

The Journal of the Core Curriculum

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*The Journal of
the
Core Curriculum
Spring 2000*

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Dedication

The other day in discussion, Dean Jorgensen told our class that if we came to a passage in a book that we didn't understand, we should put a mark next to it and ask about it in class. He said we should do the same thing for any lines we found especially beautiful. He mentioned almost as an afterthought that it was a good habit to acquire for life, as well. I think this advice is indicative of Dean J's attitude and the attitude of all our Core professors. You challenge us to think about problems, appreciate the beauty of great science and art, and take what we have learned into our lives. Each of you fosters these qualities in us in different ways, from Professor Speight's sympathetic head tilt encouraging students to articulate their sudden profound realizations to the vast number of ways Professor Crovella draws DNA on the chalkboard attempting to make it tangible. This is one of the reasons we stay in Core, because we understand that our professors genuinely care about us. It is difficult for most of us to articulate how much we appreciate the variety of things we learn in your classes. The Core Journal is one way we can show you that you have succeeded. We have puzzled over paradoxes and learned to enjoy the challenges presented by great thinkers. We have even been inspired to make art of our own. The following poem I wrote specifically for one person, but both this journal and this poem are for all of you, our teachers. To loosely quote Dean J, you are certainly some of the best educators to come down the pike.

For Dean J
by Liz Jones

There's a man I've seen,
Who it seems to me could sit
Content on that hospitable hill
Under the brightness of the sky,
His clear eyes lighted
By the truths and voices and visions
He ponders profoundly.

Instead he travels down
the hill, down
the avenue, down
the steps, down
into the dark
Depths of young confident minds,
Wild and suspicious.

Undaunted, he brandishes his bravery in the face of enemies
Who can't be seen.
He lifts his chin, clenches his fists and stares that demon apathy down,
Not allowing
It to merely lounge cool in the dampness,
Staring at screens or hitting the snooze button.
Not allowing
It to defeat him
In sweaty classrooms on sleepy snowy mornings.
Not allowing
Narrow minds to slam their doors.
He doesn't wince at the
Foolish cries of the naysayers
Loudly declaring that they don't
Like philosophy.
He punches holes in the ceiling
Until even the most persistently lazy creature
Looks up in curiosity, and wanders,
(Perhaps is propelled) upward.

When we arrive,
Gasping, blinking, in the sun,
Still he persists, struggles until
We love, until
We're hungering for more, until
We're pulling out ropes of our own
And are making ourselves
Climb still closer,
Lifting up our faces and
Drinking bright clarity.
Until we're flourishing, glistening
In the light that surrounds and warms us.

His face flushing with pride and beaming with joy,
He turns away,
Goes down
the avenue, down
the steps, down
the steep, winding path, down
Into the depths
of the dark, damp cave
For those who've been left behind.

Esprit de Core

by Scott C. Mohr

I think one could possibly demonstrate scientifically that the most important things in life are unplanned and unforeseen. Not that planning isn't important, but one mustn't lay too much stock by it. When I reflect on my contact with the Core Curriculum which extends from 199_ to the present (with the hiatus of one sabbatical year), the thing which stands out in my mind isn't brilliant lectures, good discussions, wonderfully written papers and home-run-quality exams – though we try hard to plan for these and successfully produce many every year. Rather it's something much more fundamental, not as easy to document, and not exactly planned.¹ I refer, of course, to the invisible, but powerful state of mind which, like gravity, pulls everything in the Core together.

How can I define this non-material reality? Perhaps it's best to describe how I sense it, to set out a brief phenomenology of the *esprit* or *Geist* that animates us.² I think it consists of six parts. First and foremost comes a hunger for knowledge and a joy in learning. To a degree unparalleled in most of my other teaching assignments over the past thirty-one years at Boston University, I find students in Core sections intensely curious, eager to learn and excited by "getting it right." Teaching, as everyone knows, has mediocre monetary rewards, but dealing with students who are thrilled by what they learn is a large reward no dedicated teacher can fail to appreciate. A parallel phenomenon prevails among Core faculty. Naturally, all scholars should have lifelong curiosity and their learning should never end, but I sense that my Core faculty colleagues have these qualities to an above-average degree. They also direct them towards disciplines outside their own narrow fields, thereby displaying what I consider to be superior role models.

Which brings me to the second key feature of the Core spirit: its catholicity (with a lower-case "c"). I immediately think of Dean Robert Neville's magnificent Tai Chi demonstration during a CC 102 lecture several years ago (during which one could have heard a pin drop in the Tsai Center). The sight of a Western theologian, expertly and with great reverence, presenting a central practice from Eastern culture speaks volumes about the breadth and inclusiveness of the content of Core—which students and faculty alike endorse with unhesitating enthusiasm. Naturally I care very much about getting across the ideas and animating spirit of science, and I have found most Core students receptive—though sometimes apprehensive! Many of my non-science colleagues among the Core faculty have been very supportive in this regard also—from Professor Christopher Ricks' passing along the poem about "The learned astronomer" to Professors Stephanie Nelson and Greg Fried taking time from their busy schedules to sit in on science lectures (and in Professor Nelson's case, discussions as well). As we move out of a century notorious for its fragmentation of intellect and culture, I feel very strongly the need for integration and wholeness—and that certainly includes science.

¹ Though I sometimes think that in his infinite patience and wisdom, Dean Jorgensen plans this as he does virtually everything else!

² I do apologize for the dreadful, but irresistible pun of my title, by the way.

I sense that students also crave to understand where everything fits into a *single* whole as they make their way through a *university* and try to comprehend their place in a *universe* that somehow includes Newton and Nietzsche, Dante and Darwin, Plato and Freud. Perhaps they can take consolation from the wave/particle duality, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, the relativistic twin paradox, Gödel's incompleteness theorem and other sometimes baffling, counter-intuitive concepts that we present in CC 104. If the systematic, rational approach to the physical universe forces us to tolerate the coexistence of paradoxes and apparent opposites, we may feel less disappointed if our demand for wholeness in the human sphere isn't adequately met by some simplistic consensus. In this context, however, the Core's breadth also provides a significant range of perspectives that may afford an opportunity to attain wholeness by transcending any single viewpoint.

Another key feature of the Core way is conversation. At Williams College my mentors were fond of quoting James A. Garfield's definition of the ideal college as "a student sitting on one end of a log and Mark Hopkins sitting on the other." (Hopkins was Williams' president from 1836 to 1872.) Anyone familiar with the Core floor in Warren Towers or the special subculture of the work-study students of the Core Office (which has an amazing way of perpetuating itself) knows that part of the Core experience consists of extended, often-penetrating conversations. And in my best moments as a teacher I have managed to provoke serious and even passionate conversations in my discussion classes. When I ask myself what we're trying to achieve with the Core Curriculum, one answer that immediately comes to mind is that we want to facilitate the development of informed conversationalists who can engage each other on a range of topics that broadly covers the (high) cultural and intellectual landscape. We hope that by the time students finish Core no major field of human learning is completely foreign to them.

Of course the "conversation" our students engage in extends far beyond the present. I remember a television program hosted by the comedian Steve Allen many years ago, each installment of which featured four actors impersonating famous figures from disparate periods of history, literature, art, etc., who sat around a dinner table discussing topics appropriate to their characters. Very importantly—to preserve peace and decorum—Allen acted as the host and moderator. Of course it was meant to be funny (imagine a conversation between Napoleon and Cleopatra...), but there was a serious side also. The idea that great thinkers and artists inspire one another and interact across time and distance is centrally important for the understanding of human culture. The notion that students (and their teachers) can partake of this great conversation is the core of the Core. In contrast to any other undergraduate liberal arts program, I think the Core prepares students so that if asked, they could probably sit down and dash off the script for a pretty convincing dialog between, say Aristotle and Shakespeare (and maybe even between Newton and Einstein!).

Implicit in the idea of conversation is the prerequisite of civility, of manners and of consideration for one's interlocutor. This constitutes a fifth element of what I observe to be characteristic of Core people: they listen as well as speak, and though they often disagree, they do so without disparagement. The shared value of the interchange of ideas surpasses insistence upon the supremacy of any one person's particular set of ideas (most of the time...). I think this aspect is especially important for the freshmen, many of whom are reluctant to speak up lest they be ridiculed. Core is not a place of ridicule, and the shelter it provides by virtue of its civility probably plays an important part in nurturing students who would otherwise hesitate to develop their talent for self-expression. Among the faculty this ethos of mutual respect also plays a key role. Sad to say, even in those temples of learning

that we call universities, scholars and teachers all too often fall into the old tribal, parochial trap of dismissing the concerns and approaches of those in fields different from their own as trivial and meaningless at best, and perhaps downright pernicious. (I would be less than honest not to say that this attitude directed toward scientists by their non-science colleagues causes me great pain. And I also have to bemoan the corresponding reciprocal prejudices of some of my science colleagues – not, however, including any who teach in Core!) At any rate, simple common sense says that a closed mind has no way to expand its content. By our efforts, formally in integrating forums, and informally by the way we speak to and of one another, Core students and faculty try to avoid this particularly common, regrettable pitfall in the life of the mind.

The final pillar in my attempt to define the spirit of the Core can be best expressed by a favorite quotation of mine from Alfred North Whitehead: "Ideas," he said, "won't keep. Something must be done about them." What fools we would be to make all the effort that we do to teach and learn the content of the Core Curriculum if all that amounted to was the perfunctory filling of a requirement, a mere going through motions! Whether our primary concern at any given moment is figuring out how better to live our individual lives or how to change the world, the depth of familiarity with the struggles and inspirations of our forebearers plus the experience of clear and critical thinking that the Core provides makes a difference. It's my sense that students relate to this – indeed, contribute to it! – in a big way. In CC 103 we put forward the conclusion that humans are thinking apes, but the emphasis falls on the first word: we are *thinking* apes. This is our destiny and it matters. It matters more than anything else.

So that's my take on the unplanned, unquantifiable esprit of Core: hunger for knowledge and joy in learning; catholic and inclusive approaches to subject matter; continual efforts to integrate knowledge; meaningful, deep conversations; mutual respect among students and teachers; and a deep-seated belief in the power and importance of ideas. I'm sure Mark Hopkins would approve.

Table of Contents

The Almighty Luddite <i>by Peter Glenn</i>	1
Twenty Years <i>by Erik Nielson</i>	4
Neural Networks: Designing a Mind <i>by Dorian Fox</i>	5
Hey Guys, Help Me Out... <i>by Annmarie Buckley</i>	7
Disregard This Frail Vessel <i>by Jeremy A. Marvel</i>	12
It All Fits Together <i>by David Roochnik</i>	16
An Analysis of Selections from Steven Pinker's <i>How the Mind Works</i> <i>by Karolina Lyznik</i>	17
Images of the Immutable <i>by Elizabeth Churchill</i>	24
Jesus as a Threat to the Socio-Political Structure during the Roman Empire <i>by Andrew Sammut</i>	28
A Joke <i>by Scott Mohr</i>	33
Justice in the Oresteia <i>by Nathaniel Berndt</i>	34
Creativity & Mental Illness: Understanding the "Mad" Genius <i>by Laila Ayad</i>	39
The Analects of Professor Nelson <i>by Matthew Spencer</i>	42
A Second Pilgrimage <i>by Elizabeth Beriau</i>	43
The Untold Adventure: Don Quixote & Sancho Meet King Machiavelli & Calvin the Odd <i>by Dennis Flanders</i>	49
The More Things Change <i>by Alexey Mohr</i>	55
Giovanni Pico: His Life & Work <i>by Camilla MacKeprang</i>	60
Smurf Village Lost: The Disillusionment of Smurfette <i>by Bethany Gumper</i>	64
Review Sessions <i>by Stephanie Nelson</i>	69
Civilization: Naiveté Can Be Good <i>by Danielle Leo</i>	70
Myth & Music in Mozart's Don Giovanni <i>by David Gelles</i>	73
Erikson's "John Henry" as a Goffmanian Performer <i>by Nicole Sawyer</i>	78
What Should She Know of Death? An Analysis of "We Are Seven" <i>by William</i> <i>Wordsworth by Joanna Upton</i>	81
Of Life, Laughter, Madness, & Tears <i>by Lydia Smith</i>	89
In the Media Booth: A Reminiscence <i>by Brian Jorgensen</i>	92



Illustrations

Photo <i>by Melanie Funken</i>	11
Don Quixote & Sancho Panza <i>photo by Bethany Gumper</i>	48
False Consciousness & You <i>watercolor by Ben Di Sibio</i>	63
Map of Xanadu <i>drawing by Alexey Mohr</i>	87

**The Almighty Luddite:
Technology in The Tower of Babel, and How it Irritated God**
by Peter Glenn

In just nine verses, the story of The Tower of Babel tells a puzzling story in which God seems to malevolently hinder man's progress. God's lashing out at the cutting-edge technology of the people—namely bricks and tar—strikes a similarity to the story of the machine-smashing Luddites of the Industrial Revolution. Perhaps God is actually the first “Luddite”. If so, what does his choice of language as the means to undo the people's progress suggest? The following analysis will seek to unravel a common thread among this story's disparate cast of language, construction, and God.

Like the factory managers of the Luddites, Noah's descendants had come up with an ingenious new technology. Genesis 11:3b says, “They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.” Although the distinction between brick and stone is a subtle detail to the modern reader, the invention of bricks at that time can be considered analogous to the more recent invention of integrated circuits. Suddenly, the painstaking task of manually fitting together oddly shaped rocks was obsolete. Unskilled workers could throw together some generic pieces according to an algorithmic process, and the resulting construction would be much sturdier than its piecemeal counterpart. The scale on which the skilled designer operated was enlarged from laying individual stones to conceptualizing overall architecture. In reality, this was a technological leap with ramifications similar to the more recent leap from horse-drawn carriage to locomotive.

The Luddites of the Industrial Revolution were not actually opposed to the principle of technology. Their anger was directed at the improper *use* of machines to trivialize their skills¹. This clarification makes the label of “Luddite” all the more relevant to God's actions against the Babylonian society. For Noah's descendants, the simple invention of tar and bricks seemed to remove their dependency on his rocks and mud, and unlocked in their imaginations the egotistical notion that, one-by-one, they would be able to replace the provisions of God with objects of their own cunning. Had the people not taken such pride in their invention, God might have approved of their progress. But because the Babylonians usurped his authority with bold claims of their own divinity, God set out to tame their rampant egos with a little dose of reality. His curious solution (typical of God) was to strike a dampening blow with the grossly overlooked invention of his own: *language*.

The relevance of language is not immediately apparent. Typically, the God of the Old Testament exhibited an ironic sense of fairness and invoked punishments that were eerily befitting of the crime. To punish technological egotism with divisive language seems to be a far stretch from the typical “eye for an eye” logic. But a correlation is drawn in Genesis 11:3: “They said to each other, ‘Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly’. They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.” Bricks and tar, the very inventions that enabled the Babylonians' self-praising undertaking, were direct products of the

ability of the people to communicate their technique to each other. In a story with such a short account, the significance of the cause and effect rhetoric in this verse is greatly magnified.

At this point, an explanation of God's actions can be made. Apparently, God was upset with the people's aspirations, so he struck a crippling blow to the root of the problem, and thus ensured that it would not resurface. As with most stabs at explaining God's actions, this is an oversimplification of the matter. God might just as easily have destroyed the tower and made their bricks crumble. This surely would have humbled the people, just as any modern technological catastrophe does. Instead, God's solution left the tower intact and did nothing to cripple the people's technology. His action was not retaliation; rather it served to teach the people that their progress was all right, but that a clear distinction lay between it and his wonders.

In order to highlight the great distinction, God first needed a parallel on his side of the divide so that the matters could be compared in the same terms. Some modern thinkers consider language to be a technology, equally subject to the dynamics implied by the classification as computers, airplanes, or the radioⁱⁱ. If we experimentally retrofit the Tower of Babel story with this notion of language, the justice in God's reaction becomes quite clear. No longer is the comparison one of apples and oranges. When put on the same playing field, the people's invention turned out to be in a totally different *league* from God's technology. The claim of invention still belonged to the people, but the technology of language clearly played a crucial role in bringing their ideas to fruition.

Language was God's technology, literally, from the beginning. God used language to create every-

thing. He gave it to people to separate them from the animals and to enable them to talk with Him. Language had an absolute power and grip on reality in the Old Testament, which it does not have today. God did not beat around the bush when he told Abraham to "Go". When Jephthah realized that his promise to God meant that he must kill his daughter, he regretted his words but did not claim that he had actually meant something different by them. He said, quite simply, "Alas, my daughter! you have brought me very low, and you have become the cause of great trouble to me; for I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot take back my vow." To which she responded, "My father, if you have opened your mouth to the Lord, do to me according to what has gone forth from your mouth."ⁱⁱⁱ This contrasts to modern day events, in which words are carefully selected for the desired psychological *effect*,^{iv} and previous assertions take on metamorphic meanings.

Whether this transition took place by the progression of intellectual understanding throughout the centuries or because of an Almighty act at the Tower of Babel is a matter of personal conviction. Crucial to interpreting this story is the understanding that God's tool of choice was not language in the modern sense, but a more potent form of language that made man unique as a creation of God. Those who lost language were ostracized from God's party, almost as if they had lost their Ethernet connection. In this sense, the Babylonian's desire to "make a name for ourselves"^v was an ignorant misuse of God's technology.

The ability to communicate clearly led the people to cast themselves in the image of God. His lesson demonstrated their error in attempting to use scientific reasoning to reposition him. Not merely a more advanced scientist, God was a completely

different, and perhaps complementary, entity. By not destroying the people's new invention, he clearly illustrated that it did not begin to threaten his divinity.

Modern scientists are just as likely to fall prey to delusions of grandeur in the face of flashy new technology as the Babylonians were. As recently as the 1970s, developments in computers prompted such claims as this:

"There are now in the world machines that think, that learn and create. Moreover, their ability to do

these things is going to increase rapidly until — in the visible future — the range of problems they can handle will be co-extensive with the range to which the human mind has been applied."^{vi}

The irony, of course, is that artificial intelligence has not even begun to imitate the strong fabric of the human mind. Simple, subtle, yet packed with meaning, God's instrumental use of technology in The Tower of Babel hints at the dynamism of his game play, and perhaps forebodes modern attempts to scientifically imitate or discredit him.

ⁱ Theodore Roszak clarifies the intentions of the Luddites in *The Cult of Information* as follows "Historians now tell us that the original Luddites may have taken a bad rap. The hard-pressed weavers of northern England who rallied around the mythical General Ludd appear to have had no grudge against technology in and of itself; their grievance was with those who used machines to lower wages or eliminate jobs." (p. xviii) He does not support this claim with references.

ⁱⁱ Marshall McLuhan used the metaphor of language as a technology extensively.

ⁱⁱⁱ Judges 11:29-36; RSV

^{iv} For example, I. A. Richards, in *Practical Criticism* (1929), stresses the importance of studying the effect of the grammar and dialectic in poetry, rather than looking for an absolute meaning in the author's words.

^v Genesis 11:4; RSV

^{vi} Newell and Simon, originally quoted in Joseph Weizenbaum, *Computer Power and Human Reason* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1976), p. 138

Twenty Years

by Erik Nielson

When they had rinsed the blood from the hall,
Made peace with the suitors' fathers, seen his,
Hired some new servants to replace the dead,
The family talked, relating their respective histories.
A few days later, in the morning, the returned hero
Awoke, leaving his strange wife in bed, walked
Alone to the kitchens, past the familiar walls
With new tapestries, not really to his taste,
Asked an unfamiliar servant for his food,
Sat down to eat in the clean-scrubbed hall,
Observed the furnishings of the hall appraisingly,
And judged the designer's taste adequate at least.
The sausage was not cooked as he liked.
He finished his meal, walked out the door,
Tripping over a first step he had forgotten.
He went to the stables, but recognized few horses,
Old ones, that he had remembered as young.
He went to the kennels, and the dogs barked accusingly.
He walked down to the shore, looked out
At the harbor, dismissing a sudden wild impulse,
Sat down on a rock facing the water, staring forward,
Silent, alone. Odysseus was home at last.

Neural Networks: Designing a Mind

by Dorian Fox

Of the infinite unknowns upon which modern scientific endeavors are based, perhaps the most intriguing and potentially revealing is the nature of human cognition. The answer to this quandary is so much a part of our identity as human beings that it seems almost impossible to ponder. How does one analyze that which is used to analyze? Despite the apparent difficulties inherent in questioning our capacity for thought and awareness, science has begun to shed light on this obscure realm of human curiosity. However, the study of the physiological brain itself has not been the sole source of experimentation and feedback. Interestingly, computers have played a key role in our ever-growing understanding of how we think. By recreating the neural networks of the brain with computer programs, scientists have modeled the learning processes on which our thinking is supposedly based and provided a means of objectively viewing just how incredible the mind is.

Years of experimentation with artificial neural networks have underscored their self-sufficiency in learning and ability to categorize, both of which arise through time and training but nonetheless present an ideal representation of human cognitive abilities. These qualities are elucidated as "DECtalk" and "NETtalk",

computer programs capable of vocalizing text, are compared. The first step in DECtalk's transformation of visual input into audible output is to scan the given text. This information is then fed into a computer program that identifies each letter and produces an output coding for its corresponding sound. Although a given letter may represent several diverse sounds, DECtalk counters this ambiguity by examining each letter within a seven letter "context window", thus accounting for the influence of surrounding text. Finally, through the use of a synthesizer, the completed output is expressed as spoken word.

The interpretive power of DECtalk is a result of the multifarious rules, each individually programmed over a span of years, that govern its output. With the employment of an artificial neural network, the creators of NETtalk were able to capture this same power in mere hours. Each letter in a training script, expressed within a context window identical to that of DECtalk, was paired with its appropriate sound. These seven letter displays were then introduced to the input layer of the network one by one, and the process of backpropagation was allowed to take its course. Filtering through the middle layer, each letter emerged as an output, which was then compared to the desired output. The inevitable difference (at least initially as the weights were

randomly set) between the two values prompted the adjustment of synaptic weights as the network attempted to match that which was desired. As this process of continual readjustment persisted, the network progressed toward a configuration of weights that ultimately yielded a nearly flawless articulation of the training script.

The fundamental difference in the designs of DECtalk and NETtalk concerns the manner in which each acquired the information necessary to carry out its task of reciting text. While DECtalk was initially provided with a complete set of commands to determine its output, NETtalk was given only an input and a desired output; its progression from start to finish was its own doing. It is this self-sufficiency that establishes NETtalk as a better suited orator, for not only is its learning process faster, but is also marked by a succession of improvements that leads to categorization of inputs. The programmed rules of DECtalk are separate entities; there is no way for the program to connect the commands. NETtalk, however, through backpropagation, has grouped the letters by similarity in sound and dictation. While DECtalk would remain baffled by any input beyond the scope of its concrete rules, NETtalk could "guess" at an unfamiliar input through association, exhibiting a much more versatile range of computation.

NETtalk's learning through the neural network parallels the human experience of learning to read as, like the program, we learn by

striving for a desired output. We first learn to pair each letter with its proper sound, and then begin to apply this knowledge to letters in the context of words. Unlike the process involved in DECtalk (the equivalent of which would be to memorize all possible circumstances one could encounter while reading), we instead learn through repeated attempts at correct pronunciation, beginning with poor results and slowly inching toward perfection. Like the neural net we begin to associate letters, words, and sounds that are similar, mentally grouping them and utilizing this knowledge as a means of guessing at unfamiliar encounters as we improve.

With so many parallels that can be drawn between artificial neural networks and the way that we appear to think, it is difficult to imagine that no clues as to the workings the human mind are ingrained in such models. As Churchland exhibits in *The Engine of Reason*, neural networks seem to be capable of immeasurable calculation and an amazingly vast expanse of function, suggesting that they quite possibly may hold all of the information necessary to understand the origin of our own understanding. Whether it be reading text aloud, accurately recognizing facial features, combining two separate eye views into one three-dimensional image, or distinguishing sonar frequencies, neural nets perform beautifully in recreating even our most intricate or mental abilities, thus providing a potential glimpse into the mysterious entity that is so profound as to question its very nature.

"Hey Guys, Help Me Out..."
Advice from Aristotle, Confucius, and Lao-tzu
by Annemarie Buckley

The Scenario:

When Professor X was a freshman, he and his three college roommates were all in the same philosophy class, and became very close. Now, however, they have all gone their separate ways. One of them, Professor Aristotle, went on to graduate school, became the star pupil of the most distinguished philosopher of his time, and now enjoys an extremely distinguished career at a University-Across-the-River. Another, Mr. Confucius, also went on to graduate school, where he spent twenty years working with great devotion, but did not succeed professionally. He now heads a small private secondary school in Vermont. Professor X's third roommate, Lao-tzu, dropped out of school during his second semester, and Professor X often runs into him in bars around town, or, in good weather, just hanging out. Professor X, confronting a difficult situation, consults his friends...

The Situation:

Professor X has just had a long and painful discussion with a student who is asking him to raise his grade because he is afraid that, otherwise, he will lose his financial aid, and have to leave school. What should Professor X do?

The Advice:

Date: Thu, 17 Feb 2000 07:06:03 -0500 (EST)
From: Professor Aristotle <profaristotle@acrosstheriver.edu>
To: profx@bu.edu
Cc:
Subject: advice

Dear X,

With regards to your dilemma, I offer my advice to you....put things in perspective, X. This child obviously does not truly know the joys of *energeia* yet, for he is too young to be happy. By letting his grades slip, and allowing the circumstances in his life to affect his schoolwork, the student is letting his emotions take precedence over his reason. Get rid of this nasty habit while you have the chance! By giving into the pleading of the student, you are reinforcing negative actions. It takes a lot of experience to know how to properly live your life and to be able to put things into context. Use your years of experience as a professor and realize that by giving this child a break, you will only be cheating him in the long run. Apply negative consequences to bad habits, and hopefully you will be able to retrain this student into seeing the positive that comes from hard work. It is only through the lessons that he learns in life that he will be able to find the mean relative to himself in different situations, and develop practical wisdom. Through the proper habitual training, the student can attain the wisdom gained only by experience, that will enable him someday to have his actions in tune with his heart. Good Luck....perhaps we shall meet for lunch sometime next week?

Sincerely,

Aristotle

Bramblewood Academy
476 Old North Road
Woodstock, Vermont 12858

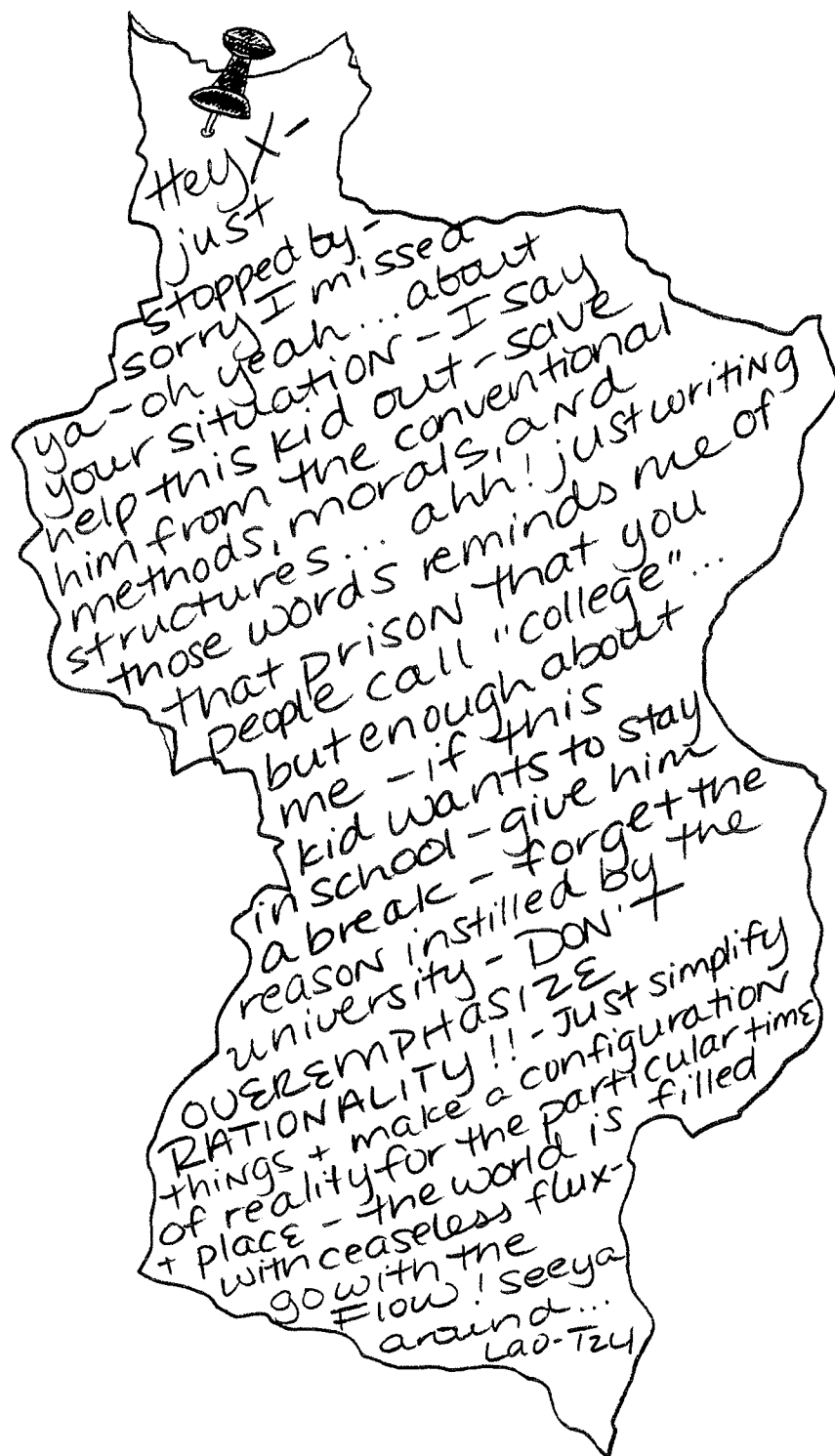
February 17, 2000

Dear X,

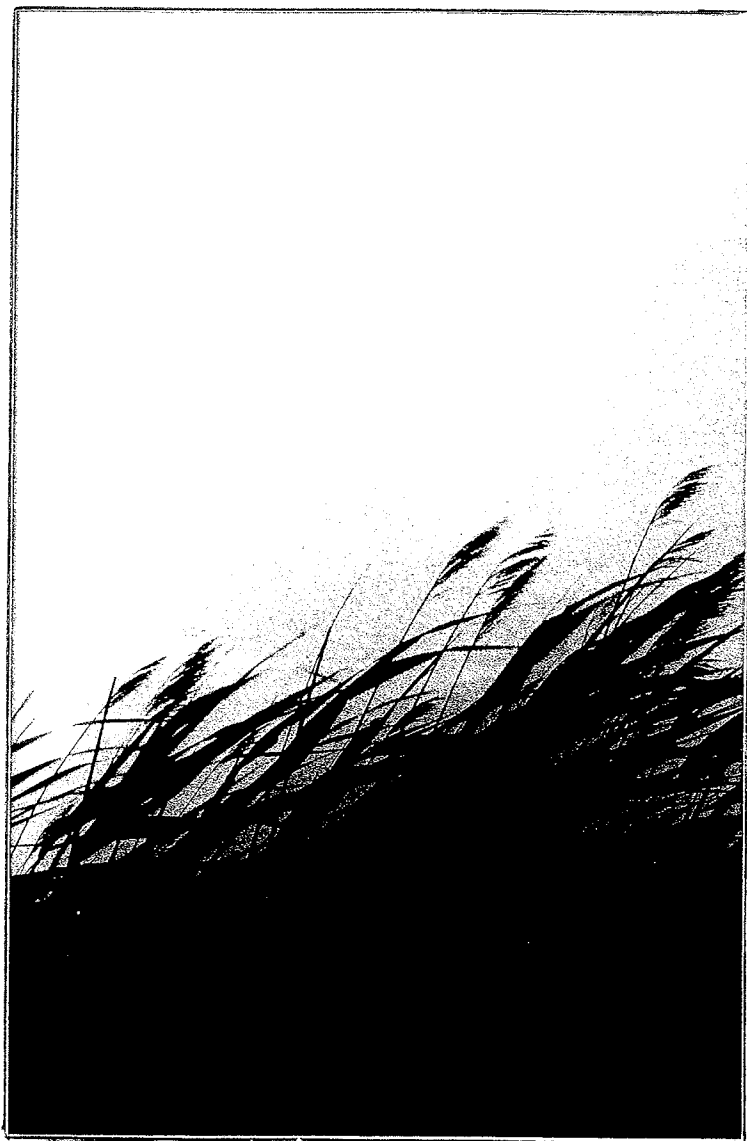
It was so nice to hear from you. I am touched that you have requested my advice. I hope that I can be of some assistance to you.

I think it is key that you remember the concept of *hsin* - the mind-heart. Take note that it is one word - inseparable. In dealing with your situation, I believe that it is necessary to not divide the mind-heart. You have mentioned to me that you are fond of this student and that there have been many unfortunate circumstances in his life this semester. You must take these into account. I realize that the student seems to not even be trying, but I suggest that you be flexible in his case. The structure and demands of the Administration are probably applying pressure on you, but I still think that you should fit the rules to the particular case. Punishing the child could possibly turn him further away from his schoolwork and the opportunity to take the right path in life. Before you is the distinct occasion to develop the premise for a solid, mutually respectful relationship with this student. By using moral virtue, rather than force, in your teaching and guiding, you can open the gates to a deeper connection with the child. Hopefully, he will see the admirable qualities in your becoming transparent, and will strive to better himself. I wish you the best of luck. Please let me know how everything turns out.

Sincerely,
Confucius



by Melanie Funken



執
大
象

Chih ta hsiang
Hold the great elephant
—The great image—
And the world moves.
Moves without danger
In safety and peace.

Music and sweets
Make passing guests pause,
But the TAO emerges
Flavorless and bland.

Look—
 You won't see it.
Listen—
 You won't hear it.
Use it—
 You will never use it up.

棄其弱器
Ch'i ch'i jo ch'i
Disgard this Frail Vessel

by Jeremy A. Marvel

In the thirty-fifth teaching from Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* one is subjected to a barrage of varying perceptions of reality. In each of the three verses, the image of reality is altered slightly to reveal a new layer of understanding previously clouded by ignorance. Yet, as each coating of ignorant paint chips away, the reader experiences not only the pleasant, enjoyable aspects of realization, but also the somber aspects associated with the comprehension of the universe. Each phrase, meticulously written, conveys an immensely profound double meaning concerning the quest for enlightenment.

The first verse begins with the expression of the futility of attempting to understand the entirety of the universe without first comprehending the awesome disproportionality between the individual and that which he wishes to grasp. "Hold the great elephant," Lao Tzu offers to the seeker; attempt to embrace that which is greater and more powerful than any man. This is the universe (or rather an incarnate approximation of the universe). Though a man can obviously see, touch, and for the most part, experience an elephant, he will never be able to take command of the elephant's majesty and fully understand the elephant. The perspective is fixed—the man will always be smaller than the elephant. Until this is realized, no progress can be made. Then the statement is amended to "the great image."

One should now create for oneself an approximation of a single aspect of the universe to study. Simultaneously, Lao Tzu warns of the potential dangers of concentrating on the image. When one's attention is consumed by one's quest for the understanding of reality and the universe one's view is obstructed by the image and one is incapable of seeing or reacting to the specific manifestations of reality about one—a condition which could readily lead to folly or ruin. The image—the picture, the word, or the musical note—becomes a gateway through which the individual explores reality. Once one delves into the infinite depths of experience-through-image, one's perceptions of the universe change; "the world moves." A paradigm shift of the mind, the intricate gossamer connections of thought are set into motion and the quester begins his journey into the depths of the universe. Eventually, one comes to the first tier of understanding and realizes that, within the image, there exists a state of tranquillity¹ in which one can exist and think without fear of danger, be it in psychological or physical form. Throughout the verse the language is light and hints at seemingly surrealistic vantage points of

¹ In modern terms, many often refer to this as a "secret place." In this state one is capable of achieving feelings of almost invincibility and of a detachment from the universe (yet is fully aware of the universe's existence).

reality—associating the universe with a dream-like air. After a closer reading of the second and third verses, one will notice that the first verse is, in fact, promoting a self-deluded state of thought. In effect, the image acts as a test of will in which only those who truly wish to understand the universe will continue questioning; all others will simply accept the “reality” they create for themselves without so much as a second thought.

As the instruction continues, Lao Tzu makes a clear transition from the bright and colorful to the bland and lackluster aspects of the universe, once again playing with the “positive” and “negative.” The “music and sweets”—the intangible and tangible pleasures of the heavenly and earthly realms—embedded within the image become trivial in one’s life. The once-idealized aspects of the image become boring. For one brief glorious moment, however, those very aspects had, for a select few mortals capable of even noticing their existence and importance (“passing guests,” the temporary occupants of the Earth), halted the motion of the earth and set it on a new track of movement. But, when “the Tao emerges,” when the path toward understanding the universe and virtue emanates from within the deepest depths of meaning from the image, the passing guests shrink back, content to live with the pomp and circumstance of the image itself believing that they grasp the entirety of the universe in the palms of their hands. Those who test the Tao will find it to be “flavorless and bland” in comparison with the lush magnificence of the image from which it sprang. The blandness must be endured (an acquired taste to be certain) in order to achieve understanding. Thus, the language employed

changes from dream-like optimism to a harsh, pessimistic voice. It demands that, if the reader wishes to achieve universal enlightenment, he/she must work diligently to replace any preconceived notions of reality with insight achieved through meditation. It is only a matter of time, one might say, before the individual can grasp the elephant in the palm of his hand.

As the teaching draws to a close, the reader is offered reassuring reasoning that the Tao is the wisest and most fulfilling train of thought to follow. When one looks to the image for enlightenment, one is struck with a profound sense of temporality. Look to the image, and enlightenment is nowhere to be seen. The image, though clearly visible, is corporeal; before one’s eyes it decays. Listen to the teachings of the image, and its music fades into silence. The words are empty; the song tuneless. Neither aspect of the image is eternal, and both lead to confusion and denial of reality when used. The Tao, on the other hand, has no manifestation. It cannot be seen or heard, but it is always present. When utilized, it is serenity incarnate through the individual, acting as a guiding force throughout eternity. It does not please the eye or the ear, but the spirit. Yet again, the language shifts, but this time juxtaposing the voices in the first and second verses. The air is harsh, crisp, and unyielding, but simultaneously optimistic and calming. The endeavor for enlightenment is eternal; the struggle is not pleasant, but the one seeking enlightenment will never be without the guidance of the Tao. Through the Tao, one will embody the universe, not grasp it.

From the realm of the finite, to that of the indefinite, to the infinite, the quest for a grasp of

reality and the universe ultimately leads back to the reader as both the source of the quest and the means to the end. At the center of it all flows the Tao. Its purpose is not to entertain the individual but to humble. In the presence of universal understanding, the ego is destroyed and the mind with it. Thus, after contemplating a simple fifteen-line teaching, the reader realizes Lao Tzu's timeless message: one should not attempt to understand the universe unless one is prepared to view it in its humbling entirety—"the infinite suns, the infinite distances between them and yourself an invisible dot on an invisible dot, infinitely small."ⁱ

Afterword

I was originally drawn to this particular piece because, upon my initial reading of it, I believed it to be pertaining to beauty and meaning behind the various art forms. Upon repeated analysis, however, I gradually began seeing a pattern emerge: the proportionality between man and the universe in which he lives. I became slightly uncomfortable with the idea that the various art forms (language, imagery, sound, etc.) lead to an ignorant impression of the universe in which we live. After considerably more time, I realized that it is not necessarily the images themselves which condone universal ignorance, but rather the fault lies in the labels society places on the images. We live in a world where social norms govern our lives, and whatever is deemed the socially acceptable interpretation of artwork is thus expected to be the interpretation of everyone. It is not what society believes which leads to a comprehension of reality, but what *I* believe, [if I am truly in

contact with reality and not only with my projection of it.]²

ⁱ Adams, Douglas. The Restaurant at the End of the Universe. New York: Random House, Inc., 1980.

² Addendum by Professor Costa

It All Fits Together

by David Roochnik

I was in a bar, drinking a beer with Prof. Stephanie Nelson, when before my very eyes she had one. I've seen her have them before, especially during a Core review session for the final exam. But I had never witnessed one quite as intense as this. Yes, she was having, and I was watching, *a peak core experience (PCE)*.

Prof. Nelson was describing a lecture that Prof. Eckel had given, and which her section then discussed. Something about Jerusalem being in the center of Israel, and the temple being in the center of Jerusalem, and the Ark being in the center of the temple, and inside the Ark...the BOOK. Her eyes lit up when she said the word "BOOK," and her arms began to wave. She started to speak in what sounded to me like tongues. Something about IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE LOGOS, and the center of Uruk, and the camel who couldn't go through the eye of the needle, and how I was damned, and how IT ALL FITS TOGETHER.

I, of course, couldn't quite figure out how IT ALL FITS TOGETHER. I wasn't even sure what IT was. So I just sat there, drinking my beer, wondering what was going on. I'm pretty sure it was, in fact, a *PCE*. But I have to admit that I'm not positive. This is because I myself have never had a *PCE*. I've come close. Like the time I was lecturing about the Odyssey and realized how Homer is really an inverted Platonist. At that moment, a lightbulb went on over my head. I had made a CONNECTION. But I wasn't yet able to fit it all together. And I didn't get to speak in tongues. No, only Prof. Nelson gets to do that.

Actually, now that I think of it, maybe she wasn't speaking in tongues. Maybe I just didn't understand what she was saying. Oh well, I guess that means I'll have to keep drinking beer with Prof. Nelson...and going to Core review sessions.

An Analysis of Selections from Steven Pinker's

How the Mind Works

by Karolina Lyznik

Locke, Descartes, the writings of the Bible, and many other sources have presented evolution and the development of the human being as "special" processes. The idea of that "little something extra" that just can't be explained by scientific means is prevalent in many past theories of evolution and the development of the body and mind. In Steven Pinker's book, *How the Mind Works*, he takes these past conceptions and juxtaposes them with the theories of Darwin, Dawkins, many others, and his own views to suggest that the complexities of the human mind and body can really be explained through scientific concepts and that perhaps that "little something extra" is a little something unnecessary.

In Chapter 3 of *How the Mind Works*, entitled "Revenge of the Nerds", Pinker reviews and supports Darwin's theory of natural selection and applies the natural selection theory in support of the theory that intelligence could, and did, develop through means of natural selection.

Pinker begins by suggesting that natural selection is a difficult concept to grasp because so much of the world and of our bodies appears to have been formed with a specific goal in mind. This is the concept of teleology, or goal-directness, and explains why so many people have turned to an entity, like God, claiming him to be the "designer" that set all these concepts

towards their goal. John Locke supports this claim with his idea of the cosmic pyramid, with God at the top, then Mind, Design, Order, Chaos, and Nothing. This pyramid was to represent the natural creation of things. However, Darwin, and Pinker in support of him, suggests just the opposite. That, as a matter of fact, Design does not need to come before Order, but rather that with order and enough time, design will surface, and without the assistance of a formulating mind. This suggestion is centered on the core of the theory of natural selection, which is the concept of replicators. Replicators produce an exact copy of themselves with most of their traits identically copied in the new form, thus producing a new replicator for subsequent replications. So, instead of the old concept of backward causation, Darwin suggests forward causation. In other words, condition A results in condition B which, if the condition is a desirable one, will then replicate itself perpetuating the positive characteristics of A. The resulting conditions that arise from the initial state are all based on random mutation, according to Darwin, and therein comes the idea of natural selection choosing which of the mutations should be selected for and replicated, and which should be selected against. Lamarck presents a similar, and yet confused, theory suggesting that acquired traits can be inherited. He suggests that if a man

builds up muscles and these prove to be beneficial to him, this trait will be selected for and passed on to his kin. However, the theory of natural selection is grounded in *random* mutation in genetic material and not the selection of acquired phenotypic traits. Phenotypic traits cannot be passed on to future generations unless the phenotype is encoded for in genetic material. Also, as Pinker points out, mutations have no concept of “niceness”, due to their randomness. Should a beneficial mutation occur, it is pure luck, and is then selected for in future generations to keep it in the gene pool.

Thus explaining the theory of natural selection, Pinker turns to applying this theory to the mind. Pinker suggests that organisms cannot be born with information about their environment, but natural selection can select for the survival of organisms with better information processing. Pinker then leaps the ever-present hindering question of innateness versus learning and suggests that evolution and learning can go along with innateness. Pinker further suggests that organisms can evolve innate connection weights, within the suggested neural network of the mind, for information processing and that therefore an innate connection weight configuration can be selected for. To explain this concept Pinker proposes that neural network connections within the mind are either on, off, or learnable. An individual is born with certain connections turned on or off, and experiments with different learnable connections. The sooner an organism establishes/learns the “right” connections, the sooner it can replicate.

Pinker’s last major point in this chapter deals with the concept of intelligence versus

instincts. Pinker defines instincts as the executions of rules because they cannot be helped. Therefore, humans have actually more “instincts” than animals because intelligence is broken down into smaller and smaller fundamental concepts and units until at the lowest levels these concepts and units are simply “automatic and unanalyzed reactions.”ⁱ The building up of these reactions into more complex reactions can eventually lead to the formation of complex programs for rational analysis.

Pinker concludes the chapter with an analysis of cultural evolution. Lamarck presented the idea of a “felt need”, or something similar to a functionalist approach to evolution. He suggested that adaptation fulfills the new needs of an organism. Pinker, however, contradicts this by saying that the natural selection theory states that needs are only met when mutations allow for it. Lamarck’s theory can best be applied to cultural evolution. According to Pinker, “human vice is proof that biological evolution is a thing of the past”ⁱⁱ and that now humanity was moved on to cultural evolution. Memes are Dawkins’ cultural equivalent to genes and are used to explain the evolution of ideas, NOT people becoming more knowledgeable. Pinker states clearly that: “My own view is that human brains evolved in by one set of laws, those of natural selection and genetics, and now interact with one another according to another set of laws, those of cognitive and social psychology, human ecology, and history”ⁱⁱⁱ. However, this cultural evolution is still not clearly defined because in comparing it to Lamarck’s theory and his believe in a greater “force” directing in the background we

“confess that one has no idea how it works”^{iv}, since we are relaying on an undefined “force” as opposed to scientific reasoning.

One new insight from this chapter is the idea of the development of intelligence as dependent on the theory of natural selection and the concept of our intelligence, at its lowest level, as a form of animal instincts. Creationist theory is often in mind during discussions of Darwin and other evolutionists. The idea of God as the “designer” or “mastermind” and the idea behind Locke’s cosmic pyramid were the ideas with which many have grown up. These along with Descartes concept of mind-body dualism, or the view of the mind and body as separate entities, made evolutionist theory always hard to grasp completely. In many ways the human body, but specifically the mind, seemed too complex to explain with scientific concepts and theory. However, Pinker’s suggestion of intelligence being based on innate on, off, and learnable connections that can be adjusted, established, and passed on to future generations presents a believable contradiction to Descartes. Also, the concept of what humans have dubbed as the vague concept of “instincts” as simply being the most basic level of intellectual responses, makes one think that perhaps in many ways we as social beings attempt to present ourselves as more complex than we really are.

It seems that people are always trying to find ways to distinguish human beings from basic biological entities and other organisms, and so comes the question of culture. If we are really so simply structured and composed how could culture and all that goes along with it form? Once again, Dawkins takes what society would

like to present as evidence of higher, unexplainable, designed structure, and reduces it to an idea of “memes.” Even though this concept is not yet fully developed, the logical possibility that culture, as with the mind and the body, can be reduced to simple units and reactions that when coupled together form complexity is indeed enough to get anyone contemplating whether we humans really are so complex that a “designer” is the ONLY explanation for our existence.

In Chapter 7, entitled “Family Values,” Pinker moves away from the evolutionary realm of replicators, natural selection, and intelligence, and asks what explanations can be given for the altruistic behavior human beings exert towards one another. “Even in the harshest competition, an intelligent organism must be a strategist, assessing whether its goal might best be served by retreat, conciliation, or living and letting live.”^v Pinker explores what it is between parents and children, siblings, spouses, and even friends that causes the unselfish behavior that is sometimes exhibited between organisms whose genes are fighting for their spot in the gene pool.

Pinker claims that the idea of altruism amidst relatives results from the sharing of genes that occurs during the mating process. Altruism between relatives makes sense because relatives have a good chance of sharing many of the same genes. So, if an organism is beneficial to a relative in such a way so as to increase the chances of that relative replicating its genes, the organism could very well be perpetuating copies of its own genes. As a result, altruistic behavior between organisms depends on the genetic nearness of the two organisms, the confidence in

the accuracy of the assessment of that nearness, and whether the impact of the altruistic behavior of the one organism will truly increase the other's chance at replicating.

One example of true altruistic behavior between relatives is the action of parents towards their children. Since each child shares half of each of its parents' genes there is a great interest for the parents to show altruism to the child, in order to better the chance that their genes will replicate later on. However, "parental investment is a precious resource."^{vi} If a parent feels that if he/she cannot provide the proper amount of attention, love, and altruism necessary to sustain the child until it can replicate its genes, then there is no reason in keeping the child. (This argument is presented as a cause for the many cases of infanticide that occur in the world.) However, when the parents are capable of investing sufficiently in their children the bond is unmistakable. This, however, leads to the fundamental paradox of politics presented by Plato in *The Republic*. Plato claims that no society can be simultaneously fair, free, and equal. If a society were fair then the hardest workers would possess the greatest wealth. However, if the same society was free, then parents, in the name of kin altruism, should be allowed to bestow their wealth upon their children. But, in this case, this same society could not be equal (or fair) because some of these children would be inheriting wealth they did not earn. (Little did we know that kin altruism could lead to a paradox in politics!). Pinker goes on to point out that although someone is labeled a parent, altruism can only be expected from true kin. All the stories of the

"wicked stepmother", as presented in the fairy tale *Cinderella*, and various other cases of stepparent-to-stepchild mistreatment can be explained, claims Pinker, due to this difference. "The indifference, even antagonism, of stepparents to stepchildren is simply the standard reaction of a human to another human."^{vii} There is no evolutionary reason for stepparents to be altruistic towards their step-children since there is no sharing of genes between the two.

Moving beyond kin relations, Pinker turns to what makes a man and a woman come together as man and wife. Based on the previous information, Pinker explains, the love and altruism between man and wife should be strong due to their mutual interest in their children, which are packages containing both of their genes. However, the role of men is to try to propagate their genes as much as possible, while a woman seeks one true mate that will help support her as she endeavors to ensure the survival of the gene package (baby) within her. This situation results from the difference in sex organs. A woman can only have one fertilized egg grow within her at a time, so it is within her best interest to find a man that is willing not only to fertilize the egg, but help her care for it later. The male, with the availability of millions of sex cells at a time, can propagate his genes more frequently and, therefore, searches for numerous sexual partners. Pinker uses this as an explanation for marital infidelity and overall greater male interest in one-night stands, numerous sexual partners, and sometimes just sex in general, in comparison to females.

At the end of the chapter, Pinker turns away from kin and begins to consider other

relationships in society and what spurs sharing and aid in these situations. For example, Pinker considers friendship. According to Pinker, a friendship with another organism is based on a cost-benefit analysis and a careful record of previous reciprocation. Sharing or trading favors should only occur if the cost to the giver does not exceed what is gotten back from the getter. Pinker also claims that one of the safest ways to ensure a friendship is to make oneself irreplaceable to another organism, because "once you have made yourself valuable to someone, the person becomes valuable to you."^{viii}

Pinker also introduces the concept of a fair-weather friend as the equivalent to an evolutionary cheater. This would be a friend that would try to reap the benefits of another friend but give nothing in return. This is similar to the concept of cuckoldry introduced earlier in the chapter. Cuckoldry was introduced earlier in reference to the male that cares for the children of a woman that has been impregnated by another male. In other words, there are males that go around propagating their genes and then count on cuckolds to raise their children for them. In this case, the evolutionary cheaters are the males that use the cuckolds.

One note-worthy insight of Pinker's is the explanation of the sometimes less than loving relationships between stepparents and stepchildren. The concept that altruism between relatives is based on a percentage of shared genetic material is a frighteningly simple explanation for a complex array of emotions. However, in many ways it seems that this percentage accurately presents the levels of altruism that *on average* are shown between

given relations. Pinker does not discount the fact that there are many truly loving and altruistic stepparents out there and people that will behave extremely altruistically to fictive individuals, but he claims that the only explanation for this is that they are simply truly noble and self-sacrificing people. The true importance of Pinker's statement is that it provides reasonable backing for behaviors that otherwise may not be understandable. As a society, we have learned to term "parents" as anyone in the care of a child and expect of them the appropriate behaviors in turn. Pinker explains why this is an invalid association. However, it is important not to use theories such as this one to excuse inappropriate behavior, but instead such theories should inspire stepfamilies to consider the implications of the theories and try to work against nature's natural tendencies.

The comparison between family relations and Plato's paradox of politics is also worth careful consideration. For years people have worked to attain justice and equality for all. Maybe such concepts just cannot be realized. Pinker's views on family relations seem to point very strongly towards this possibility. There are always going to be reasons to want to behave altruistically towards some individuals, because of eventual evolutionary benefit, and a desire to not behave in the same fashion towards others, for the same reason. Perhaps the idea of a society that is simultaneously fair, free, and equal really is an eternal paradox.

As Pinker turns to the relations between a man and a woman, concepts that have always been passed off as due to "complex and inexplicable emotions," "love webs," and "soul

wants and desires” are suddenly shown in a new light. The idea that what is normally termed as “sexual desire” could actually be the result of calculations worked out in the minds of women and men as to how most effectively to propagate their genes is amazing. Even concepts such as one-night stands, marital fidelity/infidelity, and polygamous marriages can be explained by the various goals of men and women in propagating their genes.

Finally, as Pinker turns to friendships, he again shows how altruistic behavior is often times just the result of a cost-benefit calculation. Although it seems horrible to say that what society has determined to be selfless positions such as being in love/married or participating in a friendship could actually be reduced to a cost-benefit analysis, in many ways this argument is very justified. Why do people stop being friends? Usually, because one friend is no longer fulfilling the other person’s recreational needs. What we have termed a fair-weather friend is an excellent example of a cost-benefit calculation. When you are valuable or beneficial to the other individual they are your friend. When you no longer pay-off the energy they put into being your friend, the relationship stops. Why does a couple get a divorce? Usually because one member is not fulfilling the other person’s physical or emotional needs, or even economic expectations. As a society we have accepted that the altruistic actions between man and wife, parents and children, and friends are due to compassion, concern, love, and similar emotions and leave it at that. We have accepted that such actions are spurred by some part of an “inner soul.” Once again, society has refused to reduce

such grand emotions to simple genetic and evolutionary reactions, when in fact they are reasonably explained as such.

The theories of Darwin and his successors are working to knock human beings off of their high horse. In my opinion, the effects that the theories of these men are having on society are changing the way people view things. Although there have been many technological advances made thanks to the information deduced from the theories of Churchland and others, I have concentrated my paper on the way these theories and those of Dawkins and Pinker have changed the entire mindset of society. In the Middle Ages religion governed society, controlling not only how people acted, but also how they thought. Now science has taken over this role. Past religious and philosophical explanations in this field left many holes to be filled and made many semi-ambiguous statements (although people still relied on them heavily). For example, the idea of a man being created from the dust of the earth left a lot to be explained for many people. Also, Descartes belief that the mind was aware of itself and its consciousness would leave many a person questioning, how? However, the theories of Darwin, Dawkins, Churchland, and Pinker are starting to break down the complex issues of how the mind works into simple procedures with clear and complete explanations. Before, the mystery of “desire” and “emotion,” and the visions of grandeur in many respects made many people feel human. Now, the mystery of survival machines, replicators, neural networks, and cost-benefit analysis in respect to our bodies, has made many people feel like machines. There exists a fear in

society that with this change will come a loss of respect and decency for the individual. Everything and everyone will be susceptible to calculation. However, "...as long as we stay informed, there is much more to be welcomed than there is to be feared."^{ix} In *The Republic*, Socrates claims that in order for a soul to be just and happy no one part of the soul can dominate all three parts. With our changing world we fear that the calculating part of the soul will take over in individuals and society. However, another point stressed by Socrates is the idea of moderation. There is always a possibility of abuse and misuse with any new developments in science, but society has been careful with new technologies so far and must continue to do so. Darwin enlightened the world and spurred monumental discoveries with his theory of natural selection. Further developments on the present theories of individuals such as those of Churchland, Dawkins, and Pinker should not be suppressed out of fear of the future or fear of letting go of the past, they can only help to enlighten society even more on the mystery that is our existence, our complexity, our mind.

ⁱ Pinker, Steven. *How the Mind Works*, p.185

ⁱⁱ Pinker, 207

ⁱⁱⁱ Pinker, 208

^{iv} Pinker, 209

^v Pinker, 428

^{vi} Pinker, 443

^{vii} Pinker, 434

^{viii} Pinker, 508

^{ix} Churchland, 314

Images of the Immutable:
Varying Views of Transcendence in Aristotle, Lao-Tzu, and the *Bhagavad-Gita*
by Elizabeth Churchill

Though starkly different in most respects, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Lao-Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*, and the Hindu sacred text *The Bhagavad-Gita* all share one common objective: to design and illustrate a proper "way" to live one's life. These "ways" themselves provide an even deeper linking element, in that each champions a connection with the immutable rather than with the ephemeral, preferring those higher entities that never expire to the lower, earthly ones that do. Divergence occurs, however, in the way each author depicts this realm of immutability: while Aristotle's description hinges on reason and contemplation, a transcendence that lies completely in the power of human understanding, the eastern works remain dubious of our cognitive faculties, applying mysticism and awe to their picture of a "way" that can be experienced but never understood. By closely examining the imagery used in each work to describe immutability, one can get a proper sense of both the author's point of view and that of the varying philosophical traditions from which they evolved.

For Aristotle, this hallowed connection with the intangible is attained through the "contemplative life": an existence by which one actively "contemplates" the world's theoretical truths. Aristotle upholds this as the proper "way" because it employs man's highest faculty, reason, the exercise of which allows one to participate with the divine. Immutability plays into this in that it is only the

eternal things that one can contemplate; mutable, earthly issues fall instead into the arena of deliberation, a faculty whose application yields a considerably less fulfilling lifestyle. Aristotle provides his own explanation of this idea in the following passage:

Nobody deliberates about things eternal, such as the order of the universe, or the incommensurability of the diagonal side of a square...The reason why we do not deliberate about these things is that none of them can be affected by our agency. We deliberate about things that are in our control and are attainable by action.¹

In other words, contemplation of the "eternal" connects men with those things that transcend their agency, pulling them out of immersion in human affairs and into the higher realm of divinity. However, while such entities transcend man's power to affect, they do not go beyond his power to comprehend: theories dealing with the properties of a square can be both rationally formulated and empirically verified, using no further instrument than the standard human brain. Thus, Aristotle presents us with a picture of immutability that is completely centered around reason: it is perceived by reason, understood by reason, and can even be connected to and experienced by reason.

One way to better understand Aristotle's conception of immutability is to closely examine the specific language and structure he employs in defining it. Prime material for such analysis is found

in the following selection, in which Aristotle links his “contemplative life” to an experience of divinity:

Such a life as this [contemplative life] however will be higher than the human level: not in virtue of his humanity will man achieve it, but in virtue of something in him that is divine; and by as much as something that is superior to his composite nature, by so much as its activity is superior to the exercise of the other forms of virtue. If then the intellect is something divine in comparison to man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life. Nor ought we to obey those who enjoin that a man should have man’s thoughts and a mortal thoughts of mortality, but we ought so far as possible to achieve immortality, and do all that man may to live in accordance with the highest thing in him; for though this may be small in bulk, in power and value it surpasses all the rest.ⁱⁱ

Here, Aristotle presents us with an illustration that is completely rooted in practicality and reason. Each sentence marks a progression in a well-defined, rational argument: he begins by stating his thesis, and then continues down a clearly explicated line of reason in support of it, arriving finally back at his main idea. Notice, for example, the method of cause and effect he uses to prove that the intellectual life is “divine in comparison with human life.” Beginning with the simple statement that this life is somehow “higher” than humanity, Aristotle uses a series of “ifs” and “thens” to both dissect it and assert its validity: *if* such an existence is above the human level, *then* it must involve the exercise of something in man that is divine; *if* it exercises some quality in man that is divine, *then* it must be higher than man’s other, “composite” qualities; *if* this quality is superior to anything else in man, *then* the activity of it must be superior to any of man’s other activities; and finally, *if* this activity of this faculty is better than any of man’s other activities, *then* a life based upon this faculty must be better than any other sort of life. Therefore, Aristotle also uses language to lead us

down the proper path to enlightenment, invoking the tongue of reason and practicality to both pursue and describe his idea of the immutable.

In the *Tao Te Ching*, by contrast, this sense of logical progression is palpably absent. Lao-Tzu commences his poem with a rejection of conventional expression, telling us that “names can name no lasting name”:ⁱⁱⁱ intuition, not definition, is therefore the correct “gateway to all mystery.”^{iv} That this all-important “mystery” is immutable can be found in Lao-Tzu’s constant juxtaposition of “Tao” and “the ten thousand things.” While “things” may be an expression of Tao, their perishable nature makes them significantly less reliable; therefore, it is the meaning behind the thing with which the Taoist should connect, rather than with the thing itself. This emphasis on immutability can be discerned from the following section:

If these things prosper and grow old
This is called not-Tao
Not-Tao soon ends.^v

While a “thing” may “prosper,” Lao-Tzu is reminding us that it will inevitably “grow old” and perish, making its prime significance the “root” it holds in the ineffable, imperishable Tao.

As with Aristotle, Lao-Tzu’s conception of this sacred immutability can be best understood by close analysis of his attempts to describe it. Take, for example, the *Tao Te Ching*’s poem 21:

Tao in action—
Only vague and intangible.

Intangible and vague
But within it are images.

Vague and intangible;
Within it are entities.

Shadowy and obscure;
Within it there is life,

Life so real,
That within it there is trust

From the beginning its name is not lost
But reappears through multiple origins

How do I know these origins?

Like this.

Even at first glance, this poem's departure from the logical construction of *Ethics* becomes evident. Gone are the clear explanations and practical arguments of Aristotle: Lao-Tzu's writing is instead defined by a tendency to be as cryptic as possible, using minimal words and ambiguous imagery to lead us to a transcendence that, by its very essence, can never be rationally understood. Most telling in this aspect are the poem's last two lines: "How do I know these origins? Like this." By his ideology, Lao-Tzu does not *need* to explain to us "how" he knows the unchanging, immaterial Tao—he does not need to dissect, examine, and defend it as Aristotle does. It is simply enough that he does know it; the specifics of the matter need not—and cannot—be explicated in full.

A further way to gauge Lao-Tzu's concept of the immutable is to examine the specific adjectives he employs in this poem. That the Tao is "intangible" seems to agree with the picture of immutability given to us by Aristotle, but one can hardly imagine the great philosopher of the Lyceum consenting to such terms as "vague," "shadowy," and "obscure." With these adjectives, Lao-Tzu is setting forth an image of transcendence that, though "so real," is beyond our power of our reason. While one can logic-ally grasp the "order of the universe" or the principles of geometry, it seems that Lao-Tzu's Tao is too "obscure" to be nailed down so rationally; therefore,

it is one's intuition, rather than one's reason, that will unlock the intangible "shadow" that is the Tao.

Finally, let us turn to the vision of immutability set forth in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, one that both converges with and diverges from the two previously discussed descriptions. The *Gita* continuously stresses the importance of the imperishable through its emphasis on the "infinite spirit," the "unborn, enduring"^{vi} force inside each living thing that constitutes the true essence of its being. Like the Tao, this force can be manifested through material entities, but transcends them by its very indestructibility: as Krishna tells us, "It is not killed/ when the body is killed." (2.20) This "infinite spirit," however, is only one small part of the transcendent concept we are faced with in the *Gita*: the totality of this force, it turns out, is embodied in Krishna, the divine charioteer who "stands sustaining this entire world/ with only a fragment of my being." (10.42) Therefore, the *Gita*'s picture of sublime immutability is, like that of the Tao, pervaded by a sense of unchanging oneness, encompassed in the "universal form" of its main character, Lord Krishna.

Arjuna, the story's conflicted hero, is lucky enough to sneak a peek at this "universal form," though it is not by virtue of his rational faculties that he does so. Krishna makes it very plain that knowledge of his totality cannot be attained merely by human cognition, telling Arjuna:

But you cannot see me

With your own eye
I will give you a divine eye to see
The majesty of my discipline (11.7)

Here, eastern thought once again comes head-to-head with Aristotle's western sensibility. For Aristotle, man's "divine eye" is already in place, allowing him to rationally contemplate his way toward the

“majesty of divine discipline.” However, the *Gita* departs from Lao-Tzu here too, in that it rejects the notion of knowing divinity simply “like this”: even human intuition will not yield a total vision of Krishna. Instead, Krishna’s theophany is achieved by something totally outside the power of humanity, pushing the *Gita*’s vision of immutability even further from the realm of human understanding.

Once again, a close reading of the way the *Gita* depicts this immutability will be beneficial in pinning down its essence. Especially useful in this respect is the following passage, in which Arjuna describes the conflicting visions of Krishna rendered by his “divine eye”:

I see no beginning
Or middle or end to you;
Only boundless strength
In your endless arms,
The moon and sun in your eyes
Your mouths of consuming flames,
And your own brilliance
Scorching the universe.

Here, we are presented with a picture of immutability that is alternately beautiful and terrifying. It is indeed a multi-faceted picture: the “boundless strength” in Krishna’s “endless arms” seems to suggest a myriad manifestations in the visible world,

each employing its “strength” in a very different and powerful way. Perhaps the most telling image, however, is that of Krishna’s “brilliance” “scorching the universe.” Though it is this very brilliance that makes Krishna so beautiful, giving him the power to “sustain the entire world,” its force can also be destructive, “scorching the universe” it is simultaneously supporting. Such paradoxical imagery gives rise to a conflicting, incongruous view of the immutable, one that is radically different from those displayed by both Aristotle and Lao-Tzu. While it certainly doesn’t fit into Aristotle’s logical, cause-and-effect based vision, it doesn’t seem to fit the stable oneness of Lao-Tzu either: though “shadowy,” the Tao at its core is a solid, peaceful, fountainhead of trust, a stark contrast with the mixture of beauty and terror we find in the *Gita*. All in all, *The Bhagavad-Gita* presents a vision that, though immutable, is multi-faceted, untamable, and beyond the realm of human understanding.

In conclusion, Aristotle, Lao-Tzu, and *The Bhagavad-Gita* all display views of transcendence that, though similar in their emphasis on immutability, diverge sharply when it comes to the question of human reason.

ⁱ Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Harris Rackham. New York: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1996. (3.3.3-7)

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*(10.7.8)

ⁱⁱⁱ Lao-Tzu. *The Tao Te Ching*. Trans. Stephen Addis and Stanley Lombardo. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993. (1)

^{iv} *Ibid.*(1)

^v *Ibid.*(30)

^{vi} *The Bhagavad-Gita*. Trans. Barbara Stoler Miller. Bantam Books: New York, 1986. (2.20)

Jesus as a Threat to the Socio-Political Structure During the Roman Empire

by Andrew Sammut

Jesus' role as a teacher in the Bible appears alongside popular opinion of him as a harmful troublemaker and potential revolutionary. Most of Jesus' actions in the Gospels go against social norms and accepted practices of the Jewish community, and his growing influence on the people quickly arises as a recognized threat to the current Roman political order. While his message and deeds touched many people throughout the land, both Jewish and Roman authorities correctly viewed these activities as transgression against existing social conventions, with ultimate ramifications on the political level. Jesus' teachings and behavior posed a distinct threat to the Roman Governance of the Jews, while simultaneously threatening the existing social structure of Hebrew society. Jesus' death was inevitable given the practical danger it posed to the Jewish community and the Roman Empire.

Within the Jewish population, Jesus represented a menace on ideological, authoritative, and, most offensive to the Jews, religious grounds. Throughout his life Jesus' attitude concerning some of society's outcasts aroused conflict within the community. In Matthew 9 he is questioned about eating with tax collectors and sinners, a segment of society held in scorn. Jesus' kindness towards the poor and sick, and the reverence his teachings had for them, was an act that was (and today to some extent still is) not commonplace. Jesus' involvement with the

"less-desirable" element of society is justified by his words in Matthew 9.12 and 9.13:

"Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick...I desire mercy, and not sacrifice'. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Jesus' interest in this part of the community is further echoed by his statement in Matthew 11.19, where he refers to himself as a "...a friend of tax collectors and sinners." Jesus' ideology when it comes to societal associations goes against accepted cultural standards, and for this reason Jesus must have been looked upon rather strangely, and with some degree of hostility.ⁱⁱ

This hostility was amplified and perpetuated by the political authority and elite within the Jewish community, as seen in the many altercations between Jesus, the Pharisees, Herod and other authorities. At several points Jesus flagrantly insults the Pharisees, referring to them as "hypocrites" in Matthew 15.7 and as "...whitewashed tombs" in Matthew 23.27. Matthew 23 is filled with accusations and insults towards the Pharisees and their hypocrisy. Jesus' accusations against these authorities, combined with his disregard for social and religious norms, turned him into a menace in the view of these powers. However the more practical and far-reaching concern for these people was the maintenance of their strength in the face of Jesus' growing influence. Jesus was attracting more followers, through the miracles

of healing he performed, through the kind message his teachings brought, and through his denouncement of the hypocrisy of current practices. For example in Matthew 23.16 he condemns the idea that an oath is only binding if sworn by the gold in the temple, and not by the temple itself. All of the charges that Jesus levels at the Pharisees, along with increasing support from others, made him a potential threat who could have harmed the current power structure (including both the Pharisees' influence and Herod's administration), and as a result Jewish authorities needed to eliminate this threat.

The religious controversy Jesus brought was most damaging to his public image, as this was a violation of the most fundamental aspect of Jewish society, namely the laws of the *Torah*. It also served as a concrete justification for the Pharisees' removal of a political danger, in the guise of executing of a blasphemer. Jesus' healing of a man on the Sabbath (as it appears in Matthew 12.2) shows a blatant disregard for a sacred law of the *Torah*, and is in fact a crime that is punishable by death.ⁱⁱⁱ Jesus further disrespects religious conventions in Matthew 8.22, where he tells a disciple who wants to bury his father before journeying with the other disciples to "Follow (him), and leave the dead to bury their own dead." Here Jesus is neglecting proper burial, an act that dishonors both the dead, and a sacred ritual of religious cultures around the world.^{iv} These words may also be interpreted as a breach of the fifth commandment (which orders one to respect their parents), since in this instance the disciple wishes to bury his own father and Jesus tells him to move on.^v In Matthew 9.14 Jesus' disrespect for holy Jewish

law extends so far as to defend his disciples for not observing a fasting ritual. While it is not Jesus himself directly engaging in an act against Hebrew law, he is defending the violation, thus placing himself on the same level as the transgressors and taking responsibility for their actions.^{vi} All of these actions represent some form of Jesus demonstrating either inattentiveness or pure indifference to the *Torah*, conduct that would inevitably cause resentment among the Jewish people who regard these traditions as unbreakable. In addition to their effect on public opinion, these deeds would strengthen the charges of blasphemy brought against Jesus at his trial, since they illustrate heresy in its purest form. Jesus' claim to be the son of G-D is the most harmful aspect of his blasphemy however. In Matthew 26 it is this claim that finalizes the high priest and council's decision to execute Jesus. The idea of a man claiming to be divine must have been incredibly disturbing on a religious level to the Hebrew authorities. As stated in John 5.18 "This is why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath but also called God his father, making himself equal with God." Jesus' claim to divinity was the most outrageous example of blasphemy, with all other cases being secondary charges.^{vii}

The social/religious unrest Jesus was stirring amongst the Jews became a matter of significant political concern for the governance of the Jewish territory. Jesus' trial, while mostly based in religious transgressions, is presided over by Pilate, the Roman procurator.^{viii} This represents a link between the social nature of Jesus' crime (the Pharisees' area of business), and concerns

from the Roman government about Jesus' growing power and its effect on their authority. The highly non-conformist nature of Jesus' teachings and actions was coupled with a growing following that could become increasingly disruptive to all authoritative structures, and the recognition of this threat is demonstrated in the Roman trial of Jesus. Matthew 27.37 states "...over Jesus' head they put the charge against him, which read 'This is Jesus the King of the Jews'", a title that would enforce the politically subversive aspect of Jesus and his following. The Bible does explain that Jesus was viewed as a rebel by the Roman government, and did have charges of rebellion brought against him.^{ix} The Roman accusations of rebellion brought against Jesus do contain practical justification however. Jesus did represent a profound threat to the Roman Empire and the preservation of its political rule. A man capable of developing a following that believes him to be the son of G-D could certainly cause an insurrection against the state, and a revolt with considerable devotion since it was based on a belief in motivation from divine power. This increasing, potentially catastrophic influence of Jesus must have certainly aroused suspicions and concerns at Jesus' trial, and the execution was simply a means to expel a danger before it could do any more damage. (Unfortunately the Romans had no idea of the immense power Jesus would hold after his death, as a martyr and belief in his resurrection) The trouble Jesus was stirring among the Jewish community was also adding to current dissatisfaction with Roman law among the Jews. The Jewish community never fully accepted the indoctrination of Roman

beliefs and traditions within their own, and the possibility of some degree of revolt was always present.^x Jesus' following perpetuated whatever non-conformist or rebellious sentiments existing within the Jewish territory, in addition to creating an entirely new problem for the Romans.

The very nature of Jesus' teachings and ideology posed a hazard to the Roman State's security as well, Jesus' coterie notwithstanding. Jesus' message contained some ideas that were distinctly against the Roman way of life, of an empire that uses force and relies upon strength to subdue others.^{xi} Jesus' proclamation in Matthew 5.44 that one should "Love (one's) enemies..." is a dictum that certainly will not promote nationalistic pride, or animosity towards one's enemy. It works against an integral part of a state based upon military conquest, those nationalistic roots in the masses that help promote victory and support of the state. This statement may be misconstrued as decidedly anti-Roman, as it might imply allegiance to an enemy of Rome. While this may not have been Jesus' meaning, his adversaries could easily use such an interpretation to further tarnish his reputation. Phrases such as "Blessed are the peacemakers..." from Matthew 5.9 and "What does it profit a man to gain the world if he loses his soul?" (Matthew 16.26) are blatant attacks on the institution of war, and could easily lead many Roman supporters to question the viability of their military campaigns. These statements are in direct opposition to actions of the Roman government, and must be regarded as disloyalty. Jesus is in fact teaching potentially rebellious principles, which may be misinterpreted as

propaganda. The theoretically destructive aspect of Jesus' teachings to the state must have been recognized by Roman authorities, and was dealt with through the trial and its sentence to crucifixion, thus eliminating the source of these defiant doctrines.

Jesus' message must be viewed as subversive, on both social and political levels. His prosecution and death sentence are clearly justifiable according to both the religious laws of the Hebrews, and on a more practical level, by the political interests and agenda of both Jewish and Roman authorities. Obviously Jesus was a threat to the existing socio-political order, and as such had to be put to death. However the disruptive manner of his word is as integral to his message as his other teachings, and the opposition he provides is designed to disturb existing conditions. In Matthew 10.34 Jesus clearly states "Do not think I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." Jesus' intent is to arouse conflict and bring disharmony. Through disorder Jesus can show men what is truly important, and what concerns are merely worldly constructs that really don't matter.

The Empire Jesus scorns, which is based upon values such as wealth, power and strength, is grounded in fleeting ideas that have no importance in G-D's realm. Jesus preaches that the Kingdom of Heaven admits the poor, the sick, the meek, and other people who would be regarded as the weaker, more unfortunate part of the population. However Jesus instructs that these people are in fact truly blessed in the eyes

of G-D. Furthermore, the Kingdom of Heaven dwarfs the empire of Rome in that it encompasses all parts of existence. Jesus' famous statement in Matthew 22.21 "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" can be interpreted as an affirmation of the "...absolute and exclusive sovereignty of God."^{xii} Jesus teaches the people that G-D is the being who has dominion over all parts of life, and this takes away from the value of the Empire. Jesus' philosophy is after all decidedly anti-political. He never mentions anything concerning government, political administration or rule of any kind.^{xiii} Through deliberately ignoring these matters Jesus further illustrates his belief in the uselessness of secular, political affairs, such as those of the Empire. This lesson attacks Rome's power and importance further, and takes away the value of its ideology.

Due to these attacks Jesus must inevitably give up his life. However his death is one part (albeit final) of the mission G-D gives him. Jesus must spread this type of revolutionary dogma, so that he can shed light upon the hypocritical, unimportant practices and beliefs of his time, and thus provide a foundation for those teachings that will really hold importance in one's life. Through subversive doctrines that disrupted the existing conditions during his lifetime, Jesus was able to spread the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven, and G-D's word.

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A Joke

by Scott C. Mohr

One of my favorite Chemistry Department colleagues was Klaas Eriks, now an emeritus professor. Klaas and his wife immigrated to the United States from the Netherlands in the mid-50's and he spent his entire academic career at Boston University where he set up an active X-ray crystallographic lab, trained many graduate students - and in his spare time gave much-appreciated lectures in CH 101-102, among other courses! He always had a twinkle in his eye and a great sense of humor.

Now in his 70's, Klaas was a teenager in Holland when the Nazi war machine swept into the country. With characteristic Teutonic charm, the Nazis grabbed all the able-bodied young Dutch males they could get their hands on and transported them to Germany to serve as slave labor for the Reich. Klaas was shipped to a papermill on the Elbe River in eastern Germany where he spent the entire period of the war, together with other unpaid workers who had been similarly "recruited." As members of this group came and went they brought news and gossip, including some great jokes that must have helped them endure the privation and abuse.

One of Klaas' jokes recounts a (purportedly) true story from the early days of the Hitler dictatorship. It's about a cabaret humorist who belonged to the wonderful Berlin culture of the Weimar years that produced things like "Die Dreigroschenoper" (The Threepenny Opera) by Kurt Weill and Berthold Brecht—as well as a significant fraction of quantum mechanics! When Hitler came to power in January

1933, Germany's greatest scientist was Albert Einstein, who held a professorship at the University of Berlin (the most prestigious in the country). The problem was that Einstein was a Jew, very much a free-thinker, and quite used to speaking his mind plainly on political issues that happened to attract his attention. Lesser lights in the German science establishment encouraged the Nazi government not only to dismiss Einstein from his post (professors were government employees) as was being done with all the other Jewish academics, but to proceed with a campaign to obliterate Einstein's reputation. At any event the Nazis passed a law prohibiting anyone from *even mentioning Einstein's name*. [Das war verboten!]

The cabaret humorist responded to this the very next day by coming out on stage carrying three bricks (stones or "Steine"). As soon as his audience quieted down, he held up the bricks, turning in all directions so that everyone could see them, then nodded his head vigorously and said, "Drei Steine!" (Three stones!). Then he took the top brick off the pile and threw it backstage. He then repeated the same display with the remaining bricks and said emphatically, "Zwei Steine!" (Two stones.). Again he took the top brick and threw it backstage. Slowly and very deliberately he held out the single remaining brick for everyone to see, and with a quizzical expression on his face asked, "Ein Stein?" (One stone?) For that the Gestapo slapped him in jail.

Justice in the *Oresteia*

by Nathaniel Berndt

The three plays that comprise Aeschylus' *The Oresteia* trace a blood feud within the house of Atreus. The story line is concerned with the motivations and justifications of murder and revenge and the point at which these passionate, personal matters become entangled in the realm of politics. Essentially, this means that *The Oresteia* is ultimately about justice from its most primordially human sense, predominately expressed in *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers*, to its formulation in the socio-political sense in *The Eumenides*. Aeschylus presents this shift in conceptions of justice as an evolution of historical necessity. In other words, for a society to function as any sort of unified whole, it must develop an agreed upon definition of and structure for maintaining justice in order to ensure stability and order. Such a political conception must not be based on the same personal retributive justice of blood vengeance that Aeschylus depicts as in some way naturally governing humanity, personified by the Furies. Rather it must be something that protects the interests of the society as a whole not any single person. The evolution of conceptions of justice traced in *The Oresteia* does not reflect an ever-deepening, ever-increasing understanding of what is ultimately true justice. Instead, it reflects the need to shift the emphasis from a personal sense of justice to a collective sense of justice for societies to govern the lives and actions of their citizens and in turn prosper.

Agamemnon contains two key steps in the evolving idea of justice in *The Oresteia*. The first important incident is the actual murder of Agamemnon at the hands of Clytæmnestra. This is an act of revenge for the death of Iphigenia, her daughter, and demonstrates the blood for blood model of retributive justice that guides much of the action and discussion in the first two plays in the trilogy. However, the true righteousness and benefits of this model are put into serious question by the situation of Cassandra, whose death seems anything but just.

Although there is a basic evolution concerning the trilogy's shift from a personal form of justice to a collective one, there is a tension throughout the story. The balance between the two models is tipping back and forth constantly until Athena's final verdict and persuasion of the Furies in *The Eumenides*. Upon Agamemnon's arrival, he calls for a trial, a national tribunal to be formed in order to lay down the laws of the city in the name of justice. In essence, this is a call for a political structure of justice to be developed and preside over the actions of the city. The problem is that the prevailing model in his wife's mind is retributive and she kills him before this counsel can be realized. This dynamic is demonstrative of the need for a society to develop and thoroughly impose a non-retributive system of justice on its citizens. If a society fails to squelch personal ideals of justice and

acts of vengeance, it is very easy for the larger functioning of the society to break down as a result.

The relationship between suffering and truth is of central importance to the retributive model of justice, a system exemplified by the chain of acts of murder and revenge in the house of Atreus. This is a system in which each just act prepares for another one to come and counter-attack. The Chorus of *Agamemnon* captures this cycle of tormented justice in which each act feeds on the previous one and into the next by saying, "Justice brings new acts of agony, yes, on new grindstones Fate is grinding sharp the sword of Justice"ⁱ It is deeply entrenched within this cycle that Clytæmnestra kills Agamemnon and so it is that she sees it as a just and natural act. The players in this system of justice are all active participants, there is only room for attackers and the attacked, no judges. Justice is described as an active force that impels an individual to carry out the prescribed act of vengeance righting past wrongs and turning the individual into a "weaver of Justice" as Aegisthus puts it.ⁱⁱ This natural process of retributive justice, in which suffering is intrinsic, seems to regulate the whole motion of the cosmos connecting each little act to its causes and its effects. For those who get caught up into it, it becomes the truth in which one finds one's place in the world.

For Clytæmnestra and Aegisthus, this world-view and approach propagated by the Furies makes sense to some degree. For Cassandra, this process of retributive justice is absurd. The problem with this model is that it only takes into account active agents of so-called justice. Cassandra, however, is a bystander stripped of her power to affect anything yet entirely aware of the process and how she is to be ruined by it. Cassandra is a seer cursed by Apollo, meaning that she is tormented by visions that no one

believes rendering her helpless. As a seer, Cassandra immediately recognizes the Furies that loom over the house of Atreus and knows that they are responsible for the sequence of blood lust that she is bound to be claimed by through no action of her own. Although she never goes too deeply in outwardly denouncing the retributive process of justice as being unrighteous or absurd and harmful, her madness of sorts and the obvious injustice of her death serve to counter and expose certain flaws in the world-view and approach proposed by Clytæmnestra and the Furies.

An important way to view the evolution of justice in *The Oresteia* is to understand the personal, retributive form of justice as connected with the old gods, the Furies, and the political justice-by-committee form as linked with the new gods. The action of *The Libation Bearers* marks an important middle step in the transformation of justice in this trilogy. Orestes kills his mother Clytæmnestra out of revenge for the death of his father Agamemnon. In one sense, this is an act of retributive justice, the spilling of blood in retaliation for the spilling of blood. However, it does not represent the justice of the old gods, because it is an act attacking one's own blood relative avenging an attack on a social unit. Clytæmnestra is Orestes' mother, a direct blood link, whereas Agamemnon is merely his father, a role prescribed by society. Orestes' greater allegiance to his father represents a subtle shift in the values of the society in *The Oresteia*, a shift that is presented as natural and necessary for a society to survive.

Orestes is a pivotal character in *The Oresteia*, a man who acts in retribution on a personal level but in the name of the new gods, entirely opposed to the will of the Furies. In the old, pure form of retributive justice, an act was considered just if one person knew that he or she had to avenge an attack on what is

essentially his or her own blood. In this story, Clytæmnestra avenges the murder of her daughter and simply knows that it is something that she must do. It is a personal reaction, part of a natural process and pattern of actions, but without a conception that one's actions are to be judged by some higher, outside authority. The socio-political construction of justice is predicated on this higher, outside authority who judges the act and declares it to be just or not. Instead of being driven on by the Furies and his own, internal sense of righteousness, Orestes is called upon by Apollo to kill Clytæmnestra and he does it with a certain uncertainty concerning its ultimate justice and an awareness that it will be judged by some external authority.

The moment of hesitation experienced by Orestes before he is to carry out the deed reveals much about the judicial limbo in which Orestes finds himself. It is a place somewhere between the realm of the old gods and the realm of the new gods. Orestes still thoroughly loathes the thought of killing his mother, signifying his awareness of some primordial force inside him that is the domain of the Furies. Yet he is impelled to commit this act of socio-political justice by Apollo, one of the new gods who represents the way of Zeus. Orestes expresses this strange position he is in and his perspective on the whole act of killing his mother by saying, "So he may come, my witness when the day of judgement comes, that I pursued this bloody death with justice, mother's death"ⁱⁱⁱ This is a way of saying that the justice of this act belonged to some external, higher conception and system of justice. It was a personal act for personal reasons but consciously within a larger schema of justice. In this case, that larger schema of justice is the design of Zeus, making the act in accordance with divine justice. This is the

defense in favor of Orestes as it comes to trial before Athena in *The Eumenides* presented by Apollo.

Although Orestes has Apollo and the way of Zeus on his side to explain and justify his actions, he is tormented internally by the Furies for having killed his own blood-mother. The Furies represent the way of the old gods and are the prosecution in the trial set up by Athena to decide once and for all whether Orestes' actions are just or not. The conception of justice that the Furies put forth in *The Eumenides*, as they appear embodied for the first time, is based on the idea that everybody gets what they deserve in this lifetime. If someone commits a bloody murder, that person will be hounded by the Furies until they get what is due to them, that being death. That is justice in the eyes of the Furies. If someone is good and just, not seeking power beyond their rights, all on their own free will, that person will be repaid with comfort and joy. These situations are at the core of retributive justice, which the Furies argue is at the core of human existence. The Furies try to make a case for this form of justice to be also at the core of any successful political society since it is meant to prescribe against and punish both tyranny and anarchy. This attempt at social theorizing is an outgrowth of the Furies' basic idea of a just life, that being a life of due proportions. This message is expressed by this passage in *The Eumenides*, "Strike the balance all in all and god will give you power; the laws of god may veer from north to south-we Furies plead for measure."^{iv}

The problem with this conception of justice in terms of the welfare of an entire society is that it is all built on individual interpretations of what is right. Apollo recognizes this fact along with its ramifications when he insults the Furies by saying, "Go where heads are severed, eyes gouged out,

where justice and bloody slaughter are the same.”^v This image serves as Apollo’s prophetic vision of a society governed by the Furies’ system of justice. As is inherently evident in the plot of *The Oresteia*, humans do seemingly unjust and terrible things and in a land or house, as is the case in these plays, controlled by the way of the Furies bloody destruction will never cease, all in the name of justice. Apollo cries out for a form of justice whereby every action must answer to a higher authority based on some preconceived structure of justice, in Apollo’s mind this structure is Zeus’ law.

Athena takes on the task of judging Orestes by proclaiming that not even she, a god, is truly qualified to decide such a case and proceeds to form a tribunal “for all time to come.”^{vi} This very act of forming a committee, especially one said to stand for all time, to judge Orestes marks the official shift from a retributive form of justice to a deliberative one. No longer is justice a matter of one’s own personal convictions and duties, it is now the convictions of an entire society and the duty of everyone in that society to uphold those communally developed convictions. This transformation from retributive to deliberative justice, personal to communal justice, is necessary for the stability and prosperity of a society for many reasons already discussed, but it is important to note that Athena’s final conception of justice is not altogether different from the Furies’ conception. It is more that Athena shifted the setting and emphasis of the conception to fit her needs, in other words a city’s needs. For instance, a telling passage is this, “Worship the Mean, I urge you, shore it up with reverence and never banish terror from the gates, not outright...The stronger your fear, your reverence for the just, the stronger your country’s wall and city’s safety.”^{vii} A just person in the eyes of the Furies is

someone who fears retribution and revenge for his or her unjust acts and thus lives a moderate, righteous, and, in turn, peaceful life. A just person in the eyes of Athena is someone who fears the punishment of a city’s tribunal for his or her unjust acts and thus lives a moderate, righteous, and, in turn, peaceful life as part of a larger, secure society. This incorporation of the Furies’ conceptions into a broader, deliberative structure of justice culminates with Athena persuading the Furies themselves to become an honored part of the city’s dynamic.

The trouble with the evolution of the conceptions of justice in *The Oresteia* is that it doesn’t represent a shift from a false view to a true one. Rather it represents a shift of models for the simple reason that one system simply worked better for what was trying to ultimately be accomplished, that being to develop a system of justice to govern an entire society. In many ways the very existence of a deliberative system of justice means that the society agrees that there is no such thing as absolute justice, evidenced by the fact that Athena did not even feel that she could judge the case of Orestes. A deliberative system is merely the best way to reach and uphold what, hopefully anyway, the majority of a society considers to be just in any given case for the sake of maintaining order and security in the society. However, by consciously denying the existence of anything such as absolute justice yet taking on the responsibility of communally judging acts to be just or not, a society is admitting the inevitability that just acts will be condemned as unjust. This unfortunate reality of deliberative justice exists to this day in modern, Western society and much of the rest of the world as people struggle with the question of how much power should a society have to judge and punish the actions of its citizens. Although *The*

Oresteia does not really provide many answers for the modern world struggling with this question, it certainly does a brilliant job of exploring the roots of

the question thus providing a fertile resource from which modern answers may sprout.

ⁱ (ll. 1564-1565)

ⁱⁱ (ll. 1635)

ⁱⁱⁱ (ll. 978-981)

^{iv} (ll. 539-541)

^v (ll. 183-184)

^{vi} (ll. 499)

^{vii} (ll. 710-715)

**Creativity and Mental Illness:
Understanding the “Mad” Genius**

by Laila Ayad

“...people afflicted with melancholic or manic personalities are often among the most imaginative, the most relentlessly productive, and the most successful among us.”

--Paul Churchland

“All poets are mad.”

--Robert Burton

In our society, there is a stereotype often associated with the creative and genius mind. In films and books we see the brilliant artist as one who is dark and brooding, stooped low over an easel while furiously painting and strewing supplies, unsatisfied and impassioned by each new masterpiece. The same is also true for the ingenious “mad” scientist, whose cackling laugh and blood-shot eyes reflect the insane and often deadly experiments concocted in dungeon-like, secret laboratories. While these vivid pictures are indeed caricatures, they cannot be developed without some grain of truth. We imagine these scenarios because, while to no degree is every artist insane or depressed, there is a plausible correlation associated between mental illness and creative ability that stems beyond mere coincidence.

For many artists, writers, and composers who are afflicted with mood disorders, the most common diseases are bipolar (manic-depression) and unipolar (major depression). Characterized by episodes of mania, lack of sleep, and abundant energy, bipolar individuals in the

manic stages of the illness are thought to be at the peak of creativity. Before dying in an insane asylum in 1856, the composer Robert Schumann wrote most of his work in the years when he was hypomanic (27 pieces in 1849), and the least in the years when he was depressed (none in 1844). For Schumann, bouts of restless behavior and intense focus seemingly contributed to his level of productivity. Likewise, we are all aware that the painter Vincent Van Gogh cut off his own ear in a state of manic-depression, but not many people know that he produced his great paintings of flowers while in an insane asylum at Saint-Rémy. The 19th century poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson was known to have experienced deep depression and trances, while his brother Edward lived in an asylum for 60 years before dying from manic exhaustion. Many others, including Ezra Pound, Charles Mingus, Tennessee Williams, Georgia O’Keeffe, William Blake, Cole Porter, and Lord Byron suffered from similar symptoms, and studies have shown that the rate of suicide among such influential artists is 18 times that of the normal population. In

many of these cases, the disease is passed down through generations, and the artists, including his or her immediate and extended family, are afflicted with similar disorders. One of the first controlled studies of the creativity/mood disorder connection was completed by University of Iowa psychiatrist Nancy C. Andreasen. She compared 30 creative writers at the University of Iowa with 30 people holding jobs that were not inherently creative. She found that 80% of the writers said they had experienced either manic-depression illness or major depression, while only 30% of the people in noncreative jobs said they had. In addition, the families of these writers, contrasted to the families of the regular subjects, usually held more creative jobs and were more likely to have had a mood disorder.

In what way does mental illness correlate with creativity at the level of the brain? What is it about such diseases that can enhance an artist's emotional response? In all of our nervous systems there are important neurotransmitters (chemicals) that secrete to each neuron to regulate certain aspects of our brain's response system. In each of us there is the common mood-stabilizing chemical serotonin that is secreted in the body. For those individuals who are afflicted with mood disorders, the level of serotonin needed for a normally functioning brain is low. In this case, patients can react in many different ways to different levels of serotonin, and this is what classifies and separates different mental illnesses. The common symptom that seems to connect all disorders is a heightened and extremely sensitive emotional response, whether that response is extreme worthlessness or stimulating excitement.

The very nature of artistic and creative work is the expression of emotion and the opening of one's reactive mind. For those whose brains are tormented by enhanced emotional activity, their work produces as a result of that sensitivity. What we might consider as an ordinary piece of art by an averagely talented and stable person can become that much more innovative and brilliant by one who sees and reacts to the world far differently than we could ever imagine or fully understand.

Though there is still much to discover about the effects of mental illness on creativity and productivity, general observation of the frequent and often obvious correlation does not go unnoticed by one's own personal experiences. Consider, in point, the somewhat alarming case of my father's good friend of many years, Nordeen. A diagnosed schizophrenic, Nordeen is a man often mentally absent from reality and, when in his manic stages, obsessed with work. Occasionally, when he has not taken his prescribed medication, Nordeen has had to be picked up from wandering aimlessly down congested highways, unaware of his having ever arrived there. And yet, it is in these moods that Nordeen is an excessive worker. Recently, he has taken to the habit of working late hours on weekdays, and coming in to the office all day on Saturdays and Sundays, forever discontent with how much work he is accomplishing, though by average standards, it is an outrageous amount. So out-of-touch with the world is he, that only a few weeks ago did my father witness him arrive to work on Monday in his pajamas, extremely surprised that it wasn't Sunday and that there were others in the office. Certainly, Nordeen

should be medicated to lead a normal life, but it, in a sense, changes his personality and his resourcefulness dramatically. Despite the pain of mental illness, some people with mood disorders, like Nordeen, avoid treatments because of potential side effects, such as a certain mental “sluggishness.” These side effects can be particularly upsetting for people, like artists, musicians, and writers, whose work develops in large part from states of intellectual and creative flexibility. There is no real answer for the case of the “mad” genius, but it is simply oblivious to ignore such a palpable connection. Perhaps instead of spending energy cartooning and doubting these intriguing people, time should be spent finding a way to treat illnesses while maintaining creativity, so that in the future, our society will no longer have to lose so many extraordinary talents before they have finished sharing their brilliance with the world.

The Analects of Professor Nelson
by Matthew Spencer

1. The Professor said of Rousseau's *Confessions*, "Boy, it's *so* nitty, and it's *so* gritty!" Only then did Matthew understand.
2. When Matthew thought he really understood Rousseau, the Professor said, "What's the point of Rousseau's life?" and Matthew could not speak for the rest of the day.
3. The Professor said to a student in the class, "You remind me of Satan, but not in a bad way."
4. When the class thought that they had discussed everything, the Professor surprised them, saying "All we have to do now is figure out, who is Don Giovanni and why, and then we go home!"
5. The Professor redirected discussion one day by uttering the words, "When they were snorting coke!"
6. For a confounded class, the best medicine is more and more confusion. Thus, the Professor said, after a dizzying discussion of *Faust*, "And otherwise, we only have to figure out the meaning of the universe, and then we're done, Ok?"

A Second Pilgrimage

by Elizabeth Beriau

The Introduction

When we move toward times of new from old,
As if from plague or a change, or we just simply grow,
We are refreshed in our thoughts, our views and our notions,
And those around us experience similar emotions.
As if the rain has washed away many years,
We hope to experience a new time without fears.
A new perspective has been born out of night,
Where the rain has rinsed blackness, allowed depth, and light.
I have met with five authors who all felt it worth
To discuss their opinions on Renaissance, rebirth.
Some all in favor, great change could be truly
A title, a patron, and a new opportunity,
But others looked back and beyond this fresh world
Relishing the days gone before, and those still to unfurl.
But all together, since for us time won't wait,
I and these gentlemen headed out of history's gate.
A pilgrimage from Medieval times, feudalistic,
To secular sculptures, novels, and ideas dualistic.
So, not in any order these authors will remark,
Cervantes and Petrarch, Milton, Bacon, Descartes.

Petrarch's Poem

"I am a man of earliest years which none of you precede.
Chaucer is the closest with thirty-eight in between.
I was born before your Renaissance, but with dawning influences,
Like unclad statues in the City Square, with biblical resemblances.
I wrote a book of tricky odes, twas called the *Canzoniere*.
Wherein I discuss deceptively the woman I held dear.

Three hundred and sixty five poems are found with deeper meaning
Than simply love, but secular versus religious intervening.
Yet I offer another piece instead of just this one,
Where I climb an Earthly mountain towards the Spiritual sun.
So, I will take the time right now to recount to you
How my opinion is expressed in the *Ascent of Mt. Ventoux*.
This Renaissance you speak of seems to be a trying time
Where tight religious values are beginning to unwind.
I seem to see it coming from one erroneous path to another
As I wander up the mountain trying to catch up with my brother.
I ask myself on the way up, why do I even bother?
Do I really 'wish to see what a great height had to offer'?ⁱ
But as you read of my ascent you will see within
I was climbing to a righteous peak above the valley of sins.
I question my emotion and its influence from God,
So I move into this Renaissance with an almost certain nod.
I'm not sure that I'm ready, but I'll know when I arrive
If my questioning was all worth it, as was the extra miles"

Cervantes' Poem

"I know I come later in Fifteen Forty Seven,
But I too choose to mingle Earth, life, and Heaven.
Oh dear Petrarcha, I do agree with you
I have looked towards this rebirth and must say that I approve.
We need a new image, and new style at this rate,
And so I have written such a thing to demonstrate.
I created a piece of literature so delicious
You'll call it a novel, creative, fictitious!
Not so gloomy and truthful as the Medieval types,
But not either an epic of ancient delights.
Its modern and exciting, set in difficult times
With contemporary problems found in ominous signs.
And in it I have expressed my own convictions-
My main character Quixote lacks all inhibitions.
He thinks he is one thing, but it is soon apparent,
He is a faithful land owner and not a Knight-Errant!

Yet his faith is impeded by his gallant adventures
With delusion he even attacks a procession of holy paraders.
And I'll show you perspective if that's what you ask for,
Can you count how many stories, or even how many authors?
Depth is apparent in these strange, novel sensations,
Absolute unreality, is one's final meditation."

Bacon's Poem.

"I must intervene, since you seem both so dull-witted,
Can't you see that the future is what is forfeited?
In this conversation all that you can see,
Is yesterday and today, and not what is to be.
I've written a work that has fully defines this
Entitled with care as the great New Atlantis.
And I've created a method, a whole new society.
Forget this Renaissance, science has the priority.
A mechanic Bensalem, of the scientific process,
"Where the end of our foundation is the knowledge of causes."ⁱⁱ
Why dwell in a time where you're still plagued with disease,
Your paintings may be better, and your literature if you please,
Is much more artistic, but you really should admit
That's not what is important in the survival of what's fit.
'Philosophy and the intellectual sciences stand like statues'ⁱⁱⁱ
Still, erect, and full of never progressing virtues.
In the New Atlantis, the machinelike arts,
Will look past your Classics with their timeless parts.
You can change your ways but will admit your reproduction,
Of the history that influences, and your dependence on deduction."

Descartes' Poem

"Now wait just a minute, Sir Frances Bacon,
I have also delved into a scientific vocation.
With a *Discourse on Method* and a few *Mediations*,
I've made logical steps to conclude enumerations.
I proved the existence of The Holiest, most Divine,

As I doubted all else coming from my own limitless mind.
And in realizing thus I have recognized soul,
And the dualistic nature the human being holds.
We are not just mechanical, we do not simply die-
Our spirit thrives on, I would tell you no lie.
So wait just one moment before shunning my time,
Your future must recognize what I've developed in mine.
Absolute reality through dualism is about
Explaining life and also God based solely on my doubt.
Progression is exceptional yet you must not forget,
Our creator and our soul are fundamentally set."

Milton's Poem

"Why you two must quarrel is beyond my state of mind,
You should rather look at insights from one another's sides.
I myself will show this in my own epic story,
I demonstrate an angle missed in Dante's single glory.
He focused on one image, a Medieval point of view,
Where I have used the Renaissance to show more than a few!
I've given Eve and Adam voice, God and "Arch-Enemy,"^{iv}
And when you think those are enough, I've added blinded me.
And in the darkness I've found sight and applied it to my book-
I feel the fault of man as such that I need not even look.
And so this Renaissance created a verse of length and intensity,
Where there is no shapeless argument, dependent upon history.
It encompasses a whole universe, and our world is not the center,
It hangs like a helpless ornament, on a tiny golden fetter.
And the human world with its sciences is not as once believed,
Nor will it provide the answer for all that we perceive.
So bravo to the Renaissance and the Paradise we've gained,
Where I can write in levels that have never been obtained.

Retraction

I feel it is necessary to apologize for my actions. I did not realize what an impact my first work, *The Canterbury Tales*, would press upon the literature to follow. I beg for your pardon if you do not support this newborn era, as it is beginning to have lost the true meaning of divine influence. It is as if Pandora's box has been finally opened, and ideas and thoughts have flooded the minds of authors everywhere. They no longer recognize Jesus Christ, my own inspiration.

"Wherefore I beseech you meekly for mercy of God to pray for me, that Christ have mercy on me and forgive me for my sins."^v If I had previously known that all hope would be lost in succeeding in perspective, and the artist's world would never again be not sullied with some secular image, I'm not sure that I would have even written my first work. Yet I honestly admit, that as I started both these

pilgrimages, I did not know what my fellows were to tell. This second piece, where I have questioned not only my current society, but rather historical progression, has pushed me even further into a world I least expected to uncover.

Here ends the second book compiled by Geoffrey Chaucer, "on whose soul Jesu Christ have mercy."^{vi}

ⁱ Petrarch. *Selections from the Canzoniere and Other Works*. Trans. Mark Musa. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. (Petrarch, 11)

ⁱⁱ Bacon, Francis. *New Atlantis and The Great Instauration*. Ed. Jerry Weinberger. Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc, 1989. (Bacon, 71)

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. 9

^{iv} Milton, John. *Paradise Lost & Paradise Regained*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. New York: Penguin Books, 1968. (Milton, 49)

^v Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Trans. Nevill Coghill. England: Penguin Books, 1977. (Chaucer, 489)

^{vi} Ibid. 489

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza

Sculpture in Madrid, Spain

a photo by Bethany Gumper



The Untold Adventure:
Don Quixote and Sancho meet King Machiavelli and Calvin the Odd

by Dennis Flanders

Of one of our heroes' lesser known Adventures

After yet another long duration without food or drink, the valorous Don Quixote de la Mancha and his squire, the simple but true Sancho Panza, came upon one side of the Rio Guadiana. Here they drank the clear water at great length, until their thirst was no more. Now all that they needed to do was find something to eat. It was at this point that Sancho noticed a figure moving in the distance. He alerted his leader to this, and both stood in anticipation of what fantastic adventure this person might bring. Soon the figure came close enough for the ad-venturers to see that it was a relatively young man, with rather ornate clothing.

This man's dress was, if you would believe it, a laborer's version of regal attire. On his head he wore a crown-like hat made of a blinding green cloth, which looked more like a jester's cap than the saddest headgear of *anyone's* Majesty. His shirt was lemon-yellow, and his robe was a hideous purple, faded in some parts and fluffed up with feathers at both collar and cuff. The man's steed was none other than the famous llama, Temere.

As the strange man wandered closer, the knight and his squire could hear him mumbling something about his son, the prince: "Oh, my prince, created through me, did I not warn you about the rigidity of mor...". At this the oddly-

dressed man stopped verbalizing his thoughts and stared at Don Quixote and Sancho. "Good morrow, kind sirs," uttered the man. "I know not of your business. I only wish that you would allow me some of the clear water by which you stand, so that I may be on my way."

Don Quixote would not just let him leave, however, for this poor delusional knight knew that the man so gaudily dressed had to be a king. "I beg thee sir, what is your name? And over which kingdom do you rule? The richness of your regal costume is truly without compare. Your Majesty's kingdom and wealth must be great if you are able to wear such elegant apparel on a leisurely ride."

Not sure of the nature of these men, the other replied, "Rule? Ah, yes... This kingdom right here, in fact. Yes, that's it. I am the proud go-vernor of all that you see. My name, kind sirs, is Machiavelli."

"Senor Make-evil-e," said Sancho, "I could not help but overhear about your son, the prince. Did he do you some wrong? Or are you concerned that he will not be a fit successor to your throne?"

"Sancho, silence!" exclaimed the knight-errant. "I am very sorry, my lord, for this simple man's rude and abrupt interrogation. I assure you, he will not again speak in such an

insubordinate tone while in Your Majesty's presence. Since you are, it seems, without any sort of guard at the moment, please accept Sancho Panza and myself, Don Quixote de la Mancha, as your faithful servants. I would truly like to make the acquaintance of your princely son, that my squire and I may aid both of you with our services." He then turned to Sancho and announced, "Here we shall relax and enjoy a feast of the finest of nature's bounty. Sancho, while I stay here and converse with King Machiavelli, please search the area for the best fruits and game that you can find. When you return, we shall eat, remember histories long past, and rejoice under the beauty of the summer sky. Now be off with you!" Sancho, at his master's request, mounted the esteemed Dapple and wandered off in search of their much deserved meal. Don Quixote and Machiavelli then secured their respective animals to a nearby tree and sat by the riverbank.

Machiavelli was certainly caught in an odd situation, for he never thought people would mistake his clothing for the regal garb of a king. However, he wanted to see what benefits might come from this chance meeting, so he decided to play along with his new, very odd, acquaintance. He had always been totally focused on the increase of his own power and worldly success, but until now no one would allow this to occur.

Don Quixote went on with his ramblings: "My, this is indeed a fated meeting! I call to mind something from one of my histories similar to what has happened here. A brave and valiant king was hunting with his steed, his three score of hounds, and a good fifty servants. By chance, he stumbled across a love-obsessed knight named Alcahuete who had been wandering and

composing ballads under the canopy of the dense forests of the Bosque del Monito in Galicia. Afterwards, the knight became the king's faithful subject and defender, and his glory became known in even the most secluded kingdom!"

Machiavelli, sinister and sneaky as he was, agreed to take the foolish Don Quixote as his servant. He hoped to build a kingdom of moral-loving fools to dominate, and he would start with this one. He said to Don Quixote then, "That is a history that is known well by every person in my kingdom, I assure you." Of course, this was not a lie, for the only actual subject of Machiavelli was Don Quixote himself. "I would like to tell you, my knight, a history of my own. You will most definitely get my meaning, and become an even wiser man than you are now."

"That is truly an excellent idea," replied Don Quixote. "I am sure that Your Majesty's account will reflect the truth of the situation perfectly. Please, do not delay!"

"Very well. The history that I shall tell you deals with one of the lesser known, and more successful, crusades by the Christians to rescue the holiest of cities from the hands of the Turks. It is not a very lengthy tale, but all men who desire to have prosperity and fame, especially knights, should become familiar with it. After learning the hard way, through defeat, the Christians became aware of several of the weaknesses of their enemies. One might compare this to searching the walls of a fortress to discover structural weaknesses, and thus possible points of entry. At any rate, the brave knights that were leading the advance on Jerusalem had worked out a plan with which to trick the Turks. Realizing that the women who served the men of Islam always veiled every part of their bodies

except for their eyes, they decided to pose as female Turkish servants in order to enter into the center of the caliph's base. And so the knights costumed themselves, exposing only their eyes, and made their way into the Islamic stronghold. Needless to say, their plan was perfectly executed, and the Turks never knew what hit them. The knights were victorious, and the Muslim caliphate was thrown out of Jerusalem for a good while. This is merely a summary of what happened. In any case, you should understand the lesson here: learn to overcome chance by making it work for you, as the Christian knights did, and always expect the unexpected, as the Turks did not."

"My liege, that is an excellent lesson, concise and relevant. I shall always be on my toes, as you say. There are forces in the world, enchanter if you will, who are notorious for playing with the otherwise sound minds of men, of mine especially. Cautious as I may be, I fall victim to their trickery now and again."

"Your enchanter is truly horrible creatures," said Machiavelli. "I know a great deal about those manipulators of nature to whom you refer. Those wretched fiends! Those coaxers of the sure-footed, making things appear as they are not, for their own greedy intentions; and shape-shifters themselves, once foxes, the next moment lions!"

"I know that I can learn a lot from you," said Don Quixote in praise of his new king.

'I know that I can take a lot from *you*,' thought Machiavelli in silent response.

While this was going on, just by chance John Calvin happened to be wandering into the area. Calvin was preaching in the nearby wood to anyone that would listen, whether it be a man,

a gopher, or a tree. None would listen, however, nor would they bow a branch in acknowledgment. But if one would convert, Calvin knew that it would be because of the infinite knowledge and grace of God and His plan to make things happen as He would have them. He did not want to eat of one of his potential followers; but he knew that this was predestined and mapped out by the Lord, no matter what Calvin eventually chose to do. Soon, he realized that a hunger-death by indecision was a result of him getting lost in the labyrinth of his own mind. Thus he ate a ripe and colorful quince from a tree that was somewhat separated from the rest. As soon as Calvin's mouth became aware of the fruit's juices, Calvin heard a voice calling to him from the distance.

'My Lord!' he thought. 'Adam ate from the tree and caused the necessary downfall of mankind! What if I have committed a similar offense, through my ignorance, by taking fruit of this tree to satiate my own selfish desires? Adam was visited by God in the Garden... might the same be happening now to me?'

The voice that was once far off was now close enough for its words to be discernible: "I shall say it again. Sir, do you know which of these trees might give me the best fruit? I am in search of the best that grows out of the earth around here, so that I, my master, and another may eat well and fill our empty bellies."

'He, His Master, and the "other" must surely mean Christ, His Father, and the perfect spirit of holiness, the dove who flies high over the earthly kingdom!' thought Calvin. 'Oh, my fated error! "The best to grow out of the earth" must mean mankind--He refers to me! They of course have seen me indulge my gluttonous

appetites with this condemning fruit, and to the dust I shall return!" Calvin mustered enough courage to say, meekly, "My Lord, I offer myself to Your perfect judgment. Please do what You will with me. But please do not punish all of my sons and daughters to come, for my own horrible sin and human errors. Yet I know that, if this be Your will and plan, You shall have it done." The fearful preacher wept after saying this, and his tears were true.

Sancho, confused at why anyone would call him a lord, said, "I know not why you refer to me in such high regard, for I am not of such noble birth; my master is, however. Please, end your tears, no harm will come to you while you are in the company of my leader." Slightly relieved by Sancho's words, although still believing him to be the theophany of God, Calvin faithfully followed the rotund squire. On the way back to the camp, they notice a fox ambling clumsily by, which is rather uncharacteristic of those furry little animals of cunning.

"That creature would make a fine meal for the four of us, so that we may lessen our hunger from our respective journeys," said Sancho. Calvin, figuring that this had to be some test of his loyalty to the deified squire, decided to trap the slow fox. This was relatively easy due to the animal's odd lethargy. Indeed, he was more of a small sloth than a fox. Calvin of course wondered why God needed to eat of His earthy creations, since He was perfect and did not have to feel hunger. But then it struck him that either Sancho or one of the his other companions had to be Jesus, God on earth. Calvin suddenly understood this whole meeting to be part of the grand scheme of the second

coming of Christ. Needless to say, he was surprised.

"Oh, the rapture is near! Our loved ones may soon be taken from this earthly waiting room!" uttered Calvin, in both fear and intense excitement.

"What did you say?" questioned the divine Sancho.

"Sorry, I was just thinking aloud."

"Oh."

As Sancho and Calvin reached Don Quixote and Machiavelli, they noticed that the knight and the stranger had managed to catch a fish and were now preparing it for their meal. Calvin, of course, saw this fish as further evidence for his God hypothesis. He recalled the New Testament accounts of Jesus giving bread and fish to the masses, and felt that the similarities were too numerous to be coincidental (He would never find out that these men did not represent the Trinity). The other men all formally met the preacher Calvin, and Sancho and Don Quixote found him to be a very religious man of high moral standards. They saw this as a quality to be highly regarded, but Machiavelli recognized this as something that could potentially be manipulated for his own benefit.

Eventually they all ate the fish and the slow fox, which tasted wonderful and finally filled the voids in their stomachs. Over lunch, Don Quixote told Sancho of his new allegiance to King Machiavelli. Sancho certainly did not approve of this, and made no attempt to hide his discontent. When the meal was done, the four weary men stood by the water's edge and began to talk.

"See you how this river flows so wildly here?" said Machiavelli to Don Quixote. "To

me, it is so much like Fortune, its course tameable by the flexibility and readiness of man."

"Ah, such absurd talk!" blurted Sancho. "You say that you see fortune in this river, but I see no flow of gold here. Look, it is as clear as glass."

"Sancho, show this wonderful king the respect his position deserves, or I shall be forced to correct thee expeditiously."

"But he is not a real king," whispered Sancho. "Where are his servants, his treasure, his sword? His majesty is feigned!"

"Hush, young Sancho! He might not give you that land you desire so much!"

"I assure you, Don Quixote, that I would more legitimately be king of my own vegetable garden than I could ever be as governor over any tract of fertile land that he would call mine."

Machiavelli, alarmed by the comment that was just made by the squire, became afraid that his secret intentions might become known. He therefore decided to draw attention away from himself and toward the newest member of their little party, the vulnerable and unsuspecting Calvin. Turning to the man, he asked, "Do you know who owns the land in these parts?" Don Quixote immediately stifled Sancho so that they might hear the king talk. All of their attention was then focused on this burgeoning conversation.

"I know You are testing my faith," replied Calvin, "and the answer to that is quite simple: The land belongs to the Lord, and He is the only one with a true claim to it. Fighting to gain land is an example of one's own hollow ambition. It is not something attempted by the holy."

"Very good, young believer. It is quite noble of you to stand behind and defend what you feel is right. And yet, you are *wrong*!" It was at this moment that Machiavelli turned from a benevolent but strange little man into a tyrannical beast. "This is my land, and Don Quixote will defend my honor! My knight, this foolish man is exhibiting a treason of the worst kind, for he is denying my divine right as king. Please correct him, my loyal servant, and I shall give you and your squire half of my kingdom to govern!"

Moved by King Machiavelli's words and eager to please his king under the code of chivalry, Don Quixote jumped at the traitor. Attempting to dodge the sudden attack, Calvin fell into the rushing waters of the turbulent Rio Guadiana. He decided that it was no use trying to fight the current: it would take him where it pleased, no matter how much he tried to move against it. With this, the rather strange Calvin was carried downstream, never to be seen again. Once the man floated out of their sight, Machiavelli mused, "And Fortune controls the fate of the faithful."

"Don Quixote!" cried Sancho Panza. "What have you done? Because of this falsely crowned commoner, you sent an innocent and holy young man into a wild river of unpredictable course. And all because he defended his convictions in the face of adversity! Can you not see the fault with this?"

Because of Sancho's words of reason, Don Quixote briefly saw Machiavelli as Sancho had seen him all along. In fury and confusion, he yelled out, "King Machiavelli, you are no more than a pauper, a worthless knave! Never abuse any man as you have done to me and my

squire! I shall correct you for that!" With this, he launched himself at his former king.

Swiftly, and for his sake with greater speed than Don Quixote, Machiavelli mounted his llama, Temere, and fled into the horizon. His voice continued to be discernible even when his physical shape ceased to be. Machiavelli was saying the same thing over and over again: "The Prince shall live on! The Prince shall live on!"

The knight stood there for a few moments in silence, trying to understand what strangeness had just taken place there. His conclusion, as one might have expected was as follows:

"Friend Sancho," explained Don Quixote, "it must have been the enchanters who made the great Machiavelli appear to us like a vagabond rather than a king. I can understand that you, a mere squire who still has much to learn about the world, could have easily been fooled by the magician Ariosto--or was it Arrete? And yet, the spell was so powerful that even I believed for a moment that Machiavelli was a liar!"

"Yes. The enchantment was very convincing."

"Maybe we will encounter that great man again in another adventure, and sooner or later we shall have the opportunity to make amends."

"Perhaps. But for my sake, I hope this next encounter tends toward *later*. I am tired," continued Sancho, turning his head to look around, "and Dapple has vanished into thin air yet again. I cannot help but wonder if your enchanters played a part in that as well."

At this moment Sancho recognized the shape of a monkey in the distance, but the

adventure that arose because of that primate's chance appearance is one that shall be told in a later history.

The More Things Change

by Alexey Mohr

In recent times no European nation has had a bloodier, less expected, or more passionate Revolution than that of France in 1789. Alexis De Tocqueville's *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* outlines the many aspects of French society that allowed for such social and political upheaval to rear its ugly head. He examines, from his aristocratic point of view, the state of social order before, during, and after this monumental time of change in French history. While his perspective shows itself to be biased on more than one occasion, the analysis of France's socioeconomic order that he offers effectively elucidates a society in which a Revolution was inevitable. While the Revolution failed to usher in a time of stable political structure based on the hopes and aspirations of its instigators, De Tocqueville does believe that it managed to alter France, and indirectly all of Europe, permanently. Nevertheless, he also believes that what it means to be a Frenchman survived the Revolution.

Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was still in the grip of the Feudal system, with the peasant class firmly under the foot of the nobility. However, this exemplification of inequality was weakening, particularly so in France. As De Tocqueville notes, this fact seems extremely odd, given the aspects of French society the revolt is attributed to. It is commonly held that the Revolution was motivated by the commoners' desire to embrace the equality that was being denied them by the vast schism that existed between the classes, something

they viewed as being due to the Feudal structure in France. De Tocqueville points out the contradiction by asking the obvious question, if other European countries were under a more strict Feudal system than France, why was it France that experienced revolution? The answer, he says, is in the question; the French people were living under the most lenient Feudal system in Europe, and it was this leniency that gave the peasants a sense of what it was like to have a higher quality of life. "The peasants could move about, buy and sell, work, and enter into contracts as they liked. Only in one or two eastern provinces, recent annexations, some last vestiges of serfdom lingered on; everywhere else it had wholly disappeared."ⁱ Because the peasants were allowed some freedoms, they wanted the rest. De Tocqueville explains, "Exactly the same feudal rights were in force in every European land and that in most other countries of the continent they pressed far more heavily on the population than in France."ⁱⁱ By giving the commoners an inch, they wanted to take a mile.

Another point that De Tocqueville makes illustrates this point further. In France, unlike many other major European countries of the time, the peasants were allowed to own land. In fact, according to De Tocqueville, they were ravenous for it. "The peasants' desire for owning land was nothing short of an obsession and already all the passions to which possession of the soil gives rise in present-day France were active."ⁱⁱⁱ The number of land-owners in France before the Revolution was

between half and two-thirds that of France after the Revolution. This is an extremely high amount of land-ownership among commoners for a Feudal system. It must be noted that one of the key sources of land that the peasants could purchase was the nobility. In many cases, while the nobles would sell peasants land, they would impose some form of taxation on that land, such as the peasants having to give a certain amount of their harvested crops to the nobility from which they purchased the land. This aside, being allowed this one major privilege made those commoners acutely aware of the ones which they were not allowed. Also, the fact that the nobility retained some control over the land induced feelings of ill will from the peasants. Nevertheless, these peasants were still remarkably well-off for their time.

This higher quality of life among the peasants by itself would not have brought about the Revolution - greater conflict was necessary. While the peasants were indeed allowed to own land and enjoyed a more free existence than peasants of other Feudal systems, they were still financially controlled and exploited by the central powers of the government (a central system, which De Tocqueville notes, existed before the Revolution, and was not a result of it). "The privilege most resented by the general public, that of {the nobles'} exemption from taxation, became progressively more valuable from the fifteenth century up to the Revolution."^{iv} Because the nobility was excused from the obligation of paying any form of taxes to the government, all the burden of financing the state rested on the shoulders of the lower classes. "The inequality of taxation created an even wider rift between classes, dividing up the nation more and more into watertight compartments."^v This situation of the immunity of the nobility was nothing new, but it became more and

more noteworthy as the government imposed more and more forms of taxation. De Tocqueville notes that the annual taxation of the state rose by leaps and bounds from the rule of Charles VII to Louis XVI. As a result of these increasing taxes, the poor became poorer and the middle class became consistently more aware of the difference between it and the nobility.

The economic problems imposed on the state that demanded higher and higher rates of taxation were self-propagating at this time in French history. For a fee, a commoner could purchase a noble position, and essentially buy his way into freedom from taxation. Without explanation, this seems to be just about the worst thing France could possibly do to lift its financial difficulties - granted, the state gains money every time a commoner buys a position. However, eventually all commoners with enough money would by their way into nobility, and the remaining commoners would be the ones who are too poor to support the financial burden of the country in the first place. There was motivation for this seemingly idiotic idea, however; Louis XVI's aim, as outlined by De Tocqueville, was "to lower the prestige of the nobility."^{vi} The objective was to ease the tension between the classes by homogenizing the people and moving towards a state of social equality, removing a sense of resentment for those socially 'better' than one's self. Regrettably, this ennobling of commoners had the opposite effect, according to De Tocqueville. "The envy with which the newly made nobleman inspired his former equals intensified their sense of being unfairly treated."^{vii} Poor commoners watching their neighbors buy their way into nobility only felt more disdain for the establishment that allowed such actions, because they too wished to join higher social ranks, but could not

afford to. This purchasing of posts was no small development, either. "Within no more than sixteen years, from 1693 to 1709, it would seem that some forty thousand new official posts, for the most part open to members of the lower middle class, were created."^{viii} Posts of this nature also exempted people from more than just taxation; some exempted them from service in the militia, others from forced labor. It is clear why this infuriated the commoners.

While the people were becoming more alike on average due to the lessening of the prestige of the nobility and the rights of the peasants to own land and live as they pleased within their financial limits, the class lines were becoming more sharply defined and subsequently created a resentment of one class for another. "Throughout the eighteenth century the hostility of the urban middle class towards the peasantry living around the towns and the jealousy of the latter were common knowledge."^{ix} One specific reason for the disdain between these two groups was the obligation of being tax collector; it was far easier to avoid this most hated position in an urban setting than a rural one, and therefore this likely helped motivate the ill will of the rural peoples towards those living in urban settings. This sort of class-based hate was becoming steadily more common in pre-revolutionary France.

Not only was tension developing between classes as a result of the clarification of class distinctions, but tension was developing within classes themselves. In the bourgeoisie this was due to the increasing popularity of the new notion of 'individualism,' De Tocqueville explains. This bourgeoisie class was viewed as a unified mass with a pervading homogeneity, but in fact it was extremely subdivided. "The notabilities of a quite small town were split up into no less than thirty-six distinct groups.

Small as they were, these groups kept trying still further to narrow themselves down by expelling all such elements as seemed in any way out of sympathy with their aims."^x These small groups would attempt to assert as much social power as they could muster in order to maintain dignity and distinction. This is likely due to the fact that they could not purchase positions of nobility, and were motivated by jealousy to fabricate social positions and distinctions of merit that would quell their feelings of animosity towards those higher on the social ladder. This then, is clearly indicative of the existence of those undertones of animosity. De Tocqueville himself attributes this to the "personal vanity which seems innate in Frenchmen."^{xi}

Even in light of this trend towards individualism, De Tocqueville makes the observation that the bourgeoisie class was nevertheless utterly homogeneous. "all these men, split up into compact groups though they were, had become so similar as to be almost interchangeable; that is to say anyone might have moved out of his group into another without one's noticing any difference in his practices or personality."^{xii} What then, was the motivation to move towards this consistency of living, to embrace this penetrating equality of rights and standard of life? De Tocqueville attributes it to the increasing acceptance of the beliefs of the "men of letters," socio-philosophical thinkers whose ideals became ingrained in the psyche of the commoners. The beliefs of these thinkers typically stated that what was needed was to "replace the complex of traditional customs governing the social order of the day by simple, elementary rules deriving from the exercise of the human reason and natural law."^{xiii} De Tocqueville states that "every Frenchman felt he was being victimized,"^{xiv} and therefore became unified

both in that conviction and in the beliefs of the theories of the men of letters which offered an escape from that victimization. It was the mentality of being oppressed throughout the lower classes which allowed for the unification of the people against the Feudal system, thus inciting the Revolution. "There was no taxpayer aggrieved by the injustices of the *taille* who did not welcome the idea that all men should be equal..."^{xv} De Tocqueville even addresses the men of letters as possessions of the French when he says "Our men of letters did not merely impart their Revolutionary ideas to the French nation; they also shaped the national temperament and outlook on life."^{xvi} The people were unified in the spirit of equality and political reform as delineated by these thinkers. It was this unification that could break through the sub-divisions and bring about a revolution.

The acceptance of the notions of the men of letters by the masses was one of the primary social catalysts of the Revolution. In terms of specific political events, the most important events transpired as follows; an attempt by the Controller-General of finances to modify the nature of taxation in France pushed the society ever closer to its boiling point. He called an assembly to address the possibility of taxing the upper classes to offset the deficit that had been building in France. The assembly would not make any decisions regarding that issue, and suggested the calling of the Estates General (representing the clergy, nobility, and Third Estate), which had not met since 1614. The king agreed, and issued elections for the Estates General, electing 600 delegates for the Third Estate and 300 each for the clergy and nobility. They met on May 5, 1789 and were immediately in conflict over voting by head (advantage to Third Estate) or by group (advantage to clergy/nobility).

The Third Estate made the 'Tennis Court Oath' stating that they would not rest until a new constitution was written for France. The king gave in and conglomerated the entire Estates General into the National Constituent Assembly. At this time the people were starving due to a bad harvest the previous year, and were struck by the 'Great Fear' that the king was planning to overthrow the Third Estate. Everything came to a climax, and Revolution erupted on July 14, 1789. (Information derived from Encyclopedia Britannica Online)

While De Tocqueville did believe that France was forever altered as a result of these events, he did not believe that a radically new society was created as a result of the Revolution. He acknowledged that Feudalism was destroyed in France, and could never again return to the country. "The chief permanent achievement of the French Revolution was the suppression of those political institutions, commonly described as feudal, which for many centuries had held unquestioned sway in most European countries."^{xvii} However, he consistently makes references throughout *The Old Regime* to social institutions that were commonly held as having been created by the Revolution that in fact existed well before it. For example, "Then, as in our own day, the peasant's desire for owning land was nothing short of an obsession..."^{xviii} Another example is the centralization of power in France, something that many had attributed to the Revolution, but which De Tocqueville had shown to have existed prior to it. He notes that this is a consistent theme in many aspects of modern French life. "There had existed under the old regime a host of institutions which had quite a 'modern' air and, not being incompatible with equality, could easily be embodied in the new social order..."^{xix} While the Revolution did usher in a tide of

political change and social transition, the fundamental nature of the French condition persevered.

The Frenchman himself survives all social and political upheaval, according to De Tocqueville. That is to say, those things that defined a man from France remained unchanged throughout all of the strife and turmoil of the revolutionary times. "Their

basic characteristics are so constant that we can recognize the France we know in portraits made of it two or three hundred years ago..."^{xx} The Feudal system had been destroyed, and division of classes was permanently altered, but what it fundamentally meant to be French, be it personal, social, or universal, endured the Revolution.

ⁱ de Tocqueville 23

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.* 27

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.* 24

^{iv} *Ibid.* 86

^v *Ibid.* 100

^{vi} *Ibid.* 88

^{vii} *Ibid.* 89

^{viii} *Ibid.* 91

^{ix} *Ibid.* 92

^x *Ibid.* 94

^{xi} *Ibid.* 95

^{xii} *Ibid.* 96

^{xiii} *Ibid.* 139

^{xiv} *Ibid.* 141

^{xv} *Ibid.* 142

^{xvi} *Ibid.* 146-7

^{xvii} *Ibid.* 19-20

^{xviii} *Ibid.* 24

^{xix} *Ibid.* 209

^{xx} *Ibid.* 210

Giovanni Pico: His Life and Work

by Camilla Mackeprang

Giovanni Pico, Count of Mirandola, was a brilliant young philosopher. Born in 1463, he made many contributions to thought during the Italian Renaissance. There is a direct correlation between the life Pico led and the work he produced. We will illuminate this influence by investigating Pico's background.

This essay will concern only one of Pico's works: the immense 900 theses project (including the introductory *Oration on the Dignity of Man*). In order to determine how his life related to this particular work, we will first look at Pico's education. The knowledge he obtained throughout his lifetime served as the foundation for his theoretical arguments. We will also investigate the argumentative method that Pico used in his philosophical debates: syncretism. If we understand the significance of his syncretic approach, we will discover why he was a convincing, but sometimes scandalous rhetorician.

Pico was an autodidact, since his pursuit of scholarly enlightenment was entirely self-motivated.ⁱ He "called himself an *explorator*," and spent much of his inherited wealth acquiring books. Pico's personal library contained numerous texts on subjects including literature, science, philosophy, and theology represented in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic.ⁱⁱ These

books represent the broad range of subjects he studied. The sheer breadth of his education was remarkable for such a young person.

After enjoying a self-generated, "thorough classical education"ⁱ in his home, Pico extended his learning. This "child prodigy" attended the University of Ferrara at age sixteen.ⁱⁱⁱ A confident and intrepid young man, he proposed a work containing 900 theses when he was just twenty-four years old. Pico intended to present these disputable theses in an open forum to distinguished philosophical and theological scholars. Although the debate never occurred, Pico continued to cultivate his knowledge, and intellectually enrich himself.

The statement "clarity is achieved through breadth,"^{iv} sums up Pico's educational activity as well as his argumentative practice. Because he acquired information from a vast collection of intellectual and cultural sources, Pico was able to synthesize diverse ideas to prove a point. His syncretic method yoked together disparate religious and philosophical wisdom to expose their similarities and differences.^v

Pico's ability to synthesize what would appear to be incompatible information was the result of three contributing factors in his life. The first factor was his vast educational interest. It was from his broad range of knowledge that he

was able to extract and weave together seemingly opposing beliefs.

The second factor that contributed to his syncretism, was his lack of traditional education. Since Pico taught himself, he was able to embrace the subjects he found interesting, regardless of what the scholars of the time thought he should study. This freedom gave Pico the advantage of learning information that was not traditionally taught in Italian educational establishments.

The third factor that permitted Pico to incorporate syncretism into his reasoning, was his bold nature. The young man's courage led him to present arguments that were different than what had been seen before.^{vi} He made daring associations that were both refreshing and effective.

Let us look at an example of Pico's syncretism in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. In this example, he explains why God created man. Pico writes, "But, when the work was finished, the Craftsman kept wishing that there were someone to ponder the plan of so great a work, to love its beauty, and to wonder at its vastness. Therefore, when everything was done (as Moses and Timaeus bear witness), He finally took thought concerning the creation of man."^{vii}

The association that deserves your attention, is the connection Pico makes between Moses and Timaeus. Moses was a well-known Old Testament figure; Timaeus was a character in Plato's cosmological philosophy. The idea that these two could have anything in common must have seemed absurd to people at the time; yet, Pico linked them together for a reason. Pico continually challenged his audience by promoting the expansion of their minds. By re-

ferring to Moses and Timaeus together, readers make simultaneous mental connections between the following: philosophical theory and Biblical wisdom, Plato and Moses, paganism and Catholicism. Pico had brilliant intentions and he realized them through unique associations such as these.

Pico's monumental rhetorical event of 900 theses never took place.^{viii} Because he embraced foreign religious knowledge, his work was not widely accepted by his ecclesiastic contemporaries. Pope Innocent VIII felt the event was so dangerous that he postponed it indefinitely.

The debate was considered scandalous for a variety of reasons. Pico had planned for the event to take place during Epiphany^{ix} at the Vatican. Pico's choice of time and setting provides insight into what the event was meant to symbolize.

Epiphany, in the Roman Catholic tradition, occurs on January 6. It signifies the holy event when three wise men were led from distant lands to Bethlehem. These Magi traveled to adore and bestow gifts upon baby Jesus. This Biblical story corresponds to what Pico wanted to recreate. He invited scholars from all over take part in his debate. Pico wanted each wise man in attendance to contribute his gift of intellect and experience.

Pico made another New Testament reference to a story that was read during the season of Epiphany. In this story, a twelve years old Jesus was left behind by his parents. When Mary and Joseph found Jesus, he was in the temple teaching the elders. This story parallels what Pico tried to do in his life. Young Pico wanted to educate his elders. The location he chose for

his rhetorical debate--the Vatican--was not accidental. From within the Holy Empire, Rome was viewed as the "new Jerusalem."^x

Pico's revolutionary religious associations were regarded as heretical by ecclesiastics. The religious conflict that ensued between Pico and the church prevented the fruition of his 900 theses project. Despite the opposition he encountered during his life, Pico was undeniably a remarkable and influential philosopher.

Pico died when he was thirty-one years old, but he compressed a great amount of educational activity into that very brief life. One detects an urgency in his work, which may or may not relate to his short lifetime. When he was only twenty-four years old, Pico felt absolutely *compelled* to gather all the wise elders together in one place, at one time to debate his theories. I doubt Pico knew he was going to die young,

but there is still a curious immediacy that comes through in his works.

Giovanni Pico conceived of motifs that were directly influenced by the life he led. His "'universal' intellectual activity" made him a significant contributor to Renaissance thought.^{xi} Consistently driven by an inflamed passion for knowledge, Pico's infinitely broad education permitted the production of works that incorporated a variety of diverse sources. His syncretic approach to argumentation was directly influenced by his self-directed study of numerous diverse works. And, although his synthesis of religious and philosophical subject matter caused him to be criticized by some, he was still a thoroughly innovative rhetorician.

ⁱ Professor Dennis Costa's lecture on Pico della Mirandola in CC201 Honors on 9/27/99.
Wallis, Charles Glenn. Pico della Mirandola: On the Dignity of Man, and Other Works. The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1940. Introduction, p.xxv

ⁱⁱⁱ Kristeller, Paul Oskar. Handout of Renaissance Philosophy of Man. p.215

^{iv} A quotation from Niels Bohr

^v Professor Dennis Costa's lecture 9/27/99.

^{vi} Pico's syncretism is related to ancient eclecticism, but his syncretic techniques were far more effective and systematic than the earlier eclectic methods.

^{vii} Kristeller. p.224

^{viii} Wallis p.217

^{ix} Epiphany literally means the "shining through of divinity." Professor Dennis Costa's lecture 9/27/99.

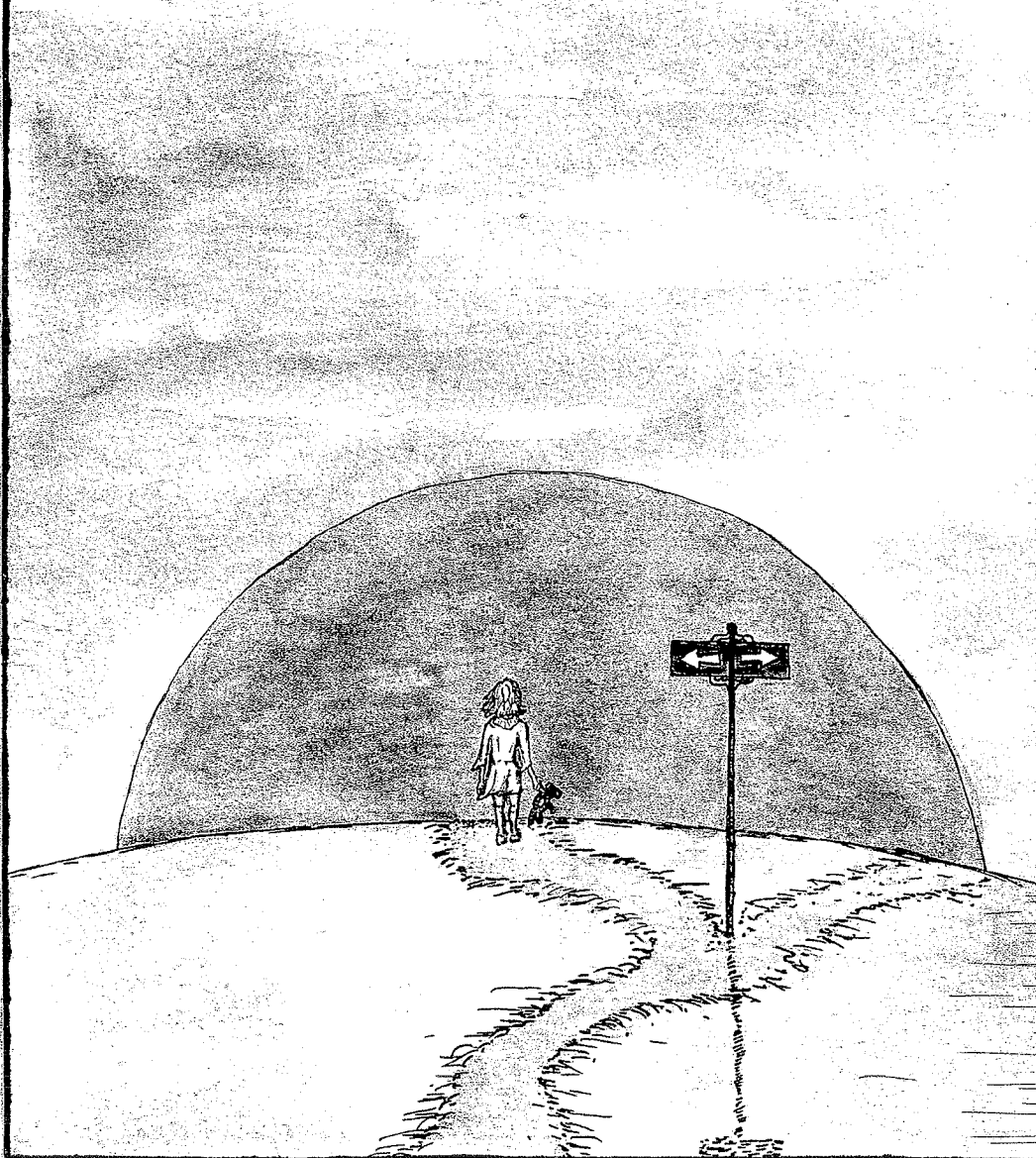
^x Professor Dennis Costa's lecture 9/27/99.

^{xi} Kristeller. p.216

by Ben Di Sibio

False Consciousness and You

K. Marx
F. Engels



Smurf Village Lost: the Disillusionment of Smurfette

by Bethany Gumper

Characters:

John Milton: learned and controversial poet of one of the greatest epics of all time, *Paradise Lost*

His view: Good can come from evil.

Smurfette: naïve young Smurf; Smurfette is unique for two reasons: she is the only female in the Smurf Village and Gargamel (the evil wizard) originally created her as an instrument of evil—she was a decoy to lure the other Smurfs into Gargamel’s lair. *Note: a Smurf is a blue fictional character who is unconditionally good (the Smurfs can be likened to the Care Bears). The Smurfs’ antagonist is Gargamel.*

Her view: Evil and good are always well defined, and evil only comes from evil.

Exposition:

Milton comes across Smurfette sitting outside her little toadstool house crying. A copy of the Bible lies next to her on the ground. She has just finished reading Genesis and is upset over the plight of Adam and Eve. Milton sets out to cheer Smurfette up and convince her that all is not lost for God’s first creations.

Scene I: Does Satan win?

Milton: Smurfette, my little blue friend, why do you weep?

Smurfette: I just read the saddest story. It was about Adam and Eve and that awful serpent that gets them kicked out of Eden. I had to stop reading as soon as God commanded that they leave the Garden; it was just too sad to read on!

M: I have done a lot of thinking about this particular situation. I have concluded that it is sad that Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden, but it is not the end of the world. It is really just the end of life in Eden. Tell me, what is it exactly about the story that upsets you?

S: I think what worries me the most is that Satan wins. And why does he want to hurt Adam and Eve in the first place? They didn’t do anything to him.

M: Before you can decide whether Satan ultimately wins or loses, you need to understand his motives. Adam and Eve aren’t the first to fall from God’s grace—Satan was. He used to be an angel, until he had some ideas that didn’t go over well in Heaven. After his fall, Satan has no choice but to reign as the antithesis of God. He doesn’t want to, so he is very bitter toward God and anyone who God loves. “[N]ow the thought / Both of lost happiness and lasting pain / Torments him.”ⁱ

S: So Satan goes after Adam and Eve to get back at God, since God loves them?

M: Exactly. After his expulsion from Heaven, Satan is hungry for revenge. Since it is futile to attempt to regain Heaven, he schemes to sever God from his new creation. He wants “to confound the race / Of mankind in one root, and Earth with Hell /

To mingle and involve... all to spite / The Great Creator.”ⁱⁱ

S: Well, that makes sense. But I still think it’s horrible that Satan wins. Because in my world, good ALWAYS wins over evil! Life is simple because good and evil are clearly defined. Gargamel is bad, and the Smurfs are good. It is unthinkable that Gargamel could ever succeed at capturing the Smurfs and cooking us for dinner like he’s always trying to do! When Satan got his way and convinced Eve to disobey God, it just broke my blue little heart. Adam and Eve are DOOMED!

M: There are two ways to look at this problem. Satan succeeds at getting Adam and Eve expelled from Eden by enticing Eve to eat the apple. So he achieves his goal of physically separating them from God. But in the long run, he is making things worse for himself than for them. Because there is still a chance for salvation for the two humans, but he can never be saved. In a sense, Satan wins the battle but loses the war.

S: What do you mean he is making things worse for himself? He is already *in* Hell. How can things get worse? Adam and Eve are the ones who have to leave the Garden and God.

M: Satan will always be worse off than Adam and Eve, no matter what he does to them. He is the epitome of evil, because he is the opposite of God.

S: Oh, is that why the Bible refers to him as “the adversary?” Because he’s the opposite of God?

M: You’re absolutely right. He is the opposite of God, and since God is all goodness, Satan is all sin. In fact, Satan is the father of sin! This is an interesting idea – God is the father of Christ and Satan is the father of sin. It emphasizes how Satan and God are polar opposites.

S: That makes sense, but how does that apply to Adam and Eve?

M: No matter how Adam and Eve sin, they will never fall as low as Satan. Because he INVENTED sin. Adam and Eve can rise after their fall from grace, but Satan never can. “The first sort [fallen angels] by their own suggestion fell, / Self-tempted, self-deprav’d: Man falls deceiv’d / By the other first: Man therefore shall find grace, / The other none.”ⁱⁱⁱ

S: So since it was Satan’s fault that Adam and Eve disobeyed God, Satan is in more trouble than they are? If you think of it like that, Adam and Eve’s sin can represent every sin that human beings commit. It’s Satan’s fault whenever ANYONE sins! Satan can NEVER get out of hell because he’s ultimately responsible for sin!

M: Good point.

Scene II: How can good and evil be related?

M: So now you understand that maybe Satan does not REALLY win.

S: Yes—he gets the humans kicked out of Eden, but they can win God’s love again, while he can never get out of Hell.

M: Very good. And *why* does Satan not ultimately win?

S: Um...because he is a bad guy.

M: Smurfette, it simplifies matters to think that Satan does not ultimately win because bad guys always get what they deserve. This is not how life works.

S: It’s not? It’s how my life works! Gargamel ALWAYS gets what he deserves!

M: I know, but your life is a cartoon. Rather than assuming that bad guys always get what they deserve, it is better to consider what evil really is.

That will help us see that it is not so much a question of who wins.

S: We already established that evil is the opposite of good.

M: And therefore, you must have evil to fully understand good.

S: Huh?

M: This is a tricky concept. Let's try to break it down and use an example from your life to make it easier to relate to. Smurfette, who is the handsomest Smurf?

S: Handy Smurf, of course!

M: And who is the ugliest Smurf?

S: That's easy —Brainy Smurf!

M: Do you think that if Brainy Smurf and Handy Smurf stood next to each other, Brainy would look even uglier than usual?

S: Um... yes, he would. And if Brainy Smurf stood next to Papa Smurf, he wouldn't look that bad, because Papa Smurf is old and not such a good-looking guy. But put Brainy Smurf and Handy Smurf side by side, and, MY GOODNESS, Brainy is hideous and Handy is an Adonis!

M: So, what you're telling me is that it is easier to appreciate Handy's good looks when you compare them to Brainy's ugliness.

S: Yes. But what does this have to do with good and evil?

M: Just as Brainy and Handy are physical opposites, good and evil are opposites. And while Brainy makes Handy's good looks more prominent, the presence of evil makes good more recognizable.

S: Hmmmm... take your argument a little further, please. It's starting to make sense.

M: If we recognize this relation between good and evil, it is no longer a question of whether good or evil triumphs. You really can not have one without

the other. It's strange; it seems like the two forces are always in discord but always in harmony.

Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil...It was from out the rind of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evil as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the world.^{iv}

S: Hey, I have an idea! Maybe the serpent's entrance into Eden was inevitable, be-cause good and evil ALWAYS exist together. Adam and Eve had to leave Eden because they must live in a place where both good and evil forces can act. There was no place for evil in Eden until the serpent wormed his way in. So now the two humans live outside the Garden.

M: That's an excellent idea! When Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden, a new world opens up for them. It is a world in which there is not just good and life is not easy. Although this world is more difficult, it is also more interesting. In this life outside of the Garden, goodness is more brilliant than before because they have seen evil. Satan's plan backfires. Instead of separating Adam and Eve from God, he leads mankind closer to Him.

Scene III: How do Adam and Eve benefit from their expulsion?

S: Are you saying that Adam and Eve benefit from their expulsion?

M: In a sense, yes. They gain a deeper understanding of God – they learn of Christ and have a more complete picture of their destiny. Their relationship with God has been tested, so they now can more fully appreciate His divine grace. Before eating the apple, they just love God because He is God and He created them. After they partake of the forbidden fruit, their relationship with God is more of a choice than merely blind faith.

S: Hmmm...

M: Leaving Eden opens up a world of understanding for God's two creations. As they come to understand good through evil, they come to really understand their relation to each other, and, consequently, their relation to God.

S: That's a pretty big jump—I don't see the connection.

M: When Adam and Eve leave the Garden, they are not solely dependent on God anymore. Together they must explore the exciting and frightening new environment:

The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.^v

S: Why did you call it their "solitary way?" Aren't they together? You just said they were "hand in hand."

M: Although it is paradoxical, Adam and Eve are together but alone. They are now dependent on each other, but they are also alone in that they are separated from God. As Adam and Eve realize that they need each other, in a sense they become one. After Eve eats the apple, Adam feels that he must as well. She is a part of him, and he does not want to go back to being alone. He could not live without her: "Should God create another Eve, and I / Another rib afford, yet loss of thee / Would never from my heart."^{vi}

Scene IV: Smurfette's epiphany

M: So, Smurfette, do you have a new understanding of Adam and Eve's story?

S: I think so. Now I understand that Satan does not really *win*, because he and God are opposite yet related forces. I know that Adam and Eve learn to

depend on each other and can better appreciate God after they are expelled from Eden.

M: Very impressive! You've made great progress today. I think now you understand that good can come from evil.

S: Well, I understand it theoretically, but I don't see how it can possibly apply to me. Good can come from evil in books, but never in my own Smurf Village.

M: Why? Because from what you just told me, it seems this would automatically follow. Let's take another Smurfy real-life example to really understand. Smurfette, do you know who your parents are?

S: I don't really have any. I'm the only Smurf without parents.

M: How did you come into the world then?

S: It's a long story—Gargamel created me as a decoy to lure Smurfs into his control. He wanted to get them into his spooky castle so he could cook them and eat them for dinner. Eventually, I escaped and became a real Smurf.

M: Let's talk about the story of your creation in relation to good and evil instead of Adam and Eve's. Gargamel is evil and he made you, right?

S: Right.

M: You were originally created as an instrument of evil, but then you escaped from his evil grasp and became a good Smurf, right?

S: Right.

M: Aren't you then an example of how good can rise out of evil?

B: Hmmm... you're right! Oh my goodness, it is all falling into place! Good things CAN come from evil!

M: Now that you understand good, evil, and how they work in the world, what are you going to do?

S: First, I'm going to leave the Smurf Village. It is far too sheltered for me now. I think I'll venture out into the real world where there are not always happy endings—where bad guys don't always get what they deserve, and things are more complicated but more interesting. Life may not be as easy, but I'll certainly learn something. Thank you, Professor Milton!

ⁱ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*; Signet Classics; Middlesex, England: 1968. (l.53-5)

ⁱⁱ Ibid. II.38205

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. III.129-32

^{iv} John Milton's *Aeropagitica*: 1644

^v (XII.646-9)

^{vi} (IX.911-13)

Review Sessions
by Stephanie Nelson

I was doing a review session for CC101 along with Dean Jorgensen. We had just finished Gilgamesh, and were beginning Genesis, when one of the students towards the back of the room raised his hand and asked if we could go a little faster, and just give a one sentence definition for each ID. Jorgensen just looked at him for a minute and asked, in his quiet voice: "You want a one sentence definition of *God*?"

I remember another review session I was doing, with Professor Hoffmann, for CC201. As always, the copying machine was being difficult, and so I asked Professor Mohr, who

was doing a late night session in the Core Office, if he would mind bringing the ID's up to CAS 522 when they were done. The review session proceeded merrily along and I was in the middle of what, if I say so myself, was an eloquent and spirited discourse on Bacon and the way in which science has imposed an entirely distorted paradigm of the nature of human knowledge upon the modern world. Then, with a particularly vivid flourish at this room, a place where CC104 professors explain, definitively, the utterly inexplicable, I turned towards the door—where Professor Mohr was quietly listening, with the ID sheets in his hand, and a somewhat curious expression on his face.

Civilization: Naiveté Can be Good

by Danielle Leo

Sigmund Freud defines civilization as “the whole sum of achievements and the regulations which distinguish our lives from those of our animal ancestors and which serve two purposes—namely to protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations.”ⁱ In this definition, the second purpose modifies the first; the amount of social cohesion is, to some extent, proportional to man’s power over or ability to react to the forces of nature. The intention behind these purposes is that civilized man be *happy*. “What we call happiness in the strictest sense comes from the satisfaction of needs which have been damned up to a high degree.”ⁱⁱ

Freud’s definition of Civilization addresses three sources of suffering in life: our body, nature, and social interaction. Respective to the sources, our bodies decay, we are at the whims of nature, and we are pushed or pulled by lust or aggression (the two basic drives) towards our fellow man. In order that a community remain socially cohesive, man must relinquish his “natural” rights to follow his basic drives. If he were to pursue his libidinal drive, he’d become entirely dependent upon the object of his lust or affection, and expose himself to extreme suffering. Even if his desires are met, the man that seeks constant satisfaction of his sexual drives isolates himself from society, thus exposing himself to the dangers of nature. Freud states

that sexual relationships can be a major source of aggression. They are “bound to become the source of the strongest dislike and the most violent hostility among men who in other respects are on an equal footing.”ⁱⁱⁱ If man were to pursue his aggressive drive to satisfaction, the community would disintegrate due to a high degree of mutual hostility and destroy his feeling of security from nature. Therefore, civilization makes individual aggression communal and directs this aggression internally in the individual and against other communities. It places restricts on the libidinal drive in such a way as to strengthen social cohesion, by requiring “that there shall be a single kind of sexual life for everyone, disregard[ing] the dissimilarities, whether innate or acquired, in the sexual constitution of human beings.”^{iv}

Both drives are forever at war within the individual, causing man to want to create and to destroy, to want to unify and to dissolve, to lose identity and to assert identity. Freud states that the evolution of civilization parallels the struggle between the libidinal and aggressive drives.^v This struggle parallels the stages in the development of individual man, represented by a paradigmatic tragedy, the story of Oedipus.

Restricting the satisfaction of instinctual needs produces frustrations in man that limit his happiness. The limiting force is guilt, or conscience, or the super-ego (all three words

being roughly synonymous). It requires knowledge of what is good and what is bad. The definitions of the words *good* and *bad* have evolved with civilization through its stages of development. *Bad* began, with primitive man just at the beginning of developing communities, as the consequence of the denial of sexual satisfaction. "At the beginning, therefore, what is bad is whatever causes one to be threatened with loss of love."^{vi} When Oedipus kills his father, he satiates his desire for aggression, but at the expense of losing the love of his father. This more personal knowledge of good and bad becomes further removed from the self, and is given over to the judgement of an external force: the community. The community sets up an authority capable of punishing the individual in other ways besides the simple frustration of unsatisfied needs. Oedipus' mother loves him less because of what was done to the father. This fear of punishment makes the individual feel bad for things done that are not considered acceptable by the community.

Mentioned earlier is the concept of man's aggressive drive being internalized and directed against the self. Man's guilt takes the form of a super-ego, which causes man to punish himself not only from actually *doing* a wrongful act, but merely *thinking* it. Future generations of the Oedipus family feel the same conflict of love and hate toward their fathers, and though they may not act upon their hate, they feel as badly as if they *had* acted upon it. "Civilization obtains mastery over the individual's dangerous desire for aggression by weakening it and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it."^{vii} This agency is guilt, which ultimately

cows a man into inhibiting his own instincts for the sake of the community. "A threatened external unhappiness—loss of love and punishment on the part of the external authority—has been exchanged for a permanent internal unhappiness, for the tension of the sense of guilt."^{viii} Every civilized individual, then, experiences the frustration of conflicting forces within his person: the natural desires and restrictive guilt, sex and aggression.

Aware that he will firmly establish that suffering is an essential component of the human experience, Freud gives the reader three measures to bear suffering. They are: *powerful deflections, substitutive satisfactions, and intoxicating substances*. All three measures involve the denial or suspension of reality, hinting that Freud equated reality with suffering. Deflections are distractions. The substitutive satisfactions pertain to the imagination and the world of art and the fantasies. Intoxicating substances refer to the chemical substances a person can imbibe to cause a chemical change in which reality is no longer perceived. All three measures can be found in religion.

Freud goes on to define religion as a procedure that "regards reality as its sole enemy and as the source of all suffering."^{ix} The aim of religion is to creatively recreate a world without all of the elements that make the real world unbearable. Christianity does this by imploring man to love his neighbors as he loves himself. Freud dismisses this commandment as an impossible fantasy. He also accuses religion of being contradictory; he spends a good portion of the sixth chapter on the argument of theodicy against the ability of religion to actually create

the world it wants to. "How exactly is it that evil manages to intrude on the religious fantasy world?" It intrudes thusly: communities develop, each with their own unique conception of a fantasy world. Then one community professes its fantasy world as the only truth, and directs a social form of the aggressive instinct at a different religious group. Christianity (in the Protestant sects of Northern Europe) also linked religion with deflection in the concept of asceticism. Man redirects the energy of his repressed instincts to his vocation. Lastly, in the three measures found in religion, man is intoxicated by communal acts and rites of his religion (see Durkheim and totemism), by the nature of the religious experience (see James), and by some of the substances used in religious ceremony (the transfiguration, imbibing of wine).

Also, and more importantly, religion involves ethics, which Freud defines as a kind of therapy for civilization in which the power of guilt (in the form of the superego) is lessened. At the beginning of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud mentions that people look to religion as a kind of parent figure to which the people look for protection and love.^x An excellent example is found in the figure of Jesus Christ, who first satisfied the instinct of aggression by allowing the masses to kill Him. Then He satisfied the love instinct by loving them despite their transgression. His figure, I suppose, is intended to be the undoing of the Oedipal story. The father dies, the sons are loved, guilt is averted. It is contradictory that Freud should decry religion so extensively. He

sets it up as a false reality, as an utterly infantile pursuit of the people.

What's so wrong with naiveté? In *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud indicates that the store of religious ideas includes wish fulfillment. If the people believe in a paternal God, they can love and be loved by a paternal figure. They can fight for him in holy wars, and thus satisfy their need for aggression. They can love their fellow man, and, in a diluted way, satisfy something of their libidinal drives. This trancelike state of partial happiness is better than a world in which everybody strives to satisfy the demands of their drives (there would be no communities—civilizations would not develop). He suggests that the dangerous masses be kept away from intellectual awakening. If the people are awakened from this trance, they lose their fear of God and all becomes permissible.

ⁱ Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 42

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.* 25

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.* 71

^{iv} *Ibid.* 60

^v *Ibid.* 82

^{vi} *Ibid.* 85

^{vii} *Ibid.* 84

^{viii} *Ibid.* 89

^{ix} *Ibid.* 31

^x *Ibid.* 54

Myth and Music in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

by David Gelles

Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* is bursting with emotional, intense, irrational experiences. Don Giovanni himself is an utterly confusing character, and the listener is granted no clear portrait of who he is. The opera bombards one with murder, lust, and betrayal, as it strives for immortality. And yet through such a discordant assortment of emotions and images, the opera remains unified, beautiful, intelligent and poignant, at once addressing the profound and the perverse.

The key to understanding *Don Giovanni* is Don Giovanni himself. His characterization is more complex than any other in the opera, and indeed rivals the complexity of real life; he has character, he is not a caricature. Don Giovanni is a paradoxical man of many faces, and all from the sweet to the savage are revealed. However as his many personas are sorted through and understood against each other, revealed is not a concise portrait of the Don, but rather a window into human nature, a glimpse at primordial unity.

The dramatic opening of the opera sets the tone for much of the understanding of Don Giovanni's character. In Act 1, Scene 1, the violins race around Donna Anna and Don Giovanni as they joust. The fervor created by the music accentuates Don Giovanni's taunting of Donna Anna as he shouts, "You'll never find out my name." Piercingly high notes hang over the melodious strings. Anticipation builds. While Donna Anna is crying in an accusatory tone, Don Giovanni's voice is robust. He teases her, enjoying fleeing from the woman he desires. The

thrill conveyed by Don Giovanni introduces one of the several emotions that will be born in the opening scene.

This seemingly playful feeling that has prevailed is suddenly shattered when the Commendatore enters. In contrary motion, the high strings reel up in fear as the low strings tumble down below the earth. As the dialogue between Don Giovanni and Donna Anna's father begins, the pace of the violins races like a beating heart. Don Giovanni's voice changes from that of a playful escapist to the brash spitting of an insensitive snake. And though Don Giovanni attempts to dissuade the Commendatore from fighting, the Don has no qualms proceeding to murder the old man. Throughout this scene, however, the listener is compelled not to damn Don Giovanni entirely. A certain amount of sympathy and even respect is reserved. While the music and his attitude inevitably contribute to this, these reactions stem from the unconscious recognition of a deeper current at work. The listeners instincts react to the excitement conveyed through the diverse instrumentation—from the ominous basses to the near jubilee of the high strings—allowing the listener to almost shed the role of *listener* and enter into the opera. So involving is this scene that the primordial portrayed in the music is awakened in the listener.

Upon the Commendatore's fall, the winds pick up. As the Commendatore's life is carried away three deep male voices, two *baritonos* and one *basso*, hover with each other for a moment of remarkable musical genius. In this brief passage Leporello, Don

Giovanni, and the passing Commendatore are unified in their recognition of death. The music descends down scales as if it were walking away, and indeed the life is eventually gone. Then, in the most difficult emotional turn in the opera, there is an immediate transition to the recitative in which Don Giovanni and Leporello pass jokes about the murder. It is a light movement, and the discussion is ornamented with the frills of a harpsichord. The contrast between these two scenes is indicative of a larger duality embodied in Don Giovanni, a duality that expresses a unity, which is ultimately his appeal and his demise.

One of the larger contrasts within Don Giovanni is that between his rage and his charm. In Act 1, Scene 3, during the Duet "La ci darem la mano," Don Giovanni's seduction is at its finest as he charms Zerlina. This is not sensitivity, for at least to some degree this show of affection is a clear continuation of the selfish sexual playfulness hinted at in the first scene. However, the sensuality and mutual attraction act as an aphrodisiac, and the personal seduction between the two projects an aura of tenderness, bliss, and even joy.

The music has much to do with this, for as Don Giovanni woos, in a deep sincere voice, lines such as "I shall transform your life," sweet buoyant melodies keep him afloat. Horns and the use of pizzicato lie subtly beneath the surface, adding deep pressure and a delicate touch. The music sways and steps with the enchanted couple as they dance, and soon a flute begins to lead the tune towards its inevitably tender climax. But when the climax does come upon Zerlina's submission and the union of the two voices, it is almost anti-climatic. The music lingers for a moment, breathing nervously with the couple as they slide into melodic harmony with each other. It is

only as they go "to remedy an innocent love" that the music concludes on a triumphant note.

The wrath displayed in the first scene and the sensuality—even if it is somewhat self-consciously deceptive—shown in "La ci darem la mano" work in contrast to each other almost to the point of contradiction. However reconciliation comes exactly from the fact that terror and tenderness are of the same origin. Such a combination of emotions is found in Friedrich Nietzsche's description of ancient Greek Dionysian festivals where, just as in Don Giovanni, "the most savage natural instincts were unleashed, including even that horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty" (39)¹. This description is apt, and indeed Don Giovanni is a mythical Dionysian character, commanding both warped admiration and fear. As is called for throughout the opera, these raw emotions are manifest in tenderness and charm, sensuality and terror, pleasure and rage. Understanding this is enormously helpful, and a further exploration of the Dionysian may provide deeper insight into the nature of Don Giovanni's true persona. It is also especially appropriate to mention that opera has its origins in an attempt to resurrect Greek tragedy.

Klaus Umbach, author of the EMI Classics liner notes to *Don Giovanni*, is aware of the Dionysian link too. He writes of Don Giovanni, "As a personification of the natural libido on the rampage he becomes...a Dionysian fertility symbol that society must either worship or destroy."ⁱ Once the fear, respect and awe pass, Don Giovanni's company realizes they must destroy him. He has killed once already, and he is tearing apart the relationships of such couples as Masetto and Zerlina as he continues his rampage of debauchery.

Yet another reading of Don Giovanni focuses on his extreme individuality and disregard for convention. In this reading he is finally damned not because of his promiscuity, not because of his vile reputation, and not even because he disposed of Donna Anna's father so unceremoniously, but because "he flouted the conventions of continence and chastity, mocked the venerable institution of marriage, and espoused and practiced a philosophy of determined self-expression and individualism which was not in the interest of established authority" (Umbach 11). But just in the way that the primordial vigor of the Dionysian led to certain feelings of enrapture with Don Giovanni, "it is in the sense that Don Giovanni defies convention and is a rebel against the properties that he engages our sympathies and cuts an attractive figure, perhaps even an heroic one" (Umbach 12). It is because of this archetype of the vicious hero that we are not completely damning of Don Giovanni in the first scene. While we recognize the horror of murder, a part of us relates to the self-overcoming of Don Giovanni. He is heroic because he triumphs over his own conscience. For in careening through his morals with "the rapture of the Dionysian state with its annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence," Don Giovanni arrives at his instinctual self (Nietzsche 59). This pre-historical, self-serving drive, it can be argued, is primal to human nature. And it is Don Giovanni's attunement to his own instincts that commands the initial awe of others, and indeed the sympathies of the listeners.

The viciousness so integral to Don Giovanni's heroic profile alludes to the Dionysian. For amid the violence and horror there is in Don Giovanni this excitement and festiveness, a celebration of terror! The combination of terror and "the blissful ecstasy

that wells from the innermost depths of man" gives us "a glimpse into the nature of the *Dionysian*, which is brought home to us most intimately by the analogy of intoxication" (Nietzsche 36). And indeed the analogy of intoxication is ubiquitous throughout *Don Giovanni*. In the opening scene Don Giovanni is drunk on the thrill of terror. And again, because his thrill and rage are born from the Dionysian, we reserve a certain amount of sympathy due to our primal identification with this. During "La ci darem la mano" Don Giovanni is drunk on seduction and lust. All else has faded, and he is fixated on the fulfillment of his desire for Zerlina. Finally, in Act 2, Scene 5, the finale, Don Giovanni most completely fulfills his Dionysian role. He is drunk on hedonism and self-gratification, and innumerable other features of the scene fulfill all requirements for nothing less than a Dionysian festival. This is the second of such festivals, the first being the finale of Act 1, where there was in fact a festival. The concentration of the communal Dionysian festival into a display of hedonism by Don Giovanni marks his continued weakening. He has seduced no one, his community has turned against him, and fate is on his heels. The finale of Act 2 is a last supper for one, and perhaps unconsciously Don Giovanni is anticipating his own demise.

As the music from the overture returns in the finale, Don Giovanni sits at a grand table for one, and is served food in a display of absolute debauchery. Here his Dionysian flame is momentarily reduced to narcissism, but within moments, as Donna Elvira returns to give "one last proof of her love," Don Giovanni is once again delighting in the painful. As he toys with her, celebrating the "the ladies and good wine and glory and sustenance of mankind" and making sport of her desire and rage, the music is

festive, still echoing the overture. However, in the moments just before Donna Elvira's exit, as she damns Don Giovanni to "wallow in [his] filth" and calls him a "monster," the low strings begin to pulse in fits. The basses here foreshadow death, as they have, in fact, throughout the opera.

The scene continues into the initial confusion of who is rapping at the door. And even though a certain amount of fear exists in the music there is still optimism, with sweet melodies dancing freely. This comes to an immediate end, however, with the entrance of the Statue of the Commendatore. The Statue is an appropriate symbol for Don Giovanni's opposition, for "in the Greek world there existed a tremendous opposition, in origin and aims, between the Appollinian art of sculpture, and the nonimagistic, Dionysian art of music" (Nietzsche 33). An ominous tone takes over in one blare of the horns and strings. Hovering on a single chord, the low strings and horns begin lead the music to inevitable conclusion, while the high strings circle and sting. The Statue's voice is commanding, and while the music of the overture calls for conclusion, the horns reinforce the Statue's eternal authority. The Statue denies Don Giovanni's invitation to join in the feast, announcing that after tasting the food of heaven, he will not eat mortal viands, nor drink "good wine." For "other, weightier concerns" await them.

The music meanwhile continues its frenzy, drawing closer and closer to a climax. The strings leap up like the fires of Hell then tumble down like judgement from God. Bold chords lash out as the Statue commands Don Giovanni to "Repent! Repent!" But Don Giovanni does not. For throughout this confrontation the most Dionysian emotions have been aroused. Don Giovanni is

confronted with the results of all his rage and seduction. He is also excited by all of this, proclaiming "Never shall it be said that I am a coward!" Were he to repent, Don Giovanni would be renouncing all his attempts to overcome the ordinary bounds of human existence. He cannot repent, for his whole life has been grounded in Dionysian strives to fulfill all instincts, including that of transcendence. And while the Statue signifies his judgement and ultimate doom, it is also Don Giovanni's last chance for transcendence. By defying divine judgement, Don Giovanni casts himself above all other men. In this act of hubris, spawned from Don Giovanni's belief in the Dionysian power, he seals his own fate. Don Giovanni cries "No!" The statue leaves, and a moment of silence ensues.

In classic tragic form, it is now inevitable that Don Giovanni, in all his anger and attractiveness, will fall. In an instant, flames leap up in the music and deep horns shake foundations. A chorus of demons calls from below and after a tremendously intense buildup Don Giovanni falls through the floor, terrified.

Don Giovanni periled in his Dionysian attempt to transcend himself by attempting to physically embody the instinctual Dionysian unity. Of this very phenomenon Nietzsche writes, "In the heroic effort of the individual to attain universality, in the attempt to transcend the curse of individuation and to become the *one* world-being, he suffers in his own person the primordial contradiction that is concealed in things, which means that he commits sacrilege and suffers." "This is the essence of tragedy, and indeed the essence of *Don Giovanni*."

It is a paradoxical opera that elicits paradoxical emotions in the listener. There are anti-climatic climaxes, polarities expressing unities, rage and

tenderness. Furthermore, Don Giovanni demands both sympathy and spite from the observer. He is a character as old as human nature, and his attempts to attain universality stem from instincts primal to man. Mozart's music in every way reinforces these themes, and if Don Giovanni has no one musical profile, it is because each scene reveals a different side of the same man. Tenderness, terror, rage and delight all find their origins in the primordial unity of instincts and emotions. We must credit the Dionysian with not only the emotions and instincts that add infinite depth and color to lives, but with the inspiration for the greatest of art: for *Don Giovanni*.

ⁱ Nietzsche, Friedrich. "The Birth of Tragedy," from The Basic Writings of Nietzsche, ed. Walter Kaufmann. Random House. New York. 1992 (11)

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.* 71

**Erikson's "John Henry" as a
Goffmanian Performer**

by Nicole Sawyer

Erikson describes the development of the American identity from the strong individual to the standardized, conflicted man in an industrialized society. Due to the constantly changing, fast-paced environment in the United States, the "John Henry" hero of frontier times has had to restrain himself and adapt to different and extreme situations. Like Goffman's performer in a constant state of "impression management," he must appear to be in control of his life and able to handle whatever he encounters in order to live up to the American ideal. His "self" derives from the outside world and what is expected of him.

According to Erikson, the American bases his "identity on some tentative combination of dynamic polarities such as migratory and sedentary, individualistic and standardized, competitive and cooperative, pious and free-thinking, responsible and cynical, etc."ⁱ These sharp contrasts in American society result from the development of the country from a wild frontier into an industrialized machine. It was founded "by men who in their countries of origin, for one reason or another, had not wanted to be 'fenced in.'"ⁱⁱ They moved to a new continent to experience freedom and live as they pleased. The pioneers could not be held back by personal ties or dependency. They had to be strong individuals, and they "developed to its very emotional and societal

limits the image of the man without roots, the motherless man, the womanless man."ⁱⁱⁱ This ideal was personified in the "John Henry" hero, who from his birth refused to be defined by or to commit himself to any pre-determined identity.^{iv} At the start of his life he left his family and forged his way alone.

Once they reached the new country, however, these pioneers had to settle in one place, at least temporarily, to build their new lives and raise families. The American mother had to adjust to this situation in raising her children, and while the descendants of the first settlers continued to live the "role of freeborn sons", she had to be both mother and father.^v She was "forced to prepare men and women who would take root in the community life and the gradual class stratification of the new villages and towns and at the same time to prepare these children for the possible physical hardships of homesteading on the frontiers."^{vi} She feared that protective maternalism would make her children too dependent or nostalgic for their home life and leave them too weak to deal with a potential change in environment. They had to be "rugged individuals" as their ancestors had been.

The lack of obvious maternal affection for the child causes him to feel abandoned. He does not make an emotional investment in his mother, because her response to it is uncertain. She encourages him

not to rely on her, but on himself, and he has no choice but to move on and try to find his individualism. This, however, begins a cycle of self-accusation. Following the American tradition, his mother abandons him so that he may become an individual, but in his rush to become independent, he feels that he has abandoned her. He pushes forward, but with such ambivalence toward himself and his family that he falls into "withdrawal and the standardized smile, and later, psychosomatic disturbances."^{vii} He tries desperately to fulfill the ideal American role, but without a strong personal and familial foundation, he finds it difficult to succeed.

As America became industrialized, these difficulties increased. Mothers entangled their children between the ideal of the strong, independent "John Henry" individual and the need to adapt to an increasingly standardized environment. In order to prepare children for mechanization and "to raise masters of the machine you must mechanize the impulses of childhood."^{viii} However, children still were not free from stories of the brave pioneers and strong individuals. Confused and unsure of his place in the world, "youth after youth... runs away in one form or another: leaves schools and jobs, stays out at night, or withdraws into bizarre and inaccessible moods."^{ix} Those who defend themselves from this neurotic anxiety do so by self-restriction.^x They set vague and limited goals so that they do not disappoint anyone and are careful to take what they believe to be the proper path toward these objectives. They wish to appear to be individuals while never overstepping the boundaries imposed by their industrialized society.

Goffman as well believes that people try to act as social ideals dictate. Whether a person is conscious

of it or not, he constantly tries to control the impressions of his audience. He presents a "self" that "does not derive from its possessor, but from the whole scene of his action" and the expectations of the people around him.^{xi} He plays a certain role in a given situation, and when the situation and the audience changes, he assumes a different persona.

The performer may be sincere in this act, believing that the face he shows is his true self, or he may not be taken in by his own role at all.^{xii} In either case, performers usually want to appear sincere and "foster the impression that the routine they are presently performing is their only routine or at least their most essential one."^{xiii} The audience will not receive the intended impression unless they see the consistency between appearance and manner that they expect from a strong individual.^{xiv} The motivation for creating this impression may be no more than acceptance by his audience, and "he may seek this judgment as an ultimate end in itself".^{xv} However, he may also have larger objectives in mind, such as financial gain, power, or status.

To reach these goals, performers try to embody the ideal behaviors and characteristics that society sets in a given situation. However, if they are to act out a believable role, "some of these standards will be sustained in public by the private sacrifice of some of the others."^{xvi} Socially unacceptable behavior is concealed and praiseworthy actions are emphasized. They try to appear at all times as if they have the proper intentions and qualifications for the part they play and that they did not make any deals or sacrifices for its execution.^{xvii} These impressions flow from a successful performance in a manner that creates the appearance of firm personality emanating from the actor.

However, "the whole machinery of self-production is cumbersome, of course, and sometimes breaks down, exposing its separate components."^{xviii} The stress of constant performance can cause a person to betray the mechanisms or motivations of his part. Failing in his act can cause more damage than just an unsatisfied audience and an inability to obtain the ends desired by creating a particular impression. If the actor does not believe in his ability to perform a part, "he can come to experience a special kind of alienation from self and a special kind of wariness of others."^{xix} His sense of what part is necessary for each situation leaves him. He cannot adapt to changes in environment and maintain an impression of control and firm individualism.

Like Erikson's "John Henry" hero living in industrialized America, this unsuccessful performer feels confused about his role in society. He cannot manage the conflicting messages and ideals that his environment pushes on to him. His environment changes too quickly for him to keep up with it and to meet its expectations. He becomes disconnected from himself, his family, and the world around him. When an actor is successful, however, he skillfully engages in the projection of the impression that protects the American from neurotic anxiety. He gives the appearance of being an individual while remaining within the limits drawn by his society.

However, this self-fashioning that Erikson's and Goffman's subjects engage in take different forms. "John Henry" living in industrial America restricts his impulses in order to fit a standardized role. Goffman's actor, however, makes use of his instincts to read his audience and his circumstances. Also, "John Henry's" confusion and disconnection, unlike Goffman's actor, comes from generations of socialization into a culture with conflicting ideals, not

an inherent lack of personal identity. He tries to balance his role of rugged individual and standardized machine, but exactly where this balance lies is unclear to him. His performance of several different roles is an attempt to find his median. The actor, on the other hand, plays a great number of roles as he tries to adapt to each situation that he faces. He does not seek a balance; instead, he looks for appropriate routines to meet his goals. He engages in "impression management" in order to inspire the reaction that he desires from his audience, while the standardized "John Henry" only tries to make sense of the different directions in which his mother sends him.

ⁱ Erikson; p. 286

ⁱⁱ Ibid. 291

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. p. 299

^{iv} Ibid. p. 298

^v Ibid. 295-296

^{vi} Ibid. 293

^{vii} Ibid. 296

^{viii} Ibid. 324

^{ix} Ibid. 307

^x Ibid. 308

^{xi} Goffman p. 252

^{xii} Ibid. 18

^{xiii} Ibid. 48

^{xiv} Ibid. 24

^{xv} Ibid. 21

^{xvi} Ibid. 44

^{xvii} Ibid. 46

^{xviii} Ibid. 253

^{xix} Ibid. 236

We Are Seven
by William Wordsworth

—A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage girl:
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She has a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
—Her beauty made me glad.

“Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
How many may you be?”
“How many? Seven in all,” she said,
And wondering looked at me.

“And where are they? I pray you tell.”
She answered, “Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

“Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.”

“You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven!—I pray you tell,
Sweet maid, how this may be.”

Then did the little Maid reply,
“Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,
Beneath the church-yard tree.”

“You run about, my little Maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the church-yard laid,
Then ye are only five.”

1 “Their graves are green, they may be seen,”
The little Maid replied,
“Twelve steps or more from my mother’s door,
And they are side by side. 40

10 “My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them.

“And often after sunset, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

20 “The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay, 50
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

“So in the church-yard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

“And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side.” 60

“How many are you, then,” said I,
“If they two are in heaven?”
Quick was the little Maid’s reply,
“O Master! we are seven.”

“But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!”
‘Twas throwing words away; for still
The little Maid would have her will,
And said, “Nay, we are seven!”

What Should She Know of Death?
An Analysis of "We Are Seven"
by William Wordsworth
by Joanna Upton

Wordsworth's poetry, in the romantic tradition, is poetry of recollection and reflection. "We Are Seven" is perhaps among his most poignant "recollections," portraying a sweetly comic meeting between a man and a child. The two, as is parodied by Max Beerbohm in his famous sketch, encounter each other "at cross purposes." The man asks the child how many she and her siblings are, and she answers that they "are seven," including of course the two who "in the church-yard lie." The man tries to explain, to no avail, that the two in the church-yard are dead, and cannot be counted among her living siblings. The simplicity of the language of this encounter belies the profundity of its matter. It is an encounter, across the vast chasm of age, between an inexplicable sense of the "living" presence of the dead and a reasoned knowledge of their absence. It is a reflection, for both author and reader, on the true nature of these cosmically different understandings.

The overall voice of "We Are Seven" is that of an "I" relating his encounter with a little girl. There is an ambiguity in this voice, however, in the very opening stanza of the poem. This stanza asks what "—A simple Child...should...know of death." The second stanza then begins the story of the encounter. This has the curious effect of presenting a reflection

on the story that is about to be related, before the author even begins telling it. By giving it this exposition, Wordsworth proposes his poem in a tone of questioning, forcing the reader to think about what exactly is to be learned. The other main effect of this question is to present an ambiguity of authorship, and hence an ambiguity in the nature of the question. It could be that Wordsworth, or the objective voice of the author, is asking the initial question, then setting forth a different narrator for the rest of the poem. In the second case, the question is objective. We are literally being asked to determine its answer. The question could also, however, be being proposed by the same narrator who is telling the story. In this case, the question could be rhetorical, stating right off that the narrator has determined the child knows nothing of death. Wordsworth leaves the truth of this ambiguity for us to discover.

The rhythmic structure of the poem is designed more or less within the bounds of common meter. The stanzas rhyme a/b/a/b, and the lines alternate between eight and six syllables. The use of this form, which is usually associated with hymns and psalms, raises the poem by association to a sacred reflection. This is perhaps Wordsworth's clue that the poem is to be treated more as a meditation on death than as a

simple story with a foregone interpretation. When used as the voice of a young child, the meter adds to her sense of innocence. The simplicity of the lines and the rhymes strikes the ear with a certain youthful sincerity. Wordsworth uses many slight variations on this form that are all the more striking. The very first line, for example, has no place within the over-all structure of the poem, nor within the design of its stanza. Ignoring rhyme and meter, "A simple child" stands alone. The sentiment of the phrase could not be properly expressed any other way. Just as the line introducing her, the child is simple, and doesn't fit easily into any prescribed form.

Variation on the form is also used in other ways for emphasis. In one case of this, in stanza ten, Wordsworth varies both the meter and the rhyme pattern:

"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
The little Maid replied,
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

The man has just told the girl, "If two are in the church-yard laid, / Then ye are only five." The child must for the third time defend that she and her siblings are really seven, and this change in meter and structure draws attention to the words to emphasize her point. The rhymes within the line, of "green" and "seen," as well as the alliteration of "graves" and "green," point directly to the image of the grave. Its location is emphasized by "Twelve steps or more" and "door." These lines and this structure surprise the ear, and show us her emphasis of the grave as a proof for the existence of the other two siblings that the gentlemen denies. There is also a feeling that, in becoming so emphatic about her point, the girl herself has in a child-like way carelessly missed the rhyme.

The word "seven" is emphasized throughout the poem by its effect on the meter. In each of its six usages, the word grabs our attention by adding a syllable to the form of the line. In lines 18, 30, 64, and 69, the lines that "should" contain six syllables, due to the word "seven," contain seven. Additional emphasis is added to this word, by its placement, rhyme, and meter, in the last two stanzas. It is used here as a final word for the first time. This placement draws attention to the word both by its being used this way in two consecutive stanzas and by its effect on the meter. Most of the six-syllable lines fit an iambic trimeter. Placing "seven" last adds an extra syllable to the last iamb of this phrase. Just as in the example of the first line of the poem, the idea of "seven" is an element that both technically and symbolically does not fit the structure. If the little girl were to concede that they are five, she would be conforming to the proper poetic structure. She would also, through that acceptance, be conforming to the structure of the adult's reason.

Somehow without being at all grating, "We Are Seven" is an incessantly repetitive poem. One level of repetition lies in the question and answer process between these two souls who are so completely incomprehensible to each other. Within that repetition is constant repetition of singular words and phrases. These repetitions serve to further create the sense of childlike simplicity. While the older man repeats his question in varying ways, and even attempts his logic against the girl in varying forms, her answers remain constant. After his initial inquiry, she explains, "'Two of us at Conway dwell, / And two are gone to sea. / 'Two of us in the church-yard lie...'" He then repeats back only those living, and asks how that can add to seven. As though he may not have heard her properly, she simply corrects

that it is seven, and repeats, “Two of us in the church-yard lie.” He then emphasizes her vitality, her ‘living-ness,’ and states that if “two are in the church-yard laid,” there can be only five. Still again, as though he doesn’t get it, she embellishes on her siblings’ graves, and gives a long account of how she lives daily around them, and so around her brother and sister. He goes on to emphasize that, as stated by the maid herself, they are “dead,” and “Their spirits are in heaven.” She readily replies twice to this argument, “we are seven.” Wordsworth, by having her repeat phrases such as “in the church-yard” (lines 21, 23, 31, 32, and 53) and “we are seven” or “seven are we” (18, 64, and 69), gives her speech a child’s limited simplicity.

The greater sense of her youth and innocence is given by her blindness to the adult’s attempt at logic, and her sweet security in her position. As with a young child when one attempts in vain to correct grammar, she doesn’t know what his problem with her statements is, or what he is trying to correct. First she thinks he misheard her, then she thinks she may prove her point by showing the existence of the graves. She then adds what she does with the two, around their graves, and gives an account of how they died. When this fails, she simply adamantly repeats, “we are seven,” still not comprehending why he contradicts her.

The voice of this poem who encounters the precious little girl sees in her both great beauty and ruggedness. One can almost see her eyes sparkling under the mess of her “thick...clustered” curls. He says right off that she is a “cottage girl,” and describes her as not only “very fair,” but “wildly clad,” and having a “rustic, woodland air” (7-11). This combined image of both beauty and the pastoral is reminiscent of Wordsworth’s reverence for wild

nature. This maid is like a shepherdess, who would fit well in the scene Wordsworth radiantly describes in the first four stanzas of “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.” Here, nature is like the maid, “beautiful and fair.” Those present within this natural world are the “happy Shepherd-boy,” and the “Children culling on every side.” The child of this imagining, very like the “little Maid” in “We Are Seven,” is Wordsworth’s “best philosopher.” This child is the presence “whose exterior semblance doth belie” her “Soul’s immensity” (*Ode*, VIII).

As well as being stricken by her beauty and naturalness, the man is impressed with the force of her life. In the first stanza, the “removed” prelude to the poem, Wordsworth asks how:

—A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

The little girl, by this opening description, is more than anything else very alive. The word “lightly” indicates both that her breath is easy and untroubled and that she treads “lightly,” or easily, upon the earth. According to this narrator, she “feels her life in every limb,” as though she is actively aware of her health and vitality. The reference to her vitality returns in the ninth stanza. As though trying to comprehend how she, being so alive herself, could speak of her siblings as among her realm, the man emphasizes to her her vitality. He says, “You run about, my little Maid, / Your limbs they are alive,” then states that thus she and her siblings are “only five.” This part of the man’s argument is odd, and it shows that he is not just trying to find a way to convince the girl, but trying to reconcile the contrast between this radiant, living girl and her siblings’ dark church-yard homes.

Although Wordsworth's "little Maid" is in some sense "simple," her understanding of death is far from simplistic. As is expressed even in the poem's title, she clearly counts the dead among the living. When asked the whereabouts of her siblings, the two who have passed on merely "in the church-yard lie," just as two others "at Conway dwell" and two "are gone to sea" (19-21). She later speaks of the times she spends around their graves, and how she sometimes "sing[s] a song to them" (44). From this one might presume she simply considers the bodies of her siblings their true substance. Even the statement that they "lie" in their graves, a phrase accepted in the older man's speech as well, implies that they are just their corporeal selves.

The girl continues by describing how it is they died. Her "sister Jane" was ill, until "God released her of her pain." Although she then "went away," she was "laid," later "in the church-yard," where the little girl and her brother played "round her grave" (49-56). John, later, was "forced to go," so that now "he lies by her side" (59-60). The maid contradicts herself in her manner of speaking of her siblings both as existing in the graveyard and having "died" and gone "away" (52). When the man insists that those "two are in heaven," she quickly insists still that "we are seven" (62-64). One could assume that she doesn't react to his statement because she, in her obstinacy, doesn't hear his argument. Perhaps, though, she hears all, but the difference is that there is no paradox. She has an understanding of death and of the simultaneous presence and absence of her sister and her brother that transcends all argument of logic and earthly understanding.

The first question this poem seems to be asking is what it is that the adult man knows that the child has yet to learn. What, then, is the "proper"

understanding of death? Several of Wordsworth's other poems relate adult reactions to loss. The picture these paint is often one of abject sorrow and despair. One such poem is "The Last of the Flock," in which an old man is seen carrying the dead body of the last of the sheep that he had raised and loved like children. The old man relates how, to make money to feed his hungry children, he had to sell one of his sheep. The bread he thus won, he says, "...never did [him] good." He tells of the sorrow of seeing the product of "all [his] care and pains" slowly "melt like snow away" (VI). In this abject sorrow, the man becomes "inclined" to "wicked deeds" (VIII). He even loves his children less and less each day (IX). This poem expresses a man's natural sorrow at loss, but also his complete and tragic obsession with impermanence. This reaction, appearing natural to most adult eyes, is materialistic, and far distant from a true acceptance of the nature of things. It is the epitome of the Buddhist notion of suffering, and not the optimal relationship of man to his cosmos.

The question this poem raises may then not be what it is the child must learn, but what it is the child knows that the man, in his age, has forgotten. For this we can return to Wordsworth's image of the child in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." The child of Wordsworth's fancy is born directly of God: "Heaven lies about us in our infancy!" In this primal, divine state, the child is "Nature's Priest," and is "attended" on his way "by vision splendid." This vision, in the tempest of time and age, somehow must "die away, / And fade into the light of common day" (V). Adulthood is only a cage for the free spirit of the child, into which the young are gradually bound by "endless imitation" (VII). Rather than born of

ignorance, then, the little Maid's untroubled understanding of life, her knowledge that she can still answer "we are seven" in spite of the death of two of her siblings, is born of a powerful connection with nature and the divine. She is in contact with one of "those simple truths" that we "are toiling all our lives to find," and can never fully possess again.

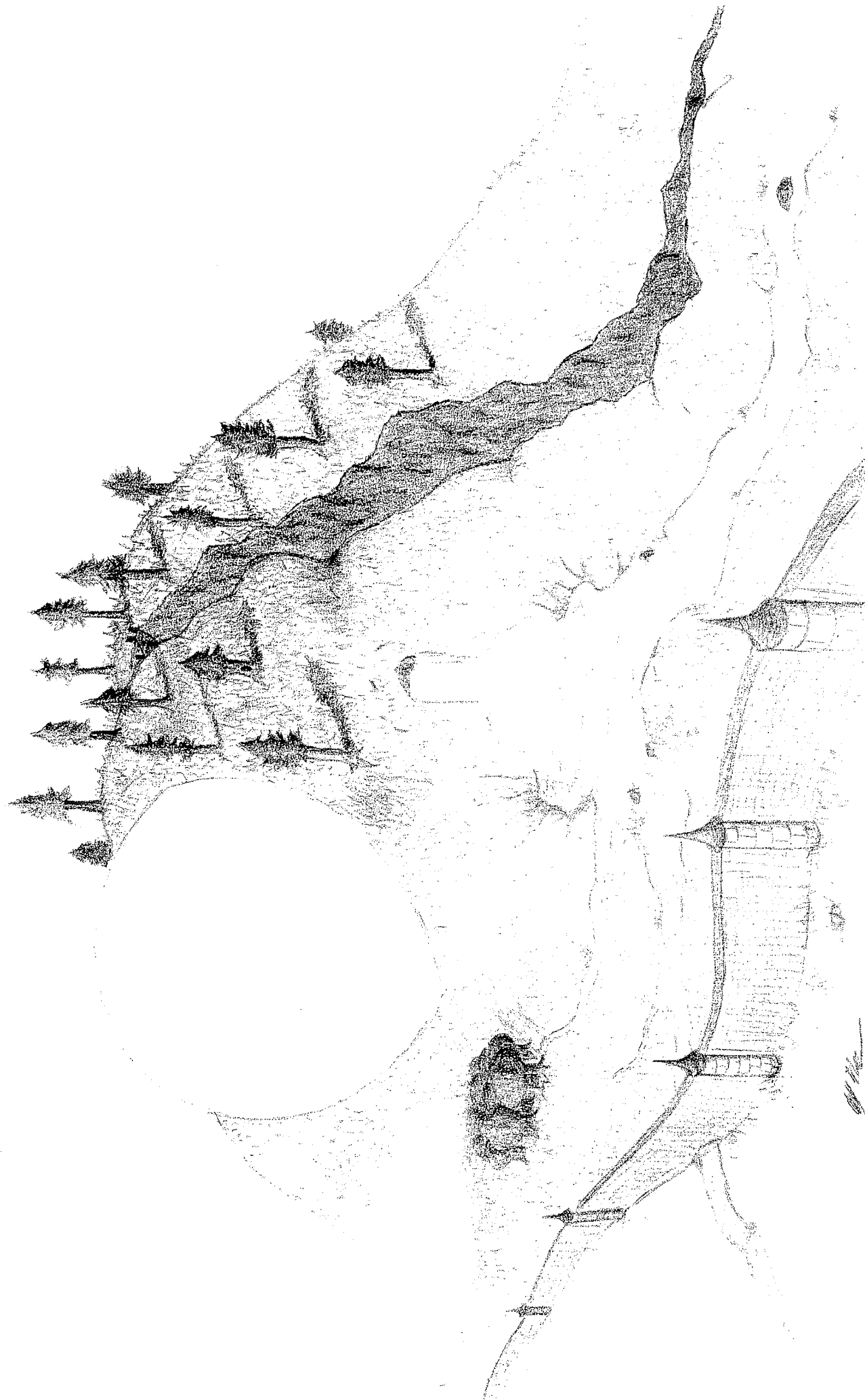
What can a "simple child" possibly know of death? The answer, perhaps, is much more than we can comprehend. The little maid has not learned to "know" that the dead are gone, and are no longer to be counted among the number of the living. Her

reason does not know to write them out of her heart. Although not necessarily free of sorrow, she can, in her purity, exist unmournfully with the spirits of her siblings. She does not, through this ability, lack in love for them. Rather, she radiates with it, and demonstrates it in her every action. Moreover, the other element she does not lack is wisdom. She instead possesses a wisdom that would mean the liberation of the chained and hardened human heart if, through purity and innocence, it could only be regained.

Map of Xanadu

by Alexey Mohr

Attached at the back here is my own personal interpretation of the landscape of Xanadu, per Coleridge's description in "Kubla Khan." The large featureless sphere to the left of center is the pleasure dome (no description of the dome itself was given, hence its lack of features), and directly to its right is the massive chasm surrounded by cedar trees. To the lower right of the dome is Alph, pouring forth from the face of the mountain and spreading in several directions. Along the foreground is the wall lined with towers that block Xanadu off from the rest of the world. Little additional description was offered in the poem; so a few creative liberties were taken with this interpretation. For the most part, however, it is true to the land described by Coleridge.



Of Life, Laughter, Madness, and Tears

by Lydia Smith

In reality, life is a blend of the comic and tragic, a grayish mixture with very few points of stark black or white. Fyodor Dostoyevsky recognizes this, and incorporates it into his writing by adding little bits of absurdity to his most poignant scenes. In his novel *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoyevsky illustrates this emotional paradox with the last hours of Katerina Ivanovna's life. Reading about these ridiculously desperate circumstances makes one admire Katerina for her fortitude, but more than that; it inspires a second look at what we believe to be funny.

One of the many facets of Katerina's character is a certain kind of pride. It is not simply the pathetic pride of the poorⁱ which deals with proving self-worth to others. Katerina knows only too well who she is. Her pride is more of an Aristotelian virtue, asking only what she thinks she deserves. Unfortunately, her character is more noble than her surroundings and she ends up fighting everything that doesn't harmonize with her idea of what should be: Circumstances might kill her, but they could not crush her spirit, could not intimidate her or subdue her will.ⁱⁱ

And so it is that with half the money that she has in the world, Katerina Ivanovna attempts to create a respectable funeral dinner for her late husband. Though the food and drink are plentiful and the table is full, the scene, which should be one of sober respect, is one of poverty ("To make room the children had not even been put at the table")ⁱⁱⁱ and hilarity due to the motley crew of guests. None of the guests particularly cared much about Marmeladov,

with the possible exception of Raskolnikov, who painfully sits through the crowd's antics. There are many comic characters: the slow, self-righteous German landlady, the three Poles whom no one has seen before (one has been trying to get Katerina's attentions all day), a pimply clerk, a deaf old man, and Katerina herself. They play off each other in a complicated web of power struggles (Katerina and Amalia), and drunken jokes (everyone else except Raskolnikov). Raskolnikov is an observer, as we are.

He watches with us as Katerina judges each guest and laughs at those she considers "stupider than us"^{iv} and sees the poor deaf old man, unable to hear her invitation to take more food and nudged; rudely laughed at. Obviously, Dostoyevsky means to prompt pity for this blameless person that these buffoons are ridiculing. They are laughing at the expense of someone else--something which is even different from Katerina's laughter. Hers is based on a judge of character--theirs is all on the surface.

Unlike the old man, Katerina is not helpless to correct the situation when someone laughs at her. She ends up, at the funeral feast for her husband, defending not only his daughter's character, but that of the dead man himself--both of which have been the butt of laughter at this unimaginably coarse gathering. The irony of her efforts and expectations compared to the reality of the dinner is excruciating.

It almost leads her to violence when, in the middle of her speech at the dinner table involving her wild scheme to head a ladies' boarding school,

someone laughs at the mention of Sonya. Without a pause, she praises Sonya loudly, jumps up, and kisses her, before promptly bursting into tears. It is situations like these where Katerina's extreme emotions are comical in their expansiveness. Dostoyevsky takes a situation that could be seen as absolutely horrible, and blunts it with hyperbole and the spectacle of a table of drunken hooligans watching the scene as if it were entertainment.

Similarly, she immediately jumps on a drunken remark made about her husband and praises him lovingly and, perhaps, excessively: "...he was a generous-hearted, good man, who loved and respected his family;"^v and she makes an observation about him which fits her as well, "In the goodness of his heart he trusted all sorts of depraved creatures."^{vi} This misguided trust leads her to many misconceptions of character (such as that of Luzhin) that, along with her convictions about her place in life, cause great havoc.

Katerina's crusades against injustice seem to be the main source of amusement for her neighbors--especially the fights with her husband, which sparked the remark discussed above, and with Amalia Ivanovna, her German landlady, who really does deserve to be called stupid. Amalia is an extremely stubborn woman who likes money, attention, and praise. She has just as high an image of self-worth as Katerina, but for all the wrong reasons. Whereas Amalia's descriptions of her father all deal with his importance based on his appearance, Katerina capitalizes on her father's hospitality, her up bringing, and her sense of nobility. Nevertheless, Katerina's refusal to accept her landlady, who has the power to throw her out, makes for ceaseless wrangling between the two.

Amalia's last attempt for equality comes after Katerina's scene with Sonya. Her comments, given only for getting attention, are the last straw for

Katerina. She pounces on Amalia to "put her in her place"^{vii} and the two start a mud-slinging affair with a breathless audience gathered around. Once again, the situation is dire for Katerina—but the series of events that led up to the fight combined with the absurdity of the contestants makes for great entertainment. Dostoyevsky makes their actions comical, so that the reader isn't focused on the precariousness of Katerina's position until Amalia brings out the big guns: "Geld for the room had not paid been."^{viii} This ever-present threat makes Katerina's attitude all the more impressive, as she stands in danger of losing her home.

In all of these pages, Fyodor Dostoyevsky has not created one instance of pathos without a tinge of humor. At times, one forgets that this is a funeral dinner, because of the absence of gravity. He seems to comment on death--that life continues in its sad, funny way and not all the best intentions in the world can stop it. The incident with Luzhin is perhaps the only scene where he creates pure tragedy. Sonya is guiltless and defenseless and Katerina is powerless to help her. The only mark of levity is the audience that swings from one side to another, yet they are almost used as tools to direct the reader's feelings. It's as if Dostoyevsky is saying that poverty, silly people, and even death are just part of life--that it is a betrayal of the innocent that is truly tragic.

Then, of course, Amalia decides to throw the family out and Katerina runs out to find justice: "There is justice and truth on earth; they do exist, and I will find them."^{ix} She finds an official and calls him out from his dinner with her pleas and has her beliefs shattered again. Hence, she throws an inkpot at him, and goes mad. The following scenes contain snapshots of Katerina on the streets with her children, sick and driven with an awful need to find justice ("Let them see well-born children whose father was a

civil servant, going about the street as beggars!")^x, are heart-wrenching. Yet even so, you have people laughing at Katerina's harsh voice and the children's tattered costumes. The images that Dostoyevsky presents are funny, yet their meanings are not.

Even in the end, Katerina is not without absurdity. In her final delirium she slips in and out of consciousness, singing songs when prompted by her confused mind--a death made distasteful by its parody of life. She gives her children away to Sonya and asks: "Let me at least die in peace!"^{xi} Peace, such a foreign concept to Katerina, comes with her divestiture of responsibility. She does not even want a priest: "I have no sins!"^{xii} In Katerina, Dostoyevsky has created a character who believes in herself and is trying to make the world fit into her view of it. She is both comical and very, very sad in her struggles with society. It is almost as if Dostoyevsky is creating another Jesus out of her, culminating with her last words: "...I am finished!"^{xiii}

Another parallel can be drawn from the life of Katerina--she says of herself, "This poor beast has been driven to death!"^{xiv} This is clearly a reference to Raskolnikov's dream of a horse trying in vain to pull

its load while its owner is beating it to death. Dostoyevsky thus provides an image of rebirth (that of Jesus) and one of hopeless pain and mockery (that of the horse).

We are left with a complicated impression of a woman who did exactly what she believed in with absolutely no regrets. In spirit, Katerina Ivanovna is the ideal that Raskolnikov is searching for. She is only hindered from greatness by her surroundings, whereas Raskolnikov ignores his surroundings and is hindered by regret. The strength of her unusual character makes her a study in emotional extremes that somehow illustrate the shallowness of the characters around her. On the physical surface Katerina's life, and thus Dostoyevsky's view of life, seems very bleak. But this is just the side that those who laugh at the deaf old man see. Deeper within lies an indomitable spirit who took on whatever the world could throw at her. On the spiritual surface, Katerina has fought for her principles through a world of tears, laughter, and madness--and has won.

ⁱ Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment*. W.W.Norton and Co., London. 1989 (Dostoyevsky, 319)

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*, 319

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid*, 322

^{iv} *Ibid*, 327

^v *Ibid*, 325

^{vi} *Ibid*, 325

^{vii} *Ibid*, 329

^{viii} *Ibid*, 329

^{ix} *Ibid*, 342

^x *Ibid*, 357

^{xi} *Ibid*, 366

^{xii} *Ibid*, 366

^{xiii} *Ibid*, 367

^{xiv} *Ibid*, 367

In the Media Booth: A Reminiscence

by Assistant Dean B. Jorgensen

Having been asked for an account of some behind-the-scenes moments of the Core Curriculum, it has occurred to me that, little noticed though it may be, there is to be found behind and above every Core lecture the Media Booth, province of the University's Media Services to which ranking Core administrators are frequently admitted by special dispensation. There are things to be said about the Media Booth, inside things, for it is there that plan meets contingency, dream meets plank across ditch, high purpose tangles with tape both magnetic and adhesive, scholarship encounters rigid or flexible plastics, and all conceptions negotiate with the viewless but thereby more potent and fitful forces of electricity. There, advanced technology is taken in hand by inadequate training, and good intentions submit to ways things are done; there, showmanship's exigencies push against policies developed in response to the lower nature of man.

The smell of hot electronics, old wooden shelves, linoleum, grimed carpets, dust and ozone sparks, recall to the initiate the Media Booth. Certain of them have cast iron stairs going steeply upward to a bunkerlike space where are to be found exposed wires, ancient switches, objects bolted and chained, and various individuals knowing some but not inevitably all of what concerns the congeries of capabilities and presences. As a result of certain actions, lights unexpectedly quit entirely or blaze; on occasion they slowly and with fine subtlety dim themselves to almost nothing over the space of half an hour, for reasons no one present can understand or remedy. As

a result of less certain actions, rock and roll may make its way into the lecture of a distinguished individual who has requested Mozart or an attentive silence.

Among the more notable Media Booth occasions was a slide lecture delivered in the Tsai Center by Professor Stephen Scully of the Department of Classics. It was during his discussion of the Diana Of Ephesus that, for reasons which do not now make themselves entirely available, one student in the Media Booth had his head to the linoleum, kneeling underneath a Visuals Platform (something similar to a table), holding with one hand a plug in a power strip and attempting with the other some sort of noninterruptive substitution of one type of widget for another. Two other figures were standing watching; one had coffee. When Professor Scully pressed a button down on the stage, the slide carousel atop a high-intensity projector on the Visuals Platform rotated, sending a vivid image across the large spaces of the Tsai Center to appear most effectively on a stage-wide screen. This was as it should be. However, since, again due to contingencies not now recoverable, a small plastic ring designed for the top of the slide tray had been removed and lost, each ejected slide would leap some four or five inches into the air, usually with a slight rotation in one, two, or even three planes. Some faction of the interpretive mind, perhaps even influenced by Practical Reason, did attempt at the time to recall the proper definitions of pitch, roll, and yaw, but all that the Hippocampus provided was the name of a city in Texas and the

notion that someone had a problem. The mind in question, one's own as it happened, instructed its associated body to catch each slide. The mind/body combination engaged in this activity will be, for our further purposes, hereafter known as the Slidecatcher.

It became evident that what was important in this newly discovered Media Services position of Slidecatcher was the use of thumb and forefinger only, to nip each slide at its apogee, grasping it by the cardboard so as not to leave thumbprints on what were, after all, classic and beautiful images from antiquity. The Slidecatcher, it was soon discovered, does well to pass each apprehended slide to a work-study student who has taken a position on his right, and is learning on the job the equally novel occupation hereafter designated as Sorter. The Sorter, as best that individual can, arranges the apprehended slides in a pile whose top-to-bottom order reflects in reverse the original numbered sequence of the tray or carousel.

The light for sorting was appreciably dim, and the resultant difficulty applied as well to apprehending the ejected slides, which jumped free with a certain tilting, bland insouciance, never ceasing to be slides, but yet grasshopperesque in nature, or cricketlike. But a Slidecatcher may learn to look for a momentary flash of the bottom band of a leaping slide, often with relevant scholarly information available thereon, well-lit for perhaps half a second by the projector bulb before the next slide has cycled into its place. Indeed, different qualities of light--intermittent, nigh-Dantesque lucencies from the high-intensity projector bulb, the low sullen glow of various all-clear or ready lights, the rising and falling bar-sequences or backlit flickers of meters faithfully registering ever-changing levels of volume and gain, the subdued modern lighting of the booth itself, and occasional glints and softer beams from someone's pocket flashlight, were

very much a part, as it now seems, of the memorable essence of the situation.

At times a slide would cycle into place but fail to drop, thereby belying the description encoded in its generic name. It was these occasions that brought a fifth person into the picture, an individual still dressed for the winter day and standing on a black-painted wooden box some six or seven inches high. This individual, it quickly became known, had on previous occasions mastered the technique, soon designated, and he with it, as the Magic Thumb, of coaxing or pressuring a recalcitrant misnomer into its appointed place. Various half images or slashes and rhomboids of pure white light were sometimes the intermediate results. The audience might see Zeus in all his paternal power moving oddly up and down, now whole, now looking hollow-eyed and helplessly back from a lower corner upward at missing areas of himself, starting, stopping, retracing his ways while maintaining his gesture of authority, generally jiggling up and down in an unseemly manner not at all befitting a megalopsychic immortal. It was soon noted that these forced misnomers, once ejected or given the heave-ho, could be expected to jump either significantly higher than their more accommodating siblings, or, alternatively, to come up as from the grave with a certain vapid sluggishness, falling on their sides atop the carousel like bored and resentful students.

Perhaps our ad-hoc Media Team's greatest achievements came when Professor Scully decided that the information and feeling he hoped to convey to his audience required a return to a previous slide. Then it became the task of the Sorter, taciturn and alert in his backwards cap, to return images to the Slidecatcher in proper backward sequence until the identity of what Professor Scully was looking for could be established. It fell to the Slidecatcher to

orient the slide as best as could be (right quite as often as wrong, if memory serves; the general rule is Upside Down and Backwards, which does not always harmonize with the stability one is otherwise hoping to maintain), and pass it up, with instructions, to the Magic Thumb atop his black box. An occasional difficulty arose when Professor Scully, insistently seeking the once-seen image that would enlarge his point, repeatedly cycled the carousel. This involved not only perhaps the most rapid and deft Slidecatcher-to-Sorter activities of which neophytes may be thought capable, but also an additional task for the Sorter of distinguishing between slides already shown and slides yet to come. In addition it was important to closely observe the backward and forward circlings of the carousel so that, when a moment of calm seemed in evidence, the carousel could be quickly disengaged from the projector, the required slide dropped into an open slot, the carousel re-engaged and, despite Professor Scully's attempts to regain control, cycled to the proper slot. Once he saw what he wanted on the screen, Professor Scully would generally become quiet, and not press the cycle button until he had discoursed on the current image and was ready to move on. It eventually occurred to us—to Magic Thumb in particular, I think—that, at crucial moments of a call for recollected images, one might simply remove from the back of the projector the plug connecting it to a remote radio receiver, thereby completely neutralizing Professor Scully's buttons. This was done on occasion, with success, though there was little doubt, from remarks which came through large high-fidelity high-gain high-presence speakers overhead, that this sudden impotence or disconnection of thumb-power added significantly to the various feelings Professor Scully was undergoing onstage. It seems clear in retrospect, however, that to have attempted to communicate with Professor

Scully, via broadcasting an apology or explanation—coming as these would have, through the most elevated and fully resonant of the house speakers, and thus with an unlikely reminiscence of the voice of God—would have seemed the greater of two evils. And, too, the question hung in the air: in whose amplified yet doubtless quavering tones would be delivered the deific "Sorry" or "Please hold it a second, Professor" or "We are temporarily unplugging you, but all will be well, with luck" that was apposite?

As the lecture in question came to a conclusion, the last few slides were a simple Slidecatcher-to-Sorter operation conducted at quite feasible speeds. Indeed, as Professor Scully made his final points, our newly developed talents were perhaps not so fully exercised as they might have been. This was mildly disappointing as it became evident that a Supervisor, alerted by a perfectly workable phone in the Media Booth, had at some point joined, both in body and behavior, those two employees whose contribution had been their quiet and nonintrusive observation of the proceedings. As the lecture ended, and the voices and noises of students leaving filled the booth's excellent overhead speakers, the Slidecatcher and Sorter took upon themselves the final task of returning slides to the tray in the best order and orientation that they could.

While this account may be found lacking in certain scholarly information, such lack may in part be attributed to the fact that the ejected slides, upon which were inscribed the sources of such information, were only briefly in the air, and in lighting conditions whose difficulty has already been discussed. It is, however, the author's hope and intention that this piece will nonetheless serve to provide some sense of the behind-the-scenes activities of the Core Curriculum.