

**BRIDGING DIVIDES
CROSSING BORDERS
COMMUNITY BUILDING**

**THE HUMAN VOICE IN CORE TEXTS
AND THE LIBERAL ARTS**

Edited by Tuan Hoang & Daniel Nuckols

**BRIDGING DIVIDES, CROSSING BORDERS,
COMMUNITY BUILDING:**

**THE HUMAN VOICE IN
CORE TEXTS AND THE LIBERAL ARTS**

*Selected Papers from the Twenty-Third Annual Conference of
the Association for Core Texts and Courses
Dallas, April 20–23, 2017*

**Edited by
Tuan Hoang & Daniel Nuckols**

Association for Core Texts and Courses
ACTC Liberal Arts Institute
2021

Acknowledgment

(Park)

CREDIT LINE: Republished with permission of Dover Publications, Incorporated, from *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. DuBois, 1994; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Contents

Editors' Introduction: The Bridging Voice in the Age of Twitter
Tuan Hoang and Daniel Nuckols xi

Teaching Core Texts: Two Plenary Addresses

Musing Dante and Divining Milton: A Great Books and Fine
Arts Collaboration
Jane Kelley Rodeheffer 3

Inventing a (Real) Core Course at the University of Chicago:
Form/Problem/Event
Richard Strier 15

The Natural Sciences in the Core

Reconnecting Catholicism with the Sciences: A Model for
Teaching Science–Religion Core Texts
Sr. Damien Marie Savino, FSE, and James Clarage 25

Teaching the Big Bang and Cosmological Evolution in the Core
James Clarage and Sister Damien Marie Savino, FSE 31

Reading the Story of Our Understanding of Life: Rebuilding
the Connection Between Science and the Humanities
Lam To Kam 37

Examining Paralysis: Medical Images in James Joyce's *Ulysses*
Krista Rascoe 43

Political Discourse, Political Communities

- Questions of Democracy: Rethinking *Demos* and *Kratos* with Herodotus and Mandela
David Arndt 51
- Getting Up Off the Ground: Toward a Genuine Community in Plato's *Republic*
R. Michael Olson 57
- A Painful Dream: Alexis de Tocqueville on Race and Slavery
Jacob Boros 63
- Arendt, Orwell, and the Politics of Truth
Wade Roberts 69
- The Feminine Mystique*: Second-Wave Feminism and Current Politics
Christopher C. Strangeman 75

Ethical Overtures

- A Global Approach to Ancient Core Texts: *Job* and *Euthyphro* on Moral Obligation
Peter Diamond 83
- Liberal Education for Mortal Communities: Cicero, Tolstoy, and Chekhov on Living and Aging Well
James N. Roney 89
- Speaking Across Differences: Classic and Contemporary Stoicism
Julie Park 97
- Student Enculturation in Crime and Punishment
Robbie Kubala 103

Individuals in History and Literature

- A Noteworthy Passage of No Consequence in Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles*
Thomas R. Larson 109

Breaking the Rule: St. Clare of Assisi and Women Living the <i>Vita Apostolica</i> <i>Lisa Battaglia</i>	115
Giving a Generous Reading: Elizabeth Bennet and the Intellectual Virtue of Candor <i>Leta Sundet</i>	125
Ethics, Aesthetics, Agriculture, and Technology: Wendell Berry's Intellectual Synthesis <i>Bernd K. Estabrook</i>	131
Theological and Psychological Subjects	
At the Heart of Atheism: Aquinas on the Two Basic Objections to God's Existence <i>Matthew D. Walz</i>	139
The Structure of Dante's <i>Paradiso</i> : Transhumanization of the Ethical Life <i>Neil G. Robertson</i>	145
Grieving for the World Through Core Texts <i>Jean-Marie Kauth</i>	151
Memory and Forgetting: Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C. <i>Katherine Platt</i>	157
Closing Meditations: Hermeneutics and the Human Condition	
Talking with the Ancestors: Hermeneutics in the Classroom <i>Albert B. Fernandez</i>	163
Honey, Please: Emerson and Merleau-Ponty on the Human Condition <i>Mary Catherine McDonald</i>	171

Introduction: The Bridging Voice in the Age of Twitter

The twenty-third annual conference of the Association of Core Texts and Courses (ACTC) began exactly three months to the day after the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump. Having surprised America and the world with his victory, the new president promptly issued a host of controversial statements and policies. An active user of Twitter, Trump successfully employed the medium to arouse delight among supporters and provoke indignation among opponents. However one might feel about the forty-fifth president, it was virtually impossible to escape opinions and arguments about his style, temperament, statements, and decisions, and their pervasive effects during his first hundred days in office. If liberal education is to continue to aspire to excellence, how will this most recent political event affect how we might conceive and reconstitute excellence? Will the very meaning of a liberal education be contested or redefined in the wake of ever-increasing division and unimaginative communication?

Given this historic and unusual backdrop, it was notable that the conference attendees in downtown Dallas hardly spoke of Trump and the accompanying political controversies, at least not during the keynote addresses and the many panel sessions attended by the editors of this volume. It should be no surprise, however, that this overt distraction did not disorient or dazzle, nor lessen the intensity and energy surrounding this year's conference. For the sharp focus of ACTC has always been about intellectual traditions, the liberal arts, and core texts that have engaged readers, students, teachers, and scholars throughout millennia. It is not the case that ACTC members do not care about or shy from discussing current politics. One paper in this volume, for instance, names Trump as a way to open its discussion of a core feminist text. Another paper examines the controversial notion of "post-truth," still a part of political currency. All the same, the center of these gatherings has been about intellectual legacies and their applications to the life of the mind in higher education, not political concerns of the day, important and consequential as they may be. To their credit, the conference organizers

and participants did not deviate from this core commitment.

As with previous annual gatherings, the 2017 conference also served as a small but insistent effort to bridge differences and boundaries among traditions, disciplines, specializations, and core texts. This kind of border-crossing and division-bridging is most appropriate, even necessary, in the global society of the twenty-first century. Technology has enabled speedy communication and transportation, but it also contributes to further compartmentalization even among lovers of knowledge and wisdom. On the university campus, the professionalization in higher education, especially in business and STEM [science, technology, engineering, and medicine], continues its dominating march. The humanities and liberal arts have witnessed reduction and closure of programs and even a few institutions. Already threatened, the future of the liberal arts would look dimmer without innovative and persistent attempts toward adaptation and construction of intellectual communities appropriate to the temperament and sensibilities of our times.

This collection of peer-reviewed papers reflects the effort among ACTC members to cross borders and bridge divides toward the goal of constructing and rebuilding intellectual communities. For the sake of clarity, the papers in this volume are organized for the most part by general disciplines. But a closer look at their contents reveals that the authors as a whole cast their intellectual and pedagogical eyes well beyond strict disciplinary analysis—diverging from linearity and having a thematic framework more represented by concentric circles. Julie Park, for example, begins her article by asking how the Stoics “speak to people who have been marginalized,” including “women, slaves, racial and ethnic minorities, atheists, and agnostics.” Or Bernd Estabrook seeks to use Wendell Berry’s publications to promote how “key core texts involved contemporary articles and books [and] helped students bridge the gap between their everyday lives and the intellectual and academic goals of a college education.” Or Mary Catherine McDonald’s closing article not only considers two philosophers who are not commonly put together, but also the unusual combination of “loss and honey.” And so on. Core texts and core curricula invite exploration. In the alienating Age of Twitter, these scholars present some of the latest refreshing explorations among ACTC members as bridging voices that rise above compartmentalization and overspecialization.

This volume opens with two plenary addresses on the subject of teaching core texts, albeit with considerably different speaker backgrounds and methods. In her inaugural presidential address, which is accompanied by a number of illustrations, Jane Kelley Rodeheffer offers an account of a collaboration on *The Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost* between two groups of students in two very different programs at her institution. In comparison, Richard Strier’s address recalls the design, structure, and execution of a course involving three disciplines at his institution. The first paper section of this volume pertains to the natural sciences and continues the theme of interdisciplinary pedagogy. In back-to-back papers, coauthors James Clarage and Sister Damien Marie Savino describe their collaborative work in teaching a large undergraduate course at a Catholic university about cosmological evolution. Intent on bridging the natural sciences with religion, their papers highlight the works of Catholic scientists such as Georges Lemaître and Nicholas Steno. Somewhat similarly, Lam To Kam tells about the bridging of science and the humanities by using

the texts of Charles Darwin and Henri Poincaré via a course on evolution at his Hong Kong institution. Closing this section is Krista Rascoe's paper, which seeks to bridge two very different disciplines in literature and medicine. Rascoe specifically names STEM students as real and potential targets, suggesting that a challenging modernist classic like *Ulysses* actually provides a wonderful window to broaden the seemingly predominant scientific outlook and understanding among such students.

Political discourse and communities are the focus of the following section, where authors examine various texts from ancient writers, near-contemporary writers, and others in between. In one way or another, either directly or indirectly, the papers in this section engage the subjects of democracy and freedom: their meanings, their ideals, and, perhaps most significantly, old and new challenges for them. Thus, David Arndt probes the meanings of two Greek words used by Herodotus and then ends with Nelson Mandela on democracy in the present. Taking a different tack, the papers by Jacob Boros and Christopher Strangeman examine texts pertaining to race and gender respectively in American history. Elsewhere in this section, R. Michael Olson takes a close look at Book II of the *Republic* and concludes that to Plato, the most significant kind of education is "the education of freedom." Finally, Wade Roberts examines the writings of two twentieth-century authors to demonstrate that the concept of "post-truth" may sound "relatively new to Western democracies" today but actually has had important precedents.

The section on ethics entitled *Ethical Overtures* begins with a paper that compares two ancient texts and ends with another on a modern classic. Similar to other papers in this collection, both come out of the authors' experience of teaching first-year students. Peter Diamond describes the engagement of his first-year students with two very different texts from the Old Testament and Plato. The subject matter is moral obligation, but Diamond's greater goal is to lead students to juxtapose two texts that have no historical connections or cultural contexts so as to appreciate the "global" approach to learning and ideas. On the other hand, Robbie Kubala aims to "enculturate" his students by employing one of Dostoevsky's novels to instigate discussion in the classroom about intellectual life *and* university students themselves. In between, James Roney and Julie Park each examine the writings of three literary and historical figures to illustrate the crossing of ideas and experiences over time and place. Roney's paper meditates on the theme of aging according to three well-known authors, and Park considers a white woman, a white man, and a black man from the modern era to illustrate different types of Stoicism.

Historical figures and literary characters also make up the bulk of the next section. Ostensibly organized as "history and literature," the papers to one or another degree are concerned with "virtue" in multiple manifestations. This section begins with Thomas Larson's close reading of a particular passage from Plutarch's *Lives* in order to show that the ancient biographer "seems to aim at cultivating . . . the *intellectual* virtues of prudence and right judgment." Next, Lisa Battaglia analyzes the life and writings of St. Clare of Assisi to present a more complex portrayal of the saint as both outsider and insider, especially as a religious radical for her adherence to poverty. Leta Sundet then offers an entertaining examination of the virtue of candor found in the always entertaining *Pride and Prejudice*. Finally, Bernd Estabrook's

paper argues for a host of intellectual values through reading and teaching the essays by the aforementioned Wendell Berry.

The next quartet of papers make up perhaps the most varied section in this volume. Michael Walz's paper is a detailed exposition of two challenging passages from the *Summa theologiae* regarding atheism; it concludes that belief may possibly require "a dash of hope and a sliver of guilt" in addition to reasoning. Neil Robertson, on the other hand, focuses on a different medieval text and argues that the most problematic book of the *Divine Comedy* (and the least taught) is yet crucial for seeing Dante's vision of perfecting virtue. Shifting to the environment, Jean-Marie Kauth discusses her students' engagement with two contemporary novels as examples of texts that "imagine negative outcomes" from environmental problems, and texts that "bolster belief in the efficacy of action." Reading such texts, concludes Kauth, helps "students not only to learn the message, but to internalize it." Still shifting to a different subject, Katherine Platt's paper describes teaching about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a core text, which is about a lot more than memory. Platt argues that a "reading" of the memorial should engage "both critical and ethical practice": the critical regarding the design and the ethical regarding the people shown *and* not shown by the memorial.

The volume closes with two papers on the themes of learning and life, respectively. Albert Fernandez offers hermeneutics as an alternative to historical contextualization in understanding core texts that include opinions contrary to today's sensibilities. "Hermeneutics," argues Fernandez, "answers to the deeply rooted desire to communicate with the long-dead ancestors, without misprision or distortion of what they had to say." Similar to those of Thomas Larson and Michael Walz, Mary Catherine McDonald's contribution focuses on short passages, in this case from Emerson and Merleau-Ponty. The result is a phenomenological meditation on the human condition in regard to loss, grief, and particularly the concept and experience of lubricity.

We thank the following conference participants who doubled as referees for this blind-review volume: Lisa Battaglia, Jim Clarage, Deborah DeChiara-Quenzer, Jacqueline Dillion, Michael Dink, Patrick Dunn, Ei Hlaing, Robbie Kubala, Jason Lund, Patrick Malcolmson, Christopher Metress, Pavlos Papadopoulos, Elizabeth Reyes, Wade Roberts, Jane Kelley Rodeheffer, Jim Roney, Brian Schwartz, Julie Stewart, Sam Stoner, Christopher Strangeman, Kerri Tom, and Ivette Vargas-O'Bryan. These peer reviewers represent the dependable commitment that characterizes the goodwill surrounding ACTC. Throughout the editorial process, Kathleen Burk and Scott Lee offered generous and gracious support, with prompt and helpful responses to all the questions that we had for them. Finally, this volume could not be possible without crucial institutional support from the conference's lead sponsor, Austin College, and its co-sponsors, Midwestern State University and the University of Dallas. We acknowledge and thank them for this life-sustaining support.

Tuan Hoang
Pepperdine University

Daniel Nuckols
Austin College

**Teaching Core Texts:
Two Plenary Addresses**

Musing Dante and Divining Milton: A Great Books and Fine Arts Collaboration

Jane Kelley Rodeheffer
Pepperdine University

In what follows I will present the results of a collaboration between students in Pepperdine's second and third course in the Great Books Colloquium and students in an introductory painting course and an intermediate course titled "Explorations in Drawing" in the Fine Arts Division at Pepperdine University. This project began as a result of my desire to develop a project to enhance my students' understanding of the visual language in Dante and Milton. There exists a long tradition of illustrating the *Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost*, which includes such legendary artists as Botticelli, William Blake, Auguste Rodin, Gustave Doré, Salvador Dali, and in our own time, Barry Moser, Sandow Birk, and the African performance artist Mwangi Hutter. What visual cues are imbedded in the language of Dante and Milton such that uncovering them might bring my students to a greater appreciation of the visionary range of narrative and epic poetry?

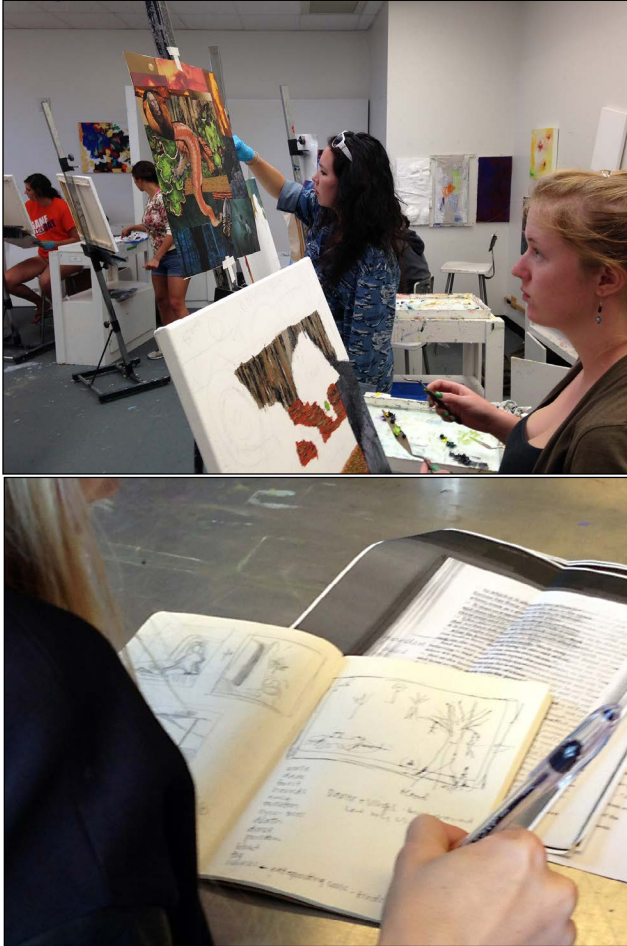
As a philosopher with an interest in the arts, I looked to my colleague Gretchen Batcheller, associate professor of painting in the Fine Arts Division at Pepperdine. I soon learned that Professor Batcheller had developed an assignment in her painting and drawing courses that required students to work from a narrative, and she was keen to pursue a collaboration in which the Great Books students provided a textual narrative for her students to explore artistically. Art, like the humanities, is an intellectual pursuit, and the academic environment offers a special opportunity to understand, explore, and question this pursuit through discussion, feedback, trial and error, and hands-on experience. Wrestling with input from a variety of sources is a valuable and necessary component in the creative process, in that it allows the artist to evolve,

grow, and transform. At previous institutions both of us had learned the value, from a liberal arts perspective, of moving across disciplinary and pedagogical boundaries.

At the pedagogical level, Professor Batcheller and I both drew inspiration from the workshop of Leonardo da Vinci, which served as a model for innovative ideas. His was a working environment that favored creative and intellectual cross pollination. Leonardo was a consummate liberal artist in the original sense of the term: inventor, painter, scientist, anatomist, engineer, philosopher, architect, and sculptor. In late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Europe, *ars* or art meant something made by human skill, and liberal meant free—it was not the political opposite of conservative. Although many of Leonardo's inventions would ultimately require the use of the *artes mechanicae* (skills necessary for the creation of artifacts), their use was grounded in the *artes liberales*, the free skills of an educated citizen that were not constrained by or subjugated to skills of production like agriculture, trade, metallurgy, and masonry. The free arts were traditionally associated with the medieval *trivium* and *quadrivium*, although they are currently understood to encompass the humanities, the fine and performing arts, and the social and physical sciences, including mathematics. In terms of the liberal arts, then, our goal was to develop an experiential collaboration focused on the visual imaginations of Dante and Milton. It was meant to inspire *freedom in thinking and creating* in the tradition of the Renaissance workshop.

Leonardo's work spanned a variety of disciplines and platforms, and it reveals the myriad ways in which observation about one area of experience can shed light on a different, seemingly untested area. In leading Great Books students into the environment of an art studio and art students into the realm of textual analysis, we hoped to loosen the conventional notions of learning that students traditionally rely on. The workshop in which Leonardo apprenticed was a large open space filled with easels, sculptor's turntables, workbenches, kilns, and grindstones. His codex, or bound manuscript, served as an idea file and a source of constant consultation. Leonardo wrote that the purpose of the codex was "to awaken genius within this jumble of things." In a similar way, Great Books students each relied upon their commonplace book, known in the seventeenth century as a *silva rerum*, or "forest of things." In this version of a codex, students were asked to record and organize important, beautiful, inspiring, or quotable passages from each of the classical texts we read, as well as questions, ideas, observations, and other information they came across in the course of their learning. In keeping a commonplace book, students come to appreciate that reading and writing are inseparable activities. Like the illustration of classical texts, the commonplace book also has a long tradition among humanists; indeed, the one kept by Marcus Aurelius ultimately became the *Meditations*, and Montaigne, inventor of the essay, recorded maxims and quotations from literature and history that formed the basis of his earliest *Essais*. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Virginia Woolf also kept commonplace books.

While painting and drawing students traditionally work from a sketchbook, the painting project also required the creation of a collage from magazine images that represented the full color palette; this was to serve as the artist's template. Because we sought to create a learning environment and not merely a "maker's Space" or "fab



lab,” Professor Batcheller and I worked carefully to develop prompts and guidelines for the collaboration, which are explained in more detail below. Nevertheless, our message to the students was consistent: collaboration is a messy process, a meeting at the crossroads that requires communication, problem solving, and a constant re-framing of ideas in order to be successful.

The project began on the Great Books side of the project. After they read the texts and engaged in shared inquiry in seminar, I led a discussion in which students nominated scenes from the text whose language conjured up images that made them especially conducive to illustration. The Great Books students then worked together in small groups to isolate textual passages in Dante’s *Inferno* or Milton’s *Paradise Lost* that could serve as the narrative basis for a work of art. The students took to this task with significant enthusiasm, and at the end of the class period, individual students were tasked with writing a three-page brief presenting a vision of the scene their group had isolated, based on textual analysis. The prompt asked them to pay

particular attention to the elements of design: focal point, shape, color, value, texture, balance, and proportion. Students were directed to first determine what the focal point should be, i.e., the dominant element in the scene to which they desired to draw the viewer's attention. The other elements of design served as a further lens through which to direct the artist aiding students in imagining as many details as possible—even facial expressions and gestures.

Once the briefs were completed, the collaboration moved to phase two, in which each art student read the briefs for her particular scene and, sketchbook in hand, met with the small group of Great Books students to flesh out a vision for the work of art. The art students were then tasked with using their expertise in the aesthetic components of the mediums of painting or multimedia to translate the information into a visual context. Over the course of the collaboration, we have found that a ratio of two or three Great Books students to one art student is ideal; too much input can strain the ability of the artist to develop a coherent vision.

As I was asking my students to stretch their skills of textual analysis into a visual context, in a similar way Professor Batcheller sought to coax her art students into spaces where they could ask questions that go beyond the exploration of subject and form, that is, beyond issues of whether or not the color palette is correct, the paint is applied correctly, and the forms being painted are proportionate. In addition to these basic elements of subject and form, the art students were directed to focus on *content*, which requires a more nuanced visual acuity. Such acuity is developed through attention to the principles and elements of design and the way in which specific tools and materials can be used to arrange objects on a canvas. In this case, the objects were the textual passages from Dante and Milton, which first had to be translated into visual cues before eventually becoming images on canvas.

To this end, Professor Batcheller presented the painting students with a list of guidelines. As mentioned above, for the first time in the semester, they were invited to use a full-color palette, and they were directed to create a collage of the text they were illustrating from brightly saturated magazine images that represented the full-color spectrum. This collage then served as source material from which to paint. The painting students were directed to make use of the other essential elements of design (line, shape, value, and texture), with one limitation: the only tool they could use to apply the paint was a palette knife. With just a palette knife, students were forced to consider texture and paint application differently than if they were using a paintbrush. The paint application becomes thicker and enhances the ability of the artist to create a variety of physical textures on the canvas. In addition, the awkwardness of using a palette knife empowers rigid painters to loosen up and discover new painting styles. In the intermediate drawing course, Professor Batcheller introduced the students to a new material called Yupo, which is a synthetic, tree-free paper. It offers a rare alternative to traditional paper and is an excellent surface for water-based media such as ink, watercolor, and acrylic paints. In this particular project, students are encouraged to continue to experiment not only with the aforementioned materials but also with collage. This experimentation pushes students to move beyond overused stereotypes and helps those whose creativity has become stagnant to produce more resonant works of art.

The marriage of subject and form with content is usually a struggle for art students at this level, and Professor Batcheller has found that this goal is most successfully reached if she asked her students to convey a story or narrative. The Great Books students fulfilled that role in providing a narrative drawn from the *Inferno* or *Paradise Lost*, which aided considerably in this process of conceptual growth. The project thus followed the natural trajectory of artistic research, in which broader concepts are gradually distilled into finer distinctions. In the collaboration between the two courses, the original directive to collaborate was reframed and refined over the course of several meetings between the two groups of students. It resulted in either an oil painting or a multimedia work.

Once the artworks were completed, the Great Books students wrote a second piece in which they responded to the artwork in three parts. In part I they were asked to reflect on the following questions:

1. In viewing the artwork, what do you see first? Do you think this is what the artist wants you to see first?
2. Why did you see it first? Does it have a bright color, is it in the center of the piece, does it have a texture that is different from the rest of the piece, is it an awkward moment in the piece?
3. What path does your eye follow through the work?
4. Are there any places where your eye gets stuck? Why?
5. What interests you most about this piece? Why?

In part II students were asked to transition to their experience as a “muse” to the artist:

6. What aspects of your discussion with and suggestions to the artist are reflected in the final painting? Does the artist’s rendering evoke the central themes, mood, activity, or characters of your assigned scene? What part of the scene from the *Inferno* or *Paradise Lost* has the artist chosen to highlight?
7. What line or lines from the *Inferno* or *Paradise Lost* does the painting best illustrate? Quote at least two passages.
8. What do you question about the artist’s interpretation of the *Inferno* or *Paradise Lost*? Why?
9. What would be an appropriate title for this piece?

Finally, in part III the students were asked to write a brief conclusion in which they stated their reasons for determining whether or not the collaboration was a successful one.

Upon completion of their responses to the artwork, the Great Books students joined the art students in the painting or drawing studio for a formal “critique” of the artwork. Critique is a necessary component of the creative process, especially for young artists. It provides a forum for the artists to see areas in need of improvement through input from their peers and to consider whether or not the audience perceives the intended meaning of the artwork. Professor Batcheller invited the Great Books



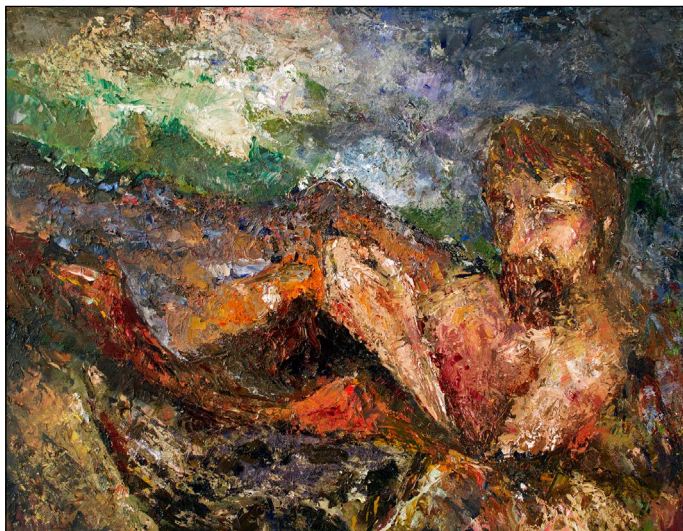
students to join the art students in asking and answering questions and exploring details of the works the original briefs had inspired. The collaboration culminated in a pop-up exhibition in the Payson Gallery at Pepperdine University in the spring of 2014. In this final stage of implementation, the painters and their muses were invited to discuss the project with audience members who visited the gallery. The artworks and selections from the briefs and responses to the artworks were also featured in our undergraduate Great Books journal, *Athena's Gate*. Through this collaboration, humanities and art students entered into a centuries-old tradition of interpreting and illustrating the *Inferno* and *Paradise Lost*.

Musing Dante. What follows are brief discussions of two paintings that were completed in the *Musing Dante* project from the perspective of the painter's conceptual and artistic growth, followed by selections from the briefs by Great Books II students based on textual passages from the *Inferno*.

About the first painting (left), the artist was able to draw out very fine details using only a palette knife to produce a realistic rendering of Dante's description of Phlegethon, the river of blood into which those who shed the blood of their neighbors are sent to boil, in Cantos XII–XIII of the *Inferno*.

The next painting (right) is more abstract than the River of Blood image. Nevertheless, it is still somewhat representational of the giant Antaneus lifting Dante and Virgil in his hand and placing them in the ninth circle of Hell. The palette knife allowed the artist to utilize a consistently rough texture across the surface.

In her response to the painting of the Heavenly Messenger arriving to scatter the furies and open the gates of hell, a Great Books student wrote the following:



Antaeus Sets Dante and Virgil Down in Cocytus (9th Circle). Oil on canvas, 20 x 26 in.

During my discussion with the artist, I mentioned that Virgil and Dante should be differentiated from each other because Dante is living and Virgil is not—he is a shade. The way the artist interprets this difference from Virgil is very astute in that Virgil is depicted as a large ambiguous figure and Dante as the crave-ridden she-wolf who haunts the pilgrim in the dark wood. I found it particularly clever of the artist to liken the heavenly messenger to a professional hurdler who overcomes obstacles. Dante writes that the heavenly messenger who comes to disperse Medusa and the Furies prior to unlocking the Gates of Dis appears “full of high disdain.” The painter captures this language in the image of a professional hurdler who must tilt her face upward to clear each bar.

A different Great Books student focused on the artist’s depiction of the Furies as beach-going sorority girls:

In Virgil’s classical world, the Furies appear as a gruesome and terrifying trio: the “daughters of Night” marked by bloodstained faces and snakes twirling in their hair and about their waists. They symbolized obstinacy and pride and were often invoked by offended mortals and gods to exact revenge. In a biting reference to Pepperdine’s Greek life culture, the painter depicts the Furies as sorority girls basking on the beach, the coiled snake suggesting they are completely embroiled in the latest mean-girls gossip.

Another Great Books student wrote the following in her directions to the artist assigned to the punishment of the fraudulent:

Dante describes this sight of the serpents as “cruel” and “depressing.” I would depict the snakes as very large and intimidating with many coils and a flared neck to make them look more threatening. They should have their double-pointed tongues sticking out; this feature should be exaggerated in the snakes to symbolize the double-personality of a thief, who must deceitfully fool his victims while appearing kind and just on the outside. Among the snakes are naked and terrified people



*The Violent in the Plain of Fire
(7th Circle). Oil on canvas, 26
x 20 in.*



*Traversing the City of Styx to the City of Dis: Dante and Virgil at the Gates
of Hell Inferno, Canto IX.
Oil on canvas, 20 x 26 in.*

running around hopelessly, with no place to hide. Their hands are tied behind their backs by the serpents. The serpents “thrust their head and tail right through the loins” (XXIV, 95), and twist themselves around the other side.

The *contrapasso* (punishment resembling the sin) wrought by the snakes in this pouch of hell should be central to the painting since snakes are deceitful and stealthy, just like thieves.

Divining Milton. Based on our experience with *Musing Dante*, we transitioned the collaboration to intermediate art students and students in Great Books III. We called this collaboration *Divining Milton*, and it was completed in the fall of 2015. To enhance the essays produced by the students, I included a discussion of the principles and elements of design in my prompt and directed them to employ this terminology in both their briefs for the artists and their responses to the completed paintings. Professor Batcheller directed her drawing students to use a variety of drawing and painting media in an exploratory process using the synthetic drawing surface Yupo.

The first example is the birth of Sin, and a student in Great Books III pointed out the following in his brief:

Sin’s birth is rooted in the ancient myth of Athena’s genesis. Just as Athena was born out of Zeus’s head, so Sin is begotten from the head of Satan. Eve says to Satan, “All of a sudden, miserable pain surprised thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swum in darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast threw forth, till on the left side opening wide, likest to thee in shape and countenance bright, then shining heavenly fair, a goddess armed out of thy head I sprung?” (2.751–56)



Divining Milton: Satan Gives Birth to Sin
Paradise Lost II: 635–808
 Collage, ink, acrylic, charcoal, and watercolor on Yupo
 50 x 18 in.



Detail: Satan Gives Birth to Sin

Certain themes and words jump off the page in that passage. Milton's tone is one of horror and repulsion, so I imagine Sin's emergence from Satan's mind to be horrific, sickening, and gruesome as well. The flames literally eat through his false exterior, revealing the true soul within and creating a portal through which Sin aggressively "springs" forth. She splits "[open] wide" the left side of his skull and claws her way out (2.755). Sin is described by Milton as a "snaky sorceress" (2.724), seeming like a "woman to the waist and fair, but [ending] foul in many a scaly fold, voluminous and vast, a serpent armed with mortal sting" (2.650–52).

I imagine Sin to appear like an unnatural extension of Satan's brain, violently piercing through flesh, a nauseating evil that was never meant to see daylight. As his skull rips open, the terribly beautiful woman greedily and hastily crawls out, her eyes hungry, her snakelike lower-half one with the innards of Satan's mind, "scaly folds" merging with the folds of his brain, a scorpion-like tail ("mortal sting") raised behind her. This juxtaposition of beautiful and fair with scaly and foul could make for the most interesting contrast in the scene. Sin could even be portrayed as two characters here to emphasize the contrast and deviousness of her nature. This is the birth of something that should not be, a hopelessly sad mutilation of creation.

The last example is about Eve. In her description of Eve coming upon her image reflected in a lake, a different student directed the artist to focus on the water:



*Eve Viewing Her Reflection in the Lake. Paradise Lost
IV: 449–69*

Collage, ink, and watercolor on Yupo, 40 x 33 in.

When Milton describes Eve hearing a “murmuring sound of water ... spread into a liquid plain, then stood unmoved pure as the expanse of Heaven” (4:451–54), I imagine the water to be a crystal blue that has a glass-like texture to it, translucent and pure. The water should appear as if it is real water, almost inviting the viewer to reach out and touch the surface. In rendering the water as shaded like glass the artist will echo Milton’s idea that the water in the lake is ultimately a mirror reflecting both the image of Eve and the image of God through his creation. Milton describes Eve approaching the calm lake, as a “clear smooth lake that to [her] seemed another sky.” (4:458–59)

In terms of color and texture, the drawing should suggest the color of heaven as reflected in Paradise. In regard to value, I see the lake as bright and light, with the value slowly getting darker farther away from the lake. The surrounding flowers and plants should be richer and rendered in various colors. Overall, I want the feeling of the scene to be one that calms and delights, based on Eve’s response to seeing her image, “I started Back, It started back” (4:462–63). I want the presence of the lake to be a peaceful focal point, while there may be some hints of darkness upon further examination.

Professor Batcheller and I engaged in a third collaboration involving the *Oresteia*, a set of three Greek tragedies by Aeschylus in the fall of 2016. In the coming years we plan to sustain this project through further collaborations involving Homer's *Odyssey* and Shakespeare's *Othello*. We are hopeful that these ongoing projects will begin to open our students to the liberal arts as a transformative experience in which collaborating across disciplinary fields provokes new insights into classical texts, enhances visual literacy, and contributes to the conceptual and artistic skills of artists in training. Our ultimate objective as teachers and mentors is to facilitate this journey, whereby students realize their potential as evolving artists, intellectuals, and, most importantly, as both debtors and stewards of the *ars liberalis*.

Works Cited

- Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum. New York: Penguin Random House, 1995.
- Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Ed. David Scott Kastan. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2005.

Inventing a (Real) Core Course at the University of Chicago: “Form/Problem/Event”

Richard Strier
University of Chicago

This essay involves a story and a demonstration. The story is of how a core course was invented at the University of Chicago—a course that, as my title suggests, was a “real” core course in its content and approach, and also a “real” one in that it actually came into being and was a great success. It no longer exists in its original form, but it spawned a number of other courses that do exist and that carry on some of its aims. The demonstration will show how this course would treat, and would try to teach students to treat, a major and familiar text that is commonly used in core courses in the humanities and, for that matter, the social sciences. The final section briefly narrates and reflects upon the afterlife of this course.

THE STORY

Once upon a time in the late 1970s at the University of Chicago, I and two other young English Department faculty members, together with one humanities post-doc (a historian), discovered that we were all unhappy with the core course that we were currently teaching and felt that, if we put some work into it, we could devise a better, more sophisticated humanities core course. We met regularly for a number of weeks in one of our offices, with no institutional support at all—we just did it.

Our first task was to articulate our unhappiness with the Introduction to the Humanities that we were all then teaching. We felt that the course we were teaching had an unimaginative canon (no philosophy after Kant or Mill; no history after Gibbon or Trotsky) and that although it encompassed a variety of texts from different disci-

plines in the humanities—which we thought was good and made it truly a core rather than a departmental or even interdepartmental course—it tended to homogenize the texts, to read them all as pieces of rhetoric to be analyzed in pretty much the same way. Our aim was to free the course from any canon (with the understanding that we would especially favor philosophy and history by contemporaries in order to suggest that significant work in these areas was still being done) and, most of all, *to sharpen up and convey our sense of disciplinary difference*. The disciplines that seemed relevant to us to constitute (apart from the nonliterary arts, which were not our bailiwick) the field of the “Humanities” were literary study, philosophy, and history (visual arts and music had their own core courses). Reading texts was our province, and we saw all three of the concerned disciplines engaged in doing that. But our aim, building on our discontent with the existing Introduction to the Humanities, was to take seriously the following key fact: that philosophers and historians do not read books the same way as literature professors do.

But we did not want to create a sense of *professional* difference. Rather, we wanted to create a sense that the three different disciplines have different ways of reading, and to suggest that the liberally educated person ought to be able to read in all three of these distinct, but ultimately not incompatible, ways. This required a certain mental exercise. The trick was to think of each of the three “disciplines” *as ways of reading rather than as bodies of material*. The ways of reading were recognized as having an existence apart from the texts and from the kinds of texts on which they normally operated. What this meant was that *each* way of reading could be productively used on texts from *all* the disciplines.

So how would one set up a year-long course to reflect this? Here the fact that the University of Chicago is on the quarter-system helped us. We decided that each quarter would include texts from all three disciplines (and perhaps some unclassifiable ones), but that each quarter would have students reading this entire range of texts through the lens of one particular discipline. It was decided to arrange the disciplines in order of (something like) distance from ordinary reading habits, so that we would move from literary to philosophical to historicizing ways of reading. This gave us the order of the quarters, but we still had to discern how to think about the “lens” that each discipline represented. We tried to do this uncontentiously. Each quarter was meant to capture, uncontentiously, a central and defining concern of the discipline in question. So we took literary studies to have some necessary interest in formal features; philosophy to be concerned with certain kinds of problems; and history to involve some special concern with social and political events. And so, the title of the course was generated: Form/Problem/Event.

However, these disciplinary characterizations, though adequate and even informative enough in themselves, were clearly too general to be used to produce reading lists of specific texts. Some further specification under each rubric was necessary (and these, of course, could change from year to year). For the Form quarter, such specifying topics as “narrative,” “autobiography,” and “tragedy” were used—in each case, some ingenuity in finding texts from the nonfocal discipline was needed (I was less happy, I should say, with “autobiography” and “tragedy” than with “narrative,” for reasons that I can explain). For the Problem quarter, such

topics as “Meaning and Interpretation,” “The Nature of Morality or Virtue,” and “Gender” were used. For the Event quarter, we used, at different times, the English Revolution (Cromwell and company), the French Revolution, and the period of the formation of “American” identity, that is, the period from the Revolution to the Civil War. It turned out that revolutions seemed to suit this course, since they tended to produce significant texts of different sorts; but a different kind of “event,” like the Emancipation Proclamation could also serve, and did—which led to a discussion of process as well as of “event.”

If this all seems hard to follow, let me give some concrete cases. When “narrative” was the topic in the Form quarter in the fall, we began with some parables and narratively organized lyrics (by Robert Frost, George Herbert, or William Butler Yeats) and then moved to *The Odyssey*, Plato’s *Symposium*, and Garret Mattingly’s *The Armada* (about the attempted Spanish invasion of England in 1588). Sometimes, for that quarter, we used Genesis and Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*.

The Meaning and Interpretation version of the winter-problem quarter led us to Wittgenstein’s *Blue Book*, selections from Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, or Natalie Davis’s *The Return of Martin Guerre* [with the movie] and Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom* or Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. When gender was the problem, we read some essays from contemporary feminist philosophers in the collection titled *A Mind of One’s Own*, Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice*, *The Symposium* (if not done in the fall), Freud’s *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, volume 1 of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*; and we viewed the movie *The Crying Game*.

For the spring quarter event, the topic of the English Revolution had the students reading such historians as Clarendon, Gardiner, and Hill; various documents from the period (especially the Putney Debates on extending the suffrage); Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (books 1 and 2); and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. For the French Revolution, we also read some historians (Lefebvre, Michelet) and some documents (in translation), along with (in order) Paine’s *The Rights of Man*, Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, and Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*.

Implicit in the three-quarter sequence is the belief that the skills developed in the fall and winter can be productively employed in the spring as well. By the end of the course, the student would, ideally, be able to read, and write about, any text in all three ways—and to “form/problem/event” any text or passage (given some historical knowledge of the relevant “event”). Ideally, perhaps, we should have read the same texts every quarter, but the flesh and the spirit are weak (thank goodness!). I should note that the writing assignments in the course were intended to be tightly correlated to the sequence’s general shape and aims, so that the writing assignments in the first segment concentrated on structural analysis; in the second, on analyzing and building an argument; and in the third, on questions of evidence and context.

Let me proceed now to the demonstration and then narrate more of the history and consider some of the problematics of “Form/ Problem/Event” (FPE), a course that, I feel bound to mention, its founders are still proud of having invented and which has, demonstrably and significantly, had a lasting effect on their lives as scholars in their fields, as well as on their lives teaching in the core.

THE DEMONSTRATION

Here is what it would look like to “Form/Problem/Event” a text—Plato’s *Apology* for Socrates. I have chosen this text not only because it is familiar and widely used but also because it does not neatly fit into any disciplinary category (it’s not obviously a literary, philosophical, or historical work) and therefore should be open to insight from any approach that can claim to throw light on it. There doesn’t, in other words, seem anything perverse or strained in the attempt to FPE this text. Also, while the text seems ambiguous in its disciplinary status, it also has obvious literary, philosophical, and historical dimensions, so again there doesn’t seem to be anything perverse or strained in the attempt to FPE it. The success of this exercise will depend on two things: (a) how different the three “readings” are from one another. If they all sound basically the same, and say the same things, the exercise fails. And (b) how informative each one is. The exercise fails if the each of the readings do not say something interesting and informative about the text.

Finally, it should be clear—if the above conditions are met—that a really good, relatively full or “complete” reading of the text in question (or any text) would include the major points of each of the three methodologically focused readings. So here goes.

1. F (FORM)

The most important move, I think, from the point of view of seeing this text rhetorically or literarily (as a piece of writing that is carefully structured to produce certain effects on the audience, then or now) is the way in which Socrates chooses to frame his answer not in relation to the particular charges against him but in relation to what he calls the “many prosecutors” [18b] he has had before the current ones.

This move has the effect of making the current trial simply one in a long series of similar events, and it allows Socrates not just to attempt to answer the particular charges against him but also to give an account of his whole life, as he sees it. The reorienting of the question away from the moment of the trial leads to the literary form of the text as a whole—that of, amazingly enough, autobiography. The author of this text (Plato) dramatizes its hero speaking his own autobiography.

In the context of this speech as an imagined autobiography, one would want to note how much information the speaker (let’s call him “Socrates,” since it seems clumsy to say “Socrates as Plato presents him” every time) gives about himself. He tells us about his profession (such as it is); his relation to politics and office-holding; his military service; his economic situation; his religious beliefs and experiences; his friends (who they are, naming names) and his friendships (what kind of people they tend to be); and his family (telling us nothing about his wife—why?—but giving us the number, sex, and approximate age of his children).

A full working out of the text from the point of view of its “form” would want to understand why Socrates mentions each of these details. I don’t have time to do this here, but each item could be an object of such discussion (in class or as a paper topic).

From a more technically and specifically “literary” point of view, one would want to attend to the literary references or allusions in the text. One would want to know how the quotation from Euripides [20e]) functions. Why does Socrates think

this point important enough to quote a famous tragic poet?

Most obviously, along these lines, one would want to work on the place of Homer in the text. How often is Homer mentioned or alluded to? What do these allusions do? Perhaps the most important of such questions relates to the extended discussion of Achilles [28b]). Why does Socrates/Plato spend so much time on this?

Equally obviously, just as one would want to take the literary allusions into account, one would want to deal with imagery in the text. Why does Socrates keep referring to horses, for instance? There are many instances of this, but perhaps the most important is Socrates' extended analogy or conceit [30e–31a] of the city of Athens as a large sluggish, sleepy horse and of himself as an irritating fly on it, constantly annoying it and goading it into activity.

The above is probably enough to give a sense of what an “F” reading of the *Apology* might be like, though obviously, much more could be offered.

2. P (PROBLEM)

Here, I look for fundamental conceptual premises or positions and for arguments for particular positions.

A candidate for Socrates' most fundamental premise would be the assertion that cultivation of the “soul” is the most important thing in life, more important than money, position, etc. One could and should certainly ask why Socrates thinks this is so. Here one would have to *construct* arguments for this view, since he does not explicitly give any in the text.

In relation to this premise, one might then want to ask why Socrates has the view that cultivation of the soul is best done through the peculiar thing that he calls “examination,” and through the peculiar means of conducting such examination that he favors, namely through asking a series of linked and probing questions. One must therefore ask why Socrates thinks questions are so important.

From a deeper, more strictly philosophical point of view—but still along these lines—one might ask why the principle of noncontradiction is so central to Socrates. Why does he think he has done something really significant when he shows Meletus contradicting himself?

One might want to take up some specific philosophical moves (i.e., ones tied explicitly to arguments or constituting arguments). What, for instance, is the argument against statesmen, poets, and craftsmen having wisdom? Why does Socrates seem to see the failure of the poets as central and relate the problem of the craftsmen to this? In what sense do the craftsmen, as Socrates says, “make the same mistake” that the poets do [22d])? To work this out, one would have to do some philosophy à la Socrates.

To pursue the above-mentioned episode with Meletus, one might try to lay out the argument against the idea that Socrates could be intentionally corrupting his companions. The premise of this argument seems to be that the vicious or corrupt will cause harm. What would an argument for this premise look like? And once Socrates has this premise in place, how does it function?

One might also think about how this picture of vice relates to a corresponding picture of virtue. Virtue must cause benefits, and since the greatest of benefits is happiness, happiness must derive from virtue. How does this idea get into the text? Does

it explain why Socrates thinks he can't be hurt? Relatedly, an obvious, pretty explicit argument is why Socrates thinks it foolish to fear death.

One might finally (or at any time) return to a "literary" feature and now ask about that feature's philosophical point. One might return, for instance, to the discussion of horses.

Again, there is obviously a lot more one could do along these lines, and what I have said is extremely sketchy, but the idea of what a reading of this sort might be like should now be clear or at least clearer.

3. E (EVENT)

How to take a historical approach to this text is fairly obvious. The text refers to a historical event (the trial and legal condemnation of Socrates) that we can date (399 BCE) in a place (Athens) that we know quite a lot about. Before contextualizing, say, the text in Athenian military and political history, one might attempt the exercise of thinking about what one could learn from the text by treating it as *itself* a historical document or source.

What does one learn about the structure of an Athenian state trial: what does one learn (or would one hypothesize) about Athenian law? What previous trials are referred to in the text? What would you guess the trial of Anaxagoras was all about? What was the trial of the "captains" all about? What can one learn about the recent political situation from Socrates' speech? There seems to have been a democracy and then an oligarchy in Athens. One would want to investigate this, to see whether it was true and what it meant. Socrates speaks of his resistance to a command of the "Thirty" with regard to "Leon of Salamis." Is this a true episode? What was it all about? Who were the Thirty, and at that time what seems to be the attitude of the trial toward them?

More questions abound. Could one learn anything about Athenian class or social structure? About gender relations and attitudes? What does Socrates think about women?

Or, one might come back to the question of horses and historicize accordingly. Why were they important to Athens? One might take the references to Homer as *historically* informative. What place might these references lead one to think that knowledge of the Homeric poems had in this culture? One would also want to think about why Socrates is concerned with distinguishing himself from "the sophists." Who do these people seem to be? What were their characteristics, and what, supposedly, is the knock on them? These are bits of historical knowledge and historical questions that come directly out of the text. And again, surely there are many others.

Of course, one cannot historicize or contextualize any text only from itself—though one *can* generate historical questions and historical information from it. One would want to find out about the situation of Athens in 399. And one would want to uncover who Meletus, Anytus, and the other accusers of Socrates were. One would also want to know why Socrates was accused of these particular "crimes." Were these a mask for something else? Was his crime political? It turns out that there was an amnesty law in 403 BCE that made it difficult to prosecute someone for political ideas. Is this relevant? Was Socrates antidemocratic, so that it made sense for a moderate democrat like Anytus (as we know from the historical record) to want him

to leave town—and did Anytus, in fact, want to execute Socrates or just to get him to leave town?

In any case, it should now be clear how many historical issues the text raises (and gives information about) and how useful it might be to read the text in the light of Athenian history—with regard, perhaps especially, to the loss of the Peloponnesian war as described in Thucydides.

Finally (or not so finally), one might want to compare this account of Socrates with other accounts by contemporaries or near contemporaries (Xenophon, Aristotle, other Platonic dialogues). One might especially want to look at the account that Socrates mentions most prominently and finds most annoying—the portrait of him in Aristophanes' play *The Clouds* ([19c]), a play that we are fortunate enough to have.

Contextualization—reading a text in relation to the events and culture of its time—can obviously go on and on. But here again, I hope to have suggested some starting points. The important strategy, I think, is to start with the text as a “document” and then move outward.

Ultimately, as I have already suggested, one would need to FPE the text fairly fully to get a reasonably complete picture. But the important thing is *to be able* to do this, not necessarily actually to do it in detail or with every text. One might at particular times be legitimately interested primarily in one aspect or other of a given text, but one cannot answer any question about its literary structure, philosophical content, or historical context and meaning without having some sense of how to ask, as well as how to answer, such questions. The course, FPE, was meant to give students the ability to ask such questions of any text and to have confidence that, with some effort, some knowledge, and the proper skills, such questions can be plausibly answered.

THE AFTERLIFE AND REFLECTIONS

“Form/Problem/Event” (FPE) continued as one of the major humanities core course options at the University of Chicago for over 15 years (others were a “Great Books” option called “Human Being and Citizen” and one called “Greek Thought and Literature”). FPE led to the invention by other groups of faculty of similar three-quarter, three-foci core courses—one more cultural and anthropological in its orientation titled “Reading Cultures” with the rubrics of “Collection,” “Travel,” and “Exchange,” and one with an obviously more recent focus, titled “Media Aesthetics” with the rubrics of “Image,” “Sound,” and “Text.” These courses represented the interests of newer faculty, and they brought in other faculty.

But despite the seminal quality of its structure, and despite its obvious analytical rigor, there were problems with FPE, problems that continue to haunt its still functioning offshoots. The largest problem is that the course and its offshoots were theorized into existence. This is very much a part of the faculty's excitement for these courses, but it means that the process of ideological transmission is crucial to their continued success and existence. If the founders do not communicate the idea of the course to their successors, it devolves into pretty much the situation that FPE was invented to transcend: it becomes simply a set of (presumably) interesting texts all read in more or less the same way. If the “trick” of the course is not grasped by the faculty teaching it, needless to say the trick will not be grasped by the students taking it. As

soon as the first segment is thought of as the “literature” part rather than the literary part; the second segment as the “philosophy” part rather than the philosophical part; and the third segment as the “history” (rather than historicizing) part, the course has failed. The initial idea—of detaching the characteristic approaches of the disciplines from the materials on which they are normally deployed—has disappeared, and mere disciplinarity has taken hold. So one lesson from this is that faculty who found or are committed to such a course must take pains to communicate not the reading list but the *idea* of the course to their contemporaries and successors. Staff meetings and demonstrations—repeated demonstrations—are crucial. The general faculty reluctance to convene and attend meetings must be overcome.

But there is another, perhaps even more troubling reason for the failure, so to speak, of Form, Problem, Event. History declared itself a social science (rather than being listed in the Humanities Division as well). So the historians sheered themselves off. The philosophers decided that FPE did not do enough straight philosophy, so the philosophers invented their own core course (“Philosophical Perspectives on the Humanities”), which rides very close to disciplinary norms. And the Romance literature and Comparative Literature folks decided that they wanted their own core course, so “Readings in European Literature” was born and then, for obvious reasons, transformed to “Readings in World Literature.” These are fine courses, and they make life easier for the faculty who teach them (and make it easier for administrators to attract faculty to teach them). But they are not, to my mind, “real” core courses, though they certainly exist. The moral of this story is that disciplinary and departmental structures have extraordinarily strong gravitational pulls and that only a strong and sustained commitment to transcending disciplinarity—by estranging the disciplines from themselves a bit—can keep a real core course alive and well over time.

The Natural Sciences in the Core

Reconnecting Catholicism with the Sciences: A Model for Teaching Science–Religion Core Texts

Sr. Damien Marie Savino, FSE, Aquinas College
James Clarage, University of St. Thomas

In this paper we tell the story of a team-taught course that was developed as a synthesis course for juniors and seniors at the University of St. Thomas (UST) in Houston, TX. As part of the core curriculum at the university, all students are required to take a course that synthesizes philosophy or theology with their academic major. The synthesis course that is the subject of this paper was titled “Reconnecting Catholicism with the Sciences,” co-taught by the authors (Savino from Theology and Environmental Science and Clarage from Physics). This course provided us an opportunity to experiment with a model for teaching a science–religion course using core texts in science and religion.

The course was open to students of all majors. In the two years we taught the course, we had thirty-eight students total. Of those, twenty-one students were majoring in the natural sciences or mathematics, ten in the social sciences or education, five in philosophy or theology, and two in business or accounting. Through the course texts, we sought to address such questions as: What are the limits of science, and what kind of truths does it pursue? What are the limits of theology, and what kinds of truth does it pursue? How do these truths affect the way one lives and relates to others and to creation?

There were five course objectives, of which two will be commented upon in this paper. The first objective was to introduce the students to various models for relating science and religion. Here we focused on Ian Barbour’s four models—conflict,

independence, dialogue, and integration (77–105)—and used these models to guide our class discussions of the texts. For example, in discussing the core texts from the Galileo case, the students considered the nature and source of the conflictual relationship, as well as whether there were also examples of independence, dialogue, or integration in those texts. The core texts we read were the *Papal Condemnation of Galileo* (1633) and the *Recantation of Galileo* (1633), both original legal documents written in 1633 during the Galileo trial. We undertook a similar approach in studying and discussing the core texts about evolution and the Big Bang.

This approach was a particularly helpful way to frame the readings and class discussions in order to illumine the development of the relationship between religion and science over the past centuries. We discussed the relationship between science and religion as analogous to other human relationships that experience moments of conflict as well as dialogue and harmony. At the beginning of the course, most students felt the predominant relationship between science and religion was conflictual. However, by the end of the course, many of the students had begun to realize that there were more examples of dialogue and integration than they had first thought.

Another objective was to familiarize students with the history of the relationship between science and faith in the Catholic intellectual tradition. Has the Church been a patroness or a persecutor of science throughout the centuries? Placing the texts in historical context was particularly important as a teaching tool, as the students had very little concept of when key events in science and religion had occurred. Discussing the texts in their historical context helped them to see various themes in the relationship between religion and science and to understand better how they unfolded over time to bring us to where we are today.

In preparing the course, we considered several approaches to using the texts in the classroom, seeking to maximize student engagement with the readings. Each text was prefaced with background material on the author and historical setting of the text. Most of the time, this was done in an interactive lecture and PowerPoint format. After the text was introduced in one class period, the next class period was devoted to discussion. Students were given short quizzes at the beginning of class, and the remainder of the class was given to discussing the answers to the quiz questions. Alternatively, students were asked to record three points about the readings that stood out to them in a particular way or that generated questions or confusion. In the class, we recorded “quiz” grades for each student if they completed this task and then spent the class period discussing their points of interest or confusion. Both of these techniques were simple but highly effective in motivating the students to engage with the readings. Additionally, we were able to cover the points with more impact for the students than if we had covered them in a lecture. Class discussions were well attended and lively, and we felt the level of comprehension of the texts was generally higher than in either a straight lecture or a less structured discussion setting.

The course was organized into three sections. The first introduced Ian Barbour’s four models of the relationship between science and religion and addressed basic epistemological questions. We focused on the Galileo affair, using the core texts from his condemnation and recantation mentioned above, along with twentieth-century writings of popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Specifically, we addressed the

question, prompted so pointedly by the Galileo case: Can you believe in the truths of scripture and those of science? We also read selections from St. Augustine's *Confessions* in which he writes beautifully, with prescience, about how to understand the truths of scripture in light of our knowledge about the natural world.

In the second section, we looked at anthropological questions through the lens of evolution. However, we did not focus only on biological evolution but rather on a broader concept of evolution we called "cosmological evolution." This includes the notion of evolution as it applies to geology, biology, and cosmology. By placing evolution within this broader context, we were able to address important concepts related to faith and science that arose from the birth of geology between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (which actually inspired Darwin's theory of biological evolution), as well as questions surrounding twentieth-century physics and the evolution of the universe. We were also able to "circle back" to the questions that arose in the Galileo texts in the first part of the course.

Since geological evolution is probably the least familiar to most readers, this paper focuses on the three geology core texts used in the course. They were written by three key figures in geology in successive centuries. The first chronologically was Niels Stensen (also known as Nicholas Steno), a Danish scientist and the founder of geology in the seventeenth century, who eventually converted to Catholicism, became a Catholic bishop, and was beatified in 1988. The second was James Hutton, who, through his observations of different layers of sediments and rocks in Scotland and their slow dissolution and rebuilding over time, developed his theories of uniformitarianism in the eighteenth century. The third was Charles Lyell (1830), the English geologist who wrote his famous *Principles of Geology* in the nineteenth century, a text that Darwin read on his *Beagle* voyage and which inspired him to develop his theory of biological evolution.

In reading and discussing these texts with the students, it became clear how significant geology is in the dialogue between science and religion. This is an important point not often recognized in science–faith circles, which focus almost exclusively on the importance of biological evolution. With Galileo's discoveries, mankind confronted existential questions about the centrality of the Earth in the universe, while as the science of geology developed, questions arose as to the age of the Earth and its initial creation. Had the world been created *ex nihilo* at a singular point in time, or had it always existed? Were the landscapes we see the product of the biblical flood or were other processes involved? Geological history broaches these questions and many others.

In Stensen we introduced the students to a scientist and man of faith voicing a beautiful harmony between his science and his faith, as exemplified by this passage from his writings:

That which we see is beautiful, that which we understand is even more beautiful, but the most beautiful of all is that which we cannot grasp. Let us not, therefore, be satisfied with the evidence of our senses, but through our bodily eyes, use our mind's eyes, as if they were windows in a glorious palace, surrounded by a beautiful landscape. . . . [The scientist] cannot, therefore, take the credit either for his discoveries or the proof. The investigator is only God's instrument. (Kermit 62–63)

By the eighteenth century, James Hutton was led by his science to question biblical notions of the origin and age of the Earth. His theory of uniformitarianism postulated that the landscape, rather than being the product of the biblical flood, was the result of endlessly repeating cycles of erosion and sedimentation that had proceeded for millennia. He ended his book, *Theory of the Earth* (1788), with these words: “The result of our present enquiry is that we find no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end” (90).

Charles Lyell, in *Principles of Geology* (1830), built upon Hutton’s theory of uniformitarianism while also addressing its theological and philosophical implications. In fact, the questions for science and faith were important enough to him that he took time in the concluding chapter of what was strictly a scientific work to address them. He clarified that while he could not with his science interpret the landscape as the product of diluvial forces (i.e., the biblical flood), neither did he want to argue for an eternal Earth. He saw evidence of a creator everywhere and suggested that science and religion were of different orders of knowledge. He wrote:

But in whatever direction we pursue our researches, whether in time or space, we discover everywhere the clear proofs of a Creative Intelligence, and of His foresight, wisdom, and power. . . . To assume that the evidence of the beginning or end of so vast a scheme lies within the reach of our philosophical inquiries . . . appears to us inconsistent with a just estimate of the relationship which subsists between the finite power of man and the attributes of an Infinite and Eternal Being. (437–38)

It is interesting to note that he went on in the closing passage of his book to anticipate the theory of biological evolution:

As geologists, we learn that it is not only the present condition of the globe that has been suited to the accommodation of myriads of living creatures, but that many former states also have been equally adapted to the organization and habits of prior races of beings. The disposition of the seas, continents, and islands, and the climates have varied; so it appears that the species have been changed, and yet they have all been so modelled, on types analogous to those of existing plants and animals, as to indicate throughout a perfect harmony of design and unity of purpose. (437–38)

Reading Lyell’s core text was a good segue to the theory of biological evolution. In this section, the students read not Darwin but a contemporary National Academy of Sciences scientific account of modern evolution (2008) (more properly called neo-Darwinism), representing the grand synthesis of Darwin’s ideas with molecular genetics. After this we covered the Big Bang in relation to the evolution of the universe. Students read *The Primeval Atom*, the seminal work of Georges Lemaitre (1950), a Catholic priest and professor of physics whose work in the 1920s paved the way for what we now call The Big Bang theory.

In the third and final section of the course, we focused on moral/ethical questions. How do we apply the principles we learned in the course to real situations? How do we reconcile our scientific discoveries with living according to the tenets of our faith? We considered the challenges posed by technology, as well as environmental and bioethical questions. Why are there humans, and what is unique about them? What is our particular place and responsibility in the world?

In conclusion, in this course we sought to develop a model for teaching an un-

dergraduate synthesis course using core texts in science and religion. Simple techniques for helping students engage meaningfully with the texts in class discussions, as described above, contributed significantly to the success of the course. Class evaluations were positive both years, with excellent ratings for both teaching and course content. Students indicated that the course helped them especially to learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view and to develop a clearer understanding of, and commitment to, personal values. The texts and class discussions helped the students understand the historical development of the sciences and how the mutual relationship between science and religion can inform existential and ethical questions regarding the nature and purpose of human life. We believe this model could be helpful to others in liberal arts colleges who are interested in bridging the disciplines of science, religion, and history through the study of core texts.

Works Cited

- Barbour, Ian G. *Religion and Science*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997.
- Galilei, Galileo. "Recantation." *Famous Trials: Trial of Galileo Galilei*, 1633. <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/galileo/galileo.html>.
- Hutton, M.D. James. *Theory of the Earth*. 1788. New York: Classic Books International, 2010.
- Kermit, Hans. *Niels Stensen: The Scientist Who Was Beatified*. Hereford: Gracewing, 2003.
- Lemaître, Georges. *The Primeval Atom: An Essay on Cosmogony*. New York: Van Nostrand, 1950.
- Lyell, Charles. *Principles of Geology*. 1830. New York: Penguin Classics, 1997.
- National Academy of Sciences. *Science, Evolution and Creationism*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2008.
- "Papal Condemnation." *Famous Trials: Trial of Galileo Galilei*, 1633. <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/galileo/galileo.html>.

Teaching the Big Bang and Cosmological Evolution in the Core

James Clarage, University of St. Thomas
Sister Damien Marie Savino, FSE, Aquinas College

Most students, and even their professors, narrowly equate the term “evolution” with Darwin’s theory of biological evolution. Consequently, discussions of the relation between faith and science often are reduced to biologist versus theologian. Yet scientific works both before Darwin (in geology) and after (in Big Bang cosmology) have led to a broader understanding of evolution. Here, not only do Earth’s organisms arise from a common ancestor, but also all material structures (plants to planets, rocks to stars, even the “elements” in the periodic table) arise from a common simpler source. Such a sweeping cosmological evolution presents a correspondingly greater challenge to those universities, educators, and courses that explore the divisions, and possible bridges, between faith and the sciences. This paper discusses one specific module, on cosmological evolution, used in a larger undergraduate core course co-taught by the authors, titled *Reconnecting Catholicism with the Sciences*, where undergraduate students are challenged to integrate contemporary technical disciplines with philosophy and theology. The success of this course suggests that familiarity with the Big Bang theory of cosmological evolution should not be restricted to students specializing in the physical sciences, but should be considered part of a liberal arts core curriculum.

Astronomy is one of the original seven liberal arts. Book VII of Plato’s *Republic* argues the case forcibly, leading Socrates’ poor pupil Glaucon to whine: “What a multiplication of work you prescribe for astronomy, compared with present practice” (530c). So perhaps the case need not be made for cosmology’s inclusion in the core. Yet, as the existence of the ACTC annual conference proves, the case for the

core must be made afresh each season, even each day. Moving into the twenty-first century, we propose reintroducing a seminal yet neglected text in astronomy, one that expounds a theory of cosmological evolution now referred to as the Big Bang. Besides its obvious connection to the liberal art of astronomy, this text also includes elements from the rest of the *quadrivium* and even *trivium*, as well as other disciplines often grouped with the liberal arts and humanities (e.g., history, philosophy, arts), and even sacred studies (i.e., theology).

Most people have heard of the Big Bang theory, a rigorous scientific account for the present and past state of the universe, as arising from a sort of explosion 14.7 billion years ago. However, most people do not know who first developed this theory. Many might guess it was Einstein. Some cite Edwin Hubble, for whom the space telescope was named. In fact, the theory was developed by a Catholic priest, Fr. Georges Lemaître. Working in Belgium in the 1920s as a canon lawyer and professor of physics, Lemaître was interested in cosmology, a subject he called “the most magnificent subject that the human mind may be tempted to explore” (55). He ambitiously combined the ideas, and equations, from the two revolutionary theories of his time, quantum theory and Einstein’s newly created theory of gravitation (the General Theory of Relativity). Lemaître concluded, “These equations account for the dynamics of the universe; they accustom us to thinking of the radius of the universe as a physical quantity, able to vary” (63). This simple statement has radical implications: not only matter but also space and time themselves can change and can therefore have a beginning and an end.

If we go back in the course of time we must find fewer and fewer quanta, until we find all the energy of the universe packed in a few or even in a unique quantum. . . . If the world began with a single quantum, the notions of space and time would altogether fail to have any meaning at the beginning; they would only begin to have a sensible meaning when the original quantum had been divided into a sufficient number of quanta. If this suggestion is correct, the beginning of the world happened a little before the beginning of space and time. (17)

These ideas met initial conflict with not only the established science of the time but also philosophy and even politics. The famed British astronomer Sir Arthur Eddington at first ridiculed the theory, saying “Philosophically, the notion of a beginning of the present order of Nature is repugnant to me” (447). Another astronomer, Fred Hoyle (1948), pejoratively termed Lemaître’s theory “Big Bang” to contrast it with his established, and soberly named, “Steady State Cosmology.” Indeed, most scientists at that time believed the universe was eternal, an appealing idea since it seems to remove the need for an ultimate cause (e.g., a creator God). The Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the 1940s proclaimed that this Catholic priest’s theory was part of the “falsifiers of science who want to revive the fairy tale of the origin of the world from nothing” (Kragh 224).

As with biological evolution, the historical controversies surrounding cosmological evolution are but one reason it is an attractive subject for the core curriculum. To recount the entire history of its acceptance, from meetings between Lemaître and Einstein in the 1920s and 1930s to the theory’s eventual confirmation in 1965 (by Penzias and Wilson, only one year before Lemaître’s death) would require a separate

paper. In this paper, we now focus on one particular text of Lemaître's and how it naturally fits within the liberal arts.

The most appropriate original text by Georges Lemaître for a general undergraduate audience is *l'Atome Primitif*, published in 1946, available in English translation as *The Primeval Atom*. Unfortunately, and ironically, although there are hundreds of popular secondary accounts of the Big Bang theory (in book and journal form, Wikipedia, YouTube, even the genre of TV comedy series), the original seminal account by Lemaître is no longer in print. Now, recall that one of this conference's topics was *Rejuvenating the Liberal Arts in the Core (RLA)*, which calls for "newer and innovative liberal arts texts with a view to reintroducing texts into core curricula." With this charge, I hereby *reintroduce* the liberal arts community to Lemaître's seminal twentieth work, *The Primeval Atom*.

Although Lemaître's theory is highly mathematical and was developed in technical physics journals, he mercifully wrote this popular account, most chapters expressed in a nonmathematical style accessible to any intelligent undergraduate. All quotations of Lemaître in this paper are taken directly from the book. Moreover, he weaves his theory using threads from disciplines besides physics and astronomy, including elements from the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, as well as other subjects in the humanities, including philosophy and even theology. Consider the following examples from each of the seven liberal arts.

Grammar and rhetoric: Lemaître uses poetic, yet precise, language. For instance, the term "fossil rays" is used to describe the billion-year-old light gathered by telescopes, which encodes the ancient records of creation. He coins various expressions for the singular creation event: "cosmic egg," "the original quantum," "primordial atom," and "day without a yesterday." Consider this passage, which actually expresses fairly precise details of galactic nebula and stellar redshifts, "The evolution of the world can be compared to a display of fireworks that has just ended: some few red wisps, ashes and smoke. Standing on a well chilled cinder, we see the slow fading of the suns, and we try to recall the vanished brilliance of the origin of the worlds" (78).

Logic: The book begins with observable facts (the distribution of stars and galaxies) and logically arrives at its novel conclusion via a sort of astronomical and geometrical *reductio ad absurdum*. "I shall rather try to show that the universe must be expanding, or rather that the most necessary processes of evolution are contradictory to the view that space is and has always been static" (81).

Algebra: After recounting ancient Greek notions of number (e.g., Archimedes' explorations in the Sand Reckoner), Lemaître entertains the reader with our more modern ideas of number, including the transfinite numbers of Weierstrass, Dedekind, and Cantor.

Geometry: In a mentally moving section called "The Border of Naught," Lemaître explains how our universe must be "space which is finite but without boundary," best described by the four-dimensional non-Euclidean geometries of Riemann and Poincaré. To help the reader, our author uses analogy (soap bubbles, globes) as well as consoling words, "I suppose that your imagination is tugging at its bridle, so I am going to endeavor, not to satisfy it (which is impossible) but to have it appeased" (40).

Harmony: As for the seventh and ultimate liberal art, Lemaître's beautiful solution of Einstein's tensor field equations in four-dimensional spacetime provides a majestic and modern interpretive score for the ancients' Music of the Spheres. Yes it is mathematical, but so it ever was, from Pythagoras and Plato to Ptolemy and to Johannes Kepler, who concluded from his mathematical laws of planetary motion that "The heavenly bodies are nothing but a continuous song for several voices, perceived not by the ear but by the intellect; a music which . . . sets landmarks in the immeasurable flow of time" (446).

Besides these traditional liberal arts, *The Primeval Atom* also invokes elements of history, philosophy, and theology, as it traces the cosmologies of Aristotle, Laplace, and Kant, lifts imagery from Pascal's *Pensées*, and creates comparisons between the stellar bodies and God's heavenly host.

The sphere of fixed stars spread out, far away, into space, while a few outposts swung with the motion of the earth. The others, the huge army, speckled afar, as an apparent challenge to the patient pride of man. How does the imagination of the poets compare with the reality of the heavens? The world is not a dungeon, not even a nicely decorated dungeon; it is a boundless perspective, marked out with bright guideposts that seem to have been placed at the farthest distance where they may still help us to answer the riddle, or rather, to value and admire the work of beauty which has been prepared for us by the "God of the Armies." (32)

Although Lemaître does not put forth his scientific theory as a metaphysical proof of creation, he does present his cosmology as being consistent, if not harmonious, with the notion of a created world. Fr. Georges Lemaître apparently found no ultimate conflict between the revelations contained in his faith's Bible and the truths his scientific theory revealed: a cosmos created billions of years ago, slowly evolving from simple to complex, from a singular quantum of energy, to atoms, to stars, to solar systems, to cells, to primates, to us. In our experience, using this reading in the classroom, the fact that the Big Bang theory was developed by a Catholic priest goes a long way toward helping students who struggle with bridging the apparent divides between disciplines, most notably theology and science (our era's focusing on the perennial problem of *fides et ratio*). Students who read the *Primeval Atom* can experience a modern *synthesis* of our often scattered academic disciplines at work, and perhaps understand that they attend not a multiversity, but a university. As Lemaître reflects, "Should we only be able to vanquish the universe, part by part, and should our mind be obliged to confess its impotency to face and understand the world as a whole? It remains for me to tell you how one can avoid such a pessimistic conclusion and conceive of an intelligible form for the entirety of the world" (35).

Works Cited

- Eddington, Arthur S. "The End of the World: from the Standpoint of Mathematical Physics." *Nature* 127 (March 1931): 447–53.
- Hoyle, Fred. "The Nature of the Universe." *BBC Third Programme*. BBC radio, London, March 28, 1949.
- Kepler, Johannes. *Harmonice Mundi*. Trans. E. J. Aiton, A. M. Duncan, and J. V.

Field. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1997.

Kragh, Helge. *Entropic Creation: Religious Contexts of Thermodynamics and Cosmology*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008.

Lemaître, Georges. *The Primeval Atom: An Essay on Cosmogony*. New York: Van Nostrand, 1950.

Plato. *Republic*. Trans. W.H.D. Rouse. New York: New American Library, 1956.

Reading the Story of Our Understanding of Life: Rebuilding the Connection Between Science and the Humanities

Lam To Kam

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Science and the humanities are two domains in the contemporary classification of human knowledge, often separated in the current education system. The connections between them are therefore consigned to oblivion under the increasing specialization in intellectual development. Such dichotomy could be bridged by turning our attention to core texts and courses.

On the Origin of Species, the classic in which Charles Darwin presented the theory of evolution one and a half centuries ago, is one of the selected core-text readings for the course *In Dialogue with Nature*, which, together with *In Dialogue with Humanity*, constitutes the General Education Foundation Programme at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. While both *Dialogues* are guided by the reading of classic texts, *In Dialogue with Nature* is about human endeavors to investigate nature and the establishment of scientific knowledge. The *Origin*, as one of the core-text readings, perfectly shows us how scientists' original words in classical science literatures bring in humanistic sides of science.

The *Origin* is a book we often refer to but seldom read, so oversimplification and misunderstanding of its concepts and thesis are common. Over the past century, the theory of evolution has been widely accepted in the area of science, serving as the foundation of biological science and included in the syllabus of biology and science courses worldwide. However, the original literature is not normally included in school, and students are therefore not required to read about evolution in Darwin's

own words. The curriculum and assessment guide from the Education Bureau of Hong Kong, for example, puts Darwin's theory under the compulsory part of "Genetic and Evolution," with the focus placed on biotechnology and biodiversity (*Curriculum Development Council [Secondary 4–6], 23–27*). Not only are the historical and cultural backgrounds largely excluded, but the details of the theory at Darwin's time are also omitted. Molecular genetics, unfolded a century after Darwin, however, is introduced together with evolution to explain the inheritance mechanism of the theory. Students, therefore, usually find the *Origin* obscure, as it reveals that Darwin himself did not know about DNA mutation.

Understandably, it is the power of science to condense an extensive amount of experience on the order of the world we live in into a small volume of simple, objective laws (Poincaré 165). Nevertheless, as Darwin wrote, "Throw up a handful of feathers, and all must fall to the ground according to definite laws; but how simple is this problem compared to the action and reaction of the innumerable plants and animals" (Darwin and Costa 75).

The theory is seemingly not as straightforward as those found in contemporary biology textbooks, for Darwin thoughtfully supported his universal law on life with nearly 500 pages of arguments and evidences; and yet he originally intended to call the publication an abstract (Darwin and Costa xvi).

Notably, "survival of the fittest," as the mechanistic process of evolution, is the general recollection of the biology class; ironically, it is not the original expression of Darwin. The term coined by Darwin was "natural selection," which is also the title of chapter IV in the *Origin*. Herbert Spencer's "survival of the fittest" is a later addition, appended to the title starting from the fifth edition of the *Origin* in 1869 and used interchangeably with "natural selection" ever since (Darwin and Costa 61). Those who have read the *Origin* would agree that the disastrous implications of Spencer's "survival of the fittest"—in the understanding of human evolution and social evolution—would be Darwin's nightmare.

Reading original literature is, therefore, important for the understanding of what Darwin really meant in his space and time. Classics of science are the key for students to rebuild the chronological development of the scientific knowledge and hence the full particulars of human effort to establish the modern science we know today. This is beyond the scientific knowledge *per se*.

The *Origin* encompasses a long, yet compelling, story about life and about Darwin's struggle to read the life story. Charles Darwin (1809–82), who lies in Westminster Abbey next to Isaac Newton, is the central actor of the story. He was attracted to the beauty of nature at a very young age:

When I left the school I was for my age neither high nor low in it; and I believe that I was considered by all my masters and by my father as a very ordinary boy, rather below the common standard in intellect. To my deep mortification my father once said to me, "You care for nothing but shooting, dogs, and rat-catching, and you will be a disgrace to yourself and all your family." (Darwin and Barlow 27)

As "a very ordinary boy, rather below the common standard in intellect," the critical event in his life was the voyage on a British warship, *HMS Beagle* (December 1831–October 1836), after which he had committed himself into a life-long career

to explain the magnificent and diversified world of life (Browne and Van Wyhe). Nevertheless, this story of life interweaves with a number of aspects of human activities, including British maritime exploration of the New World, the Americas, development in geology, discovery of fossil records, development of agriculture, and a long period of peace and prosperity renowned as the Victorian era. By that time, empiricism, the mechanical worldview introduced by Isaac Newton, and the attempt to identify independent mechanism as the true cause of natural phenomena are the intellectual conditions imprinted in Darwin's mind and reflected in his writing. The first of the two epigraphs depicts Darwin's point of view:

But with regard to the material world, we can at least go so far as this—we can perceive that events are brought about not by insulated interpositions of Divine power, exerted in each particular case, but by the establishment of general laws. William Whewell: *Bridgewater Treatise*. (Darwin and Costa ii)

Darwin had compared his work to Newton's general laws of motion more than once (the above analogy with falling feathers is another example). The last sentence of the last chapter of the *Origin* well presents his admiration of Newton's general laws and ambition to embrace the whole history of life into one law:

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved. (Darwin and Costa 490)

Darwin's Victorian writing style beautifully expresses how the law governs the evolution of all life forms in the enormous geological time of the earth in the past and future. In chapter IV of the *Origin*, included in the excerpt for students of the course, Darwin vividly portrays the action of Nature:

It may be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising, throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life. (Darwin and Costa 84)

Students would notice that this kind of writing style is unlikely to be found in modern scientific work, yet the language reveals its historical and cultural origin. As mentioned above, while modern science curricula do not normally include the cultural background, reading Darwin's words would allow students to directly engage in his scientific enquiry. This is especially meaningful for Asian students who are coming not only from a different era, but also from a different side of the earth from Darwin's.

Apart from the writing style, the historical footprints of the fermenting period between the eighteenth and early nineteenth century of Western Europe can be found all over the *Origin*. The idea of natural selection as a slow and gradual process was inspired by Charles Lyell's theory on geological changes:

As modern geology has almost banished such views as the excavation of a great valley by a single diluvial wave, so will natural selection, if it be a true principle,

banish the belief of the continued creation of new organic beings, or of any great and sudden modification in their structure. (Darwin and Costa 95)

The action of natural selection to accumulate changes in characters is compared with artificial selection or man's selection in domestic animals at the beginning of chapter IV (Darwin and Costa 80). Such comparison has taken advantage of the popularity of domestic breeding, which stemmed from the flourishing development in agriculture of England. In the same chapter, tissue and organ specialization in organic beings is ascribed to "physiological division of labor" which correlates with the concept of "division of labor" from the economist Adam Smith (Darwin and Costa 93). Both of the above cases illustrate the influence from social-economic activities on Darwin's conceptualization of the theory; meanwhile, Darwin himself benefited from the wealth brought by the economic bloom of his time in England.

One would argue science should be objective, value free, and supported by reasoning with evidence. As the groundwork for modern science, Darwin did think by conscientious reasoning:

Have we any right to assume that the Creator works by intellectual powers like those of man? (Darwin and Costa 188)

He strived for as much empirical support as possible. Below is just one example of his experiments and calculations:

Until I tried, with Mr Berkeley's aid, a few experiments, it was not even known how far seeds could resist the injurious action of sea-water. To my surprise I found that out of 87 kinds, 64 germinated after an immersion of 28 days, and a few survived an immersion of 137 days. . . . Afterwards I tried some larger fruits, capsules. . . . Hence I was led to dry stems and branches of 94 plants with ripe fruit, and to place them on sea water. The majority sank quickly, but some which whilst green floated for a very short time, when dried floated much longer; for instance, ripe hazel-nuts sank immediately, but when dried, they floated for 90 days and afterwards when planted they germinated . . . we may conclude, as far as anything can be inferred from these scanty facts, that the seeds of 14/100 kinds of plants of any country might be floated by sea currents during twenty-eight days, and would retain their power of germination. (Darwin and Costa 359)

Darwin's work and words not only demonstrated the spirit of science but also laid a foundation for manifold branches of knowledge, including paleontology, genetics, and ecology. Indeed, Darwin has foreseen his significance in the development of knowledge and human history:

In the distant future I see open fields for far more important researches. Psychology will be based on a new foundation, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation. Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history. (Darwin and Costa 488)

Indeed, the *Origin* opened up new directions for us to search for our origins. Who we are and where we came from are big questions or fundamental questions that are interdisciplinary by nature. Diversified disciplines are connected at the very beginning, as in the case of common ancestry illustrated in the great tree of life (Darwin and Costa 117–18).

Science is not only about the systemic study of nature and technical application of the knowledge; it is inseparable from its historical origin and the people who worked it out. While Darwin was dedicated to generating the general laws in his time, his theory suggests lives on earth are connected since life first appeared on earth over three billion years ago. His original words bear witness to the historical background of the scientific theory in the West. The classic, *Origin*, as the story of life and the story of humans' endeavors to read the life story, reveals connection between the beauty of life on earth and human existence; science and culture; science and social-economic activities. For the fact that scientific theories were spread all over the world for technical values, embracing the scientists' historical context builds a fuller understanding of the foundation of scientific knowledge for Asian students.

The development of science has revolutionized our vision over a few centuries ago. The emphasis on technology and specification in science education nowadays, however, breaks it away from its humanistic root. As the reservoir of human thoughts, core texts could be the bridge for us to reflect on our past, present, and future, and therefore an important part of holistic education for students.

Works Cited

- Browne, Janet, and John Van Wyhe. "Timeline of the Life of Charles Robert Darwin." *Darwin Online*. Darwin Online, n.d. Web. <http://darwin-online.org.uk/timeline.html>. Accessed April 15, 2017.
- Curriculum Development Council and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, Education Bureau of HKSAR. Science Education Key Learning Area: *Biology Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4–6)*, http://334.edb.hkedcity.net/doc/chi/curriculum2015/Bio_CAGuide_e_2015.pdf. Accessed June 24, 2017.
- Darwin, Charles, and Nora Barlow. *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, 1809–1882 with Original Omissions Restored*. London: Collins, 1958.
- Darwin, Charles, and James T. Costa. *The Annotated Origin: A Facsimile of the First Edition of On the Origin of Species*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2011.
- Poincaré, Henri. *The Value of Science: Essential Writings of Henri Poincaré*. New York: Modern Library, 2001. Reprinted in *In Dialogue with Nature: Textbook for General Education Foundation Programme*. 2nd ed. Hong Kong: Office of University General Education, 2012.

Examining Paralysis: Medical Images in James Joyce's *Ulysses*

Krista Rascoe
Tarrant County College

Steeped in medical vocabulary, James Joyce's *Ulysses* reflects themes of social, cultural, political, and religious stagnation through the image of paralysis. Joyce's work naturally invites discussion of and exploration into the cultural vacuum left in Ireland following Britain's decolonization from all states but Ulster. But using *Ulysses* in the classroom can also facilitate student engagement in conversations that question the divide between science and religion, the emergence of women's health issues, and the xenophobia within nationalism, to name just a few of the ethical discussions raised by the text. Close reading and analysis of this core text with students, particularly those in STEM [science, technology, engineering, and medicine] fields, fosters the development and construction of their own communal voice to confront many problems of inequality that arise in medicine.

Using *Ulysses* as a core text in a freshman rhetoric and composition class at a liberal arts university works. In any semester, students from a variety of majors and interests endure that dreaded freshman writing seminar. Joyce's use of humor, scandalous language, and blunt blarney provide situations that keep students engaged. Furthermore, the text works particularly well to grab the attention of science and engineering majors due to Joyce's use of medical images and scientific language within the work. Many passages lend themselves naturally to discussions that remain relevant to those seeking employment in medical and science fields after college. Questions regarding the difficulty of Joyce's language might discourage instructors from using the text. However, segmenting passages and reading them aloud enables students to engage with the text. When read with an ironic tone as Joyce intended,

students focus on the message of each episode. They also enjoy trying different voices and accents while performing for their peers. Before reading, spend time with students to lay a foundation by placing the work in its historical, political, and social contexts. The key to using *Ulysses* in the freshman composition classroom is that it is framed properly for the student.

With each discussion of selected passages, background information must be given to students in advance to prevent anachronistic interpretations of the text. Flexibility toward a modern application of its ethical arguments may be permitted during discussion. However, it is best to establish the context for reading and understanding the passage with the students prior to discussion. One of the topics first explored with students from *Ulysses* is women's reproductive health. The "Penelope" episode, where Molly Bloom's stream of consciousness creates only eight sentences, initiates students to some of the stagnant issues that remain ignored in women's health care. For example, Molly's visit to the gynecologist for leucorrhea, as indicated by Molly's statement "I had that white thing coming from me" (U.18. 1152), creates a moment where Molly steps back from her usual confident self to allow medical authority to guide her understanding of what occurs within her own body. She engages in the distancing between doctor and patient by referring to her gynecologist as "that dry old stick" (U.18.1154) and desexualizes the encounter through her recollection of the patient history questions she answers during the visit. Molly seemingly, at this point, leaves medicine's position unchallenged.

Student questions and discussion now focus on why Molly, who flaunts her sexuality, feels a need to suddenly restrain her speech for the doctor. Discussion should center on how Joyce uses this particular moment to accentuate medical imperialism over domestic affairs through Molly's reflections in "Penelope" (Plock 147). Joyce acknowledges through Molly's discourse that advancements in gynecological care for women, while creating improvements to their health, work to keep control over women. As students read further, they see that she harbors a distrust for medical authority due to its attitude toward her symptoms, stating, "where do those old fellows get all the words they have omissions with his shortsighted eyes on me cocked sideways I wouldnt trust him too far to give me chloroform or God knows what else" (U.18.1170–172). Molly even goes on to say that "I always used to know by Millys when she was a child whether she had worms or not still all the same paying him for that" (U18.1167–168). Such statements further announce Molly's doubt that her physician truly listened to her during the course of an exam. Molly laments that she cannot obtain the medicine she needs without the doctor's approval; but instead, must pay one guinea to confirm a diagnosis that she knew her child had. Molly recognizes that her physician ignores most of what she says due to the fact that she is a woman, citing that he only saw the natural weakness in her.

Looking at Molly's frustration with doctors, students usually engage in conversations regarding the degree to which men actually listen to women during discourse as important as taking a patient history or intake record during treatment. Students also answer and discuss the question regarding the doctor's authority over a patient. For example, some female doctors ignore their female patients in a manner similar to male physicians based on their own sense of medical prowess. As classroom

conversation continues, students realize through Molly that Joyce demonstrates the arbitrariness of medical theories designed to keep women submissive.

Using health care to keep women submissive remains a source of dialogue through class discussion of passages from “Oxen of the Sun.” Once more it is important to establish background for students. Students need to be reminded that at the turn of the century in Ireland, religious doctrine dictated what women could and could not do in the public sphere. Joyce recognized the cascading effect that religious stagnation created for women in their social standing, making *Ulysses* a perfect text to use to discuss not only women’s health-care issues but also the divide between science and religion. To begin discussion, students learn that in 1904, Trinity College began to allow women to enter its medical school. The first women to go through Trinity’s medical program studied obstetrics and gynecology, as well as pediatrics and general care. However, even with this progressive initiative that sought to provide women with female physicians, women still fell victim to religious dogma in their obstetrical and gynecological care.

Joyce highlights the dilemma of conscience that many doctors encountered during delivery when both the unborn child and the mother faced complications that could lead to the death of the mother or the child, even both. Traditional Catholic influence dictated that the child’s life be spared at the expense of the mother. More progressive medical thought centered on saving the mother, since she could bear more children. Joyce places this debate in the heart of the episode “Oxen of the Sun” when the medical students sit in the lounge and debate the topic extensively as Mrs. Purefoy’s agonizing labor screams can be heard from the floor above them:

And he heard their aresouns each gen other a touching birth and righteousness, young Madden maintaining that put such a case it were hard the wife to die (for so it had fallen out a matter some year agoe with a woman of Elblana in Horne’s house that now was trespassed out of this world and the self night next before her death all leeches and pothecaries had taken counsel of her case). And they said farther she should live because in the beginning, they said, the woman should bring forth in pain and wherefore they that were of this imagination affirmed how young Madden had said truth for he had conscience to let her die. And not few and of these was young Lynch were in doubt that the world was now right evil governed as it was never other howbeit the mean people believed it otherwise but the law nor his judges did provide no remedy. A redress God grant. This was scant said but all cried with one acclaim nay, by our Virgin Mother, the wife should live and the babe to die. (U. 14. 202–15)

Like many doctors bound by their religious traditions, young Madden emphasizes saving the child, while many of his fellows cry out for the mother to live. This conflict within the medical community in Dublin rose from the competitive attitude of the medicals against the clergy (Downing 187). Young doctors started to see themselves as an authoritative voice, countering the stranglehold that the Catholic Church and Protestant British political rule held over Ireland for centuries (187). With their new voice in religious and political matters, doctors saw that they could influence society and push for social reforms to improve lives around them.

Discussion of the “Oxen of the Sun” episode raises current disparities and inequalities in women’s health care. Students talk at length about problems they, or

their friends and family, encounter when seeking gynecological or obstetric care. They engage with this episode due to their personal connection with the topic. Many students seek to discuss possible solutions to change current practice. Before this discussion begins, students learn that Joyce's friend Gogarty shared with Joyce the changes he saw in medicine. Due to his discussions with medicals in Gogarty's circle, Joyce implied to Nora in a letter dated 29 August 1904 that the combined religious and social pressures on women contributed to his mother's illness and death, stating, "My mother was slowly killed, I think, by my father's ill-treatment, by years of trouble, and by my cynical frankness of conduct. When I looked on her face as she lay in her coffin—a face grey and wasted with cancer—I understood that I was looking at the face of a victim and I cursed the system which had made her a victim" (Joyce, *Letters II* 48). Students need to know that Joyce's experiences influenced his need to criticize the system that subjugated women. His medical discussions with Gogarty signaled to Joyce that not only a need to raise the social status of women existed, but also using the language of medicine to achieve his purpose provided an element of authority.

Scientific research strengthened the rhetorical voice of medical practitioners to criticize social problems and suggest resolutions through proven research. The debate as to whether the mother or the child should live within the "Oxen" episode reflects the emerging dominant moral position within the medical community of Dublin, which ran counter to religious influence. As reflected within the previous passage, Joyce affirms the medical cultural authority when his medical doctors at the NMH resolutely conclude in their debate that the mother should live. This debate usually initiates a discussion that explores how science and religion can bridge the understanding gap between the two fields. Students explore questions regarding the degree to which the role of science and the role of religion should influence political policy, cultural practice, and social expectations. Students argue their position from facts, as well as use arguments of definition to substantiate claims. Furthermore, discussions also surface regarding the proper care and treatment of expectant mothers. Students learn that infant mortality became an expected norm in the early twentieth century: 125 to 150 births per 1,000 led to the death of the infant (Shanahan and Quigley 280), since most doctors performed a craniotomy (also known as high forceps delivery) to forcefully pull the infant from the mother's womb in order to save the mother. To improve the physical survival of birthing women and their infants, Caesarean section surgery improved by the end of the nineteenth century, but it still proved a risky option for preserving the life of mother and child.

Students see the medicals, Stephen Dadelus, and Leopold Bloom continue their debate, as the conversation emphasizes the complications women faced in childbirth and health care in Dublin. From the pages of *Ulysses*, students learn that Caesarean sections could be performed with advancements in "anesthesia or twilight sleep" (U. 14. 966); however, pregnant women still faced risk to their lives during labor due to "the prolongation of labour pains in advance gravidancy by reason of pressure on the vein, the premature relentment of the amniotic fluid (as exemplified in the actual case) with consequent peril of sepsis in the matrix" (U. 14. 667–69). During discussion of this portion of the text, students calculate that Mrs. Purefoy's prolonged labor

stood at three days. They join the medicals, Stephen Dadelus, and Leopold Bloom in discussion of how medical personnel should ethically proceed with her care. Most of these students know from other nursing or pre-health classes that once the mucosal plug and membrane that protects the womb and growing fetus ruptures, birth partum needs to occur rather quickly. Extended exposure of the warm womb to bacteria from surfaces, air, and contact by medical personnel provides a habitat that breeds infection.

From these two episodes, *Ulysses* provides material that enriches discussions in rhetoric and composition classes, allowing students to develop poignant arguments centered on public health issues. Students draw correlations between medicine as practiced in the early twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, focusing on many of the ethical debates that surround the fields of science and medicine. At a liberal arts college, these debates engage the science-track student, piquing interest not only in the core text used, but also in the humanities. Students leave the classroom recognizing that science and the arts intertwine and support each other. They also develop rhetorical skills, creating and developing arguments through the use of a core text and their own scientific knowledge. In the course of learning these valuable lessons, students find that they possess a powerful voice to engage others in discussion regarding many of the problems that face humanity.

Works Cited

- Downing, Gregory. "Life Lessons from Untimely Death in James Joyce's 'Ulysses.'" *Literature and Medicine* 19.2 (Fall 2000): 182–204. *Project MUSE*. Web. Mar. 14, 2015. DOI: 10.1353/lm.2000.0022
- Joyce, James. *The Letters of James Joyce*. 3 vols. Ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking Press, 1966.
- . *Ulysses*. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler. New York: Vintage, 1986.
- Plock, Vike Martina. *Joyce, Medicine, and Modernity*. Gainesville, FL: U of Florida Press, 2010.
- Shanahan, Fergus, and Eamonn M. M. Quigley. "Medicine in the Age of 'Ulysses': James Joyce's Portrait of Life, Medicine, and Disease on a Dublin Day a Century Ago." *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 49.2 (Spring 2006): 276–85. *Project MUSE*. Web. 14 Mar. 2015. DOI: 10.1353/pbm.2006.0032

Political Discourse, Political Communities

Questions of Democracy: Rethinking *Demos* and *Kratos* with Herodotus and Mandela

David Arndt

Saint Mary's College of California

Democracy is commonly defined as the “rule of the people” or “majority rule,” but this definition does not quite fit the text in which the word “democracy” first appeared. In the *History* of Herodotus, an advocate of democracy rejects not just monarchy and oligarchy, but also the whole notion of rule: “I am willing neither to rule nor to be ruled” (οὔτε γὰρ ἄρχειν οὔτε ἄρχεσθαι ἐθέλω) (2: 110–11). Some thinkers today have also challenged the notion of democracy as a form of rule. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela described the tribal meetings of his people as “democracy in its purest form” but rejected the notion of democracy as majority rule: “Democracy meant all men were to be heard and a decision was taken together as a people. Majority rule was a foreign notion” (22).

What, then, is democracy? How best to think about the meaning of democracy? And how can the study of core texts—such as Herodotus—help us to think through these questions?

These questions are now often met with an odd mix of dogma and relativism. The dogma is that “democracy” is an essentially contested word—an empty signifier defined in different ways for different purposes. The relativism is the belief that there is no essence of democracy. Bernard Crick said democracy has no “one essential true meaning or . . . definitive definition” (7). And Larry Diamond has said, “There cannot be any one ‘right’ answer to the question of what democracy is; we can only be transparent, and logical and consistent, in whatever standard we adopt” (22). This

dogmatic relativism rests on an instrumental view of language: words seen as tools that have no core meaning. The meaning of a word depends on how it is used.

This view of language is naive. In reducing language to a tool, it overlooks the historical dimension of words. Words derive their sense in part from the historical traditions to which they belong. The instrumental view of language not only obscures the historicity of words; it effectively impoverishes language by emptying words of their traditional senses.

Think of the word “fascism.” It was coined to name a political movement founded in Italy in 1915. It is true that the word “fascism” is now used to describe many things, including the aesthetics of Hummers, the ubiquity of Starbucks, and the interior decor of Trump Tower. But to understand the precise meanings of the word—and how those meanings have changed over time—we have to understand the political phenomenon the word first named.

The same is true of the word “democracy.” It first named a kind of politics that emerged in sixth- and fifth-century Athens. It is true that the word is now used to refer to many things, including popularity contests in high school, the kleptocracy of Putin’s Russia, and the totalitarian dictatorship of North Korea. This *is not* to say the original sense of the word is the one true meaning. It *is* to say that we have to understand the phenomenon the word first named in order to understand the precise meanings of the word and how those meanings have changed over time.

This is true in general of words for cultural phenomena. Words articulate an understanding of the things to which they refer. To understand cultural phenomena in essence, we have to reflect on their history and the words in which they have been understood. We must start with their history—return to the moment when they first emerged clearly enough to be recognized and named in words—and then try to explicate, clarify, and refine the authentic understanding of the phenomena implicit in the original sense of those words.

What, then, was the original sense of “democracy”?

To answer this question, we have to go back to Herodotus. It is generally recognized that a decisive step toward democracy took place in Athens at the end of the sixth century BCE, with the constitutional reforms of Cleisthenes. But Herodotus is careful to say that these reforms were established only after a popular uprising that preceded the institutions of democratic self-government. To understand the origins of democracy, we have to look at this uprising itself.

The uprising occurred following several decades of tyranny, which ended when the last tyrant was dethroned in 510 BC by a Spartan king named Cleomenes, and there was a struggle for power between two factions of Athenian aristocrats, led by Isagoras and Cleisthenes. Herodotus says that to win popular support, Cleisthenes made friends with the people of Athens (ὁ Κλεισθένης τὸν δῆμον προσεταιρίζεται), while Isagoras turned for help to Cleomenes (3:72). Cleomenes ordered the Athenians to banish Cleisthenes, then came back to Athens with a small military force and, on the advice of Isagoras, banished seven hundred families close to Cleisthenes. The moment of truth came when Cleomenes ordered the Council to dissolve, to be replaced by three hundred supporters of Isagoras. The Council resisted and refused to obey, and Herodotus says the rest of the Athenians—thinking the same thing (τὰ

αὐτὰ φρονήσαντες)—joined this resistance (3: 80). Cleomenes and Isagoras took refuge on the Acropolis, where they were besieged by the Athenian people for three days, after which the Spartans negotiated a safe retreat. Isagoras was banished from Athens, and his supporters were executed. The Athenians recalled from exile the seven hundred banished families, and Cleisthenes instituted the reforms that made the first democratic government in Athens. Here is David Grene's translation of the story:

When Cleomenes sent his herald, demanding the expulsion of Cleisthenes and the "Accursed," Cleisthenes himself departed; but Cleomenes, even so, came to Athens, with no great military power, and on his arrival banished—to undo the curse—seven hundred Athenian families, all suggested by Isagoras. Having done that, he next tried to do away with the Council and entrusted the government to three hundred partisans of Isagoras. The Council resisted and refused to obey, and then Cleomenes and his party took possession of the Acropolis. The rest of the Athenians, thinking the same thing (τὰ αὐτὰ φρονήσαντες), united and besieged them for two days, and on the third day all who were Lacedaemonians among them accepted a treaty and marched out of the country. (386–87)¹

Several things here are worth noting.

1. The protagonist of the story is not Cleisthenes but the people of Athens. The people came together and acted in concert to protect their Council and to expel Cleomenes and Isagoras.

2. The people acted in concert without the direction of a recognized leader. No one was in charge. There was no vertical relation of leader and followers, commander and subjects.

3. Even without a leader, the people had the power to force the surrender and expulsion of Isagoras, Cleomenes, and the Spartan soldiers.

4. The power exercised by the people of Athens was a purely "horizontal" power—the power-to-act-in-concert generated by the unified solidarity of a group.

5. The power of the people in this case was not power over government institutions but the power to act in concert that precedes and sustains institutions of government.²

The word "democracy" (δημοκρατία) seems not to have existed before these events. Cleisthenes described his reforms with the word "isonomy," that is, equality (ἴσος) under law (νόμος). So the word "democracy" was a retrospective interpretation of this new kind of politics. It seems likely that this interpretation was informed by the experience of collective action in the uprising that made democratic government possible. How, then, did the Athenians understand the kind of political power that established the institutions of citizen self-government? What was the understanding of power implicit in the original sense of the word "democracy"?

"Democracy" comes from two Greek words: *demos* (δῆμος) and *kratos* (κράτος). *Demos* meant "the people" in several different senses: 1. the low-born or common folk in a polis; 2. the total number of individuals in a polis; and 3. the body of all citizens who belong to a polis. *Kratos* meant "power" in several senses as well: 1. the strength of an individual; 2. the capacity of a group to act in concert; 3. a leader's capacity to direct the action of a group of people; 4. the right to command the obedi-

ence of a group of people by virtue of holding a position of rulership.

A common view is that “democracy” was formed like other Greek words for forms of government. Just as “monarchy” meant *rule* (ἄρχειν) *of one* (μόνος); just as “oligarchy” meant *rule* (ἄρχειν) *of a few* (ὀλίγος); and just as “anarchy” meant *rule* (ἄρχειν) *of no one* (ἄν-), so, too, “democracy” meant *rule* (κράτος) *of the people* (δῆμος). This view treats the two verbs for the exercise of power—*kratein* (κρατεῖν) and *archein* (ἀρχειν)—as synonyms. They are both taken to mean to rule-over-others.

But if we look more closely, there are reasons to think these two words are different.³

First, there were no Greek words with the root *archein* that meant “rule by the people.” There was a word “demarchy” (δημαρχία), which combined *demos* (the people) and *archein* (to rule), but it meant the office of the *demarch*—a particular tribune of the people. Similarly, there was the word “polyarchy” (πολυαρχία), which combined the prefix *polu* (many) with *archein* (to rule), but it meant many people in positions of command, as when Thucydides used it to describe an army that was defeated because it had too many generals (310–11). There was another word for “the multitude”—*to plethos* (τὸ πλῆθος)—but there was no word “pletharchy” to name a form of government characterized by rule of the many. In short, there were no Greek words with the root *archein* (ἀρχειν) that named what we would call democracy.

Second, there was a gap in words for government based on the root *kratein* (κρατεῖν). There were words with the root *kratein* that named the *kind* of people who exercised power. Aristocracy (ἀριστοκρατία) named a regime in which power (κράτος) was exercised by the best (οἱ ἄριστος). The word “isocracy” (ἰσοκρατία) meant a form of government in which power (κράτος) is exercised by all citizens equally (ἴσος). But there were no Greek words that combined the root *kratein* with specific numbers. There was no word similar to “monarchy” that combined *monos* with *kratein* to designate “monocracy”—“the power of one.” There was also no word, similar to “oligarchy,” that combined *oligos* with *kratein* to designate “oligocracy”—“the power of a few.” (There was a word that combined the alpha privative *a-* with *kratein* to designate “*Akrasia*”—“powerlessness”—but *akrasia* meant the lack of strength or self-command within a single person, rather than the absence of rule in a polity.)

So, the words *archein* and *kratein* meant something different. What was this difference?

The word *archein* referred to what we might call “vertical” power: power over others. A public office was called an *arche*. The public offices as a whole were called the *archai*. An official was called an *archon*. The official who spoke for the common people was called the *demarchos*. In every case, words with the root *archein* referred to power *over* others.

The word *Kratein*, on the other hand, had two senses. In one sense, *Kratein* did mean power-over-others. Herodotus used the word in this sense when he spoke of someone holding power over the Persians (τὸ Περσέων κράτος) (2: 90–91). But in a more basic sense, the meaning of *kratos* was simply the power-to-do, i.e., the capacity to act. This sense of the word is implicit in the phrase “to take by force” (αἰρεῖν κατὰ κράτος); *kratos* here meant the power that makes it possible to do something.

Instead of the vertical power-over-others named by the word *archein*, the word *kratein* referred primarily to the horizontal power of a group acting in concert.⁴

In short, words with the root *archein* answer the question “How many hold power-over-others?” Words with the root *kratein* answer the question “Who is empowered to act?”

How do these linguistic considerations help us understand the meaning of democracy?

What is the understanding of democracy implicit in the first use of the word?

I would argue that the original sense of the word “democracy” was not “rule of the people” but “people power”—the power of a people united in action. It meant the empowerment of the people to act together as an agent—the power of a people to do together what they could not do as individuals or factions. This sense of power is implicit in a conclusion of Herodotus—that after the end of tyranny and the emergence of democracy, Athens grew in power: “Thus grew the power of Athens” (Ἀθηναῖοι μὲν νῦν ἠΐθξηντο) (3: 86–87). While the Athenians’ capacity for collective action was weak under the tyrants, it grew immensely once they became a democracy. A derivative meaning of democracy is the form of government that sustains the people’s power to act; the original meaning of democracy is this “people power” itself.

I use the phrase “people power” deliberately. It evokes the democratic revolution in the Philippines in 1986, but also the nonviolent revolutions in East Germany and Prague in 1989, the mass movement that led to the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, the Bulldozer Revolution in Serbia that overthrew Milosevic in 2000, the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, and the EuroMaidan Revolution in 2014. All these events echo the spontaneous popular uprising in Athens in 508–507 BCE.

Why does this matter? Why understand democracy not primarily as a form of government based on popular sovereignty and majority rule, but instead as a kind of politics in which the citizens as a whole act in concert for the sake of the common good?

Mandela gave an answer to this question. He argued that democracy is best understood not as majority rule: “Democracy meant all men were to be heard and a decision was taken together as a people. Majority rule was a foreign notion” (22). In South Africa, the implication of his argument was clear: the point of bringing democracy to South Africa was not to enable the black majority to “rule” the white minority, as the white minority had “ruled” the black majority under apartheid. The point was to open the political sphere to all citizens of South Africa, so that the citizens as a whole could deliberate and act together for their common good.

Mandela’s argument has implications beyond South Africa. It is dangerous to define democracy as majority rule or popular sovereignty because these definitions can legitimize the rule of a majority over minorities, or the sovereign power of a “people” over the noncitizens or second-class citizens who are deemed not part of the people. In the United States, the notion of democracy as majority rule has lent support to the rule of the white majority over racial minorities. It is often said that the liberal democracy implies rights for minorities, but history shows that minority rights are at the mercy of the majority. Majorities will not recognize the rights of mi-

norities as long as they do not recognize minorities as full members of “the people.”

So, we reach three answers to our initial three questions. The notion of democracy as “people power” allows us to view democracy less as a form of government than as a kind of politics in which all citizens deliberate and act together for the sake of the common good. We can reach this view of democracy if we think genealogically—if we return to the core texts of our tradition, and explicate how words were understood when they first appeared. And this genealogical approach is only possible through a constantly renewed return to the core texts of the traditions that have made us who we are.

Notes

1. A different version of the same story is given in Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*. 60–63.
2. My thoughts on this episode are indebted to Josiah Ober, *The Athenian Revolution*, 32–52.
3. Here I am indebted to Josiah Ober, “The Original Meaning of ‘Democracy.’”
4. On “vertical” and “horizontal” power I am indebted to Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, 35–56.

Works Cited

- Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970.
- Aristotle. *Athenian Constitution*. Trans. H. Rackham. Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1971.
- Crick, Bernard. *Democracy*. New York: Oxford U. Press, 2002.
- Diamond, Larry. *The Spirit of Democracy*. New York: Times Books, 2008.
- Herodotus. *The History*. Trans. A. D. Godley. Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1963.
- . *The History*. Trans. David Grene. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. New York: Back Bay Books, 1995.
- Ober, Josiah. *The Athenian Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1996.
- . “The Original Meaning of ‘Democracy,’” <https://www.princeton.edu/~pswpc/pdfs/ober/090704.pdf>.
- Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Trans. C. F. Smith. New York: Putnam, 1931.

Getting Up Off the Ground: Toward a Genuine Community in Plato's *Republic*

R. Michael Olson

St. Michael's College

Of the dramatic transitions that take place in Plato's *Republic*, perhaps none is more significant than Glaucon's interruption in Book II. Accusing his brother, Adeimantus, and Socrates of having founded a city fit for sows, Glaucon insists that they get the wretches populating this city up off the ground and place them at tables and on couches as is conventional (372d). At this juncture in the dialogue, where the inhabitants of the initial city are raised up from the earth and placed at tables and couches, so, too, might it be said that political life gets fully off the ground. "Overstepping the boundary of the necessary" (Plato 373d), the inhabitants of the city in speech leave behind the peaceful and healthy city initially founded by Adeimantus and Socrates as they step into the indeterminate world of human freedom, wherein haunts the threat of war as the city tends toward feverish and luxurious decadence (Plato 372e–373e). Here, at this point in the construction of the city in speech where the inhabitants of the initial city get fully off the ground, it appears that Glaucon has touched on the conditions out of which emerge the need for rule and thus the concern for justice. "For," as Socrates says, "in considering such a city too, we could probably see in what way justice and injustice naturally grow in cities" (Plato 372e). It is here, on the occasion of Glaucon's interruption, that the conversation concerning the relationship between justice and the soul gets up off the ground and is launched deep into the evening.

Despite the threat of decadence and war, which follows from Glaucon's insistence that the individuals in the initial city are raised up off the ground and placed at tables and couches, such degeneracy does not directly ensue. What follows

instead is an extended conversation on education aimed at making some of the citizens fit for guarding and subsequently fit for ruling. In order to gain some insight into the significance of this transition from the initial city founded by Socrates and Adeimantus to the city of unbounded desire initiated by Glaucon's interruption, and thus in order to gain greater insight into the significance of the subsequent dialogue, I propose to follow Socrates's initial plan for embarking on the project of constructing a city in speech in the first place. I propose to see by means of that which is writ large, *viz.*, the city, that which is smaller and more difficult to see, *viz.*, the human soul (Plato 368c–d), interpreting the transition from the initial city founded by Adeimantus and Socrates to the city following Glaucon's interruption by looking at those desires of the soul that give rise to these larger political forms that serve to mediate them.

"[T]he state," according to Aristotle, "comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continues its existence for the sake of a good life" (1252b27–30). The founding of the city in speech in the *Republic* follows this same logic. Socrates begins the construction of the city with Adeimantus by identifying necessity for the sake of which cities initially come into existence. The city in speech is thus initially founded in order to provide the bare necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter (Plato 369b–d). Because individuals are not self-sufficient in meeting these needs, they coordinate their efforts into cooperate endeavor by introducing the specialization of labor: "[o]ne man, one art" (Plato 370b). With the introduction of the specialization of labor, this aggregate of individuals is woven into a community as they become interdependent in achieving a common good, that is, the survival of each individual.

The initial city—"the city of utmost necessity" (Plato 369d) or the logically minimal city—quickly expands. In the second phase of the initial founding of the city in speech, a host of secondary occupations are introduced as the population of the city increases and as labor becomes more specialized in order to secure more efficiently the necessities of life. With the introduction of specialized occupations in the areas of manufacturing, industry, commerce, trade, and labor, we arrive at something beginning to resemble the business of actual political life (Plato, 370c–371e). Indeed, we get an economic city, a city ordered towards the efficient production and exchange of material goods. However vast and complex this city may become as its population increases, developing ever more complex networks of increased specialization as it advances in technological innovations and in administrative mechanisms for the management of its material welfare, it is still founded on the same principle as that on which the initial city was founded: necessity. Nothing new of human significance has been introduced. Accordingly, this healthy and peaceful city, as Socrates portrays it, has its *meaning* in that primary purpose for the sake of which it came into existence and towards which it is ordered: meeting the necessities of life.

The psychic grounds on which Adeimantus's and Socrates's initial city is founded is necessary desire. By "necessary desire" I mean those desires that have their seat in and are expressive of the biological imperative of human existence, those appetitive desires concentrated in the individual as the desire for self-preservation, where "self" is understood predominately as bodily self. Although this city comes into being in order to meet those desires expressive of the biological stratum of our existence, it is

nonetheless a city of sorts, that is to say, a distinctly human association that cannot be mistaken for a herd or a flock. It is distinctly human because it arises in response to the distinctly human expression of necessary desire as care. By “care” I mean the projection of the necessary desires into a universal horizon. Looking forward into an open-ended future that extends to infinity, the human being becomes aware of his or her eventual mortality along with the incessant cycle of arising appetitive desires and the need to satisfy them if he or she hopes to postpone that mortality. Projecting bodily need into an indefinite future, the self becomes full of care, prudentially seeking to secure in the present the means for satisfying those needs in any possible future. The economic city is constructed in order to meet the demands of bodily care, thus finding its meaning and its justification in the securing of the necessary ends of human life.

Socrates depicts this careful city as moderate and healthy. Insofar as it admits no strife and thus has no occupations or institutions tasked with mediating conflicts, it appears to have no need for the administration of justice. Were desire to remain within the boundaries of necessity, were the individuals populating this city ruled by the desire for self-preservation, and were their rational capacities employed in the service of securing those ends in cooperation with others, we may infer that just political rule would entail nothing more than the administrative structures required for the fair and efficient regulation of its economic transactions. Such a city would be moderate and healthy. Human desire, however, appears not to be so easily satisfied, as Glaucon attests to when he accuses Socrates and his brother of having provided a city fit for sows and implores them to get these wretches off the ground and to place them at tables and on couches as is conventional. Once the necessities of life have been adequately secured, one may begin to raise the question over whether this constitutes the good life.

Just as Socrates, Glaucon, Adeimantus, and company sit together leisurely at table, discussing the questions regarding the soul and justice, subjects that imply and thus inevitably point to questions of the good, so too, one can imagine, will some individuals in the city in speech desire to raise the same questions. Once the city is initially founded, once the life of its inhabitants is secured against want such that necessity no longer severely rules their lives and some amount of leisure is won, individuals may begin to entertain the question over whether their form of life is the good life. When Glaucon disparages this initial city founded by Socrates and Adeimantus as fit only for feeding beasts, he is implicitly raising the question over the good, suspecting that something is lacking, that it is not fully human. Living so closely to the earth, the inhabitants of this city have not fully emancipated themselves from the logic of necessity. However masterfully, efficiently, and fairly the technological and economic developments of the city enable it to secure the material necessities for its inhabitants, it is still barbaric; it is not adequately civilized. For to be civilized is to live truly as free individuals. Insofar as the city is slavishly ordered towards securing necessity, insofar as it has its meaning in the biological ends of life for the sake of which it is ordered, it fails to account for the full potential of human freedom. Thus, when Glaucon insists that Socrates get the wretched inhabitants of this initial city up off the ground and set them at tables and chairs as is conventional, he may be

understood as asserting the just demands of human freedom, not yet fully perceiving the actualities in which its satisfaction may consist.

Human freedom gets up off the ground, so to speak, as the individual radically reflects him- or herself out of the matrix of biological necessity and awareness opens out into an infinite and universal horizon, emancipating the individual from total enthrallment in the biological particulars of his or her existence. With this upsurge of freedom, however, come complications. Desire becomes unbounded. Projecting itself into an infinite horizon of possibility, human desire overreaches itself, tending towards *pleonexia*, towards luxuriousness and feverishness as it desires beyond what is necessary. “[O]verstepping the boundary of the necessary” (Plato 373d), as Socrates aptly describes it, the human soul and its desires no longer possess any naturally determined order. With this upsurge of freedom, any natural economy of desire enjoyed by the nonrational animal is disrupted. Thus arises the need for self-rule, the need to order one’s desires, establishing and maintaining the boundaries of the free self where those boundaries are not simply given. Here, it may be said, is the ontological origin out of which the concern for justice grows.

When Glaucon insists that Socrates and Adeimantus raise the inhabitants of the initial city off the ground of necessity, he introduces the possibility of political degeneracy by introducing unnecessary desires into the political equation. Yet, with the introduction of unnecessary desire, neither does Glaucon appear inclined toward the feverish pursuit or luxurious enjoyment of excessive material goods, nor does the subsequent history of the city in speech directly devolve into feverish and luxurious decadence. The spirited Glaucon appears to be more impressed with the exercise of freedom in the activity of rule, as is evident in the conversation that follows, even though his initial complaints with Adeimantus’s and Socrates’s city are directed at the more necessary business of eating.

When Glaucon insists that the inhabitants of the city founded on necessity be placed at tables and on couches as is conventional, he introduces a significant mediation in the satisfaction of appetitive desires, namely, the mediation of conventional forms, which intervene between the arousal of appetitive desire and its satisfaction. Tables and couches introduce a physical distance between the individual and the ground of necessity. This physical distance signifies the psychic distance that allows for self-possession, namely, the inner-distance of self-conscious awareness over and against the immediate urges of its appetitive nature and the objects of its satisfaction, and this self-possession may be expressed through conventional forms. When one is at table and adopts the conventional forms of dining, one maintains a distance from the immediate promptings of the appetitive desire, thereby exhibiting one’s emancipation from the grip of hunger and from enthrallment in the immediate object of its possible satisfaction. In this regard, the conventional forms may be said to be the forms of freedom, which serve to dignify the self by allowing it to exhibit self-possession and thus independence from its more immediate appetitive nature while nonetheless giving what is due to necessity and the biological imperative of its existence. In the words of Leon Kass, “Despite the differences from one culture to the next, table manners everywhere effect a certain beautification of the eater, as he displays himself to be above the enslavement to his appetites. An activity that

is inherently ugly is beautified by graceful deed and tactful speech” (153–54). Not only do these conventional forms allow one to manifest inward character of soul—namely, freedom in one’s self-possessing moderation—they also serve to veil the more embarrassing biological business of eating and thus to create the social space wherein other social graces and genuinely human interaction may take place. By clothing the necessary business of satisfying appetitive activity in the forms of civil dining, attention is shifted away from the solitary and brutish business of mere eating and is directed toward the communal activity of being together in the satisfaction of higher desires. To be at table is primarily to be in the company of others. By insisting that they place these citizens at tables and on couches as is conventional, Glaucon thus initiates the possibility for more genuine community, community in which the higher potentials of the soul may be awakened and satisfied.

To be sure, Socrates already has an eye on other nonappetitive, unnecessary desires implicit in Glaucon’s desire to get the inhabitants of the city of necessity off the ground and seated at table. This is most evident in the first group of new occupations introduced by Socrates in order to satisfy unnecessary desires distinctly expressive of rational nature: the imitative artists (Plato 373b). Belonging to this group are the nonverbal imitative artists, those practitioners of both the plastic and musical arts, and the verbal imitative artists, the poets and those involved in the theatrical productions whereby the poets’ works are interpreted for public display. While the nonverbal imitative artists, concerned primarily with sensuous form, are introduced in the city in order to satisfy the unnecessary desire for beauty, the verbal imitative artists, concerned primarily with inner significance, are introduced into the city in order to satisfy the unnecessary desire for meaning. When freedom gets up off the ground, so does awareness, opening out to the whole. In its noetic openness, the individual is open to the allure of intelligibility and thus is susceptible to being moved by beauty and the idea of the good. At this point in the development of the city in speech, the full potentials of rational nature are up off the ground, for everything that follows in the dialogue, including the possibility of philosophy itself, emerges out of these conditions.

If the *Republic* is about anything, it is about education. It has such a prominent place in the *Republic* that one may, I believe, say that education and, more specifically, the education of freedom, that is to say, liberal education, is or ought to be in Plato’s estimation the most important concern of political life. One may even venture to say that the association of teachers and learners form the more genuine communities, the most genuine consisting of philosophical friends, those individuals desiring to learn and to share their learning with regard to the most significant and the highest things. The approximation to such a community is, indeed, represented in the *Republic* by the ten individuals who come together at table to enjoy a meal and to talk. And even though it appears that dinner is never served, not all the participants appear to go hungry, for the conversation concerning the best possible life provides at least some of those present with more needful nourishment.

Works Cited

Aristotle. *Politics*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.

Kass, Leon. *The Hungry Soul: Eating and the Perfecting of Our Nature*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999.

Plato. *The Republic of Plato*. Trans. Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1968.

A Painful Dream: Alexis de Tocqueville on Race and Slavery

Jacob Boros
Baylor University

His long domestic political career notwithstanding, Alexis de Tocqueville remains most notable in the United States for his landmark work *Democracy in America*. Through his expansive analysis of the United States' political and social conditions, Tocqueville sought to trace the historical trajectory of democracy to assist his native land through the same process as painlessly as possible. In doing so, he made countless observations on the new and dynamic American character, using them to comment on human nature. One of the most eye-opening of these comes in the final chapter of volume one, in which Tocqueville discusses slavery and the unsteady association between the white and black races in America. His harsh assessment of this relationship rings true in a modern nation that still struggles to bridge gaps between racial and ethnic communities. Even so, we cannot simply use Tocqueville as an oracle for today's problems without understanding what he means. What does he say regarding slavery and the racial tension it fostered? In this paper, I offer an answer by showing that Tocqueville's view of race relations, specifically between blacks and whites, is both pessimistic and hopeful.

My analysis focuses on *Democracy in America* itself, but in order to grasp this selection, it will help to have a broader understanding of Tocqueville's public position on race-based slavery. Tocqueville founded his opposition to the so-called peculiar institution on three principles. First, he possessed an abiding moral objection to the practice. Tocqueville, an intellectual Roman Catholic if not necessarily a practicing one, held that slavery "contradicted both Christian belief and tradition and the political philosophy of the rights of man" (Gershman 263), thus embracing both

secular and religious approaches to human equality. In spite of his position that human cultures as distinct entities were not all equal (Neem 600), Tocqueville ardently defended the idea of individual egalitarianism, using unusually strong language in his book to direct “all my hatred against those who, after more than a thousand years of equality, introduced servitude into the world once again” (*Democracy* 348). In public, however, this position often took a back seat to practical arguments. As a member of France’s Chamber of Deputies in 1839, Tocqueville composed a report for a commission evaluating abolitionism. He made clear the pragmatic political necessity for immediate emancipation (Gershman 472–73), specifically noting increasing racial tension in the French colonies and remarking that “if this state of things be long continued, it will ruin the white population, and leave little hope of ever attaining peaceably and happily the enfranchisement of the blacks” (“Report”). We will see in *Democracy in America* as well the idea that slavery hinders long-term concord and prosperity. Tocqueville also championed a third pro-abolition claim, one focused on national honor. It seemed fitting to the Frenchman that a nation like his own, whose revolution gave concrete significance to the idea of natural equality, would recognize that this principle extended to black slaves (Gershman 481). He also expressed concern that servitude would undermine the democracy that distinguished America’s national character (Neem 604). For countries that so strongly identified with concepts of equality and liberty to blatantly contradict them in practice appeared hypocritical. This fact cast further doubt in Tocqueville’s mind on slavery’s justification.

Democracy in America elaborates on these ideas, making some salient points regarding human nature in its section on the black race. Some of these claims sound rather uncomfortable, such as the assertion that prejudice, if misguided, seems innate in all societies. The text avers that one group of men, when elevated above another by circumstances, will come to scorn them as naturally inferior (327). Furthermore, one class will always concern itself more with inequalities and injustices among themselves than between social groups (*Democracy* 341). We must emphasize that Tocqueville did not believe the then-popular theory that climate creates differences in race and temperament; he criticized it in *Democracy in America* (338) as well as in his private correspondence (Tillery 641). Yet the perception of dissimilarity and inferiority appears inevitable. Likewise, the institution of slavery itself has historical precedent, and Tocqueville found this fact significant. The classical Greeks and Romans used unpaid laborers widely, yet *Democracy in America* carefully distinguishes this practice from modern slavery. For the ancients, law alone made one a slave, so an alteration in legal codes could provide a simple means of general emancipation (327). Moreover, Tocqueville’s idea of history as the increasing proliferation of equality can explain slavery’s eventual disappearance at the hands of Christianity (*Democracy* 326). Unfortunately, it returned later, and Tocqueville’s writings find this particularly problematic because “the fugitive fact of slavery is [now] combined in the most fatal manner with the material and permanent fact of difference in race” (*Democracy* 327). The modern world bound these two concepts together, racializing the American social hierarchy (Janara 787). Two unfortunate elements of human history and society combined to create an anachronism that contradicted everything for

which Tocqueville thought the modern democratic world ought to stand (Neem 603). Its aberrant unnaturalness marks *Democracy in America's* chapter on race.

Clearly, Tocqueville possessed a pessimistic view of slavery, racial tension, and its potential consequences. He believed that it would prove burdensome for America in three ways, firstly stating that the stain of slavery would never leave the country, even if the institution itself eventually died. A footnote in *Democracy in America* points out the circularity of racist reasoning, remarking that “in order that the whites abandon the opinion . . . of the intellectual and moral inferiority of their former slaves, the Negroes would have to change, and they cannot change as long as this opinion subsists” (328). The rootless nature of the black populace, unable to call anywhere on the American map their home (*Democracy* 336–37), exacerbated the alienation it experienced. The pervasiveness of the separation between whites and blacks led to a second point: a violent war might be the only way to resolve racial tension, at least in the United States. We must not assume that Tocqueville foresaw the Civil War, for he predicted a true race war that would take place exclusively within the South (*Democracy* 344). Additionally, he did not see the impending conflict as a clear-cut battle between good liberal democracy and evil prejudice, but rather acknowledged the tragic and complex intermingling of these concepts (Kohn 174). Still, such a clash appeared “inevitable” to him, and it “constantly represent[ed] itself as a painful dream to the imagination of the Americans” (*Democracy* 344). One more point exhibits the difficulties Tocqueville’s book anticipates. The North’s attitude toward blacks, in his eyes, was just as harmful and reprehensible as the South’s. He noted in Anglo-Americans a tendency to obsess over blood purity and abhor racial intermingling, especially the creation of a mixed-race class (*Democracy* 342). Members of this group possessed an irrational “fear of falling” from their societal position into a position of inferiority represented by the black race itself (Janara 793). A nation that lives in dread of upheaval and violence cannot prosper.

Despite this prognosis, however, *Democracy in America* offers some signs of hope. Chief among these is Tocqueville’s firm belief that using practical, fiscally minded rhetoric would encourage abolition and integration. It took some effect in early nineteenth-century America, where states that banned slavery generally became more populous and prosperous than those with plantation-based economies (*Democracy* 330–31). The argument from self-interest applied on a personal level as well. The book recounts an encounter with an old Southerner, wracked with guilt by the thought of his long-enslaved illegitimate children being sold off after his death. This awful scene is punctuated by the observation: “nature knew how to avenge herself for wounds the laws had given her” (347). Indeed, the financial and psychological health of both races may be improved by equalizing them, ultimately fitting the “great democratic revolution” Tocqueville observed “taking place among us” (*Democracy* 1). As we noted earlier, slavery existed only as an anachronism in this model, though in its creator’s mind it would still take long enough for the revolution to happen that even a child born in 1850 would not notice it (“Letter”). Even so, Tocqueville demonstrated a confidence in a human progress that might not have universally positive results but would in this regard. Furthermore, he emphasized the role of religion in promoting peace and justice. Christianity in particular destroyed ancient

slavery by asserting the God-given sameness of all humans, and Tocqueville argued that it could adapt the same argument for the nineteenth century by focusing more on the interests of the master (*Democracy* 334). The Church's doctrine of "genuine human liberty" complemented "the new nation's commitment to democratic equality of conditions" (Noll 299) and thus demonstrated that religion can serve a positive purpose in helping modern human beings live together. Tocqueville prized faith as a moderating influence on societies and as an essential part of the optimistic solution to the very negative racial problems he anticipated.

The view Alexis de Tocqueville expresses of race relations, specifically between blacks and whites, in *Democracy in America* is both pessimistic and encouraging. Once more, we must remember that, as astute and insightful as Tocqueville was, he did not have a crystal ball through which he observed the future of America and human history writ large. It is hard to say what he would have made of our Civil War and Reconstruction period, the Jim Crow era, and the civil rights movement and its persistent legacy. Yet *Democracy in America* demands to be read less as mere prognostication and more as political philosophy, articulating principles and ideas as they manifest themselves in actual states and societies. Revisiting its ideas within the context of twenty-first-century America's own questions about race can prove fruitful, for it highlights the fact that the problems created by massive injustices do not simply disappear on their own. Conscious effort is required to rectify such divides; such work will take time and may not bear fruit, but it is necessary to the success of a democracy that claims to be built on the principle of human equality. Tocqueville's perspective on race in America is one of frankness and frustration, but also of patience and expectation.

Works Cited

- Gershman, Sally. "Alexis de Tocqueville and Slavery." *French Historical Studies* 9.3 (1976): 467–83. ProQuest. <http://ezproxy.baylor.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1301497056?accountid=7014/>.
- Janara, Laura. "Brothers and Others: Tocqueville and Beaumont, U.S. Genealogy, Democracy, and Racism." *Political Theory* 32.6 (2004) 773–800. SAGE Journals, doi:10.1177/0090591704265931.
- Kohn, Margaret. "The Other America: Tocqueville and Beaumont on Race and Slavery." *Polity* 35.2 (2002): 169–93. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3235496.
- Neem, Johann N. "Taking Modernity's Wager: Tocqueville, Social Capital, and the American Civil War." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41.4 (2011) 591–618. Project MUSE, <http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.baylor.edu/article/418146/>.
- Noll, Mark. "Tocqueville's America, Beaumont's Slavery, and the United States in 1831–32." *American Political Thought* 3.2 (2014): 273–302. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/677734.
- Tillery, Alvin B. "Tocqueville as Critical Race Theorist: Whiteness as Property, Interest Convergence, and the Limits of Jacksonian Democracy." *Political Research Quarterly* 62: 4 (2009): 639–52. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25594436.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*. Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and

Delba Winthrop. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000.

———. “Letter to Eugène Stoffels.” Online Library of Liberty, April 28, 1850, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/tocqueville-memoir-letters-and-remains-of-alex-is-de-tocqueville-vol-1#toc/>.

———. “Report Made to the Chamber of Deputies on the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies.” Online Library of Liberty, July 23, 1839, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2467/>.

Arendt, Orwell, and the Politics of Truth

Wade Roberts
Juniata College

According to Oxford Dictionaries, the 2016 word of the year was “post-truth,” which the editors defined as “circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (Wang). Although this definition conceals a number of ambiguities, it nevertheless has the virtue of economically capturing important features of our current political condition. To cite one example, it highlights the fact that public opinion is increasingly swayed by rhetorical appeals and innuendo rather than empirical data. Yet while this is an important attribute of contemporary politics, it is hardly novel, since commentators such as Walter Lippmann were already expressing similar concerns as early as the 1920s. Indeed, the tendency of voters to make decisions based predominantly on subjective inclinations rather than objective data is only one aspect, albeit an important one, of our current predicament. What’s different about the contemporary political scene is the apparent insouciance of our political leaders concerning truth. This observation refers not only to the fact that politicians often engage in sophistry, up to the point of outright deception. If that were all it meant, the claim would hardly withstand scrutiny, since this is a habit that public officials have been assiduously cultivating since antiquity. Rather, the novelty about the present moment is the utter disregard for truth itself, which is manifested both in the total lack of curiosity exhibited by many of our representatives concerning even the most elementary details of policy, as well as the willingness to manufacture information whole cloth, which seems to bear only the most tenuous relation to facts on the ground.

While the phenomena that I describe are relatively new to Western democracies, it is not entirely unprecedented if we begin to examine the broader sweep of history. Indeed, vis-à-vis the utter disregard for truth, there are at least rough paral-

els between our current political condition and that of twentieth-century totalitarian societies. Thus, it seems appropriate to revisit the work of two eminent authors who, prompted initially by the phenomena of propaganda in totalitarian regimes, were able to develop prescient insights concerning both the relationship between truth and manipulation in totalitarian regimes as well as the importance of truth-telling in politics more generally. Following Hannah Arendt, I will argue that as a general rule, the truth-teller stands outside the realm of politics, but in societies where lying, deception, and the misuse of language have become the norm in political life rather than exceptions, the mere act of truth-telling and speaking clearly does take on political significance. In order to flesh out this position, I turn to Arendt's work ("Truth and Politics") as well as George Orwell's *1984* and his short essay "Politics of the English Language." I discuss the insights that both Arendt and Orwell bring to bear on our current post-fact society, while also examining the broader challenges we face in attempting to uncover truth—as well as the virtues that we will need in order to do so.

The force of circumstances and history led Hannah Arendt to reflect on the relationship between truth and politics. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she had emphasized the essential role that propaganda played in Nazism and Stalinism, yet she also recognized that the problem of deception was much older than the twentieth century: "Lies have always been regarded as necessary and justifiable tools not only of the politician's or the demagogue's but also of the statesman's trade" ("Truth and Politics," 227). Indeed, the tension between society's interests and the imperative of truthfulness is one of the central problems tackled by Socrates in the *Republic*, but it recurs throughout the history of Western political thought.

Arendt's own views on the question of how we should understand the interplay of truth and politics are complex and multifaceted, but they're clearly influenced by the lessons that Plato drew from witnessing the trial of Socrates. Arendt avers that as long as the truth-teller is content to reside in his or her study and contemplate abstract questions, most of society will simply ridicule his/her speculative flights or, better yet, simply ignore them (229). Thus, Arendt contends that for the most part the truth-teller stands outside the political realm and is content to pursue theoretical inquiry (259–60).

What happens, however, when deception, manipulation of data, and outright lying have become so ubiquitous that they threaten to undermine the very possibility of communicating about a shared reality? This was the terrifying state of affairs that confronted individuals who lived (and still live) in totalitarian societies, and George Orwell's *1984* describes it in jarring and graphic detail. The novel's protagonist is Winston Smith, who is employed as a bureaucratic functionary in Oceania's Ministry of Truth. Oceania is ruled by the enigmatic Big Brother, a seemingly omniscient dictator who controls society through an elaborate network of surveillance. Big Brother's tyrannical control is further cemented by the dissemination of propaganda that is designed to foster unyielding allegiance to the Party. Winston's primary responsibility at the Ministry of Truth is to systematically revise newspaper reports to ensure that official records reflect the public narrative that is being promoted by Big Brother at any given time. Thus, he is forced to edit documents in order to reflect constantly

changing political circumstances and the mercurial whims of a totalitarian despot.

Yet Winston gradually arrives at the same realization as Arendt, who notes that the attempt to perpetually rewrite history as a means of guaranteeing that it reinforces existing party orthodoxy produces a cascading series of dilemmas, since in many cases it isn't sufficient simply to change the text in question. Rather, one document may refer to another, which in turn contains additional relevant material, until eventually entire books simply vanish into thin air. Indeed, Arendt cites a 1935 memorandum located in the Smolensk Archive in which the censor ponders what to do about articles from the *Communist International* that had been penned by Trotsky. Arendt's sarcastic response nicely captures the perplexity the memo's writer must have been experiencing when she comments that such questions are "[p]uzzling . . . indeed," and she ends this brief aside with the laconic observation that "the Archive contains no replies" to the query the author raises (256–66).

Winston can likewise feel himself slipping into an abyss where deceptions begin to multiply, up to the point of destroying the very foundations of coherent experience. It gradually dawns on him that "[i]n the end the Party would announce that two and two make five, and you would have to believe it" (1984, 83). Indeed, for the briefest moment Winston begins to wonder if perhaps the Party is indeed correct, until he returns to his senses, insisting that "[t]he obvious . . . and the true had got to be defended" (1984, 84). It is this objectivity, normally so banal and self-evident that we take it for granted, that Arendt refers to when she writes that "[f]acts are stubborn [and] in their stubbornness [they] are superior to power" (Arendt, 248–49). But to repeat the question I posed above, what should the truth-teller do when s/he is confronted by a massive and systematic effort to deny reality itself? Or even more disturbingly, how should the truth-teller deal with attempts by the ruling class to rewrite the past and generate "alternative facts" that clearly fly in the face of basic experience?

As Arendt notes, it is at this moment that the truth-teller's desire to speak clearly and plainly, to describe things as they are, begins to take on political importance. She writes that

Only when a community has embarked upon organized lying on principle, and not only with respect to particulars, can truthfulness as such, unsupported by the distorting forces of power and interest, become a political factor of the first order. Where everybody lies about everything of importance, the truth-teller, whether he knows it or not, has begun to act; he, too, has engaged himself in political business, for, in the unlikely event that he survives, he has made a start toward changing the world. (251)

But how should the truth-teller undertake this immensely difficult task? Obviously, s/he will have to muster a considerable amount of courage, since the apparently banal act itself of stating the obvious requires nearly immeasurable bravery in totalitarian societies. This is increasingly true of societies such as our own, where institutions are sharply polarized and thinking that breaks from an epistemic or political community's orthodoxy often carries the penalty of symbolic as well as real forms of ostracism. From Socrates's heroic insistence that we must attend to our daimon, even if we risk courting death by doing so, through Kant's recognition that an essential precondition of Enlightenment is the courage to use our reason auto-

mously, all the way up to Nietzsche's belief that allowing oneself to fall into error is a form of cowardice, the liberal arts tradition has emphasized the centrality of courage to the epistemic virtues specifically, and to the life of the mind more generally. Indeed, it is a notable if not bitter paradox that at the very moment when we need the ennobling wisdom that the liberal arts can offer us, they are under attack from both the Left and the Right.

At the same time, while the epistemic virtue of courage is important, it's hardly sufficient, since the truth-teller must also speak veridically over and against the ubiquitous mendacity that characterizes speech in totalitarian regimes. In addition, it is important, if we are to name things correctly, that we pay careful attention to language. Indeed, one of the great struggles in totalitarian societies is precisely the battle over who controls the meaning of words. This was, once again, brilliantly captured by Orwell in *1984* in an exchange between Winston and his comrade Syme, who works in Big Brother's so-called Research Department and is one of the experts selected to compile the eleventh edition of the Newspeak Dictionary, which contains authoritative definitions of terms that are approved by the party. As Syme notes, the dictionary serves not only to identify the correct meaning and usage of particular words, it also has the equally important effect of eliminating parts of the language that introduce complexity and nuance. Indeed, he informs Winston that the ultimate purpose of Newspeak is to "narrow the range of thought" to such an extent that "we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words with which to express it" (*1984*, 55).

In "Politics and the English Language" Orwell relentlessly criticized what he regarded as the decline of clear and honest expression in public discourse. Yet it was undoubtedly this aspect of semantic manipulation (i.e., the attempt to transform reality through the deliberate misuse of words) that he had in mind when he wrote that "[p]olitical language . . . is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind" (171). Indeed, Orwell recognized that the English he encountered in public communication was increasingly characterized by jargon, empty rhetoric, and, in its written forms, sluggish prose, with all of the tendencies being especially evident in political writing. He emphasized that confused language is generally a reflection of even more confused thought, but, as he was quick to note, the causal arrow can (and frequently) does point in the other direction, such that corrupted language can itself become an impediment to clear thought. Orwell was especially acerbic toward the proliferation of euphemisms in political discourse. Terms such as "pacification" and "collateral damage" mask the horrors of displacement and war. In this regard, liberal democracies, or more specifically military bureaucracies and their spokespeople, also have a great deal to answer for.

While truth-telling is essential in the current political climate, however, we should harbor no illusions that it is easy to uncover the truth. Indeed, if anything, it is becoming more difficult, at least in part for the reasons mentioned above, i.e., partisanship and the enforcement of intellectual orthodoxies. Moreover, in addition to the immediate obstacles confronting us in the current political and academic climates, there are the more profound barriers to human cognition that were already

recognized by Socrates two millennia ago. Finally, it is important to underscore that the very question of how we should define truth is itself contested, although it is also worth noting that it's not obvious how either pragmatic or coherence models of truth would allow us to gain any critical purchase on a closed totalitarian society. If we opt for a pragmatic theory of truth, for example, propaganda can have an instrumental or expedient value for the ruler who disseminates it. There are similar problems with a coherentist approach, since it is conceivable that an entirely false belief system could nevertheless exhibit internal coherence. But none of these important qualifications should lead us to abandon the search for truth; if anything, they should cause us to redouble our efforts when we begin to appreciate the obstacles we have to surmount.

It's also the case that many political disputes are not resolved—and indeed in principle are not soluble—simply by appealing to facts. Indeed, it is often the case that our deepest and most contentious disagreements reflect fundamental differences about values, and more specifically they are byproducts of basic disagreements about the ends of political life. In these instances, the debates are underdetermined by empirical data, and it is necessary to search for other ways of reaching accord. Yet even here we should not necessarily assume that because disputes have been historically intractable, it follows that there's no truth concerning questions of morality. The relativist or, more strongly, anti-cognitivist conclusion does not necessarily follow. In any case, they often serve as pessimistic excuses to abandon the hard work of struggling toward greater understanding.

We do not have the luxury of adopting an apathetic attitude toward the truth, especially at the present moment when it is either being ignored or outright attacked by the partisans of mendacity. Of course, as Arendt herself noted, facts have an obstinate quality that makes it difficult to obliterate them entirely, and this should give us hope. At the same time, things that display permanence are rarely produced or discovered without labor, sweat, and time, and if truth is one of the most valuable goods we can possess, we should not expect that it will come cheaply either. Indeed, we might even believe, in our more contemplative moments, that acquiring it over and against the concerted opposition of its saboteurs makes its acquisition even more fulfilling.

Works Cited

- Arendt, Hannah. "Truth and Politics." *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1977.
- Orwell, George. 1984. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.
- . "Politics and the English Language." *Collected Essays*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1981.
- Wang, Amy. "'Post-Truth' Named 2016 Word of the Year by Oxford Dictionaries." *Washington Post*, November 16, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/11/16/post-truth-named-2016-word-of-the-year-by-oxford-dictionaries/?utm_term=.197e09cedcba/.

The Feminine Mystique: Second-Wave Feminism and Current Politics

Christopher C. Strangeman
MacMurray College

In an interesting interview for the online website Vox at the time of the 2016 election, contributor Sean Illing interviewed Christina Hoff Sommers, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, often seen as a right-wing think tank. Sommers is known for challenging feminists and in the interview was very clear with Illing that she disliked the hostility feminists hold toward “men and women who don’t agree with them,” having “a willingness, a readiness to censure, to silence people.” Yet, Sommers did talk of the troubles she had with the president-to-be. Contrasting her position with Illing’s view that Trump represented the traditional picture of masculinity, she explained: “I am worried about him. . . . I don’t think he conforms to conventional masculinity. Trump is a reminder of what masculinity can be like outside of conventions. He exhibits what might be called amoral masculinity.” Indeed, Sommers continues, “He ridicules, bullies, and threatens anyone who crosses him. . . . He preys on women. All of this without any remorse. . . . History teaches us that masculinity constrained by morality is powerful and constructive, and that masculinity without ethics is dangerous.” This is a fascinating exchange because Sommers, though not one herself, revealed herself to share much in common with academic feminists when it came to viewing the masculinity of Donald Trump. (Illing)

Just like Sommers and Illing, many people have taken the election of Donald Trump as an entry point to reflect on this time in American history. Engaging in events largely connected to President Trump’s election, feminists have taken part in the Women’s March after his inauguration (the largest single-day protest in United States history), argued against a push by conservatives to defund Planned Parenthood

and to move toward a new comprehensive health care law that would have important ramifications for women's reproductive health care, and witnessed the placement of Neil Gorsuch on the Supreme Court, leading many commentators to speculate that *Roe v. Wade* (1973) could be overturned.

These actions lend themselves to the argument that now might be the ideal time to help our students understand why the place of women in American history is an issue that matters and is an issue with a great deal of history behind it. To varying degrees of depth, I have been able to touch on women's history in three of my classes—the US History survey (where the nature of the course leads to much more cursory coverage), a history class devoted to the 1960s and the counterculture movement (from which my examples for this paper will be drawn), and a core text course offered by my institution that has some readings that specifically focus on issues of gender. Sadly, though not that surprisingly, in teaching these courses, I have found that most of our students do not know women's history at all, and in that light, Trump's question to the women's empowerment meeting may not be so shocking. However, as an instructor I can see my students' lack of knowledge as a great opportunity to stress to them the significance of primary texts—while they can be wonderful as stand-alone readings that help us all to ponder the “big” questions, at the same time they can contain a real power in their specific contemporary relevance.

I divide my 1960s and the counterculture course into several units, each of which focuses on a major theme / social movement of the period—the college experience, drugs and music, Vietnam, the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and the environmental movement. For each unit, I use readings that emphasize ideas central to those movements and the discussion of these readings as the main pedagogical tool to drive the class forward. I lecture to start each unit to be able to provide needed historical background for these units.

As noted, historical background is particularly needed for my students to understand the second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s, and I (relatively quickly) go over the peaks and major marks of women's history in the United States, touching on the Revolutionary period (Abigail Adams's admonishment to “Remember the ladies”), and the Jacksonian period (ideas of “republican motherhood” and the Seneca Falls Convention), as well as the Progressive Era (the work of Margaret Sanger and the Nineteenth Amendment). I spend considerably more time looking at the post-World War II period, the nadir of the women's rights movement, as the return of the GIs helped establish the “normalcy” and the social mores of the 1950s, with women being kept solidly in the domestic sphere, echoing period ideas of containing communism. When we look at the 1950s, students get a good laugh from a one-page handout “The Good Wife's Guide,” which, though a fake, is very indicative of the times, highlighting the place of a woman as a housewife during the 1950s. It does this through listing a series of points such as “Listen to him. You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first—remember his topics of conversation are more important than yours,” and ending with the firm declaration that “A good wife always knows her place” (“The Good Wife's Guide”). Yet, even during the post-World War II years, I tell my students, there were rumblings under the surface of what would emerge as second-wave femi-

nism during the 1960s, such as the experience gained during the war represented by the cultural icon Rosie the Riveter, Simone de Beauvoir's arguments distinguishing between sex and gender, between biological and social constructs, and the stirrings of the nascent sexual revolution when *Playboy* started publication.

As a way to segue from the 1950s to the 1960s, I have my class watch Todd Haynes's masterful *Far from Heaven*, starring Julianne Moore as an upper-middle-class housewife in suburban Connecticut in the late 1950s. This film, which Haynes purposefully shot in the style of Douglas Sirk's Hollywood melodramas such as *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) and *Written on the Wind* (1956), is a great visual presentation for my students to be able to see how the very real limitations of housewives in the 1950s prepared the way for the 1960s feminist movement. One scene of many really good ones from this film that seems to stand out for students is when a group of housewives are sitting around a table talking about their sex lives. It becomes clear that their sex lives were about how many times they had sex because that's how often their husband wanted to, while the women had very little to no agency for their own sexual fulfillment or enjoyment.

With a good understanding of the social "place" of women during the 1950s, we move on to discussing Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. It is interesting to note that, in the experiences I have had with this text, my students have not leveled the charge against Friedan that drew her much criticism; namely, that her work did not address the concerns of minority women and women of lower economic status. In the courses where I am able to incorporate reading and discussion of an excerpt from Friedan's work, students almost always seem slow to take to it but end up really enjoying it. In part, I think, this is because students end up being able to see themselves in this work—the classes where I am able to spend any time with this text are junior-senior level classes where the students tend to be both mature enough to discuss readings *and* also at that age where they are wondering for themselves what comes next after they graduate. This helps to lend the text a personal resonance, as it was written based largely on a questionnaire that Friedan sent to fellow college graduates.

Students also tend to be drawn to Friedan's writing style. It is engaging, and Friedan uses phrases and wording that strike a chord with people, not just women. For instance, she begins by writing, "The problem lay buried, unspoken for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning" (Friedan 494). Nearly all students can associate with the idea that there might be something more, something they would like to experience but cannot give words or voice to. As Friedan famously wrote, it was "the problem that has no name" (498). She comments on ways these housewives tried to address their feelings of incompleteness—drugs (tranquilizers), redecorating their houses, moving to a better neighborhood, having an affair or another baby—which often manifested in feeling tired, angry, and crying (501). Again, almost all students can associate with trying to find a way to deal with something that is troubling them.

Later, after explaining to some degree what she thought housewives were missing, Friedan flippantly asks her readers, "What kind of woman was she if she did not feel this mysterious fulfillment waxing the kitchen floor?" (497). Sarcasm, if done

well, goes over great with twenty-year-old college students! Even more, Friedan tells her readers that there is a need to challenge tradition and supposed expert advice:

Over and over again women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him . . . this mystique of feminine fulfillment became the cherished and self-perpetuating core of contemporary American culture. (499)

Again, this speaks to students who also like to challenge tradition and supposed expert advice. In many ways, Friedan's text is tailor-made to speak to students and their personalities, their aspirations, and their fears. In the end, of course, Friedan argues that women should no longer have to feel that finding a husband has to be their goal, that the future is open to them. This, too, is something that students want to hear.

And this helps give Friedan's work direct contemporary relevance. Friedan's text does one of the most important things a core text can do in that it "speaks" to us universally, as it does in showing how many of us are looking for something to help give our lives greater meaning, in showing why it is necessary at times for us to ignore tradition and the "experts," and how we should not be locked into having to follow one socially proscribed path. But it has an added power because of how it can be read in terms of our specific and concrete political context.

To help with this way of understanding Friedan's text, after our discussion of it, I have my students do a basic brainstorming exercise in which I give them a few minutes to jot down on a piece of scratch paper those issues that they think are the most important with which women currently have to deal. Once they have some ideas down, I open the discussion to class, and lots of students participate, wanting to share the points they wrote down. Among the most common responses are an interest in making sure they are not objectified by men or held to a double standard in terms of sexual relations with men, that they have equal rights, that they have access to get an abortion if they need it, and that they fear they will not make as much money as men and that some professional doors are still closed to them. After listing many of these points on the board, I ask my students to consider how they think these points are related to what Friedan wrote in *The Feminine Mystique*. They generally respond that she helped open the door to women's ability to make these arguments.

To help my students better understand their role, I pass out the National Organization for Women's (NOW) Bill of Rights, an organization that was cofounded by Friedan after the publication of her book. Some students are surprised to see this Bill of Rights, which includes, among other points, calls for an equal rights constitutional amendment, enforcement of laws that ban sex discrimination in employment, an "equal and unsegregated education," "equal job training opportunities," and "the right of women to control their reproductive lives" (National Organization for Women 403–4). What my students see with the NOW Bill of Rights is that the same issues that feminists were fighting for as second-wave feminism emerged in the 1960s are the same issues they worry about today and are the same ones that many people fear are under siege by the Trump administration. Friedan was a vital figure in this emergence, helping to frame the terms of the movement that still resonate today as strongly as ever.

Works Cited

- Friedan, Betty. "The Feminine Mystique." *The Portable Sixties Reader*. Ed. Ann Charters. New York: Penguin Books, 2003. 494–503.
- "The Good Wife's Guide." Typed by Robin Olson. *Robin's Web*, 2002. Web. www.robinsweb.com. 19 April 2017.
- Far from Heaven*. Dir. Todd Haynes. Screenplay by Todd Evans. Produced by Jody Allen and Christine Vachon, Consolidated Film Industries, TF1 Cinema, Section Eight, Vulcan Productions, and Killer Films, 2002.
- Illing, Sean. "'Amoral Masculinity: A Theory for Understanding Trump from Feminist Contrarian Christina Hoff Sommers.'" 2 Nov 2016. Web. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/11/2/13476916/donald-trump-christina-sommers-feminism-election-2016-masculinity/>. Accessed 12 Feb 2018.
- National Organization for Women. "Bill of Rights." *"Takin' It to The Streets": A Sixties Reader*. Ed. Alexander Bloom and Wini Brienes. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2011, 403–4.

Ethical Overtures

A Global Approach to Ancient Core Texts: *Job* and *Euthyphro* on Moral Obligation

Peter Diamond
New York University

Teaching intellectual history from a global perspective requires, at a minimum, transcending national or regional boundaries. But what else might a global perspective entail? Adding non-Western works to a course that was formerly limited to Western European or North American texts is certainly a worthy goal if by global we merely mean “inclusive.” But inclusiveness alone is of limited value if we fail to explore connections between cultures across space and even over time. By focusing on connections we heighten awareness of what Charles Taylor has called the “horizons of significance,” i.e., the background against which people’s judgments and choices, tastes and desires, make sense (34, 37–39), but which otherwise may remain hidden or taken for granted. Often, it is not until the members of one culture come into contact with another that they become aware of the limits and entailments of those horizons.

But what if the ideas and cultures we study were not influenced by or otherwise connected to one another? That is often the case when we study ancient worlds. One possible response has been offered by political theorist Duncan Bell, who argues that a properly global intellectual history is best conceived as a history of “world making,” which focuses on “enunciations of universality, on attempts to cognitively encompass a given world (of whatever physical scale)” (257).¹ From this standpoint, the *global* does not depend upon any spatial orientation, but rather refers to the scope of the arguments or worldviews under consideration. To be clear, this does not require that such worlds be considered apart from their social or political contexts. Indeed, an important goal of this sort of global history consists of exploring how

worlds come to be, how they subsist, and how some displace others (260). The interconnection of ideas is a central part of this history as well, though often it is the instructor who brings this to light by drawing comparisons between worlds.

Let me illustrate this approach to global history with a brief account of two of the “worlds” featured in *Ancient Worlds*, a course I offer to first-year students at NYU. The first is the world of the ancient Hebrew nation, a world ordered by the Israelites’ belief in a covenant between themselves and an omnipotent and perfectly just God. The Israelites pledged to obey God’s law in return for their protection and prosperity. My students read selectively in *Genesis* and *Exodus* to explore the ideological framework within which the Hebrew people emerged and flourished, but the centerpiece of this opening section of the course is the *Book of Job* in the Old Testament. I agree with philosopher Susan Neiman that Western philosophy begins not with Plato, but with Job,² whose inexplicable suffering and unjust treatment force us to ask whether our lives have meaning, or whether human existence may be deeply incomprehensible. The *Book of Job* raises those questions by demonstrating the moral shortcomings of a world ordered by the might-makes-right logic of the covenant.

While it is certainly possible to read *Job* without reference to a specific place—indeed the book’s author intended as much by recalling an ancient Judaic legend about a man “from the land of Uz”—locating the text in terms of its context enables us to understand the social or geographic conditions that prompted its author to make (or seek to unmake) a certain world. Despite the book’s mythical beginning, my students and I eventually side with most scholars by assuming the book was written in response to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jews’ deportation to Babylon in 587 BCE—a time of suffering that was not easily reconciled with the world created by the covenant. Reading the text closely, we ask why the poetic sections of the book are framed by an ancient prose tale about a Gentile, at this particular moment and place in history. And what was intended by the manner of its retelling? The *Job* of the poem bewails his fate and proclaims his righteousness to his friends and to God alike, in passages of great lyrical power. The *Job* of the legend, servile and patient to a fault, inhabits a world that translator Stephen Mitchell aptly likens to a puppet show. If the prose section alludes—perhaps ironically—to the world of the covenant, then the poetry was designed to call that world into question.

Our central concern is, of course, the poetic core of the book, in which the problem of evil in the form of undeserved suffering is raised, and God’s justice is exposed as ultimately grounded in his unreasoning power. “But he wills,” *Job* says, “and who can stop him? / What he wishes to do, he does” (59). What did *Job*’s author wish his (or her) readers to understand about this divine-command perspective? As this question has worried history’s greatest thinkers within the Abrahamic tradition and beyond, it’s important to avoid assuming that the author meant to endorse that grim perspective (as Hobbes believed). What of *Job*’s repeated calls for “a witness” to whom he could appeal in God’s court? In the first of three rounds of speeches to God and to his friends, *Job* addresses God directly, bemoaning the absence of the one thing that could rescue him from his undeserved plight: “If only there were an arbiter / who could lay his hand on us both, / who could make you put down your club / and hold back your terrible arm. / Then, without fear, I would say, / You have not treated

me justly” (29). Considering Job’s growing awareness of his own capacity and obligation to make moral judgments, it is likely the author wanted us to share Job’s frustration and anger when he confronted a world ordered by unreasoning command. To be sure, this interpretation cuts against the grain of traditional readings of the book, which suggest that passive acceptance of Creation, not an active attempt to change it, is the only wise attitude for human beings to hold. But that message is belied in the Epilogue, when God twice tells Eliphaz that he and his accusing friends “have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has” (91).³

When at last God appears in the whirlwind and taunts Job, directing him to consider the unfathomable wonders of creation, Job realizes that God’s justice is beyond human comprehension. “I have spoken of the unspeakable / and tried to grasp the infinite . . . / I had heard of you with my ears; / but now my eyes have seen you. / Therefore I will be quiet, / comforted that I am dust” (88). According to the traditional reading of these lines, in the end Job chose pious silence over angry dissidence. On my reading, no such surrender took place. Rather, Job was acknowledging the limits of our ability to reason, much as Wittgenstein would, centuries later: “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence” (151).

If the Book of Job questions the cogency of a world ordered solely by divine command, then we do well to compare that text to Plato’s *Euthyphro*, which conceptualizes a world in which the source and validity of our moral obligations depend upon rational argument rather than the threat of force by those who would act on behalf of the gods. There is, of course, no evidence that these two texts or their cultural contexts were connected to one another, but that should not stop us from juxtaposing them in a meaningful way. Indeed, it is not despite, but rather on account of their lack of historical connection that these texts acquire significance for us. A direct influence between them might even defeat the purpose of comparison, which inheres in our ability to discern the limitations of putatively universal worldviews. More specifically, by juxtaposing the Book of Job with the *Euthyphro*, students become increasingly aware of the problematic nature of certain claims regarding the source and the nature of our moral obligations, claims that they might otherwise take for granted.

The *Euthyphro* was likely written in the first decade of the fourth century, BCE, not long after Athens’ defeat by Sparta in the Peloponnesian War. It was a period of prolonged social and economic upheaval, which gave rise to the religious persecution of intellectuals who had dared to question the gods’ existence—an act that, in wartime, bordered on treason. Having read Plato’s *Apology* and *Crito* as well in “Ancient Worlds,” my students are keenly aware that Socrates was prosecuted for impiety and subversion of the religion of the state. The *Euthyphro* is set on the porch of the courthouse where Socrates is about to be tried. Euthyphro is there to prosecute his father for murder, an action that would be thought by most Athenians to violate some of the most sacred duties of sons toward their fathers, and so to be impious. This opening provides Socrates with the opportunity to cross-examine Euthyphro, who claims to have “accurate knowledge” of the divine and of piety and impiety. That turns out not to be the case, but his third try at a definition—“that the pious is what all the gods love”—enables Socrates to question the divine-command theory by posing the following dilemma: “Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or

is it pious because it is loved by the gods?” (Plato 11).

The question is never fully answered, but Socrates does show us that “pious” should not be defined as “what the gods love.” That definition does not explain *why* pious things have the attributes they have; nor does it allow us to tell whether a disputed case is a case of piety or not. This may seem a minor point, but not when you realize what follows from this position. What follows is nothing less than the claim that there can be no theological or religious basis for ethics—supposing, of course, that God has some reason for commanding or approving what he commands or approves. In the world envisaged by Socrates, the real task for the ethical thinker is to work out what that reason is.

I’ve found that this sort of comparison of worlds inevitably leads students to declare Socrates the winner in what appears to be a contest of ideas. It is a conclusion I do nothing to promote; students, after all, can make up their own minds. But I have found that keeping context in mind is often the best way to slow their rush to judgment. I like to remind them that rational inquiry and naturalistic thinking often provoke deep discomfort. This is especially the case among those who suffer from what Kant called our “self-imposed immaturity,” which results not from “lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another” (41). The determination of Job’s friends to blame him for his suffering, contrary to all experience, thereby projecting their fear and vulnerability onto a scapegoat,⁴ is one example of such discomfort; the Athenians’ decision to condemn and execute Socrates is another. And yet, there is quite another kind of discomfort, which results from our failure to recognize the limits of our understanding. We may not know the right thing to do, either because we face a genuine moral dilemma of the sort political actors often confront, and we are compelled to get our hands dirty; or we simply don’t have the knowledge or the capacity to grasp things beyond a certain level. In such cases, we can understand why Job was comforted by the realization that there are limits to our ability to reason.

These two case studies offer us examples of how humans construct and reconstruct worlds, drawing on the existing resources available to them, worlds carved from the materials of other worlds. My aim in approaching the *global* in this manner is to create a course narrative that respects the diversity of worlds and that also extends the bounds of thought beyond the limits defined by cultures that have traditionally shaped Western or Eurocentric curricula. I also hope to sharpen students’ awareness that the resolution of arguments is very often illusory, and that texts ending with silence are an invitation for us to think further.

Notes

1. Bell adopts this metaphor from Nelson Goodman’s *Ways of Worldmaking*. Goodman rejected realism—the view that reality exists independently of our representations of it—arguing instead that our minds literally construct and reconstruct worlds by manipulating symbolic systems. Worldmaking is constrained by coherence, consistency, the fit with intuitive judgment and intelligible purpose, and these virtues add up to what Goodman calls the “rightness” of a version. Right versions make worlds and are produced by scientists, philosophers, artists, and many other kinds of people—whenever they successfully create an order of things.

2. See Neiman (2015), chap. 1.
3. In the speech from the whirlwind, God also asserts the truth of Job's claims, albeit ambiguously, when he asks, "Am I wrong because you are right?" (84).
4. See Girard (1987).

Works Cited

- Bell, Duncan. "Making and Taking Worlds." In *Global Intellectual History*. Eds. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori. New York: Columbia UP, 2013.
- The Book of Job*. Trans. Stephen Mitchell. New York: HarperPerennial, 1979.
- Girard, René. *Job: The Victim of His People*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1987.
- Goodman, Nelson. *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978.
- Kant, Immanuel. "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, pp. 41–48. Trans. Ted Humphrey. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983.
- Neiman, Susan. *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015.
- Plato. *Five Dialogues*. Trans. G. M. A. Grube. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981.
- Taylor, Charles. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Ed. A. J. Ayer. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.

Liberal Education for Mortal Communities: Cicero, Tolstoy, and Chekhov on Living and Aging Well

James N. Roney
Juniata College

The author's course on medicine and literature for pre-med students uses literary and philosophical writings to explore the epistemology and ethics of health care and the proper balance between scientific knowledge and human empathy in shaping the relationships between physicians and patients. A central issue is always the potential conflict between progress and tradition, including the liberal arts traditions. At least at our institution, undergraduate science students tend to assume that progress grounded in scientific reason can lead to a redefinition of the human and cure all diseases. The mapping of the human genome and the development of synthetic biology have only increased optimism about a biomedical approach to human health leading to a future when personalized medicine will allow patients to choose their own individual biological destinies and physicians to attune evidence-based treatments to individual needs. Such faith in our ability to transcend the limits of the human through technological progress helps feed the belief that the liberal arts traditions are no longer relevant, since the questions they ask about human existence are seen as historical, even anachronistic, rather than universal in nature. The liberal arts traditions are currently in a position similar to that of philosophy and tragedy at the start of the modern age and to classical texts during some periods of Christianity: facing a pressing need to reconcile universal and historical meanings. Texts that had one set of meanings in their original historical contexts are now read both for possible universal meanings and as a set of particular meanings in a new historical context.

Cicero or Chekhov had a meaning in their original Roman or Russian contexts; their works also may contain universal meanings and may be read for their meaning in our contemporary historical and social context. Literary interpretation and classroom discussion must reconcile those meanings (Billings; Pinkard; Taylor). In our course, death and the need for caregivers and patients to deal with incurable illness pose a question that remains universal for a mortal species: How does one not only live well but also die well (Gawande)?

This essay draws on the idea of traditions as ranges of human possibilities and horizons of expectations (Gadamer; MacIntyre; Mukařovský; Ślawiński) to contrast three works in which figures deal with their own encroaching mortality: Cicero's *Cato Maior De Senectute (On Old Age)*, Tolstoy's *Smert Ivana Ilicha (The Death of Ivan Ilyich)*, and Chekhov's "Skuchnaia istoriia" ("A Boring Story"). The major contrast is between Cicero's Cato, who faces death with the resources of a Stoic tradition grounded in ancestral continuity and providential rationality, and Chekhov's professor of medicine, who faces a meaningless death alienated from his own scientific accomplishments and family. Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich, on the other hand, lives in a discontinuous world in which he finds meaning in death by accepting the falsehood of his life. Each character faces human mortality as a universal condition; each character's choices are shaped by his tradition's beliefs about life and death.

Cicero's choice of narrator suits his overall argument: "the love and pursuit of wisdom . . . allows a person to enjoy every stage of life free from worry" (7). By dedicating his dialogue to a friend and choosing the historical figure Marcus Cato over a mythical one, he reinforces the theme of mortality as an aspect of being human and establishes the continuous human tradition whose figures serve as examples of what can and should be done by people who want to age well. This historical continuity provides the rational order missing in the political agony of the contemporary moment. Living and dying have meaning because they are part of a purposeful tradition in which the young "prove by experience that the words I [Cato] have spoken are true" (177).

Cicero assumes that reason shapes tradition, orders individual lives, and sustains the order of nature. Resentment of age and fear of death are irrational because aging and death are part of the natural order. A person of character views life as a play whose final act must be accepted with grace. Living well is the best way to prepare for a worthy old age, giving us not only the character to die well but also the memories and respect that are among the pleasures of age. Since a providential natural order provides inner peace and enables harmony among nature, tradition, and acts of will, feelings of despair, resentment, and fear are signs of poor character, of a mind that is not in tune either with itself or with nature.

Cato refutes the four major complaints about old age: "It takes us away from an active life," "it weakens the body," "it deprives us of almost all sensual pleasures," and "it is not far from death" (Cicero 33). He accepts each claim as true but argues they are not losses but gains when understood as parts of a full life. Since age is a fitting part of a life well lived, it should be accepted for its own positive values. Youth flourishes in body, while age flourishes in mind. The activities and rashness of youth give way to the wisdom (*prudencia*) and leadership of age as seen in the *senes*, or

elders, of the Senate. Companionship and council take the place of more vigorous pursuits. Memory is not lost if we use it. Sensual pleasure is a gift that should be enjoyed in its time, but, as lust passes, self-indulgence becomes self-control, and more worthy goals are easier to pursue. If the old demand the respect they are owed and act in a way that is appropriate to their physical state, they can enjoy the pleasures appropriate for age: sharing liberal education with youth, the delights of discussion with companions (*convivium*), the joys of farming, and earned respect. Cicero values farming as a way of improving oneself and the natural world. The rhythms of farming are the rhythms of nature itself: “No life can be happier than that of the farmer, not only because of the service he provides that benefits the entire human race, but because of the pleasures I mentioned earlier and the abundance of all things needed for the worship of the gods and the sustenance of humanity” (119–20). This positive value of farming and organic rhythms was found in many classical authors and had a long life in European culture, including in Tolstoy.

Cicero uses the Platonic and Stoic argument: fear of death is unreasonable because death is a part of life and can yield no bad result: there is either nothing or bliss. Accept the trajectory of life and leave the stage when the pleasures of age have lost their appeal. Cato links the immortality of the soul to the purpose of life itself: “The immortal gods planted souls in human bodies to have beings who would care for the earth and who would contemplate the divine order and imitate it in the moderation and discipline of their own lives” (Cicero 159). People seek fame because they believe their immortal souls will be around to see it, and, anyway, a belief in immortality makes one happy.

Tolstoy’s Ivan Ilyich dies as a successful individual in a modern society that does not have a unified tradition. The society is split between a Europeanized professional class, who use reason and science to screen them from nature and the possibility of death, and the people (Russian *narod*) who have an organic connection with tradition, nature, and death. The stoic in the story is, therefore, the peasant Gerasim, who, like Cicero’s farmer, lives in touch with the rhythms of life and death. Gerasim provides the acceptance of death that helps Ivan Ilyich die well. However, the break with tradition has made civilized society false, and its beliefs and ritual behaviors, including medicine and doctors’ visits, only contribute to Ivan’s pain. Ivan Ilyich experiences death as a violation of social decorum and denial of his free will that reveal the void at the center of existence. However, once he accepts the appropriateness of death, another reality reveals itself to him, and he sees the light that brings peace and concern for his family. This state remains incommunicable to the living. Trapped in social decorum, they see only the enigmatic expression on the corpse’s face. If reason united Cicero’s human and natural worlds, Tolstoy’s split between the false social world of civilized society and the light hiding within nature and the self is almost complete. Gerasim lives in touch with an older tradition of life, while Ivan Ilyich can find the joy concealed within him only by rejecting the conventions that had shaped his life. Tolstoy finds meaning by emphasizing the discontinuity among society, tradition, and the self. The light is present only as a private reality, a joy that can be known individually but not shared publicly.

Chekhov’s dying professor of medicine experiences a further disenchantment of

the world. Whereas Cicero began with a dedication to friends who connected past, present, and future in shared experience, Chekhov's notes of an old man begin with a distant third-person description of the honors and international connections that "constitute what is known as my name" (55). This distancing effect conveys the alienated consciousness of "a man who is famous, richly endowed, and unquestionably useful" (55) and whose life is a "beautiful composition executed with talent" (84), but who does not know how to die "as befits a teacher, a scientist, and a citizen of a Christian country: cheerfully and with a peaceful soul" (84). He is aware of his age's version of the arguments used by Cicero but lacks the required sense of a rational order uniting individuals, nature, and tradition. Unable to draw on the Tolstoyan revelation of the underlying light of love hidden beneath the alienation of a false social life, he remains caught in a state of alienation that is only clearer to him because of his education and scientific knowledge.

The short story "Vanka" provides a useful example of how alienation works in Chekhov. A young boy is trapped in an apprenticeship in which he is being abused. He dreams happily of the days when he was in the village with his grandfather and mails a letter asking his grandfather to come and get him. The boy anticipates a better future. However, readers know that his village life was never as happy as he remembers it and that his grandfather will never get the letter and probably would not come if he did. Alienation in Chekhov involves characters who are trapped in an unbearable present, find consolation in fragmented memories of a nostalgic past, and have hopes for a utopian future with no means of making it a reality. The dying professor is in such a situation. However, unlike the boy, he knows it.

Despite his knowledge of what is happening to him, the professor cannot adjust his mental state to the decay in his surroundings and physical health and laments the miseries of age that Cicero accepted. He knows his failing health is responsible for his insomnia, his inability to maintain a train of thought when he writes seriously in Russian, his loss of the stamina it takes to lecture well, and his inability to tolerate the flaws he perceives in others. His mind tells him it is wrong to feel spite toward those who commit bad actions "as if they alone were to blame and not all of us, because we are unable to educate each other" (82). Despite his fame, no scientific heirs will carry on his work. His famous name only increases his family problems because he lacks the funds to live the life his wife associates with his rank. His bitterness causes him to see the gap between the status and true abilities of those with whom he interacts: the porter has knowledge and love of the institution's traditions but has no understanding of science; his assistant, who will likely take his position, worships science but has no creativity and little chance of making any meaningful contributions; his philologist friend is only capable of criticizing others; the students he meets in his office either only want a credential they have not earned or want a preselected research topic rather than pursuing their own ideas; and Katya, who is perhaps his soul mate, has failed in her theatrical career because she has no talent and too much self-love. There is no Cato, and there will be no young people who remember him. Absent a common sense of truth and purpose, respect becomes an empty social form, and companionship is steeped in bitterness. The people in his life increase each other's alienation rather than engaging in meaningful conversation. As

he interacts with them, he becomes more resentful rather than accepting, since they share only present alienation and nostalgic fragments of a lost past in which everything seemed better. He no longer has any hopes for the future and suspects the past might have been good only in its potential.

The professor barely recognizes the lover of scientific accomplishment in the person he has become. His wife's current physical appearance and obsession with money make it impossible for him to see her as the young woman with whom he fell in love. He loves his memories of the youthful Katya and his daughter but can offer them little in the present. He remembers the simple family dinners they shared as lost delights. His daughter's fiancé is not what he claims. His philologist friend deceives himself into hoping for a relationship with Katya that she rejects as a defeat of her hopes for a better life. If in Cicero and Tolstoy the decline of the physical can allow the mental or spiritual to develop, in Chekhov's story the two decline together. Even the academic gardens and university buildings do not match his youthful memories of the places where there was "quite enough for a sense of happiness suddenly to fill not only my breast, but even my stomach, legs, arms, . . . and imagine myself a doctor and paint pictures—one better than the other" (83). His student dream of a better future has become a successful career but is ending in alienation rather than in Cicero's generational continuity. Why?

Despite his fame, the professor is a "superfluous man," whose obvious talents neither have the social impact they should nor lead to personal happiness. Is his alienation a result of his character or the social situation in which he must act? Cicero might say our professor is unable to accept age and death because he has not lived well. He values science above all else and interacts with people in platitudes and general sentiments. Since he never had the time "to individualize each particular case" (Chekhov 96), he remains distant from family and colleagues and wishes futilely for gestures of affection from his daughter and son. His focus on work has caused the isolation and emptiness that is revealed when he speaks of his wishes:

I want our wives, children, friends, and students to love in us not the name, not the brand or label, but the ordinary person. What else? I'd like to have helpers and heirs. What else? I'd like to wake up in a hundred years and have at least a glimpse of what's happened with science. . . . something general is lacking that would unite it all into a single whole. Each feeling and thought lives separately in me, and in all my opinions about science, the theater, literature, students, and in all the pictures drawn by my imagination, even the most skillful analyst would be unable to find what is known as a general idea or the god of the living man.

And if there isn't that, there is nothing. (104–5)

Absent a general idea, "a good cold really is enough" to shatter a life (Chekhov 105). This is more than a matter of character. Individuals think with the beliefs available in their individual circumstances and within the horizons of expectations of their societies. Cicero's Roman tradition linked individuals, generations, and nature in an order ultimately grounded in immortal reason. Tolstoy drew a contrast between false social nature and the organic nature it had displaced, variously seen in his writings as life, love, or the divine. Chekhov's professor lives in a world without either a unified tradition or a deeper order of nature. Individuals strive for meaning they create

out of their own biographies and what they learn of the social and natural worlds around them. “Farewell, my treasure!” (Chekhov 107), the ironic, plaintive, final cry of the professor as his young ward leaves him after he is unable to take up her impossible offer to run away together, reflects a world in which individuals share only their youthful memories, their criticisms of others, and the alienation caused by private dreams and sorrows. Since the past seems increasingly nostalgic and the future promises no continuity, old age cannot be met with the stoic confidence of Cicero. Instead, the lack of convivial conversation makes the meaning of each death a private matter and leaves the social forms as external conventions awaiting utopian fulfillment in the new world to be created by work and scientific discovery “in a hundred years” (Chekhov 104).

Chekhov’s professor is ending his life in a dark place, and my students in a course on medicine and literature are surprisingly willing to go there. However, no one wants to stay there. Reading these works together with science fiction dystopias on the possible futures of genetic engineering and texts on medical ethics and the problems of contemporary professionals encourages students to develop their own versions of the perspectives on life, death, and medicine provided by the liberal arts traditions. Stoic thought leads to questions about the uses and nature of scientific research: Can the sciences be seen as specialized forms of inquiry using reason to master the laws of nature and then applying them to suit human purposes? If so, can they provide the kind of unifying worldview Cicero had? What are the dangers of that effort? Will it exclude the world of Gerasim and the joyful meaning Ivan Ilyich found on his deathbed? Can it lead to massive social disruption and greater inequality? Students use these ideas to discuss their own senses of the possible tensions between their public professional beliefs and their private worldviews. Should they try to reconcile them or keep them separate?

Another question is the relationship among efficient treatment, curing disease, and caring for patients. Chekhov’s professor should probably retire since he has lost the empathy for students that teaching requires. The physicians in Tolstoy neither perceive nor address their patients’ psychological and spiritual needs. These stories show the private anguish and professional callousness of professionals whose daily practices do not reflect the moral commitments that inspired them to enter the field as young people. Premeds are aware of the alienation in their future professions and use these stories to discuss how they might develop better empathy and create time for reflection on their own happiness. Many students bring up the necessity of hospice care that treats patients as feeling and thinking individuals with wills of their own and assert that caregivers and physicians need opportunities for personal reflection as they age and their patients age and die.

Stoicism, Tolstoy’s version of religious faith, and Chekhov’s role as a diagnostician of social and personal problems are different ways of being human. The medical sciences and medical practice are also socially constructed traditions with their own possibilities and limitations. Classroom discussions and student essays become means of asking what makes a life meaningful. Cicero’s stoicism could reply: reason and the rational will. Chekhov’s world is less certain and, in that sense, more familiar. We communicate across differences and are not entirely certain what is there or

if there is any consensus. Students in my classes are intrigued by Susan Wolf's idea that a meaningful life is one that combines the objectively good with the subjectively happy. Age and disease cause Chekhov's professor to lose his belief that his research has made any lasting contributions, and he has no joy from his family life. Absent both objective accomplishment and subjective joy, his life loses meaning. The result is alienation. Discussing such situations and the solutions found and lost in writing about them provides students with a view of the liberal arts as a means of imaginatively and argumentatively exploring different ways of asking important questions: What is good? What is an appropriate form of happiness? What meaning do my activities and beliefs have in the face of the realities of aging and death?

Works Cited

- Billings, Joshua. *Genealogy of the Tragic: Greek Tragedy and German Philosophy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2014.
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *How to Grow Old: Ancient Wisdom for the Second Half of Life*. Trans. Philip Freeman. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2016.
- Chekhov, Anton. *Stories*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Bantam Books, 2000.
- Gawande, Atul. *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014.
- Gadamer, Hans Georg. *Truth and Method*. New York: Crossroad, 1998.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 3rd ed. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.
- Mukařovský, Jan. "The Individual and Literary Development." *The Word and Verbal Art*, trans. John Burbank and Peter Steiner. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1977, 161–79.
- Pinkard, Terry. *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Sławiński, Janusz. *Dzielo. Język. Tradycja*. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn Naukowe, 1974.
- Taylor, Charles. *Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975.
- Tolstoy, Leo. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. London: Vintage Classics, 2012.
- Wolf, Susan. *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2012.

Speaking Across Differences: Classic and Contemporary Stoicism

Julie Park

Saint Mary's College of California

The Stoics are some of the most central thinkers in the Western traditions. How might they speak to people who have been marginalized in those traditions: women, slaves, racial and ethnic minorities, atheists, and agnostics? Does Stoicism reinforce or undermine this marginalization? Is Stoicism compatible with a commitment to social justice? How can the Stoics speak to our lives today?

I will try to answer these questions by looking at how the Stoics have been received by three readers: Elizabeth Carter, the first person to translate the works of Epictetus into English; James Stockdale, who spent seven years as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam; and W. E. B. DuBois, the African American philosopher and historian.

One principle of Stoic thought is that we have an inner self and an outer self. Our inner self is made up of thought, reason, and willpower. Our outer self is made up of our body, family, job, and worldly position. There are goods proper to our inner selves, such as wisdom, courage, justice, and self-control. And there are goods proper to our outer selves, such as wealth, domestic bliss, success, and honor. The bad news is that the outer goods are ultimately beyond our control. The good news is that the inner goods are entirely within our reach. Inner goods are all we need for a good life. For the Stoics, philosophy was not just a matter of theory, but a practice centered on the care for the soul and devoted to the search for wisdom: “a philosopher in antiquity was not necessarily a theoretician of philosophy . . . a philosopher was someone who lived like a philosopher—that is, who led a philosophical life” (Hadot 4).

What does it mean to lead a philosophical life?

Epictetus, a former slave, answers: “Eat as a proper human being, drink as a proper human being, dress, marry, father children, perform your public duties; put up with being abused, put up with an inconsiderate brother, put up with a father, a son, a neighbor, a fellow traveler” (3.21: 179). A philosopher is someone who puts up with pain: “A philosopher’s school . . . is a doctor’s surgery. You shouldn’t leave after having had an enjoyable time, but after having been subjected to pain” (3.23: 197).

Elizabeth Carter, an English Bluestocking and the first to translate Epictetus into English, incisively critiques this view of the Stoic philosopher as someone who patiently and good-humoredly endures pain and abuse. She argues that the “absolute indifference” (xxiii) of the Stoic philosopher to external goods is “repugnant” (xx) in that it conceives of virtue alone as sufficient to happiness. The Stoics believed that virtue is enough to make people sovereign, self-sufficient, and invulnerable to misfortune. The Stoic ideal is based on a denial of human fragility and vulnerability—it ascribes to the soul the sovereign power that belongs only to God. Thus, the Stoic concept of self is a form of idolatry that leads to arrogance, pride, and hard-heartedness: “Nothing can excuse their idolatry of human nature, which they proudly, and inconsistently supposed perfect and self-sufficient” (xxv). Carter concludes that Stoic philosophy is out of touch with reality. Since virtue was supposed to be its own reward, the Stoics expected people to be happy in circumstances that are inimical to happiness. She observes: “That a good man stretched on a rack, or reposing on a bed of roses, should enjoy himself equally, was a notion which could gain but few proselytes” (xxiii). Some Stoics took the principle of absolute indifference to all externals to such an extreme that they deluded themselves into thinking that what is evil is good (xxiii–xxiv). They convinced themselves that, while they were “insulted, oppressed, and tortured” (xxviii), they were not really suffering. Such Stoicism is both deceptive and self-deceiving, because suffering isn’t something that exists solely in our minds and can simply be willed away.

Yet, Carter devoted seven years to translating Epictetus. Why? How did Epictetus speak to an eighteenth-century Christian Bluestocking? At the end of her “Introduction,” she writes:

Even now, their compositions may be read with great advantage, as containing excellent rules of self-government and of social behavior; of a noble reliance on the aid and protection of Heaven, and of a perfect resignation and submission to the divine will . . . and, though their directions are seldom practicable . . . may be rendered highly useful in subordination to Christian reflections (xxxiii).

She admires those aspects of Epictetus’s life and thought that reflect Christian virtues. Although she disagrees with some of his assumptions, she affirms the “conduct of his life and the usefulness of his instructions” (xxxviii).

Carter is right that the Stoics thought human beings could become perfect through their own willpower, and that achieving goodness was strictly or mostly a matter of spiritual training and exercise. As a Christian, she was sensitive to our imperfectability and the extent to which our moments of true goodness are made possible by grace. Gender is also at work in her critique; as a woman, she saw that Stoicism could lend itself to a discipline that refuses or denies the human condition of

fragility and vulnerability, and appeals to a typically masculine fantasy of individual sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and invulnerability.

But she was able to arrive at this critique by taking to heart the Stoic practice of the discipline of thought, to which she refers when she writes of “the exercises and trials of that duty, which finite understandings owe to infinite wisdom” (xxxv). Carter’s example shows that learning from the Stoics doesn’t mean that we simply recover them without question and become modern Stoics. We must engage in a critical dialogue.

Another reader of Epictetus is James Stockdale, a Navy vice admiral and prisoner of war for seven years during the Vietnam War, and author of *Courage Under Fire*. The book is an autobiographical account of how Stockdale came to Stoicism at the age of thirty-eight after having served in the Navy for twenty years. He was struck by how “Epictetus comes across speaking like a modern person,” and by how Stoicism as a philosophy is “more practicable than a modern cynic would expect” (3).

Stockdale answers a couple of Carter’s criticisms. The first is the charge of absurdity—that it is absurd to think that, through sheer force of will, somebody lying on a torture rack and somebody lying in a bed of roses could be equally happy. For Stockdale, the experience of being tortured as a prisoner of war was revelatory in that he discovered that there was something worse than having to endure pain. What he found was that physical pain was nothing compared to the moral shame of betraying your ideals, friends, and country: “The thing that brings down a man is not pain but shame” (19).

For Stockdale, Stoicism is not about denying one’s pain; it is *not* the superior achievement of mind over matter. The point of Stoic self-discipline is not an abstract, detached state of happiness, but the “tranquility, fearlessness, and freedom” that come from being honest and taking responsibility for our actions within the given circumstances of our lives (19). Epictetus is not saying that we can be physically comfortable on the rack, but we’ll ultimately be happier to behave in a self-respecting way while on the rack than to betray our ideals in order to lie in a bed of roses.

Carter’s second criticism is that Epictetus assumes, wrongly, that the will is sovereign, and no one can make us do what we think is wrong. Stockdale qualifies Epictetus’s claim by emphasizing the truth of human vulnerability, fragility, and the lack of human self-sufficiency. For him and his fellow prisoners of war “the key word . . . was ‘fragility’” (12):

The realization of your own fragility . . . [is that] you can be reduced by wind and rain and ice and seawater or men to a helpless, sobbing wreck—unable to control your own bowels—in a matter of minutes. And . . . you’re going to face fragilities you never before let yourself believe you could have (8–9).

If the effects of torture are beyond our control, then they are no longer a matter of morality. There’s no point in being ashamed of something that unbearable pain made you do against your will. A Stoic recognizes the limits of human willpower: “A Stoic always kept *separate* files in his mind for . . . (A) those things that are ‘within the grasp of ‘his Will, his Free Will’ and (B) those things that are beyond it” (7).

Stockdale’s account suggests that the Stoics are not necessarily motivated by a denial of human fragility and vulnerability, and they do not necessarily buy into fan-

tasies of sovereign self-sufficiency. Moreover, Stoicism is not a cut-and-dried dogma or doctrine. It is better to think of it and treat it as the Stoics themselves did, as a living tradition and way of life that has to be constantly reappropriated and reinterpreted.

W. E. B. DuBois is known as the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard, the author of *The Souls of Black Folk*, and co-founder of the NAACP. In a famous passage, DuBois names Marcus Aurelius as one of the most influential interlocutors in his education:

I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color-line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls. From out the caves of evening that swing between the strong-limbed earth and the tracery of the stars, I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension (67).

A key part of DuBois's project, in *The Souls of Black Folk*, is the claim that education must be directed toward the care for the soul. He describes the process by which a person is educated in terms that evoke the story of Moses leading his people to the Promised Land, but that also evoke Plato's image of education as the movement of the soul upward from darkness to light:

Up the new path the advance guard toiled, slowly, heavily, doggedly; only those who have watched and guided the faltering feet, the misty minds, the dull understandings, of the dark pupils of these schools know how faithfully, how piteously, this people strove to learn. . . . To the tired climbers, the horizon was ever dark, the mists were often cold, the Canaan was always dim and far away. If, however, the vistas disclosed as yet no goal, no resting-place, little but flattery and criticism, the journey at least gave leisure for reflection and self-examination; it changed the child of Emancipation to the youth with dawning consciousness, self-realization, self-respect. In those somber forests of his striving his own soul rose before him, and he saw himself. (5)

DuBois is responding here to the development of "industrial education," the kind of education that "reminded Black folk that before the Temple of Knowledge swing the Gates of Toil" (58); "We daily hear that an education that encourages aspiration, that sets the loftiest of ideals and seeks as an end culture and character rather than bread-winning, is the privilege of White men and the danger and delusion of Black" (58–59). DuBois argues that the education of the soul is the best way to prepare Black Americans to deal with the brutal realities of prejudice, hatred, and violence: "the color-prejudice of the South . . . can be met in but one way—by the breadth and broadening of human reason, by catholicity of taste and culture" (56). Education should lead us toward the universal. At the same time, he recognizes that we always approach the universal through the particular and historically contingent. For DuBois, the impulse toward universality requires that we face and seek to redress the horrors of history.

DuBois's understanding of education as something that must be directed toward the formation of souls—drawing on the stories and figures of Moses, Plato, Jesus, Marcus, and others—is close to the Stoic understanding of philosophy as a form of spiritual self-discipline. He writes, "Training for life teaches living" (57). Similarly,

Marcus writes of his gratitude toward his teacher: “From Rusticus: I gained the idea that my character was in need of correction and cultivation” (1.7: 3). In this connection, *The Souls of Black Folk* speaks to a philosophical question: How can education address a care for the soul or self with respect to the “blight of slavery” (57)?

Seeking to articulate an educational project that had never before been attempted, in 1903 DuBois tentatively suggests a “necessary combination” of “the ideal and the practical in workable equilibrium” (57). He observes that the curriculum of the first New England colleges was “doubtless old-fashioned” (62). These were places in which “the best of the sons of the freedmen came in close and sympathetic touch with the best traditions of New England” (62). Nevertheless, these colleges made it possible to work toward a “larger, juster, and fuller future” (66). They did so, DuBois argues, by harnessing the “educational power” that comes from “the contact of living souls” (62). In the face of racial prejudices that could not be eradicated just through legislation, DuBois saw that freedom must be understood not just in political but also in spiritual terms, and that the key to spiritual freedom is an education directed toward the care of the soul: “The Negro college . . . must develop men. . . . There must come a loftier respect for the sovereign human soul that seeks to know itself and the world about it; that seeks a freedom for expansion and self-development” (66). For DuBois, education for Black Americans must be neither vocational training alone nor simply the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake; both vocational training and the pursuit of knowledge must be subsumed within an education centered on a care for the soul and devoted to a search for wisdom.

What in Stoicism drew people as different as Carter, Stockdale, and DuBois? All three were drawn to the Stoic vision of philosophy as a way of life—not just an academic field, but a practice open both to the elite and the marginalized: women (Carter), slaves (Epictetus), prisoners (Stockdale), the impoverished and disenfranchised (the students of DuBois). They were drawn to Stoicism as a philosophy rooted not in fantasies of sovereign invulnerability, but in a keen appreciation of human fragility, the many ways our lives are subject to forces beyond our control, and the supreme importance of human solidarity. In their footsteps, we can draw from the Stoics a vision of education as, in the words of DuBois, a “training for life that teaches living” (57).

Notes

I am indebted to Anthony Pinn, “The Problem Soul and Life Without Appeal.”

Works Cited

- Aurelius, Marcus. *Meditations*. Trans. Robin Hard. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011.
- Carter, Elizabeth. “Introduction by the Translator.” *The Works of Epictetus, Consisting of His Discourses, in Four Books*. Trans. Elizabeth Carter. F.C. and J. Rivington, 1807.
- DuBois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Dover Publications, 1994.
- Epictetus. *Discourses*. Trans. Robin Hard. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014.
- Hadot, Pierre. *The Inner Citadel*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998.

- Pinn, Anthony. "The Problem Soul and Life Without Appeal." William James Lecture, March 9, 2017, Harvard Divinity School, [http:// hds.harvard.edu/news/2017/03/02/web-du-bois-and-problem-soul/](http://hds.harvard.edu/news/2017/03/02/web-du-bois-and-problem-soul/). Accessed 29 June 2017.
- Stockdale, James. *Courage Under Fire: Testing Epictetus' Doctrines in a Laboratory of Human Behavior*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1993.

Student Enculturation in *Crime and Punishment*

Robbie Kubala
Columbia University

As one of the few core texts that depict university life, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is particularly valuable for facilitating conversations about the norms and aims of being a college student. The core course I teach at Columbia is required of all first-year students, and the transition into college life is an especially popular subject of discussion for this demographic. In what new ways are first-year students being socialized to behave, both in the classroom and elsewhere? What do their families think about these changes, and what does the wider world expect of them? And why do they have to take this demanding humanities class anyway?

In this paper, I will highlight some of the ways in which Dostoevsky's novel can be used as a productive point of entry into these questions. My discussion has three parts, each centered on a debate that the novel itself stages. First, the novel's portrayal of student life raises questions about what it means to be a good student, especially through the contrast between the protagonist Raskolnikov and his friend Razumikhin. Second, the positive and negative attitudes that other characters hold toward students can occasion a discussion of what society expects from the college-educated both during and after the college years. Finally, the novel's epilogue, with its apparent repudiation of intellectual discourse, helps us to reflect on the place of the liberal arts in a good life.

In his landmark intellectual biography of Dostoevsky, Joseph Frank argues that every major character in *Crime and Punishment* is "a 'quasi-double' who embodies, in a more sharply accentuated incarnation, one or another of the clashing oppositions within Raskolnikov's character and ideas" (484). One of the clearest cases of

such an opposition is that between Raskolnikov and Razumikhin, the two students in the novel. Whereas “Raskolnikov” derives from *raskolnik*, the Russian term for a “schismatic,” Razumikhin’s name comes from the word *razum*, or “reason.” This contrast is evident in their differing personalities. As the novel’s narrator puts it, “Raskolnikov had almost no friends while he was at the university, kept aloof from everyone, visited no one, and had difficulty receiving visitors,” while Razumikhin is “an exceptionally cheerful and sociable fellow, kind to the point of simplicity” (51).¹ Raskolnikov sets himself apart from others, earning respect but not love for his zealous study habits, a respect all the more surprising given that “[i]t seemed to some of his friends that he looked upon them all as children, from above, as though he were ahead of them all in development, in knowledge” (51). He becomes close with Razumikhin only because of the latter’s vivacity, sociability, and blithely optimistic attitude. And although both men are forced to leave the university due to financial troubles, it is Razumikhin who not only finds a job translating French and German texts into Russian but later offers to split the work with Raskolnikov (112). Indeed, he goes so far as to pretend that his German is worse than it is, “with the aim of convincing [Raskolnikov] to take half of his translation work” (311).

These two types of characters are clearly recognizable on any campus today, and students enjoy finding various parallels with their own acquaintances. But these characters’ divergent attitudes toward their shared experience of poverty also raise questions about how to negotiate classism and privilege among a diverse student body. This issue is traceable to Dostoevsky’s own experience at the Academy of Military Engineers, where he struggled to make friends due to his relatively impecunious background. As Frank puts it, “Dostoevsky may have held most of his fellow students in contempt, but he could not endure the idea of being considered by them both personally odd *and* socially inferior” (47), and so he frequently wrote home for money to buy, for instance, extra boots, his own tea, and a locker for his books. Not coincidentally, Raskolnikov also receives money from his family, whereas Razumikhin supports himself “decidedly on his own” (51).

The opposition between the two students extends to the level of their intellectual life as well. Notoriously, Raskolnikov writes an article “On Crime,” in which he argues that while the “ordinary” run of people must stay within the bounds of morality, the “extraordinary” have “the right to commit all sorts of crime and in various ways to transgress the law” (259). Yet Raskolnikov publicly disclaims these ideas, affecting an indifferent and blasé attitude toward them. When he overhears a discussion of the permissibility of killing a wicked old woman and using her money to save thousands of lives, he tries to dismiss it as “all the most common and ordinary youthful talk and thinking” (66). Nevertheless, he is the one so privately gripped by this idea that he goes on to carry out the very murder he envisages. Razumikhin, by contrast, is deeply distressed by Raskolnikov’s article and tries his best to refute his arguments (267). I bring this up not just to highlight the obvious point about their differing moral outlooks, but to suggest that it can be used to raise discussion about what kind of *higher-order* attitude students should take toward the ideas they encounter. Should they be passionate advocates, concerned about the concrete effects of believing abstract claims, or should they be ironic, distanced observers who pretend that ideas

shared in the classroom have no impact on behavior?

The novel stages this debate not only among students, but also among those outside the university as well. Should we dismiss college educational practices as merely “youthful talk and thinking,” or should we insist that these practices can change and even improve minds? In part 3 of the novel, Raskolnikov’s young doctor Zossimov takes the latter position, observing that “the beginning of [Raskolnikov’s] disorder to some extent coincides with [his] leaving the university” (223).² To many readers, this implies that had Raskolnikov continued to enjoy the benefits of university life—regular conversation with others, engagement with diverse viewpoints, and the challenge of hard work—he could have averted mental breakdown. To others, however, the university is part of the problem, not the solution.

Those in the novel who are suspicious of students tend to belong to official government positions, suggesting an opposition between academic freedom and state power. The police lieutenant Gunpowder knows he can be rude to a former student without any consequences, and he denounces all “writers, litterateurs, students” as scandalous lawbreakers (100). The civil servant Pyotr Petrovich Luzhin, who courts Raskolnikov’s sister, outwardly professes to love “young people” with their new ideas (147), but he is secretly terrified by progressivist students, who are “powerful, all-knowing, all-despising, and all-exposing” (363) and whose ideas threaten the stability of his well-ordered government career.

Still, there are many in the novel who accord students a great deal of respect. The washed-up titular councilor Marmeladov claims to have “always respected education” and drunkenly proposes to engage Raskolnikov in “a conversation of decency” (12). At Marmeladov’s funeral, his wife Katerina Ivanovna is similarly delighted to see Raskolnikov, but primarily because “he was the only ‘educated man’ among all the guests” (382). And Raskolnikov’s mother is distressed by the fact that he has left the university; she dreams of helping her son return to the department of jurisprudence and the “future career” that awaits (37). For all three, however, it seems as though students are valued more for their prospective social capital than for the intrinsic benefits of their education. This can be used to spark a discussion about the ultimate purpose of a college degree—is it simply to help students move up in the class hierarchy, or are there other benefits as well?

This question is all the more pressing because of the novel’s apparent repudiation of intellectual life. In the epilogue, after Raskolnikov has confessed his crime and been sentenced to an eight-year stint in the Siberian work camps, he has a dream that sparks a religious awakening. In the dream, the world falls victim to a plague of microscopic creatures “endowed with reason and will,” which possess their hosts and make them “unshakeable” in their convictions and beliefs (547). This dream, to put it too simply, prompts Raskolnikov to give up his endless attempts at rationalizing his crime and to allow himself instead to be “resurrected by love,” in particular his love for Sonya (549). As the narrator puts it, “Instead of dialectics, there was life, and something completely different had to work itself out in his consciousness” (550). This opposition between dialectics on the one hand—which I understand to refer to the various debates and conversations characteristic of both the novel and our core classes—and life on the other, as something that takes place outside of the class-

room, can be a fruitful route into thinking about the attitude that the novel ultimately takes toward “dialectics.”

Here it can also be useful to introduce Dostoevsky’s own educational philosophy, which aims less at an opposition between dialectics and life than at a subordination of the former to the latter. Knowledge, for Dostoevsky, must be applied in the service of life. As the scholar Inessa Medzhibovskaya puts it,

With this idea of the care of life as the care of self, Dostoevsky returns to the principles of pre-modern Russian Christian learning which concentrate on “the building of the soul” (*dushevnoe stroenie*) through the divine word in holy books. Instead of adopting only Western concepts focused on schooling and knowledge, Dostoevsky veers toward more plural notions of life as the space for learning about being. (112)

Dostoevsky is too subtle a thinker to have taken an easy or obvious position on this or any other topic in the novel, but this makes his text all the more valuable for sparking interesting discussion. I have highlighted some of the ways in which *Crime and Punishment* can be used to debate the norms of student life, society’s attitude to student life, and the place of the liberal arts in student life, all in the hopes of making our own core conversations more productive.

Notes

1. All citations of Dostoevsky refer to the translation of *Crime and Punishment* by Pevear and Volokhonsky (1992). All emphasis is original.
2. This is also, intriguingly, the time at which Raskolnikov writes his “little article” (258).

Works Cited

- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage Classics, 1992.
- Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky: A Writer in His Time*. Ed. Mary Petrusewicz. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2010.
- Medzhibovskaya, Inessa. “Education.” *Dostoevsky in Context*, ed. Deborah A. Martinsen and Olga Maiorova. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015, 106–13.

Individuals in History and Literature

A Noteworthy Passage of No Consequence in Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles*

Thomas R. Larson
Saint Anselm College

Plutarch is a great friend to seminar leaders. His biographies of famous Greeks and Romans are packed so densely with rich characters, plots, anecdotes, sayings, and insights that almost any seminar participant can with ease and pleasure find in them something of quality to offer for discussion.

Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles* is no exception. The person of Themistocles himself not surprisingly provokes a great deal of conversation. Some admire him for the ambition that urged him to do great things for Athens. Some point out the foresight he demonstrated in preparing for a war with Persia at a time when virtually no one else in Athens perceived a rising threat. And the shrewdness he demonstrated in forcing the battle of Salamis is a regular cause of wonder and comment.

But the conversation would not be very interesting if everything about the subject matter were uncomplicated. And the life of Themistocles possesses many complexities, ambiguities, and puzzles. From even a superficial reading, one learns that Plutarch's presentation of Themistocles can hardly be called flattering. His Themistocles is graceless, devious, and obnoxious. Whatever virtue he has, he does not make himself likable.

Then there are more difficult questions. What are we to make of Themistocles's breaking down the social barriers that divide the well-born youths of Athens from the illegitimate and base born? Is Themistocles's "baseness" purely an artificial, legal designation, or is there a natural vulgarity at the core of his character? What important social changes does Themistocles effect in Athens when he re-centers its strength from

the land to the sea? Is it a fair judgment to say that Themistocles is a slave to riches? Or is it closer to the mark to say he uses money shrewdly? So many questions and puzzles. It is my conviction that Plutarch intended to challenge readers with such questions, giving us an opportunity to practice the virtue of judgment. The *Lives* were written by Plutarch for his friends, some of whom visited him and, with other guests, took part in dinner conversations, the record of some of which survive. I like to think that Plutarch offered the biographies for his friends in much the same way as a host offers a delicious dinner to his treasured guests to eat and enjoy. He intended his friends to read, consider, discuss, and debate the intellectual feast he prepared.

So we, the later friends of Plutarch, think about and discuss the character, deeds, and speeches of Themistocles, and not just him but any and all characters that Plutarch sketches for us. Some stand out. There is Aristides, Themistocles's rival and almost perfect opposite: where Themistocles is deceitful, Aristides is honest; where Themistocles aims at personal distinction, Aristides aims at the safety of Athens; where Themistocles is vehement, Aristides is mild; where Themistocles seeks the expedient and advantageous, Aristides gives priority to justice (cf. *Themistocles*, 3).¹ Some characters are in the background; the Greeks, for instance, who, though they must acknowledge the value of Themistocles, nonetheless envy him and find him obnoxious (see 17) or the Persian court who treat Themistocles with great suspicion as the man who was their nemesis, now a fugitive from Greece, finds great success in courting the favor of the king (see 29).

And then there is Athens. Athens, the city where a man with the talents of Themistocles, even though base born, can rise to the top of political power and influence. Athens, the city that, in the institution of ostracism, would banish powerful men, not as much to punish the bad actions of these men, but more to give vent to the envy of the people.² The Athens we encounter in the life of Themistocles is a complicated blend of strengths and weakness, giving rise to the question whether any success the city experiences is due to its wisdom and virtue, or to fortune.

I wish to examine one short passage, a single sentence in fact, from the biography. It will be clear that the event it relates is of no consequence. But a careful and critical reading of this passage of no consequence reveals character traits of both Themistocles and Athens.

The event occurs at a crucial moment in Themistocles's early career. For some time he has been preparing Athens for war with Persia, a war only he saw coming. As apparently no one else in Athens believed there was anything to fear from Persia, Themistocles craftily made the most out of some of the more immediate regional concerns as a pretext for building up Athens' naval power (4). And on the political front, with his rival Aristides newly ostracized (5.5), Themistocles had cleared his the way before him. At this crucial moment, Persia sent an embassy to Athens demanding that it formally submit and acknowledge Persian supremacy. The great contest Themistocles had been hoping and preparing for was at hand, and he was perfectly positioned to lead Athens.

At this point, however, something unexpected occurs. Here is how Plutarch tells it:

At last, when the Mede was descending upon Hellas and the Athenians were deliberating who should be their general, all the rest, they say, voluntarily renounced their

claims to the generalship, so panic-stricken were they at the danger; but Epicydes, the son of Euphemides, a popular leader [demagogue] who was powerful in speech but soft in soul and open to bribes, set out to get the office, and was likely to prevail in the election; so Themistocles, fearing lest matters should go to utter ruin in case the leadership fell to such a man, bribed and bought off the ambition of Epicydes. (6.1)

From here the narrative moves on, and we never hear of Epicydes again. But let us pause, note, and ask some questions. Why does Plutarch include this event, this minor speed bump in the career of Themistocles, in the biography?

The first and probably most obvious function the passages serve is to introduce us to one of Themistocles's less flattering practices, that of employing bribery to secure his aim. But we should ask, "Should it even have come to this?" Several factors argue that Themistocles really should never have had to resort to bribery to remove someone the likes of Epicydes from the stage.

First, we are told that Epicydes is "effeminate in spirit" (or "faint of heart" in the Dryden translation).³ Why, then, is he of all people attempting to become a general, when others "withdrew themselves of their own accord, being terrified with the greatness of the danger"? Perhaps he is carried away, given the circumstance, by an uncharacteristic desire for glory? Delusions of grandeur, we might think. Or perhaps his other dominant characteristic is at play.

Epicydes, we are told, is a "open to bribes" or a "slave to riches." Does this explain his desire to become a general? Perhaps the wealth that attends a glorious victory is enough to inspire even a coward to lead his fellow countrymen into battle against a most formidable enemy. Or perhaps this powerful and terrible (*deinos*) speaker has his sights on another source of wealth, one that would not require military service.

Themistocles has certainly made it no secret that he desired the generalship. Who in Athens could not be aware of his ambition that he so gracelessly (even obnoxiously) manifested? Plutarch tells us that an expression of this ambition was his ostentatious and conspicuous spending: "Some say that Themistocles was an eager money-maker because of his liberality; for since he was fond of entertaining, and lavished money splendidly on his guests, he required a generous budget" (5.1). At the Olympic Games, "he tried to rival Cimon in his banquets and booths and other brilliant appointments." The Greeks found his show of wealth to be insolent and obnoxious, but they certainly noticed it.⁴ Did Epicydes perhaps see in Themistocles a money opportunity? Noting Themistocles's willingness to throw around money, along with his obvious desire to have the role of general, could it be that Epicydes engaged in a masterful bluff, figuring that, if he is likely to win the election, Themistocles would intervene and buy him off?

Whatever his motivation, Epicydes, the soft-of-soul slave to riches, throws his hat into the ring to lead the Athenian war effort. From what Plutarch has told us, there was not much to recommend Epicydes for the position. Imagine Themistocles's surprise then, when, as the votes were coming in, Epicydes appeared to be "in a fair way to carry (the election) by the number of votes." Recall that at this point in his own career, Themistocles had an impressive resumé and was surely the man for the job. Yet here, at the crucial moment, someone who really has no business even seek-

ing the position is on the verge of being put in charge of the war effort. How could this happen?

The answer, obviously, is that Epicycles is a “powerful speaker” and a “demagogue.” He is the incarnation of the dangers of sophistry. Clearly the wrong man for the job, he nevertheless, by means of speech alone, is on the verge of persuading the Athenians to entrust him with the war effort. I think it is reasonable to suppose that Themistocles and his faction opposed the candidacy of Epicycles but were in fact unable to overcome the power of this demagogue. And so, unable to persuade the Athenians otherwise, and in order to keep them from choosing for themselves a man singularly unsuited to the office of general at a time of crisis, and to prevent the dashing of his own hopes for greatness and distinction, Themistocles was forced to resort to buying off Epicycles.

But for the “cowardly spirit,” Plutarch’s Epicycles bears important similarities to Themistocles, for Themistocles, too, is a demagogue who had studied and practiced “the art of speaking” that Plutarch explicitly links to the Greek Sophists (2.4). When one further recalls that Themistocles also had a reputation for being “eager in the acquisition of riches,” Epicycles starts to look like and function as an alter ego to Themistocles. He and Themistocles both rise to prominence. It is striking, then, that just such a character should pose a threat to Themistocles’s rise to dominance in Athens.

The episode may not have had any lasting historical effects, but it does reveal certain features about the subjects of the biography. It reveals Athens as a city most vulnerable to the powers of a skilled demagogue. The election of Epicycles, we are led to believe, would have been a disaster for the city, but his rhetoric robs the Athenians of their good sense and puts them in danger. By means of this episode, Plutarch, it would seem, would have us note a real and dangerous weakness in Athenian democracy.

Also by noting how a character like Epicycles could rise so quickly to prominence, the episode takes away some of the luster of Themistocles’s own success in securing the command of the Athenian forces. Finally, the passage shows the limitations of Themistocles’s rhetorical power. He loses the contest of speech to Epicycles and so is forced to buy him off. No one comes off well in this passage.

The main point of this paper, however, was really to try to read Plutarch in the spirit he intended. If, has been my assumption, Plutarch intended the *Lives* to be considered, discussed, and evaluated, then his project is in fact an intellectual one. His goal is to encourage and facilitate a certain kind of understanding. Less than proposing a teaching or a doctrine, Plutarch seems to aim at cultivating, both in himself and his readers, the *intellectual* virtues of prudence and right judgment. When one learns that an event such as the one examined in this paper may have no significant historical consequences, yet still have much in it to understand, that it can be meaningful and reveal things to our minds even though it does not give rise to notable effects, we might develop a sensitivity to texts (and to the world around us), and we might become more inclined to give our careful attention to matters that, humble on the outside, bear treasure on the inside.

Notes

1. All references, unless otherwise noted, are from Plutarch. Numbers refer to chapters and paragraphs in the text.

2. See Themistocles, 22.3: "For ostracism was not a penalty, but a way of pacifying and alleviating that jealousy which delights to humble the eminent, breathing out its malice into this disfranchisement."

3. The Greek is *malakon de ten psuchen*, literally "soft of soul."

4. Themistocles, 5.3: "Again, on going to Olympia, he tried to rival Cimon in his banquets and booths and other brilliant appointments, so that he displeased the Hellenes. For Cimon was young and of a great house, and they thought they must allow him in such extravagances; but Themistocles had not yet become famous, and was thought to be seeking to elevate himself unduly without adequate means, and so was charged with ostentation."

Work Cited

Plutarch. *Plutarch's Lives, Vol. II: Themistocles and Camillus. Aristides and Cato Major. Cimon and Lucullus*. Trans. Bernadotte Perrin. Loeb Classical Library 47. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1914. Print.

Breaking the Rule: St. Clare of Assisi and Women Living the *Vita Apostolica*

Lisa Battaglia
Samford University

Her parents tired of locking her up
before she tired of running away.
Love mocks the locksmith, and love
drove her on till the convent walls
closed around her strong as a castle,
and poverty made her as safe
as wealth makes a queen.

—Gail White, “St. Clare of Assisi”

Many are familiar with the story of St. Clare captured in Gail White’s poem: the tale of a young woman who refused to marry and ran away to join a convent. Many are also familiar with her “spiritual father,” St. Francis of Assisi, and the poignant account of Francis cutting Clare’s hair when she entered the monastic life. However, few are familiar with other aspects of Clare’s life, most notably her vows of radical poverty and her pioneering authorship. St. Clare wrote the first Rule—a set of guidelines governing monastic life—by and for women, aptly titled *The Rule of St. Clare*. This innovative work has been curiously obscured in scholarship and pedagogy on the Christian intellectual tradition, and the core texts curriculum more broadly.

This paper examines the life of St. Clare of Assisi, her adoption of the *vita apostolica* (or apostolic life), and her often overlooked role in writing *The Rule of St. Clare*, the first set of monastic guidelines known to be written by a woman. In analyzing Clare’s life and work, I will rely on the trope of “outsider” on three levels, namely: social outsider, religious outsider, and core texts outsider. First, Clare’s re-

jection of normative gender roles in the Middle Ages renders her a social outsider. Second, Clare's innovation in being the first woman to write a Rule for a religious community, and her resistance to living by the established Rules set for male monastic communities, render her a religious outsider. She broke boundaries and Church constraints. Finally, Clare is a core texts outsider. She is overshadowed by the fame of her "spiritual father," St. Francis of Assisi, and she generally does not appear in core text courses and canons, particularly those that consider the Christian intellectual tradition. While it may be customary to read the *Rule of St. Benedict* or St. Francis's *The Earlier Rule*, what of *The Rule of St. Clare*?

FLEEING MARRIAGE FOR THE MONASTERY: CLARE AS A SOCIAL OUTSIDER

Clare was born in 1194 CE to a wealthy aristocratic family in Assisi, Italy.¹ While little is known of her early life, two things are certain: she renounced marriage for a life of asceticism, and she renounced wealth for a life of voluntary poverty.²

Records indicate that Clare's family made many attempts to betroth her, but to no avail. Traditionally, women in the Middle Ages were married off at a young age; they were deemed ready for marriage at puberty when they could consummate the relationship (Brundage 434). They did not have a choice as to whom they would marry, and most marriages were arranged by the prospective bride and groom's parents and involved exchange of property. In Clare's era, she would have been expected to "assent to a marriage designed to advance the power and landed resources of her family" (Mueller 1). Moreover, it was also customary for the oldest daughter to be married off first. Thus, as the eldest of three daughters, Clare was "blocking the marriage prospects for her sisters" (Jones 91). Clare fled her home at the age of 18 after hearing Francis preach about a life of Christian poverty and piety.³ She found refuge in the small Franciscan community. There, she cut her hair—actually, Francis cut off Clare's hair—and she exchanged her "rich brocaded clothes for a robe of sacking, tied at the waste with a cord" (Jones 92). Since the Franciscan friars had no accommodations for women, Clare stayed with the Benedictine nuns for a while until eventually Francis offered her and her companions a small house close to the church of San Damiano (Jantzen 199–200).⁴ Six of the eight women who "joined San Damiano prior to 1220 (there may have been others) were related to Clare, lived with her, or had been long-time and often close friends" (Mooney 49).⁵ Three years after Clare's conversion, Francis asked her to take over the rule and governance (*regimento et governo*) of the sisters (Mooney 49). We can surmise that Clare undertook this task for the remainder of her life. Clare lived in this monastery in San Damiano for over forty years until her death in 1253.

Medieval historian Barbara MacHaffie argues that the ascetic life benefited women in multiple ways, ultimately offering them power and autonomy and the opportunity to break free from social constraints (56–60). First, by resisting marriage and taking vows of celibacy, as Clare did, women exercised free choice not to marry or have children (59). While such choices may be read as autonomous and subversive to the "patriarchal clan" (59), they were not without consequences. Clare's family disowned her, leaving her in a precarious place: "She was a pauper without a family, a nun without a dowry, a woman without a man" (Mueller 9). Yet, "the dis-

ownment brought freedom” (Mueller 9). Clare surely broke the barriers of familial, patriarchal, and social tradition and, in somewhat of a paradoxical nature, she gained freedom by cloistering herself. As Grace M. Jantzen critiques, while the religious life offered medieval women more mobility and independence, “the extent of their freedom should not be overstated. . . . [W]hile there were more religious houses for women [in the twelfth century], it remained the case that if women wanted to enter religious life, it was essential that they be thus physically enclosed” (201). However, in forming her own religious community, Clare loosened the traditional, established rule that religious women live in strict enclosure throughout their lifetime.⁶ According to *The Rule of St. Clare*, Chapter II, v. 7, upon cutting her hair, setting aside her secular dress, and becoming a member of the monastic community, a woman may go outside the monastery “for some useful, reasonable, evident, and approved purpose” (*Francis and Clare* 212). One can infer from Chapter IX, v. 6–7, that the sisters did indeed go beyond the enclosure of the monastery: “The sisters who serve outside the monastery should not delay long outside unless some evident necessity demands it. They should conduct themselves virtuously and speak little, so that those who see them may always be edified” (*Francis and Clare* 221). Clare traded the perceived confining institution of marriage (and motherhood) for the spiritual liberation of the monastic life. Interestingly, she retained nuptial wording and symbolism in her articulation of her vocation. In the first of four letters to St. Agnes of Prague, Clare speaks of Jesus Christ as her beloved spouse:

[You] have chosen with your whole heart and soul a life of holy poverty and destitution. Thus you took a spouse of a more noble lineage, Who will keep your virginity ever unspotted and unsullied, the Lord Jesus Christ:

When You have loved [Him], You shall be chaste; when You have touched [Him], You shall become pure; when you have accepted [Him], You shall be a virgin.

Whose power is stronger,
 Whose generosity is more abundant,
 Whose appearance more beautiful,
 Whose love more tender,
 Whose courtesy more gracious.
 In Whose embrace You are already caught up;
 Who has adorned Your breast with precious stones . . .
 and placed on Your head *a golden crown*
*as a sign [to all] of your Holiness.*⁷

Clare refers explicitly to Agnes, and implicitly to herself, as “*the spouse and the mother and the sister* of my Lord Jesus Christ.”⁸ Clare at once transcends normative social gender roles and reappropriates those same roles in a monastic context.

Second, as MacHaffie suggests, religious women of the Middle Ages were often “empowered” by their holiness and secured either formal or informal positions of authority.⁹ In Clare’s case, she was renowned for her strict religious observance and became the abbess of her religious community. Despite her influence and authority, Clare retained an air of profound humility. In the first verses of *The Rule of St. Clare*, she refers to herself as “Clare, the unworthy handmaid of Christ and the little plant of the most blessed Father Francis.”¹⁰ The self-effacement and deference demonstrated

here at once reflect St. Clare's complex status as one who is eclipsed yet illuminated: she is fundamentally shadowed by St. Francis, yet her radical humility elevates her. Centuries later, Clare is still lauded for her devotion, modesty, and chastity.¹¹

Third, MacHaffie notes that the holy life gave medieval women the opportunity to study and acquire learning, and often rewarded them with intellectual achievement (57). While Clare is known (particularly in Catholic circles) for her piety and poverty, she perhaps should be best known for her use of the pen. While living the religious life, Clare wrote the first set of monastic guidelines by and for women: *The Rule of St. Clare*. Fourth, as MacHaffie observes, the ascetic life also allowed for friendships between women and men (58). By symbolically removing their sexuality (through vows of celibacy, cutting of hair, and donning of asexual robes), women transgressed gender norms. By becoming "like men," they were free to cultivate deep spiritual friendships with men. This was surely the case with Clare and Francis. Pope Benedict XVI referred to Francis as Clare's "brotherly friend" and wrote of the "profound friendship" between Clare and Francis "on the journey toward Christian perfection" (246). Further, in her book *Women Saints: Lives of Faith and Courage*, Kathleen Jones calls Clare and Francis "collaborators" and commemorates their close relationship. She speculates, "In his later life, Francis said he never looked directly at (women), and that he knew only two women by sight. If his mother was one, we may hope that Clare was the other" (94).

LIVING BY HER OWN RULE: CLARE AS A RELIGIOUS OUTSIDER

Christian monasticism represents one answer to the fundamental question: "How do I live the Christian life?" For Christian ascetics, the answer to this question involved a withdrawal from the world in order to devote themselves fully to their Christian vocation, a vocation that often required vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These Christians claimed Jesus and his apostles—hence the use of the term *vita apostolica*, or apostolic life—as describing this particular approach to the Christian life.

The question of whether women could live the *vita apostolica* and come together in community, and on their own terms, was controversial, to say the least. During the Middle Ages, many new types of ascetic communities emerged, but they often denied women or severely restricted them (MacHaffie 54). For example, the Cistercians (an order established in France in the eleventh century that adhered to *The Rule of St. Benedict*) believed that "the female sex was not capable of obeying the austere rules and attaining the level of perfection demanded by the order," and they refused to recognize women's religious communities (MacHaffie 55). In a time when women's capacity for religious achievement was suspect, and women were seen as threats to the spiritual well-being of monks, it is astounding that Clare succeeded in creating her own spiritual community and, ultimately, on her own terms.

In the center of her text, the *forma vitae* (or "form of life," which later comes to be known as *The Rule of St. Clare*), Clare reflects on the early years of monastic life. She speaks in the first person and includes Francis's voice through verbatim quotes:

After the Most High Heavenly Father saw fit by His grace to enlighten my heart to do penance according to the example and teaching of our most blessed father Saint Francis, shortly after his own conversion, I, together with my sisters, willingly

promised him obedience. When the Blessed Father saw we had no fear of poverty, hard work, trial, shame, or contempt of world, but, instead, we held them as great delights, moved by piety he wrote a form of life [*forma vivendi*] for us as follows: “Because by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and handmaids of the most High, most Exalted King, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to perfection of the holy Gospel, I resolve and promise for myself and for my brothers always to have the same loving care and special solicitude for you as for them.” As long as he lived he diligently fulfilled this and wished that it always be fulfilled by the brothers. (cited in Mooney 31)

Clearly, Clare’s religious life (and that of her sisters) was integrally tied to Francis—his support, inspiration, and collaboration. Catherine M. Mooney emphasizes the “highly unusual format” of Clare’s writing as demonstrative of this vital relationship: “she interrupts a legislative text, the *1253 forma vitae* [Rule of St. Clare], with her highly personalized first-person voice, then encloses within that the first-person voice of Francis himself” (33). While it appears from this excerpt that Francis wielded effective authority over Clare and her sisters, it is also evident that Clare navigated the religious life according to her own terms. For example, Francis and the bishop of Assisi commanded Clare to eat at least half a roll of bread on certain days of the week—Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—for she had been eating nothing at all (Mooney 35). Whether or not Clare practiced this “moderation” is unknown. Further, witnesses describe Clare’s harsh sleeping arrangements: in one account she reportedly slept on a bed of twigs and branches, in another a coarse board, in yet another a simple mat. When Clare fell ill, Francis had to cajole her to sleep on a sack of straw (Mooney 52). In the case of both food and sleeping practices, Clare was radical and manifested her vow of poverty beyond what made her spiritual father, Francis, and Church authority comfortable.¹²

While the Order of St. Clare (as her community came to be called) paralleled the Order of St. Francis, she did not merely imitate Francis, particularly with respect to her understanding of poverty (McKelvie 3–4). Clare focused intensely on living poorly—“in highest poverty” is her phrase. In fact, in the face of an established Church rule that monastic orders have some ownership of possessions and property, Clare resisted. Clare requested papal approval of her vocation to live “in highest poverty” and for her sisters at San Damiano to live without possessions or property. In 1216, she was given “The Privilege of Poverty” by Pope Innocent III: “Therefore, we confirm with our apostolic authority, as you requested, your proposal of *most high poverty* (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:2), granting you by the authority of this letter that no one can compel you to receive possessions” (cited in McKelvie 6). This vow of radical poverty is evidenced in her Rule:

Chapter VIII: The Sisters Shall Not Acquire Anything as Their Own; Begging Alms; the Sick Sisters

1. The sisters shall not acquire anything as their own, neither a house nor a place nor anything at all; instead, as pilgrims and strangers in this world who serve the Lord in poverty and humility, let them send confidently for alms. 2. Nor should they feel ashamed, since the Lord made Himself poor for us in this world. This is that summit of highest poverty which has established you, my dearest sisters, as heirs and queens

of the kingdom of heaven; it has made you poor in the things [of this world] but has exalted you in virtue.¹³

According to historian R. C. Dhont, poverty was, for Clare, the single most important element of her religious life (cited in Gerrard 550). Similarly, Mooney suggests that “poverty, the poverty and humility of the poor Christ, seemed to be the beginning and foundation of Clare’s religious life” (101).

Beyond defending a lifestyle of radical poverty, Clare insisted that the sisters should exercise responsibility and power within their community (Gerrard 559). According to her Rule, the sisters should exercise authority in electing the abbess:

Chapter IV: The Election and Office of the Abbess; the Chapter. Those Who Hold Office and the Discreets

1. In the election of the Abbess, the sisters are bound to observe the canonical form. . . . 3. And no one is to be elected who is not professed. And if a nonprofessed should be elected or otherwise given to them, she is not to be obeyed unless she first professes our form of poverty.

4. At her death the election of another Abbess is to take place.

5. Likewise, if at any time it should appear to the entire body of the sisters that she is not competent for their service and common welfare, the sisters are bound to elect another as Abbess and mother as soon as possible according to the form given above.¹⁴

Moreover, the sisters should meet “at least once a week” to discuss the “welfare and good of the monastery.”¹⁵ The spirit of mutuality and shared responsibility and power is further evidenced in *The Rule of St. Clare*, Chapter IV, v. 16: “To preserve the unity of mutual love and peace, all who hold offices in the monastery should be chosen by the common consent of all the sisters” (*Francis and Clare* 216). Notably, Clare’s humility and self-effacement goes in tandem with the female responsibility and power she preaches to her sisters. To illustrate, in her letters to her sister Agnes, Clare refers to herself as: “Clare, an unworthy servant of Jesus Christ and useless handmaid (Lk 17:10)” and “Clare, useless and unworthy handmaid of the Poor Ladies.”¹⁶ All the while, she exhorts Agnes to live a life of Christian poverty, humility, and contemplation.¹⁷ Likewise, in Chapter I of her Rule, Clare introduces herself as: “Clare, the unworthy servant of Christ and the little plant of the most Blessed Francis.”¹⁸

Clare’s determination to defend her way of living and to write a Rule was a “radical departure from the religious norms of her time” (Sotelo). *The Rule of St. Clare* was officially approved by Pope Innocent IV only two days before Clare’s death on August 11, 1253. She was the first woman to have a Rule she had written for her community approved by the papacy (Gerrard 548). The original document (the papal bull approving her Rule) was brought to Clare on her deathbed, and it is reported that she kissed it many times (*Francis and Clare* 209).

“HIDDEN IN THE CLOISTERED LIFE”: CLARE AS A CORE TEXTS OUTSIDER
Pope Alexander IV canonized Clare in 1255, two years after her death. In the bull on the Canonization of St. Clare, Pope Alexander IV writes of St. Clare:

How powerful was the illumination of this light and how strong the brightness of this source of light. Truly this light was kept hidden in the cloistered life; and outside them shone with gleaming rays; Clare, in fact, lay hidden, but her life was revealed to all. Clare was silent, but her fame was shouted out.” (cited in Pope Benedict XVI 247)

As Roberta McKelvie contends, Clare of Assisi is “perhaps one of the most remarkable women of the Middle Ages” (1). She was the first foundress to write up her own Rule for monastic living and the first woman to have a Rule approved by the papacy. The Order of St. Clare, or the “Poor Clares,” as they have come to be called, persists to this day. The Poor Clares number over 20,000 sisters in over seventy countries.¹⁹ Poor Clare monasteries are autonomous communities, individually governed and completely independent from other monastic orders such as the Benedictine, Dominican, Visitation, or Carmelite nunneries. In the spirit of Clare’s life, the Poor Clares uphold the spiritual values of prayer, simplicity, community, and joy.

While Clare’s legacy lives on in religious human community, she is largely obscured in the core texts curriculum. Clare of Assisi is an important figure in her own right and, I would contend, warrants status as a Core Texts insider, particularly if attention is paid to the Christian intellectual tradition. In the words of a “Poor Clare” nun: “the return to the sources has let us see her as a great saint and foundress on her own account, not just as a follower of Francis” (cited in Gerard 550). In a beautiful autobiographical reflection, *The Testament of Saint Clare*, Clare speaks of her hopes for the future of the Poor Clares, while remembering its origins: “If these sisters should ever leave this place and go elsewhere, after my death, wherever they may be, they are bound nonetheless to observe that form of poverty which we have promised God and our most blessed Father Francis” (*Francis and Clare* 230).

CONCLUSION: CLARE AS AN “INSIDER/OUTSIDER”

In many respects, Clare works within the parameters of the institutions within which she finds herself to achieve her goals. While she may be considered a “social outsider” due to her rejection of the normative roles of marriage and motherhood, she adopts traditional nuptial and familial language in her religious writing. Further, though Clare breaks new ground for religious women by writing her own Rule and gaining its approval by the papacy, she figuratively places herself below Father Francis’s leadership.

In some respects she breaks patriarchal norms—namely, by rejecting marriage and by living decisively on her own terms. In other respects, she adheres to patriarchal paradigms—through her adoption of conventional nuptial and familial language, and her deference to Francis, in her religious writings. Retrospectively, Clare finessed a fine line between traditionalism/conservatism and innovation/progressivism. One might consider Clare an “insider/outsider” in both social and religious respects. Clare’s pioneering authorship, along with how her life and work speak to the gendered realities of medieval history, Church history, and core texts curriculums, surely warrant her inclusion in core texts programs and scholarship.

Notes

1. Clare's birth year is disputed: she was born in either 1193 or 1194 (Mooney 17).
2. The events of Clare's early life are largely obscured because most of the details about this period of her life "derive from hagiographic sources composed only after Clare's death" (Mooney 15).
3. The popular story is that Clare heard Francis preach at the cathedral of San Ruffino or in its piazza. However, as Mooney critiques, "no evidence establishes this" (18), yet she claims that "it is certainly plausible" (19). Mooney indicates that Clare had already "taken up the penitential life" while still at home (19). Further, she suggests the possibility (based on testimony from Clare's sister, Beatrice) that "it was Francis, having heard of Clare, who repeatedly sought her out to preach to her," though where this may have occurred is not specified (19). One thing we know for sure is that Clare was associated with Francis (and his companions).
4. It is interesting and telling to note that, initially, Francis took Clare to a Benedictine convent; however, Clare insisted that she had no intention of becoming a Benedictine nun but desired "to become a follower of Francis and of Christ in evangelical poverty" (Jantzen 199–200). It was then that Francis aided Clare and her companions in securing the rebuilt church of San Damiano, which became the locus of the Order of the Poor Clares.
5. Later, more relatives and acquaintances would enter, making San Damiano "a family affair" (Mooney 49).
6. According to the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, any religious community of women had to follow some (existing) Rule. The Rule of Hugolino di Segni, cardinal archbishop of Ostia and Velletri, is an example of a Rule imposed on Clare and her sisters: "[The sisters] must live enclosed throughout their lifetime, and after they have entered in the enclosure of this Order, taking the regular habit, the permission or faculty to go out may no longer be given to them, unless to plant or build that same Order" (cited in Jantzen 201).
7. "The First Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague" (*Francis and Clare* 191).
8. Clare continues to use similar marital and familial language in her four letters to St. Agnes, such as "Queen and Bride of the Lamb," "bride of Christ," "queen and spouse of Jesus Christ," and "mother and daughter, spouse of the King of all ages." See *Francis and Clare* 189–206.
9. This echoes Eleanor McLaughlin's claim that "(Medieval Christian) women in their pursuit of wholeness or holiness were empowered" (56).
10. The Rule of St. Clare, Chapter I, v. 3 (*Francis and Clare* 211).
11. To illustrate, Pope Benedict XVI refers to Clare as "the pure and beautiful bride of Christ" (245).
12. Evidence suggests that Clare tempered such asceticism with regard to her sisters. As Benvenuta da Perugia noted, Clare used "rough hair-cloths and shirts for herself, but was very merciful to the sisters who could not endure such harshness and willingly gave them consolation" (cited in Mooney 52). However, in relation to her younger sister, Agnes, Clare "forcefully urges Agnes to live in utmost poverty" (Mooney 100). For a profound examination of food practices among medieval religious women, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (University of California Press, 1988).
13. The Rule of St. Clare, Chapter VIII, v. 1–2 (*Francis and Clare* 219–20).
14. The Rule of St. Clare, Chapter IV, v. 1–5 (*Francis and Clare* 215).
15. The Rule of St. Clare, Chapter IV, v. 11–13 (*Francis and Clare* 216).
16. "First Letter of St. Clare to Agnes" (http://www.slr-ofs.org/uploads/9/5/5/8/95584600/1_-_the_first_letter_of_st_clare.pdf Accessed 8 March 2018) and "Third Letter of St. Clare to Agnes" (http://www.slr-ofs.org/uploads/9/5/5/8/95584600/3_-_the_third_letter_of_st_clare.pdf. Accessed 8 March 2018).

17. Clare's four letters to her sister, Agnes, span nineteen years. Like Clare, Agnes gave up the worldly life to live a life of Christian virginity, poverty, and piety.
18. The Rule of St. Clare, Chapter I. (https://ourladyofthepearlcom681.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/rule_st_clare.pdf (Accessed 8 March 2018)).
19. <http://poorclare.org/> (Accessed 8 March 2018).

Works Cited

- Brundage, James A. *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*. Trans. Regis J. Armstrong and Ignatius C. Brady. New York: Paulist Press, 1982.
- Gerrard, Paul M. "St Clare of Assisi and the Poor Clares: A New Spring." *Studies in Church History* 33 (1997): 547–61.
- Jantzen, Grace M. *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Jones, Kathleen. *Women Saints: Lives of Faith and Courage*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999.
- MacHaffie, Barbara J. "Virgin and Witch: Women in Medieval Christianity." *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, 2d ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006, 49–74.
- McKelvie, Roberta. "Clare's Rule: Weaving Together Law and Life." *Clare of Assisi: Investigations*, ed. Mary Francis Hone. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, 1993, 1–20.
- McLaughlin, Eleanor. "The Christian Past: Does It Hold a Future for Women?" *Anglican Theological Review* 57, no. 1 (January 1975): 36–56.
- Mooney, Catherine M. *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church: Religious Women, Rules, and Resistance*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.
- Mueller, Joan. *The Privilege of Poverty: Clare of Assisi, Agnes of Prague, and the Struggle for a Franciscan Rule for Women*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2006.
- Pope Benedict XVI. *Great Christian Thinkers: From the Early Church Through the Middle Ages*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011.
- Sotelo, Nicole. "Can Women Write the Rules? St. Clare of Assisi Did." *National Catholic Reporter*, August 28, 2014. <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/young-voices/can-women-write-rules-st-clare-assisi-did/>. Accessed March 8, 2018.

Giving a Generous Reading: Elizabeth Bennet and the Intellectual Virtue of Candor

Leta Sundet

University of Dallas

At the crux of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet, who has always prided herself on her perception, learns how gravely she has misjudged the two men vying for her affections. The charming Mr. Wickham is an unscrupulous and cold-hearted fortune hunter, and Mr. Darcy, whom Elizabeth has so loved to hate, may actually have a good deal of honor and heart. As Elizabeth reorients her thinking around this discovery, as she revisits earlier interchanges and reinterprets them in light of this new information, she does not merely rebuke herself for blindness or stupidity. She considers her mistake to be morally culpable. Elizabeth insists that she has "courted prepossession and ignorance" and "driven reason away"; she insists that her "distrust" of Mr. Darcy was "blamable" (137).

What, exactly, is blamable about Elizabeth's distrust? What Elizabeth diagnoses in herself is a lack of candor. When we use the word "candor" now, we almost exclusively mean "honesty" or "frankness," but in Austen's day the word was only beginning to be used this way. Austen and her contemporaries generally used "candor" to refer first of all to lack of prejudice—to fair, impartial judgment; but they also regularly pushed the term even further to mean a positive *generosity* of judgment, a disposition to give people the benefit of the doubt.¹ I would argue that Austen makes good use of the ambiguity, the multivalence of this term throughout *Pride and Prejudice*. What Elizabeth realizes as she digests Darcy's letter is that she was unjust and prejudiced exactly *because* she was ungenerous. This paper will argue that in

Pride and Prejudice Austen is teaching her readers, alongside Elizabeth, this crucial intellectual virtue of candor—a virtue that the great texts both require and inculcate. The theme of this year’s conference was crossing borders, and this paper explores in particular the border between reader and text, arguing that true understanding of a text depends on the reader’s predisposition to listen, to attend, to postpone judgment, to read generously, and to reread.

Elizabeth Bennet is sharp, perceptive, and critical. Her tendency to laugh at the follies of others requires her to make speedy judgments about them, to quickly categorize, and sometimes caricature, the people she comes into contact with. She implicitly contrasts her critical tendency with her sister Jane’s perhaps excessive candor. As they compare notes about a ball, Elizabeth laughs at Jane’s desperation to paint all the people Elizabeth is criticizing in the best light possible. “[Y]ou are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general,” she tells Jane. “You never see a fault in any body. . . . I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life” (10). When Jane protests that she always says exactly what she thinks, Elizabeth replies,

I know you do; and it is *that* which makes the wonder. With *your* good sense to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others! Affectation of candour is common enough;—one meets it every where. But to be candid without ostentation or design . . . belongs to you alone. (10–11)

There is surely affection, and even grudging admiration, in Elizabeth’s characterization of Jane’s candor here, but it is clear nonetheless that Elizabeth prefers and privileges her own incisiveness. She portrays Jane as a paragon of intellectual generosity in proportions just extreme enough that Elizabeth need not feel chastened by Jane’s example—after all, such candor “belongs to [Jane] alone.” But Elizabeth also concludes that Jane’s candor is lovely only because it is honest. Because her own candor could not be natural and unconscious like Jane’s is, because she cannot be “honestly blind” like Jane to the “follies and nonsense of others,” Elizabeth is absolved from responsibility where candor is concerned. Her ready discernment excuses her from being intellectually generous to others because in her, this kind of candor could only be an “affectation.” If indeed candor is a virtue, Elizabeth implies, it is not the virtue of a critic.

The reader initially feels very little unease with Elizabeth’s critical spirit. Her playful mockery, the “mixture of sweetness and archness in her manner which [makes] it difficult for her to affront anybody” . . . “bewitche[s]” the reader as much as it bewitches Mr. Darcy (35). Elizabeth’s critical spirit is not merely charming; it initially appears quite insightful: all of Elizabeth’s first impressions seem to be confirmed. The Bingley sisters *are* scheming and insincere, their brother *is* a bit of a pushover, and Mr. Darcy is not only the unpleasant snob Elizabeth took him for at first but also a bully and scoundrel, as the testimony of Mr. Wickham demonstrates irrefutably. We and Elizabeth feel confident in her opinions—confident in her interpretation of events, in the truthfulness of the lens through which we have witnessed the scenes we have witnessed—until, that is, another voice enters the narrative.

It is as Elizabeth reads Mr. Darcy’s letter that Austen begins to show us how little candor—even of the merely unprejudiced kind—Elizabeth really has. Elizabeth begins to read the letter “[w]ith a strong prejudice against every thing he might say,”

and initially it “[makes] her too angry to have any wish of doing him justice” (134); she is convinced that there is nothing the man can say to mollify her. While we may share her frustration with Darcy at this point in the novel, her explicit lack of objectivity here should make us uneasy—but likely does not. In a brilliant piece of colored narrative, we read the first half of the letter through her eyes: we learn that “[h]e expressed no regret for what he had done which satisfied her; his style was not penitent, but haughty. It was all pride and insolence” (134). Although we have just been told that Elizabeth is not giving the letter a fair reading because of this slow shift from factual information (“he expressed no regret which satisfied her”) to specific but subjective criticism (“his style was not penitent”) to an enormous generalization (“it was all pride and insolence”), we nonetheless read this *her* prejudiced judgment as if it is an unbiased authorial pronouncement about the letter. Elizabeth has been making this move consistently up until this point in the novel: leaping from impressions to judgments without bothering to distinguish between them, allowing everything to confirm her preconceived ideas. Now, however, Austen has slowed down the tape so that we can actually see this process taking place.²

But in the second part of the letter, where Mr. Darcy accuses Mr. Wickham, Elizabeth’s innate rationality forces her to pause and reconsider her own presuppositions. She revisits old conversations with Mr. Wickham, comparing them point by point with Darcy’s account. She “read[s], and re-read[s]” Mr. Darcy’s words “with the closest attention” (135). While she is by no means immediately persuaded of the truth of his story, she is forced to acknowledge what she would not acknowledge before: “that the affair . . . [is] capable of a turn which must make [Mr. Darcy] entirely blameless throughout the whole” (135). She now “weigh[s] every circumstance with what she mean[s] to be impartiality” (135). Elizabeth is restored to a state of bare minimum candor—the desire to be impartial—at which point we realize how prejudiced her thinking has been up until now. She realizes it, too. As the true situation emerges with painful clarity, she discovers that “she [has] been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd” (137).

What Elizabeth chides herself for is not first and foremost her lack of suspicion toward Mr. Wickham. It is her “blamable distrust” toward Mr. Darcy, a distrust that she contrasts explicitly with her sister’s candor:

How despicably have I acted! . . . I, who have prided myself on my discernment!— I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity, in useless or blameable distrust. . . . Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. (137)

In their earlier discussion of candor—which Elizabeth surely has in mind—it was Jane whom Elizabeth accused of blindness—honest blindness, that naive desperation to think well of everyone. Now Elizabeth admits that she herself was blind—and not honestly so. Her distrust of Mr. Darcy was an emotional response to his insult. The source of her distrust was not insight but vanity—a vanity that a dose of Jane’s candor might have counteracted. One man flattered her; she therefore wanted him to be a good man. The other refused to flatter her; she therefore very much wanted him to be villainous. What would have saved her, she realizes, was not a more ready suspicion

of everyone; what would have saved her was generosity, a willingness and eagerness to give Mr. Darcy the benefit of the doubt even after he had insulted her. The appropriate suspicion about Mr. Wickham's checkered testimony would have emerged naturally from a candid disposition toward Mr. Darcy; had she not been prejudiced against the one, she would not have been prejudiced toward the other.

Elizabeth realizes that candor not merely of the negative, unprejudiced kind but of the positive, generous kind is a necessary antidote to *vanity*, to our natural and innate prejudice toward *ourselves*. It is not enough to be impartial, because what we think is impartiality may very well be biased. Everyone privileges his or her own opinion, and the intelligent more than anyone. We must take the further step—or seemingly overstep—of assuming and even wishing good of others—and particularly of those we are not disposed to like, to counteract our disposition to think well of *ourselves*. Far from being excused from the necessity of candor by her incisiveness, Elizabeth learns that she is all the more responsible for cultivating it.

Our desire to think well or badly of someone or something enormously affects what we see: the application of Elizabeth's discovery to our own relationships is obvious. But it is important that Austen sets up the issue of candor as an issue of reading and rereading. In Austen's novels, where physical descriptions are scarce and spare, we become acquainted with characters primarily through their words—through the language they use. In a very real sense, people are texts, or rather compilations of texts. Elizabeth's opinion of Mr. Darcy is formed by her analysis of one tiny piece of verbal text (his overheard diss); appropriately, her revised opinion is shaped by her analysis of a literal text: his letter, which causes her to go back and re-analyze the other "texts" she has been privy to, rereading the mental transcripts of her previous conversations with a more honest, more generous eye.

Austen thus deftly communicates that the virtue of candor is a reader's virtue. Negative criticism is remarkably easy, requiring little more than intelligence and ironic detachment, and while it is sometimes warranted, it is also an easy substitute for genuine engagement and understanding. To what degree even at the heights of our sophistication does our criticism instinctively privilege not a particular literary standard but our own preferences? How often do we criticize negatively not because we sense real literary failure, but because we feel that a text does not flatter our intelligence or expectations? Our approach to texts can often resemble our approach to other people. Our instinct when confronted with a text that challenges us, whether by its difficulty, its distance, or its unfamiliarity, is, sadly, not always or perhaps even often to diagnose a lacking in ourselves and put ourselves under the text's tutelage, but rather to dismiss, to caricature, and even to mock—and thus to cut ourselves off from the insight it has to offer.

But students of literature who have vocally despised books on first reading have also known, like Elizabeth, the embarrassing necessity of eating their words—often under the direction of a teacher who demanded candor. And what Austen reveals is that often that teacher is the book itself. Elizabeth nearly tosses Darcy's letter aside after reading the first half, declaring that she will "never look in it again" (135). The letter, however, has gotten under her skin, and when, forced to pick it up again, she finally finishes it—she cannot read it again in the same way. The great books get bet-

ter with time because, like Mr. Darcy, they resist our attempts to dismiss or diminish them, because—also like Mr. Darcy—they teach us how to read them. We return to them a second—and third and fourth—time with our minds shaped by them and therefore better able to appreciate what they have to offer us. Such, in fact, is many people's experience with Austen's novels.

The predisposition to give a text the benefit of the doubt—perhaps in the teeth of our vanity—is a prerequisite to any sort of insight. Good scholarship is candid scholarship, characterized by a reluctance to categorize and critique too quickly, characterized by an insistence on self-doubt and rereading, characterized by the *desire* that there be something of real value there to be found. Only generosity ensures real justice. One may discover eventually, of course, that candor was wasted on a genuinely worthless book. But only candor makes possible the best literary criticism, criticism resulting from patient reading and affectionate rereading, criticism presented in a spirit of generous wonder.

Mr. Darcy's letter sets Elizabeth the task of rereading the man she has misinterpreted, and the second half of *Pride and Prejudice* is the story of this rereading. Some chapters later, Elizabeth visits Pemberley, Mr. Darcy's home. In a new spirit of penitent candor,³ with shy curiosity, with a sincere if somewhat shamefaced desire to become acquainted with the real man, she walks around the house and land that belong to him; she listens to the testimony of his housekeeper, who has known him since he was a child. Elizabeth is astonished and touched by everything she sees and hears, finding everywhere evidence of his good taste and kindness. When Mr. Darcy himself appears, he is a different man—gentlemanly, attentive, eager to please. We are left to wonder whether his altered character is entirely accounted for by his own exertions or whether Elizabeth finds him so agreeable because she is finally looking at him through candid eyes. The reader cannot help but feel the fresh air in the Pemberley passages, and such is the power of this episode that when Elizabeth later claims that she began to love Mr. Darcy after “first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley” (244), she is not being entirely flippant: love grew out of those first unprejudiced impressions. And if good literary criticism creates in its readers a similar sensation of breathing fresh air, of looking out onto widening vistas, it is because such criticism is written in Elizabeth Bennet's candid spirit—replete with wonder, poised to love.

Notes

1. According to the OED, these two definitions of “candor” cover overlapping periods of time. For candor defined as “freedom from mental bias, openness of mind; fairness, impartiality, justice,” the OED provides examples beginning in 1616 with Ben Jonson and ending in 1854 with Henry Read. For candor defined as “freedom from malice, favorable disposition, kindness; ‘sweetness of temper, kindness’ (Johnson),” it provides examples spanning 1653–1802, including Izaak Walton, John Dryden, and Samuel Johnson. The first instance of the modern use of the word (“freedom from reserve in one's statements; openness, frankness, ingenuousness, outspokenness”) that it records is W. Draper in 1769. Although in her novels Austen occasionally uses the term in the latter sense to refer to honesty or frankness, in the majority of instances she uses it to refer to judgment rather than self-expression and thus assumes one of the two former definitions.

2. Jan Fergus argues that in *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth's dislike of Darcy colors the readers' perception of him almost from page one of the novel, requiring us to reread without prejudice before we can understand his character (110–15).

3. While Elizabeth does not consider her changing feelings for Mr. Darcy in terms of developing candor, we can see a transition taking place in her, particularly during the Pemberley episode, from a mere willingness to do Mr. Darcy justice to a positive desire to think well of him. Especially interesting is the moment when Elizabeth's feelings, as she contemplates Mr. Darcy's portrait, shift from open-mindedness to an acceptance of his goodness and a desire for that goodness that make her even alter some of her memories of him:

There was certainly at this moment, in Elizabeth's mind, a more gentle sensation towards [Mr. Darcy], than she had ever felt in the height of their acquaintance. . . . Every idea that had been brought forward by the housekeeper was favourable to his character, and as she stood before the canvas, on which he was represented, and fixed his eyes upon herself, she thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before; she remembered its warmth, and softened its impropriety of expression. (162)

Here Elizabeth seems to be doing with Darcy exactly what she earlier accused the candid Jane of doing with everyone: "tak[ing] the good" of Mr. Darcy and "mak[ing] it still better, and say[ing] nothing of the bad" (11).

Works Cited

- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Ed. Donald Gray. 3rd ed. New York: Norton Critical Edition, 2001.
- Fergus, Jan. *Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel*. Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1983.
- OED Online. "candour | candor n." Oxford UP, January 2018: www.oed.com/view/Entry/27009. Accessed February 15, 2018.

Ethics, Aesthetics, Agriculture, and Technology: Wendell Berry's Intellectual Synthesis

Bernd K. Estabrook
Illinois College

To employ core texts today in our courses is implicitly to be a dissenter, a rebel, perhaps even a utopian. In an age of increasing specialization, quantification, and automation, core texts violate the sensibilities of our increasingly specialized world because their sympathies are with wholes rather than with parts. The effort to join disparate disciplines or bodies of knowledge through interdisciplinary connections diverges from our contemporary tendency to fragment, isolate, and objectify human understanding.

When I began to explore new possibilities for core texts in my college's first-year seminar a decade ago, I realized that there were two kinds of core texts that I wanted to include in the course. The first were canonical texts from the past, valuable both because they were recognized constituents of Western culture and because they yielded interesting connections to current events and ideas. The second set of key core texts involved contemporary articles and books that helped students bridge the gap between their everyday lives and the intellectual and academic goals of a college education. The former texts bring students into *relationship* with their cultural and intellectual past; the latter argue for the *value* of that relationship.

I would like to share my experiences with the writings of Wendell Berry, an important figure in American life and letters for the last fifty years. His essays, novels, poetry, and lectures are quintessentially American: he draws on intellectual traditions that range from Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson to John Muir,

Rachel Carson, and Neil Postman. Fundamental to his world view are his cultural and personal roots in Kentucky, where he farms, writes, protests, and reflects on the world in which we live.

Berry's work exemplifies key liberal arts values: critical thinking, familiarity with our cultural heritage, interdisciplinary connections, moral integrity, and the analysis of values. His essays are studies in thoughtful, critical, and lively writing. For these reasons alone, his books (such as *Life Is a Miracle: An Essay against Modern Superstition*) work well as core texts for a first-year seminar. They teach both by precept and by example how a liberally educated mind engages the world.

But the familiar buzzwords of the liberal arts, the catchphrases mentioned above, do not in themselves constitute the true meaning of what it means to be liberally educated. The significance of the liberal arts today for our particular students is its access to modes of knowing that run counter to the societal mainstream—a world dominated by technology. This is something Wendell Berry knows all too well, In a quotation from *Life is a Miracle* he says:

A little harder to encompass is the danger that we can give up on life also by presuming to “understand” it—that is, by reducing it to the terms of our understanding and by treating it as predictable or mechanical. The most radical influence of reductive science has been the virtually universal adoption of the idea that the world, its creatures, and all parts of its creatures are machines—that is, that there is no difference between creature and artifice, birth and manufacture, thought and computation. Our language, wherever it is used, is now almost invariably conditioned by the assumption that fleshly bodies are machines full of mechanisms, fully compatible with the mechanisms of medicine, industry, and commerce; and that minds are computers fully compatible with electronic technology. (Berry, 6)

This problem is a familiar one for most faculty. Our students define their lives through their machines. Their social interactions are mediated by Instagram and text messaging, their attention constantly diverted to glowing screens, and their knowledge is largely obtained from the Internet. They start with the presumption of a world that is encompassed, controlled, and framed by electronic technology. Their assumed understanding of the world allows them to control that world through their devices, and such awe as they do feel comes from their power to manipulate the abstract symbols of digital culture. They have no need for the past because they are infatuated with an oncoming future, a limitless horizon that promises to meet every desire they have.

What Wendell Berry reminds us is that the past does not exist to be subordinated to contemporary ideas and then stored on a hard drive; that past is a vital storehouse of ideas, experiences, and modes of knowing that still have meaning and significance for us today—indeed, without that connection with the past, we find ourselves cast adrift and lost in a glut of information.

Berry emphasizes the vital role of context for any meaningful understanding of objects, ideas, and perceptions. In his view the acquisition of data—a modern obsession—is, in itself, trivial and pointless. Data, to be meaningful, requires *interpretation*—the making of connections that bring the data into relationship with the world in which we live. A good student in a liberal arts setting is not a collector of data so

much as an interpreter of it. Our desperate need in our society today is not—as all too many of us assume—that we must collect *more* data to solve our current challenges, but rather that we must apply our intelligence to create meaning from the information that we possess. Our problem today is not lack of knowledge but the failure to integrate the knowledge that we have acquired.

Berry reminds us that the distinctive essence of any particular thing has meaning not exclusively through its essence but also through its connections with everything else. He stands in the tradition of John Muir and his famous quote: “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it is hitched to everything else in the Universe.” When we isolate our understanding of things from their embedded nature in the world, we necessarily have only a partial understanding that masquerades as a full understanding—which leads to illusion and hubris. Our failure to recognize the importance of context in this way has led, in Berry’s view, to many of our worst ecological disasters, to say nothing of deformations in our economic and social lives.

Wendell Berry’s notion of context makes him an eloquent defender of place. What we do or what we choose in any situation is intimately connected with our location; the land in which we work and live is the context of that work and that life. Our failure to embed ourselves in our landscapes today allows us to ravage those landscapes for “raw materials”—as if we were somehow detached from our environment and could therefore use it recklessly.

He argues for recognition of such contexts in the education of our young people. Agriculture is not, in his view, a separate discipline for land-grant universities but rather something that we should all be familiar with because our lives depend upon the food we grow. The subordination of agriculture to economic and political concerns in our society and its isolation in technical educational institutions has led to extraordinary abuses of the land that, over the long term, threaten our ability to feed ourselves.

The point that Wendell Berry makes, however, is not merely that the neglect of our landscapes will lead to unpleasant or dangerous consequences, but also that our literature, our politics, our economic life, our religious life, and our societal interactions are all impoverished because they have been disconnected from the physical landscapes in which they take place. The devastation of our land through exploitation, bad farming practices, or corporate greed are a symptom of our failure to connect agriculture and poetry, land use and aesthetics, business and stewardship.

This disconnect in many of our educational establishments promotes the desecration of natural landscapes in the name of immediate economic advantage. When they are considered as isolated, partial understandings, these landscapes are little more than objects to be manipulated and controlled. Our current failure to manage our landscapes is explained in an essay from Berry’s book *Our Only World*:

We have come to this by way of the disembodiment of thought—a mentalization, almost a puritanization, of thought—depriving us of the physical basis of a sympathy that might join us kindly to landscapes and their creatures, including their human creatures. This purity or sublimity of thought is hard to account for, for it has come about under the sponsorship of materialism. Perhaps it happened because materialists, instead of assigning ultimate value to materiality as would have been reason-

able, have abstracted “material” to “mechanical,” and thus have removed from it all bodily or creaturely attributes. (7)

Berry is famous for his activism against large-scale strip mining in Kentucky, a practice that, aside from its pollution of water sources and its devastation of natural habitats, leaves ugly scars across the land. His protests are a liberal arts–inspired response to our society’s instrumentalization and objectification of the natural world. An isolated understanding of a strip mine can only view such a mine as a source of raw materials. A liberal arts–influenced perspective, however, understands mining and the land not only economically but also aesthetically, culturally, environmentally and—dare we say it?—even spiritually. The truth of agriculture—its value in our education—is as likely to come from our poetic reflections as from our economic studies. Different modes of knowing, when properly employed in a liberal arts framework, are mutually supporting and equally necessary to a profound understanding of how we can and should use the land that sustains us.

I will close with reflections on how this core text provides a model for program development. In an increasingly technological world, there are times when it seems that we will never be able to keep up with the pace of new technologies—and if we view things this way, we are condemned to be left behind and disadvantaged. In contrast, Berry’s integrative approach to education places primacy not upon the tools that our society uses *but upon the skills, aptitudes, and attitudes of the educated tool user*.

Berry demonstrates to us that the headlong rush to develop new tools ought to be accompanied by an equal focus on the values and moral development of the tool user—and it is precisely this education that the liberal arts are concerned with. The liberal arts are not timeless (they must change and adapt with our culture), but they are *not* secondary to the demands of our modern technological infatuation with novelty, speed, quantity, and power. Not unless we redefine them to conform to those qualities.

Those who discount the humanities because they are not state-of-the-art new, like our electronic technologies, and who assume therefore that the liberal arts are antiquated or even irrelevant, are missing the point. Without the development of our students’ innate capacities, without the fostering of our students’ own talents embodied in their own experiences, without the unfolding of our students’ *native* mental and physical possibilities, they will be slaves to their own tools. Berry is arguing for an admittedly ancient but by no means antiquated notion of *wisdom*—a liberal arts education of tool users who are judicious, thoughtful, discerning, restrained, patient, and imaginative. The point is that integrative knowing has very little to do with tools as such; what we possess in our heritage as human beings—our innate abilities—is not tools that we *use* but parts of *ourselves*. They belong to us in ways no external tool ever could, and as such they constitute an authentic identity—and are vital to our freedom.

As faculty we are not required to keep up with current technological trends in order to be relevant or vital to our students’ education—but we must encourage them to challenge the facile assumptions made by technological enthusiasts, and we must guide them toward discovery of their own remarkable potentials. The most important powers that they will one day wield are not external but internal.

Wendell Berry argues that we should take liberal arts education seriously, that we should educate our students to recognize the value of context and the necessity for imaginative and cross-disciplinary connections, and to respect the incredible possibilities inherent in each of us as human beings. If our core programs are concerned with developing a matrix of truly human potentials, we could learn a great deal from Wendell Berry.

Work Cited

Berry, Wendell. *Life Is a Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstition*. Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2000.

Berry, Wendell. *Our Only World: Ten Essays*. Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2015.

Theological and Psychological Subjects

At the Heart of Atheism: Aquinas on Two Basic Objections to God's Existence

Matthew D. Walz
University of Dallas

Intellectually speaking, is there any wider divide to be bridged than that between theism and atheism, i.e., between the conviction that God exists and the conviction that God does not exist? Everyone recognizes implicitly that one's position concerning God's existence suffuses all that one considers metaphysically, cosmologically, politically, ethically, and perhaps even scientifically—which could explain the often bitter tone of debates about this question. And the question, of course, is not new, nor are the numerous arguments marshaled on behalf of theism or atheism. They have always been with us.

It may be surprising, then, to discover that in perhaps the most famous text written by Thomas Aquinas—the article from the *Summa theologiae* in which he attempts to prove that God exists by five ways—he presents only two objections. Could he not think of other arguments that give voice to atheistic concerns? Or does he have some other end in mind here in presenting the two objections? Some context may help us to answer these questions.

In the prologue to the whole *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas tells us why he wrote it:

We have considered how beginning students of this teaching are impeded in several ways by works written by diverse authors. This is owing partly to the multiplication of useless questions, articles, and arguments; partly to the fact that the things they need to know are not treated according to the order of learning, but instead according to what the exposition of a certain book demands or according to what the occasion of a disputation offers; and partly to the fact that frequent repetition in

these writings produces both loathing and confusion in the minds of hearers. Intent on avoiding these and other such things, and with confident trust in divine help, we will attempt to pursue what belongs to sacred teaching briefly and lucidly, so far as the subject matter allows.¹

In the *Summa theologiae*, then, Aquinas aims to present his teaching “briefly and lucidly” (or “concisely and clearly,” *breviter ac dilucide*) in order to foster learning among those at the initial stages of theological study.² In light of Aquinas’s aims in the *Summa theologiae* as a whole, I want to call attention to two features of the objections he presents: a quantitative one, i.e., the actual number of objections Aquinas presents, wherein Aquinas opts for conciseness; and a qualitative one, i.e., the mode or manner in which he presents those objections, whereby Aquinas aims for clarity.

Quantitatively speaking, Aquinas does not include as many objections in the *Summa theologiae* as he could; he is concise. To see this, one can simply compare the *Summa theologiae* to other works of his, in which he sometimes articulates upward of twenty objections and *sed contras* in a single article.³ In those works, one could argue, he represents more adequately the number and variety of objections that one is likely to encounter—or that Aquinas himself actually encountered—during a disputation or in the classroom. In the *Summa theologiae*, by contrast, Aquinas usually articulates only three or four objections, though on occasion there are just two or more than four. He limits his objections in the *Summa theologiae*, which suits well the brevity for which he aims. Undoubtedly, then, Aquinas agrees with the Bard: brevity is the soul of wit.

But is Aquinas aiming for brevity simply for brevity’s sake? In other words, why are there so few objections in the *Summa theologiae*? The answer has to do with the qualitative dimension of the objections, i.e., their mode or manner, which is determined by why Aquinas has objections in the *Summa theologiae* in the first place. Put succinctly, in the *Summa theologiae*, despite its format, Aquinas is not disputing; rather, he is teaching. He operates not in debate mode, but in pedagogical mode. He does not present objections with a view to overcoming this or that opponent; rather, his concern is more universal, namely, putting into words the principal obstacles and default tendencies of human reason that hinder the achievement of truth concerning the question at hand. He wants to correct the basic misunderstandings or intellectual dispositions that obscure the truth of the matter at issue. He wants, in other words, to get at the “rational heart” of the difficulty, first unveiling and eventually countering the human learner’s chief ways of going astray regarding a specific issue. Hence Aquinas’s brevity is at the service of lucidity; he is concise in order to clear away the fundamental sources of opacity in the human learner’s mind.

This is especially evident when Aquinas tries to prove that God exists. By presenting only two objections, Aquinas suggests that when it comes to being well disposed to reason toward God’s existence, two principal sources of opacity stand in the way. This is what Aquinas says:

It seems that God does not exist.

[*Objection 1*] This is because if one of two contraries were infinite, then the other would be totally destroyed. Now, understood in the name “God” is this: that he is

an infinite good. Thus if God exists, no evil would be found. But evil is found in the world. Therefore God does not exist.

[*Objection 2*] Moreover, what can be accomplished through fewer principles does not come about through more. Now, when it is assumed that God does not exist, it seems that all things that appear in the world can be accomplished through other principles. For things that are natural are traced back to a principle (i.e., a nature), while things that arise from a purpose are also traced back to a principle (i.e., human reason or will). Thus there is no need to assert that God exists.⁴

When considering God's existence, then, a human learner might be held back by the presence of evil in the world, incapable of reconciling it with a good God. Or that learner might limit the sorts of explanations to which he or she is open, recognizing no need to go beyond explanations rooted in principles belonging to this world. These may be called, respectively, "the obstacle of evil" and "a delimiting naturalism."

For Aquinas, the obstacle of evil and a delimiting naturalism are at the rational heart of atheism. By "atheism," moreover, I do not mean merely a person's firm conviction that God does not exist; I also mean a certain gravitational pull, as it were, on the intellect of every human learner, which detracts it from apprehending as fully as possible the permanent reality of God's existence. Even someone who believes in God deeply, then, benefits from working through these two objections, since an exercise of this sort can straighten up certain intellectual declinations that are preventing that person from accessing God's existence as rationally as possible. In fact, given Aquinas's intended audience for the *Summa theologiae*, he likely has precisely such already believing learners in mind when articulating these two objections.

This helps to explain, moreover, the matter-of-fact manner in which Aquinas presents these two objections. Consider the obstacle of evil as he presents it. Under normal circumstances, such an objection is likely emotionally and rhetorically charged, referring (say) to the apparently excessive suffering that scars our human experience. For Aquinas, by contrast, the obstacle of evil seems a purely logical matter: if one contrary be infinite, the other would never be found; logically speaking, then, evil and God just cannot coexist.

With these two objections, then, Aquinas suggests that misunderstanding divine goodness and/or divine causality prevents a human learner from reasoning well about God's existence. The learner who takes these objections seriously, then, enters into the subsequent five ways that Aquinas articulates with a more unrestricted notion of God, a notion signifying a reality that manifests a unique form of goodness and a unique mode of causality. Thus alerted to shortcomings in how he or she may be predisposed to conceive of God, the learner undertakes the reasoning process toward God's existence with greater clarity of mind.

When it comes to his replies to the two objections, Aquinas plumbs the misunderstandings behind them more deeply, with hints as to where they might come from. Consider how he addresses the obstacle of evil:

To the first, it should be said that, as Augustine says in his *Enchiridion*, "God, since he is the highest good, would in no way allow something of evil to exist in his works

unless he were so all-powerful and good that even from evil he could make well.” Thus this belongs to the infiniteness of God: that he permit evils to exist and that from them he draw out goods.⁵

Aquinas does not deny any premise of the argument in the objection, nor does he question the logic of contraries. And he certainly does not explain away the existence of evil by appealing to its metaphysical status as a privation of a good that is owed. Instead, Aquinas focuses on understanding divine infiniteness properly, an infiniteness not conditioned by anything. In their infiniteness, the attributes of God stand outside of the range within which contraries exist.

God’s infiniteness places him beyond any range, any logical or metaphysical category, in a way similar to how an author subsists outside and independent of the world of characters about which he writes. As a consequence, God exists freely in relation to evil, which is manifest not only in his permitting evils to exist, but also in his drawing certain goods out of them.

Notice, moreover, how Aquinas ends his reply: “Thus this belongs to the infiniteness of God: that he permit evils to exist and that from them he draw out goods.” I want to highlight the “and” in this sentence—in Latin, *et*. It is an *et* (“and”), not an *ut* (“so that”). God does not permit evils to exist *so that* he may draw goods out of them. Rather, one might say, there are two distinct facts in play: God permits evils to exist, *and* from evils God draws out goods. Are these facts connected? They are not connected logically, at least not in the sense that one can conclude the second fact from the first. If there be a connection, then, it must be through God’s infinite goodness, whereby he exists freely in relation to evil. Indeed, had Aquinas used *ut* rather than *et*—“so that” rather than “and”—then one might surmise that God wants evils to exist in order to bring good things out of them, which is a terrible thought. In the face of the world’s evils, though, one ought not to be so presumptuous, just as one ought not to despair.

Aquinas’s reply suggests, then, that when it comes to considering God’s existence, the human learner’s proper disposition is neither presumption nor despair, but hope—hope rooted in an understanding of God’s goodness that aims to be adequate to its infiniteness. Presumption and despair undercut reason’s approach toward God’s existence, whereas hope encourages it. In different ways, both a presumptuous person and a despairing person have already confined their God—or at least their notion of God—in a box. Only a hopeful learner appropriately opens himself or herself to being rationally surprised, as it were, by God’s infinitely good existence.

What about the second objection, a delimiting naturalism, i.e., the view that all happenings in the world can be explained by causes within the world itself, either natural or volitional? Aquinas says:

To the second, it should be said that since a nature works on account of a determinate end owing to the direction of a higher agent, it is necessary that one trace even those things that come about by nature back to God as to a first cause. Likewise, one must trace even those things that come about from a purpose back to a higher cause that is not human reason and will, because human reason and will are changeable and able to fall short. Now, everything that is changeable and able to fall short has to be traced back to a first principle that is unchangeable and necessary in its own right.⁶

Aquinas's first claim in this reply is not surprising coming from him: God must be invoked to explain the teleological ordering of the natures found in things. For a natural entity does not give itself its own end; rather, from its beginning, its very existence is on a trajectory toward given ends.

But why must one look beyond human reason and will as causes? According to Aquinas, it is not only because reason and will are changeable, but also because they are *defectibilia*, "able to fall short." Put more colloquially, we human beings make mistakes, we mess up, we sin. Moreover, recognizing this about ourselves may be necessary for us learners to be properly disposed to apprehend God's existence rationally. Is Aquinas suggesting, then, that a sense of guilt, broadly conceived, is indispensable for breaking out of a delimiting naturalism, since guilt hints at a divine reality that transcends human reason and will? The alternative, it seems, is to consider ourselves as rational agents to be the highest realities that exist. Our rather obvious intellectual and moral fallibility, however, tell a different story, making any such claim about ourselves hard to swallow, if not downright depressing. In fact, considering ourselves to be the highest realities that exist either is either presumptuous or likely to cause us to despair—which, of course, pushes us back into the obstacle of evil!

What holds a human learner back from reasoning well toward God's existence? In other words, what is at the heart of atheism taken as a settled disposition, or at least as a downward pull on our all-too-human intellects? The two objections to God's existence that Aquinas articulates in the *Summa theologiae* suggest an intriguing answer, namely, lack of hope in the face of evils encountered in the world and lack of guilt that springs from recognition of intellectual and moral failure. And so, Aquinas seems to suggest, if a learner wants to be disposed to reason well toward God's existence, a dash of hope and a sliver of guilt may be indispensable. For both attitudes get us learners out of ourselves, opening our minds up to the possibility that a divine reality exists that, though generously causing this world, nonetheless transcends its categories through infinite goodness.

If, then, a learner intends to bridge the divide between atheism and theism, the road should be paved by hope and guilt as predispositions of the human heart. Moreover, if a theist and an atheist are to converse seriously about the plausibility of God's existence, considerations of the validity of these two basic human experiences—hope in the face of evils and guilt in the face of failures—may be just the place to begin. For, as Aquinas indicates in the *Summa theologiae*, embracing and investigating the intelligibility of these experiences dwells at the heart of a fully rational exploration of God's existence.

Notes

1. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (ST), I, proem. (The Latin text of this passage from ST as well as the others translated in this paper is at <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/iopera.html>. All translations in this paper are mine.)

2. By "beginning students of this teaching" in the Prologue of ST, Aquinas is referring to young men, usually confreres in the Dominican order, who finished philosophical studies, which were equivalent to something like a bachelor's degree in a traditional and systematic

philosophy major. For more on this, see L. Boyle, “The Setting of the *Summa Theologiae*,” in Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*”: *Critical Essays*, ed. B. Davies (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 1–24.

3. Consider, e.g., *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, q. 1 (also available at <http://www.corpusthomaticum.org/iopera.html>). In this question Aquinas entertains eighteen objections, followed by two *sed* contras. Examples like this abound in many of Aquinas’s works. When it comes to objections, then, ST stands out as exceptional in its conciseness.

4. ST, I, q. 2, a. 3, obj. 1–2.

5. ST, I, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1.

6. ST, I, q. 2, a. 3, ad 2.

Works Cited

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa theologiae*. Accessed March 10, 2018. <http://www.corpusthomaticum.org/iopera.html>.

Boyle, Leonard. “The Setting of the *Summa Theologiae*.” In: *Aquinas’s “Summa Theologiae”*: *Critical Essays*, ed. Brian Davies (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 1–24.

The Structure of Dante's *Paradiso*: Transhumanization of the Ethical Life

Neil G. Robertson
University of King's College

Not unique by any means, but at least distinctive of the Foundation Year Programme at the University of King's College among core text or Great Books programs, is the reading and study of the entire *Divine Comedy* of Dante. Many programs cover Dante either by reading the *Inferno* or through selections. I do not want to undermine these laudable practices. But I do want to suggest that something crucial is lost in not reading all of the *Divine Comedy*, and in particular in giving short shrift to the *Paradiso*: the culmination and purpose of the whole poetic journey.

As the culmination of the *Divine Comedy*, the *Paradiso* speaks to our conference theme: it is precisely about crossing divides, above all the divine-human divide. And in traversing this most radical of divisions—one that for Aristotle in his *Ethics* prohibited the possibility of divine-human friendship—all interhuman division is, in principle, transcended and at the same recognized and included. In this sense, to pick up on another aspect of the conference theme, as we shall see, the *Paradiso* is a vision of “community building”: a vision of a city in which differences and oppositions irresolvable from an earthly perspective become complementary and mutually sustaining when viewed in the gracious vision of paradise. The goal of this paper is to articulate the logic of the structure that leads to the vision made available by Dante's *Paradiso*.

I know that there are formidable pedagogical reasons not to read, or not read all of, the *Paradiso*. We live in an age of diminishing attention spans and a diminishing capacity within both us and our students to be free of distractions and the need for sensible stimulation. Dante's *Paradiso*, after two massive canticles of poetry, seems

too much. It appears to be the least dramatic, most theological, and least compelling of the canticles—dry and filled with outdated or partisan orthodoxy. It can seem like a long and diffuse Sunday school or confirmation class for even those of a Christian background. How, then, can I argue for its inclusion in the core of an undergraduate program's offerings?

There is, of course, the basic pedagogical point about reading whole texts as much as possible: any selection involves interpretation in which the reader—the students—have been rendered ignorant and incompetent to offer resistance. But I want to suggest something more, to make two points very briefly: (1) the *Paradiso* is in fact a deeply dramatic work that properly concludes this masterpiece, if only we can get hold of the theatrical space of the drama. (2) Through a grasp of the drama of the *Paradiso*—above all as a drama of the soul, as a psychological thriller—the student is afforded an opportunity to see the powerful medieval articulation of the human personality, but further to see in it the development of the modern self and our post-Dantean modern world. I would argue that Dante knows that he is on the cusp of a new world coming to be all around him—though he sees it as a loss or corruption.

In my analysis of the *Paradiso*, I will follow the standpoint outlined by Dante in his dedicatory letter to Cangrande, which gives us the crucial principle by which to interpret the *Divine Comedy* as a whole and the *Paradiso* in particular. There Dante argues that while at the literal level the work is about the disposition of souls in the afterlife and a journey that passes from Hell through Purgatory to Paradise, its spiritual or allegorical meaning—its fundamental and determining meaning—is ethical and about this life: “Dropping all subtle investigation, we may say briefly that the end of the whole and of the part is to remove those living in this life from misery and lead them to happiness.” He tells us—and it is so easy to forget this point—that “the whole was undertaken not for speculation but for practical results” (Dante, 366). So questions like, “Why doesn’t Virgil get to go to Paradise?” or “What about those unbaptized children?” or “How could Dante be so judgmental about the absolute end of this or that person?” are all genre mistakes. Dante’s work *uses* theological reflection and church teaching as well as Biblical history and pagan mythology, but not for speculative purposes—though in a sense it ends in speculation or contemplation, or, even better, adoration as the highest human activity. But what, then, about all the discussions of theoretical or philosophical matters throughout the *Divine Comedy*, and especially in the *Paradiso*? These discussions need to be seen as part of the *drama*, the ethical drama of moral psychology that is the *plot* of this poem. In each case, the moment of theological or philosophic reflection needs to be understood as removing an obstacle or misunderstanding that prevents Dante, the pilgrim, from coming to a more adequate ethical standpoint, a standpoint that more fully integrates and realizes his personality. The goal of the poem is, then, to build up in the reader just such an ethical development in this life.

But let me be clear: while Dante’s account in the *Paradiso* is about happiness in this life, that by no means excludes or denies a “beatific vision” belonging to a more complete happiness in the afterlife. Its post-visionary conclusion—“Here ceased the powers of my high fantasy”—points us to this as it moves us beyond the poetic altogether (Dante 359). Indeed, the poem everywhere points to the dependency of the

practical happiness of this life upon the speculative or beatific happiness of the next. As he says in Canto I:

I have been in that heaven He makes most bright
and seen things neither mind can hold nor tongue utter. (3)

The relationship between the primarily practical happiness figured through the allegory and the speculative happiness of a beatific vision beyond all poetry is a complex matter and one that Dante addresses throughout the poem and in his further discussion in the Cangrande letter. We can also see a more particular reflection on these matters in his account, in the Sphere of the Sun, of the circle led by Thomas Aquinas, which is above all structured by a concern about the relation of earthly and heavenly knowledge and particularly knowledge of separate substances (see Crouse, 148–50). All of this is to say that nothing about the allegorical meaning of the *Paradiso* should be read to deny a perfectly orthodox belief on Dante's part in the after-life; it only means that the literal account in the poem is not his effort at providing such a portrayal.

What, then, is the plot of the *Paradiso*? One way to describe it is through the word Dante coins and uses in the first canto: “transumanar,” to transhumanize. This word captures a principle that Aquinas articulated in the *Summa Theologica* as “Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it” (6). Dante's argument in the whole of the *Divine Comedy* is toward this standpoint: the *Paradiso* is the articulation of it. Each step of that canticle is toward a more and more complete integration of nature and grace in and through the more complete realization of human personality. In so doing, Dante overcomes the limitations of a pagan nature and prepares the ground for a modern account of human subjectivity, the birth of the modern self.

Let me just sketch the logic of this movement in the *Paradiso*, which is really, for much of the text, the logic of the theological virtues—faith, hope, and charity (as understood and grounded in Augustine's account of human personality)—that become directly the object of examination in the sphere of the fixed stars, the last visible ground of the celestial motion. The logic of the first three spheres—the Moon, Mercury, and Venus—is, and here I follow a number of commentators, the logic of faith defective through lack of hope exemplified by broken vows, in the Moon; hope defective through a lack of faith exemplified by a worldly pursuit of glory, in Mercury; and in Venus a love made insufficient by its worldliness. For all three, this defective character is signaled by the planets' falling under the shadow of the Earth and so remaining with a kind of pagan finitude that limits and corrupts the realization of the virtues. So, we have here still an unresolved opposition of earth and heaven, nature and grace.

It is with the four middle spheres of the *Paradiso* that interpretive issues become more problematic, and it is here that I want to argue that the principle of “transhumanization,” of grace perfecting nature, is most deeply at work. Here the question is how nature can become fully transparent to grace, how nature can be both affirmed and yet also have no residual otherness to grace that might limit or impede its work, as was still the case under the shadow of Earth.

Interpreters of these middle spheres—the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—argue variously about how we are to understand them ethically. Some—in fact, most—see

them as embodying the four cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance respectively. Some of these readers will argue that they belong in Paradise because they are the Christian form of these pagan virtues: so, theologians and not philosophers, Christian martyr warriors and not pagan soldiers, providential rulers and not philosopher kings, and monks and not sober citizens. At King's, the Dante lecture was done for decades by Robert Crouse, a very significant historian of medieval thought, who argued that these spheres were about not the cardinal virtues, but the theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity (the latter in two forms as love of neighbor in Jupiter and love of God in Saturn). Certainly, on the face of it, it does not make sense that Dante would turn to the cardinal virtues in celestial paradise. If they are operative, it would surely be in the earthly paradise, as he argues clearly in his *De Monarchia*.

Dante knows that Aristotle's *Ethics*, which is such a crucial guide to the *Comedy*, ends in an ambiguous or even tragic standpoint. The highest practical end for both the *Ethics* and the *Divine Comedy* is the happiest life actualized above all in the life of God, the unmoved mover, which is most fully attained humanly in contemplation. Aristotle tells us two things: First, that it is a life too high for man. But then, rather than just telling us to stay with embodied natural ends, he secondly argues that this life of contemplation is one we should strive for as far as we are able, and indeed that it is the work of the divine within us. So there is a kind of unresolved desire (the sighing of Limbo) made present through a divine spark within, which points to and moves us toward a life that is also too high for us. It is the possibility of transhumanization, made available through the Incarnation, which suggests the capacity to transcend this tragic condition. It is this specifically Christian reworking of principles that I wish to call the "infinetization of virtue" in the planetary spheres beyond the shadow of the earth.

Let us take an example. Mars, the planet in which courage is transhumanized into hope, has as one of the figures present: Roland, the great medieval Christian warrior celebrated in the *chanson de geste*, *The Song of Roland*, one of the most widely celebrated figures of the medieval period. In the *Chanson*, Roland is presented in contrast to his companion Oliver. In a moment caused by treachery, the small rearguard that Roland commands is faced by an overwhelming Saracen force that Oliver recognizes will destroy them. But Roland refuses Oliver's advice to blow his horn and call upon the main force of Charlemagne's army to come to their aid. Oliver comes to accuse Roland of "recklessness." This is a very exact judgment. From an Aristotelian perspective, it is exactly right. Courage, like any other virtue, was understood by Aristotle to be a mean between extremes. On the one side is cowardice—fleeing when one should stand firm—but on the other is recklessness—standing firm when one should flee. Courage, like any other virtue, requires prudence—a virtue Oliver possesses—and this is the capacity to judge in relation to a given context how one should act. A virtue is not just a certain disposition but includes this aspect of judgment of appropriateness. Roland appears to lack this aspect of courage pretty massively and so from an Aristotelian point of view should be regarded as committing the vice of recklessness. From this perspective, one could at best see *The Song of Roland* as a tragedy, if not a simple morality tale about the folly of recklessness.

But, of course, this is not the perspective of the *Chanson*. Roland's death, symbolized through the return of his glove to the angel Gabriel, fully exemplifies the fidelity of the feudal knight in relation to his lord. What Roland sees and Oliver fails to see is that, from the medieval point of view, all finite contexts are secondary to the absolute or infinite context of Roland's end, life with God. It is fidelity to this end that transforms, for the medieval standpoint, Roland's courage into hope, a will absolutely secure in its infinite end. And so, as Roland makes clear in the poem, the "pagans" cannot make him blow his horn, even in their overwhelming numbers.

What is this perfecting of nature doing to the virtue? It is making it inherently speculative or free, with its ground not in nature or human nature but in God as creator of both nature and human nature and the redeemer of both. Thus, the sphere of the fixed stars gathers up this infinitization, this transhumanizing of the ethical life, through an examination of the three theological virtues on their own terms and as constitutive of happiness in this life.

But the poem does not end there. I can only briefly touch upon the *Primum Mobile* and Empyrean Heaven. The poem moves us beyond the subjective appropriation of the content of happiness in this life to the subjective recognition of the principles or realities that made possible this appropriation. We make a transition from the subjective to the objective and in doing so come to see what has in fact been moving in us in the drama. This work of transition occurs through two aspects: (1) the Virgin Mary as the object of Romance and her charity as the mediating, penultimate moment, makes available the absolute divine mediation of the Incarnation; (2) the inversion of perspective that is made possible through grasping that the principles of the virtues are not (to use the celestial image) the "planets"—the habits or virtues themselves—but rather the angelic intelligences that properly move the "planets": the pure act of the soul that is providential and absolute. But then, beyond this, the turn of the soul to the actual humanity of Christ within the Trinity is the completed perfection of human personality in its total end, uniting subjective and objective in a total activity of love. This happiness—and Dante is drawing not only on Aristotle, but also on Augustine, Boethius, and really the whole medieval tradition—is the activity of the soul as at once practical and theoretical. In this the ancient tragedy has become a human-divine comedy. But if one regards the Renaissance as the unwritten fourth canticle, this medieval comedy will bring forth all manner of new, modern tragedies, precisely because the human soul has been "transhumanized."

Works Cited

- Aquinas, St. Thomas. *The Summa Theologica*. Vol. 1. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1948.
- Crouse, Robert. "Dante as Philosopher: Christian Aristotelianism." *Dionysius* 16 (1998): 141–56.
- Dante. *Paradise*. Trans. Anthony Esolen. New York: Modern Library, 2007.

Grieving for the World through Core Texts

Jean-Marie Kauth

Benedictine University

The 2017 ACTC conference proposal speaks to the power of the liberal arts to address suffering and loss:

To realize that the worst of humanity can be counteracted by the best is to commit to liberal arts education in core texts. To commit to the openness of core texts—their huge traditions of conversation, substance, invention, and appreciation—is to construct the antithesis of a closed, divisive world, to work for a free and open world. . . . A liberal arts core text education, especially in college, constructs communities out of the diversity of traditions and human beings. A community of liberal arts education using core texts is committed to comparisons, across genres, disciplines, eras, languages, cultures, and civilizations. . . . It knows that today's problems—be they violence, demographics, economics, politics, arts, sciences, or technology—are addressable. What can a communal chorus of human voices say to these human problems and potentials?

Encountering the reality of environmental degradation with undergraduates brings with it a grief for the world we are losing that is better acknowledged than left unspoken. I have found that in reading post-apocalyptic texts such as Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, which vividly portrays the end of human civilization, it is important to counterbalance that narrative of impending doom with one that allows for hope, and happiness. In my Honors Research Writing course, Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* plays that role. I use these two texts to address the larger question of grief at seeing the natural world destroyed.

As Aldo Leopold famously said,

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)

So as we train students to be literate in science and versed in cultural criticism, we have a duty to leave space to explore the emotional impact of the knowledge they gain. The human community described in the conference invitation is at the center of these pre- and post-apocalyptic narratives.

I have argued elsewhere that many of our very popular post-apocalyptic narratives, including *The Road*, provide a sense of catharsis for the collective unconscious as we realize, sometimes underneath denial, that we are destroying the planet, and with it, some of our most precious democratic ideals and other fragile fruits of civilization. One of the news stories most illustrative of this in recent weeks is the response of the reading public to Kellyanne Conway’s “alternative facts” remark and the flagrant mendacity of the Trump administration: George Orwell’s *1984* shot to number one on Amazon’s bestseller list (Schaub). People turn to literature for comfort, explanation, and sometimes a place to work out a reality that seems too terrible to confront head-on.

Work in psychology about denials of climate change attests to both the likelihood of climate change denial and the difficulty of seeing that such a grave problem could be ameliorated by personal actions, a phenomenon sometimes called *climate change helplessness* (Solomon et al. 1). One major finding is that people are already afraid enough of climate change; what they need is to believe that changed behaviors could be efficacious (ibid.). Others find that “being anxious about a given issue is a necessary if not a sufficient condition to being persuaded by the validity of counterarguments” (Nai et al. 137). Anxiety can increase “attention, awareness, and learning” (ibid., 140). The balance is delicate.

The news I share with students about the environment is always shocking to them. They do not know some very basic facts about climate change: pollution of air, water, and soil; the Pacific garbage patch; deforestation; and the health effects resulting from toxic contamination of every human alive, including every child they will ever give birth to. This year, the news has been more astonishingly bad than ever, and we sometimes take a few minutes to debrief. I ask the students if they are fine and if they would prefer not to know. One student, shaken, nevertheless said, “No—it’s better to be woke!” Every day seems to bring a new horror, from the slashing of the EPA budget, to climate and science deniers at the helm of the executive branch, to credible evidence that the collusion between Russia and the Trump administration is in part motivated by a desire to keep the fossil fuel bubble going a little longer, planet be damned (Kramer and Krauss; Wasserman).

For our Scholars students, McCarthy’s *The Road* illustrates the worst-case scenario of complete environmental devastation, but it is also haunted by a vision of what, at that future time, has been lost, what is for us still present, though threatened. This is perhaps more important: showing what can be saved by effective environmental action now. McCarthy’s post-apocalyptic fable ends with an invocation of a peak ecosystem, of natural beauty worthy of Thoreau:

Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains. You could see them

standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. Polished and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery. (286–87)

Students often misread this gorgeous passage as a harbinger of hope. But the key term here, the phrase that makes this an environmental novel is “a thing which could not be put back.” These are the precious things that we are losing now, year by year, minute by minute, in a sort of reverse Creation: The Great Barrier Reef, for instance, which even the *New York Times* said we should shed a tear for (*New York Times* Editorial Board 1). Sometimes, we may not even have names for the things we lose, as when undiscovered treasures of the ecosystem silently blink out in the Amazon. McCarthy talks about the loss not only of things, but of the names for them: “The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. . . . The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality” (88–89). Sometimes it takes a poet to describe the pathos that scientists anticipate, and themselves feel. Sometimes, as in the case of Sandra Steingraber and Jim Hansen, who visited our campus last year, scientists use poetry to convey scientific facts.

This year, my scholars did not appreciate Kingsolver’s *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, an account of how her family lived for a year mostly from local food or food they grew themselves on their small farm. The scholars found the carefully crafted, playful prose cloying and overwritten. For them, her appeals to do better were too obvious, too sanctimonious and self-congratulatory. I could see their point at times. But I tried to make them aware of Kingsolver’s narrative purpose: to make needed environmental and cultural change palatable. She often qualifies claims about her project, but Kingsolver is indeed unremittingly cheerful, even chirpy, relegating scientific facts and economics figures about the cost of our food system to sidebars, right until the end. I let them live with their criticisms of her prose, but on the last day, we spent most of a class period on this passage from among the last pages of the book:

The truth is so horrific: we are marching ourselves to the maw of our own extinction. An audience that doesn’t really get that will amble out of the theater unmoved, go home and change nothing. But an audience that *does* get it may be so terrified they’ll feel doomed already” (345)

Kingsolver labels fatalism child abuse and calls saving the planet on which life evolved “A now or never project” (345). Students see that all along she was pulling her punches, hiding grim facts among hilarious passages about turkey sex in order to make them acceptable to a general audience. But Kingsolver could not be more clear that she lives her joyous life and exerts herself in ridiculous-seeming home economics projects as a rebellion, an effort to do something—“recycling or carpooling or growing a garden or saving a species or *something*”—all the while knowing that we are “marching ourselves to the maw of our own extinction” (345–46). She points out, addressing precisely the students’ concern with her perceived hypocrisy, that “It is

the worst of bad manners . . . to ridicule the small gesture. . . . Small stepwise changes in personal habits aren't trivial. Ultimately they will, or won't, add up to having been the thing that mattered" (346). This changed the students' view of her project entirely, although we debated what approach, scaring people or cheering them on, is most effective in helping them change.

This is the role of cultural criticism in shaping society. There is an assumption in ecocriticism—and in socially conscious literature of all types—that by understanding our culture, we can change it for the better. I explicitly point out to my students that these are the transferable skills I expect them to gain from cultural and literary criticism: the ability to read and analyze carefully, to step outside the envelope of our culture and critique it, to be able to say that what we are doing is crazy, and to address changing the culture in order to save civilization. This is the crux of Garrett Hardin's famous essay, "The Tragedy of the Commons," in which we also read: the problem has no technological fix. Environmental degradation is a problem of culture, society, character, and politics. Is it fixable? Are humans smarter than bacteria in a petri dish? James Lovelock has speculated in recent years about the capability of humans to avert catastrophic climate change; he thought we were not smart enough, even though all the technology is in place (Hickman). Perhaps that is true, but it is essential to try.

It can be very difficult to balance with student information that increases anxiety about outcomes—particularly fiction works that imagine negative outcomes, like *The Road*—and works that bolster belief in the efficacy of action—like *Animals, Vegetables, Miracle*. In any case, reading primary, core texts help students not only to learn the message but also to internalize it. I am constantly in search of core texts that will do this. Facts are not enough—those could be gained by way of PowerPoints and visits to the websites of NASA, NOAA, IPCC, and the National Academies of Sciences. We need students to emotionally engage with these issues in order to prompt them to act. Arguably, never in the last century of American history has it been more important that the "worst of humanity can be counteracted by the best." As educators, we play a live role in motivating that action, and our choice of core texts augments our action. Our ability to "construct communities out of the diversity of traditions and human beings" is essential, and never more important than now, when our dearest democratic ideals and the environment on which all life is based are in peril.

We recognize what we are losing, sometimes, only after we have lost it irrevocably, and yet hope shadows the project of reading about environmental devastation, hope that we will prevent further damage and preserve the best of what has been.

Works Cited

- Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Journal of Science* 162.1243 (1968).
- Hickman, Leo. "James Lovelock: Humans Are Too Stupid to Prevent Climate Change." *The Guardian*, March 29, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2010/mar/29/james-lovelock-climate-change/>.
- Kingsolver, Barbara. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*. New York: HarperCollins, 2007.

- Kramer, Andrew E., and Clifford Krauss. "Rex Tillerson's Company, Exxon, Has Billions at Stake Over Sanctions on Russia." *New York Times*, December 12, 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/12/12/world/europe/rex-tillersons-company-exxon-has-billions-at-stake-over-russia-sanctions.html.
- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Ballantine, 1966.
- McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. New York: Vintage Books, 2006.
- Nai, Alessandro, Yves Schemail, and Jean-Luis Marie. "Anxiety, Sophistication, and Resistance to Persuasion: Evidence from a Quasi-Experimental Survey on Global Climate Change." *International Society of Political Psychology* 38.1 (2017): 137–56.
- New York Times* Editorial Board. "Shed a Tear for the Reefs." *New York Times*, March 18, 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/03/18/opinion/shed-a-tear-for-the-reefs.html?_r=0/.
- Schaub, Michael. "Not an 'alternative fact': George Orwell's '1984' tops Amazon's bestseller list." *Los Angeles Times*, March 23, 2017, www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-et-jc-george-orwell-20170125-story.html.
- Solomon, Erika, Jesse Preston, and Melanie Tannenbaum. "Climate Change Helplessness and the (De)moralization of Individual Energy Behavior." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied* 23.1 (2017): 15–28.
- Wasserman, Lee. "What Rex Tillerson's Exxon Mobil Track Record Tells Us." *LA Times*, January 3, 2017, www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-wasserman-rex-tillerson-exxonmobil-20170103-story.html.

Memory and Forgetting: Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, DC

Katherine Platt
Babson College

Memorials in the public landscape easily become subject to a reverential gaze. Too much reverence can dampen curiosity and lead to passive consumption of the memorial as a “thing.” This, of course, gives way to boredom and ultimately to the habit of hurrying past without a second look as the memorials become part of the visual “white noise” of the world we live in. One of my goals as a teacher of undergraduates is to help students abandon the habit of hurrying past in favor of a vivacious reading practice of memorials as material texts. In this paper I address the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a specific core text and also the pedagogy of reading material memorial texts in general.

I treat the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a core text in my first-year interdisciplinary seminar “Memory and Forgetting” along with other texts of many different media and genres. Our pedagogy is to put vivacious texts into conversation with each other over the arch of the semester as we develop a memory-and-forgetting conceptual vocabulary. We never “finish” a text. We circle back and reconsider. Like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial itself, our reading practice is active, multi-vocal, incomplete, and open to further debate. As ambiguity and incompleteness are not comfortable conditions for many eighteen-year-olds, we must practice this reading practice.

On the National Mall, in the center of the center of the nation’s capital, the most visible of places, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is nearly invisible until you are upon it. It consists of two 246-foot-long walls of polished black granite, each of which is made up of seventy-four panels that gradually increase in height from eight inches to more than ten feet at the center, where they meet at a 125-degree angle. The

names of those who died in the Vietnam Conflict (Congress never declared war) between October 21, 1957, and May 15, 1975, are engraved in the granite. A diamond or a plus symbol indicates whether a person is confirmed dead or missing in action. The names are listed according to the day of death starting at the vertex in the center, extending to the shallow end of the east wall and then continuing from the shallow end of the west wall back to the center. This turns something linear into a circle, putting the last death next to the first death.

Although it is easily recognizable as an example of the memorial genre, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is distinctive in its liveliness and contestation. This liveliness is expressed in the generation of associated rituals that continue to develop even today, thirty-five years after its dedication. It also has a resounding voice in the battle on the National Mall for authority over the meaning of twentieth-century wars. This interactive vitality supports the treatment of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a text, a core text, as opposed to a work, to use Barthes's useful model. Blair et al. (1991) richly apply Barthes's distinction to the memorial, emphasizing that it invites interrogation and interaction rather than offering an authoritative metanarrative. In "From Work to Text," Barthes (1997) makes a distinction between a work and a text, arguing that the meaning of a work is singular, definite, and complete. By contrast, a text is dynamic, inviting an interactive reading, and it has a plurality of open-ended meaning.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is intrinsically interactive. Nearly all of the 5 million annual visitors walk down into the earth and back up along the 500-foot length of the memorial. Nearly all of them touch some of the engraved names and see their own images mirrored in the shiny black granite. Many people search for a specific name and possibly make a rubbing, which is promoted by the Park Service. Over the last thirty-five years, hundreds of thousands of spontaneous personal shrines have been left along the wall, another way for one memorial to speak to another. These personal shrines are stored by the Park Service, including the boots, bottles of whiskey, and the Harley-Davidson motorcycle that have been left. Every small shrine whispers its own story.

Rituals of every scale have been generated by the memorial. One of the most dramatic is the Run for the Wall, an annual ten-day cross-country motorcycle pilgrimage from California to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in honor of Memorial Day. Many of the nearly 10,000 riders who travel in tight disciplined formation are Vietnam veterans, their families, descendants, and supporters. Growing steadily since 1989, the pilgrimage now has three routes across the country.

The Wall itself goes on the road in the form of the Wall that Heals, a half-scale aluminum replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that travels to communities throughout the United States. Since its dedication in 1996, the Wall That Heals has visited more than 400 cities and towns. Each of these visits proliferates its own memorial rituals. Our memorial reading practice challenges us to consider what cultural, psychological, and spiritual space these rituals are meant to fill.

The first and perhaps most important idea that we discuss in the Memory and Forgetting course is Maurice Halbwachs's (1992) proposition that there is no memory without forgetting. Although many critics argued that Maya Lin "forgot" what

a war memorial is supposed to be, refraining from valorizing valor and hallowing sacrifice, her design paradoxically acknowledges that model in its departure from it. Conversely, her design “remembers” one of the most famous of all war memorials, the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. The engraving of the simple given names of the 72,246 British and South African servicemen who died in the World War I Battles of the Somme moved Maya Lin to use a nearly identical font to engrave on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial the 58,318 simple given names of the American military dead. We follow Bakhtin (1992) in asserting that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is necessarily in dialogue with memorials that went before it. Making this dialogue “visibly audible” is part of a vivacious reading practice and a reminder of another dimension of the liveliness of this specific memorial.

Halbwachs would tell us that there can be no remembering of 58,318 without forgetting. We cannot read a memorial text without asking who is not there. Early on in the life of this memorial, the absence of realistic representations of virility and sacrifice engendered a contest to include a statue of three soldiers from the three armed services. Their “in country” gear is meticulously rendered, as are their racially diverse yet stereotyped faces: one Caucasian, one Hispanic, and one African American. Once there were representations of men, the absence/exclusion of women became visible, and in 1993 the Vietnam Women’s Memorial, a statue of three uniformed women aiding a wounded male soldier, was added to the site. Further struggles over absence/exclusion have concerned the question of veterans who have died of war injuries, including suicides caused by PTSD and cancers caused by Agent Orange, since the official end of the conflict in 1975. This issue was addressed by the addition of a plaque in 2004, which reads: “In Memory of the men and women who served in the Vietnam War and later died as a result of their service. We honor and remember their sacrifice.” Although the plaque reads “In Memory,” it must also anticipate the deaths of those whose war-incurred injuries and illnesses have yet to kill them. These newcomers are not engraved on the black granite wall due to the official categorization of their war wounds; rather, they are inducted into a virtual honor roll every Memorial Day. We use the expression “cast in stone” to signal the immutable final version of something. As I write this, less than a month ago five of the MIA diamond symbols were changed to confirmed-dead plus symbols, and three new names were engraved due to a revised understanding of how and where these soldiers died. They are now officially remembered. Our vivacious reading practice encourages us to excavate the categorization that determines what and who counts and is counted and what and who does not.

Nearby on the National Mall are the 1995 Korean War Veterans Memorial and the 2004 National World War II Memorial. Since they were both designed and dedicated after the 1982 Vietnam Veterans Memorial, they have to be read as interlocutors in the often-heated memorial conversation about nation, war, and death. Neither of these designs includes individual soldiers’ names or the order of death as organizing principles. The Korean War Veterans Memorial localizes its symbols in the specifics of time and place, foregrounding detailed representations of uniforms, vehicles, weapons, technology, and specific yet anonymous scenes. Visitors walk up a hill as if on patrol, along with nineteen larger-than-life statues wearing realistic ponchos,

squinting in the imagined rain. A granite wall is etched with detailed images from unidentified photographs of various moments of the 1950–53 war. The memorial distinguishes U.S. troops from UN troops and divides each of these military populations into numbers killed, captured, and wounded.

The paradoxically youngest of these memorials, the National World War II Memorial, harkens back to classical architectural forms using triumphal arches, statues of Winged Victory, sparkling white pillars, laurel wreaths, gold stars, and exuberant fountains in a large pool. Primary distinguishing categories are the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of war and the states, districts, and territories from which the soldiers hailed. The undifferentiated dead are acknowledged on a wall of gold stars, with one star standing for 100 dead. Each system of memorial categories makes other absences visible.

In his book *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*, Viet Thanh Nguyen (2016) makes an argument about the ethics of memory and proposes a model for just memory. He says that we must first notice that our memorials and cultural memory practices are encouraging us to remember in a certain way. Generally, we are taught to see only our own humanity and the inhumanity of the other, the enemy. Just memory requires that we be equally willing and able to see our own inhumanity and the humanity of the other. Less than this, Nguyen argues, perpetuates the binary on which unjust memory (and war) depends. Nguyen often quotes philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who said that ethics is optics, a new way of looking at things, a way of looking at things that is relational at a face-to-face level. The vivacious memorial reading practice I try to nurture in my students is both a critical and an ethical practice. The critical practice recognizes the layers of meaning and considers the complexities and contradictions of design. The ethical practice notices what and who is not there and imagines other ways that it might be and could be.

Works Cited

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1992.
- Barthes, Roland. "From Work to Text." *Image Music Text*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1977.
- Blair, Carole, et al. "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: A Prototype." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991): 263–88.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: U of C Press, 1992.
- Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2016.

**Closing Meditations:
Hermeneutics and the Human Condition**

Talking with the Ancestors: Hermeneutics in the Classroom

Albert B. Fernandez
Shimer School of North Central College

An excess of history is detrimental to life.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

The theme of the 2017 conference of the Association for Core Texts and Courses was “Bridging Divides, Crossing Borders, Community Building: Core Texts, Liberal Arts, College and the Human Voice.” That covers a lot, but it would seem that the divide to be bridged that is most manifest to those of us who teach core texts is the one between contemporary students and Western authors from before the Enlightenment, especially when it comes to moral and political discourse. I heard a student say not long ago, “I don’t think that Socrates or Plato has anything to say to me.” And this paper originated in a discussion at Shimer College in Chicago during which a member of the faculty expressed dismay at knee-jerk student repudiations of Aristotle’s qualified endorsement of slavery in ancient Athens, which can be found in Book 2 of the philosopher’s *Politics*. That colleague went on to suggest that our students should be provided with more historical background, which would place them in a better or more informed position for passing judgment on the political opinions of Aristotle. As an alternate way of responding to student rejections of ancient minds, I proposed asking such students: “What would you say to Aristotle (who is present in this classroom)?” To be followed by “And, what do you suppose, based on Aristotle’s text, would be his response to you?” This paper maintains that this approach is more likely

to bridge the divide between the contemporary student or reader and the old books than historical contextualization.

“Deep is the well of the past. Should we not call it bottomless?” These are the opening lines of Thomas Mann’s *Joseph and His Brothers* (3). Actually, there is a tradition, a long-evolving school of thought, that has been devoted to plumbing that well, to bridging the gap between the present and the ancient. It’s called “hermeneutics.” Hermeneutics answers the deeply rooted desire to communicate with long-dead ancestors, without misinterpretation or distortion of what they had to say. To ask a student to attempt to converse with an author is very much within the tradition of hermeneutics and could be said to capture its essence, or to be adapted for the classroom.

Hermeneutics is itself a deep well, going back at least to early Christians attempting to understand what they had begun to call the “Old Testament” in such a way that it would be reconciled with the Gospels. This art or science of interpretation, applied to Judeo-Christian and eventually to pagan texts, came to be called “hermeneutics,” after the messenger god, Hermes. The awareness of a difference between the moral ideas and practices of the Hebrews and those of the Christians was the embryonic form of historical consciousness. Yes, the Greeks may be credited as the originators of historiography, but note how Plato and Aristotle, and even Herodotus and Thucydides, though they were aware of historical events, always treated someone’s teaching or opinion as if it did not matter how long ago or how far away those ideas were conceived.

Of course, there is value in historical contextualization, although some exponents of the Great Books type of core curriculum have claimed that “The Great Books teach themselves,” and the original Robert Maynard Hutchins curriculum for the University of Chicago excluded historical study from the undergraduate curriculum (though it was not implemented, largely because of opposition from the history department). Awareness of historical and philological knowledge helps to forestall the “presentist” fallacy, which can take several forms. Most often, presentism is based on an unexamined assumption that the ancestors were “folks just like us.” But presentism can also take the form of underscoring historical or cultural difference, while at the same time imposing a gross caricature on the past. The paradigm of what we might call “snotty presentism” would be the Enlightenment *philosophes*, who regarded medieval Christendom as an aggregate of “superstitions” that reason had simply superseded. Today, the kind of presentism that is probably most often brought up is the application of our modern moral values and judgments to persons who lived in the distant past. It is also the most debated kind, since rejection of such transhistorical judgments implies rejection of their grounds, which may be upheld as natural law, international law, universal human rights, or common decency.

It is easy to come up with examples of the value of contextualization—historical, biographical, bibliographical, etc. To properly evaluate Aristotle’s conditional acceptance of slavery, the student should know that in all civilizations, not just Western civilization, slavery was a well-established institution, a way of life; that the Athenian economy was utterly dependent on slavery; that slavery in Athens was a lot less harsh than in Sparta; and that, not just in Greece, slavery was the routine fate of prisoners of war. Indeed, such historical awareness makes it possible to see that Aristotle, in

condemning the indiscriminate enslavement of war captives, may have been the first Western thinker to recognize a group other than one's own as what we would now call "oppressed."

Yet there is a danger in contextualization, in that it can lead to evasion of the reality that we have the text because there was once a person or persons of flesh and blood who were trying to say something, however much they were cobbling and quoting from others, and that something, moreover, may call into question our own cherished ideas and values. Elucidation through contextualization can approach a mode of understanding in which what persons say and do is much like natural phenomena that can be accounted for as *caused* by historical, biographical, and/or cultural factors or forces. With the help of evocations of historical distance, whatever the ancestor said that clashes with modern values can be disposed of as . . . just the sort of thing that people thought in those days. Thus, if presentism inclines toward the assumption that everybody's folks like us, the complementary fallacy is to assume that people who can only be read about today are like Martians, and we can't possibly understand them in the way that my classroom question points to. It may be that modern education has had the effect of making the presentist fallacy recede, while unintentionally promoting the alienating fallacy of regarding the other as a being one could never understand, which ensues from the application of a strict empiricism to human subjects ("The only thing we can say about those people is . . .") On campuses today, one recurrently hears declarations in the form of "No one who is not an X, Y, or Z could possibly understand the experience of an X, Y, or Z," which unwittingly echo attitudes toward other cultures that were rife before the advent of cultural anthropology and that played into racist and orientalist attitudes ("For who can understand the dark peoples of the vast . . .").

The view that the classics "have nothing to say" to contemporary students is entirely compatible with regarding them as objects of scientific investigation. Hans Georg Gadamer, a disciple of Martin Heidegger and the great twentieth-century hermeneuticist, had this to say about scholarly contextualization:

We think we understand when we see the past from a historical standpoint—i.e. transpose ourselves into the historical situation and try to reconstruct the historical horizon. In fact, however, we have given up the claim to find in the past any truth that is valid and intelligible for ourselves. Acknowledging the otherness of the other in this way, making him the object of objective knowledge, involves the fundamental suspension of his claim to truth. (303)

How much of an evasion contextualization can be may be appreciated if we imagine addressing a student in class who says something unconventional in this way: "Well, John or Jill, it's understandable that you're saying that, considering your *background*." Of course, that would be an insult, because it implicitly denies that the speaker is the agent of what s/he says. The question, "What would you say to Aristotle, who is part of this class?" is not just a tactic for eliciting commentary on a text but is also intended to work as a channeled appellation, a relayed call reminding the student that there is another person here, a dead but speaking ancestor, who is addressing you and who should not be buried a second time. On this point, Gadamer echoes Hegel:

The experience of the Thou manifests the paradox that something standing over against me asserts its own rights and requires absolute recognition, and in that very process is “understood.” (xxxv)

Awareness of the shortcomings of scholarly contextualization emerged within the hermeneutic tradition after Hegel and during Romanticism, when Friedrich Schleiermacher distinguished between what he called “grammatical” understanding and the “psychological” kind. By the former he meant supplying background, the art of the footnote, responding to questions like “Whom did the Athenians refer to as a ‘mechanic’?” and by the latter, psychological understanding, responding to the sort of question that arises not when we do not understand vocabulary or reference but when we understand the words but not their intent or when we wonder how anyone could have seriously written such a thing.

Schleiermacher began to see that the two forms of hermeneutic differ not only in what they attend to but also in their very mode of understanding. It was Wilhelm Dilthey, later in the nineteenth century, who fully theorized the difference. For Dilthey, the explanatory mode of the natural sciences is the establishing of cause-effect relations, but in what he was the first to call the “human sciences” (*Geisteswissenschaften*), the explanatory mode consists of showing relations between part and whole, which Heidegger eventually dubbed “the hermeneutic circle.” In trying to account for a natural phenomenon, we collect data and concatenate factors that cause or impel the phenomenon. But if we’re trying to understand a person or a fictional personage, the details concerning them are not likely to be “data” but rather statements or socially meaningful actions that will in themselves require interpretation, guided by reference to the whole, to the overall psychology or “character,” which, in turn, needs to be revised so as to fit in new details, in the manner of a progressively crystallizing pattern.

The sociologist Max Weber performed a very similar sort of operation in attempting to portray “ideal types” of persons in bygone social milieus, such as the protestant follower of the work ethic in the seventeenth century, constructing the type by tacking back and forth between psychological speculation and textual and other kinds of source material, in contrast to the statistical sociology of Emil Durkheim, which followed the classic inductive approach of establishing empirical data and then drawing inferences from it. Contrasting the two kinds of social science, Weber wrote:

In the case of “social systems” (as opposed to “organisms”) we are in a position not only to formulate functional interrelations and regularities (or “laws”), but also to achieve something which must lie forever beyond the reach of all forms of “natural science.” . . . What we can do is to “understand” the behavior of the individuals involved, whereas we do *not* “understand” the behavior of, say, cells. All we can do in the case of cells is to grasp their behaviour in functional terms. (18–19)

And as José Ortega y Gasset asserts in his interpretive biography of the painter Francisco de Goya, “The primary function of the facts is to obligate us to imagine hypotheses that would account for them” (31).

Hermeneuticists do not necessarily look for what an author intended or had in mind. They may rather seek in a work an originary meaning that was in the mind of not only one author. For Gadamer, who died in 2002, what hermeneutics attempts

to retrieve is what he calls the hermeneutic “horizon” (302 & passim) or universe of meanings available to an author or authors at a given time and place.

Schleiermacher’s idea of “grammatical” hermeneutics was similar to Gadamer’s pursuit of the “horizon” in that it looked for formerly available shared meanings, but Schleiermacher’s method of “psychological” hermeneutics for understanding the psychology of old authors and poets was not like Gadamer’s. It was very much like the one that in the twentieth century Jorge Luis Borges satirized in “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote” (36): the interpreter is to *become* the author. According to Schleiermacher, readers are to abnegate themselves, to purify themselves of all modern, personal ideas or assumptions that would interfere with what he actually calls “divination” of the ancestor’s meaning.

Nowadays, when presentist distortions or burial by contextualization are detected in an academic discussion, or when contemporary political themes are perceived as being brought up too readily, a common admonition is that we should “read the text *in its own terms*.” But by now, hermeneutics recognizes that to attempt to “read a text in its own terms” is as chimerical as Pierre Menard becoming Cervantes himself. All understanding is translation. It may be the greatest insight of hermeneutic thought that the meaning of the old books is neither irretrievable in that “bottomless” well nor to be summoned like a spirit in an act of divination. Rather, the thoughts of the ancestors are brought out of concealment in a *dialogue* between the reader and the text, which proceeds back and forth between the expectations of the former and the challenges that spring from the latter.

Schleiermacher and Dilthey, as well as Gadamer, take for granted a will to understanding, and even reverence, on the part of students and readers. It is revealing in this connection that the earliest versions of Great Books courses appeared during World War I and were intended for American troops before they were sent to Europe. The idea was that if they read the Great Books, they would be more motivated to fight the Huns, notwithstanding that, as you may have noticed, the Great Books are loaded with Huns. Today most of us who teach classic texts expect and have a right to expect that will to understanding on the part of students. But, as for reverence, that was then, this is now. We cannot expect or make it a requirement for the baccalaureate degree that students agree, or approve of, or admire any book, or author, or work of art, or, for that matter, of Western civilization (and vice versa). But if disapproval is to be the outcome of a contemporary student’s encounter with Western or other classics, let it be deep disapproval. Let it be based on as deep as possible an understanding, which may well be an understanding of where the final, irreconcilable differences lie.

Gadamer, like previous hermeneuticists, assumes that students and readers of the classics will be on board with Western Civilization. He published his magnum opus, *Truth and Method*, in 1960, just a few years before the outbreak of the culture wars. Yet his theory is well suited to accommodate adversarial readers. He conceives of hermeneutic understanding as something that arises from conflict. For Gadamer, the hermeneutic encounter happens when the text, in his phrasing, “brings us up short,” or “pulls us up short” (268 & passim); that is, when we come across something that we can’t make sense of, either because the meaning is obscure or because we cannot understand how anybody could have said such a thing. For Gadamer, *that* is the most

valuable thing in a text, *that* is the learning opportunity, not because the reader is necessarily going to end up agreeing with what is being said, but because if we do not shield ourselves from being “brought up short,” the experience will make it possible to understand a psychology or a situation or a thinking that we did not understand before the shock of the text.

Within two years of Thomas Kuhn’s bringing the study of crises into the historiography of science (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*), Gadamer was seeing that the reading of texts in their historical alterity consists, most importantly and fruitfully, of paradigm challenges. To understand the thought that “brings us up short” requires exertion to see “how what is being said could be true” (292, 297), or rather, that to understand *consists* of seeing how something could be true, with what meanings, on the basis of which premises, within what horizon.

The sense of “being brought up short” is not distant from “feeling offended,” and seeing how the thought that makes us feel offended could be true is precisely what is prohibited within the narrowness of ideology, any ideology in the pejorative sense of the term intimated by Karl Marx and later worked out by Karl Mannheim. To understand, even in the sense of understanding how something could be true, is not the same as to concur. Agreement with Aristotle’s quasi-defense of slavery is not likely from a student brought up in a modern democratic culture that in countless ways, popular and esoteric, including Kant’s categorical imperative, communicates that the quintessence of the human being is freedom. But by reading Aristotle’s *Politics* with an effort to see in what way he might be speaking truth can lead to learning that for Aristotle, and many of the ancestors, hierarchy was natural, as natural as freedom was for Rousseau.

Besides modern biases or “prejudices”—a term that Gadamer, following Heidegger, redefines as nothing but the starting point for any understanding—that might impede coming to terms with minds like Aristotle’s or Rousseau’s, there are other influences in our classrooms that work against focusing on “what brings us up short” and getting as close and personal as the question that my point of departure invites. There is the dominance in academia, in spite of Hutchins and others, of the late-nineteenth-century science-oriented model of university study, sometimes called the “German Model” (not in the same sense as in economics), which goes back to Emil Durkheim and other originators of “human sciences” such as sociology and cultural anthropology, and which casts the professor, even the professor of humanities, more as a specialized scholar and researcher than as a teacher and Socratic questioner. The dispassionate professionalism prescribed for all branches of study by the late-nineteenth-century model dovetails with the wish to avoid unseemly contention in the classroom, which can grow into a form of what Plato called “misology.” Additionally, the tail-wagging-the-dog importance of recruitment and retention in contemporary American colleges likewise discourages discussions in which students can get upset. And yet in the humanities and in social thought, it is not possible to take seriously many of the questions raised by major authors—what is justice? what is virtue?—without risking distress and angst among students. Sticking to scholarly contextualization, however, is a way to bypass such potential hot spots.

There is yet one more influence that works against hermeneutic and, in general,

humanist approaches that cannot pass unmentioned here because of the directness of its challenge and the genuine forcefulness of its arguments. If hermeneutics can be thought of as an attempt to recover presence, albeit in the imperfect form of a ghostly interlocutor, it hardly needs saying that it is vigorously challenged by postmodernist philosophy and literary theory. The additional space it would require to rehearse the arguments against the possibility of recovering original meaning is, however, not really needed in this context, because ultimately, the reason for hermeneutics—for attempting to recover authorial meaning—is not that it's the best way of reading, or that it results in more complete or more reliable interpretations, or that the recovery of authorial presence is even fully achievable, or any reason that arises from literary theory and criticism. The reason for being of hermeneutics is *ethical*. Irreducibly, every text refers to a person or persons of flesh and blood who were trying to say something. And to try to understand what they said is a matter of respect for the dead.

Works Cited

- Aristotle. *Politics*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote." Trans. James E. Irby. In *Labyrinths*. Ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby. New York: New Directions, 2007.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Trans. W. Glen-Doepel, Joel Weinsheimer, and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Continuum, 1997.
- Mann, Thomas. *Joseph and His Brothers*. Trans. John E. Woods. New York: Everyman's Library—Knopf, 2005.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*. Trans. Adrian Collins. New York: Liberal Arts—Macmillan, 1957.
- Ortega y Gasset, José. *Goya*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1962.
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *Hermeneutics and Criticism: And Other Writings*. Ed. Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: University Press, 1998.
- Weber, Max. "The Nature of Social Action." In *Weber: Selections in Translation*. Trans. E. Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978.

Honey, Please: Emerson & Merleau-Ponty on the Human Condition

Mary Catherine McDonald
Old Dominion University

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Maurice Merleau-Ponty are two philosophers who are not often brought together, and most certainly not on the topic of loss and honey. After all, Emerson died two decades before Merleau-Ponty was born. However, these gaps of time and topic are easily bridged, and doing so sheds light on each. Both philosophers talk about the human condition as it is mediated through our experience with the slippery and sticky external world. In this paper, I will look closely at two passages, one from Emerson and one from Merleau-Ponty. In each passage they discuss grasping and slipping away, both to illustrate a particular experience with the world and to underscore a part of the human condition.

Emerson takes “the evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition” (*Essays* 473). Emerson’s comment is curiously echoed by Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological reflections on honey: “While it undoubtedly has a certain consistency and allows itself to be grasped, [honey] soon creeps slyly from the fingers and returns to where it started from. It comes apart as soon as it has been given a particular shape and . . . reverses the roles by grasping the hands of whoever would take hold of it” (60–61).

I will do three things with these two passages in order to build a bridge from Emerson to Merleau-Ponty. The first is consider for both authors the following question: In what way is the instability or impermanence of *objects* reflective of the human condition? In other words, why does the lubricity of objects say anything about us?

Second, I will point out something that is implicit in Emerson and more explicit

in Merleau-Ponty, which is that *we* are also lubricious. There is a way of reading Emerson here that can trick us into thinking that the world and the people in it are objects for us to grasp. We might think that the lesson is that when objects slip through our fingers we are disappointed, and nature reminds us that we are not in charge. If we think about lubricity being bivalent—if it goes both ways, meaning that which grasps also slips away—then Emerson’s statement becomes even more profound.

Finally, I will suggest that these philosophers are talking about the human condition in a much larger sense than it may seem. Emerson is not just talking about instances in which we lose, and Merleau-Ponty is not just talking about the way that we interact with objects in the world. They *both* remark that they are illuminating the human condition in these paradigms. So what are they saying, exactly? I will propose that they are suggesting that the human condition is marked by lubricity. In other words, in some foundational way, what it means to be human is to grasp what is slipping away, and to be grasped while slipping away. A continuous grasping and slipping away constitutes all of our relationships, both with people and with the world.

Emerson’s passage can be found in his essay “Experience.” Emerson remarks that the most unhandsome part of the human condition is “the evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest” (*Essays*, 473). This statement is curious. How are the instability and impermanence of *objects* somehow the most unhandsome part of the *human* condition? As I said earlier, this is not a mistake or a clumsy statement. It is rather a commentary on the nature of human existence, the entangled nature of our relationships with people and things, and our precarious (and permanent) placement on the precipice of loss.

In “Experience,” Emerson is mourning the loss of his son Waldo: Waldo, who was “my little Waldo” (Porte, 198). Waldo, who “when he came to a tuft of violets in the wood, knelt down on the ground, smell[ed] of them, kiss[ed] them, & depart[ed] without plucking them” (277). Waldo, who “gave up his little innocent breath like a bird” (276). This loss wasn’t Emerson’s first brush with death, but his writings suggest that it was *by far* his most astonishing loss.

If we think of losses like turning over unfamiliar soil, sometimes we are left with dry clay that will not yield any growth. Other times, we are left with rich, fertile soil that yields new growth. In many ways, we could say that the loss of Waldo was Emerson’s richest loss. It brought him his greatest grief, but it also brought him to this realization, not just about himself but also about the human condition—namely, that we clutch. In fact, when we feel like what we are clutching is slipping, we clutch all the harder. We cannot help it. It is in our nature.

Many might interpret Emerson’s description of “clutching” as “unhandsome” as a sign of his coldness. He seems to be remarking, from a distance, that grief is an *unseemly* part of our nature, one that is unnecessary, overly emotional, and one that we should reject or conquer. Perhaps that is not quite right. Stanley Cavell has suggested that Emerson chose the word in order to anticipate the “hand” that clutches. It is even possible that Emerson is quoting Shakespeare here.¹ One of the first uses of “unhandsome” appears in *Henry IV* in reference to the carrying of corpses. In the scene, soldiers are berated for carrying the “unhandsome” corpses too close to their superior. Maybe Emerson was remarking on the fact that we continue clutching even

through and past death. We cannot let go. We clutch the dead.

Or perhaps instead of removing himself from his grief, Emerson was trying to get at the inevitability of it, the innateness of this tendency to clutch, this tendency of the things we clutch to slip away. The state of being handsome or unhandsome is something we are born with; it is not something one can change. In this way, Emerson suggests closeness rather than distance. Our unhandsomeness is written in our blood; it is inherent, unavoidable. We are made to clutch, and the world is made to resist.

Emerson's essay, then, can be regarded as a piece that helps us understand how to grieve, what it means to grieve, what constitutes grieving. In so doing, Emerson ended up inevitably explaining this most unhandsome part of our condition. However, what he ended up hinting at was something more foundational than that—more fertile, more fruitful—an undercurrent that defines all of our relationships with each other.

In her book *The Empathy Exams*, Leslie Jamison writes, "A root system of loss stretches radial and rhizomatic under the entire territory of my life" (5). It is a beautiful phrase, and she is writing of her own experience, but it is true of all of us, all the time. Merleau-Ponty can help us live into an explanation.

If Emerson can teach us about our human condition and the way we clutch that which we cannot hold, Merleau-Ponty reminds us that we also cannot be held, that this relationship is bivalent. In all of our clutching, we are also slipping away. In all of our losing, we are also being lost. Though it may sound like a contradiction, it is this "root system" of loss that defines our connections with one another and makes them possible.

In a series of radio addresses commissioned by French national radio in 1948 (over a hundred years after the publication of "Experience"), Merleau-Ponty gave seven lectures intended to serve as an introduction to his work. The lectures spanned all manner of topics, from politics to art and literature, from embodiment to perception.

The lecture that is most relevant here is the third one, "Exploring the World of Perception: Sensory Objects." In it, Merleau-Ponty considers what it means to be a being-in-a-world—a world defined at least in part by what and how one perceives. Since Merleau-Ponty is a phenomenologist, his account is more tactile and fleshier than Emerson's. He considers the experience of honeyedness as paradigmatic of human experience.

Honey is a slow-moving liquid; while it undoubtedly has a certain consistency and allows itself to be grasped, it soon creeps slyly from the fingers and returns to where it started from. It comes apart as soon as it has been given a particular shape and, what is more, it reverses the roles by grasping the hands of whoever would take hold of it. The living, exploring hand which thought it could master this thing instead discovers that it is embroiled in a sticky external object. (60–61)

We can weave our way through this passage from the end back to the beginning. At the end, we find ourselves back at our hands, back to lubricity, back to the experiencing of clutching that which resists being held, that which slips through our fingers even faster the harder we hold. And then, we are back to the object. Just like with

Emerson, it is again the object that is doing the slipping away, coming apart as soon as it is given shape. And yet, if we go to the beginning of the passage, somewhat curiously we see that this description of objects is supposed to tell us something about *us* and our experience, *not* the outside world.

What matters about the honey is not simply that it is lubricious, that it is sticky, that it slips through our fingers—but *that we experience it that way*. This is how we meet the honey in the world, and how it behaves is what it *means* to us. So when we use the word “honeyed,” we are not just describing something in the strict sense of “using a descriptor,” we are assigning meaning to it—a meaning that would not be possible were it not for our bodied experience in the world.

Further—and this is a crucial phenomenological point—we consider ourselves masters, arbiters of control over the external world. We are subjects, and the things we encounter are merely objects to be overtaken. But the honey “reverses the roles.” *It grasps us*—as it slips away. Just like that, we are embroiled in a game that we did not choose.

If we return to Emerson for a moment, we might notice that Waldo is like the honey in this way. He grasps Emerson even as he slips away. In the same journal entry, Emerson writes, “It seems as if I ought to call upon the winds to describe my boy, my fast receding boy” (Porte 277). Waldo slips away. And then, “Every place is handsome or tolerable where he has been. Once he sat in the pew” (277). Waldo grasps. Waldo’s presence is not diminished by his absence—in a way it seems his absence *magnifies* his presence.

This is not all. As with the Emerson passage, there is something even deeper and more foundational going on here. Merleau-Ponty continues:

Sartre, who must take the credit for this elegant analysis, writes: “in one sense it is like the supreme docility of the possessed, the fidelity of a dog who gives himself even when one does not want him any longer, and in another sense there is underneath this docility a surreptitious appropriation of the possessor by the possessed.” So the quality of being honeyed—and this is why this epithet can be used to symbolise an entire pattern of human behaviour—can only be understood in the light of the dialogue between me as an embodied subject and the external object which bears this quality. (61)

The honey, in one sense, is an object. I pick it up, I put it in my hands, play with it. In another sense, it defies me. It sticks to me and then slips away. I cannot get it to do what I want. I am possessed by *it*. We are not just talking about honey anymore. This is the *entire* human theater; connection, friendship, love, and loss, in one metaphor about honey.

This is what Merleau-Ponty means when he says that this epithet can be used to symbolize an entire human pattern of behavior. We are always at the same time both the subject (the person playing with the honey) and the object (the honey). As Merleau-Ponty says, in the middle of the game, the roles get reversed. We are at once wanting and wanted, docile and empowered, possessor and possessed. Even the pitiful, docile dog—unwanted—possesses us, grasps us.

To return to Emerson’s words, we are not just unhandsome in that we think we

can grasp that which cannot be held (which leaves us with messy, sticky hands). Our unhandsomeness extends to our honeyedness. We allow ourselves to be grasped and then we creep slyly away—we *cannot help it*. We ask to be given a shape, and then as soon as we get it, we come apart—again, we cannot help it. We trick ourselves into thinking that we are the “living, exploring, hand,” but we are also lubricious and evanescent.

In the *Work of Mourning*, Derrida writes,

To have a friend, to look at him, to follow him with your eyes, to admire him in friendship, is to know in a more intense way, already injured, always insistent, and more and more unforgettable, that one of the two of you will inevitably see the other die. (107)

All of our relationships are marked with inevitable loss. It looms large on the horizon, an ever-present specter. That passage takes the breath away in its truth. However, what Merleau-Ponty shows us with the example of the honey is that the loss is not looming, it is *already here*. At the very moment when we connect, we already begin slipping away. Our relationships are comprised—indeed constituted—by becoming entangled and then slipping away.

It is helpful to consider desire alongside of death in order to understand this. When we desire someone else we *long* for them. What does that mean? In Old English, to long is to yearn after, to grieve. Isn't that strange? *In the midst of desire, we are already grieving*. Then, when we connect with one another, there is a kind of reaching out. I tell you something about myself; I show you something of mine. “The honey allows itself to be grasped.” But what I give you—a thought, a secret, a hug—recedes as soon as it is given. “The honey creeps slyly from the fingers and returns to where it started from.” Then I ask something of you, what do you think? How do you feel? What do you like? “The honey reverses the roles by grasping the hands of whoever would take hold of it.” Just like that, we are embroiled. We do not need death to lose—we are slipping away from each other all the time.

Taken together, Emerson and Merleau-Ponty suggest that we are not just unhandy in that we think we can grasp that which cannot be held. Our condition mirrors that of the honey. We allow ourselves to be grasped only (and inevitably) to “creep slyly” away while somehow adhering to people and things. Neither fully grasping, nor fully grasped, we live our lubricity through the practice of philosophy.

Though there are over a hundred years between them, these essays come together to issue a philosophical corrective. They serve to remind us that despite all of the mastery that we think we have but do not *have*, we are not *intact*. What it means to be human is to be transient, to come undone, to grasp and to lose, to mourn and to heal, and then to forget and try to clutch all over again.

This is our job—to struggle with this and to try not to get too stuck on the clutching or the keening—and thankfully, honey is sweet and abundant. As Emerson remarked in a lecture in 1855, “When love has reached this height that all our pretty rhetoric begins to have meaning . . . it adds to the soul a new soul, it is honey in the mouth, music in the ear and balsam in the heart” (*Later Lectures*, 23).

Note

1. This is not actually that much of a leap. Emerson was heavily influenced by Shakespeare, who appears in his “Representative Men,” as well as in his *Letters*. Further, parts of *Henry IV* appear in a poetry anthology (*Parnassus* 1880) edited by Emerson.

Works Cited

- Cavell, Stanley. *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford UP, 2003.
- Derrida, Jacques. *The Work of Mourning*. U Chicago P, 2001.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Essays & Lectures*. New York: Penguin, 1983.
- . *The Later Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson: 1843–1871*. Ed. Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson. U of Georgia P, 2010.
- , ed. *Parnassus: An Anthology of Poetry*. Boston: Houghton, Osgood, 1880; Bartleby.com, 2013.
- Jamison, Leslie. *The Empathy Exams*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2014.
- Porte, Joel. *Emerson in His Journals*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982.
- Shakespeare, William, and David M. Bevington. *Henry IV, Part 1*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994.

Association for Core Texts and Courses
ACTC Liberal Arts Institute at the University of Dallas
Box 725, 1845 E. Northgate Drive
Irving, TX 75062
www.coretexts.org