about any object, even ourselves. True judgment is crucial for a person’s development in all aspects of life, a point repeatedly emphasized in Garrigou-Lagrange’s classic *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation* (370). Moreover, for Thomas Aquinas there is always an appetitive, indeed a moral, dimension to our study and pursuit of knowledge. As Sertillanges has stressed in *La vie intellectuelle*, the life of the mind is about submitting oneself to the discipline of work and to the discipline of the true, which requires a genuine humility (130).

To grasp human nature and explain characteristically human activities, we need to look to the ultimate end of a human being. As Herbert McCabe says in *The Good Life*, “You do not just *happen* to be human, being human is *what it takes for you to exist*” (79–80). Let us turn to the relevant discussion in Henry of Ghent’s *Summa*. The opening articles of Henry’s *Summa* deal with the scope and the limits of human knowledge. Henry states in article 3, question 2, that “the proper operation of a human being insofar as he is a human being is to know and to understand, since it is

his operation according to intellect and reason, through which he is truly a human being, according to the Philosopher [Aristotle] in Book X of the [*Nicomachean Ethics*]” (250–51). Thus, what makes human beings human is their use of reason. It is no coincidence that Henry refers to Aristotle’s discussion of the contemplative life in the final book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (cf. 1178a5–8), since this marks the culmination of Aristotle’s analysis of the human function (*érgon*) and what counts as performing it with virtue or excellence (*aretê*). The right performance of the human function is intimately tied to happiness, the ultimate end of human well-being. In the first question of article 5, which deals with the notion of *studium*, Henry describes this ultimate end in terms of our pursuit of knowledge:

There is one end for human life at which a human being seeks to arrive, namely the complete comprehension of the highest true thing, at which [comprehension] he cannot arrive unless he progresses, as on a path, in cognizing through other true things that are related to it. . . . However, he can only progress through comprehension from one thing to another by diligently seeking knowledge, since human beings acquire knowledge only through study and inquiry. (317)

Henry thus emphasizes our effort, our study and investigation. According to him, human beings in this life are appropriately described as pilgrims. Henry stresses the rational, discursive nature of the human mind and its activity in article 5, question 6, where he explains “the mode of acquiring knowledge through rational deduction, by proceeding from what is known to what is unknown, so that what is unknown may be cognized through what is known” (356). Performing our human function involves gradual cognitive progress; it is a continuing, lifelong endeavor.

What is the scope, what is the reach of this characteristically human endeavor? In article 3, question 4, Henry describes our human cognitive capacities as significantly limited in their scope, in the way a craftsman’s tools are limited to his craft. For instance, “through the tool of the blacksmith’s craft a blacksmith cannot bring about the work of a carpenter” (258). By analogy, the tools or capacities with which human cognizers operate are suited chiefly for encountering the sensible, material world. As Aquinas had asserted in his treatise on human nature in the first part of the *Summa Theologiae*, question 84, article 8, “everything we understand in the present state we cognize in relation to sensible, natural realities” (328).

For Henry of Ghent, however, knowledge is not merely an end. In article 5, question 6, Henry asks whether a human being should study to acquire knowledge for the sake of knowing itself, *propter se*, and he presents several preliminary arguments that purport to show that the end of study is knowledge as such. Henry distinguishes two senses of the phrase “for its own sake” (*propter*). He concedes that formally the delightful character of knowledge and grasping the truth is valuable in itself, but he adds that this does not exclude its having another end that allows for a further teleological analysis. Henry focuses on the entire person, the knower:

In this life, one should not study for the sake of knowing itself, but rather in the practical disciplines in such a way that the knower, through acquired knowledge, may be directed towards action based on what is cognized, and in the theoretical disciplines in such a way that the knower may be further kindled towards love. (358)

In this way, knowledge will serve the knower in all her complexity as a human thinker and agent: in practical matters for directing her actions and in theoretical matters for strengthening her appreciation of the objects of contemplation. Thus, to give just one example, knowledge of moral philosophy is not about our knowledge of virtue but rather about our becoming good: “*praesens negotium non est ut sciamus, sed ut boni fiamus,*” says Henry, citing Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, 2, 1103b26–28. In this manner Henry clarifies the functions of study and knowledge within his overall account of human nature and its completion, which already presupposes a set of principles and values.

Our diligent pursuit of theoretical understanding ultimately aims at directing us toward those cognized things that are in fact worth valuing, worth loving. As Sertillanges has put it, love is the common *point de départ* of knowledge and *praxis* (24). Ideally, study and knowledge are ordered toward the perfection of the knower. For this reason, any adequate account of human knowledge and learning must begin with an explanation of the goal, namely the well-being and completion of the entire person.

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Montaigne, Schopenhauer, and the Wisdom of Living Well

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Their ostensible topics notwithstanding, Montaigne's *Essays*, "the excrements," as he called them, "of an aged mind,"¹ are catalysts for self-reflection. Whatever the subject under discussion, the notorious divagations of this precursor of Rousseau served him as a means to palpate his way to what is for each of us our paramount task in life: the understanding of self. "I dare not only to speak of myself," he admits in his essay *Of the Art of Discussion*, "but to speak only of myself; I go astray when I write of anything else," though "I do not love myself so indiscriminately . . . that I cannot distinguish and consider myself apart, as I do a neighbor or a tree" (720).

Not egotism but the wish to live sensibly motivates this introspection; for if we know who we are, we know what suits us, and we can tailor our actions accordingly. The whole point of his essay *Of Repentance* is that a life lived in congruity with our nature saves us from looking back with ineffectual regret or self-reproach. This does not mean that we are necessarily pleased with who we are: there is hardly one of us who has not at some immature stage of life wished to go back for a second chance—on condition, of course, that we could do things differently. Montaigne, serenely levelheaded, would scoff at this desire as pointless wishing for the impossible.

At every turn in the *Essays* we find gems of insight. "What would I not do rather than read a contract" (728), he says, much as one might confess to being an irredeemable procrastinator. He is disinclined (*le mot juste*) to discommode himself with obligations; and his reluctance to burden others with advice is the natural obverse of his reluctance to be in turn inconvenienced by them. He tells us in that fine piece *Of Husbanding One's Will* that he resists wasting himself in multiple or impassioned ac-

tivity. He knows well enough to avoid passions and complications rather than try to temper them once begun. Honesty is more than a precondition to these confessions; it is Montaigne's *oriflamme*. He is not shy to advertise his shortcomings. "I have this other worse habit," he says almost proudly in his essay *On Vanity*, "that if I have one shoe on wrong, I also leave my shirt and my cloak on wrong. I scorn to reform half-way. . . . I abandon myself in despair . . . and, as they say, throw the handle after the ax" (722). We don't object to this candor; though his no less candid admission that he would sooner sacrifice a woman's brains than her looks is no doubt bound to offend some readers, just as his melancholy verdict on the state of his genitals or his digression on the fact that he ejaculates prematurely might seem at best gratuitous disclosures. There is hardly an essay that does not garnish its ideas with generously quoted tidbits from his favorite authors, above all Plutarch, Seneca, Ovid, Horace. No writer pilfers so much from others yet thinks so much for himself. Altogether his wisdom is refreshingly counterintuitive. To criticize others when guilty of the same fault oneself, he observes, does not invalidate the justice of the criticism. Opposition to his views arouses his interest, not his ire. It is better, he insists, never to acquire virtues than to acquire them late in life.

If there is a danger in this tolerant coexistence with oneself, it is in the possible resignation to passivity and the risk of repeating our mistakes, as if experience has taught us nothing. Montaigne indulges his contradictions and weaknesses as a fond parent would a spoiled child. Nowhere is his disinclination to abandon habits more evident than in his absurd notions on diet; at least he keeps these to himself, anticipating what Proust (his spiritual descendant as an anatomist of human passions) was to observe in his own discursive masterpiece: that the hardest thing next to following a regimen is to avoid trying to impose it on others.

At first blush nothing would seem further from Montaigne's casual subjectivity than the comprehensive vision of Schopenhauer more than two centuries later. His masterpiece is *The World as Will and Representation*, a fusion of metaphysics, esthetics, and ethics, the exposition, as its author says, of a single thought, what we might call an epiphany grasped in an intuitive moment and then elucidated in argumentative stages. There are weaknesses, of course, as there are in any attempt to fit life's multiplicity into a single schema. His attempt, for instance, to correlate musical tones to what we commonly know as The Great Chain of Being is one of Schopenhauer's sillier moments. In his judgments of art he reveals the prejudices of his period. More importantly, his linking of the individual Will to the presumed existence of a universal Will demands nothing short of a leap of faith; but there is no other way to argue what cannot perhaps ever be confirmed scientifically. "Will" is what Schopenhauer calls the driving force that inheres in all creation, what corresponds to the Self in humans and to the laws of nature in inanimate matter. This is a single universal energy, just as we might say that Beethoven's music is a single thing, manifesting itself in various creative flora, now as a string quartet, now as a symphony, now as a piano sonata. Dylan Thomas, it seems to me, meant something of the sort in his poem "The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower." But all through Schopenhauer we meet dazzling insights, especially in Book 3 on Esthetics and Book 4 on Ethics: his inspired correction of Plato's theory of forms and its relation to art;

his fine distinction between the nominal and the real subject of a work of art; his view of life as a perpetual pendulum between the polarities of pain and boredom; his view of the abject condition under which the masses live life enslaved to the tyranny of the Will; his discussion of suffering; his Buddhist views on the renunciation of desire; his discussion of genius and its sublimation of the Will; his fantastically counter-intuitive exposition of suicide, convincingly fitted to his comprehensive schema. I will limit myself to discussing just one of his penetrating distinctions: the difference between what he terms the *intelligible* self and the *empirical* self.

“There is no one who, if he listens to himself, does not discover in himself a pattern all his own” (615), says Montaigne, who, having discovered his, orients his life accordingly. Schopenhauer would agree: this individuated pattern is what he calls the “intelligible self,” that which is contained within the circumference of our personality, that which makes each of us distinct and different from anyone else. Though we are—and can be—many things, we are not—and cannot be—anything. I think this is clearly seen in the life achievement of a great artist, which is inevitably an exfoliation of the artist’s distinctive self. Time, says Schopenhauer, by subjecting us to experiences (which elicit specific reactions from us), is the chemical reagent that reveals this intelligible self, so that we come to know ourselves in the same gradual and piecemeal fashion that we come to know others, ever better, though never at any given point in life completely. This incrementally and partially revealed character is what Schopenhauer calls the “empirical self.” Now, unless certain experiences happen to us—and their happening is contingent—there are latent aspects of our nature that we will never come to know. In consequence, our inescapably distorted view of ourselves is responsible for generating the problems that cause our unhappiness. We pursue wrong goals. We fail to understand the true motives of our actions, especially when preserving our good self-opinion requires that the Will operative in us conceal these from our awareness. Often it is only in experiencing disappointment or shame that we recognize what our unconscious desires had been. We have all at some time or other experienced surprise at the self that we imagined we knew so well. I would compare such epiphanies to the anomalies in science that produce results incompatible with the current paradigm: they call for a revision of our self-conception—never a matter of mere accretion (as if we knew five things about ourselves and suddenly know six) but a realignment.

Clearly the empirical self cannot be different from the intelligible self since it is a progressive unveiling of it. We act out the predeterminations of our nature, and this leads Schopenhauer to a denial of free will. His view here is different from Montaigne’s. When Montaigne confesses that he has set out to “portray a particular [man], very ill-formed, whom I should really make very different from what he is if I had to fashion him over again” (610), he seems to imply that we have grown to become what we are. For Schopenhauer we are what we have always been and what inescapably we will continue to be; but since self-knowledge is *a posteriori*, we don’t see that this is so or appreciate the logical corollaries. And so we spend our lives agonizing over goals and means, tormenting our conscience with all sorts of plans and desires, all the while failing to see that these might be outside the periphery of possibility for our nature and hence irrelevant. We envy the life we see someone

else living, not realizing that such a life, if unsuited to us, would, even if achievable, only make us unhappy. Most people, instead of following their own imperative, subvert the natural order of things by submitting to the prejudices of their society and worrying about the views of others. What we see in our own society confirms Schopenhauer's indictment. The major decisions in the lives of most people are made by default—for instance, the decision to enter college or marry or procreate. Our future-oriented society urges us to postpone the quality of life in the actual present for hypothetical rewards to accrue in the future; and the ensuing sacrifice is given moral validation as a virtue, while deflection from these long-term goals is censured as short-sighted. Yet in truth the only reality is the present; past and future exist only as memory and anticipation—which is not to deny their influence on our actions. It seems to me that we ought at least occasionally to examine our life (Montaigne reminds us how rarely people do so) and ask: between this diurnal present and that hypothetical future, am I in the process of living well this life of mine, this “brief vigil of the senses”?² “The value of the soul,” Montaigne says, “consists not in flying high, but in an orderly pace. Its greatness is exercised not in greatness, but in mediocrity” (614). In other words, the difficulty of living well in the moment—in the passing of each day—is what we most underestimate.

I have found that it is not unusual for people, at some point in midlife, to become interested in resuming the threads of dropped friendships. In part it is a means of measuring our life trajectory against the alternative trajectories taken by others. It is also in midlife that people find themselves at their unhappiest, having come far enough to realize that certain longings and dreams will never be fulfilled, yet not far enough to be reconciled to the fact. Schopenhauer notes something similar: it is not the manifestly impossible desires that cause us anguish but, rather, those things that we think would have been possible had we but acted differently. Our sharpest condiment to this misery is the perceived disparity between what life has given us and what we think we deserve—in other words, not simply the fact of not having, but rather our telling ourselves that we *ought* to have, while conscious of not having.

To appreciate the value of Schopenhauer's discussion is not hard: his holistic vision clarifies lucidly the universal laws of human nature, and it is no surprise that great artists like Tolstoy and Proust have come under its spell. We might wonder, on the other hand, what value there is in Montaigne's intimate disclosures to us, as when he volunteers the remark that in pursuing women, “Never was a man more impertinently genital” (679). Of course, he is never uninteresting. But I think his greatest virtue is that, like Schopenhauer, he excites the admiration we cannot help feeling when we listen to the discourse of an independent mind, whether we ultimately agree with the views expressed or not. Like anyone who thinks for himself, Montaigne is guaranteed to offend where he does not inspire. Either way, as we listen to him descant on his idiosyncrasies—that he learns better by contrast than by example, by warning than by exhortation, by avoidance than by emulation, or that he prefers never to be with company than never to be alone—we are prompted at once to ponder our own predispositions. He rouses the mind from lethargy. Proust would say that in reading Montaigne we are, above all, readers of ourselves. After all, the *Essays* are a catalyst to the enlargement of the reader's empirical self, as consciousness reclaims

from obscurity more of the territory of our inner being.

In counterpointing Montaigne and Schopenhauer, I have no desire to suggest any absurdly simplistic antinomy between national temperaments, the rational Teutonic and the *laissez-faire* Gallic; it is really a contrast between two distinct individuals. To my knowledge, Schopenhauer has left no comments on Montaigne beyond the observations that his French was still quite readable and that Montaigne, like other highly active minds, liked to sleep a lot. I have no doubt that Montaigne would have found Schopenhauer's notion of sublimating the tyranny of the Will at the very least absurd, if not incomprehensible. But with regard to the wisdom of living a happy life, the two are in considerable agreement. "If," says Schopenhauer, "we have already recognized once for all our good qualities and strong points as well as our defects and weaknesses; if we have fixed our aim accordingly, and rest content about the unattainable, we thus escape in the surest way, as far as our individuality allows, that bitterest of all sufferings, dissatisfaction with ourselves, which is the inevitable consequence of ignorance of our own individuality."³ "The most barbarous of our maladies," affirms Montaigne, is "to despise our being" (852). And in this finest of all his essays, *Of Experience*, he ends with this wisest of all admonitions: "It is an absolute perfection and virtually divine to know how to enjoy our being rightfully. We seek other conditions because we do not understand our own, and go outside of ourselves because we do not know what it is like inside. Yet there is no use mounting on stilts, for on stilts we must still walk on our own legs. And on the loftiest throne in the world, we are still sitting only on our own rump" (857). That they are not original ideas, these marvelous reformulations of that facile cliché, *know thyself*, is beside the point, or perhaps it is precisely the point: to recall the pungent truism of probably the most over-quoted of eighteenth-century British savants, what people need is not so much to be informed as to be reminded.

Notes

1. Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*. Trans. Donald M. Frame. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1957. Print. All subsequent citations by page number to this edition.
2. Dante, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*. 1970. Trans. Charles S. Singleton. Princeton: Princeton UP: Bollingen Series LXXX, 1977. Canto XXVI, 279. Print.
3. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. 1958. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover, 1969. Vol. 1, 307. Print.

Augustine and the Reinvention of Natural Philosophy

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What I hope to do in this article is make a case that St. Augustine is not as fundamentally opposed to the study of natural philosophy as some have suggested. Rather, his criticism of physicists is specific to his time and place, and the proposition of creation *ex nihilo* is a sort of response to the criticism he makes of science. More important, it is Augustine who allows the study of nature to be eventually reconciled with the study of God.

In Augustine's *Confessions*, we meet our hero as an ambitious and curious—although slightly undirected—youth. Rejecting the Christianity of his childhood, and “Puffed up with pride” (40), as he tells us, Augustine begins his studies at Carthage and soon becomes a follower of the Manichees, a movement founded by an Iranian prophet named Mani. What the Manichees offer is a sort of rational response to the variety of spiritual traditions extant at this time, including many from beyond the borders of the Roman Empire—and the promise that through hard work and dedication and discipline one might obtain the knowledge and certainty they want to possess. In this respect, they are like any other Gnostic cult or mystery religion of the era. But the Manichees are also marked by a sort of evangelical spirit that leads them to actively recruit promising young men and to cultivate them in both their private and public lives.

Augustine describes his initial experience with the Manichees as a sort of seduction. He already knows himself to be a seeker of wisdom, but as he lacks it—as well as an understanding of the true reality of the Christian God—he easily falls prey to a group he will later call “stupid deceivers” (43). But Augustine finds a sort of home

among the Manichees, who provide him with their own answers to the questions that vex his mind—about good and evil and the nature of God. In fact, during his time with the Manichees, Augustine seems more concerned about learning the secrets and the true teachings of his borrowed faith than for the salvation of his soul or even leading a morally upright life. Throughout his journey Augustine expresses a desire to learn and to know the truth.

One of the difficulties the Manichees attempt to resolve is the problem of evil. Their solution presupposes an evil God—the God we see described in the Old Testament—a Demiurge who created the material world and is opposed by the good and spiritual God—the true God of the New Testament. Their claim is that the entire material world is evil, and our salvation lies in an escape to the world of pure spirit. The heavens, according to Mani, give us glimpses of these cosmic battles through the occasion of events such as eclipses. On some level, the dualism of the Manichees appeals to Augustine, an aspiring intellectual who grew up on a provincial farm, but he has learned the scientific account of the material world—particularly with respect to astronomy. In Augustine's words:

Nevertheless, I used to recall many true observations made by them [the astronomers] about the creation itself. I particularly noted the rational, mathematical order of things, the order of the seasons, the visible evidence of the stars. I compared these with the sayings of Mani who wrote much on these matters very copiously and foolishly. I did not notice any rational account of solstices and equinoxes or eclipses or luminaries nor anything resembling what I had learnt in the books of secular wisdom. Yet I was ordered to believe Mani. But he was not in agreement with the rational explanations which I had verified by calculation and observed with my own eyes. His account was very different. (*Confessions*, 75)

In the very next passage, Augustine explains that one who has knowledge of natural science is not on that account pleasing to God, nor does this knowledge replace or augment the happiness one must find in God. He then compares this to a man who can give thanks for the use of a tree and its fruits, while some other might know its height and breadth and the number of its branches and yet can take no pleasure in this knowledge alone. But there are two significant points to make here.

First, Augustine's own experience with astronomy and mathematics helps draw him away from the errors of the Manichees. Thus, his grasp of certain particular truths about nature leads him toward the deeper and more universal truth about God, just as the secular works of Cicero, the Platonists, and others prepared him to become a lover of the wisdom offered by Christianity.

The second point is that this branch of natural science—the description of things seen in the heavens—even though this description contains predictive power, does not penetrate to true causes. Eternal motion has, by its very definition, always been as it is now, and thus cannot be attributed to some external or prior cause.

The latter point is crucial if we are to appreciate the transformation Augustine makes to our understanding of science itself. The natural philosophers of Greece and Rome, just as those in this day and age, seek to explain and understand the visible and material world through the mechanism of natural causes. An alternative view, that the events we observe are the consequence of actions by good or bad or indiffer-

ent gods and spirits and minor or major deities, was still extant in classical Rome and certainly paid homage to in polite society but was not taken seriously by those who considered themselves wise or educated. This is part of Augustine's criticism of the pagans in the early portion of his *City of God*.

Meanwhile, the "physicists," as Aristotle calls them, are from virtually their first appearance accused of atheism precisely because their search for natural causes leaves little if any room for the gods of antiquity. By Augustine's time, natural scientists have long established themselves in two more or less competing traditions, which we might call the Aristotelians and the Epicureans.

The natural philosophy of Epicurus draws on the atomic theory of Democritus and is popularized in Roman times by the poet Lucretius. This system is effectively atheistic, accounting for all appearances and change by postulating the motion of tiny atoms that come together and fall apart at random through otherwise infinite empty space, and pointing out that truly happy and immortal beings would have no concern for the affairs of humans. The goal of Lucretius and Epicurus before him is for man to focus his energy and efforts on his present life rather than the next, a position inherently incompatible with the purpose of Christianity.

For the followers of Aristotle, the gods, if they exist at all, must be found within the spatially finite yet temporally eternal universe. The cause of all motion and change can be traced to a first or prime mover, described in the final sentence of the *Physics* as "indivisible and without parts and without magnitude" (394). The Aristotelian scientist must necessarily become a sort of pantheist, looking to nature itself as eternal and the cause of all being—or at least all beings—including any gods. This, for the Christian Augustine, is a dead end, for it does not and cannot lead to the salvation of one's soul.

Augustine, is, however, a proponent of the work of the neo-Platonists, writing in *City of God*:

We rate the Platonists above the rest of the philosophers. The others have employed their talents and concentrated their interests on the investigation of the causes of things, of the method of acquiring knowledge, and the rules of the moral life, while the Platonists, coming to a knowledge of God, have found the cause of the organized universe, the light by which the truth is perceived, and the spring which offers the drink of felicity. (313)

This, despite the fact that, as Augustine points out, "even Plato himself thought it right to render worship to a plurality of Gods" (316).

Now, at first glance it might seem that Augustine is suggesting we forgo any study of the natural world whatsoever. But this cannot be the case and is not the intention of Augustine. Rather, Augustine asks us to reject the notion that nature can be studied and understood without recognizing the action of the Creator. He expressly rejects the Manichee belief that the physical world is inherently corrupt, as it was created by God and God declares it to be good. In fact, just as the careful study of spiritual questions can lead one on the path to God—as it had for the Platonists and for Augustine himself—a careful and humble study of the physical world might lead one to truths about God as well.

We have already seen once how Augustine used his knowledge of astronomy to

refute certain claims of the Manichees. He describes another step in his journey away from their cosmology in his discussion of Genesis in books 12 and 13 of the *Confessions*. Augustine recalls questioning the idea of “formless matter” and the nature of being and says:

I concentrated my attention on the bodies themselves and gave a more critical examination to the mutability by which they cease to be what they were and begin to be what they were not. I suspected that this passing from form to form took place by means of something that had no form, yet was not absolutely nothing. I wanted to know, not to suspect. (248)

He seems to have found a sort of limit to unaided human reason. But he discovers a solution in the revealed truth of Scripture and concludes, “Where could this capacity come from except from you [God], from whom everything has being insofar as it has being” (249).

Augustine does not reject outright the study of our natural world. Rather, he rejects the search for causes in the natural world when this search is artificially cut off from the cause of the universe itself, the source of its order, and “the light by which the truth is perceived.” He recognizes that a study of nature that ignores or denies the existence of the Creator leads to making nature itself into a god or rejecting the existence of any rational order whatsoever, thus rendering the cosmos unknowable and meaningless.

Thus, the new idea of “creation *ex nihilo*” is the seed whose fruit allows for the reinvention of the natural philosophy of antiquity into the natural science of the Christian world. And although this idea lay virtually dormant for more than 800 years, it provides a key for Thomas Aquinas to read Aristotle in the light of Christian revelation, thus making the rediscovered “Philosopher” a permissible subject of study and a source of enlightenment. More generally, by suggesting that God creates nature rather than that nature spawns the gods, the commonly accepted structure of cosmology is overthrown, and with that the premise that the world is fundamentally arbitrary or nonrational. After Augustine, the causes and order and laws of nature that we discover can be seen as a consequence of the cause of the universe, the source of its order, and the giver of its laws.

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Transcendence to Reality in Plato and Dante

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I begin with a bold claim, stated as provocatively as possible: Plato and Dante say essentially the same thing about what it means to live transcendentally within the real world. Briefly stated, this life consists in seeking the transcendent ground of being in the world together with others in charitable response to an erotically noetic vision inspired and mediated by the love of another human being. This seeking is both intellectual and passionate, theoretical and practical, private and communal. It involves moral, political, and pedagogical action; its intellectual aspect both proceeds from and returns to the love of another human being; and its ultimate source and object is not just conceptually described, but depicted through images, and always as to some degree both ineffable, transcendent, and elusive; and yet at the same time inspiring, immanent, and progressively present for one who undertakes the journey to encounter it.

Let us start with Plato, with particular focus on the cave image, which will then form the basis of our comparison of Plato with Dante. Here we should first recall that Plato introduces the images of the sun, line, and cave as explicitly inadequate accounts of the ultimate object of knowledge and our journey to it—images of “crooked and ugly” opinions, as Socrates puts it (506b–e). This ultimate object is called “the idea of the Good” and is described, on analogy with the sun, as the source of intellectual light and of our apprehension of beings in that light (truth and knowledge), and as the ground of the being of intellectual objects, the forms, and through them of everything else—though it is itself “beyond being” (508b–9b; cf. 517c). In the cave, presented explicitly as an account of our “education and lack thereof,” the Good is made the ul-

timate object of a journey that begins in the shadowy bowels of the cave and requires a long and difficult struggle to reach. Here we note the dependence of the prisoner on assistance from an unnamed liberator, the description of the prisoner's progress as an initial painful, coercive "dragging," followed by his emergence into the light and the gradual acclimation of his vision, culminating in the direct contemplation of the sun, and finally, his subsequent descent back into the cave in order to share the benefits of his enlightenment with the cave dwellers, as a liberator in his own right. Some key questions to address here are the following: (1) Who is the liberator? (2) Whom does the liberator liberate? (3) How does the liberator liberate? (4) To what extent is liberation possible? (5) Why does the liberator seek to liberate?

To the first question, the identity of the liberator: certain clues—above all the references to his trial and execution—make it clear that Socrates himself is the prototypical liberator (517a, d). Whom, then, does he liberate? At his trial Socrates says he talks to anyone who will listen, with widely varying results; but among those who do make progress, certainly Plato himself counts as Socrates' greatest success. As for *how* he succeeds (3), the dialogues show Socrates regularly turning his fellow citizens away from their unreflective opinions (the shadows) and their conventional source (the artifacts) and leading them to knowledge of genuine reality (the beings outside the cave) and the ultimate ground of truth (the sun) through a combination of elenchus-induced *aporia* and dialectical discourse—i.e., a sustained dialogue concerning the nature of virtue, goodness, knowledge, and other such fundamental topics. In this way, they gain a progressively greater understanding of the nature and purpose of human life, its relation to eternal standards of truth, value, and being, and their unity in an ultimate first principle: the idea of the Good. The goal, then, is to apprehend the Good and comprehend everything else on its basis.

But to what extent is this goal attainable? That is our fourth question. Should we infer that Plato and Socrates have contemplated the idea of the Good and understood everything else in its light, because they seek to lead others to contemplate it? This is equivalent to asking whether they became comprehensively wise in the way required of the philosopher-kings. While we cannot say for sure, we can at least say that Socrates never claims to know the Good, and rather strongly suggests that he does not, which is entirely in keeping with his famous claim to possess only "human wisdom," described in the *Apology* as only knowing that he does not know (cf. 20d, 21d, 23a–b). As for Plato, we never have anything like an attempt to give a comprehensive account of the Good, not even in the *Philebus*, which is expressly devoted to this topic. Nor do we ever get a systematic account of the whole in the light of a unifying first principle. Nor is this surprising since, in fact, Plato and Socrates never lived in the ideal city with its ideal education system designed to produce comprehensively wise philosophers. It would seem, then, that they never left the cave. In the real world, everyone always lives in the cave, if the cave is the mundane world of imperfect regimes and generated beings. Yet somehow Socrates liberated Plato, at least so far as that was possible, and Plato in writing his dialogues seems to be concerned with liberating others. It would seem, then, that one can gain sparks of illumination from within the cave, see beings, even if not comprehensively, in the light of their transcendent source, the ground of beings beyond being, and that such

imperfect insight is itself sufficient to motivate the pursuit of a more adequate vision of it together with the attempt to bring others to see it.

But why? Why does the liberator liberate? Why is the glimpse of the Good motivating in this way? As the engendering and informing power responsible for the existence and essence (*einai* and *ousia*) of all beings (509b), the idea of the Good is the ultimate benefactor and giver and certainly without any expectation of receiving anything in return. It is not accidental, then, that Plato has Socrates call it the Good and describe it explicitly as the source of the goodness of justice and everything else. Its link to justice is also suggested by the orderly and harmonious relations of forms, which Socrates says are imitated by one who consorts with them in philosophic activity (500b–c).¹ Simply put, then, Socrates and Plato seek to liberate others because even their imperfect insight into the idea of the Good, the ultimate ground of beings, inspires such activity. Calling this activity simply “just” is inadequate, however, because no debt is owed to these others, as Socrates observes. A better word, though one fraught with misleading connotations, is “charitable.”

With that, I turn to Dante. Here let us note the following parallels. Beatrice seeks to liberate Dante as Socrates sought to liberate Plato—not out of any obligation to him, but as a matter of charity and as a direct consequence of her relationship to God (who sparks her activity through the mediation of Mary and Lucy; cf. *Inf.* ii, 58–114). Just as Socrates enlightened others, including Plato, through confronting them with their mistakes and misunderstandings and engaging them in dialectic, Beatrice enlightens Dante first by confronting him directly with his failings, as she does in their memorably disappointing first meeting on the top of Purgatory (*Purg.* xxx–xxxi), and then by teaching him through dialectical engagement as they ascend upward through Paradise. While Beatrice in life was not Dante’s teacher, but rather his romantic idol, his love for her is gradually purified as he transforms her in his poem into a philosophical and theological educator and a saintly prism through which he perceives and desires the divine. She becomes Christlike, in other words, as his symbol-laden depiction of her appearance to him on the mount of Purgatory makes unmistakably clear (*Purg.* xxx, 1–33), in a way analogous, perhaps, to Plato’s description of Socrates in the *Symposium* as a Silenus-like figure, filled with divine images (215b, 216d–217a).

Responding to this presence of the transcendent in human form, both Dante and Plato come to regard their liberating mentors as mediators, guides, and conveyors rather than direct objects of devotion, and in response they both take on the role of guides and mediators themselves in the composing of their works. They both seek to educate and reform their readers and their larger societies. This task requires not just intellectual instruction but also moral and spiritual inspiration, because the goal is not just to learn something different but to learn to live differently. To this end, instructing, persuading, rebuking, and exhorting are all necessary means. Consequently, both philosophy and poetry, argument as well as rhetoric and imagery, are needed, and so we find both in both works.

And in each of these areas we may note substantial similarities as well. Rhetorically, as a means of rebuking, persuading, and exhorting more effectively, both use real places and real people to call home the real-world implications of their writings.

Both name names—as Plato names Alcibiades and Aristophanes, for example, and Dante names Guido da Montefeltro and Pope Nicholas III (cf. *Inf.* xviii, xxvii). No churchman or politician can remain smug and sanctimonious after reading Dante’s poem, just as no poet or aristocrat can remain blithely self-confident after reading Plato’s dialogues. Both directly confront the forms, theories, and practices of politics in their worlds. Both confront the theories and practices of religion. And in all these cases, the source and aim of reform is rooted in a vision of the ultimate ground of reality: God for Dante and the Good for Plato.

The process of reform, similarly, is depicted in terms of a journey, both individual and collective, toward that ground as its goal. Dante’s journey, like Plato’s, is described in terms of an upward ascent followed by a descent back to “real” life in order to carry out his mission. For both, upward progress toward the goal is accomplished through stages of self-recognition, confronting of false idols, struggle for moral and intellectual improvement, and so on, which we find depicted in Dante’s journey up the mountain of Purgatory and in the prisoner’s slow and painful journey up to the mouth of the cave. At the summit of Purgatory, we find a transformation depicted, in Dante’s case in the transition from Virgil to Beatrice, signaled by the successful reform of his moral character, so that he now desires just what he should, and *eros* without further struggle can lead up him upward (*Purg.* xxvii, 130–42). Similarly, it is only at the cave entrance that the prisoner no longer has to be “dragged” upward but, in seeing the light for himself, desires only to gain an ever more adequate ability to behold the objects that it illuminates in the upper world and, ultimately, to gaze on the source of light, the sun itself. His gaze must adjust by stages, as we see Dante’s gaze adjusting, his regular bedazzlement by Beatrice and the other blessed souls being progressively overcome until he, too, is capable of beholding God himself in the Rose of the Empyrean, as the escaped prisoner is said to behold the sun itself (cf. *Rep.* 515e–16b, *Para.* xxxiii, 46–145).

This goal is envisioned, however, not actually achieved, and not adequately described. A regular trope of the *Paradiso* is Dante the poet’s increasing inability to describe or even remember what he says he saw in his vision of Heaven (e.g., *Par.* i, 4–12), which turns to complete silence at the moment his vision is perfected, or as nearly perfected as it can be; for it is at this moment that the poem ends. What he does say about the object of his contemplation is put in terms of various images, increasingly but never fully adequate to their model, as the sun is by no means an adequate image of the Good. For Dante, the images culminate in the “effigy” of man in the second of the three circles representing the Trinity, followed by a description—not of God—but of himself in his response to this vision, his “desire and will” being “moved already—like / a wheel revolving uniformly—by / the Love that moves the sun and the other stars” (*Par.* xxxiii, 127–45). Intellectual-mystical vision of the Christ, the most perfect presence of the divine in the human, the transcendent in the mundane, is followed by active response, just as the prisoner’s vision of the good in its relation to the whole of reality is followed by his return to reform the cave dwellers. This response in Dante’s case and on his own account will become his writing of the poem in the attempt to educate and improve others as he was educated and improved. Charitable action is the effect of beholding God, as we see also in

the charitable action of all the blessed souls, not just Beatrice, toward Dante and the Earth in general (*cf.*, e.g. *Par.* iii, 43–87).

Again, though, we must emphasize that the vision is itself a poetic fiction, as is the prisoner's beholding of the sun in the *Republic*. In the real world, glimpses are possible, but one does not gaze perfectly or unceasingly on God or the good. The fiction is not just a fiction;² however, in either case: it is meant to capture the reality of a journey and its goal in terms that abstract from real life but that can only ever be realized by the living *in* real life, for they are part of life. The journey to God or the Good is undertaken by the living, not the dead, in the world, not in heaven—whether the heaven of the forms or the heaven of blessed souls. Ascent and descent are different aspects of one and the same journey and orientation to the ineffable ground and goal of goodness, truth, and being, when we understand their real application beyond poetry and philosophy to us and in life.

Notes

1. Note also the requirement, stated by Plato in the 7th Letter, that one must be just oneself in order to grasp justice or the good of anything (343e ff.).
2. I am alluding here to the famous statement by Charles Singleton, "The fiction of the *Comedy* is that it is not fiction" (62).

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**Reading Modern Classics
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Reading Darwin in the Real World: Human Descent v. Human Ascent

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In the book of Genesis (1:27) we read that “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Elsewhere in Genesis (2:7), we read that “then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” Quoting these passages from Genesis would seem a strange place to begin a paper with Darwin in the title. This said, I find the Genesis juxtaposition of humanity’s dusty, earthly, origins with the elevated, apparently spiritual “image of God” origin(s) a very suitable beginning for a paper where I wish to explore a list of real world “who are we?” questions regarding humanity, invoking Darwin as a resource. These questions include all of the following: How are human beings related to the rest of the biological and natural world? How are human beings “in nature” and to some extent “out of nature”? How are human beings exactly the same as the rest of the biological, zoological world? And how are they also, in some respect, different from the rest of the nonhuman, biological-zoological world? I characterize this contrast as the distinction, or even possibly the disparity, between human “descent” and human “ascent.”

In Darwin’s 1859 first edition of the *On the Origin of Species*, the only absolutely transparent reference to humanity’s role in the evolutionary, natural selection process, he includes at the very end his *Origin* opus. Darwin simply says:

In the distant future, I see open fields for more important researches. . . . Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history. (Chap. XIV, 488)

There is much historical, scientific, and other disciplinary scholarly speculation as to why Darwin did this. That is, why he refrained from making explicit reference to humanity's role in the evolutionary natural-selection process in the early editions of the *Origin*. Whatever his motive, it is certainly clear that Darwin did not succeed in fooling anyone regarding the broader implications of his theory for the overall place of humankind in the larger biological scheme. The original 1859 publication of Darwin's *Origin* touched off a firestorm of intellectual and social controversy, a firestorm directed at the implications of Darwin's theory for the role and place of humanity in the cosmos.

The Darwinian project represented in his 1871 work, *The Descent of Man*, was to some extent an effort on Darwin's part to respond to this intellectual and social firestorm. The work was an effort to explore and extend biologically how human beings fit into the larger evolutionary, naturalistic picture of his revolutionary biological vision. At the very end of *Descent*, Darwin contends:

Man may be excused for feeling some pride at having risen through his own exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale, and the fact of his having thus risen . . . may give him hope for a still higher destiny in the distant future. . . We must, however, acknowledge, . . . that man with all his noble qualities . . . still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin. (2: 405)

Darwin's argument in *The Descent of Man* is basically an attempt to formulate the exact implied human biological consequences of Darwin's general theory of natural selection and evolution as laid out in the *Origin*. All life is part of the overall evolutionary process, as defined by the basic model of Darwinian evolution. All plants, all animals, all living structures are included in this elemental biological process. Human beings, as living animals, must, of course also be part of this essential bio-natural process.

What is the basic model of Darwinian evolution? First stated by Charles Darwin in the 1859 *Origin* edition and given a wide range of alternative formulations in later editions, the basic physical model by which the evolutionary process operates is that *there are differential reproductive rates for selected inherited variants*. That is, at any given time, some members of, or variants within, a species group will be better adapted to exploiting the biological and physical environment in which they exist. As a result, this better adapted, selected group will either directly produce more offspring or will indirectly produce offspring so that future generation(s) will produce more offspring. This phenomenon and process is what Darwin in 1859 baptismally termed *natural selection* (to contrast it with *artificial selection*, i.e., humanly controlled breeding). We can enumerate the elements of this model:

1. Organisms are programmed to reproduce, and this reproduction or tendency to reproduction is very aggressive, so much so that rates of reproduction generally exceed the increase of supply of available resources or habitat to sustain life. Thus, natural populations tend to *overpopulate*—where *overpopulation* is defined or understood in terms of limiting factors. The result is *competition* among the variant individuals in the population. More individuals are produced than can survive.

2. Natural population(s) of animals and plants exhibit *variation* in observable physical traits and tendencies. This variation furthermore is largely the result of heredity.
3. Some of the *variants* in the natural population are better than others in exploiting the limited resources. These individuals channel more of the limited resources through themselves and reproduce more successfully than do other variants. Thus, these *selected* variants pass on their heritable traits and tendencies with greater frequency than other variants.
4. Finally, the result of this “naturally selected” or naturally favored breeding is a modification of the traits and tendencies of the animal/plant/living population over time. That is, the average state or makeup of a given biological character undergoing selection changes from one generation to the next. This is what we understand and observe as *evolution*.

In a nutshell, this summarizes the basic Darwinian evolutionary scheme.

There are a number of observations that we can make regarding this Darwinian model/process of evolution. The first is that the model clearly explains *how* biological life forms change or “evolve” over and through time and natural history, but the model or process does not really explain *why* this change occurs—at least within a certain understanding of “why.” That is, the unadorned Darwinian (or neo-Darwinian) model of evolution does not explain why, in the case of the earth and its life systems, that the evolutionary process should result in apparent normative and teleological biological progress; that is, it does not explain why the evolutionary process in the case of the earth and its life systems leads to the development of higher animal forms coming out of preexisting lower plant and animal forms. It does not explain why the evolutionary process in the case of the earth and its life systems leads to an increase in biocomplexity, an increase in levels of biological organization, and even a localized increase in the entropy of biological life. The Darwinian evolutionary process certainly does explain *how* this transformation occurs. But it does not say why it occurs (for earth and its life systems). Now, I am quite aware that to “bring up” any of these ontologically loaded concepts—such as “higher” life forms, greater “complexity,” or organizational “progress”—is to make any listening biologist or life scientist extremely nervous about the general direction of this discussion. Furthermore, from strictly within the narrow frameworks of biology and/or the life sciences, I can completely understand this nervousness and can even sympathize with such scientifically inspired worries. From a strictly biological (scientific) perspective, the “why” question that I raised a bit earlier may indeed not be a methodologically legitimate disciplinary question. But from a wider common-sense perspective, the “why” question clearly is legitimate.

Some may think that to frame the issue in the way I have just articulated is to bring the concept of teleology (the enemy of many overly “positivist” or “scientism-minded” frameworks) in by the back door. I generally accept this criticism and add that I do not apologize for doing so. There is no question that as a relatively pure and unadulterated scientific theory, Darwinian natural selection contains excessively little teleology and that this lack is by design. There is nothing wrong with this. In

fact, in most cases, a fundamental lack of teleology in a scientific theory is usually praiseworthy. I am simply pointing out that as a result of certain intentional limitations built into the Darwinian natural selection framework, there are certain things that the theory and framework cannot adequately explain.

I think it may be possible to illuminate what I am trying to get at here through the following imaginary thought experiment. Imagine two different evolutionary scenarios, one entirely fictional and the other real. The first is fictional; the second is biologically what actually occurred:

- Single-celled life forms in an early life history have evolved over eons of time into supremely better adapted single-celled life forms in a future life history—without any jump to “higher” life forms. Environmental conditions on this fictional earth are such that these conditions never supported the development of multicellular life forms from single-celled life. Thus, life never evolves into multicellular life forms.
- What actually happened in the life history of the planet earth is that single-celled life evolved into multicellular life, and the multicellular life continues to evolve into ever more complex multicellular life forms—involving constant shifts through the evolutionary process from “lower” life forms to “higher” life forms.

The Darwinian evolutionary model explains equally well *how* both of these scenarios, one fictional and one factual, could have occurred. However, it is evident that the one happened and the other did not. Why did the factual one happen and the other nonfactual one not happen? Darwinian biology cannot answer this type of question.

A second observation can be made concerning the Darwinian model of evolution. This is an observation concerning the limitations of any purely biological, Darwinian account of “who are we”—relative to questions concerning the origins and nature of human beings. Very close to the dawn of human civilization, proto-human beings, hominids, begin to distinguish themselves as being very different from the rest of the earthly zoological world. They drew on cave walls; they organized hunts; they made tools; they buried the dead; they stood up, becoming bipedal; they developed an opposing digit on their upper limbs, what we call a thumb. Some forms of oral and eventually written communication and language were developed. Hominids and homo sapiens in particular began not only to biologically adapt to their environment but also to culturally and physically change their environment to fit their needs, interests, and purposes. This is not to say that there are not animals besides human beings that also alter their environment—such as beavers. But there are no animals besides human beings that alter their environment to the extraordinary extent as homo sapiens does. Around the dawn of human civilization, a natural competition and conflict between pure biological evolution and the opposing forces of human technological and cultural evolution ensued—and over time began to develop into its own interactive evolutionary force. Human beings were no longer simply a product of Darwinian natural selection. They are now also the result of human technological and cultural evolution and the competitive interaction of these forces with the residue

of original biological evolution. This is what I call the “ascent” of man—the progressive movement of human beings through Darwinian biological evolution to their present position, to some extent, outside of pure biological evolution.

So, in conclusion, to return to our original question: how are humans and the nonhuman biological world related, how are they the same, how are they different? It is my view that the basic Darwinian evolutionary perspective provides a marvelous account of the “descent” of human beings—a marvelous answer to the material question: “From whence have we come?” Or to quote 1871 Darwin in *Descent*, “Humanity bears in its bodily frame the indelible stamp of its lowly and purely biological origins” (2: 405). However, if effort is made to extend a basic Darwinian evolutionary perspective to a more general philosophical account of human origins—what I have called “human ascent”—such an extension seems woefully inadequate. Such an extension is inadequate to explain the fundamental emergent differences between human beings and the rest of the nonhuman biological world. These emergent differences are what I have called and characterized above as human technological and cultural evolution and their interaction with strict biological evolution. To the question “Who are we?” (reminiscent of the book of *Genesis*), one answer might be that there is clearly more than one answer to this question.

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Seeing in Literature, Art, and Nature: Tying Thoreau into the Aesthetics of Environmental Issues

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Thoreau's *Walden* is indisputably a core text of environmental literature; it is also one of those books that sometimes cause students and others to question the relationship between core texts and the real world, to wonder why they are made to read such slow stuff. Sure, the project of rejecting the material world or living within tight constraints is a perennial one (witness *No-Impact Man*), but how many students can immediately relate to an author who spends pages and pages, and apparently days and days, contemplating the color of the water in Walden Pond? Precisely because these long descriptive passages are a challenge to students, we begin with them, talking about how Thoreau trains the reader in a way of seeing. From there we go on to a discussion about how our vision of the world inescapably conditions how we treat it, an appropriate topic in an environmental literature course. I would argue, however, that it is important to go further in making explicit the connections between a text like this and the real world. Otherwise, the gap for students is too great. I do this by taking students step-wise through an analysis of how Thoreau directs our seeing to an examination of the ways in which we do and should see images of the natural world today. One effective technique for indexing contemporary images of nature and environmental issues is through Google Image searches, a method I have found remarkably effective in showing students how important a way of seeing is to framing larger arguments about the environment.

Thoreau's approach to seeing and describing nature has been much discussed by

others.¹ What students notice is how foreign his nature descriptions are, particularly given their generic expectations. *Walden* is neither novel, nor poem, nor history, nor journalistic account, though perhaps a combination of all of those, so students do not quite know what to do with him. Consider this long description:

All our Concord waters have two colors at least; one when viewed at a distance, and another, more proper, close at hand. The first depends more on the light, and follows the sky. In clear weather, in summer, they appear blue at a little distance, especially if agitated, and at a great distance all appear alike. In stormy weather, they are sometimes of a dark slate-color. The sea, however, is said to be blue one day and green another without any perceptible change in the atmosphere. I have seen our river, when, the landscape being covered with snow, both water and ice were almost as green as grass. Some consider blue "to be the color of pure water, whether liquid or solid." But, looking directly down into our waters from a boat, they are seen to be of very different colors. *Walden* is blue at one time and green at another, even from the same point of view. Lying between the earth and the heavens, it partakes of the color of both. (141)

This description of the various bodies of water in Concord goes on, rarely interrupted by account of humans or even animals, for a further nineteen pages. There is no plot here, and the main characters are nonhuman. "So, what?" is students' usual first response. I ask students if Thoreau could just have taken a picture since a picture is worth a thousand words. Is that all he is doing? No, they find. Next, we discuss what a picture is and whether or not a photograph can be art. Typically, the breakthrough in this discussion has come with art majors who can address these questions better than others. A photograph is art because of composition, for the way it directs the viewer's eye. We discuss how, in painting, we see differently. We must stop our brain from telling us the sky is blue, as children do, and instead look and see and record the actual color values that are there. Gradually, the students come to understand how Thoreau is both describing a landscape and directing the eye of the reader across that imagined landscape, how he is training the reader in a way of seeing that is transferable outside the scope of the work. There is much debate about the intersections between art and nature. Is a picture of a mountain art, but not the mountain itself? Can one create art simply by gazing upon the mountain? It comes down to this difference in the way of seeing, and students begin to realize the lenses through which they view the world.

They come to understand, too, that Thoreau advocates art in living: "It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue . . . ; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look" (72). Moreover, Thoreau often shows nature overlapping with art. For Thoreau, the hum of a mosquito is equivalent to the highest literature: "I was as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn . . . as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer's requiem; itself an *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the air, singing of its own wrath and wanderings" (71). A storm becomes music: "There was never yet such a storm but it was *Æolian* music to a healthy and innocent ear" (105). Finally, the emergence of a bug from hibernation in an applewood farm table is equated with the highest of

spiritual mysteries, the Resurrection: “Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, whose egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodness in the dead dry life of society . . . may unexpectedly come forth from amidst society’s most trivial and handselled furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer life at last?” (264). These comparisons work to break down conventional barriers between art and experience, life and culture, high and low, leading the reader to question hierarchies established between the imagined and experienced world. These contrasts allow students to question how they see nature—as inorganic resource for human stuff, or living organism of its own, as Gaia, as James Lovelock terms it.

Thoreau also feels intrusions on nature, though they seem nothing by comparison to what we experience. He hears “that devilish Iron Horse, whose ear-rending neigh is heard throughout the town” (154), and sees villagers polluting the water of Walden Pond, “which should be as sacred as the Ganges at least” (154), with their daily ablutions. Of course, even the waters of the Ganges are now only thought to be sacred and pure, polluted as they now are with manure, dead bodies, industrial effluent, and the contaminating tributes of millions. This failure to see the actual filth of the river beside its reputed purity is akin to our modern self-protective gaze upon the world, selecting for scenery and wildness in inspirational posters and screen savers, while screening out actual damage and destruction. While students can see the contrast between a dirty Ganges and the idea of the waters as pure, it takes longer for them to consider what they actually see surrounding them in suburban Chicago: the strip malls, the industrial wastelands, the big-box stores and parking lots, the mushrooming subdivisions whose names only echo the nature left behind: Fox Hollow, Monarch Landing, Prairie Crossings, Oak Park, Oak Lawn. We joke about Oak Lawn’s main drag: no oaks, no lawn, and Monarch Landing’s lack of actual places for butterflies to alight, and they begin to see the contrast between the idea of nature as palimpsestic remains and what is actually left of the nature around them. What is essential is for students to understand that the way we see is culturally conditioned and informed by what we think is so. From proximate surroundings, we move on to explore the wider world through Google Images and consider the aesthetics of environmental touchstones.

The visual screening that we perform to obscure the uglier aspects of the suburbs applies even more to the world as a whole, which is so large that it is fairly easy to see only the picturesque parts. I consider it part of my job to create the cognitive dissonance necessary for students to leave the Disneyfied world of their imaginations behind. I sometimes begin with a slideshow associated with a National Geographic article about the greatest Human Impacts on the World.

The Pacific Garbage Gyre, of all images we survey, most startles students out of their habitual stupor about the state of the environment. Nothing conveys the extent of the damage we have done to the earth more than seeing images from the patch of plastic, only one of many, the size of two Texas, floating in the middle of the Pacific. The ways of portraying this phenomenon are importantly various: there are images of boats in the middle of garbage, schematics of the depth and breadth along with its assorted composition, pictures of animals entangled and mangled by plastic

debris, baby albatrosses dead from ingesting the bright bits their parents fed them, and maps of the largest areas of deposition. Up close, the plastic caps, toy parts, and disposals floating along or protruding from the cavity of albatross skeletons speak for themselves; some parts of the gyre can be hard to see as the plastic photodegrades, and this is where narratives about the hazards of microscopic bits of plastic that never biodegrade contribute. But for most students, it is seeing that is believing.

Belief in climate change has lagged among the general public in part, I believe, because it is difficult to see first-hand. Besides the statistics and facts so ably conveyed by credible authorities such as NASA, NOAA, the IPCC, and the Academy of Sciences, I find students profit from seeing images of climate change in action—time-lapse photos of glaciers calving, retreating, and melting, for instance, or maps of predicted climate change that include local changes. I make an effort, however, to show students how seeing is not necessarily the best way of perceiving and understanding, and I ask them, here, to try to bridge the gap between scientific statistics and evidence they can see and feel.

SEEING WINDMILLS, SOLAR PANELS, AND POLAR BEARS

We begin our investigation of current imagery with windmills and solar panels, since they seem most symbolic of environmental issues, renewable energy in particular.

Solar panels, in particular, are contested territory, alternately seen as ugly modernizations pinned on traditional architecture, or glossy symbols of a better future. Google images portray a *mélange* of positive and negative images. Windmills, although many see them as ugly disruptions of the landscape, are rapidly acquiring positive connotations because of their adoption by various environmental groups as symbols of renewable energy. If viewed for what they are, substitutes for the ugly pollution of coal-fired power plants and the distressing contingencies of nuclear, windmills are beautiful. As Deborah Rowe, a leader in sustainability in higher education, said when visiting our campus last year: “I ask people who think windmills are ugly: would you rather we parked asthmatic children and old people on respirators next to your house? Because the alternative to renewable energy is the tens of thousands of people now dying from coal-fired power plants each year.” It is important and pragmatic that we retrain our eyes to see windmills as clean, beautiful solutions for the future, the Eiffel Towers of the renewable-energy future. Students observe that while we see some clean things as dirty, we see some truly contaminated things as clean: lawns sprayed with carcinogenic chemicals, for example.

Oddly enough, investigations of polar bears have furnished the most complex findings, enough for a full-length paper in itself. Suffice it to say that there are stark dichotomies among their emblematic use as tokens of climate change, contested images of the brutality of nature, and playful mascots for various products, Coca-Cola foremost among them. Particularly in the contrast between the actual fate of polar bears as the Arctic warms and the portrayal of them frolicking in pristine, moonlit anthropomorphic glory while selling a product that contributes to anthropogenic climate change, students can see how images are constructed and nature is read, highly dependent upon cultural biases.

CONCLUSIONS

In some ways, experiencing nature through literature or art is perilous. It is easy to confine the scope of vision to the past, where nature still existed in its more or less full glory, or the fictional present, where, like children, we train our gaze on the blue sky, bright sun, and picturesque mountains of the ideal, rejecting the real nature of lived experience. On the other hand, students find that to a great degree, we can learn to retrain our eyes and our mental framework by reading core texts from the past, in part because the past creates a greater contrast with our current environmental status than anything else.¹

Finally, they find that far from being removed from reality, Thoreau is trying to shake readers into a more acute perception of reality: “Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business” (78). We discuss how often we have passed through life in a daze, scarcely being able to account for a week or more, how we drive down the street or highway oblivious to the landscape that surrounds us. We realize what Thoreau means when he says, “Let us spend a day as deliberately as Nature” (78) or “To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?” (72)—because this is the other realization: to be awake to reality, to be the rare person who sees clearly, is to experience pain. As Aldo Leopold says in *Sand County Almanac*, which we read just subsequent to *Walden*, “One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise” (197). Who can look on the destruction we have wrought, fully realizing and understanding its extent, and not feel terrible pain, loss, and guilt? My dearest hope is that by the end of the semester my students will make the decision to look anew through the lens of the past at what the world is, whole and destroyed, with courage and clarity.

Notes

1. See, for example, William Rossi, Peter Blakemore, James McGrath, and Ralph Black.
2. Bill McKibben has proclaimed an end to nature, in which case, the past may provide our only entrée to an imaginative world where nature still exists.

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Reading Darwin in the Real World: A Meditation

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When Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* on November 24, 1859, he set off a firestorm of controversy and quickly became both the most praised and the most damned man in England and soon after throughout much of Europe. In this very influential book, Darwin accomplished at least three things. First, he presented a tremendous amount of evidence, based mainly on extant organisms, for the fact of biological evolution. Second, he discovered, and was the first to describe, descent from common ancestry, and third, he gave us the basic mechanism for evolution, called “natural selection.” Darwin’s discoveries had to endure the challenges of time and scientific verification, and it was some years before his discoveries were widely accepted among scientists as they are today. For example, some of Darwin’s contemporaries thought that genetic variation and change in populations were due mainly to mutation and that natural selection was only a minor factor. But modern biology has justified Darwin in regard to natural selection.

Today’s Darwinian evolution is usually dubbed neo-Darwinism or the modern synthesis, which is often viewed as natural selection reinforced by our current knowledge of genetics and cell biology. (Darwin, for example, knew nothing about the origin of hereditary variation in populations on which his theory depended.) Biologist Stephen Jay Gould’s neo-Darwinism enhanced Darwinian gradualism with “punctuated equilibrium,” or periods of rapid evolution followed by long periods of stasis with little or no phylogenetic change. Darwinian natural selection is based on the fact that, due to genetic variation, some individuals in a population are more successful than others at exploiting limited resources and channeling those resources

into reproduction. Thus, those individuals pass on their genes with greater frequency than other members of the population. As a result, the average state of the character undergoing selection changes from one generation to the next. But the story does not end there. What are the implications, if any, of this process to our current understanding of biology and religion? Does Darwin shed any light on our understanding of ultimate questions? How do we read Darwin in the “real world”?

The facts and realities of Darwin’s discoveries are clear and indisputable. But it turns out that the implications of Darwin’s work, like any “classic” piece of music, literature, or art, are highly interpretable. Darwin means different things to different people. People read into Darwin (or perhaps more likely than not, read into what they have heard about Darwin) an interpretation that fits their belief system. In my experience of dealing with students, laypersons, biologists, secular humanists, and young-earth creationists, I have come to realize that people tend to encase themselves within a self-constructed bubble of reality that they often strongly defend. This bubble is the product of their upbringing, education, and socialization, as well as their hopes. The problem is that usually no two people’s “bubbles of reality” are the same, making the perception of reality somewhat subjective. As a result, scientific evidence is often irrelevant to a given individual or at least questionable. Whether or not a person accepts a scientific idea and how he or she views that idea depends not so much on the quality of the evidence as on how well it fits within his or her bubble of reality. Evidence alone is likely to be insufficient. The idea in question has to “make sense” to the person in light of what he or she already “knows” to be true.

Even professionals in science or religion who write about Darwin tend to fit their interpretation of Darwin’s discoveries into their accepted bubbles of reality. An example of this is biologist Richard Dawkins, one of the “new atheists” and author of *The Blind Watchmaker*, *The Selfish Gene*, and *The God Delusion*. Dawkins is on nothing short of a mission to spread the religion of atheism. He even spent his own money to put signs on buses in London that say, “There is probably no God, so relax, enjoy your life.” While this act clearly goes beyond the boundaries and necessities of science and science education, it does reflect Dawkins’s bubble of reality, which includes “evolutionism” or the unjustified claim that Darwinian science is capable of asking and answering questions normally seen as being beyond the boundaries of science, such as ultimate origins or the meaning of human life. Thus, science, Dawkins believes, can decide the question of God (*God Delusion* 48, 58–66). Clearly, the act of natural selection, which causes struggle and death and operates blindly over millions of years, precludes the possibility of there being a creator god. Thus the obvious necessity of atheism for any science-literate person determines how Dawkins interprets Darwin. Dawkins insists that one cannot be both a religious believer and an evolutionist. It just is not possible and makes no sense. Perhaps, before the publication of *The Origin of Species*, he says, a person might have had an excuse to believe in God, but certainly after *The Origin* such a conclusion is inexcusable. In comparison, evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould, an outspoken advocate for Darwinian evolution, has noted that many of his colleagues are, in fact, religious. He insists that Darwinian evolution must therefore be perfectly consistent with either an atheistic or a theistic world view. Science and religion are two NOMA or nonover-

lapping magisteria (*Rocks of Ages* 52–64). Darwinian biology, being science, sheds no light on the question of God either way.

Dawkins has said that “Darwin made atheism respectable.” We might note that Darwin himself was a religious skeptic (largely for personal reasons) but not an outright atheist, so he did not view the implications of his work in the same way as does Dawkins. In fact, Darwin’s religious beliefs seem difficult to adequately describe as he did not give his religious views any deep or extensive thought (*Rocks of Ages* 30, 31). In his autobiography he writes, “Disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate but was at last complete” (*Autobiography* 87). Then later he adds,

Another source of conviction in the existence of God, connected with reason and not with feelings, impresses me as having more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty or rather impossibility of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity of looking far backwards or far into futurity, as a result of blind chance or necessity. While thus reflecting, I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a theist. (*Autobiography* 92)

Even fundamentalist young earth creationists often accept Darwinian evolution—to a degree. After all, the fact of evolution is quite obvious to anyone who studies biology. The creationists, however, may not use the term “Darwinian” to express their position. But they insist that what Darwin discovered was simply *change within kind* or what we might call “microevolution.” That is, while accepting minor genetic or evolutionary changes within a created “type” or species, they categorically deny that evolutionary changes beyond the species level can or do occur. Specific examples listed by creationist John Morris in an article in *Back to Genesis (Evolution vs. Creationism, 206–7)* include changes in the beak shape of Galapagos finches (which is a *major* evolutionary change, by the way), changes in the color of the peppered moth (often cited as a classical example of Darwinian evolution), and microbes developing resistance to antibiotics as constituting nothing more than a *change within kind*. A finch is still a finch, a microbe still a microbe. There is, in fact, much evidence from the fossil record, comparative anatomy, and genetics that *macroevolution* has and does occur to change one type of animal into a very different one (bovine-like land animals into whales, fishes into creatures with legs, a small dinosaur into birds, etc.). Modern molecular and developmental biology are discovering the mechanisms by which macroevolution works. For example, there is clear evidence that mutations and duplications of homeobox genes that determine axes in the animal body and which control clusters of other genes can cause the addition of new body segments to an animal and can modify types of appendages, thus forming more complex organisms, as we see in the fossil record of arthropod evolution. We should note, of course, that this is non-Darwinian in that it was discovered after Darwin. But that is irrelevant to the creationist because macroevolutionary change and descent of different groups of animals from a common ancestor are not ideas or “truths” that lie within their bubbles of reality, whatever the evidences, and categorically cannot be true. Such evidence is suspect as “human wisdom” in conflict with God’s revealed and perfect wisdom gleaned from a literal reading of Judeo-Christian scriptures. Macroevolution is simply not possible because it does not fit into what they already “know”

to be true. John D. Morris writes in *Back to Genesis (Evolution vs. Creationism, 207)*, “The central question . . . is whether the mechanism underlying microevolution can be extrapolated to explain the phenomenon of macroevolution. . . . The answer can be given as a clear ‘no.’”

The Catholic theologian John F. Haught puts yet a different interpretation on Darwin. In *God After Darwin*, he describes “Darwin’s gift to theology.” Says Haught, evolution is God’s method of creation. Darwinian evolution addresses the theodicy problem (the problem of why there is suffering) because it reveals a physical universe that is still in the process of being created. It is not yet finished, evolving and not yet perfect, in fact the antithesis of “intelligent design.” It is into this evolving and imperfect environment with its death and suffering that God inserted himself, an act of Divine love and humility by a God who submitted himself to crucifixion, a loving and giving God rather than a god who is self-aggrandizing (*God After Darwin*, 47–56). Thus Haught sees Darwinian biology as not only consistent with a deep religious faith but also as a process that magnifies the Christian message.

To Dawkins and the other “new atheists”, Darwinian evolution absolutely compels atheism. To a young earth creationist, *real* Darwinian evolution is no threat to Biblical literalism because Darwin is not understood to describe anything other than minor degrading changes within “kinds” (a “devolution”). To theologians like Haught, evolution is the quintessential act of Divine love. Each bubble of reality incorporates its understanding of Darwinian biology in the way that best fits. How do people read Darwin in the real world? It would appear that, like beauty, Darwin’s message is in the eye of the beholder.

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Teaching Adam Smith: On Free Markets and the Common Good

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During the financial crisis in the fall of 2008, the *National Review* pictured a weeping Adam Smith on its cover with the issue title “Adam Smith’s Lament.” The title, and the tear rolling down Smith’s cheek, signaled the editors’ view that, were Adam Smith alive today, he would bemoan the federal government’s bailout of failing corporations as the kind of interference with market mechanisms that impedes economic growth and depletes the common good.¹

The *National Review* stood on solid ground, of course, in portraying the eighteenth-century philosopher as an advocate of free-market capitalism. In his masterwork on political economy, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), the Scottish philosopher urged eighteenth-century government ministers to turn away from their current practice of granting market freedoms only to those investors and producers that they *deemed* most productive, reliable, and friendly to national interests, and to extend market freedoms to all. Allowing competition among the widest possible field of investors and producers would result in a larger increase in each nation’s wealth than the mercantilist era’s government-engineered markets ever had.

However, the *Review*’s identification of Smith with a “markets-are-good, business-is-good, government-is-bad” market fundamentalism finds much less support in Smith’s writings. As multiple historians of economic thought have demonstrated, Smith held a more complicated view of government’s optimal relationship to market; he is more accurately described as pro-consumer, not pro-business, and as anti-monopoly, not anti-government.² That said, since the misidentification of Smith

as a contemporary market fundamentalist is so common today as to rank as a conventional wisdom, I have found that gathering my students' impressions of Smith's economic theory before they have read all of the assigned excerpts from Smith's writings offers an introductory unit on Smith's theory of production and distribution and the relationship between markets, commonwealth, and the common good.

I teach excerpts of Smith's writings in a Great Books–style course in the “Development of Modern Western Civilization,” and the structure and content of the team-taught course dictates that we spend only a few class sessions on Smith's philosophy: one seventy-minute lecture period, followed a few days later by a fifty-minute seminar discussion. Leading students toward grasping a nuanced introduction to the fundamentals of Smith's theory about market functioning through just thirty-five pages of reading, one lecture, and one seminar is a challenge. I have found that beginning the lecture period on Smith with a brief, informal pre-test (see below) that is specifically designed to flush out the popular identification of Smith as a market fundamentalist serves as a nice springboard into a unit focused on clarifying which elements of the popular impression of Smith are supported by Smith's writings and which are not.

The reading assignments I use total approximately thirty-five pages: From *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (hereafter WN), Book I: “Introduction and Plan of the Work”—ch. 1, par. 1–3, 5, 8–11; ch. 2, par. 1–4; ch. 3, par. 1; ch. 7, par. 1–27; ch. 8, par. 11–12, 36, 42, 44. Book II—Introduction, par. 1–5; Book IV—ch. 2, par. 4, 7–9; ch. 7, c, par. 88–89; ch. 8, par. 49, 54. Book V—ch. 1, f, par. 6–8, 52–58, 60–61. From *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (hereafter TMS), Book I, Section iii—ch. 2, par. 5. *Note:* Editions of *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* are in the public domain—assignments are compiled from these sources.³

The Pretest: When students arrive for the first lecture period, they have read only the excerpts from Book I of WN, so they have not yet read most of the week's assignments. I begin the session by displaying the pre-test questions on PowerPoint slides, one question per slide, scrolling through them once so students read all four questions, then going back through each slide one by one and having students vote with a show of hands.

1. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith chiefly advocated for the interests of:
 - a. governments
 - b. merchants
 - b. manufacturers (*the answer most students choose*)
 - d. consumers (*the correct answer*)_

2. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith reserved his strongest criticism for:
 - a. government spending (*the answer most students chose*)
 - b. business monopolies (*the correct answer*)
 - c. unskilled workers
 - d. consumers

3. True or False: Adam Smith argued that free market competition best ensures that a society will maximize its common wealth.

Answer: True. (*Most students answer this correctly.*)

4. True or False: Adam Smith believed that the individual who pursues his own economic interest, always simultaneously, contributes to the common good. Answer: False. (*Most students answer this incorrectly.*)

In sum, most students give the answers that reveal their misapprehension of Smith as a market fundamentalist. However, rather than asserting this student misapprehension and revealing the correct answers up front, I tell the students that we will return to the questions again, as a post-test at the class's end, once we have examined and discussed some key passages from Smith.

I then direct the class's attention to the central argument in WN by telling them that we will begin the session with the one question that nearly all of them got right. This cuts to the core of Smith's argument in WN, question 3. Adam Smith did argue that free market competition best ensures that a society will maximize the common wealth. To prompt students into thinking about this central contention of Smith, as well as his description of the cause-and-effect relations in large economies, I ask them: "What is wealth, according to Smith?" Also, "What 'natural' human 'dispositions' and tendencies, and developments that follow from these tendencies, lead to increases in wealth?" Since the students have already read the selections from Book I, some quickly allude to two of the most famous passages from WN: Smith's description of how individuals' "natural" desire for more goods and their "propensity to truck, barter, and exchange" leads to labor specialization (I.ii.1-3), and his description of how labor specialization and the invention of better tools lead to further increases in the products of labor, as exemplified by the increases in output from an eighteenth-century pin manufactory (I.i.1-3).

Once we've identified some of the motives and practices that Smith believed enhance economic growth, I then guide the students deeper into Smith's theory about what increases total wealth by turning them to excerpts from Book IV (which they have not yet read). Here, I point to Smith's claim that promise of profits is what draws investors to particular industry and spurs innovations in productivity: "[I]t is only for the sake of profit that any man employs a capital in the support of an industry; and he will always . . . endeavor to employ it in the support of that industry of which the produce is likely to be of the greatest value" (IV.ii.8). And what spurs investors to withdraw capital from one "employment" and shift it to another? "[I]f . . . [investors] should turn too much [capital] . . . towards . . . [some] employments, the fall of profit in them and the rise of it in all others immediately dispose them to alter this faulty distribution [of capital]" (IV.ii.9). In other words, according to Smith, individuals want to maximize profits, and rising and falling prices and profit margins prompt movement of capital and labor. Since profit margins are connected, in part, to the intensity of consumer demand, as investors shift resources into areas with the strong consumer demand, consumers benefit from the increase in the number of products available for purchase.

After students have digested this central description of how markets optimize wealth production and consumer satisfaction, I conclude this part of the lecture by turning to the oft-quoted metaphor that Smith employed when he marveled at the degree to which a seeming chaos of individuals, each pursuing his or her own material interest, generated more public wealth than governments that tried to manage production for the nation by giving special market advantages to companies and guilds that they deemed most productive and skilled. As Smith put it, in a commercial system, or free market:

[The investor] generally . . . neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. . . . [H]e intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value . . . he is in this . . . led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention” (IV.ii.9).

By freeing people to fulfill their natural desire for wealth through the most profitable investment of stock, the largest possible competitive market increases the common wealth more surely than planned markets.

Where some go wrong, however, I then tell the students, is in assuming that Smith is claiming that the pursuit of self-interest always contributes to the common wealth and common good and that market freedom is a sufficient condition for optimal functioning of markets and a sufficient condition for a good society. The awe that Smith expresses at the degree to which self-interest contributes to the common wealth in a competitive marketplace arises because this outcome is exceptional. One of Smith’s working assumptions is that in most circumstances, the exercise of self-interest is socially damaging. The effect that an optimally functioning competitive marketplace has on self-interest, that is, channeling it toward social good, is so exceptional that it is marvelous. It is a sign, to Smith, that a benevolent Creator has built some levers into the natural world that allow for common wealth and *some measure* of moral good to arise even when humans are not trying to be altruistic.

A close and careful reading of *Wealth of Nations*, I argue, reveals that Smith believed that there are *additional* conditions, besides broad freedom to participate in markets, that must be in place if markets are to function as the engines of optimal economic growth and nurturers of social peace. In short, these, in my reading, are:

1. *Equal access to accurate knowledge about returns on investment.* Smith implies that in order for markets to function optimally, all competitors must have relatively equal access to accurate knowledge about returns on investment. Smith highlights the necessity for this condition by way of the negative example of monopolies. According to Smith, the greatest enemies of economic growth are merchants and manufacturers who, out of self-interest, continually seek ways to “narrow the competition” in order to raise prices above their “natural price.” Monopolies hurt the public not only by overcharging, but also, most importantly, by indirectly impeding investment in the employments that would best serve consumer demand (I.vii.26–27). According to Smith, when governments in the mercantilist age granted special monopolistic privileges to a few companies to buy raw materials abroad at low prices in colonies, the narrowing of the field of competitors ultimately limited the number of products available to consumers. Smith urges the leaders of Europe to

cease creating such monopolies, which he dubbed “the sole engine of the mercantile system” (IV.vii.c.89).

2. *The functioning of the market and the morals of society are enhanced when the majority of the competitors in the marketplace are middling or inferior.* Smith also maintains that the wealthy, whether or not they have monopolistic advantages, are more likely to inflict harm on society because they feel less need to exercise common virtues in business in order to please potential consumers. In a passage on market behavior in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* that has been overlooked by scholars who study Smith’s economic thought, Smith claims that the social benefits of relative equality in the marketplace are enhanced if most of the competitors in the marketplace are of humble means. In order to succeed economically, men of “middling and inferior stations,” unlike men of wealth, are compelled to employ honesty, respect for the law, and “prudent, just, firm, and temperate conduct” in their professional activities if they are to succeed, because their success “almost always depends upon the favour and good opinion of their neighbors and equals” (TMS, I.iii.2.par. 5). “Fortunately for the good morals of society,” Smith adds, “the far greater part of mankind” is not wealthy.

3. *Wages for laborers must be high enough to encourage laborers’ industry:* Another condition for long-term optimal health of economy and society is that wages must be high enough to encourage industry among the common people. “Where wages are high,” Smith writes, “. . . we shall always find the workmen more active,” because “plentiful subsistence,” unlike bare subsistence, will strengthen the body of the laborer and give him “the comfortable hope of bettering his condition, and of ending his days perhaps in ease and plenty” (WN, I.viii.44). Smith is clearly aware, however, that market mechanisms themselves compel only subsistence wages. He urges employers to voluntarily institute a wage above subsistence, arguing that justice, and the wish that most people have for a prosperous nation, demand it. It is “but equity,” he writes, that the majority of the population who labor to feed, clothe, and shelter the total population should have “such a share of the produce of their own labor as to be themselves tolerably well fed, clothed, and lodged,” and, further, “what improves the circumstances of the greater part can never be considered an inconvenience to the whole” (I.viii.36). That said, I always also point out to students that Smith wanted, as far as possible, compensation to be tied to performance on the job. (See WN V.i.f.6–8, where Smith approves of the fact that at least some portion of teachers’ salaries is paid by the students, and that teachers’ compensation therefore varies according to how many students they attract!)

4. *Government supports:* Smith opposed government interference with market mechanisms, and in particular governments’ common practice, in his day, of granting monopolistic advantages to some producers, but there were some government activities of which Smith strongly approved: he thought that governments ought to (a) protect societies against invasion; (b) maintain administrations of justice; and (c) establish and maintain “public institutions and those public works” that befit a “civilized and commercial society,” but which are not profitable enough to draw private investment (WN, V.f.52–58, 60–61). Here, Smith explicitly states that he is thinking of road-building, the financial support of common schools, the organizing of physi-

cal training for the masses, and funding for cultural monuments.

Much more could be said about these conditions, but I end my lecture there and move on to redisplay the pretest, which is now a post-test. Students tend to do quite well the second time around. Finally, I conclude class by advising them to review their notes from lectures as they finish reading their Smith packets and to consider the following disputatious questions as they prepare for seminar:

1. Smith believed that the main obstacle to maximum economic growth and prosperity in his day was government-created monopolies. What do you think the main obstacles to free market functioning and economic growth are today?

2. As you will read, Smith believed that one negative consequence of a highly productive commercial economy would be the dumbing down of workers and that the public (government) ought to compensate for this consequence by funding schools for commoners. How have governments expanded this role as compensators for negative consequences of the market since then? Why, do you think? What would Smith's assessment(s) of these various expansions be? What do *you* think Smith's evaluation of the 2008–9 bank and car-industry bailouts would be? What might Smith think of the concept "too big to fail"? Putting aside what Smith might think, what do you think? Why?

Students leave the lecture better prepared to engage the text with comprehension and an appreciation for nuances in Smith's argument. The big payoff, if all goes well, is that students arrive for seminar prepared to offer, defend, and debate a variety of plausible answers to the above questions.

Notes

1. Cover illustration, *National Review* 60 (October 20, 2008).

2. Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times, and Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers*. New York: Touchstone Books, 1995, 42–74. Print. Amartya Sen has also written a good deal about misunderstanding of Smith. See Amartya Sen, "The Economist Manifesto," *New Statesman* 26 (April 2010), pp. 29–30. Print.

3. The paragraphs delineated here are from the following print editions of Smith's works: Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981); *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1984). I generated the photocopied packet from public domain editions that can be found at the Library of Economics and Liberty's website, <http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWNCover.html>.

**Expanding the Core Text Canon
for Real World Living**

Guilt and Innocence in Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*

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“I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” —Rev. 3:15–16

In his classic novel exploring the horrors of Stalin's 1930s show trials of suspected saboteurs within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Arthur Koestler portrays the main character, Nicolas Salmanovitch Rubashov, sympathetically, a man of conscience disturbed by the sordid choices the CPSU made in consolidating the gains of the Russian Revolution in a period of reaction leading to World War II. Indeed, some characters in *Darkness at Noon* consider him a Christ figure. When the old porter Wassilj hears of Rubashov's public confession to trumped-up charges at his show trial, he looks to a wall in his apartment where on a “rusty hook” (Koestler 1941, 256) once hung a portrait of a much younger, bearded Partisan Commander Rubashov, taken down upon Rubashov's arrest and condemnation by the party. The rusty hook seems to stand for the nails from which Christ the Lamb was hung to atone for the sins of humanity. The novel's very title evokes the same, reminding readers that “Marxism is a religion and bears the usual signs” (Shadwell 31).

This imagery suggests that Rubashov is the innocent in the book, a victim among untold others of the cynical machinations of a party *cum* dictatorship. Rubashov, however, is not without sin. He is guilty both of the antirevolutionary attitudes with which the party charges him and of arranging the liquidation of the communist internationalists, Trotskyites, and others of the old guard whose understanding of the revolution dated from before “No. 1's” remaking of the party in his image. Caught

in a dim, unanchored intellectual and moral space between, on the one hand, an understanding of the laws of history that ordain the CPSU's primacy over life and belief and, on the other, an increasingly undeniable sense that the individual person has inestimable value and status belying any materialist, rational calculation of his or her place in the grand scheme of means and ends, Rubashov betrays both individual persons and the party that uses them for its purposes.

Koestler was no Christian, but his assessment of communism in the light of biblical ethical imagery betrays his sense that the socialist imagination bears the mark of secularized Christianity, a view shared by other careful observers (e.g., Löwith; Tucker). It is the metaphor of the wandering nation of Israel in the desert, not the metaphor of Rubashov the Christ figure, that signals Koestler's sense of Rubashov's moral state. Rubashov, a senior Soviet Communist Party official, was there from the beginning. His late career was spent principally as a Soviet representative in Nazi Germany and Belgium, not to foment international communist agitation against fascism but to suppress those agitators in favor of facilitating smoother economic and political relations between the champion of communism and the fascist dictatorship. He was to assist the party in eliminating those who still believed in international revolution, the goals of the Comintern. "Socialism in one country" was the new gospel, and Rubashov was its missionary. No. 1 "understood" that circumstances dictated the achievement of world communism through an accommodation with fascism. Molotov-Ribbentrop advanced the revolution. So did importation of American technology and food relief, so did the use of forced labor, so did the division of labor, so did the reversion to old Russian nationalism, so did the partial rehabilitation of the Orthodox Church, so did the elimination of unreliable elements. No. 1 declared the new policies; they must be implemented with cold determination. History at times requires deviations from the straight course.

As Ivanov, one of Rubashov's investigating magistrates, explained, previous revolutions foundered on the moralism and pity of their leaders. Instead of consolidating the gains of revolution, moralists were paralyzed by conscience. Revolutions fell to the "antivivisection morality" in which individuals mattered. Moral attention to individuals foreclosed real change. Nothing is accomplished when the greater is sacrificed to the lesser (159). Said Ivanov, like Rubashov among the old guard but reconciled to the new gospel: "Nature is generous in senseless experiments on mankind. Why should mankind not have the right to experiment on itself?" (165).

Was No. 1 right about his interpretations of the course of history? Are her laws tractable? Rubashov had his doubts, not about the revolution's purpose—to end senseless suffering on earth—but about the means to this end. Were they necessary, excessive, misguided, self-defeating? Does dissent from the party's policy improve progress toward the end, or retard and frustrate it? Is history infallible, and is No. 1, her interpreter, also infallible? How much suffering must be inflicted and endured to usher in an end to suffering? How many humans must be crushed to save humanity? Are all means justified by the revolution's ends? Rubashov's diagnosis of the party's fatal disability: "We are doing the work of prophets without their gift" (101).

Rubashov expressed his doubts in small, offhanded remarks and jokes. These did not escape notice. These expressions of his "counterrevolutionary" attitudes got

him arrested for sabotage, the stock explanation for the myriad economic and political failures of the Soviet regime (Rayfield 145). Eventually he was charged with seven¹ offenses—criminal acts he did not commit. Of course, whether he committed them is immaterial. The party requires total commitment. It is the attitude that is important; actions are merely logical consequences of anti-revolutionary attitudes. With antirevolutionary attitudes, one *could* perform criminal acts. And as an encouragement to less sophisticated others, one must be convicted of outrageous, spectacular, easily understood plots and schemes. Trials were theater (in fact, orchestrated on the advice of theater directors in the USSR), and the moral of each story had to be clearly rendered. Though the charges may be “mechanically false,” they are always “dialectically true” (Koestler 1945, 127–28).

Given the propagandistic character of the show trials, readers are led to conclude that Rubashov is an innocent, a scapegoat sacrificed to the party. This is incorrect. The novel describes three categories of people. The first is represented by “402,” the old tsarist anticommunist who mocks the Rubashovs for falling victim to the grotesque logic of their own principles. 402 is a useful idiot, reminding the regime and all others why the revolution was prosecuted to begin with. But for Rubashov he not only becomes a consolation as the logic of the hearings plays out; he is also a sort of embodied conscience reminding Rubashov of what is at stake. With 402 is “406,” the old revolutionary from southeastern Europe who balked at the new Party line. On opposite sides of the revolutionary question—and on opposite sides of Rubashov’s cell 404—both nonetheless shared a sense of the inviolable conscience. “Die in silence,” 406 enjoins Rubashov. Deny the new autocracy your assistance. Do not betray the ideals of the revolution.

The second is the group of internationalists, the idealists for whose expulsions and deaths Rubashov considers himself personally responsible. The clearest case is Little Loewy, the long-time Belgian Party member and dockworker who, with his fellow revolutionaries, played their part in subverting fascism by refusing to load and unload German ships. To him it was obvious: communists fight against fascist reaction. It was similarly obvious for Richard and Bogrov.² But the party needed crucial commodities from Germany and was about to sign a treaty of military cooperation. The dockworkers accordingly needed disciplining or expulsion. Little Loewy’s sense of disillusion and betrayal was overwhelming; he soon hanged himself. Rubashov’s toothache flared, as it always did when he considered how his conduct on behalf of the party issued in the death of one of the innocents. George Orwell once remarked that “Every time Stalin swaps partners, ‘Marxism’ has to be hammered into a new shape” (Orwell 235). Party workers like Little Loewy were uncomprehending in the face of such political dexterity.

The third group is represented by Gletkin, the barely literate (221–22) true believer who, without a memory of the time before the revolution, is the face of the new regime. He is of the generation “born without an umbilical cord” (189). Gletkin’s ignorance and materialism explain his lack of irony and his ready resort to “physical methods” to produce the necessary confessions. Whereas Ivanov averred that Rubashov would see the historical or dialectical logic in confessing to the crimes, no matter how outrageous, Gletkin preferred torture: it is quicker and more reliable.

Gletkin at least had the insight to understand that an investigator who fails to produce a confession was himself transformed into a suspect. Gletkin, thought Rubashov, is the brute of the new age, a “modern Neanderthaler” (192). Rubashov’s metaphor is telling. Movement toward history’s consummation is turning us into the planet of the apes.

Between the second and third types is Rubashov. Part of Rubashov is Ivanov, the party loyalist with a memory of the old days before the revolution. Indeed, Rubashov is little different from Ivanov. Both understand that each could be on the other side of the table in the interrogation room. He knows both the ideals and the cold calculation of means that must be made to consolidate the revolution. Maybe Ivanov was too cold. When he reflects on why Ivanov was replaced by Gletkin (and later shot), Rubashov imagines it is because someone remembered that he and Ivanov were once friends. But perhaps it was also because Ivanov’s loyalty to No. 1 “was based on logical considerations and not on blind faith. He was too clever; he was of the old school: the new school was Gletkin and his methods.” (188). But part of Rubashov was bourgeois, Christian, “cricket,” “anti-vivisection morality” (160). Rubashov was increasingly dogged by a sense of the infinite subject, the “grammatical fiction” of the “I,” the merging of the One into the All that was as real as it was beyond words and reason. The grammatical fiction was the falling-into-the-oceanic feeling; it was also the experience of acute responsibility for one’s part in the sacrifice of innocent others. “I shall pay” (58, 83), murmured Rubashov to himself when he thought of the innocents he betrayed. The subject, the person, disrupted or imbalanced all the calculations by which humans were reduced to material for party-historical ends. The inestimable individual stood in the way of revolutionary consummation.

Betray individual persons he did. Rubashov was guilty of those deaths, and he knew it. And betray the party he did. He had none of Gletkin’s blind, resolute faith in No. 1. He reasoned his way to confession to the mechanically false charges, all the while feeling nothing but contempt for the concrete, historical form the party and its functionaries had taken. He refused to take a fellow inmate’s advice to “die in silence” (127). He would serve the party, not subvert it. Yet he knew he was being forced “down the ladder” (218) step-by-step by confessing to crimes and telling Ivanov that the party betrayed the revolution. Rubashov *descends* the ladder after theorizing in his diary that history *ascends* in fits and starts, as a ship through the locks.

Rubashov is not a Christ figure. He is wayward Israel, delivered by God from Egyptian slavery, in the desert on the way to the Promised Land. Doubts afflict him, as they did many Israelites. Is God faithful? Why do we lack good food? Was it not better in Egypt? For their lack of faith God declared that the generation of those who complained would die in the desert and not enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14). Israel was condemned by God to cast about in the desert, traveling in circles for forty years until the present unfaithful generation died out. For *his* forty-year career of increasing skepticism about the party he served, Rubashov will also die. But for his betrayal of the innocents he will also pay. “Let the little children come to me,” said Jesus, “for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs” (Mark 10:14). While for the party humans are so much material for the making of the future, Rubashov knew that reason and historical materialism cannot comprehend the incal-

culable character of the person. He would pay for Richard, Little Loewy, and Arlova. So for his ambivalence, indecision, his paralyzing doubts, Rubashov was doubly guilty. He was neither hot nor cold. For this he was spat out.

Notes

1. Seven is the biblical number connoting completeness, totality, perfection. Confession to all charges would thus claim all of Rubashov. Alas, Rubashov could get Gletkin to drop one of the seven charges. The regime in the end did not quite claim all of him.

2. Rubashov is not personally responsible for Bogrov's death, but he understood himself to be complicit in the system that made Bogrov's liquidation necessary. If Rubashov refuses to die in silence, he sanctions the deaths of all counterrevolutionaries.

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Marvell's "Mower Against Gardens" and Poetry for the Obdurate Pragmatist

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Doctor: A good plumber is worth twenty poets. . . . For a useful book, give me Mackenzie's No More Hemorrhoids! (Stoppard 216)

Facing a poetry assignment, many students will ask—legitimately—"How will my life be better if I read this poem?" For too many of them, poetry remains a disagreeable mystery—an experience, wrote one reviewer, "akin to being shoved blindfolded into a labyrinth at whose heart lies a Brussels sprout doused in castor oil" (Abramowitz). James Dickey may have insisted that "poetry is just naturally the greatest god damn thing that ever was in the whole universe" (Kirby), and William Carlos Williams (craftily using a poem to do so) could claim that "It is difficult/to get the news from poems/yet men die miserably every day/for lack/of what is found there" ("Asphodel" 317–21). But few skeptics will be convinced.

The value and benefits of poetry are a topic to fill several books and an unending dialogue. But most of our pragmatic students demand something simple and easy to assent to. And so, we need a justification that resonates with students who view college as a vocational training ground and think that poetry, to be useful, should supply easy-to-apply lessons that they can take to the workplace: something like "Be friends to all and all will be friends to you." But this sort of bumper-sticker wisdom is entirely at odds with the nature of poetry (indeed, of *all* academic disciplines). And in its complexity, its irreducibility, we see why poetry can be so useful to these resisting students.

A poem is at least four things: a message, an aesthetic object, a cultural artifact,

and an experience. The *experience* is the most valuable of all. What process do we undergo as we read this poem? What do we see, think, feel, hear? How can we fit all the pieces together? Where do we wind up in the end? Much as a painting does, a poem demands that we pay attention to its subject, whatever it may be. The subject matter needn't be elevated: we've contemplated Julia's clothes for nearly four centuries because of Herrick's poem. But because a poem invites the reader to examine, question, compare, and judge any subject, the act of reading it gives students practice in a way of examining and analyzing *anything* they encounter.

Most students believe that a poem simply requires decoding: "all they want to do is tie the poem to a chair with rope / and torture a confession out of it. / They begin beating it with a hose / to find out what it really means" (Collins 12–16). Students and instructors alike need to set aside this narrow preoccupation with meaning. The meanings of good poems are complex and elusive, and students will benefit more by focusing on the complicated processes needed to identify them. Instead of leaping to questions about meanings—the end, really, of an analysis—we might get students to compare reading a poem with making some difficult planning or personnel or financial decision: each requires us to look for patterns, draw connections and inferences, understand the complementarity of diverse elements, and cope with ambiguities, all while trying to make some sense of the larger whole. Reading a poem is work, much as a lot of work is. And the effort will usually not produce a tidy answer.

Let's consider Andrew Marvell's astute dramatic monologue "The Mower Against Gardens" (c. 1651–52?) to illustrate things. A seventeenth-century denunciation of horticultural practices seems unlikely to appeal instantly to career-minded twenty-first-century undergraduates. But the experience of reading it closely will reveal to them at least one way in which poetry can prepare them for the world of work. To begin with, if they want nothing more than a meaning, they can have this one: "Don't violate nature to serve human purposes." That's simple and easy to embrace—a pleasant truism. But if they don't stop at this point, the *experience* of reading and re-reading the poem provides students with something immeasurably richer. Modern gardeners, the mower insists, are everywhere *inverting* the natural order: the air of walled gardens is not fresh but "dead and standing" (6), and the "luscious earth," cloying and sickly, stupefies what it should invigorate (7–8). The mower goes on to describe a more shocking inversion: a tulip bulb "they then so high did hold / That one was for a meadow sold: / Another world was searched through oceans new, / To find the *Marvel of Peru*" (15–18). In both cases, the mower laments that modern values subordinate the vast to the small, even the petty, and he recoils from the horrible diminishment of the world for trivial purposes. Even worse, "Nature [that] was most plain and pure" (4) has been sexually corrupted: "Luxurious man"—lascivious, unchaste—"to put his vice in use, / Did after him the world seduce" (1–2). Nature grows duplicitous, meretricious, and genetically debased: "No plant now knew the stock from which it came" (23). Asking students what the mower believes to be the results of human interference with nature will enable them to discover these transformations; and they will notice that these are not the things that we currently tend to worry about when facing environmental evils.

One part of the reader's experience of the poem is the voluptuous sound of

lines 1–2, which heightens awareness of the opening couplet's reference to the Fall and the seductions that follow. In contrast, the poem's *last* lines place the speaker himself in the Golden Age, "Where willing Nature does to all dispense / A wild and fragrant innocence," and "The Gods themselves with us do dwell" (33–34, 40). Setting gardeners in a post-lapsarian Christian world and himself in a pagan Golden Age suggests that the mower does not entirely understand the implications of his attack: anger drives him, not a reasoned evaluation of the situation. His flawed judgment emerges in other elements of the poem, such as the excessiveness of his denunciation of sexual perversions that humans are spreading throughout the natural world. But most significant is the mower's deficient self-knowledge. Readers and critics have often been charmed by the mower: they enjoy his clever metaphors and approve of his disapproval. But as students keep exploring the poem, they should recognize that the mower is oblivious to his own exploitative relationship with nature: he's a mower, not the traditional low-impact shepherd. Fauns and fairies may till the meadows "More by their presence than their skill" (36), but a mower intrudes into nature and takes what he needs. And as Linda Anderson has pointed out, a mower would also plow and sow, thus *repeatedly* interfering with nature (133). Even if we approve of the poem's environmental message, we must confront the messenger's self-delusion. The mower misjudges his own post-lapsarian identity and the divide it creates between him and nature. Marvell frequently examines how people perceive their relationships with the green world (as in "The Garden," "Upon Appleton House," and the three other mower poems); those who *misread* that relationship cannot benefit from or harmonize with nature, and sometimes (as in the mower poems), they consequently die (see Burke). The mower's lack of self-knowledge calls into question his attack. And so might his clever artistry in crafting metaphors: if natural honesty is all-important, is the mower's elaborate poetic artifice morally compromising?

So, what have we got here for our reluctant students? Confusion, for a start. And that's useful. Life doesn't present them with simple lessons and clean, clear answers. They need to consider the possibilities: The mower's criticisms may well be worth their attention. Or they may be mistaken. The mower might be right *despite* his occupation. Or the conflict between work and values may demonstrate the utter impossibility of living in *total* harmony with nature. The mower's excessive anger may undermine his message, or it may give it a tone of pained sincerity. And so on. Marvell loves ambiguity. And so does life. Memorization and closed questions certainly have their place in education. But in work and out, life is more like a poem than a multiple-choice question. What gets said may be misunderstood. What goes unsaid may be crucially important. The sounds of things, the pace, the many shadings of meaning and voice and implication, all require close attention and thinking and rethinking. In contrast, college courses often aim to be as clear and straightforward as their teachers can make them. Like the mower, these courses will disregard complexities for the sake of a clear message. In contrast, the poem, like life, stands before the students unclear, irreducible, and stimulatingly perplexing.

Poetry can teach students to read with great care, weigh multiple possibilities, expect conflicts and contradiction, cope with paradoxes and ambiguities, and make judgments even when there is no certain basis for selecting the "right" one. Poems

show students that resolving everything down to a simple correct answer—a statement of true or false, an easily transported message—is not always possible. Or desirable. They need to recognize that the poem, like life, is not a message but an experience to engage with. They are not skimming through it in search of a useful insight; they need to encounter and explore and evaluate what they read, constantly checking to be sure that they are paying attention to what is really in front of them. Where certain courses might (very reasonably) require students to memorize ideas or processes or effective habits or atomic weights, the course that includes poetry reminds students that life on a larger scale is usually complicated and messy. And unraveling the meanings is something they will all be doing for the rest of their lives. Is this a lesson that students typically welcome? Have they come to us looking for ambiguity and confusion? The answer must be that we are here to give them what they *need* more than what they come asking for.

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Teaching the American Protest Novel: Meridel Le Sueur's *The Girl* and Its Pedagogy of Protest

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When surveying American literary history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially with an eye to those enduring works affixed with the sorts of “universal” cachets that ensure their place in the liberal arts curriculum, it would likely not appear particularly outrageous if an instructor were, say, to “skip over” the proletarian literature of the 1930s in favor of purportedly more luminous texts. Perhaps the most notable exception to my claim here would be John Steinbeck’s 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, arguably the one 1930s US protest novel that by most standards is a “must read,” and this would explain its significant presence in high school literature curricula.

Literary historian Michael Denning’s book-length study *The Cultural Front* (1997) has helped to mark and renew intellectual interest in the often underappreciated literary production of the 1930s post-Depression era, a time characterized by tremendous economic hardship, vigorous social struggle, and a pronounced leftist, proletarian politics. Denning observes that in the 1930s “the young plebeians, the radical moderns, and the anti-fascist émigrés” came together in this “extraordinary flowering of arts, entertainment, and thought”—a movement that he and others describe as the “cultural front” (xvi). The cultural front was a part of the Popular Front, the “radical social-democratic movement forged around anti-fascism, anti-lynching, and the industrial unionism of the CIO” (Denning xviii). In demonstrating the cultural significance of the artistic and literary production of the 1930s, Denning clearly

makes a case for its universal significance, suggesting that this “laboring” of US culture in this era of radical thought fundamentally reshaped US culture.

This essay focuses on the merits and remarkable insights of Meridel Le Sueur’s novel *The Girl*, set in 1930s St. Paul, Minnesota, and makes a case for its pedagogical value in the liberal arts curriculum. Le Sueur wrote most of the novel in the late 1930s, and the original manuscript was completed in 1939. However, it remained unpublished until the 1970s; it was during this decade that Le Sueur had the opportunity to revisit the manuscript, make additional revisions, and then finally publish it in 1978—at a time when the feminist movement created new interest in Le Sueur’s writings. Thematically and ideologically, one might describe *The Girl* as a politically hybrid text, fusing cultural sensibilities of the post-Depression era with perspectives associated with the women’s movement of the 1970s. This decades-long journey of Le Sueur’s *The Girl* from obscurity to some degree of academic prominence also offers lessons on literary canon formation, its temporality, and its historical instability, especially when considered in relation to the academic lives of other female-authored texts that to some or great extent were recovered in the 1970s (e.g., works by Zora Neale Hurston, Kate Chopin, and Nella Larsen readily come to mind).

What I, along with other literary critics, find extraordinary in Le Sueur’s *The Girl* is broadly conveyed by Paula Rabinowitz’s observation that “[p]erhaps no woman writer of the 1930s more consciously narrated the *female working-class subject* than Meridel Le Sueur” (542, emphasis added). Admittedly, until I developed a course focusing on literature of the 1930s and 1940s, I was not aware that this kind of story was available to us. I was critically aware of the masculinist sensibilities of important writers of proletarian fiction such as the Jewish-American writer Mike Gold and the Filipino-American writer Carlos Bulosan—also arguably underappreciated literary figures—and I was quite familiar with the feminist literary criticism that revealed and studied the masculinist logic found in these texts. However, I had not anticipated the depth of representation of female subjectivity and the extensive development of interiority that one finds in Le Sueur’s novel. Le Sueur narrates the story of the Great Depression through the lens of female sexual awakening in a very particular time and place in the Midwest. Through the first-person narration of a young female protagonist—who has left the village of her family to brave the challenges of the city and struggles for survival, growth, and meaningful existence in St. Paul—the novel explores such themes as sexual desire, the politics of female reproduction, and the significance of giving birth in this time of economic depression, social unrest, and patriarchal violence against women. Literary critic Constance Coiner points out that the novel’s “emphasis on the physiological and sexual events that shape women’s lives—sexual initiation, battery, pregnancy, sterilization—is remarkable at a time when these topics seldom appeared in literature, including leftist literature” (111).

The young, unnamed narrator is generically referred to as “the girl,” and in the novel’s depiction of her labor, her friendships, and her romantic struggles in the unforgiving social world of Depression-era St. Paul, careful, detailed attention is also devoted to the figure of the female sex worker. In other prominent works such as Bulosan’s *America Is in the Heart* and Gold’s *Jews Without Money*, the figure of the prostitute typically functions as a corrupt, sometimes monstrous figure disassociated

from the values and goals of “proper” proletarian figures. Prostitutes may be victims evoking sympathy—they may even be heroic in their perseverance in the face of adversity—but typically they do not stand in for the proletariat. In contrast, Le Sueur’s *The Girl* provides a much more complex, detailed, and sympathetic portrayal of the female sex worker (with the emphasis on *worker*) in the character Clara, who functions as a representative proletarian figure in the novel. Clara is a figure whose social path designates one of the few available paths for young women in this patriarchal, economically depressed community, a figure whose suffering and distress and mistreatment in the hands of a hostile welfare state become the cause around which the women politically organize at the end of the novel. It is Clara’s strength, endurance, and maternal kindness that are recognized in the protagonist’s decision, at the novel’s end, to name her newborn daughter after her. Clara’s identity lives on through her namesake and the cultural memory (a powerful theme in the novel) of the women who knew her.

Interestingly, Coiner, in commenting on Le Sueur’s representation of prostitutes vis-à-vis the sensibilities of 1930s leftists in established positions of political leadership, observes that “some [Communist] Party members who read the novel in manuscript form considered it politically suspect. CP [Communist Party] leader Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, for example, questioned Le Sueur’s writing about prostitutes rather than ‘*virtuous Communist women*,’ declaring *The Girl* a ‘*lumpen*’ rather than a *bona-fide* proletarian novel” (111, emphasis added). To Coiner’s observation I would add that Le Sueur’s detailed representation of the “lumpen”—the lowly situated underclass of unskilled workers, vagrants, and criminals—refuses to mark them as inauthentic proletariat but rather insists upon exploring their exceedingly human values, dreams, and motivations in the face of economic hopelessness. Indeed, one of the key story lines concerns several desperate male characters who, in a state of economic and psychological despair, make the reckless decision to team with a hardened criminal in a failed bank robbery. It should be noted that while some understanding of the specific ideological contexts of the post-Depression era is necessary to make sense of historical references and the unabashedly leftist political logic of the text, it is within the human experiences and conditions richly depicted in the novel that the political abstractions and slogans acquire meaning.

Even if teachers and students are not familiar with the work of this author or the development of the US cultural front, they would likely appreciate the many connections one can draw between this text and others, both in the context of literary history and, as invoked by this year’s ACTC conference theme, in relation to *real-world* issues. The journey of a young, naïve, gifted female protagonist, having left the comfort of family and community in a rural town to encounter the economic challenges and opportunities of urban life, may remind one of similar narratives about female migrants confronted by the complexity and risks of city life. Think, for instance, of Theodore Dreiser’s 1900 novel *Sister Carrie*, which opens with the eighteen-year-old Carrie Meeber arriving in Chicago from a small town in Wisconsin in search of economic and cultural opportunity. Or in the realm of more recent popular nonfiction, the depiction in Erik Larson’s *Devil in the White City* (2003) of vulnerable young women having recently arrived in late nineteenth-century Chicago,

at the time of the World's Fair, and then being horribly deceived and murdered by the serial killer H. H. Holmes. The struggles of Le Sueur's young female protagonist in the urban environment of St. Paul easily resonate with the conditions of these other female characters. The sexual exploitation of young women is a theme powerfully developed in *The Girl*; sexual abuse is a constant threat to be evaded and parried in masculine social spaces, and in a brutal, disturbing scene of violence, the narrator is raped by two men. Le Sueur's *The Girl* concludes with the protagonist's growing empowerment and the development of a utopian female community from which a threatening male presence has been effectively removed. Except for Clara, the prostitute, the women survive while the major male figures in the novel die or are taken away because of the failed bank robbery.

The narrative also resonates with late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century real-world tales of economic globalization and labor, in which young female laborers, displaced from family and community in their pursuit of economic sustenance, become especially vulnerable to the patriarchal violence of the global city. Over the past several decades, for instance, the numerous deaths and horrible mutilation of young, vulnerable Mexican female workers, isolated from family and friends after moving to the Mexican border city of Juarez for employment in the *maquiladoras*, constitute a great human tragedy. Lourdes Portillo's film, *Senorita Extraviada* (*Missing Young Woman*), observes that over 270 women were raped and murdered between 1993 and 2002 in this border zone. In Portillo's words, her film is "the story of a city of the future; it is the story of the underbelly of our global economy." This is a tragic story characterized by the absence of the sort of organized resistance ultimately celebrated in Le Sueur's novel; the strains of political idealism in *The Girl* are perhaps in marked contrast with the pessimism found in more recent tales about gendered labor in the global economy.

It might seem paradoxical that a novel so geographically localized, heavily ideological, and culturally marginal vis-à-vis both dominant and emerging literary canons contains such a rich exploration of human experience. When Clara dies in the novel, the narrator, emotionally overwhelmed by the outpouring of sympathy for Clara, says, "I couldn't get over it, that they should all care" (179). In the novel, this is what motivates the preservation of cultural memory. As a teacher of this text for the very first time, I could also observe, about my twenty-first-century students' impassioned response to *The Girl*, "I couldn't get over it, that they should all care."

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Home and the Real World: Vilém Flusser’s *Migrant*, *Crito*’s Athens, and Tim Winton’s *Trailer Park*

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Although it may seem counterintuitive, an excellent theme for a first-year course to launch a liberal arts education preparing students for the real world is “home.” Such a theme invites discussion of a wide range of core texts that explore relations between the structures that are external conditions for our development—the body, the dwelling place, the city; and internal structures—cognitive, psychological, and spiritual—that help create our sense of belonging. A short essay, “The Challenge of the Migrant,” by the twentieth-century Czech-Jewish philosopher Vilém Flusser, read at the beginning of such a course, provides an open, flexible frame for exploring the multiple dimensions of this theme.¹ Here I introduce Flusser’s essay and then illustrate how it invites inquiry through two very different texts: Plato’s *Crito* and a short story, “The Turning,” by the contemporary Australian writer Tim Winton.

The resonance that the theme “home” will have for first-year students is obvious. Many students are recently removed from family, friends, and the familiar and are confronted with an entirely new location, group of peers, and institutional structures and expectations, giving rise to various degrees of unease, discomfort, and pain. Flusser, in an essay that is both personal and philosophical, describes a kindred pain in that of a migrant detached from a homeland (Flusser prefers the German word *heimat* for the richness of its historical associations):

[W]hoever loses it [homeland or *heimat*] suffers. This is because we are attached to *heimat* by many bonds, most of which are hidden and not accessible to conscious-

ness. Whenever these attachments tear or are torn asunder, the individual experiences this painfully, almost as a surgical invasion of his most intimate person. When I was forced to leave Prague (or got up the courage to flee), I felt that the universe was crumbling. . . . [T]he feeling of *heimat* will grab hold of [the migrant's] guts and make him feel as if they were being turned inside out. (3–4)

Paradoxically, however, Flusser almost comes to celebrate this wrenching experience, not, of course, for the pain but because only through such a separation does one become aware of one's unconscious enmeshment in *heimat*: the invisible, mysterious feelings that “extend beyond adult consciousness into childish, infantile, and probably even fetal transpersonal regions, . . . the seat of most (perhaps even all) prejudice, that is, judgments that are made prior to all conscious judgments” (4). Such enmeshments are dangerous because they inhibit freedom by preventing one from seeing reality clearly and making clear judgments and decisions, particularly about the limitations characteristic of one's *heimat*. As a Jew who left Prague in 1938 and lost all his loved ones to the gas chambers, the Czech Resistance, or the Russian Front, and who eventually migrated to Brazil where he attempted to construct a Brazilian *heimat* open to immigrants from all over the world, Flusser is particularly concerned about the dangers of any patriotism that refuses to examine the limitations of its *heimat*.

Becoming detached from *heimat* gives one freedom *from* destructive prejudices and allows the freedom *for* consciously made, clear judgments. The migrant is not free from attachments but rather is free to choose attachments that are worthy to be honored. “I myself weave my connections with others, and I do this in concert with them. The responsibility that I have for others has not been forced on me; it is something that I have taken on myself” (6). That is, the migrant has “the freedom that the Judeo-Christian tradition means when it calls on us to love our neighbor” (11–12).

If to be free the migrant must detach himself from “a home encased in mystification” (11), so also must the settled community that receives the immigrant come to terms with the immigrant's disturbing presence. For the immigrant necessarily exposes as banal the unconscious habits and secret codes that the native assumes are sacred. The native sees the immigrant as “worthy of hatred and . . . detestable because he reveals the *heimat*'s beauty as prettified kitsch. A polemical dialogue develops between the beautiful native and the detestable immigrant, which can end either in pogrom, a change in the *heimat*, or the native's liberation from his own attachments” (6–7). Ultimately the migrant challenges us to replace the mysterious, unconscious prejudices of the *heimat* with the challenge of living together with others, “so that together with them we may create something beautiful out of something that is ugly” (15).

The Socrates of Plato's *Crito* might seem, on the face of it, to be antagonistic to this “challenge of the migrant.” After all, as the laws tell Socrates, “You never leave the city. . . . You never showed curiosity to know other states or their laws. Your affection never went beyond us and our state; we were your special favorites; and you submitted to our governing you . . . [Y]ou prefer death to banishment” [52].² And Socrates assumes that elements of his *heimat* are sacred and not banal, having the laws argue that “The state is higher and holier and to be valued more than mother or

father or any other ancestor” [51]. Nevertheless, without leaving his *heimat*, Socrates has accomplished just what Flusser is advocating. He has found a way to challenge the mysterious attachments and enmeshments that characterize one’s relation to *heimat*; that way is the dialectical process.

When Crito worries about what people will think if he allows Socrates to be executed, Socrates dismisses the opinion of the majority precisely because it represents opinion prior to judgment, that is, Flusser’s “prejudice” and “unconscious enmeshment.” In its place, Socrates requires that Crito test opinion against principle, in this case the principle that doing what is just improves life and doing what is unjust damages it. But it is not only the appeal to reason and principle that enables Crito to shake off the hold that majority opinion has over him. Socrates sitting in jail willing to accept execution for the sake of principle is an emotional as well as an intellectual challenge to Crito’s opinion, a challenge akin to that which Flusser’s immigrant represents to the native. Socrates’ presence there testifies to a life dedicated to values and beliefs not assumed in the unconscious allegiances characteristic of the Athenian *heimat*. Like the migrant, Socrates has freed himself *from* those unconscious prejudices in order to free himself *for* consciously chosen attachments and responsibilities, perhaps best expressed in the *Apology* when he tells the jury,

Athenians, I honor and love you, but I will obey the god rather than you. . . . I will interrogate and examine and cross-examine. If I think that person [with whom I am talking] has no virtue, but only pretends to have it, I will accuse that person of undervaluing the greater and overvaluing the less. I will say this to everyone whom I meet, young and old, citizen and foreigner, but especially to the citizens, because they are my siblings. [29–30]

Socrates has made himself an outsider in his own city but at the same time he is arguably more committed to his city than an ordinary citizen: he has freely chosen to take upon himself a responsibility to his neighbors and undertakes this responsibility in concert with them.

Using Plato’s *Crito* to discuss the implications of home demonstrates how Flusser can open the theme to philosophical and political explorations. More personal examples of individuals who wrenchingly reassess inherited values and beliefs can be found in many contemporary memoirs and short stories from around the world. Tim Winton’s short story “The Turning,” for example, is narrated from the point of view of an abused wife who struggles to acknowledge that things have gone terribly wrong for her. Raelene lives in a trailer park in a small fishing town on the west coast of Australia with her two small girls and her husband, Max, who works as a “deckie” on a boat. In the off-season, Raelene meets newcomers Sherry and Dan, who seem completely out of place. She and Sherry strike up a friendship, but Raelene isn’t sure she can trust Sherry. For one thing, Sherry is so good-looking that Raelene does not quite know what to make of the fact that she is also very kind. Raelene has not had a friend since high school, and, as she explains, “even then her friends were backstabbing bitches” (136). But Sherry “was a real surprise, out of the ordinary. . . . [S]he had something special. She listened. She gave a fuck. There was a kindness in her” (135). For Raelene this is “a mystery” (141).

Sherry’s husband, Dan, also confuses Raelene. She contrasts Dan with her hus-

band Max: Dan “was very handsome but a bit too well-groomed for Rae’s taste. Max was a slob but at least he didn’t have girly-smooth hands. In fact, they were a different species” (136). At this point Raelene still affirms her early view of Max as her ideal man: “Right from the start Max was a bloke who didn’t muck around. He never pretended to be what he wasn’t. . . . [H]e stared at her like she was food, and it made her feel powerful.” Her mother had “made a fool of herself” over Max, and her sisters had been jealous (137).

But over time, Max had “turned sour” (137). He gets into fights, he is passed over for promotion to skipper because of his temper, and, something she never allows herself to articulate directly, he beats her. He still makes her feel desired and she feels he needs her, so despite these problems, she tells herself that she still loves him. When she observes that Sherry and Dan have a “special something” (142) in their relationship, however, she feels more and more ashamed of her own situation. Eventually she is able to acknowledge to herself that she does not love Max. She justifies her situation, though, by thinking she deserves the shame: maybe “someone like her didn’t deserve better than Max.” She also acknowledges that “she was too scared to leave,” because she can’t imagine life without a man. “She needed a bloke, she hadn’t been without one since she was thirteen years old and now it was just unthinkable. The only way she’d leave Max was in the protection of another man. She needed a rescuer. She couldn’t go alone” (146).

Raelene is attracted to the “migrants” Sherry and Dan, but they are so far outside her *heimat*’s models for what genuine people are like that she is compelled to repeatedly test them. She begins that “polemical dialogue” that Flusser says characterizes the confrontation between the immigrant and the native. She tries to shock Sherry and Dan with talk about sex and to provoke them with rude behavior. When she comes upon them discussing the Bible together, the thought even crosses her mind that they belong to some kind of cult who are planning to force her into an orgy or to steal her girls (147). They remain kind and understanding, however, and Raelene begins to feel appalled at her own imaginings. She learns that Dan is a recovering alcoholic and that he and Sherry find support in the Bible. She tries to read the Bible on her own, though she finds that it only makes her head ache. Although she “warmed to the idea of Jesus and the business of forgiveness, . . . she didn’t *feel* anything” (149). But when she happens upon a snow globe with a figure of Jesus inside walking on the water, she is “seized by the look of him, his hair flying in the wind, the robe pulled back from his chest. He was all man,” she thinks. “He had real pecs and a six-pack. Like a bodybuilder. He was ripped” (152, 155). Like a transitional object between the immigrant and native cultures, the snow globe helps Raelene to connect being “all man” with being compassionate and sympathetic.

The image of Jesus, together with the renewed self-respect she is building through Sherry’s respect for her, eventually enables Raelene to release herself from Max’s hold. When in a final scene Max beats her yet again, accusing her of seeing someone else, this time she defies him, thinking of Jesus and saying, “He’s bigger than you, Max, so be careful. You don’t even know him but he owns you. He’ll cut you to pieces, you fuckin’ coward. He’ll come lookin’, he’ll suck the life out of you, he’s every fucking thing you aren’t” (156). Although Max responds with brutality,

Raelene now feels psychically free from his power. More difficult than enduring his blows had been the process of undergoing what Flusser would describe as that “painful, almost surgical invasion of [one’s] most intimate person,” for she had to sever her attachment to the limiting ideas of manhood and womanhood she had absorbed from her *heimat* before she could imagine herself in a life away from him. Raelene has responded to the migrants Sherry and Dan not with pogrom, nor change in *heimat*, but by liberating herself from her old attachments, enabling her to make conscious judgments about the bonds she should honor. She can now consciously choose whom she will be responsible for and “weave . . . connections with others . . . in concert with them.”

Flusser’s essay provides an inviting opening into a range of texts that explore ways our homes create not only a sense of belonging and attachment, but also a foundation of preconscious judgments and values that require our conscious interrogation. By choosing the values and relationships for which we will be responsible, we are moving from home into a world that we consciously create in connection with others.

Notes

1. I am especially grateful to Prof. Deborah Vlock, who first proposed the Flusser essay, and to the whole team of faculty from Babson College’s Arts and Humanities Division who worked together to design the course “Dwelling: Body, Home, City” as one of our first-year foundation course offerings.
2. Numbers in square brackets refer to the universal Greek text pages.

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The Fourth Amendment as a Core Text: A Pedagogy for the Citizen-Philosopher

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The Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution consists of a single complex sentence:

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

The text omits about as much as it asserts. Its first clause offers a statement of moral doctrine, prescribing inviolable respect for “the right . . . to be secure,” while omitting any definition or description of this right. A phrase within that clause lists four items to be protected by the same right to security, but says nothing about the status—the exhaustiveness, exclusivity, or generalizability—of the items on the list. A different phrase, also within the first clause, legitimizes “reasonable searches and seizures” but specifies no criterion of reasonability. The amendment’s second clause describes a procedure for regulating searches and seizures, but omits any mention of the procedure’s relation to the foregoing right or conception of reasonability. This combination of omission and assertion, I want to suggest, is rather puzzling, but also the amendment’s great strength, both as a legal document and as a pedagogical one.

We often think of constitutional law as a topic specific to law school, but it finds its way into the undergraduate curriculum, typically in courses on constitutional interpretation (usually taught in departments of politics or government) and courses on criminal procedure (usually taught in departments of criminal justice). Consider three popular and/or authoritative approaches to the Fourth Amendment in these

contexts. I'll call these the *folkloric*, the *textbook*, and the *historicist* approaches, regarding them merely as general tendencies one encounters in the undergraduate setting, without intending the categories to be exhaustive of the possibilities or even necessarily exclusive of one another.¹

The folkloric approach is the one that students sometimes bring to the study of the Fourth Amendment and is less a reading of the text than a series of associations conjured up by it. Inspired perhaps by police dramas on TV and the movies, this approach seizes on the amendment's warrant clause and takes that clause to be the essential content of the amendment as a whole. On this view, the Fourth Amendment is narrowly to be understood as an instrument of criminal procedure. What it demands is that law enforcement officers operate at every step of a criminal investigation by "getting" probable cause and then by getting a warrant. An officer with a warrant in hand can permissibly search and/or seize; an officer without one is paralyzed into inaction.²

Having construed the warrant requirement in this oversimplified fashion, the folkloric reading is then susceptible of a kind of inverse reading. If the warrant requirement is as rigid as the folkloric reading suggests, the Fourth Amendment would appear to be a positive obstacle to effective law enforcement. For what about cases where a search or seizure is necessary but a warrant is impracticable? The folkloric reading insists that a warrant is nonetheless required, so that if a warrant is impracticable, substantive justice must be held hostage to a mere procedure. The law officer's job, then, is discreet illegality in the service of substantive justice: a "good cop," in other words, gets around the constitutional mumbo-jumbo to "get the job done." Perhaps that explains the insistent romanticizing in our popular tradition of the officer who unapologetically searches and seizes without constraint because he has an infallible understanding of where to look and what to do, regardless of the evidence available to him.

The folkloric approach is, of course, wrong. For one thing, it is too narrow, since it ignores the amendment's application outside of criminal law. More fundamentally, it ignores the fact that while probable cause is required for warrants, nothing in the text of the amendment says that warrants are always required for search and/or seizure. It follows that some searches and seizures are legitimately warrantless. Finally, contrary to its pretensions, the inverse-folkloric reading's glorification of "rogue" law enforcement is incoherent. The "rogue" conception is ambiguous as between an ideal of law enforcement unconstrained by law and an ideal that enforces an "unwritten law" of substantive rather than merely procedural justice. In the first case, we have the incoherence of law enforcement without law. In the second, we have the fantasy of law without written procedures. In either case, the inverse reading gives us a dangerously seductive version of the desire to play God (on this desire, see Bolt 64–66 and Sartre 566).

As the name suggests, the textbook approach is the one that students encounter in textbooks of criminal procedure and the like and is often the one invoked to remedy the distortions of the folkloric view (e.g., Cole and Smith 176–91). On the textbook view, the Fourth Amendment asserts a defeasible rule—the same one asserted by the folkloric reading—amended by a long series of exceptions. Where the

folkloric reading tells us that warrants are *always* required, the textbook reading tells us that warrants are sometimes *not* required, and tells us where. The task of the apt or diligent student is to grasp the warrant requirement, to remember that it is not an absolute, and then to memorize and be able to apply the list of exceptions to it, with the proviso that the list can expand or contract as the courts modify it. Thus where the folkloric reading insists on a form of absolutism, the textbook reading offers a nuanced form of pragmatism.

The textbook approach may be more nuanced than the folkloric reading, but it is still subtly (and dangerously) wrong. The plain fact is that the Fourth Amendment asserts an inviolable right. An inviolable right is one that, by definition, *cannot* be violated. The textbook reading tells us where the right *can* be violated without telling us where it *can't* be and without setting any limits on the possible exceptions. It thereby defaults on the task of explaining what the amendment's first clause says and, by implication, what the amendment itself says.

Suppose that someone insists that no right can literally be inviolable; some "exceptions" to the rule of inviolability are necessary, if only to accommodate reasonable searches and seizures themselves.³ In that case, a rational interpreter still needs an answer to a basic question: how do we reconcile the textual requirement of inviolability with the necessary exceptions? On virtually any account, reason demands a coherent, principled account of the relationship between a rule and the supposed exceptions to it. Why, in other words, are some exceptions justified and not others?

The textbook approach gives no answer to these crucial questions. Indeed, most textbooks see no reason to raise them at all. But the text of the amendment *demand*s reasonability, and it flouts the norms of reason to promulgate an inviolable principle followed by a series of ad hoc exceptions. So the textbook approach must be rejected.

The historicist approach is an attempt to remedy the ad hoc character of the textbook approach by appeal to the historical context in which the amendment was first formulated and adopted (e.g., Amar).⁴ The assumption here is that the amendment is best interpreted by discovering what its original authors believed about or intended for it. If we discover what they believed or intended, we discover the text's original meaning, presumably the perfect interpretation. Historicist readings differ by the different historical claims they make, and any attack on one version will court the objection that it fails to respond to the claims of another. But we need not dwell on the differences between historicisms to see the problems that they all by definition share.⁵

The most obvious problem is that the historicist approach lacks a clear method of making the past relevant to the present. If its operative question is, "What *did* the Founders think?" the problem is that they disagreed with one another, not only about the meaning of the Fourth Amendment but also about the desirability of having a Bill of Rights at all.⁶ In any case, even when they agreed, some of what the Founders said was *wrong*—that is, unreasonable and rights violative (e.g., about slaves and women). If so, following their beliefs indiscriminately would violate the amendment's textual requirements of reasonability and respect for rights. To follow their *reasonable* beliefs, we would have to discriminate systematically between the right and the wrong ones. That procedure presupposes that we ourselves have in hand a criterion for distinguishing right from wrong beliefs on the subject. But the very idea

of our having a criterion for tracking the Founders' reasonable beliefs implies that it is reason rather than history that is driving our inquiry. The inquiry may be facilitated in part by historical concerns, but it is not itself an exercise in historiography.

If the operative question is "What *would* the amendment's authors think?" *that* question is incoherent. Our knowledge of the Founders is inherently tied to their eighteenth-century context. There is no feasible way to lift the Founders from that context, preserve our knowledge about them, and then ask counterfactual questions about what they "would have done" in some other century. We have no idea what the Founders "would have" learned in the time between then and now, or whether they "would have" changed their minds about what they originally believed. So the historicist reading cannot be right. We simply have to face the possibility that a James Madison or a Thomas Jefferson, resurrected from the grave, might lack good answers to the two hundred years' worth of interpretive questions we would want to ask him.

Each of the preceding three approaches to the Fourth Amendment shares a common feature and, as I see it, a common weakness. The folkloric readings begin by seizing on the warrant requirement in the amendment's second clause. The textbook reading proceeds by amending the warrant requirement in the same clause. The historicist reading directs our attention away from a direct confrontation with either clause of the amendment, insisting that any such confrontation be mediated by historical inquiries into the Founders' beliefs. Each approach, in short, avoids a direct confrontation with the amendment's *first* clause. It's as though practitioners of all three approaches scan quickly over the first clause, come upon the concept of an inviolable right there, find that concept either anachronistic or otherwise obscure, and then decide to focus attention elsewhere. But the first clause's reference to inviolable rights is where the interpretive action is. Omit an account of it, and one leaves the Fourth Amendment a mystery.

It's not surprising why interpreters tolerate that mystery. On the one hand, the amendment's first clause claims to safeguard an inviolable right to security. In doing so, it demands that its readers know what such a right is and entails. On the other hand, the Constitution neither gives us an account of that right nor gives us a hint about where to find one. We're left, then, in an interpretive quandary: we're asked to protect a right with a definite identity ("*the* right of the people to be secure"), but one whose identity is left unspecified. As students are apt to ask, where is one supposed to "go" to "get" an account of it?

Perhaps the question is misconceived. "Going" and "getting" is language appropriate to the inculcation of dogma or the consumption of commodities, but neither is appropriate to the task at hand—inquiry and discovery. The Constitution tells us that *we the people* (presumably the same "people" mentioned in the amendment's first clause) ordain a constitution to "secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity" (presumably the same concept of "security" mentioned in the amendment's first clause) and vest the judicial powers of the United States in its courts. The assumption seems to be that *we the people* already know what a right to security is and know how and why it needs protection. If "we" have forgotten all that—or never quite knew it—perhaps it becomes our responsibility to learn or relearn things on our own initiative. From this perspective, the omissions in the amendment's text are,

like the Constitution's references to representation, legislation, petitions, assemblies, militias, and juries, an invitation to active citizen participation. Just as vacant offices need willing officers to fill them, omissions in the constitutional text need willing interpreters to fill *them*. Where our political institutions demand civic action, the Constitution's textual omissions demand what might be called civic philosophy or thought.

In fact, no American comes to the study of the Constitution as a blank slate on the subject of rights. We all have beliefs about it, often strongly held ones. Unfortunately, those beliefs often get lost in the disciplinary shuffle of college-level instruction about legal matters. Practitioners of the textbook approach want their students to master contemporary legal doctrine. Practitioners of the historicist approach want their students to master the relevant historiography. Philosophers of law tend to talk about other things altogether. Aside from a core texts approach, it is unclear what undergraduate discipline or course is designed to stimulate thought into the *moral* meaning of the Fourth Amendment's right to security.

That is as good an argument as any for a core texts approach. As I see it, an undergraduate coming to the study of constitutional interpretation or criminal procedure ought to be asked—prior to any sustained discussion of the legalities or technicalities of the Fourth Amendment—to reflect on “the right to be secure.” This exercise need not and probably should not involve any heavy-duty philosophical reading. Nor should it involve theorizing of the sort appropriate to a class in philosophy. What we should expect instead is the thoughtful dialectics of the citizen-philosopher, that is, the discourse of the educated amateur generalist who stands to the professional philosopher as Aristotle's citizen-soldier stands to his or her professional counterpart.⁷ We should ask students to clarify to themselves their own independent conception of the right to security, the conception arrived at on their own intellectual initiative, prior to and independently of consultation with textbooks, casebooks, history books, journal articles, or Wikipedia. What (they should be asked) do *they* regard as inviolably secure in human life? What would they want a government to be able to search or seize so as to keep them and their loved ones secure? How would they reconcile the answers to those two questions, and how would they justify their answers to others?

The point is not to insist that every undergraduate student of law become a political philosopher. Nor is it to suggest that students' philosophical reflections on rights will necessarily be true, rational, or correspond to anything the Fourth Amendment actually protects. The point is to insist that students get their interpretive priorities straight. Too many students are indoctrinated into the belief that, as far as constitutional interpretation is concerned, intellectual sophistication requires them to miss the substantive forest for the procedural trees. I sometimes encounter budding lawyers and police cadets who can recite the entire list of exceptions to the warrant clause and are (literally) willing to put their lives on the line for the exclusionary rule, but cannot name the *right* that the Fourth Amendment protects. The first clause of the amendment has become invisible to them, even as it states the amendment's *raison d'être*. There is no better way to make it visible to them but to force it upon their notice and demand engagement with it.⁸

Much is made of the “individualism” of contemporary American life, rarely if

ever as a compliment. Americans, we are told in derogation of this individualism, are overly focused on their rights and insufficiently devoted to their civic obligations. But if my argument here has been correct, there is a distinctively individualist conception of devotion to civic life constituted by devotion to the rights inscribed in the Bill of Rights. A bill of rights neither enforces nor interprets itself. Citizens as citizens must take the initiative to enforce it or see it enforced, and citizens as amateur philosophers must figure out what counts as enforcement worthy of the name. If so, there is no conflict between an individualist focus on rights and a civic-minded focus on obligations: a commitment to understanding and defending rights just *is* an American's civic obligation—and no easy task.

It is highly doubtful that contemporary Americans are, in this sense, overly individualistic or overly focused on rights. Legal defendants aside, few Americans seem to mind the remarkable intrusions now taken for granted as ad hoc “exceptions” to the (themselves ad hoc) rules that govern search and seizure. There is no mass movement today against torture or indefinite detention in contexts of warfare; nor is there one against the ad hoc exception-making that dominates contemporary criminal law, or against the volumes of “administrative exceptions” to the Fourth Amendment in regulatory law. Legal scholars aside, few citizens seem much exercised by the “mess” that goes by the name “Fourth Amendment jurisprudence,” and even there, it's generally thought salutary to offer interpretations of the amendment that are “pragmatic, contingent, and subject to easy revision” (Amar 39).

“The instability of our laws is really an immense evil,” Jefferson wrote to Madison from Paris in 1787, going on to express the ingenuous belief that some procedural tinkering with the Constitution might serve as a fix (Jefferson 918). He was and remains right about the evil, but he was wrong about the fix. By definition, a right to security can neither survive perpetual revision nor the rule of ad-hocracy. The only real fix is a conception of rights robust enough to yield security across generations and a citizenry willing and able to discover and uphold it.⁹

Notes

1. The terminology in the text is my own, intended to capture categories that are broader (and I think more basic) than those discussed in the academic literature on constitutional interpretation.

2. For a somewhat cavalier example of this assumption, see Ely 172–73 and 260 (note 111).

3. There are at least two ways of putting the point in the text. On the one hand, we could say that there are *permissible abridgments* of the right to security (e.g., Meyers 4–15, 143–49). In that case, each exception would need a separate justification. On the other hand, we could say that the right to security is *contextually absolute*, meaning that while the right is absolutely inviolable within a specified context, it is inapplicable outside of that context (e.g., Smith, *Moral Rights* 110–17). In that case, the relevant conception of context would need justification, as would the principle defining it. Neither approach is easy to justify, but the second interpretation seems more obviously coherent than the first with the idea of an inviolable right.

4. I put Amar's book in this category not because it sets out to offer a historicist interpretation, but because it ends up endorsing one.

5. For an excellent critique of this general approach, see Smith “Originalism.” My term “historicist” denotes a broader category than what Smith calls “originalism.”

6. For a good discussion of disagreement over the Bill of Rights, see Labunski.
7. On citizen-soldiers, see Aristotle, *Ethics* 42–45 (III.8–9) and *Politics* 219–23 (VII.14–15). On dialectic, see Aristotle’s *Topics* 167–81 (I.1–18). On educated amateur generalists, see *Ethics* 2–3 (I.3).
8. The argument of this paragraph might seem to involve an endorsement of Ronald Dworkin’s well-known conception of constitutional interpretation, but no such endorsement is intended: I essentially agree with the criticisms made of Dworkin in Smith’s “Originalism,” 173–79. My argument *is* intended to contrast with the conception of constitutional interpretation espoused by, among others, Robert Bork (see, e.g., Bork 113).
9. Thanks to Charles Claunch, Dennis McGrath, Ronald Pestritto, and Anne Ruszkiewicz as well as my students at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Felician University for very helpful discussion of the issues of this paper. A special thanks to Carrie-Ann Biondi for particularly helpful commentary and advice.

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Education and Love of the World: “Crisis in Education,” by Hannah Arendt

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When talking about education, it is often our definition of the scope of education that divides us. Some define education as a set of skills that will lead to a means of employment, that is, education as vocational in its primary purpose. Others think of education as a means of ensuring equal opportunity and social mobility, that is, education as a social force in the maintenance of democracy as its primary purpose, while variants of this definition see education as necessary to teach people how to be good citizens, that is, education as civic engagement. Others think education is about preserving a particular culture or, in the most pernicious and nostalgic version of this idea, a particular cultural group is to be preserved as the primary purpose. The three definitions plus variants above all have roots in social and political ideologies. Hannah Arendt asks her readers to consider a different way of looking at education. She asks us to see a more fundamental purpose for education, one that is prior to social location or politics because it is about our human condition as mortal beings, rather than about social status or political agendas. Arendt's explanation of the purpose of education shares its structures with her accounts of philosophical thinking, both of which rest on her theory of human temporality. This account provides a perspective on education that places its purpose outside of political and social values into the sphere of epistemology, of human ways of knowing.

Once we understand this fundamental purpose of education, we can return (largely without Arendt) to the political and social questions concerning education—with a more fundamental perspective on education's epistemology—one that I will call our comportment toward the world. Having an epistemological perspective on

education provides a deeper well from which to draw responses to the demands public rhetoric places on education for being too expensive, too elitist, or not elitist enough. All higher education, but particularly the liberal arts institutions, have been taken to task for their expense, their impractical curricula, their lack of disciplinary boundaries, and their exclusivity by the department of education and by the mainstream media echo chamber.¹ This paper attempts to sketch the well from which we can draw deeper responses to and defenses of liberal arts education made from all sides of the ideological spectrum. If Arendt's account of philosophical thinking and education share the same relationship to time, then there are implications for those connections between temporality, thinking, and education. Her short essay, "The Crisis in Education," and her lengthy final work, *The Life of the Mind*, offer accounts of education and thinking respectively that link these concepts to human temporality—and offer a context in which to consider education and thinking together as a way of forming a relationship to the world.²

Arendt's work would not be many scholars' first choice as a lens to examine education. Her refusal to consider social problems as part of her political theory is notorious. Further she asserts an authoritative role to teachers and schools over students, modeling schools on the familial authority of what used to be the private realm of the household. All of this is off-putting to much contemporary educational theory that tries to "teacher-proof" its classes or that wants to emphasize pedagogy over subject mastery; and it is off-putting to those with a more activist perspective on education from either end of the ideological spectrum. Nonetheless, her perspective is useful for building a defense of education that is prior to politics or social location, which I will call comportment toward the world—a phrase defined below.

When Arendt published "The Crisis in Education" in 1958, she believed that the world was reeling from the effects of totalitarianism. Mass society and its imposition on the public realm mixed aspects of the public sphere into the private, creating what Arendt calls the realm of the social. She attacks the educational reform movement specifically in her essay as a function of the realm of the social because it seems to replace subject expertise with pedagogical training (presumably she means Dewey here, though she does not mention him by name, and she certainly misreads him if she does refer obliquely to his work). She nonetheless acknowledges in multiple places that mass society opened many new opportunities for people, such as the inclusion of women in the public realm, and the need for mass education.³ Her project is not an elitist one, though she refuses to approach it through standard analysis of the social sciences. Rather, her approach reminds us that comportment toward the human world is necessary, that we must carry the world with us as we move through time. Arendt's formulation of our comportment toward the world is as relevant today. Arendt's response to similar issues reminds us of the role of education to teach us to be lovers and protectors of the human world—which she defines in terms of human perception of time. The purpose of education that she articulates, the protection and re-creation of the human world, should remain central to any discussion of the purpose of education.

Early in the third section of Arendt's "A Crisis in Education," she concludes:

[T]he claims of the world and the requirements of order in it are being consciously

or unconsciously repudiated; all responsibility for the world is being rejected, the responsibility for giving orders no less than for obeying them. There is no doubt that in the modern loss of authority both intentions play a part and have often been simultaneously and inextricably at work together. (186–87)

This quote describes the culture of the United States as one that relinquishes responsibility for thinking actively about the world out of squeamishness for structures of authority. Thus the “crisis” in education comes not from a lack of ability of teachers or students, but in part from a refusal to grant schools and particularly teachers the authority to teach. And the refusal to grant teachers that authority ends up being a refusal to grant authority to teach responsibility for the world. On page 189 of “The Crisis in Education,” Arendt contextualizes her argument about the purpose of education in terms of her theory of temporality, that is, the way humans experience the flow of time. She concludes that we are “educating young people for a world that is becoming out of joint,” that is, our cultural world, created by human endeavor, is as mortal as we are, and while it is created to serve as a home to people while we are alive, it is created by people in the course of history, and so it is always changing. Arendt states that we must explicitly conserve our world, or it will die. The world is mortal, it will and does change, but if it is to be a home to humanity, it must be conserved as a home. Arendt argues that the world must be constantly set right anew, and education is the key to the process of setting-right because only new beings have the ability to bring newness into the world.

The challenge of education, particularly higher education, is to conserve young people’s newness until they are prepared to take their place setting the world aright in their own way. She writes that education is (or perhaps we should say “ought to be”):

[T]he point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it, and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and the young, would be inevitable. (193)

Education, then, is the assuming of responsibility for the world we created, which involves taking up a role of authority toward it. We take the world as our own when we educate people to preserve it and to love it. In order to understand this odd definition of education, we have to ask what must we do to love the world, to set it right, anew.

This newness of people entering the world is an effect of what Arendt calls natality, of being born into the flow of time or into the world of appearances or into a time that is always becoming, or the flow of history.⁴ Natality means “bornness,” the sense in which humans are born into a time that is becoming, but also only for a time that is finite. Education in this context, then, concerns understanding the conditions of our being as humans who are always becoming, but only within a limited temporal period. That knowledge reminds us to consider the world as we act, that is, to take responsibility for the particular historical moment in which we exist. She writes in “Crisis in Education,” “The problem is simply to educate in such a way that a setting-right remains actually possible, even though it can, of course, never be assured” (189). It requires that new beings be aware of how we stand between our past and our future, and that this stance toward the world allows us to think about setting the

world aright by making or remaking it anew. This pause for consideration looks very much like Arendt's description of the process of thinking, and so we need to look more closely at her definition of thinking—the kind of thinking that philosophers do.

In the "Thinking" section of *Life of the Mind*, Arendt locates the thinking mind in time. Thinking is what comes when there is a quiet moment of now, compressed between the past and the future. It is what Augustine called a *nuncstans*, a "standing now," which is grounded in relation to the past and the future so that it cannot escape from its anchor in time, though its own location is very much in the present.⁵⁴ Thinking is the space in which we decide what shall be and what is "no more"—in her rendering here, it is the place in which our world is conserved. Thinking is located in the same space, then, as the purpose of education. It is the place in which we might learn to think, but also where we learn what thinking is. Education, in its fundamentals, is seeking to teach comportment toward the world, or perhaps more appropriately, when one is educated, one understands what our comportment toward the world is.

To understand what I mean by "comportment toward the world," one can look at a section of "Thinking" in *Life of the Mind* where Arendt reads three texts together: a parable by Kafka titled "He," Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence, and Heidegger's response to Nietzsche's eternal recurrence. Kafka sets up the problem in his parable by depicting a man caught between two antagonists, one from "his origin" and one blocking the man's way to the future, which eventually is his death. "He" must fight both to just stand his ground. Arendt notes two things here: First is that humanity's particular existence shapes the flow of time: "It is the insertion of man with his limited life span that transforms the continuously flowing stream of sheer change . . . into time as we know it."⁵⁶ The second she makes by way of Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche, that the standpoint of the thinking ego, that of the man in Kafka's parable, is different from the observer, the reader. The observer experiences the regular flow of time, but the protagonist is caught up in a moment of presentness in which time separates into the past, the present, and the future. It is only in the moment of the present that we can experience the driven quality of the past and the future. Arendt describes this presentness as an experience of "a life-long fight against the dead weight of the past, driving him forward with hope, and the fear of a future (whose only certainty is death), driving him backward toward 'the quiet of the past' with nostalgia for and remembrance of the only reality he can be sure of" (205).

If we take Arendt's two points together, we see the centrality of her conception of time for both thinking and education. Our perception of time is shaped by our everyday lives, but beyond this that our particular perspective toward time shifts what we experience. And we can pay attention to this shifting. Heidegger's note about standpoint is important because the experience of "He" is that of the thinking self. Normally we experience the flow of time attached to the "continuity of our business and our activities in the world" (205), that is, our sense of time comes out of our everyday experience of the flow of activity. It is only in the activity of thinking that we perceive the nature of human time as caught between past and future. Thought is an activity that people may partake of, and when we do so, we enter a different perception of human time. For Arendt, thinking is a force that results from being acted upon by the past and the future. On page 209 of "Thinking" she writes, "The diagonal

force, whose origin is known, whose direction is determined by past and future, but which exerts its force toward an undetermined end as though it could reach out into infinity.”⁷⁷ This description gives us the traction that allows us to see the grounding of our world and the void that is outside it. We can see the limits of our world and can choose to act on that knowledge. Our experience of the everyday world propels us along through the day-to-day encounters we have (the key to loving the world, or comporting ourselves toward the world). When we step into the activity of thinking, already an unusual experience, we can see what the “He” of Kafka’s parable sees: that our thinking is a tensional force coming out of pressure from the past and the future. The thinking activity, though, is limitless—we can “go” wherever we want with our thoughts, but we cannot help remaining grounded in our own particular pasts and futures. That grounding prevents us from getting bogged down in the undefined space, what Arendt calls the void, that is either beyond our experiential world or outside of the activity of thinking. It focuses our thinking to the relationship between our past and our future.

Arendt concludes that thinking removes us enough from the flow of time to reside in the present. Thinking calls our attention to our temporal conditions. The grounding of our thinking is the particular life of each person and the shared world of experience that we create. It is through education that we learn what our world is, and how to think about it. But that shared world is only protected if we set it aright anew with each succeeding generation, and to do this, we have to understand our comportment to the world—the way we carry the world with us as we go forward through time in the course of our everyday lives. Comportment becomes active when we reflect on it as we step out of our everyday lives to engage in the activity of thinking.

Each of these activities—thinking, setting aright, and educating—require an understanding of how we participate in the flow of time, both in the sense of the flow of everyday events that make up our world and in the sense of the withdrawal from those events that happens in the activity of thinking. Understanding how thinking is grounded in our own present, yet infinite in its reach or force (we are not limited in where to go with our thinking) makes visible the responsibility we have for loving the world. Education is in part learning to take on that responsibility. This requires granting education the authority to teach this responsibility. It is the purpose of the liberal arts to open students and the world to each other, to open the opportunity for thinking and to ready us to love the world. Our understanding of these perspectives is needed before we begin any response to the public rhetoric criticizing higher education today. Such a perspective comes prior to taking on particular positions with regard to politics and social problems in order to avoid losing sight of the fundamental preparation for comportment toward the world.

Notes

1. See, for example, Elizabeth Kantor’s speech to the Annapolis Group in June 2010.
2. Arendt, “The Crisis in Education,” cited here from her collection *Between Past and Future*. See also Arendt, *Life of the Mind*.
3. Arendt notes in chapter 2 of *On Revolution* that the question of the social is separate from either the issue of the lack of equal opportunity or the issues that arise from unequal social

status with regard to education, p. 72. For her comment on women, see “The Crisis in Education,” 184.

4. *Life of the Mind*, “Thinking,” 109–10. Because the sections of this work, “Thinking” and “Willing” have separate paginations, I have included the section title in all notes.

5. For Augustine, this standing now is the closest human access to eternity. Arendt secularizes the term. See *Life of the Mind*, “Thinking,” 210, for her explanation.

6. *Ibid.*, 203.

7. *Ibid.*, 209.

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*Selected Proceedings from the
Eighteenth Annual Conference of the
Association for Core Texts and Courses
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
March 29–April 1, 2012*

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