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NEWSLETTER ON TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

FROM THE EDITORS, TZIPORAH KASACHKOFF & EUGENE KELLY

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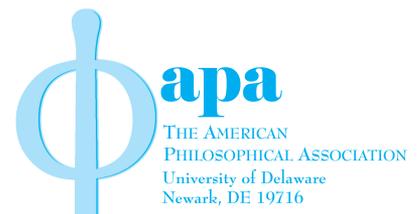
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Welcome to the Fall 2004 edition of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy*. We have assembled here articles, reviews of books, notes and information of interest to teachers of philosophy.

The first article, "Integrating Modern Arab Thought in Postcolonial Philosophies of Culture," by Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab is intended for persons who teach courses in philosophy and culture, and who are interested in extending their reach to the cultures of the postcolonial world. Professor Kassab notes that although the cultures of Asia, Africa, and Latin America that were subject to imperial conquest throughout the nineteenth century are vastly different, common themes in the twentieth-century controversies among their intellectuals are fascinatingly similar: modernity versus traditionalism, foreign borrowing versus native cultural heritage, feminism versus traditional social roles for women. The course described is intended to introduce "students at American colleges to a non-Western universe of discourse on culture that is heavily influenced by, and strongly preoccupied with, the West but that is centered around questions that are quite different from those of the West. Students are invited to explore these questions, to identify their specific and common elements, and to reflect upon the common stock of experience and thought that they constitute." The course is divided into units on Arab, Latin American, and African philosophies of culture, and each unit is further divided into overlapping themes and topics that bring similar questions to the diverse cultural situations of the three areas. A discussion of each unit is followed by a valuable bibliography of works in English by important participants in these cultural and philosophical debates.

The second article, Josef Velazquez's "The Play's the Thing," offers a delightful exercise designed to encourage student writing about elementary issues in philosophy. The key notion is to give students scenarios or situations in which they have to analyze, report upon, or respond to, philosophical questions. In that way, the student cannot simply take ideas out of a textbook, for her words must be appropriate to a specific situation and a specific audience. The author begins with a description of thirteen "subtypes" of this kind, and concludes with several scenarios that give flesh to the subtypes. The author grants that these "fanciful scenarios are mere boondoggles or window dressings. On the other hand, . . . if

the paper topics are a little bit fun and a little bit nutty, the students will feel freer to let themselves go." And, perhaps, letting go is, for some, the first step toward seriousness.

The third article, "A Lack of Sympathetic Understanding in the Classroom," by Lee A. McBride III, reports upon the author's experience as a graduate student of philosophy and as a teacher to undergraduates at his university. He makes some valuable suggestions concerning the sources of the limitations and failures he believes to be endemic to education in philosophy, where teachers tend to be concerned only with transmitting content and skills. Drawing from an article by Steven M. Cahn, where three purported errors in teaching are identified, and from the ideas of William James, John Dewey, and Jane Addams, the author develops the notion that the sympathetic understanding of students' beliefs, ambitions, and values is in fact an important condition of success in inspiring undergraduates with a love of learning. He grants that the notion of sympathetic understanding is difficult to define and even more difficult to apply, yet he nevertheless insists that teachers must be in "sympathy with the mental movements of their students," and "acquire the mental tact to see signs of promise and nourish them to maturity." The article concludes with some suggestions for fostering a needed reorientation of the graduate education of philosophers.

As you may know, back editions of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy* have long been made available at the APA's website, and, up to now, can be accessed by the general public. The American Philosophical Association has now decided upon a proposal to put current editions online at its members-only website, and to discontinue, at least temporarily, the print version. The reason for this move is budgetary, of course; the justification for it is that almost every year fewer APA members order copies of the *Newsletters* when they renew their membership. Some effort has been made to index the articles that appear in the *Newsletter on Teaching*, but it appears that, for technical reasons, this is not possible.

We welcome readers' comments on these and other matters surrounding the format, content, and usefulness of our *Newsletter*. We remind the readers that all articles published here are subject to review by a committee of four persons, including the editors, whose names are listed at the end of this letter. Some articles that have appeared in its pages have been anthologized and are now available in *Teaching Philosophy: Theoretical Reflections and Practical Suggestions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), edited by Tziporah Kasachkoff. The previous version of the book (which appeared under the title, *In the Socratic Tradition*) has been used in a graduate-level course intended to prepare philosophers for careers in teaching. An article by Martin Benjamin describing the course appeared in the Fall 2003 edition of this *Newsletter*.

We also encourage our readers to suggest themselves as reviewers of books and other material that they think may be especially good for classroom use. The names of the other books and materials we have for review are listed in section IV of the *Newsletter*.

The following guidelines for submissions should be followed:

- The author's name, the title of the paper, and a full mailing address should appear on a separate sheet of paper. Nothing that identifies the author or his or her institution should appear within the body or within the footnotes/endnotes of the paper. The title of the paper should appear on the top of the paper itself.
- Four complete copies of the paper should be sent.
- Authors should adhere to the production guidelines that are available from the APA and that are published in the issue of the *APA Newsletters* on the front inside cover. The most important features of those guidelines are the following:

Adhere to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Use as little formatting as possible. Details like page numbers, headers, footers, and columns will be added later. Use tabs instead of multiple spaces for indenting. Use *italics* instead of underlining. Use an "em dash" (—) instead of a double hyphen (--).

Use endnotes instead of footnotes. **In writing your paper to disk, please do not use your word processor's footnote or endnote function; all notes should be added manually at the end of the paper.**

Examples of proper endnote style:

John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 90.

See Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are they? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" *Noûs*, 34 (2000): 31-55.

If a bibliography is included, please use the following format:

Warnke, Georgia. *Legitimate Differences: Interpretation in the Abortion Controversy and other Public Debates*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Austin J. L. "A Plea for Excuses." In *Philosophical Papers* (2nd ed.), edited by J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock. 176-77. New York: Oxford, 1970.

- All material submitted to the *Newsletter* should be available on a windows-readable computer disk, but do not send the disk with the submitted paper. The editors will request the disk when the paper is ready to be published.
- All articles submitted to the *Newsletter* are blind-reviewed by the members of the editorial committee. They are:
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ARTICLES

Integrating Modern Arab Thought in Postcolonial Philosophies of Culture

Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab
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While current Latin American, Asian, African, African American and Native American debates have slowly made their way into the curricula and publications of U.S. higher education in philosophy, Arab debates have continued to be absent in general. They still remain unknown, misconceived, and unexamined. My specific concern here is with debates within the philosophy of culture. Arab questions of culture have been often approached, if at all, in a particularistic manner, that is, in a way that reduces them in the main to a monolithic Islam. They have rarely been put in the cultural decolonization context to which they belong. One way of breaking this cultural reductionism and of showing the relevance of this decolonization context is to examine the Arab debates on culture from a comparative perspective, in conjunction with other postcolonial debates like those of Latin America and Africa. Such a comparison enables us to explore the systemic nature of these postcolonial debates on cultural selfhood and thus to break the isolation to which Arab debates and their studies have been confined.

The many commonalities found in the cultural debates carried out in these linguistically, religiously, culturally, and racially different regions clearly indicate that these problems cannot be due, at least not solely and not deterministically, to the specific language, religion, culture, or race of a given region; but that the global economic, political, and historical conditions of colonialism and neo-colonialism have had and continue to have a crucial role in producing them and shaping them. The comparative perspective both shows the particular forms that debates surrounding cultural decolonization take in each region, given its particular historical, economic, social, political, and cultural elements, and clarifies the specificities and particular challenges of each setting.¹ In a course on "Postcolonial Philosophies of Culture" I will discuss here, I integrate modern Arab thought in a discussion of postcolonial philosophies of culture.

The course itself allows a conversation to emerge among these debates in the different regions of the former colonial world. They all concern the issues of cultural malaise, cultural critique and cultural self-determination that have been at the center of anti- and post-colonial debates. Most of these debates, whether in Africa, Latin America, India, or in the Arab world, have been conducted in reaction to the political and cultural West. Rarely, if ever, have they been connected to one another. Given the overwhelming impact of the West on these societies, the fixation on it in their cultural debates is to a great extent understandable. But this fixation has also been limiting, isolating, and often sterile, as many participants in these debates have come to conclude. It has prevented a fruitful exchange between people with comparable colonial

and postcolonial experiences. A whole learning potential has been thereby left untapped. My course aims at bringing together some of these postcolonial debates on culture, and offers a comparative perspective within which such an exchange can become possible. It introduces students at an American college to a non-Western universe of discourse on culture that is heavily influenced by and strongly preoccupied with the West but that is centered around questions that are quite different from those of the West. Students are invited to explore these questions, to identify their specific and common elements, and to reflect upon the common stock of experience and thought that they constitute.

The course devotes four weeks to each set of debates, and allocates a major theme to each week. The themes are selected from the debates themselves. They are closely connected to the historical contexts from which the debates emerge. Hence the regional rather than the topical organization of the course material: by dwelling four weeks in each region, students are to acquire a sense of the main preoccupations of its thinkers in connection with the major events marking it in the course of the twentieth century. It is from the examination of these regional debates that students are to draw the commonalities and specificities of their topics. It is important to add here that this course is not meant to be a comparative Area study. It is not supposed to be a study of “the” Arab world, or “Africa,” or “Latin America.” It is to be a study of central debates on culture in these areas in a comparative perspective.

The fourth week of each section is devoted to feminism, not out of political correctness, but because in all three regions the contribution of feminists in elaborating and indeed leading the discussions on culture has been outstanding. This is due, on the one hand, to the particular way in which women have been affected by anti-colonial and postcolonial struggles and debates, be it in cultural protectionism, in nationalism, or in the ideals and policies of modernization. It is also due, on the other hand, to the number of components that feminism and postcolonial thought have in common:

- (a) The critique of essentialism: the essentialist view of “womanhood” and gender in general has been from the very beginning a major issue of concern for feminists; that of a culturalistically defined womanhood has been attacked by postcolonial feminists both for its cultural and gender essentialism.
- (b) The rejection of certain forms of universalism: postcolonial thinkers and the feminists among them in particular have denounced the Western hegemonic views of progress, modernity, and emancipation that are presented as universal views, while being Eurocentric in reality.
- (c) The importance of historicization and contextualization: part of this denunciation was the linking of ideas and views to the particular environments, backgrounds, and interests.
- (d) The necessity of “double critique”: postcolonial feminists, like postcolonial thinkers, in general find themselves struggling on two fronts, that of the home culture and that of the external aggressor.
- (e) The struggle for “talking back”: having been defined by others—by women, by men, and by heterosexuals, non-heterosexuals, and colonized cultures by colonizers, the urge is felt to talk back to the outside definer and to tell one’s own story and identity.
- (f) The quest for empowerment: after having been deprived of enabling means, both feminists and postcolonial societies seek ways of appropriating

various means of empowerment.

Most but not all of the readings are philosophical texts written by professional philosophers. Thinkers other than professional philosophers also participate in these debates and their presence confers on the course an interdisciplinary nature. However, students are invited to examine the texts philosophically, that is, to assess critically the concepts and the arguments presented in them. The selection of the readings is based on a number of considerations. First, their authors are chosen from among the major participants in the debates. Second, their contents present the major arguments made in these debates. Third, they are accessible to students and are available in English translation.² Finally, they combine historical contextualization with conceptual analysis, providing the readers with valuable background information. These considerations are to serve the main objectives of the course, namely:

- (1) To bring forth the main cultural issues of each set of regional debates in a contextual manner; for only such a contextualization can make it possible to identify these issues adequately.
- (2) To put these issues and debates in a comparative perspective:
 - (a) To avoid their reduction to the religion, language, culture, race, character, ethos, or whatever other such essentialistic element, of the region;
 - (b) To allow for the common postcolonial political, economic, cultural, and intellectual structures and challenges to emerge.
- (3) To examine these issues and structures philosophically.

Admittedly, these are ambitious objectives for one course to achieve, and the task of achieving balance between them in each class meeting is a demanding one, but nevertheless necessary. For how can we examine philosophically the modes of thinking about culture under postcolonial conditions if these conditions and these modes are not first made clear? Once this groundwork is done, further courses can then devote more time and attention to the philosophical questions contained in them.

I would like here to share my experience of teaching this course in the fall of 2003.³ I gave it in the form of an advanced seminar for graduates (and some students in their senior year) from a wide variety of disciplines, as well as ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds. Many were from the Columbia interdisciplinary Human Rights program in the School of International Affairs with minors in philosophy, gender studies, and economics. Others were Ph.D. students in anthropology, English, and Middle East studies. I required that students send me by email two days before each class meeting a summary of, and at least one question about, each assigned reading. One third of the final grade was to be based on this homework. The rest was based on class participation and a final paper. The homework was returned to them with my brief comments at the beginning of every class. This way the students and I could come to the class meeting with the assumption that the texts were read and examined. No presentations were made and the entire session was devoted to the discussion of the central questions emerging from the readings.

I prepared the discussion agenda of each class on the basis of my own reading notes as well as the written feedback of the students. Some of the frequently recurring questions were the following: What does it mean to have a thought of one’s own? What is the link between having an identity of one’s own and a philosophy of one’s own? How are universality

and particularity in philosophy to be understood? What is the connection between certain forms of universality and colonial conquest? What are the relations between capitalism, modernity, and Western philosophy? What are the pitfalls and temptations of cultural essentialism and cultural authenticity? How are we to compare and not to compare local and Western thoughts? Is local thought necessarily traditional? What is the difference between traditional and philosophical thinking? How is the sense of a gap between ideas and realities in postcolonial settings to be understood, analyzed, and remedied? What are the importance and limits of contextualizing and historicizing ideas? What does intellectual decolonization imply? What is the role of language in intellectual emancipation (native languages versus the colonial language)? What is enlightenment for postcolonial societies? What does critique entail in a postcolonial situation? And how does the gendering of cultural questions radicalize critique? Finally, I asked that students submit a draft of their papers three weeks before the end of the classes, in order for me to comment on them and offer suggestions. I provided them with an extensive supplementary reading list and required that their paper include a comparative element.

Arab Philosophies of Culture

The Arab section starts with discussions of cultural decline and cultural renewal in the first half of the twentieth century, then moves on to the critique of these earlier views after the 1967 defeat of the Arab armies by Israel. The third week deals with issues of critique in Islamic thought, and the last week examines Arab feminist views of cultural matters in connection with Islamism, nationalism, and orientalism.

Week One:

Topic: Cultural Decline and Cultural Renewal in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

- Short excerpts from al-Tahtawi, al-Afghani, Abduh, Ali Abdel al-Raziq and Hassan al-Banna in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds., 1982), *Islam in Transition. Muslim Perspectives*. Oxford University Press, 11-37 & 78-83.
- Shakib Arslan (1930), excerpts from *The Causes of Our Decline*, translated by Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, Kashmiri Bazaar, 49-94, 102-105, 106-107 and 110-145.
- Taha Hussein (1938/1944/1954), excerpts from *The Future of Culture in Egypt*, translated by Sidney Glazer. American Council of Learned Societies, 1-29 and 135-157.
- Sayyid Qutb (1949), excerpts from *The Present State and the Prospects of Islam*, in Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, translated by John B. Hardie, translation revised by Hamid Algar, Islamic Publications International, 2000 (1953), 261, 284-296.
- Qustantine Zuraiq (1956/1948), *The Meaning of the Disaster*, translated B. Winder. Beirut: Khayat, 1-33.

Week Two:

Topic: Post-1967 Critique: Liberation, History, and Democracy

- Sadiq al-Azm (1970), "A Criticism Of Religious Thought," in *Islam in Transition*, 113-119.
- "An interview with Sadik al-Azm," in *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 19:3, 1997, 113-126.
- Abdallah Laraoui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism*. University of California Press, 1976, vii-xi, 95-101, 113-126 and 153-177.

- Nawal el Saadawi (1982), "Introduction" in Nawal el Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve. Women in the Arab World*. Translated and edited by Sherif Hetata. Beacon Press, 1-6.
- Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (1973), "Arab Intellectuals and *al-Nakba*: The Search for Fundamentalism," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 9, 187-195.
- Salwa Ismail (1995), "Democracy in Contemporary Arab Intellectual Discourse," in Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany & Paul Noble (eds.) *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World*. Volume 1: Theoretical Perspectives. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 93-111.

Week Three:

Topic: Critique in Islamic Thought

- Mohammed Abed al-Jabiri (1999), *Arab-Islamic Philosophy: A Contemporary Critique*. University of Texas at Austin, 1-46.
- Muhammad Arkoun (1987), *Rethinking Islam Today*. Occasional Papers Series. Georgetown University, Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies.
- Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1996), "The Case of Abu Zaid," in *Index on Censorship*, 25:4, 30-39.
- Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, E. Colla and A. Bakr (1997), "'Silencing is at the Heart of My Case': Nasr Abu Zayd, interview," in J. Beinin and J. Stork (eds.), *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report*. London: Tauris, 327-334.
- Leila Ahmed (1991), "Early Islam and the Position of Women: The Problem of Interpretation," in N. R. Keddie & B. Baron (eds.), *Women in Middle Eastern History*. Yale University Press, 58-73.
- Fatima Mernissi (1991/1987), "A Tradition of Misogyny" 1 and 2 in F. Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 49-81.

Week Four:

Topic: Feminism and Arab Culture

- Rosemary Sayigh, "Roles and Functions of Arab Women: A Reappraisal," in *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 3:3, 258-274.
- Marnia Lazreg (1988), "Feminism and Difference: The Perils of Writing as a Woman on Women in Algeria," in *Feminist Studies*, 14:1, 81-107.
- Lila Abu-Lughod (ed.), "Introduction" to Lila Abu-Lughod (ed.), *Remaking Women. Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Princeton University Press, 1998, 3-31.
- Mervat Hatem (1993), "Toward the Development of Post-Islamist and Post-Nationalist Feminist Discourses in The Middle East," in Judith Tucker (ed.), *Arab Women. Old Boundaries, New Frontiers*. Indiana University Press, 29-48.
- Nawal el Saadawi (1997), "Women's Voice in the North-South Dialogue" (1988) and "Islamic Fundamentalism and Women" (1990), in *The Nawal el-Saadawi Reader*. Zed Books, 27-33 and 93-99.
- Leila Ahmed (1988), "Arab Women: 1995" in Hisham Sharabi (ed.), *The Next Arab Decade. Alternative Futures*. Westview Press, 208-220.

Latin American Philosophies of Culture

Compared to that of the Arab world, the colonial experience of Latin America has been much longer and much more far-reaching. Large areas of the Americas started to come under Spanish colonial rule in the sixteenth century, and after the wave of independence movements in the nineteenth century, it soon came under more or less direct U.S. hegemony. The colonial and imperial impact has been extensive on almost all levels: those of population (massive genocide and forced population transfers through local and transatlantic slavery), economy, politics, religion, culture, education, and language. Given this massive violation of the physical and cultural integrity of the region, the most pressing questions raised in connection with culture are those of identity, exploitation, and racism. The Latin American section of the course starts with the early twentieth-century debates on cultural and philosophical identity, and moves in the second week to the later debates on colonialism, imperialism, and modernity. The third week is devoted to the issues of liberation theology and philosophy, and the last week deals with the feminist perspectives on liberation, authenticity, and community.

Week Five:

Topic: Identity, Culture and Philosophy: Early Twentieth-Century Ideas and Later Reactions

- Jose Carlos Mariategui (1928/1971), "Outline of the Economic Revolution" and "The Problem of the Indian," in J.C. Mariategui, *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*. University of Texas Press, 3-21, 22-30.
- Samuel Ramos (1934/1962), "Imitation of Europe in the Nineteenth Century," "The Profile of Mexican Culture," and "The Profile of Man" in Samuel Ramos, *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*. Transl. Peter G. Earle. Austin: University of Texas Press, 15-43, 101-109 and 110-125.
- Leopoldo Zea (1942), "The Actual Function of Philosophy in Latin America" in Jorge J.E. Gracia (ed.), *Latin American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: Man, Values and the Search for Philosophical Identity*. Prometheus, 1986, 219-230.
- Risieri Frondizi (1949), "Is There an Ibero-American Philosophy?" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 9, 345-355.
- Augusto Salazar Bondy (1969), "Selection: Can there be a Latin American Philosophy?" from A.S. Bondy, *The Meaning and Problem of Hispanic American Thought*, ed. John P. Augelli. Lawrence, Kans.: Center of Latin American Studies of the University of Kansas—in *Latin American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century. Man, Values and the Search for Philosophical Identity*. Prometheus, 1986, 233-244.
- Francisco Miro Quesada (1991), excerpt from "Historicism and Universalism in Philosophy" in Marcelo Dascal (ed.), *Cultural Relativism and Philosophy: North and Latin American Perspectives*. Brill, 152-158.
- Octavio Paz (1985), "The Mexican Intelligentsia, excerpt from *AThe Present Day*" (1961/1949?), and "Note" (1969) in *The Labyrinth of Solitude. Life and Thought in Mexico*. Transl. Lysander Kemp. New York: Grove Press, 151-173, 192-194 and 215-220.

Week Six

Topic: Colonial Experience, Cultural Imperialism, Modernity

- From the proceedings of the eleventh inter-American congress of philosophy held in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1985: Richard Rorty, "From Logic to Language to Play," Thomas Auxter, "The Debate over Cultural Imperialism," and Ofelia Schutte, "Notes on the Issue of Cultural Imperialism," in *APA Proceedings and Addresses*, 59, 1986, 747-759. Further reactions on the debate by Leopoldo Zea and Virginia Black in *APA Proceedings and Addresses*, 60, 1987, 515-522.
- Leopoldo Zea (1987), "Philosophy as an Instrument of Interamerican Understanding," in *Social Epistemology*, 1, 123-130.
- Walter Mignolo (1999), "Philosophy and the Colonial Difference," in *Philosophy Today*, 43, 36-41. Reprinted in *Latin American Philosophy. Currents, Issues, Debates*. Edited by Eduardo Mendieta, Indiana University Press, 2003, 80-86.
- Enrique Dussel (1992), "Eurocentrism and Modernity," in *Boundary 2*, 20/3. Reprinted in J. Beverly & J. Oviedo (eds.), *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*. Duke University Press, 1995, 65-76.
- Amos Nascimento (2003), "Colonialism, Modernism, and Postmodernism in Brazil," in Eduardo Mendieta (ed.), *Latin American Philosophy. Currents, Issues, Debates*. Indiana University Press, 150-162.
- Roberto Schwarz (1995), "National by Imitation" in J. Beverly & J. Oviedo (eds.), *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*. Duke University Press, 264-281.

Week Seven:

Topic: Theology and Philosophy of Liberation: Critical Perspectives

- Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff (1987), "A Concise History of Liberation Theology" and "Liberation Theology Worldwide," in *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Orbis Books, 66-89.
- Gutierrez, Gustavo (2001/1988, 1971), "Introduction to the Original Version" and "Introduction to the Revised Edition: Expanding the View," in G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*. Edited by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleton, Orbis Books, xiii-xlvi.
- Frantz J. Hinkelammert (1997), "Liberation Theology in the Economic and Social Context of Latin America: Economy and Theology, or the Irrationality of the Rationalized," in David Batstone, Eduardo Mendieta, Lois Ann Lorentzen & Dwight N. Hopkins (eds), *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity, and the Americas*. Routledge, 25-52.
- Enrique Dussel, "From Phenomenology to Liberation," in E. Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*. Orbis Books, 1-15.
- Horacio Cerutti-Guldberg (1988-9), "Actual Situation and Perspectives of Latin American Philosophy of Liberation," in *The Philosophical Forum*, 20, 43-61.
- Ofelia Schutte (1991), "Origins and Tendencies of the Philosophy of Liberation in Latin American Thought: A Critique of Dussel's Ethics," in *The Philosophical Forum*, 22, 270-295.

Week Eight:

Topic: Feminist Perspectives on Liberation, Authenticity and Community

- Elina Vuola (2000), "Thinking Otherwise: Dussel, Liberation Theology, and Feminism," in Linda Martin Alcoff & Eduardo Mendieta (eds), *Thinking From the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation*. Rowman & Littlefield, 149-180.
- Nancy Saporta et al (1992), "Feminisms in Latin America: From Bogota to San Bernard," in *Signs*, 17:2, 393-434.
- Ofelia Schutte (1988-9), "Philosophy and Feminism in Latin America: Perspectives on Gender Identity and Culture," in *The Philosophical Forum*, 20, 62-84.
- Julie Skurski (1996), "The Ambiguities of Authenticity in Latin America: Dona Barbara and the Construction of National Identity," in Geoff Eley & Ronald G. Suny (eds), *Becoming National: A Reader*. Oxford University Press, 370-402.
- Raquel Olea (1995), "Feminism: Modern or Postmodern?" in John Beverley, Jose Oviedo and Michael Aronna (eds.), *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*. Duke University Press, 192-200.

African Philosophies of Culture

While the main concern of the Latin American debates is the nature and possibility of a Latin American thought and culture that are not imitative of the West, that of the African debates is the very possibility of thought and culture for Africans. Metaphilosophical questions raised in the Latin American discussions are also found in the African ones: Is there an African philosophy? What would make it specifically African? How would its specificity be determined? Would it still be philosophy? What is philosophy? But the salient question in the African debates seems to be: Has there been and can there be thought and culture in Africa? Obviously, the question arises from century-old claims made by Western colonialists, anthropologists, travelers, and missionaries about the "primitive" nature of the African mind.

The systematic colonization of Africa began in the early nineteenth century, but the slave trade had started to disrupt its socioeconomic and political fabric by the sixteenth century. The arbitrary division of the continent, violating the integrity of tribal, ethnic, and political communities, produced a legacy of intra- and inter-state tensions that lasted into the post-independence period, which was characterized by neocolonial domination. The colonial interference was to influence life on the continent on all levels: economic, political, cultural, educational, linguistic, and religious. It did not involve, as in Latin America, a large-scale policy of settlement, except in some areas such as South Africa. Hence, we do not find, as in Latin America, the phenomena and ideologies of mixing races. And contrary to the case in Latin America, some local languages and religions survived. So the question in the anti- and postcolonial struggle in Africa is whether these languages and religions can serve as a basis for a distinct African thought, or an "ethnophilosophy." The first week's readings turn around this issue of ethnophilosophy. The second week is devoted to the discussion of the pitfalls and challenges in recovering a positive sense of African selfhood. The third week deals with issues of tradition, modernity and language in relation to cultural decolonization. The fourth week examines the African feminist views of these cultural issues.

Week Nine:

Topic: Cultural Identity and Philosophical Identity: The Debate on Ethnophilosophy

- Abiola Irele (1996/1983), "Introduction" to Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy. Myth and Reality*. Indiana University Press, 7-30.
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Week Ten:

Topic: Egyptianism, Négritude, and Postcolonial Identity

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Week Eleven:

Topic: African Tradition, Modernity, Decolonization, and Language

- Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1997/1986), *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Heinemann/EAEP, 1-33.
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- Kwasi Wiredu (1997), “The Need for Conceptual Decolonization in African Philosophy,” in Heinz Kimmerle & Franz Wimmer (eds., 1997), *Philosophy and Democracy in Intercultural Perspective*. Rodopi, 11-22.
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Week Twelve:

Topic: African Feminists on Difference, Resistance, and Solidarity

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Endnotes

1. This comparative project is developed in my forthcoming book on Contemporary Arab Debates on Culture in a Postcolonial Comparative Perspective.
2. The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) undertook between 1951 and 1954 a series of translations from Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, of contemporary works that were being produced in the Middle East (See the ACLS *Bulletin* vol. 45, 46, and 47). Many of the readings in the Arabic section are available in English thanks to this series. It is urgent that this translation activity be resumed today if access to the current debates in the Middle East is to be made possible.
3. I wish to thank Professor Hamid Dabashi, Chair of the Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures Department, and Professor Nicholas Dirks, Chair of the Anthropology Department, both of Columbia University, for inviting me to teach the two courses that were the basis of this work: Modern Arab Thought in the Spring of 2003, and Postcolonial Philosophies of Culture in the Fall of 2003, respectively. I am also grateful to the students who engaged this material with me in critical and stimulating discussions. Last but not least, I want to thank the anonymous reviewers and editors of the *Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy* for their numerous helpful comments and suggestions.

The Play's the Thing

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Introduction

I will describe a style of paper topic that I have developed for general education courses. Perhaps a good name for this style would be *mise en scene*. The general idea of this style is to put the student in a situation where he or she has to do something with philosophy—or, even better, has to do some philosophy. What this style attempts to avoid are papers which are more or less just summaries of this or that philosopher's ideas, with perhaps a few comments attached, but comments that do not really go very far or press very deeply. And the main idea of the *mise en scene* style is to put the student in a situation where he or she will have to argue a point, come up with objections and then answers to those objections, evaluate one theory in comparison to another, and, in general, get involved in the cut and thrust of actual philosophic thinking. At a second level, the style also sometimes involves asking the student to create (and then defend) philosophical theories of his or her own.

I have taken the various topics from my files and divided them up into a series of subtypes. In the next section I will describe each of these subtypes briefly. Then, in the final section, I will include some examples of actual paper topics.

Before I start, though, I want to add a word of qualification. I am afraid that what I am recommending here might seem so ambitious that it will be beyond the abilities of an average student. And I do not know what to say about this except that I have employed this sort of topic in a range of institutions (Fordham University, Ateneo de Manila, Stonehill College, University of Massachusetts–Boston, Bryant College) with what seems to me to be a successful outcome each time. Of course, our beginning students will do philosophy in a beginning way only. No topic, no matter how much it tries to encourage creativity, will turn an average student into Jacques Derrida. But my experience has been that beginning students can actually do a little philosophy in a beginning way—just like, perhaps, a beginning art student can be gotten not only to talk about art but actually to draw or paint in a beginning way. And it seems to me that actually drawing or actually arguing philosophically is, no matter how beginnerish it might be, an important educational experience.

Finally, I want to say that I am indebted here to my first philosophy teacher, Fr. Edward Gannon S.J., who also tried to make us beginners actually do a little philosophy. Everything I am saying in this essay is due to his example.

I. Subtypes

Subtype I: Answering the Arguments: The simplest subtype involves giving the student a series of arguments to respond to. In most cases, I use little stories that magically transform the student into a famous philosopher, and put him or her in front of some large gathering. The student arrives at the point when his or her presentation has just ended and when the audience begins asking questions and raising objections. What I do is to write the questions and objections myself, and the assignment is for the student (in his or her new persona as the famous philosopher) to answer them.

Another variation has a famous philosopher giving a speech or writing a letter. The speech or letter has its arguments laid out in an itemized or numbered format. This is the part that I

write. And then the student (who has been magically transformed into a contemporary of the philosopher) has the task of writing a response to each of the numbered items.

I use this subtype only after we have carefully studied the philosopher in question in class. This way the student has a basis from which to work. The same holds true, by the way, for all the subtypes from 1 to 5.

Subtype 2: Meet the Philosopher: Here the student gets to meet and talk with whatever philosopher we have been studying. There is some sort of magic or science fiction story that is designed to make this possible. Or, to be more accurate, there are actually two sorts of scenarios I use here: in one, the student actually converses with the philosopher, while in the other the student and the philosopher write letters back and forth (generally three letters: a first letter in which the student asks questions and expresses his or her doubts, a second in which the philosopher responds to those questions and doubts, and a third in which the student responds to the philosopher's responses).

The point of this is to get the student to take his or her doubts and objections about a philosophy and to press them more deeply. For now the student cannot just explain his or her objections and then stop. Rather, the student must now try to see how the philosopher in question might be able to answer those objections. And then the student must go still one step further and attempt to evaluate these answers and see if they really hold up.

Subtype 3: You are the Expert: In this subtype, I try to put the student into the role of an expert who must help another person come to some overall evaluation of whatever philosophy we have been studying. For example, the student might be talking to a younger brother or sister who is thinking of adopting a certain ethical philosophy. This younger brother or sister, though, has decided, before proceeding, to ask his or her older sibling (i.e., the student) for some wise advice.

My students seem (for whatever reason) to like the idea of writing overall evaluations. And the idea in this subtype is to try to give such overall evaluations a little more nuance and complexity by adding an interlocutor who will bring up questions, notice the other side of an issue, and so on.

Subtype 4: Straightforward Conflict: In this subtype, I create two characters who are on opposite sides of an issue and who start to argue about it. For example, I have a topic in which Gilbert Ryle, sent back from purgatory, and the Catholic President of Stonehill College argue, over lunch, about the theories in Ryle's *The Concept of Mind*. (This topic also includes a student named Olga who is at lunch with the two gentlemen previously mentioned; she is there to give the students a character whom they can use as a mouthpiece to express their own opinions.) As another example, I have a topic where Immanuel Kant and his (fictional) fiancée Ingrid exchange a series of letters about whether love is more important than duty (Ingrid's opinion) or whether duty is more important than love (Immanuel's opinion).

The students, of course, will be writing for both (or all three) characters, i.e., the students' task is to continue the argument for both of the sides. I have this subtype in a variety of formats: letters, conversation, formal speeches and rebuttals, and also guest experts on a talk radio show.

Subtype 5: Pamphlets: I sometimes ask the students to write a series of pamphlets for and against a certain issue—sort of like the pamphlets one gets from the Jehovah's Witnesses. I usually ask for four pamphlets: pro, con, pro, con. The pamphlets are linked in the sense that the later pamphlets will not only be

putting forward new points, but will also be responding to the points of the earlier pamphlets.

I have actually used this subtype with fairly theoretical issues, i.e., the debate between the utilitarians and the intuitionists, and also Nietzsche's criticisms of democracy and Christianity.

Subtype 6: Essays Beforehand: I often propose a topic to my students before we actually talk about it in class. For example, I will provide a short statement of what consequentialism is or what a moral sense theory says. And then I will ask my students to write an essay either for or against.

My thinking here is that the best reasons either for or against a topic will all be discussed during class, and so, if I assign a topic like this after we talk about it in class, all the best reasons will already be "stolen," as it were. But, if I assign the topic before we talk about it in class, the students will have a chance to discover these basic reasons for themselves (and they will also come to the class discussions with something ready to say).

I also usually provide a suggested outline that is designed to help the student construct a complete case—nothing elaborate, just something like: (i) reasons for your view, (ii) reasons against the opposing view, (iii.a) objections an opponent might make to you, (iii.b) how you would answer these objections.

Sometimes I set this up where the student writes a speech explaining (to some famous imaginary audience) what his or her opinion is, and then writes both questions from the audience and his or her answers to those questions.

Subtype 7: Write Your Own Dialogue: I think it is important to get the students not only to think more critically about other people's theories, but also to begin creating theories of their own. This subtype, along with the few that come after it, is designed to help the students begin doing that.

In my introductory course, I usually have the students read one of the early Socratic dialogues (*Euthyphro* or *Laches*) where Socrates and some other person try to define one of the virtues. After we work through this dialogue together, I ask my students to write a dialogue of their own, structured like the one we just read. I let them choose which virtue they want to write about and which characters they want to use.

Subtype 8: Write Your Own Mythology: I have also been having my introductory students read a few of the little essays from Roland Barthes's *Mythologies*. In these essays, Barthes provides a semiotic reading of a variety of ordinary objects and events. He argues, for example, that the astronaut is such a central figure for the modern imagination because the astronaut plays for us the sort of self-transcending and spiritual role previously played by the mystic and the monk. And, after we have worked through a few of Barthes's essays as well as a few classroom examples, I ask my students to write a little essay like one of Barthes's essays, but on an object or event of their own choosing.

Subtype 9: Write Your Own Theory: Sometimes I just ask my students straight out to create their own theory of something. One version of this which I use frequently has to do with sitcoms. In my introductory courses, I discuss a couple of theories of drama, and apply each of the theories to the sit-com *Seinfeld*, talking about how each theory would explain why we enjoy watching a show where the characters constantly get themselves into embarrassing and painful situations. After this, I ask the students to create their own theory of why we like to watch these shows. As part of this, I also ask them to include a

short critique of the theories we talked about in class, explaining why their theory is better.

Another version I sometimes use in my ethics classes asks the students to create their own theory about the basis of ethics. For example, after we have talked about Aristotle and Mill and happiness as a basis of ethics, I might ask my students to suggest an alternate basis, and to explain why their basis is better than the happiness basis we have discussed. I usually have many students who are uncomfortable with the idea that we should guide our conduct on the basis of happiness consequences. This topic encourages those students to take their discomfort one step further and to develop an alternate idea of how else we might guide our conduct.

Subtype 10: Commentaries about Life: This subtype comes in two parts. In the first part, I ask the students to define something like maturity, or excellence, or happiness. Unlike subtype 7 above, I am not here asking the students to write a Socratic dialogue, but just to tell me in a regular essay format what, for example, they think real maturity consists in, or what attitudes and qualities they think form the foundation of true human excellence. Then in the second part, I ask the students to discuss two of the major obstacles to the development and practice of maturity or excellence or whatever particular item I am asking about.

Sometimes I use this subtype as an “essay beforehand” (subtype 6), and sometimes I use it after we have studied a philosophy where the item in question is constantly lurking in the background (for example, I might ask about excellence after we have read Nietzsche).

Subtype 11: Interviews about Life: As a variation of the last subtype, I have recently begun trying out topics in which the student interviews friends and family members about what something like maturity or excellence really is. I ask the student to report his or her interviews, provide a critical commentary on them, and then come, in the end, to his or her own definition of the item in question.

This subtype is an imitation of the technique Aristotle sometimes uses in his ethics where he collects a whole variety of opinions and then works through them to arrive at his own.

Subtype 12: Explaining Paradoxical Behaviors: In this subtype I find some odd or paradoxical behavior and ask my students to find an explanation for it. For example, I sometimes ask why people find sex jokes funny? Sex should, it would seem, be satisfying or frustrating or guilt inducing—but why funny? Or why do people find scatological jokes funny? Sometimes, I also ask about why some people like to get heavily drunk (why try to enjoy life by the method of becoming unconscious of it?) or about why joint drunkenness is such an important bond between men (why, of all things, is doing drunk stupid things together the most important of bonds?).

I do not, of course, mean to imply by this that every human being likes scatological jokes or likes to get drunk. But I think it not only is universal behaviors, but also odd and paradoxical behaviors, which are useful in leading us to insights about human nature. For example, Freud started off by looking at hysteria, and Bataille by looking at the potlatch rituals of the Pacific Northwest. And just like these odd behaviors led Freud and Bataille to some interesting insights, so I hope that trying to explain the odd behaviors in these topics will, in some small way, help my students to interesting insights, too.

I use this subtype only after we have talked in class about some theories that try to explain paradoxical behaviors. For example, it is only after we have talked about Aristotle’s theory of catharsis and Bergson’s theory of laughter that I will ask my

students to try their hand at explaining sexual or scatological jokes.

Subtype 13: Miscellaneous: I have used a miscellany of other ideas, too. Perhaps the most successful have been asking the students to write: (i) short stories about someone who experiences the “existential awakening”—how this awakening occurs and what happens to the person afterward; (ii) soliloquies in the voice of a young parent who has been given, by a Greek goddess, the choice of whether the new born child will live a life of faith, diversion, or existential heroics; (iii) dialogues in which a young girl, pregnant out of wedlock, meets her two favorite aunts (proponents of different moral theories) to ask for advice on whether she should keep the child.

Subtype 14: The Ace in the Hole: I have a topic that I use as an ace in the hole. Whenever I am making a list of topics and feel I need one more option but cannot think of anything, I just pull this one out of the file, figuring that, however relevant it may or may not be, at least it will be entertaining.

This topic is about how morality connects with freedom. What happens is that Don Juan (through a demonic messenger) sends the student a letter arguing that immorality leads to freedom and that morality is a sort of slavery. Don Juan then pleads with the student to become his worthy successor on the path of total freedom. This first letter I write myself.

At this point the student and Don Juan exchange a series of letters in which the student tries to prove that morality does give us freedom while Don Juan tries to prove the opposite. Both the student’s letters and Don Juan’s letters are, of course, written by the student.

II. Examples

I have chosen the following examples to illustrate the “mechanics” of the more unusual or magical scenarios—how to operate a time machine, summon a demonic messenger, or perform whatever other violation of the laws of nature might be necessary to set up the problem of the subtype. On the one hand, of course, such fanciful scenarios are mere boondoggles or window dressings. On the other hand, though, they are also a good way to encourage the students to write more creatively; if the paper topics are a little bit fun and a little bit nutty, the students will feel freer to let themselves go.

All the paper topics reproduced below originally contained a couple paragraphs of directions and suggestions. I have omitted this material in the interests of saving space.

Debating with Camus—or Angels and Pen Pals

One day, as you are sitting in the cafeteria, pushing the remnants of your spaghetti around with your fork, an angel appears, and sits down in the seat across from you.

You are startled and just gape as he adjusts his wings so that they lie comfortably over the back of his chair.

You are still startled and gaping as he reaches his hand across the table to you and says, “Hi. I’m Bob. I’m your guardian angel.”

You are dazed and don’t know what to do or think, but he seems friendly and so you shake his hand and say, “Hi Bob.” His hand is very smooth and cool.

“Actually,” Bob says, “Let me come right to the point because my boss doesn’t know I’m here and I could get in a lot of trouble if he noticed me appearing to you like this—without authorization from the higher ups, I mean. But the thing of it is that I really need your help.”

“Oh,” you say, getting more and more confused all the time.

“You see,” Bob hastens to explain, “With the expanding population, our workloads have gone way up. If you just think of the tremendous population in China alone you can imagine how busy we’ve gotten.”

“Yes of course,” you respond.

“And it’s not just the living people we have to worry about, we also have responsibilities for the souls in purgatory. And I’m sure you don’t need to be told just how busy that place is getting.”

“I can only imagine,” you reply.

“Well, to get right down to it,” Bob continues, “I’ve got a long list of souls in purgatory that I’m supposed to correspond with. You know, we write them letters the way you would write to someone who was stuck in the hospital for a long time. And, well, I’m having trouble keeping up with all those letters.”

“And what do you want me to do?” you ask, wondering, as soon as the words are out of your mouth, whether this was such a wise thing to say.

“It’s like this,” Bob replies, a truly angelic smile beginning to light up his face, “I’ve got a philosopher on my purgatory list, and philosophers are the most work of all. Never satisfied with cute cards or short letters about what the weather’s like and how you are doing. No. They always want to write long letters full of arguments and ideas. And I know you are a philosophy student and so I wonder if you wouldn’t mind taking over ‘philosopher duty’ so to speak. I’d really appreciate it if you could.”

Thinking of all the times your guardian angel has helped you out, you say, “Okay; who is he?”

“Albert Camus,” Bob answers, “I know you are reading about him in school and so why don’t you write him a long letter explaining your thoughts about his book and asking him all the questions that came to mind during class?”

“Okay,” you say.

“And one more thing,” Bob continues, “Don’t be afraid to criticize his theories. Those philosophers really like to argue, even in Purgatory. I’m sure nothing would cheer poor Albert up so much as a chance to debate his ideas with a nice young person like yourself.”

“Okay,” you say, “But how will I deliver the letters to Purgatory?”

“Don’t worry about that,” Bob says, “I’ll get my assistant — his name is Harry — to handle the deliveries. Just leave the letters you want to send under your pillow at night, and Harry will pick them up and deliver Camus’s replies to the same place.”

“Sort of like the fairy god-mother,” you say ...

Your task in this topic is to write the letters back and forth between yourself and Camus.

(Assignment: three letters: from student to Camus, from Camus to student, from student to Camus.)

Amy Beth

It happens one evening when you are visiting home. Your little sister Amy Beth—she’s only seventeen—takes you aside and confesses that she has been reading Albert Camus’s essay “The Myth of Sisyphus.” You are a bit surprised to hear this, but she points out that she *is* seventeen and that this is certainly old enough to graduate from *MS.* and *Vogue* to something a bit more serious.

“Okay,” you say, “But what exactly do you want to talk about?”

“Well,” Amy Beth replies, “The way I see it I have three choices in life: the life of faith, the life of diversion, or the life of the absurd heroine.”

“What do you mean by the absurd heroine?” you ask.

“Why, Camus’s three part solution of revolt, liberty and passion,” she replies. “Haven’t you been reading carefully?”

“Yes. Yes. I remember of course,” you tell her. “But what did ...”

“And so,” Amy Beth cuts in, “What I want to know is which of these three lives is the best life. Faith? Diversion? The absurd heroine with her revolt and liberty and passion? I know that you are reading Camus in college and so I thought you could tell me which is best.”

“And you have to decide this weekend?” you ask.

“Look,” Amy Beth says, “I’m in a bit of a hurry here. I’m already seventeen and I don’t even know which direction my life should take. Are you going to help me out with this or not?”

“Okay, okay,” you say, “Let’s take these options one at a time and look at the pros and cons of each, shall we?”

“I knew you would help,” Amy Beth says enthusiastically ...
(Assignment: write the conversation.)

Regular Essay Format

This topic is in regular essay format. What you will do in this topic is write a reply to Camus in which you analyze the weaknesses in his suggestions for how to live, and then put forward an alternative suggestion of your own.

I think this essay should have three parts.

In the first part you should talk about Camus’s true solutions of revolt, liberty, and passion, and you should explain why you are dissatisfied with each of these solutions.

In the second part, you should make your own suggestions about how to live. You are here proposing your own alternatives to Camus’s ideas. You should, of course, give reasons why your alternatives are good ones.

In the third part, you should imagine what objections or questions Camus might have if he read your paper, and you should explain what these questions or objections are and also how you would answer them.

What a Drag It is Getting Old

This topic is set in the future. And in this topic you have become middle aged (yes, it happens!) and now have college-aged children of your own. One day, you receive a letter from your son or daughter who is away to school at Oxford (hey, you might be middle aged, but at least you have smart kids). The letter talks about many things, but the part which is important for us here is the part which says:

... and, please, you have to help me out. My philosophy teacher has me all confused. First he talked about John Stuart Mill who said that morality is based on the greatest happiness principle. And the arguments he gave for this sounded really convincing. But then this professor turns around and talks about Kant who contradicts practically everything Mill says, and who developed a morality that was based on duty instead of happiness. And the thing of it is that Kant’s arguments sounded really convincing too.

Well, I didn't know what to believe. And so I went up to my professor after class and asked him which of these two theories was true. And—can you believe it?—he said he didn't know (the fool).

And so I stayed confused. And that's why I am writing to you. Could you please help me out? Could you tell me which of these theories is the true one? Which one I should adopt and follow?

Your task here is to help your poor bewildered child out. (Assignment: three letters: first from parent to child, second from child to parent (with objections), third from parent to child (with answers)).

Love and Duty—the Secret Letters

It is a little-known fact (little known because I just made it up) that Immanuel Kant was once engaged to a (very very beautiful) young lady named Ingrid. And one day Immanuel received from Ingrid a letter which closed with the sentence, "Nothing, my dear Immanuel, is more important to me than my love for you."

Now, from a personal point of view, Immanuel was, of course, quite touched and gratified by this. From a philosophical point of view, however, he was a bit—well, a bit displeased, actually. For he believed (as you know) that nothing should be more important than our principles (i.e., our duty), and that no emotion, no matter how seemingly wonderful, should take precedence over these principles.

And so he wrote Ingrid a reply (very patient, very gentle) explaining why he thought this was so. He explained, in other words, why duty rather than love should always be our basic motive, and why love is actually better if it is based on duty.

Ingrid, however, was (alas alas) not convinced, and she wrote a (somewhat spirited) reply to Immanuel in which she disputed his philosophical arguments. Love, she insisted, was more basic and important than duty.

And then Immanuel wrote, etc., ...

Now your task in this topic is to write the letters between Immanuel and Ingrid.

Assignment: four letters, beginning with Immanuel's first response.)

Better than a Bug

Have you ever read Franz Kafka's story "The Metamorphosis"? This is the story that begins with the wonderful sentence "Gregor Samsa awoke from a night of uneasy dreams to find himself transformed into a giant insect." Well, this paper begins in a similar way because in it we will imagine that you awake one morning, from a night of uneasy dreams, to find yourself transformed not into an insect but into (yes, you guessed it!) Rene Descartes. Not only that, but you find yourself at a podium in front of a large audience. It seems that you have just explained your first proof for God's existence to the Philosophical Society of Rotterdam. And boy are they hot! A thousand hands are in the air, each pumping urgently up and down, a stinging objection no doubt lurking behind each one. But you say to yourself, "Hey, I'm Rene Descartes, philosopher extraordinaire. These objections will be child's play to me." And so you begin calling on people one by one, listening to what they have to say, and giving them calm, rational, and utterly overwhelming answers.

And these are the questions the audience asks you.

Bearded man in the front row: I do not agree with that step in the proof where it says that everyone has an idea of God. For example, atheists do not have this idea since they do

not believe in God. And with a mistake in this beginning step, I am afraid that your proof will not work.

Student from the back left: I would like to amplify on that first point. For I do not think that anyone really has an idea of God. My reason is simple: I do not think that the human mind is powerful enough to really grasp this idea or fully comprehend what it means. You define God as infinitely perfect. But how could we ever grasp an idea of something infinitely perfect? How could we ever have any idea of what it means to be all wise or infinitely merciful? No. As far as I can tell, all we can do is repeat the words "infinitely perfect," but we can't really have any idea what these words mean.

Etc. (The rest of the objections omitted in order to save space.) (Assignment: the list has eight objections altogether; the student answers seven of the eight.)

The Best Laid Schemes...

(Note: The next topic is from a series involving Ethyl (a friend of the student's) and her time machine. Through a series of mishaps, the student gets beamed by Ethyl's time machine into a variety of philosophically difficult situations.)

It happened again, though this time it was your own fault.

You had snuck into Ethyl's house late one night, crept stealthily down the stairs into the basement where she keeps the time machine, and typed those magic, long hoped for words into the space on the screen marked "destination." (For the ladies, we will imagine that you typed the words "Sir Lancelot's bedroom," for the gentlemen, we'll imagine "Messalina's bedroom" or someplace equally interesting). Then you closed your eyes and punched the "send" button, certain that you would, in just seconds, materialize into the arms of the bravest knight or most lascivious empress who ever lived.

And you do see (through closed eyelids) the flash of light, and you hear the howl of wind. But when the light dies down and the wind stops, you don't feel, as you had hoped, a torrent of passionate kisses. In fact, it feels like you are sitting on some sort of folding chair. And when you (cautiously) open your eyes and peek around, you realize that you are (once again) at the speaker's table of the Athenian Philosophical Association. "Did Ethyl know I was going to sneak into her house?" you ask yourself, "And did she set up this little trap to punish me?" But there is no time to really think about this because the master of ceremonies is pointing to you and introducing you to the crowd.

"Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen," he says. "I am pleased to introduce to you today the world renowned Dr. [Your Name]. Some of you may remember Dr. [Your Name] from the wonderful presentation he/she gave last month on the issue of relativism. Well, Dr. [Your Name] has traveled all the way from the twenty-first century to be with us again today—sent to us by the great goddess Ethyl herself.

Dr. [Your Name] has established him/herself as one of the leading philosophers of the distant future. Among his/her many books are: *The Anti-Callicles*, *Protagoras and Other Relativists*, *Ethyl Debates Socrates*, *The Root Of Virtue*, and the world famous novel *Ethyl My Master*.

Today, Dr. [Your Name] has come to speak to us about an exciting new idea from the future, something called "intuitionist ethics." Dr. [Your Name] is going to tell us a little about what this new theory is, and then he/she is going to tell us whether, in his/her opinion, this is a theory we should adopt and follow.

And then, after his/her presentation, Dr. [Your Name] has agreed to answer whatever questions or objections you, the audience, might have.

And so could you please join with me in welcoming Dr. [Your Name]!”

At this point, the audience, remembering your last appearance, breaks into wild cheering and applause, and you (with some trepidation) rise to speak...

(Assignment: write speech, write questions from audience, write answers to the same.)

(Note: I pass out a brief summary of intuitionist ethics along with this paper topic.)

A Lack of Sympathetic Understanding in the Classroom: Remarks from a Graduate Student Instructor

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Introduction

It was not until I began to consider this topic seriously that I realized how limited my experience of graduate student instruction really is. I am just one graduate student, in one department, at one university in the middle of America. So, please be aware that I am speaking from this limited perspective.¹

This is my attempt at pointing out an important element that is missing from our graduate training; namely, sympathetic understanding. In the first section, I detail the extent of the training that many philosophers receive in the area of teaching and discuss the antipathy toward undergraduate students that tends to arise within this system. In the second section, I introduce the notion of sympathetic understanding. As I see it, this notion is best articulated in the works of William James, Jane Addams, and John Dewey; so I draw from their works throughout this paper. In the last section, I discuss the role of sympathetic understanding in the classroom and the benefits that arise from it.

1: Training Philosophers to be Teachers

As a doctoral student in philosophy, I have learned a great deal from my graduate training. I have learned the intricacies of several philosophers' theories. I have learned to do research and write professional papers. I have played the role of teaching assistant and led recitation sessions. And I have even had the opportunity to teach my own courses. But, I have never received *formal* training from my department on the topic of teaching.

I should mention that at least twice a year my university offers general teaching improvement workshops to all graduate students. The workshops cover topics such as: how to incorporate diversity into the classroom, the proper relationship between students and instructors, and, most frequently, how to incorporate technology into your courses. These workshops do offer constructive suggestions, yet, due to the generality of the presentation, I have found them to be terribly uninformative.

Do not get me wrong, I am not trying to say that my department does not have a screening process—they do not let just anyone teach their courses. In our department, graduate students must act as teaching assistants for two semesters before they are allowed to teach their own courses. And as teaching assistants, the observant graduate student learns a

lot about teaching. We are handed syllabi, study guides, quizzes, and exams. These come in very handy; they are the models upon which we build *our* syllabi, *our* study guides, and *our* exams. As teaching assistants, we are also shown how our professors set up certain problems and formalize certain arguments. Again, these insights are extremely helpful. With no shame, I admit that the four or five arguments that I write on the board when I cover Descartes's *Meditations* come straight from the notes of one of the professors that I assisted. And, finally, as teaching assistants, we are shown what our professors take to be the most important philosophical issues in a handful of classic texts. Not only does this experience give the teaching assistant an idea of which texts to select for his or her courses, it gives the teaching assistant an idea of the type of philosophical questions that deserve to be addressed.

Yes, we are taught many things. But notice that we are not taught how to facilitate class discussion. We are not trained to be attentive to the mental responses and movements of our students. We are not taught to sense whether or not we are getting across to our students. The emphasis, for us, is placed on making sure that the students can distinguish and reproduce certain concepts and arguments.

In certain respects, my department is quite Aristotelian. Like many other departments, my department assumes that we graduate students will seek out excellent teachers and mimic their virtuous traits. The hope is that, if we act like our excellent teachers long enough, we too will come to perform the actions of excellent teachers as excellent teachers perform them.² And, once we have come to perform the actions of excellent teachers as excellent teachers perform them, we have made it. We are, then, excellent teachers. This system works to an extent, but I am of the opinion that it is not adequate to produce excellent teachers. Let me explain.

In an article entitled “How to Improve Your Teaching,” Steven Cahn lists three common strategic mistakes made by teachers. The first of these mistakes is “overestimating our audience's background knowledge, reasoning skills, powers of concentration, and interest in the subject.”³ This tendency was also noticed by Jane Addams. In *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, she warns that it is the habit of us scholars to allow our desire to say the latest word upon any subject to overcome any sympathetic understanding of our students which we might otherwise establish.⁴ The common result is that the instructor insensibly drops into dull philosophical jargon, further alienating his or her students.

Many graduate students tend to forget what it is like to be eighteen or nineteen years-old and in your first philosophy course. Having spent the last two or three years buried in the esoteric passages of Aristotle, Kant, Heidegger, and the like, we tend to forget the vast mental territory we have crossed. We tend to forget that the overwhelming majority of our students do not share our background knowledge, our reasoning skills, our powers of concentration, or our level of interest in the subject. And, unable to make a connection with their students, many graduate instructors start to think less of their students; that is, they gain a certain antipathy toward their undergraduate students.

As I see it, this first strategic mistake often leads to the second strategic mistake; that is, underestimating our audience. Philosophy often breeds elitism. I was introduced to this sentiment during my very first interactions with a group of graduate students at my university. You see, I was visiting the university and the department enlisted a group of seasoned graduate students to take me out to lunch. The lunch was nice, but when the conversation drifted onto teaching responsibilities, the tenor of the conversation turned ugly. I

distinctly remember saying that I was looking forward to teaching my own courses. To which, one of my peers, dripping with condescension, said, “you’ve obviously never taught your own course before.” Actually, I had already taught my own courses, but that is not important. The conversation quickly spiraled into an undergraduate bashing session. I heard: how the students are stupid, how they are unmotivated, how they never speak in class, how they do not read, and (my favorite) how some people just are not cut out for philosophy. In all of this, the sentiment that seems universal is that the majority of undergraduate students are hopeless.

Thus not much is expected from the undergraduates. Many graduate instructors have long since given up on trying to facilitate class discussion. Many of my peers have reverted to “spoon feeding” their students. Some graduate instructors merely lecture *at* their students, but I have noticed that many of my peers are now leaning heavily upon the overhead projector. The graduate instructor reveals argument and counter argument while their students struggle to listen as they reproduce transparency after transparency verbatim.⁵

The last strategic mistake is “the failure to do justice to our intellectual opponents.”⁶ As I see it, all competent philosophy instructors come to the classroom with particular philosophical interests and proclivities. As professional philosophers, we are engaged in various research projects, promoting very particular philosophical perspectives. The question is: whether or not we force our views upon our students in the classroom. In my experience, I have found that graduate instructors are notorious for pushing their own agendas in the classroom. To these instructors, there is *the* truth and there is everything else. Opposing views are mere foils and straw men, which are erected just for the purpose of tearing them down. In their zeal to defend, say, Thomistic virtue ethics they caricature Kantian, utilitarian, and pragmatist ethical positions. In this sort of situation, the student is placed in a precarious position. On one hand, the student can go along with her instructor and sing the praises of the instructor’s favorite philosopher. But, should the student disagree with her instructor, she is perceived as a foe and, in many cases, made to feel like an idiot. In other words, there is an antagonism that develops between the student and the instructor.

I am quite aware that, in writing this section, I have focused on the negative. It was not my intention to give graduate instructors a bad name; I am sure that there are scores of remarkable graduate instructors. But my own experience indicates that the three strategic mistakes that Cahn enumerates may be more common than some think, especially in courses taught by graduate instructors. These mistakes, I will try to show, may well derive from a lack of sympathy.

2: Sympathetic Understanding

I find it hard to explain sympathetic understanding. At base, it has to do with the process of sympathetically coming to understand the perspective of another being. To say anything more definite than that is difficult. Perhaps a few examples will help.

In his essay “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings,” William James discusses “the blindness with which we all are afflicted in regard to the feelings of creatures and people different from ourselves.”⁷ He describes a trip he took to the mountains of North Carolina. Riding through the backcountry, James came across several coves crudely carved out of the wooded mountainsides. The settlers apparently cleared an area by cutting down trees, yet did not bother to remove the stumps. In the middle of these clearings, the settlers built bucolic log cabins surrounded by zigzag fences, to keep the

pigs and cattle out. With his New Englander eyes, James saw only unmitigated squalor, an affront to Nature’s beauty. Aghast by these eyesores James asked his driver “what sort of people are they who have to make these new clearings?”⁸ To his surprise, his driver said: “All of us. ...why, we ain’t happy here unless we’re getting one of these coves under cultivation.”⁹ It was only then that James realized that he was blind to the inward significance these coves held for these settlers. He realized that the settlers looked on their coves as symbols inundated with moral sentiments, which sang a very paean of duty, struggle, and success.

The moral of the story is that all of us are restricted from knowing the innermost sentiments of people different from us. Thus we have trouble recognizing the value these sentiments hold for these people. And, not recognizing these values, it is easy for us fail to take into account their most important sentiments. The common result is intolerance. This is where sympathetic understanding comes in. To combat our blindnesses, we must acquire as much sympathetic understanding of other people’s values as possible. That is, we must strive to appreciate other people’s perspectives.¹⁰

Let me give you another example. In 1889, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr opened a settlement house in Chicago called Hull-House, which was a great asset to the community. The women of Hull-House worked very closely with many of the poor recent immigrants. In this capacity, Addams and the women of Hull-House were charity workers. One of the insights that Addams gained while working among these folks was the idea that she could not just solve their problems, dust off, and go home. She recognized that charity is tricky business. She recognized that an uninformed charity worker with good intentions could easily cause great damage, making the conditions worse than they were when she arrived. To guard against this, the effective charity worker has to inquire thoroughly into the context and conditions at hand. Addams held that, after thoroughly evaluating the situation, the charity worker should attempt to gain a sympathetic understanding of the experiences of these people. That is, the effective charity worker has to try to understand the problem from the perspective of the downtrodden. Addams tells us that this sort of understanding is attained only “by mixing on the thronged and common road where all must turn out for one another, and at least see the size of one another’s burdens.”¹¹ The claim is that once the charity worker gains a sympathetic understanding of their experiences, he or she is then in a position to work *with* people, not *for* them. And to work *with* these folks, it is paramount that charity workers go forward in “the heat and jostle of the crowd” and “walk many dreary miles besides the lowliest of [God’s] creatures” so that they may acquire a sympathetic understanding of their plight.

In both of these examples, I have tried to show that sympathetic understanding is based on the idea that there are several ways of seeing the world. The problem is that we have trouble understanding the other’s point of view; we are blind to what others find to be important. Thus it is paramount that each of us continuously strive for sympathetic understanding.

3: Sympathetic Understanding in the Classroom

What does all of this have to do with teaching? Let us return to Cahn’s pedagogical suggestions. Remember the first two strategic mistakes: we should avoid both overestimating and underestimating our students. I do find these suggestions to be insightful. But I must ask: *How* are we to recognize whether we are over- or under-estimating our students? This I take to be one of, if not, the hardest aspects of teaching.

According to William James, teaching, *in principle*, is fairly simple. In his *Talks to Teachers* James says that the science of teaching is not unlike the science of war.¹² In war, you simply work your enemy into a position from which the natural obstacles prevent them from escaping. And, at just the right moment, you fall on them in numbers superior to their own, hacking their regiments into pieces, and taking the remainder as prisoners. In principle, teaching is just as simple. You must simply work your pupils into a state of interest in the subject matter so that all else is banished from their minds. Then, strikingly, you reveal the next intellectual nugget to them, filling them with devouring curiosity to know the next few steps in connection. James, then, says: the principles being so plain, there would be nothing but victories for the masters of the science, either on the battlefield or in the classroom, if they did not both involve the task of understanding the mind of their opponent. James perceptively points out that the minds of “our own enemy,” our students, are working away from us just as eagerly as the mind of the opposing commander on the battlefield. (I am sure I do not have to convince any of you who have taught early Monday or late Friday courses.) In this light we see that to grasp just what the respective enemies want and think, and what they know and do not know, is a difficult task for generals and teachers alike. But, for James, this much is clear: it is sympathetic concrete observation and skillful forecasting that are the only helps here.

According to James, to recognize whether we are over- or under-estimating our students we must try to see the subject matter from two different angles and gain a stereoscopic view of “our enemy.” We must try to represent to ourselves the curious inner workings of our students’ minds. As Dewey puts it:

The teacher is distinguished from the scholar, no matter how good the latter, by interest in watching the movements of the minds of others, by being sensitive to all the signs of response they exhibit.¹³

In other words, teachers must be in sympathy with the mental movements of their students. It is only thus that we become open to our students’ perplexities and problems. It is only thus that we can discern the causes of these perplexities and problems. It is only by these means that we acquire the mental tact to see signs of promise and nourish them to maturity. Along these same lines Dewey says:

[The best teachers] have a quick, sure and unflagging sympathy with the operations and process of the minds they are in contact with. Their own minds move in harmony with those of others, appreciating their difficulties, entering into their problems, sharing their intellectual victories.¹⁴

Sympathetic understanding is, thus, something that excellent teachers must have.¹⁵ It is only through this sort of process that one begins to comprehend the various troubles and frustrations of their students. Only then do we begin to realize the steps we need to take as instructors to make the material relevant and accessible.

Of course, it is hard to imagine how exactly one would go about training another to gain sympathetic understanding. The “devil” is, indeed, in the details. Perhaps a good place to start would be convincing senior professors that philosophical pedagogy should be part of the graduate curriculum; that they should be teaching their graduate students how to teach philosophy. What is needed is a forum to share and discuss general and course-specific pedagogy. This could take many forms. One could institute something as weighty as a

mandatory teacher training course in the graduate curriculum or something as minimal as a teaching mentor system. In these types of settings, potential graduate instructors could be taught methods and techniques that would help them to be more attentive, challenging, self-critical, and charitable to their students and texts once they enter the classroom. Of course, mere pedagogy will not guarantee sympathetic understanding or good instruction in the classroom. Instructors must develop their own ingenuity in meeting and pursuing their students in various concrete situations in order to achieve a truly sympathetic understanding.¹⁶ Nevertheless, I think that philosophy departments have a duty to introduce their graduate instructors to this most vital aspect of teaching and mark it as something at which all instructors ought to aim.

Endnotes

1. I should add that I have yet to teach a class larger than forty students.
2. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. II, Ch. 1 & 4.
3. Steven Cahn, “How to Improve Your Teaching,” in *In the Socratic Tradition: Essays on Teaching Philosophy*, ed. Tziporah Kasachkoff (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 31.
4. Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 246-247.
5. Compare with John Lachs, “Teaching as a Calling” in *A Community of Individuals* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 15-21 and Douglas Anderson, “Creative Teachers: Risk, Responsibility, and Love,” *Journal of Education*, Vol. 183, No. 1 (2000): 33-48.
6. Steven Cahn, “How to Improve Your Teaching,” in *In the Socratic Tradition: Essays on Teaching Philosophy*, ed. Tziporah Kasachkoff (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 33.
7. William James, “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings,” in *Writings 1878-1899*, ed. G.E. Myers (New York: The Library of America, 1992), 841.
8. *Ibid.*, 843.
9. *Ibid.*
10. See Charlene Haddock Seigfried, “James: Sympathetic Apprehension of the Point of View of the Other,” in *Classical American Pragmatism*, eds. S. Rosenthal, C. Hausman, and D. Anderson (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 85-98.
11. Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 7.
12. William James, *Talks to Teachers* in *Writings 1878-1899*, ed. G.E. Myers (New York: The Library of America, 1992), 718-719.
13. John Dewey, “To Those Who Aspire to the Profession of Teaching,” in *The Later Works, Vol.13: 1938-1939*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 345.
14. *Ibid.*, 345-346.
15. See Jim Garrison, *Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997) for an in-depth exposition of the role of sympathetic understanding in education.
16. William James, *Talks to Teachers* in *Writings 1878-1899*, ed. G.E. Myers (New York: The Library of America, 1992), 718.

ON THE PROFESSION

Announcement of Woodrow Wilson Practicum Grants

Ms. Jessica Lautin of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation informs us that one of the recipients of a Woodrow Wilson Practicum Grant for Fall 2003 was Nathaniel Hansen, a doctoral student at the University of Chicago. Working with teachers at University High School in Fresno, California, Mr. Hansen will design learning modules that incorporate the teaching of philosophy concept into the humanities curricula for the ninth and tenth grades. He will receive one of ten stipends of up to \$2,000.00. Ms. Lautin writes that Mr. Hansen's work is a superb example of the way increasing numbers of young academics are integrating their discipline with public outreach. The Practicum Grants, which are supported in part by the Rockefeller Foundation, give graduate students a chance to apply their skills and knowledge in new settings and to discover their professional potential both outside and within the academy. The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation's website is <http://www.woodrow.org>.

REVIEW

Review of G. McCulloch, *The Life of the Mind: An Essay on Phenomenological Externalism* (London: Routledge, 2003)

Reviewed by Yakir Levin

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Descartes's so-called real distinction between mind and body¹ has two aspects, ontological and epistemological. The ontological aspect finds expression first and foremost in his *substance dualism*, the view that mind and body are separate substances that can exist independently of each other. But the ontological aspect also finds expression in Descartes's *internalism*, the view that *intentionality* is a feature which the mind has in and of itself—i.e., that nothing external to the mind is required for determining *mental content*. Clearly, substance dualism entails internalism. If mind can exist as it is without the existence of any body or external reality, then things external to the mind are not required for determining mental content. In addition, substance dualism supports the epistemological aspect of the Real Distinction, the view that mind and body require completely different types of account. At the same time, Descartes's conviction in the epistemological aspect of the real distinction constitutes at least part of his rationale for endorsing substance dualism. It is Descartes's conviction that mechanistic accounts of the external world are inapplicable to fundamental mental capacities that, among other reasons, led him to substance dualism.²

While substance dualism can ground internalism, it is not the only possible basis for such a view³ nor is it the most plausible basis. Indeed, there is a wide consensus among contemporary philosophers, internalists included, that substance dualism cannot be true. Contemporary philosophers

are also fairly unanimous in their rejection of the traditional *Idea idea*, the view that the primary bearers of mental content are intrinsically contentful items that wear their interpretation on their sleeve. Such a rejection is, in particular, part of nearly every internalist's stock-in-trade. However, if internalists leave behind the *Idea idea*, their position becomes incoherent. For if no intrinsic features of the bearers of mental content can determine this content, then something external to these items must determine the content they bear. This external something cannot be a thing internal to the mind. It cannot be an interpreting module of the mind, since such a module must itself involve intentionality, which will immediately set internalism off on an infinite regress. Neither can the external something under consideration be some relation between different bearers of content. A relation between bearers of content merely yields a more complicated bearer. Thus, if the *Idea idea* is rejected, mental content must be determined by something external to the mind. But this is inconsistent with internalism.

If internalists can avoid the anti-internalist conclusion of these rather compelling considerations, it is only, it seems, by reverting to the *Idea idea*. Taking this course, however, is not really an option, since the *Idea idea* is indeed hopeless. This being the case, internalists must bite the bullet and respond to the considerations at issue in one of two ways. The first way is by taking the conclusion of these considerations to reflect a fundamental incoherence in the idea of mental content. This response is tantamount to *eliminativism*, the view that the idea of mental content, and perhaps the whole idea of the mental as well, should be dispensed with. The second alternative way is by switching to *externalism*, the view that mental content is constrained or determined by the world. The main purpose of G. McCulloch's very rich, especially penetrating, and most insightful *The Life of the Mind* is to defend and develop the externalist response (unless otherwise indicated all references are to this work). Externalism, however, comes in many varieties.⁴ The version McCulloch comes up with is distinctive in its radicality. If we paraphrase his own paraphrase of a famous slogan by Hilary Putnam, in McCulloch's externalism (Yakir, it is not clear what is meant here): Content just ain't in the head; content is in the mind and thus the mind just ain't in the head (11-12). Another distinctive mark of McCulloch's externalism is that, although it takes mind to be part of the external world, it nevertheless seeks to secure for mind a special place in the world by preserving the epistemological real distinction. As he puts it, "understanding...minds involves a methodology and knowledge that is radically different from the methodology and knowledge involved in the physical sciences" (73). It is this blend of externalization of the mind and the epistemological real distinction, which, for reasons that will become clear later, McCulloch calls *phenomenological externalism*. But this blend, I shall claim, does not really resolve the problems of internalism that motivated its development by McCulloch in the first place.

To achieve *The Life of the Mind*'s main goal, McCulloch proceeds along three complementary and partly intertwined routes. Part of the first route consists of an attempt to undermine two central eliminativist moves—that of Paul Churchland (Chap. 3) and that of W.V. Quine (91-93), both of which derive eliminativism from one or another version of externalism. Churchland's move might be particularly damaging to McCulloch's attempt at defending the externalist response to the anti-internalist considerations outlined above. For not only does McCulloch accept much of the substance of Churchland's brand of externalism, but he uses Churchland's argument for this brand to motivate the type of externalism

he himself opts for. Indeed, in McCulloch's view, Churchland's argument—a combination of scientific realism with an argument to the effect that externalism is required “to make sure our experiences and thinking are about the things that science tells us they are responses to” (66)—embodies a major motivation for externalism. But this motivation does not make sense unless we take ourselves to be subjects of experience and thinking, which is exactly what eliminativism denies. Thus, a major motivation for externalism is inconsistent with Churchland's and Quine's externalism-based eliminativisms, which is McCulloch's main objection to these eliminativisms.

The other part of McCulloch's first route consists of a criticism of Donald Davidson's eliminativism (94-108). While Davidson self-consciously departs from Quine in some crucial respects—most notably in rejecting Quine's behavioristic externalism—he shares some of Quine's main doctrines—namely, that of the primacy of sentences and that of the primacy of the so-called radical case of interpretation—deriving from them a similar eliminativism. McCulloch's main argument against Davidson's eliminativism seeks to show that it must assume the very behavioristic externalism that Davidson rejects. The other side of the same argumentative coin is an attempt to show that Davidson could not have reached his eliminativism had he not ignored the epistemological real distinction endorsed by McCulloch. Ironically enough, the epistemological real distinction has an echo in Quine's overarching concern with linguistic behavior and interpretation, which results in his behavioristic externalism and eliminativism (chap. 4). Indeed, McCulloch's major argument for the epistemological real distinction is inspired by some of Quine's leading remarks on meaning and intentionality. So, McCulloch's aim in discussing Quine's and Davidson's eliminativisms is not only to undermine very central eliminativist positions, but to show that his own endorsement of the epistemological real distinction is “much more accommodating [than views that avoid this distinction] to Quine's overarching concern with linguistic behavior and interpretation...as well as to much (though not all) that can be found in Davidson” (94). This is particularly important to McCulloch with respect to Davidson because of “the influence of Davidsonian themes on the approach taken in *(The Life of the Mind)*” (106).

The second route along which McCulloch proceeds consists of an illuminating reconstruction and defense of three important lines of argument in the literature that provide, in his view, a major support for externalism. These lines of argument are: (1) Putnam's famous twin-earth considerations (41-48); (2) John McDowell's well-known considerations about the sense and reference of proper names, which McCulloch's views “as complementing, and possibly giving a way to generalize, [Putnam's twin-earth considerations]” (48-53); and (3) Churchland's aforementioned argument which, in McCulloch's view, is also related to Putnam's twin-earth considerations (56-63).

As part of his defense of Putnam's twin-earth considerations, McCulloch argues against important neo-internalist responses of Jerry Fodor and Colin McGinn to these considerations (Chap. 6). In McCulloch's analysis, the main problems with both of these responses stem from the fact that they do not respect the epistemological real distinction. So the aim of his discussion of Fodor and McGinn is not only to lend further support to externalism, but also to strengthen his case for the epistemological Real Distinction. In addition, this discussion is supposed to show that externalism can accommodate the epistemological real distinction only if the primary bearers of content are outward, public, things such as doings and sayings. But in McCulloch's view there is another, crucial reason why the primary bearers of content must be

doings and sayings: “Since communication is both a public event and a sharing of thoughts, the bearers of thought-content themselves *have to be public*” (105).

Both the first and second routes, then, involve the epistemological real distinction. But McCulloch's main argument for this thesis constitutes the third route he takes (chaps. 1 and 4). The basic step in this argument is the claim that conscious intentional states are *phenomenological*—i.e., there is something it is like to be in those states. “To say [this]...is not to say that [content] reduces to things like raw feels, or ‘purely qualitative’ aspects of the mind (if there are such things...)” (10). Neither is it to say that “distinct contents have associated with them distinct identifying qualia or raw feels” (29). To say that content is a phenomenological notion is rather to say that conscious intentional states are essentially tied to the point of view of their subject. This means that “coming to understand how [someone] S thinks, [must involve]...learning to see the world in S's way, taking S's intentional objects as one's own” (82). It means, in other words, that to understand others we must interpret them—i.e., be “in a position to *share* their modes of presentation: the interpreter's objects are presented to the interpreter in the interpreter's ways” (120). According to the second crucial step in McCulloch's argument, however, to share others' modes of presentation requires, to paraphrase Quine, that we bicker with them as brothers. It requires that we immerse ourselves in their form of life. But, and this is the third crucial step in McCulloch's argument, “not even omniscience with respect to physical science in all its glory will teach [one] to bicker with others as a brother” (83). In other words, “access to [the phenomenology of content] is not given by physicalist accounts, or indeed by any other account which fails to be interpretational” (120). Thus, understanding of mental content is drastically discontinuous with understanding of physics, which is what the epistemological real distinction claims.

Combined with the anti-internalist considerations outlined above, the three routes McCulloch takes make a rather strong case for a two-faceted externalism. In this externalism, mental content is world-dependent. But this externalism also holds that the primary bearers of mental content are outward facts, namely, doings and sayings that convey the points of view of subjects of intentional states and are in this sense phenomenological. In light of this, it should now be clear why McCulloch calls his view *phenomenological externalism*. But it should also be clear why, in addition, he characterizes it as *behavior-embracing mentalism* (chap. 5).

If the primary bearers of content are doings and sayings, then intentionality requires embodiment. Thus, an important implication of McCulloch's phenomenological externalism is that it rules out the possibility of vat-brains, or disembodied subjects with conscious intentional states (chap. 7). But McCulloch's phenomenological externalism also has a not so happy consequence. It is a major aspect of the epistemological real distinction embraced by this position that the content of intentional states cannot be read off nonintentional features of these states and/or of any other states. This aspect is especially salient in the context of the distinction that McCulloch introduces in chapter 6 between (standard) *bipartism* and (his own) *tripartism*. But if content cannot be thus read off, what determines it? On the one hand, the assumption that the content at issue is a primitive feature of intentional states as these are environmentally embedded is tantamount to something like the hopeless idea of states that bear their contents on their sleeve. On the other hand, the assumption that the content of given mental states (e.g., one's own) with a specific environmental embedding is determined by intentional features of other mental states (e.g.,

the mental states of others) sets phenomenological externalism off on an infinite regress. Thus, it appears that McCulloch's phenomenological externalism faces the same problems of internalism that motivated its development in the first place.

Notwithstanding this objection, *The Life of the Mind* is to be highly recommended for its breadth, depth, and masterly treatment of issues that are at the very center of contemporary philosophy of mind. After all, to quote Dr. Johnson, seldom is any splendid story wholly true.

Endnotes

1. Cottingham, J., Stoothoff, R. and Murdoch, D., trans., *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. I and II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 54.
2. Ibid., 126-131.
3. Guttenplan, S., ed. *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 29.
4. Ibid., 289.

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