

APA Newsletters

NEWSLETTER ON TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Volume 07, Number 2

Spring 2008

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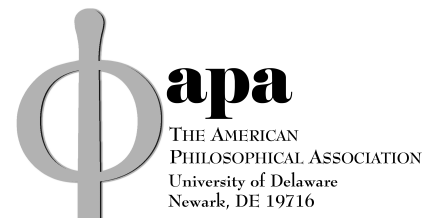
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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the Spring 2008 issue of the APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy. In this issue you will find five articles, three book reviews, and a list of books, sent to us by various publishers, that are relevant to the teaching of philosophy.

Our first article, by Mark Nowacki and Wilfried Ver Eecke, entitled "Using the Economic Concept of a 'Merit Good' to Justify the Teaching of Ethics across the University Curriculum," argues for using the economic, but normative concept of a "merit good" to bring home to students that ethical issues are not discrete matters to be studied apart from, say, business and economics, but are, rather, issues whose understanding is necessary for truly comprehending economic and business decisions, especially in the public sphere. As the authors put it, students (and future leaders in economics and business) should be helped to see that ethical reflection is not an alien intrusion into their subject but is, rather, intrinsic to the subject they are studying. Defining "merit good" as a (sometimes controversial) good that does not necessarily reflect consumer preferences—indeed, its introduction by government is often a means of fostering a change in consumer preferences—the authors argue that the study of such goods is, and should be shown to students to be, the study of basic normative questions about a) what we as a society should value, and b) what values governments are justified in promoting, even at public expense. Though the study of merit goods and its various normative implications has its most obvious home in the study of economics, the authors show how the notion of merit goods is germane to the study of many other courses that involve business, public policy issues, and questions of the public good.

The authors of this article, helpfully, append a syllabus of a course that one of them has taught using the notion of merit goods to bring home various ethical points.

Our second article, "Real Philosophy, Good Teaching and Academic Freedom" by Lou Matz, is not about how to teach philosophy but about the sort of pedagogical independence that, Matz argues, ought to be a faculty member's prerogative on pain of otherwise being subject to restriction on one's academic freedom in the classroom. Matz recounts his own experience of many years of teaching at Xavier University, the negative evaluations by his department that were made of the particular way he chose to teach his courses (though, he argues, the topics he taught were in line with the official course descriptions), and his eventual denial of tenure at that institution. Claiming unfairness in the process of evaluation—a process that in Matz's case was appealed both to a committee of The American Philosophical Association and to a chapter of the American Association of University Professors—Matz recommends that the APA add a section on academic

freedom to its "Statements on the Profession: The Teaching of Philosophy" to guide departments more clearly and to support those faculty whose pedagogical views might be at odds with those of their department. Specifically, it is Matz's view that "unlike the AAUP's purely procedural standard, the APA should support some substantive elements in its standard of academic freedom and judge on them."

The question of whether the APA should support appeal to substantive rather than merely procedural criteria in the assessment of whether there has been a violation of academic freedom is a question that the editors of this Newsletter believe to be controversial. We would welcome hearing from readers of Matz's article their own view regarding his recommendation to the APA.

Our third, fourth, and fifth articles are reports from the two editors of this publication, Tziporah Kasachkoff and Eugene Kelly, as well as from one of our editorial reviewers, David Martens, about their experiences teaching abroad. Coincidentally, all three have been teaching overseas for the past few years, either exclusively, as in the case of David Martens who is teaching in South Africa, or in addition to teaching in the U.S., as is the case with both Kasachkoff and Kelly (who have taught or are teaching in, respectively, Israel, Jordan, and China). Since many of our readers may be entertaining thoughts about teaching overseas—the APA's Jobs for Philosophers often lists positions in philosophy departments located in different countries—we thought to share with readers of our Newsletter the experiences, difficulties, and satisfactions we have had teaching philosophy in cultures different from our own. Any reader who wishes to share his or her own experiences in teaching in other cultures is invited to do so in our pages.

We include three book reviews, one of a book on the meaning of life, by Yuval Lurie; one on marginality and modernization in connection with the spread of the Jewish Enlightenment in the nineteenth century, by Iris Parush; and one on the topic of whether philosophy is rightly to be considered as androcentric, by Iddo Landau. The reviewers of these three books are: Eugene Kelly, John Kleinig, and Mark Zelcer. (Landau's book on whether philosophy is, as is sometimes claimed, androcentric, was slated to be reviewed jointly by John Kleinig and Tziporah Kasachkoff. In the end, however, we decided to publish Kleinig's and Kasachkoff's views on the book separately, with Kleinig's review appearing in this issue and Kasachkoff's to appear in our next issue.) We include Iddo Landau's reply to John Kleinig's review.

As always, we 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 books that we have received for review are listed at the end of the Newsletter. However, reviewers are welcome to suggest reviewing material that they themselves have used in the classroom and found useful, even if it does not appear in our **Books Received** list. Please remember that our publication is devoted to pedagogy

and not to theoretical discussions of philosophical issues. This should be borne in mind not only when writing articles for our publication but also when reviewing material for our publication.

We warmly encourage our readers to write for our publication. We welcome papers that respond to, comment on, or take issue with any of the material that appears within our pages.

The following guidelines for submissions should be followed:

- The author's name, the title of the paper, and full mailing address should appear on a separate sheet of paper or, if the paper is sent to the editors electronically, on a note that will not print out within the text of the paper itself. 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.
- Unless the paper is sent in electronic form, four complete copies of the paper should be sent. Authors should adhere to the production guidelines that are available from the APA. If you send an article by post rather than electronically, do not send the disk on which it was composed. The editors will request an electronic form of the paper when the paper is ready to be published. In writing your paper in electronic form, please do not use your word processor's footnote or endnote function; all notes should be added manually at the end of the paper.
- All articles submitted to the Newsletter are blind-reviewed by the members of the editorial committee. They are:

*Tziporah Kasachkoff, co-editor

The Graduate Center, CUNY & Ben Gurion University of the Negev (tkasachkoff@yahoo.com or ziporah@bgu.ac.il)

Eugene Kelly, co-editor

New York Institute of Technology (ekelly@nyit.edu)

David B. Martens (martensd@social.wits.ac.za or david.martens@gmail.com)

*Andrew Wengraf (andrew.wengraf@gmail.com)

***Please note change of email address.**

Contributions should be sent (if not electronically) to:

Tziporah Kasachkoff, PhD Program in Philosophy, The Graduate School and University Center, The City University of New York, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016

and/or

Eugene Kelly, New York Institute of Technology, Department of Social Science, Old Westbury, NY 11568

ARTICLES

Using the Economic Concept of a "Merit Good" to Justify the Teaching of Ethics across the University Curriculum¹

Mark Nowacki

Singapore Management University

Wilfried Ver Eecke

Georgetown University

I. Introduction

What follows is an argument that can be used to justify the introduction of philosophical, and specifically ethical, discourse into a wide range of university courses.² The argument advanced is, we hope, both sufficiently formal to convince administrators, and sufficiently broad to convince students, of the practical importance that at least one area of philosophy has for the successful pursuit of even the most praxis-oriented career.³

In particular, we will argue that the economic concept of a merit good provides a convenient platform for introducing ethical discourse throughout those areas of the college curriculum where economic concepts play a pivotal role. Moreover, the concept of a merit good can serve as a ready vehicle for introducing an ethical dimension into the formation of future leaders in business and politics. We will say more about merit goods and how these objectives might be accomplished in a moment. But we should like to mention that one considerable advantage of the "merit good" approach is that students come to recognize that it is impossible to avoid ethical considerations in their future careers. Economic activity simply cannot be properly understood apart from its ethical dimension. Hence, if students wish to gain a true and accurate understanding of their future field of employment—if, in fact, they wish to excel at what they do—then an education in ethics is not only appropriate but, most likely, practically necessary.

So, what we hope to do here is to offer a suggestion, open to further articulation and revision, that we believe has some interesting implications both for the general project of justifying the teaching of ethics across the curriculum, and for how, in a concrete way, the introduction of ethical discourse can be accomplished in a manner attractive to students, teachers, and administrators. A syllabus for a course which makes strategic use of the "merit good" concept is given in the appendix to this paper. The course has been taught for several years by one of the authors and has been particularly well received by students majoring in government.

Our basic argument can be stated as follows: There exists, within economic theory, a class of economic goods, namely, "merit goods," that are of at least equal theoretical and practical importance to "private goods" and "public goods." What is philosophically interesting about merit goods is that, as a precondition of their existence, and embedded within their very definition, merit goods make reference to and depend upon normative disciplines like ethics. Insofar as understanding and accounting for merit goods is important to economics, and insofar as economics is itself important to other fields of study, the economic notion of a merit good can be used to underwrite an introduction of ethical discourse across a wide spectrum of university courses. Moreover, the particular constellation of courses within which mention of merit goods naturally arises happens to overlap significantly with the types

of courses praxis-oriented future leaders are likely to take. Given the appropriate instructional context, future leaders will no longer perceive ethical reflection as an alien intrusion but, rather, as an organic development that makes contact with and flourishes within the subject they are studying. As we discuss below, a more effective allocation of social goods is achieved by engagement at the specifically ethical level with the target audience of the social policy. The formal study of ethics is thus introduced, in a natural and systematic way, into the formation of future leaders, be they economists, economic advisors, public policy planners, or politicians.

II. What is a merit good?

The concept of a “merit good” was formally introduced by Richard Musgrave in 1956 to account for certain conceptual orphans in his theory of public finance.⁴ Musgrave recognized that there are several economic goods which, while they are part of the public budget, are not justifiable by a public goods argument. In other words, goods such as subsidized housing for the poor, obligatory public education, and mandatory public inoculations cannot be justified by claiming that these economic goods are (i) supplied to the people who want them, (ii) in the degree to which they are wanted, and that (iii) the burden of payment is born by those who benefit from the goods (iv) in proportion to the benefit they receive. Consumer sovereignty is clearly violated in such cases: consumers are coerced into accepting more inoculations (for instance) than they would prefer. Yet, despite the failure of a public goods argument, it would be strange indeed to think that there can be no justification for such laudable items within the public budget.⁵ It would also be odd to think that the science of economics should not attempt to both describe and theoretically grapple with such patently economic phenomena.

Enter the concept of a merit good. Formally stated, a “merit good” is an economic good with respect to which competent authorities may, legitimately, and for axiological reasons, intervene in markets in a manner contrary to consumer preferences.⁶ Such interventions are usually (though not always) intended to bring about a change in consumer preference. The intention to change consumer preference is itself prompted by a prior critique of actual consumer demand, the level of prevailing demand being judged by competent authorities to be inappropriate in some way.

An obvious example of this class of economic goods is what one might actually wish to call a “demerit” good, namely, cigarettes. Some competent medical and political authority—say the Surgeon General—judges that the current consumer demand for cigarettes is too high. In response to that judgment, we find that high taxes are imposed on cigarettes, that venues for the advertisement of cigarettes are limited, that smoking in public buildings is curtailed, and that labels with severe health warnings are required on the product.⁷ Over time, it is hoped that a new pattern of consumer demand for cigarettes will emerge, a pattern of demand that is more in keeping with the lowered demand patterns envisioned by the intervening authorities.

Let us now situate merit goods in relation to the two other basic types of economic goods. We begin by dividing all economic goods into private goods and non-private goods. By “private good” we understand an economic good that is optimally provided via the free market mechanism. Private goods typically involve rivalry and exclusivity in consumption. For instance, if a person eats an apple then the benefit of eating that apple accrues exclusively to that person and cannot be shared with anyone else.

Non-private goods, on the other hand, are economic goods that are not optimally provided via the free market mechanism. Non-private goods come in two types, public goods and merit goods. The distinction between the two types of non-private goods turns upon the reason why the free market fails to provide those goods at optimal levels. A “public good” is a non-private good that is supplied, typically by the government but sometimes by other organized groups, with the intention of respecting consumer preferences. Consumers need help in procuring such goods because of some technical or formal feature of the good that makes it either difficult or impossible for individuals to acquire the good by themselves in an optimal way. Typical reasons for market failure in the case of public goods are their non-rivalness in consumption and their non-excludability. For instance, clean air to breathe will not be lessened by several people enjoying it nor can we prevent people from enjoying clean air, even if they do not pay.

Merit goods are also non-private goods and, as we’ve already mentioned, merit goods are also instances of some kind of market failure. However, the reason for the free market mechanism failing in the case of merit goods is not technical in nature but axiological. The value consumers place on merit goods is inappropriate: in a free market consumers either desire too much of a bad thing (as in the case of cigarettes) or too little of a good thing (hence, compulsory public education). It is at least arguable that consumers ought to value things differently than they do, and so some intervention by competent authorities is justifiable.

Such, then, must suffice for a formal characterization of merit goods. For present purposes it is neither necessary nor prudent to fill in too much detail. Formal research into the nature and the behavior of merit goods is still relatively new, and much important work remains to be done. At this time we would, however, like to highlight the following salient features of merit goods.

First, and most importantly, as a matter of brute empirical fact, merit goods do exist.⁸ Some of our most treasured public institutions and social programs display merit good aspects, mandatory public education, subsidized housing, and sumptuary taxes on cigarettes being clear instances.

Second, the phenomena picked out by the “merit good” concept are clearly economic in nature, and as such it is necessary for the science of economics to provide an account of them. Economics would be incomplete, and economists would be shirking their duty, if merit goods escaped their purview. It is entirely appropriate for us to expect a distinctively economic account of merit goods to be forthcoming.

Third, the existence of merit goods logically depends upon a prior, normative critique of consumer demand. Optimal provision of merit goods is emphatically not achieved by satisfying existing consumer demand. Rather, optimal provision of any merit good requires active intervention contrary to prevailing consumer demand. But to do so by using the power of the government requires ethical justification.

This third point is worth dwelling upon. Note that what the optimal levels of merit goods are, and which specific economic goods are best interpreted as merit goods, are issues that cannot be settled from within the discipline of economics itself as it has traditionally been conceived. By this we mean that economics, at least in the form in which it is generally understood, is conceived of as the science which maximally satisfies the allocation of scarce resources in accordance with pre-given consumer preferences. Normativity extends only thus far in traditional economic thought. But the point of identifying a particular economic good as a merit good is that the pre-given consumer preferences themselves are in need of criticism. Thus—and this

is a crucial point—a properly economic understanding of merit goods must make reference to disciplines outside the bounds of economic science as traditionally conceived. Economics cannot help but be socio-economics. And, since optimal consumption levels are revealed only through a normative critique of what should be the case, of what ought to be done, it follows that the particular discipline socio-economics must look to for its illumination is ethics. In short, economic thinking is inevitably intertwined with ethics, the science of what human beings ought to do. Therefore, with the introduction of merit goods, ethical discourse assumes a natural, and perfectly proper, place within economics courses.⁹

III. Applications of the merit good concept

At the outset of this paper we claimed that the economic concept of a merit good can be used to legitimate the discussion of ethics within a variety of educational contexts. We would now like to develop that program. We will begin with a few remarks on how ethical discourse might arise within the teaching of economics courses, and then will expand the range of application of the merit good concept to other aspects of the curriculum.

Let us begin with an examination of the teaching of economics at the undergraduate level.

As economics is generally taught at the introductory level, students are treated to a brief conceptual survey wherein they are made acquainted with the fundamental distinction between private goods and public goods, and then the instructor moves quickly on to a formal or mathematical treatment of these two goods. Yet, as we have noted, the division of economic goods into public goods and private is hardly exhaustive: the division overlooks a wide range of economic phenomena that is captured only through the introduction of the concept of a merit good. Of course, no introductory course aims at a complete treatment of its subject: details are filled in only after further academic specialization; but the variety and importance of merit good phenomena cry out for acknowledgement (if not full exposition) at the introductory level. A systematic and satisfying introduction to economics as a science requires, we believe, some discussion of merit goods.

While the technical treatment of merit goods is still, after several years, in its nascence, achieving an adequate theoretical grasp of any particular economic good that is *de facto* treated (at least by the intervening authorities) as a merit good will require mention of the prior normative thinking that prompted the intervention economists now find themselves obliged to describe. To appreciate just how wide the *de facto* net of merit goods can be cast, consider that any economic good can be treated as a merit good (or, more precisely, as a demerit good). This potential is implicit in the government's ability to place a sumptuary tax on any economic good it wishes.¹⁰

Since merit good interventions must appeal to normative standards for their justification, it follows that some knowledge of ethical theory and ethical practice can illuminate a wide spectrum of economic activity. The government's power to tax is a clear example, since taxes require justification. Moreover, without an understanding of ethics, such phenomena as mandatory inoculations, property taxes to support public schools, and sumptuary taxes on cigarettes would remain economically unintelligible: there would be some un-analyzed remainder whose import the integrated understanding of the economist would fail to grasp. Why, for instance, do we not pay cigarette smokers to quit but instead penalize smokers for smoking? Both solutions are equally possible, and equally plausible, under a cost/benefit analysis. Since the utility implicit within both scenarios is equal, to consistently decide in one way

rather than another can only be justified by reference to a theory of what should be done over and above what can be done.¹¹

Let us assume that our basic point, namely, that ethical discourse may legitimately appear within economics courses, has been sufficiently established. We would now like to consider how the merit good concept may be applied in other disciplines.

The point we would like to make in this regard is fairly straightforward. Other disciplines can be shown to benefit from the study of ethics in proportion to the importance that a grasp of economic facts has for that particular discipline. Not that there are lacking any number of alternative justifications for injecting ethics into, say, a class on public policy. Rather, we argue that the importance of possessing a reasonably nuanced understanding of economics for a public policy practitioner is sufficient justification for introducing ethical discourse into a course on public policy.

This may be the place to expound a bit on the conceptual link, or the general relation that obtains between economics and public policy. Not only do policy makers hold themselves in some measure accountable for economic performance (they certainly take the credit for good times and don't hesitate to point a finger during bad ones), but policy makers consistently try to influence society through economic means. Certainly in the formulation of almost any public policy the question of economics arises. Leaders in the formulation of public policy are often those who are responsible for identifying areas where levels of consumer demand are currently at unacceptable levels. In brief, public policy wonks are professionally responsible for identifying merit goods.

Public policy leaders are also tasked with implementing market interventions, and here a theoretical grasp of the axiological pre-conditions for merit goods can be useful. For instance, and we apologize for the controversial nature of the example, it has been demonstrated by R.K. Godwin that treating family planning supplies as having a merit good aspect leads to a more efficient allocation of social resources in less developed nations.¹² As Godwin notes, between 1963 and 1977 the governing elites of sixty-two less developed nations set the goal of reducing the birth rates in their respective countries. In each case, the impulse to have smaller families came from above, not from below, from the governing elites, not from the governed masses. The public policy of reducing fertility rates is thus an example of an intervention contrary to prevailing market preferences. To develop programs that would effectively change the then-prevailing desire for larger families, it proved important to acknowledge both the ethical reasoning that went into the intervention sponsored by the governing elites as well as the ethical milieu of the governed masses whose desire for larger families was the target of the intervention. Godwin demonstrates that taking a mixed approach, wherein the provision of family planning materials is treated as simultaneously possessing private, public, and merit good aspects, leads to the most efficient allocation of social resources. For the student of public policy, there are clear practical advantages to explicitly acknowledging and understanding merit goods.

Again, understanding the normative considerations behind merit goods can serve as a useful brake on unwarranted government interventions. Policy makers do well to remember that any merit good intervention they initiate entails that they are out of step with the public perceptions of their constituency. Ethical reflection naturally arises at this point, both with regard to initial policy formation and with regard to public vindication of individual policies. Policy makers must be able to discern what should be done, must be able to justify their

understanding and pursuit of what should be done, and must be able to predict how their proposed interventions will be received given the prevailing morals and mores of the target group of the interventions. As V. Santhakumar has shown (in an interesting study of water provision in the Indian state of Kerala), there are social costs associated with public officials mis-identifying merit goods.¹³

We have argued that introducing the notion of a merit good, and the ethical discourse concomitant with the introduction of that concept, into public policy courses is both justifiable and desirable. Future leaders of public policy are likely to welcome the introduction of ethical discourse into their discipline, for pragmatic reasons related to public effectiveness, if for no other reason.

We would now like to mention just one more area of the curriculum where introducing the concept of a merit good would be appropriate: business courses. Any professional, including business leaders, whose field of activity is significantly affected by economics should take ethics into account in order to be more effective. For instance, future business leaders will quickly discover that which particular goods and services they may provide, as well as how those goods and services can be distributed, are affected by axiological considerations. The days of J.S. Mill defending the opium trade are long gone: the noble principles of free trade can hardly justify an Opium War once opium has been classified as a demerit good of the most extreme variety.¹⁴

Ethical awareness can also be of use to business leaders when they are confronted with concrete difficulties related to product development and product placement, and can also aid their interaction with regulatory agencies. To cite a personal example: one of the odd things about living in Washington, D.C., is that one sees advertisements for things that one would never see advertised anywhere else. So, for instance, as of late 2003, if one had walked into various Metro stations in the city one would have encountered large posters advertising Lockheed-Martin's F-22 Raptor. There were also numerous ads for the plane on the radio (e.g., on WGMS, the classical station). Now, the F-22 is not the sort of plane one uses for casual business travel. What the advertisers were clearly trying to do was sell the F-22 to public officials by positioning their product as a merit good. Lockheed-Martin worked hard to convince Congress that the Raptor should be adopted by the U.S. military. And, while we are sure that the demand for the F-22 was below what Lockheed-Martin would have liked it to be, we would also be surprised to discover that the advertising blitz wasn't at least partially successful. Such is the life of a government defense contractor: gaining the private good of company profits through the sale of (putative) merit goods.

There are several other disciplines, for example, anthropology and history, within which an ethical dimension may legitimately be introduced via the mechanism of economic merit goods. For instance, the merit good concept can be used to express, in more precise theoretical terms, the "total system of giving" described by Marcel Mauss in his *Essai sur le don*. This is because the explicitly economic goods Mauss discusses are fully integrated into social gifting systems that are supposed to embody principles of distributive justice. With respect to the study of history, merit goods are conceptually useful when interpreting public budgets, as witness Adam Smith's remarks concerning the different financing methods appropriate for different types of public works.¹⁵ Or, to take another example, it is only in the light of their complex social evaluations of economic rights and duties, i.e., of economic merits and demerits, that the bewildering medieval English laws concerning the gathering of firewood can be understood.

IV. Conclusion

We have presented the notion of a merit good and have argued for the appropriateness of expanding ethical discourse into economics courses. This is, already, something of a gain. But, once introduced into economics courses, the discussion of ethics occasioned by merit goods spreads beyond the borders of economics. A wide range of praxis-based courses, including the public policy and business courses, are natural extensions. And with the systematic and justifiable introduction of the concept of a merit good comes the equally justifiable introduction of ethics across wide areas of the typical college curriculum and the exposure of university students to the peculiar pleasures of philosophical reflection.

Endnotes

1. An early version of this paper was presented at the Fifth International Ethics Across the Curriculum Conference, sponsored by the Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum (SEAC) and St. Edwards University. The conference was held in Austin, Texas, on October 23-26, 2003. A revised version was later presented at a Philosophy Department Seminar at the National University of Singapore, 24 February 2004. The authors would like to express their thanks for the many useful comments received at each meeting. Special thanks are due to Tan Yoo Guan, John Williams, Riccardo Pelizzo, Marco Verweij, Byron Gangnes, Winston Koh, Vincent Chua, Anh Tuan Nuyen, Ten Chin Liew, and Michael Pelczar. Much-appreciated assistance in the final stages of editing was supplied by Jeremy Wong. We would also like to thank Tziporah Kasachkoff for going far above and beyond the editorial call of duty in preparing this paper for publication.
2. Although in this paper we present a pragmatic argument to justify an expanded role for philosophy within the university curriculum, we do not believe that this is, ultimately, the best sort of argument one should advance in favor of philosophy. While it is true that the study of philosophy does bring certain practical benefits in its train, in itself philosophy is not an instrumental good that finds its justification in how effectively it brings about some other good beyond itself. Philosophy is, in and of itself, a human final good. Philosophical knowledge is knowledge that it is good for human beings to have, and the pursuit of philosophical knowledge is an activity that it is good for human beings to do. A suggestive parallel may be drawn with music appreciation. Why is it good to be able to appreciate music? Do we think that it is important to learn how to appreciate different types of music because doing so will give us something interesting to talk about while cutting business deals on the golf links? Intuitively, we suspect that most people would say that the appreciation of music is not the sort of thing that needs to be justified instrumentally.
3. With regard to its specific genesis, this paper grew directly out of our experience in teaching business and professional ethics to incoming freshmen. One serious challenge that anyone teaching business and professional ethics faces is that of making the material relevant to the students. When asked why they are in the course, a majority of students claim that they are taking the class simply to fulfill a distributional requirement. Among new students there is a widely held presumption that ethics is related only tangentially to business and the professions. A significant percentage of students believe that ethical considerations are a dispensable luxury and that fretting over ethical issues gets in the way of good business decision making. In short, there is a presumption among students that ethics either is or should be detachable from one's business or professional behavior.
4. The classic treatment of merit goods is to be found in R.A. Musgrave, *The Theory of Public Finance* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959). The tentative definition Musgrave suggests is that merit goods are economic goods that the government supplies "if [those goods are] considered so meritorious that their satisfaction is provided for through the public budget,

over and above what is provided for by private buyers” (Ibid., 13).

5. A libertarian might wish to respond at this point that government-led market interventions are not justified. Milton Friedman, for instance, would claim that governments should be limited to providing the necessary conditions of a market economy and to providing for security and defense. Without delving into the libertarian response in detail, we would like to note that even on a libertarian account it is possible that competent authorities may deem the desired level of, e.g., defense spending inadequate and hence may implement a merit-good intervention to ensure that the requisite defense spending needs are met. For further discussion please see the articles mentioned in the next endnote.
6. For extended discussion and justification of this definition see Wilfried Ver Eecke, “The Concept of ‘Merit Good’: The Ethical Dimension in Economic Theory and the History of Economic Thought or the Transformation of Economics Into Socio-Economics,” *Journal of Socio-Economics* 27 (1998): 133-53. A related treatment may be found in Ver Eecke, “Le concept de ‘bien méritoire’ ou la nécessité épistémologique d’un concept éthique dans la science économique,” *Laval théologique et philosophique* 57 (2001): 23-40. The historical context of the merit good concept is discussed in two further articles by the same author: “Ethics in Economics: From Classical Economics to Neo-Liberalism,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 9 (1983): 145-68; “Hegel on Economics and Freedom,” *Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie* 69,2 (1983): 187-215. For an important collection of articles on the subject of merit goods see G. Brennan and L. Lomasky, eds., *Rationality, Individualism and Public Policy* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1990). An alternative account of merit goods that is broadly complementary to the understanding advanced above may be found both in Brennan’s contribution to *ibid.* and in G. Brennan and L. Lomasky, “Institutional Aspects of ‘Merit Goods’ Analysis,” *Finanzarchiv* 41 (1983): 183-206. Several key texts on merit goods are collected in Wilfried Ver Eecke, ed., *An Anthology Regarding Merit Goods: The Unfinished Ethical Revolution in Economic Theory* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2007).
7. Promulgation of anti-smoking measures is common in several countries. A personal favorite is the required warning for cigarettes in Singapore: “Smoking Kills.”
8. This seems to be the best place to anticipate one possible line of objection. Suppose we were to encounter a classically-trained economist—we’ll call this imaginary person “Smith”—who objected to our proposal on the grounds that economists have already rendered the problematic notion of a merit good conceptually superfluous by introducing the better-behaved notion of an economic “externality.” We don’t think that Smith can escape in this way. Here is one way that the argument might go. Suppose we point to some specific instance of a market failure and then claim that that market failure should be labeled as a merit good. Smith will then object, claiming that the market failure in question is due to some externality. To begin with, since Smith refuses to admit merit goods into economic theory, we will assume that Smith believes that all economic goods are exhaustively categorized as either public goods or private goods. (This is a simplifying assumption, as various economists have proposed more robust classificatory schemes. The following argument can, *mutatis mutandis*, cover such theoretical extensions.) Now, since Smith claims that externalities can be adequately handled from within standard economic theory, it seems that the particular externality in question must itself be some sort of economic good. However, the externality cannot be a private good; otherwise, there would be no market failure for us to point to in the first place. Therefore, the externality must be a public good. This means that Smith implicitly holds the position that what we would label merit goods should be reduced to public goods. But, as it turns out, merit goods cannot be reduced to public goods. For, if merit goods are reducible to public goods, then it is either the case that our market failure is due to a failure of will or it is the case that our market failure is due to a failure of knowledge. Smith cannot admit that the market failure is due to a failure of will. This is because criticizing an agent’s failure of will involves advancing a normative critique of either what the agent ought to desire but doesn’t (i.e., the agent is morally misdirected) or what the agent should do but doesn’t (i.e., we have an akratic agent). This is exactly the sort of normative critique that the proposed definition of merit goods recognizes. Nor, for that matter, can Smith admit that the market failure in question is due to a failure of knowledge. For then Smith will be claiming that some economic agent ought to possess additional knowledge. That additional knowledge will constitute an economic good, which on Smith’s position implies that the additional knowledge is itself either a private good or a public good. The required additional knowledge cannot be a public good, for that would make Smith’s argument viciously circular: market failures occur because there are (explanatorily prior) failures in knowledge, and failures in knowledge occur because there are (explanatorily prior) market failures. Nor can the required additional knowledge be a private good, for the relevant additional knowledge clearly is not being desired or supplied by the free market mechanism at a level Smith finds acceptable. Since the additional knowledge that one ought to have can be neither a public good nor a private good, should Smith still wish to claim that economic agents ought to possess some additional knowledge, then this ought is to be interpreted in a normative sense. But Smith’s advancing a normative critique—a critique, let it be noted, endogenous to the science of economics—of the distribution of knowledge in the market would then entail that Smith is treating knowledge as a merit good. Smith’s doing so would in turn imply that Smith admits the legitimacy of the merit good concept in economics—which is what we set to prove.
9. As one anonymous reviewer quite correctly points out, acknowledging the normative dimensions of a concept is not sufficient for engaging in philosophical ethics. The extent to which consideration of merit goods and ethical issues arises within any particular course is, naturally, a function of the aims of the instructor. Within an introductory economics course it may well be that discussion of various merit goods and their ethical implications would be fairly minimal. On the other hand, in more advanced courses in public policy, discussion of the ethical implications of merit goods might conceivably dominate a considerable portion of the course. One factor that may motivate instructors to include a greater representation on the philosophical foundations of these ethical concerns is to provide the students with the necessary tools and skills such that they may appreciate and more accurately judge the entire class of merit goods as an economic category. The reason being that, in this case at least, the more general and abstract the conceptual intention, the wider the extensional illumination cast on pragmatically interesting merit goods.
10. Even the bearing of children has been subject to merit good schemes. Some societies have placed a heavy tax on having children (e.g., China); other societies have developed incentive schemes to encourage couples to have more children (e.g., Singapore’s “Baby Bonus Scheme”). (As of the time of writing, information on the Singapore Baby Bonus Scheme is available at www.babybonus.gov.sg.)
11. There are clear cases of government regulatory interventions that were historically justified by normative considerations rather than, e.g., appeals to increased efficiency. For instance, the public furor generated by Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* led to regulations concerning meat production, the justification being that people simply should not have to put up with the sorts of polluted product then being marketed.
12. For the material discussed in this and the succeeding paragraph see: R. Kenneth Godwin, “Charges for Merit Goods: Third World Family Planning,” *Journal of Public Policy* 11 (1991): 415-29.

- 13 V. Santhakumar: "Inefficiency and Institutional Issues in the Provision of Merit Goods: A Case Study of Public Water Supply in Rural Kerala," Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Working Paper #285, February 1998. Available as of 24 February 2004 at www.cds.edu/download_files/wp285.pdf.
- 14 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ch. 5 "On the other hand, there are questions relating to interference with trade which are essentially questions of liberty; such as the Maine Law, already touched upon; the prohibition of the importation of opium into China; the restriction of the sale of poisons; all cases, in short, where the object of the interference is to make it impossible or difficult to obtain a particular commodity. These interferences are objectionable, not as infringements on the liberty of the producer or seller, but on that of the buyer."
- 15 For evidence that Adam Smith operates with a concept that de facto distinguishes between public goods and merit goods see Wilfried Ver Eecke, "Adam Smith and Musgrave's Concept of Merit Good," *Journal of Socio-Economics* 27 (1998): 133-53

Appendix

Ethics and Economics: Efficiency & Justice

Professor Ver Eecke

Phil 377/527; Econ 252

Classes: TR: 1:15-2:30PM

Office: NN 227. Tel 687-7613

E-mail: Vereckw@Georgetown.edu

Office Hours: M2:30-4:30PM and by appointment

The purpose of the course is to show the systematic connection between the different disciplines analyzing economic reality. Different discourses about the economy concentrate more on one concept than the other. Thus, economic discourse concentrates more on efficiency whereas philosophy and theology concentrate more on justice. I will try to show that one needs to pay attention to both concepts in all discourses. The main thesis is that even in an economic discourse the idea of justice emerges as inherently tied to the concept of efficiency.

Many articles for the class can be found in two books:

Ver Eecke, W., *An Anthology Regarding Merit Goods: The Unfinished Ethical Revolution in Economic Theory* [edited and commentary by Wilfried Ver Eecke]. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007.

Ver Eecke, W. (2008). *Ethical Dimension of Economics: Making Use of Hegel and the Concepts of Public and Merit Goods*. Springer Verlag 2008

These will be referred to below as Ver Eecke, 2007 and Ver Eecke, 2008 respectively. For Ver Eecke, 2007 one can find an easily accessible review on Amazon.com: http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/customer-reviews/1557534284/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_top_002-8358327-6991234?ie=UTF8&n=283155&s=books#customerReviews

I. Introduction: Course Overview and Clarification of Approach

W. Ver Eecke, "Authority in Economics"

Economic Justice for All. Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy (U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986). Chapters 1; 2, 3A-B; 4

Also available at: www.osjspm.org/economic_justice_for_all.aspx

Ver Eecke, 2008, Ch. 10

W. Ver Eecke, "Ethics in Economics: From Classical Economics to Neo-liberalism," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 9, 145-68

Ver Eecke, 2008, Ch. 4

Bator, Francis M., "The Simple Analytics of Welfare Maximization," *American Economic Review* (March 1957), pp. 22-31.

Recommended reading

Mises, Ludwig von, "Economic Calculation and the Socialist Commonwealth," *Collective Economic Planning*. F.A. Hayek, ed. (Clifton: A.M Kelly, 1975) pp. 95-110

Al Hamad, A.Y. (2003). *The Arab World: Performance and Prospects*. In *The Per Jacobson Lecture*. Dubai, United Arab Emirates Washington, D.C. The Per Jacobson Foundation (2003) pp. 5-17.

Ver Eecke, 2007, 576-598

II. Imperfections in the Market

A. Market corrections: Public goods

Wildavsky, Aaron, "Why the Traditional Distinction between Public and Private Goods Should be Abandoned," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 3 (4) (1991): 355-378

Ver Eecke, 2007, 84-113

W. Ver Eecke. "Public Goods: An Ideal Concept," *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 28(3), 39-156

Ver Eecke, 2008, Ch. 6

Recommended reading

Olson, Mancur, Jr: *The Logic of Collective Action*. 2nd ed. (Harvard University Press, 1971) pp.1-16; 132-135; 165-67.

B. Market failures and merit goods

a. Musgrave's introduction of the concept and his many definitions of it

Ver Eecke, 2007, 19-70

b. The commentators of Musgrave's concept of merit good:

McLure, Charles E., Jr., "Merit Wants: A Normatively Empty Box," *Finanzarchiv* 27 (1968), pp. 474-483

Ver Eecke, 2007, 73-83

Mackscheidt, Klaus. "Meritorische Güter: Musgraves Idee und Deren Konsequenzen." *WISU Das Wirtschaftsstudium* 3 (1974): 237-41. (Translated). Cf. Ver Eecke, 2007, 244-252

Folkers, Cay. "Meritorische Güter Als Problem der Normativen Theorie Öffentliche Ausgaben," *Jahrbuch Für Sozialwissenschaft* 25 (1974): 1-29 (Translated).

Ver Eecke, 2007, 253-280

Brennan, Geoffrey, and Loren Lomasky. "Institutional Aspects of 'Merit Goods' Analysis," *Finanzarchiv* 41 (1983): 183-206

Ver Eecke, 2007, 295-319

Paul Burrows, "Efficient Pricing and Government Interference," in Michael Posner (ed.), *Public Expenditure: Allocation between Competing Ends* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 81-93

Ver Eecke, 2007, 281-294

Ver Eecke. "The Concept of Merit Good." *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 27 (1): 133-53

Ver Eecke, 2008, Ch. 5

Recommended reading

Wildavsky, Aaron, "Opportunity Costs and Merit Wants," Ch. 7 of *Speaking Truth to Power*. (Boston: Little, Brown).

III. Philosophy and Political Economy

Rawls, John, "Justice as Fairness," *The Philosophical Review*, 47 (April 1958), pp. 164-194

Sen, A.K., "More than 100 Million Women are Missing," *New York Review of Books*, Dec. 20, 1990, 61-66

Ver Eecke, 2007, 495-507.

Sen, A.K. "Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1977, pp. 317-344

Ver Eecke, W. "Hegel on Economics and Freedom." *Archiv für Rechts und Sozialphilosophie*, 69 (2), 189-215

Ver Eecke, 2008, Ch. 3

Buchanan, James. "Fairness, Hope and Justice" in Roger Skurski, ed., *New Directions in Economic Justice* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

Ver Eecke, 2007, 474-494

Stiglitz, Joseph E. "Whither Reform? Towards a New Agenda for Latin America." Prebisch Lecture delivered at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, Chile, on 26 August 2002

Baier, A. "The Need for More Than Justice" in *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 18-32

Ver Eecke, 2007, 657-673

Recommended reading

Journal Issue devoted to the work of SEN: *Economics and Philosophy*, 2001, vol. 17.

Cristi, F.R., "Hegel and Roman Liberalism" in *History of Political Thought* 5 (1984) pp. 281-94

Nussbaum, M. "Justice for Women" *The New York Review of Books* vol. 39, no. 16, pp. 43-48

Sen, A.K. "Moral Standing of the Market," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 1985, pp. 1-19

Rawls, John, "Concepts of Distributional Equality: Some Reasons for the Maximin Criterion" *American Economic Review* (May 1974), pp. 141-146

Sen, A.K. "Personal Utilities and Public Judgments or What's Wrong with Welfare Economics," *The Economic Journal*, 89 (September 1979), pp. 537-558

IV. Institutions, Culture, and Religion

A. Ethos pattern, political organization and political choice.

Briefs, Goetz A., "The Ethos Problem in the Present Pluralistic Society," *Review of Social Economy* (Dec. 1983), pp. 271-299

Ver Eecke, Wilfried. "A Refundable Tax Credit for Children: Self-interest-based and Morally Based Arguments." *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 25 (3), 383-394

Ver Eecke, 2008, Ch. 8

To be read or to be summarized depending on time:

Olson, Mancur, Jr., "The Political Economy of Comparative Growth Rates" in D.C. Mueller, ed., *The Political Economy of Growth* (Yale University Press, 1983) pp. 7-52

Glendon, Mary Ann, "Rights in Twentieth-Century Constitutions," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 59:1 (Winter 1992) pp. 519-38

Recommended reading

Briefs, G.A., "Marginal Ethics in the Pluralistic Society," *Review of Social Economy* (December 1983) pp. 259-270

Buchanan, J.M., "Public Finance and Public Choice," *National Tax Journal*, 1975, pp. 383-394

Hirschman, A.O. "Where the Montesquieu-Stewart Vision Went Wrong" in his *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 117-128

Bane, Jo Mary and David T. Ellwood. "Is American Business Working for the Poor?" *Harvard Business Review* (September-October) 1991, pp. 2-8

B. Religious ethics and economics

a. The interaction of economics, politics, philosophy and religion according to John Paul II

John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*.

Recommended reading

Essays on Centesimus Annus, *National Review*, Special Supplement, 1991.

W. Ver Eecke. "The Economy and Values," in: *Absolute Values and the Search for the Peace of Mankind Vol. I*. (New York, The Intercultural Foundation Press, 1981) pp. 123-140

Ver Eecke, 2008, Ch. 1.

Byers, David M. *Justice in the Market Place* (Washington, DC.: USCC, 1985).

Weigel, George, ed., *A New Worldly Order: John Paul II on Human Freedom: A 'Centesimus Annus' Reader* (Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1992).

b. Comment on *Economic Justice for All*

W. Ver Eecke, "American Capitalism: A Philosophical Reflection," *Philosophy and Theology*, 3 (2), 105-32

Ver Eecke, 2008, Ch. 7.

Recommended reading

Hollenbach, C., S.J., *Claims in Conflict* (Woodstock Theological Center, 1979) pp. 99-121.

&

B. Douglass, ed., *The Deeper Meaning of Economic Life* (Georgetown University Press, 1987):

(1) B. Douglass, "First Things First: The Letter and the Common Good Tradition," pp. 21-36

(2) J. Langan, S.J. "The American Context of the Bishops' Letter," pp. 1-20

(3) H. Briefs, "The Limits of Scripture: Theological Imperatives and the Economic Reality," pp. 97-117.

c. David Hollenbach on next steps in Catholic social ethics

D. Hollenbach, "Justice as Participation: Public Moral Discourse and the U.S. Economy," in his *Justice, Peace, and Human Rights* (New York: Crossroads, 1988).

d. Other Christian Perspectives on Economic Justice Requirements in the modern world.

J. Philip Wogaman, 1986 *Economics and Ethics: A Christian Inquiry* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), Ch. 1.

e. Justice in other religions.

Seymour Siegel. "A Jewish View of Economic Justice," in *Contemporary Jewish Ethics and Morality*, E.N. Dorff & L.E. Newman, eds. (Oxford University Press, 1995) pp. 336-43

Schedule

- Sept 2: Introduction and overview.
Sept 7: W. Ver Eecke, "Authority in economics"
Sept 9: Economic Justice for All.
Sept 14: W. Ver Eecke, "The Economic Order: A Human, Not a Natural Institution"
Sept 16: Bator, Francis M, "The Simple Analytics of Welfare Maximization"
Sept 21: Wildavsky, Aaron, "Why the Traditional Distinction between Public and Private Goods Should Be Abandoned"
Sept 23: W. Ver Eecke, "Objecting to a Libertarian Attack"
Sept 28: Musgrave's introduction of the concept merit good
Sept 30: Musgrave's many definitions and justifications
Oct 5: Musgrave's many definitions and justifications
Oct 7: McLure, "Merit Wants: A Normatively Empty Box"
Mackscheidt, Klaus. "Meritorische Güter: Musgraves Idee und Deren Konsequenzen." (Translated)
Oct 12: Folkers, Cay, "Meritorische Güter Als Problem der Normativen Theorie Öffentliche Ausgaben." (Translated)
Oct 14: Brennan, Geoffrey, and Loren Lomasky, "Institutional Aspects of 'Merit Goods' Analysis"
Oct 19: Burrows, "Efficient Pricing and Government Interference"
Oct 21: Ver Eecke, "Concept of Merit Good"
Oct 26: Rawls, John, "Justice as Fairness"
Oct 28: Baier, A., "The Need for more than Justice"
Nov 2: Sen, A.K., "More Than 100 Million Women are Missing"
Nov 4: Sen, A.K., "Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory"
Nov 9: Ver Eecke, W., "Ethical Function of the Economy" (on Hegel)
Nov 11: Buchanan, James, "Fairness, Hope and Justice"
Nov 16: Stiglitz, "Whither Reform?"
Nov 18: Briefs, "The Ethos Problem in the Present Pluralistic Society"
Nov 23: Summary of: Olson, M., "The Political Economy of Comparative Growth"
Glendon, M.A., "Rights in the Twentieth-Century Constitutions."
Discussion of: Ver Eecke. "Unjust redistribution in the American system"
Nov 30: John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*
Dec 2: W. Ver Eecke, "Structural Deficiencies in the American System"
Dec 7: Wogaman, *Economics and Ethics: A Christian Inquiry* Siegel, Seymour; "A Jewish View of Economic Justice"

Mechanics of the course:

1. The course will be conducted as a seminar. Sometimes I will summarize the content of the readings. Sometimes questions will be distributed to be discussed in groups and to

be reported back to the class. Most of the time, a student will be assigned to present the reading material. At all times the whole class is expected to be prepared for discussing the material, unless an explicit exception is made. Questions dealing with problems of understanding the material will be dealt with first. Afterwards questions about the validity of the arguments will be addressed.

2. After each section, all students are expected to show their understanding of the material by writing a 4 page (double spaced) paper answering one or more questions about that section. The paper is to be handed in one week after the end of the section. A rewrite is possible for the first paper: For all students, one paper may be replaced by a summary of a topic related to the chapter but not covered in class, e.g., ideas from the recommended reading. Such an option needs to be approved by the teacher.

Graduate or professional students need to present at the end of the course a final paper of 10-15 pages. You may relate some topics covered in the course to your own research area or you may summarize ideas of important authors and relate them to topics treated in the course (Brennan, Rawls, Buchanan, Sen, de Soto, Krugman, Stiglitz) or you may address important issues such as globalization, poverty, the role of international institutions, wealth distribution making use of the ideas discussed in the class. You need to have approval for the topic of your research paper.

For graduate and professional students, the research paper counts for half of the points determining the grade.

3. Class participation and class presentation may count towards the grade. Class absence for a valid reason needs to be explained to the professor:

4. No final exam.

Real Philosophy, Good Teaching and Academic Freedom

Lou Matz
University of the Pacific

In its "Statements on the Profession: The Teaching of Philosophy," the APA exhorts philosophers, philosophy departments, and their institutions to be committed to providing "educational experiences of high quality."¹ To this end, the APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy shares pedagogical best practices, giving faculty and departments new ideas and approaches to teaching philosophy more effectively and to improving philosophy curricula. In certain circumstances, it is not enough, however, to use effective teaching methods; one must persuade one's colleagues and institution that one is, in fact, delivering a quality educational experience. Since teaching skill is determined by others—especially by one's colleagues who are typically the final authorities—how well one teaches is ultimately dependent on the fairness and competence of one's departmental colleagues. If one's colleagues apply unfair or illegitimate standards to judge the quality of instruction, one's teaching skill might not only be misrepresented but one's academic freedom might also be violated. I contend that this is what happened to me when I applied for tenure at Xavier University, and I recommend that the APA add a section on academic freedom to its "Statements on the Profession: The Teaching of Philosophy" to guide departments more clearly and to support those faculty whose pedagogical views might be at odds with those of their department.

In 1992, I began a tenure-track position at Xavier University, a Jesuit-Catholic institution in Cincinnati, Ohio. I appeared to be a good fit for the department since its orientation was primarily historical. My graduate training at the University of California–San Diego was steeped in the history of philosophy and focused primarily on Hegel, Kant, and Plato. I wrote a dissertation on the relationship between freedom and character in Plato's *Republic* and Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. For five years of my graduate study, I was a teaching assistant in a five-quarter "Great Books" writing program.

Xavier's department of philosophy is an undergraduate program whose primary function is to serve general education since all students must take three philosophy courses in this order: Ethics as Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 100), Theory of Knowledge, and an upper-level elective of the student's choice. My teaching load was three courses per semester, and in each semester for seven years, I taught two sections of PHIL 100, which is the first philosophy course that students take and which is taken during their first-year, usually in the first semester. In the university catalogs from 1992–1996, the description of PHIL 100 was the following:

"The goals of human life; the first principle of morality; virtue, duty, law, responsibility. Special emphasis on justice."

In its 1994 program review, the department summarized its description of PHIL 100 as follows:

"In order to insure a common philosophical culture for advanced study at the elective level, each section of the Ethics as Introduction to Philosophy course requires the student to read the *Republic* of Plato and to engage the question of justice."

Finally, there was an addition to the course description in the 1996 university catalog, a year before I applied for tenure.

"The goals of human life; the first principle of morality; virtue, duty, law, responsibility. Special emphasis on justice, along with a treatment of Deontological, Utilitarian and Natural Law/Right theories that are central to contemporary treatments of practical and professional ethics."

PHIL 100 was also part of a sub-core curriculum—titled the "Ethics, Religion, and Society" program (E/RS)—whose purpose was to devote "special attention to ethical issues of social significance" (1996–98 Catalog). The premise of the E/RS program is to teach students how different disciplines—philosophy, theology, and literature—examine ethical issues that are relevant today.

Within the framework of the course description for PHIL 100, faculty were required only to teach Plato's *Republic*; otherwise, it was their discretion to teach whatever primary source material that engaged the subject matter of the course. There was neither a requirement—stated or unstated—to teach any text other than the *Republic* nor a ranking of what course themes were the most important to teach, and faculty approached the course in a wide variety of ways.

In my fourteen semesters of teaching PHIL 100, I regularly varied the readings and issues in the course. Table 1 states by semester the works and the order in which I taught them. In my first semester of teaching PHIL 100, I approached the course in a traditional way by teaching standard ethical works chronologically: Plato's *Republic*, Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and Mill's *Utilitarianism* and *On Liberty*. I assumed that students would have to struggle with

the readings, and I also worried that they might have difficulty appreciating the importance and contemporary relevance of these ethical works. To make the material of the course more accessible and engaging for first-year students—virtually all of whom would not major in philosophy and who would likely not take any other ethics courses in philosophy—I decided to take a different approach. I began the next semester's course with Camus' *The Plague*, a novel that depicts through its characters different philosophical and ethical responses to human suffering. I then followed *The Plague* with Mill's *On Liberty* and *Subjection of Women*. I dropped Utilitarianism altogether (though I reinserted it into my course a few years later) and I made *On Liberty* (along with the *Republic*) a permanent feature of my course for the following reasons: In *On Liberty* Mill states his utilitarian standard and applies it to a variety of significant issues of justice; *On Liberty* is a more complete statement of Mill's ethical thought since it includes the harm principle, which complicates his version of utilitarianism; *On Liberty* includes Mill's most sustained discussion of the virtues; and Mill's defense of liberalism in *On Liberty* makes for a philosophically richer comparison to Plato's *Republic* than Utilitarianism, especially given Plato's famous critique of liberty and equality in Book VIII. *The Subjection of Women* further illustrated the application of Mill's utilitarian principles to issues of sexual equality and provided an opportunity to discuss the appeal to "nature" or "natural" as a standard of morality, which Mill addresses and rejects in the work. During this phase of my teaching of the course (spring 1993 to spring 1995), I included Dostoyevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor" as a challenge to Mill's assumptions about the value of individual liberty.

In the next phase of my teaching of the course (fall 1995 to fall 1996), I dropped *The Plague* and *The Subjection of Women* and began the course with Plato's *Apology* and *Crito* and then had students read Locke's *Second Treatise* and Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" in order to offer students a later version of the treatment of some issues covered in the *Crito*. For example, I wanted students to see how the arguments presented by the Athenian Laws in the *Crito* reappear in Locke yet are developed further; how Locke's notion of a natural moral law, though absent in the *Crito*, has its roots in Plato's *ergon* argument in Book I of the *Republic*; and how morality is related to politics and law since in civil societies legal and political authorities are necessary to interpret and resolve disputes about moral issues that arise in many social contexts. The fourth phase of my teaching of this course (fall 1996–spring 1998) was similar to the third one except that I followed Mill's *On Liberty* with chapters from Singer's *Practical Ethics* on equality for animals, abortion, and euthanasia to extend our examination of issues of justice.

One of my regular pedagogical strategies in PHIL 100 during all of these phases was occasionally to connect the ideas and issues in the readings to contemporary events through newspaper articles in order to show the relevance of philosophy today and to illustrate the abstract principles of the readings with contemporary examples. For the students, the articles were useful supplements to the philosophical readings, and for me the search for articles led me to rethink the ideas in the readings in new ways.

My assignments in PHIL 100 varied but usually consisted of two papers and two exams; or two papers, an examination, and regular quizzes. The papers were always thesis-based and required demonstration of an understanding of the relevant ideas in the primary source readings and a critical assessment of these ideas to demonstrate a capacity for independent analysis. The exams consisted of short-answer essay questions, often comparative. Whenever I used quizzes, they constituted no more than 25 percent of the course grade and were primarily

used to motivate students to read carefully in order to improve the quality of class discussion and to hold them accountable for the readings. In honors sections or in special first-year seminar sections of the course, I also assigned the students class presentations and would meet with each student out of class in preparation for them since the material was often difficult for students on their own.

My colleagues in the department had various other approaches to PHIL 100. For many years, the most senior member of the department taught only Plato's *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, the *Republic*, and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*; later, he added Aquinas and Hobbes. Another colleague regularly taught the *Republic*, Hobbes' *Leviathan*, the *Declaration of Independence*, and selections from Madison in *The Federalist Papers*. Another colleague—my first department chair for three years—often taught only the *Republic* and a few works by Freud. Another member of the department, whom was hired the same year as I, often taught only Plato and Aristotle. Finally, there was a colleague who taught Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Gilligan, and Dewey.

In 1994, the department chair conducted my mid-tenure review. His report was based on student course evaluations and one class visit by a senior faculty member. The report stated that I proved "to be an excellent classroom teacher" and that students were "virtually universal in their high praise." The report emphasized my effectiveness with first-year students, i.e., with students in my PHIL 100 course. It also stated that there was "some concern over matters of pedagogy," but it did not give any specifics, and there was never any follow up. In the summary section of my review, the only area that the chair mentioned as an area of development was to devote less time to committee work and more focus on scholarship. Three years later, in its 1997 tenure evaluation, the department found "serious" problems with the quality of my PHIL 100 course. It claimed that the fundamental problem was that my course was not really about ethics at all but about "political issues, such as the limits on the power of constitutional government." As a result, the department claimed that my course was "not intellectually stimulating because most of it deals with political theses from Locke and Mill that most Americans take for granted anyway. In effect he is confirming the students' prejudices." It also argued that the "superficial" level of my course was evident in the newspaper articles that I would hand out on contemporary social issues such as abortion, doctor-assisted suicide, the equality of animals, and freedom of speech.

The department's tenure evaluation of my teaching was written by the senior member of the department; he based this evaluation on his and his tenured colleagues' written reports of their classroom visits to either my PHIL 100 course or to another one of my courses.

However, this senior member's own report of my teaching was predominant in the department's evaluation for he stated in his report that most of my PHIL 100 course was "not about principles of ethics, but about what we would at best call politics, such as civil disobedience, liberty, women's rights, animal rights, etc.," and he objected to what he believed was my study of "easy issues discussed regularly in the media instead of addressing the fundamental questions, even though they are difficult. So the type of material chosen and the level of difficulty go hand in hand."

As a matter of procedure, faculty in the philosophy department were not able to review the department's (or chair's) tenure evaluation, so I did not learn about its assessment of my PHIL 100 course until I appealed my negative tenure decision. In fact, the only way I obtained the department's tenure evaluation was to get permission from every faculty member to release it to me since the process at Xavier did not require its release without explicit permission of the members of the department.²

Since the main reason for the department's (and chair's) negative tenure evaluation was its evaluation of my teaching, I decided to appeal the decision on the grounds that my academic freedom had been violated both in terms of what I taught and how I taught it. At Xavier, tenure appeals are only done in writing and they are submitted to the same Tenure and Promotion Committee that judges the case in the first place. The defense of my appeal seemed very straightforward. Departments have a right to frame the subject matter of a course, e.g., its central issues, the time period, required readings, etc. Within this framework, however, faculty should have the right to use their professional judgment to teach material that is germane to the subject matter. Xavier presumably adhered to this principle of academic freedom since it included in its Faculty Handbook the classic 1940 AAUP Statement of Principles

Table 1. Works taught by semester in my PHIL 100 course. The numbers indicate the order in which I taught them

| | F92 | S93 | F93 | S94 | F94 | S95 | F95 | S96 | F96 | S97 | F97 | S98 | F98 | S99 |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| <i>Republic</i> | 1 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Apology</i> | | | 4 | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | |
| <i>Crito</i> | | | | 2 | | | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | |
| <i>Euthyphro</i> | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Camus, <i>The Plague</i> | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | 5 | | | | | | |
| <i>On Liberty</i> | 5 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 4 | | |
| <i>Utilitarianism</i> | 4 | | | | | | 4 | | 6 | 7 | | | 4 | 4 |
| <i>Subjection of Women</i> | | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 6 | | | | | | | |
| Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> | | | | | | | | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | | |
| Dworkin on pornography | | | | 6 | | 5 | | | | | | | | |
| Dostoyevsky, "Grand Inquisitor" | | | | | 2 | 2 | | 6 | | | | | | |
| Thoreau, <i>Civil Disobedience</i> | | | | | | | | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | | | |
| Hume, <i>Enquiry Concerning... Morals</i> | 2 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Singer, <i>Practical Ethics</i> | | | | | | | | | | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 2 |
| Kant, "Doctrine of Virtue" | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 | 3 |

on Academic Freedom and Tenure, which states, “teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter that has no relation to their subject.” In PHIL 100, faculty were required to teach only Plato’s Republic; otherwise, they had discretion to assign any primary source readings that dealt with the various issues of the course, especially justice. There were no other stated or unstated guidelines for faculty. The department never defined what “real” ethical issues were, never required the teaching of certain texts over others, and never required that a faculty member examine the most prominent ethical traditions (as was implied in the expanded 1996 course description but which was not, in practice, followed by the department).

My defense was that I adhered to the framework of the course and taught readings and issues that were germane to the course description. The department thus did not have a right to criticize what I taught since the material and issues that I taught had “relation to their subject.” The department thus judged my course by reference to arbitrary and unstated standards and singled me out for teaching “political” works despite the fact that other colleagues who taught the same sort of material were not criticized for doing so. In introducing the distinction it did between its own conception of how the course issues were to be taught and my own (which it tendentiously dubbed “political”), the department subverted my right—and thus my academic freedom—to teach the material in my own way. Although the department claimed that I did not teach within the framework of the course, this was the very point at issue: they claimed my readings and issues were not relevant, and I claimed they were. Academic freedom protects the right of a faculty member to disagree with colleagues and a department so long as the former can make a reasonable case that the readings and themes of a course bear a direct relation to it.

As part of my written appeal, I included a letter from a member of the philosophy department who explained the ideological bias of the department. He pointed out that my sympathy for “applied” ethics—evident in the issues that I taught in my PHIL 100 course as well as in an article that I wrote, solicited by the editor of Xavier’s Alumni magazine, defending doctor-assisted suicide—had diminished the philosophical respect of my colleagues since applied philosophy was considered by them to be “a regrettable devaluation of the discipline.” I also included a supportive letter from an ad hoc committee of Xavier’s AAUP chapter, which I had asked to investigate my tenure decision. The ad hoc committee alleged “that there may have been a bias, a bias rooted in sectarian philosophical differences, that played an important role in the department’s negative evaluation” of my teaching. The committee recognized “the seriousness and potentially divisive nature” of its own conclusion, and stated that it believed my case could have “a chilling effect on academic freedom at Xavier.” Finally, there was another supportive letter from a highly respected senior member of the faculty who expressed concern that the previous two members of the philosophy department whom I succeeded and who presented “differing views were not granted tenure.” He believed that a third denial would look to be more than mere coincidence.

As part of my written appeal, I urged the Tenure and Promotion Committee to seek impartial testimony from philosophers outside of Xavier to judge whether the material that I taught had “relation to the subject” as well as whether my methods, in particular my attempts to apply the ideas in the readings to current events and to use newspaper articles, were pedagogically legitimate. I believed that if I could establish

my interpretation of the course requirements as legitimate or reasonable, then the department’s refusal to grant me tenure would constitute a violation of my academic freedom since I had taught within the framework of the course. In the end, however, the Tenure and Promotion Committee denied my request for external review, and it voted against my appeal without any comment.

My final recourse on campus was to appeal the violation of my academic freedom to a campus Grievance Committee. This time, I presented my case in writing and in person, and the philosophy department did likewise. The department defended its position by citing the Supreme Court case *Keyishian v. Board of Regents*, which affirmed that academic freedom implies the right to teach theories that are in conflict with conventional or “orthodox” views. The department claimed that since it had not required me to present and defend the teaching of Jesuit or other Catholic authors or teach and defend Aristotle or Aquinas, it did not violate my academic freedom. The department argued further that it ultimately had the right to decide what is appropriate in its PHIL 100 course:

Clearly, the department must be the judge of what is appropriate in a required core course, such as the ethics course, and if a teacher persists in teaching something else, e.g., political science or civics, he is quite properly blamed by the department. Matz taught and defended J.S. Mill’s liberalism, as opposed to the views of other philosophers. The department never raised any objection to his opinions about what was true or correct. It stated, however, that if Matz wanted to teach Mill’s thought in an ethics course, he should discuss Mill’s basic ethical treatise, *Utilitarianism*, and not Mill’s political works. The department was dealing, not with Matz’s opinions, orthodox or unorthodox, but with the kinds of problems that ought to be addressed in an ethics course. Clearly this is a matter which the department may and should determine for its members.

Of course, the department did have the right to design PHIL 100 in whatever way it wanted and to have faculty conform to these expectations; however, the only explicit expectations stated for the course were to teach Plato’s Republic and teach primary source material that dealt with the subject matter of the course. The department never identified preferred works to teach, never distinguished between ethical and “political” works, and never explicitly discouraged the teaching of applied ethical issues. So, although it is true that the department never required me to teach only Jesuit or Catholic writers or to teach only Aristotle or Aquinas, it violated my academic freedom in forbidding me from teaching applied ethical problems, such as the rightful limits of social and political power, the moral and legal treatment of women, and the moral status of animals. The department’s interpretation of the appropriate issues or problems of the course was not the sole legitimate one, and since my interpretation was reasonable—indeed, I thought it was mainstream—the department violated my academic freedom in its negative tenure evaluation. I maintain that the department had no authority to settle principled differences of opinion regarding pedagogy since academic freedom is supposed to protect principled differences of opinion. Additionally, the department’s claim that I persisted in defying the official guidelines of the course or departmental advice was simply mistaken. The only time anyone suggested to me that Utilitarianism should be taught instead of *On Liberty* was after the senior member of the department (the one who wrote the departmental evaluation) visited my course in spring 1997, the semester before I applied for tenure. The department had

plenty of opportunity to register a complaint about my course before then, but it never did so. I turned in a syllabus to the chair every semester beginning in the fall of 1992. Moreover, a year or two before I applied for tenure, those who taught PHIL 100 reevaluated the focus of the course by exchanging syllabi and discussing our respective approaches.

The Grievance Committee upheld the department's position. It concluded that regardless of my arguments about the philosophical legitimacy of the issues that I taught in my PHIL 100 course, the department ultimately had the authority to judge. Nonetheless, in the concluding section of its report, the Grievance Committee acknowledged the troublesome implications for academic freedom in the philosophy department. It raised two questions that appeared to support my grievance. It asked, "Does the Philosophy department hold a 'rigid,' and perhaps undesirable, adherence to a homogeneous approach to teaching?" and "Is there a need for more open and collegial intellectual debate regarding teaching and scholarship within this department?" It concluded by urging university officials "to engage the Philosophy Department in a dialogue to explore the possibility of fostering greater academic diversity in teaching"

The Grievance Committee also learned that some philosophy faculty felt administrative pressure to hire me although I did not fit the "profile" of someone that it would normally hire since my philosophical and pedagogical approach was contrary to the "prevailing departmental culture," as "applied techniques in the classroom were and remain contrary to the department's 'norm' of teaching." I was never aware of these circumstances of my hire until I read the Grievance Committee's report.

The defeat of my grievance exhausted all internal processes at Xavier. My final recourse was to bring my case to The American Philosophical Association's Committee for the Defense of the Professional Rights of Philosophers. I believed that, at long last, I might get the independent, external review of my department's judgments that had been wanting throughout the entire grievance process. The allegation that my department had violated my academic freedom in its evaluation of my PHIL 100 course was one of seven allegations that I brought, but I believed it was the strongest. After reviewing these allegations, the APA Committee decided to investigate three allegations that were "especially troubling"; however, to my dismay, the APA dropped my allegation about the PHIL 100 course. Since I do not know how the department responded to the APA, I can only speculate on the reasons the APA did not investigate.

In its "Statement on Procedural Standards in the Renewal or Nonrenewal of Faculty Appointments," the AAUP identifies a standard to judge whether there has been a violation of academic freedom: Did the department give the faculty member "adequate consideration"? It defines this standard in procedural and not substantive terms:

Was the decision conscientiously arrived at? Was all available evidence bearing on the relevant performance of the candidate sought out and considered? Was there adequate deliberation by the department over the import of the evidence in light of the relevant standards?... Was the decision a bona fide exercise of professional academic judgment? These are the kinds of questions suggested by the standard of "adequate consideration."³

Without making explicit reference to it, Xavier's philosophy department and Xavier's Grievance Committee appeared to rely

on such a standard to judge my case. That is, the issue for them was the conscientiousness of the process and not the validity or wisdom of the conclusion. While I do not know the grounds of the APA's assessment of my allegation about PHIL 100, I contend that a purely procedural standard is inadequate. For this allows that even after extensive deliberation, a department of narrow ideologues or a department with a few dominant and influential ideologues who can stifle the dissent of others can still violate a faculty member's academic freedom. Whether a department has given "adequate consideration" to a faculty member thus cannot simply be a matter of rendering "conscientious judgment"; the competence or substance of that judgment, and not merely its process, should also be a condition to protect the academic freedom of faculty against colleagues.

I recommend that the APA add a section on "Academic Freedom," perhaps after the section "Evaluation," in its "Statements on the Profession: The Teaching of Philosophy." The addition should call attention to the importance of academic freedom, identify what the APA takes to be the principles and standard of academic freedom, and describe the relationship between a department's exercise of professional judgment and a faculty member's right of academic freedom. Such a statement might be useful in motivating departments to be more specific in their course descriptions and expectations for faculty and in helping to minimize disputes within a department. I believe that unlike the AAUP's purely procedural standard, the APA should support some substantive elements in its standard of academic freedom and judge on them. Among some of the questions relevant for this expanded standard of academic freedom could be: Are the readings and issues in fact relevant for the course given the course description? Are certain teaching methods in fact legitimate and reasonable? Were the APA to fashion an explicit statement in "Statements on the Profession: The Teaching of Philosophy," it would strengthen its stance that departments should strive to develop "educational experiences of high quality." After all, institutional judgments about the quality of teaching and educational experiences may sometimes be nothing but reflections of ideology.⁴

Endnotes

1. "Statements on the Profession: The Teaching of Philosophy," p. 1.
2. The reader might wonder why the department claimed that issues such as the rightful limits of social and political control over individual liberty, the moral status of animals, the morality of civil disobedience, and moral and legal standing of women were not relevant for a course devoted to justice and ethical issues of social significance. The most influential members of the department hold a "Great Books" view of philosophy: real philosophy takes place only in conversations about the great texts, not in an application of their ideas outside of them. Moreover, the power structure of the department held a rigid Straussian view that the ancient ethical thinkers (Plato, Aristotle) are superior to the modern ones (Mill, Rawls) since, in this view, virtue, not liberty, is the proper focus of ethics and hence anyone sympathetic to political liberalism and moral liberal views is not a serious or real philosopher and teacher. For an account that captures the sensibility of the power structure in Xavier's department, see Richard Rorty, "That Old-Time Philosophy," *The New Republic*, April 4, 1988.
3. "Statement on Procedural Standards in the Renewal or Nonrenewal of Faculty Appointments," AAUP Policy Documents and Reports, Tenth Edition, p. 20.
4. Thanks to Michelle DiGuilio, Richard Ameson, Ed Lee, Bob Gillis, John Sims, Cynthia Dobbs, and the reviewers at the APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy for their comments on earlier drafts. I'd also like to thank those at Xavier who supported me through my experience, especially John Fairfield, Paul Knitter, Stafford Johnson, and Bill Jones.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY ABROAD

Teaching Philosophy in the U.S. and Teaching Philosophy in Israel: A Comparison

Tziporah Kasachkoff

Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel & The Graduate School and University Center, Emerita

For over a decade I taught philosophy in both the United States and in Israel. In the United States I taught at two units of The City University of New York—a community college (the Borough of Manhattan Community College) and a graduate center (The Graduate School and University Center). In Israel I teach philosophy both to undergraduate and graduate students at one of Israel's five state-supported universities (Ben Gurion University of the Negev). The following are my impressions of the differences and similarities between teaching in these two different venues.

As I write down these impressions I have become aware that the differences in my teaching experience in the U.S. and in Israel have, not surprisingly, to do mostly with the various differences between American and Israeli students. As a result, this account may seem to be not so much a report of the differences in teaching experience in the U.S. and Israel as an account of the differences in the student population of these two countries and how this affects one's teaching experience. Furthermore, what I write here should not suggest that my own teaching experience in the U.S. reflects the variety of university teaching experiences that can be had in this country.¹ There is probably as much variation in teaching experience to be found among the various institutions of higher learning in the U.S. as between colleges in this country and those in Israel.

Furthermore, though in my experience most of the differences between teaching philosophy in the U.S. and teaching it in Israel have to do with differences in student population, the nature of the student population figures, as well, in the differences between my teaching philosophy in the U.S. in one of City University's community colleges and teaching it at the Graduate Center of City University. At our community college there are few reading and writing entrance requirements with the result that one finds that one's students' linguistic abilities—reading comprehension, writing abilities, and grammatical expression—vary widely. Many of my community college students, both foreign and American-born, are admitted to the college without linguistic skills adequate to the study of philosophy (or indeed of any subject that requires a great deal of reading and writing). The result is that many students who take philosophy (which in our college is not a required course but can serve to fill one of four required courses in the area of humanities) find both the reading and the writing of assignments too difficult for them. And many of our students—again, both foreign and native-born—have difficulty writing well-formed English sentences and comprehending text-book as opposed to vernacular English. In addition, many of our students' spoken English is often not completely grammatical nor provided nuance by a rich vocabulary. Indeed, the paucity of many students' vocabulary sometimes makes it difficult for these students to fully comprehend lectures and comments if these are not couched in the simplest of terms. (There is some attempt on the part of the college to ameliorate this situation through the requirement of extra classes intended to remedy linguistic deficiencies. There are many success stories to be told in this

regard but, alas, one hears too many other stories that do not fall into this positive category.)

Teaching philosophy to students beset by such linguistic problems requires that one create a course whose readings are manageable by them, a task that is—depending on the level of the students' linguistic abilities as well as the range of abilities represented in any particular class—sometimes more and sometimes less achievable. I find it helpful in the classes where the linguistic deficiencies are widespread to devote, for each required reading, at least half of one class session to showing students how to “read” the text. In this session, we read a section of the required reading aloud, while raising such questions as “What seems to be the problem that the author is addressing?” “Why is that problem seen by the author as a problem?” and “Does the author propose a solution and if so what is it?” Students say they find this reading helpful and I notice that students not in attendance on these “reading” days tend to do more poorly than those who are present. Part of the problem, I believe, is that many of my undergraduate students are simply not in the habit of reading slowly or for enjoyment. They read when they have to but they find their enjoyments in other activities (such as listening to music of various sorts, engaging in sports activities, playing various sorts of video games, and watching television).

On the other hand, my graduate students in the U.S.—self-selected for the study of philosophy and also selected for admission on the basis of graduate school admission requirements—are generally capable of comprehending the required philosophical reading, albeit sometimes with (necessary) help, and of writing and speaking intelligibly and clearly about a given topic, at least after we have covered it in class. A most significant difference between my students who elect to take a graduate degree in philosophy and those in my undergraduate classes is that the former not only enjoy reading generally but also read for enjoyment. And this is especially true for them with respect to material in philosophy (which is not to deny that they do not sometimes find such reading challenging and difficult).

There is no simple contrast between my American students and the students I teach in Israel with respect to the ease with which they read philosophy, their readiness to read it, their comprehension of the philosophical material that they read, and their enjoyment of it. This is so for several reasons. The official language of instruction in Israeli universities is Hebrew. However, as is generally true of the Israeli population at large, about one seventh of my Israeli students are recent immigrants to the country (mostly from what was formerly known as the Soviet Union but also from Ethiopia, Yemen, South America, France, and the United States). All immigrants to Israel have the opportunity to enroll in a free Hebrew-language-immersion course and almost all immigrants do, in fact, enroll in such courses. The result is that everyone understands and can speak sufficiently grammatical Hebrew to get on with daily life, read road and other signs, shop, listen to the radio or television, and (sometimes with difficulty) read the newspaper. (There are weekly newspapers published specially for immigrants that use fairly common terms and that include a glossary of those terms that might not be familiar to newcomers to the language. Though these Hebrew terms are explained in Hebrew, the explanations are in “easy” Hebrew.) There is thus a minimum facility of language—oral, aural, and written—that can be assumed of all of the students in one's class. In addition, since there is no “open admission” to colleges in Israel all students entering college do so on the basis of having passed some examination that tests linguistic as well as reasoning skills. Though some allowance is made on these entrance examinations for students who are

new to the language (as many of them are) a student must be able to comprehend the examination itself, which is written in Hebrew, in order to obtain the minimum grade necessary for admission to an Israeli university. The result is that a certain threshold level of language and reasoning competency can be assumed of every student one finds in one's class. But there is one exception.

The university where I teach (Ben Gurion University) is located in the Negev, the southern desert region of Israel where most of Israel's many Bedouins live. The Bedouins have (as do the Arab Israelis who live in the center and north of Israel) Arabic as their native tongue: they speak Arabic at home and their primary and secondary education takes place in Arabic in schools whose teachers are native Arabic speakers. This means that the Bedouins and other Israeli Arabs who attend Israeli universities receive, as do their immigrant classmates, college instruction in a language that is not native to them. Though Hebrew is the official language of the country and so of the country's universities, it is these students' second, not mother, tongue. But, unlike immigrants to the country, most native-born Bedouins have not studied Hebrew intensively before enrolling in college. The result is that this segment of the student population has greater difficulty reading and greater difficulty comprehending what they read in Hebrew than do their non-Arabic-speaking Israeli counterparts. These difficulties with respect to written Hebrew are generally not echoed by similar difficulties with respect to their oral Hebrew. Students who come from Arabic-speaking homes and have lived most of their lives in Arabic-speaking neighborhoods have also had contact with the wider Hebrew-speaking population of the country, at least for a large part of their adult lives. They therefore comprehend spoken Hebrew both within and outside the academy and their own Hebrew speech does not generally pose any difficulty for classroom participation—at least theoretically. Nevertheless, it is my experience that Arab-Israeli students are more reticent than their non-Arab counterparts about speaking up in class and I have especially to encourage them to make comments, raise questions, and give answers to questions whose answers they clearly know. (The oral reticence of my Arab students may have to do with a lack of confidence in their ability to express themselves in Hebrew in an academic "public" setting. It probably also has to do with their awareness of the poor academic level of their prior schooling relative to the academic rating of the schools of many of their Jewish classmates.)

There is another, related, problem for teaching philosophy to Israeli students, whether Arab or non-Arab, that has little parallel in teaching philosophy in the U.S. Although many philosophical texts can be found in Hebrew translation, most of these are the "classics"—such as the works of Plato, Aristotle, medieval philosophy, Spinoza, Kant, Locke, Hume, and Mill. Other than texts that deal with Jewish philosophy, there are few Hebrew translations of philosophical material that is modern. (The work of Dewey and Ayer are exceptions.) Much of the material that one may want to assign students to read, therefore, can be read by one's students only in a language that is foreign to them. This means that students who do not read English easily—and most Israeli students beginning college fall into this category—must labor long and hard on their reading assignments. Though this is true for both Arab and Jewish Israelis, it is especially true for Arab-Israelis for whom English is not a second but a third language. Often Israeli students rely, if they can afford it, on paid-for translations of philosophical material, translations that, depending on the philosophical sophistication of the translator, vary greatly in their quality. I find that one of the most pressing challenges for me as a philosophy instructor in Israel is to fashion a reading list for my courses

that combines Hebrew material that is relevant to the course with contemporary philosophical material that can, albeit with some effort, be understood by non-English speakers. For some courses this is more easily achievable than for others. In my large lecture classes teaching assistants meet with groups of students to go over material covered in the lecture. I try to have assigned to me only assistants who themselves know English so that students' difficulties with comprehending English material can be addressed by them. To ease the problem of comprehension for seminar or graduate students who do not meet separately with teaching assistants, I have established, in addition to the office hours that I generally keep for each class, a weekly two-hour "reading" session. Students are invited to come to my office where together we read the assigned text in English and then explain the reading in colloquial Hebrew. Because the session is not merely translation but explanation too, the session invariably turns out to be a sort of "mini-class."

(I feel keenly empathetic for students' difficulty in studying philosophy in a language other than their own because, like them, I myself struggle with trying to understand abstruse material written in a language with which I am not completely at home. My native tongue is English but in Israel I must teach, participate in philosophy colloquia, read students' papers, and make written and oral comments in Hebrew. While over the years that I have been teaching in Israel it has become increasingly easier for me to understand, speak, and write in Hebrew, I continue to labor over reading students' Hebrew papers, listening to Hebrew symposia, and participating in philosophical discussions that are conducted in Hebrew. I make a point of letting my students know that we share some of the same struggles with language and I invite the students in my smaller classes to correct my Hebrew when I make grammatical or vocabulary mistakes. I do this both to increase my own opportunities to learn Hebrew and to let the students know that I appreciate, because I share, their difficulty and sometimes their frustration in dealing with philosophical material in a language that is not their own.)

Some other respects of comparison:

- Both in Israel and in America I realize that I am often standing before a class of very tired young people, many of whom have not done the required reading for the class. Both groups of students labor under financial pressures that require them to work while they attend college, some at full-time jobs. And many of my students, both Israeli and American, are heads of families with all that this implies for the time needed to devote to home and children. (Single parenting is still unusual in Israel so more American than Israeli students are beset with the problems associated with combining college and childcare.) The result is that both groups seem to have little time—and as the semester goes on, diminished intellectual energy—to do the assigned readings, much less readings that are recommended but not required.

Additionally, both the Israeli and the American students that I encounter in my classes register for far more classes than they could possibly attend to with concentrated attention. (My American students' financial-aid grants are tied to their taking at least four courses per semester; a course-load that is excessive if they are simultaneously working at a full-time job. My Israeli students must take ten courses per semester (!) if they are to graduate within the standard three years that are allotted for an Israeli BA degree. The reason for this is that, as in the American system, 120 credits are required for the granting of the BA degree but since in Israel each course typically carries only two credits apiece, students must take twenty credits in each of their six college semesters. At two credits per course, this translates to ten courses per semester.² Throughout my teaching both in

Israel and in the States, many of my attempts to develop the intellectual momentum necessary to pursue philosophical ideas in depth have been stymied by the weariness of students whose attention throughout the semester becomes increasingly splintered and diffused over too many academic and other foci. I have found no easy solution to this problem either in the U.S. or in Israel. Last year, after much lobbying of my philosophy colleagues in Israel, I was successful in getting the philosophy department at Ben Gurion University to allow, at the instructor's discretion, the granting of three rather than two credits for each course that it offered so that students could concentrate on fewer philosophy courses each semester. (But the philosophy department at Ben Gurion University remains the only department in the humanities division where this is so. The next project is to get other departments to adopt the same policy so that students at the university can get some relief from the burden of having to take so many courses per semester.)

- Generally speaking, Israeli college students are older than their American counterparts. This is because in Israel there is mandatory military service for men and women when they reach the age of eighteen. Service is currently two and a half years for males and two years for females. So, while American students typically enter college at the age of eighteen, male Israeli students enter when they are nearly twenty-one and women Israeli students enter at the age of twenty. The two-year difference between American and Israeli students is reflected in a greater maturity in the latter group, which maturity is no doubt affected not merely by the two-year interval between high-school and college but also by the fact that these two years are spent in military training and participation in military operations of a rather serious nature. Few of my Israeli students have not experienced danger, extreme political tensions, and military casualties of friends and others first hand. I have found that this affects their appreciation of, readiness to respond to, and readiness to voice their (fairly strong) opinions on patriotism, political tolerance, military ethics, just war theory, medical triage, and the morality of various policies and activities undertaken in the name of national security. Since the courses I teach at Ben Gurion University are predominantly courses in Ethics and Applied Philosophy, this makes for rather lively class discussions, albeit discussions that are not always tempered by calm reflection on possible alternatives to the views that students advance. However, since my Arab students are not conscripted into the army nor are they allowed even to serve in the military, and since many Israeli Arabs have sympathy with the Palestinian cause even if not always with the tactics used to advance that cause, one has always to be sensitive to some students affronting the sensibilities of other students. Issues that we deal with in class having to do with political theory, with national security, with what is morally permissible to do in war or in the name of self-defense, and with political, social, and religious tolerance are issues that are for my students neither abstract nor theoretical but, on the contrary, decidedly practical and even pressing for everyone in the class, be they Jewish or Arab. (Although there are many Christian Arabs living in Israel, and they constitute some part of the student population of the university at which I teach, most of the Arab students I have encountered in my classes are Muslim.) Since Arab students form a small percentage of the general university student population and since their political views are generally wide of both the national mainstream and the Jewish student population, the usual Arab reticence to participate in class discussion is, not surprisingly, exacerbated in classes in which the moral issues of political life are discussed. When teaching in Israel, I am always grappling with the problem of how to encourage Arab students to participate in discussions of political/ethical issues concerning public national policy while

respecting their (highly understandable) reserve in candidly stating their political views.

- My American students are generally respectful of others' expression of their views even if they disagree with those views, be they put forth by me or their classmates or an author we are reading. This is not to say that they won't voice their disagreement, and sometimes voice it in terms that are not especially politic. I sometimes have to remind my American students to respond to opinions that they find wrongheaded in a way that doesn't stifle others' voicing unpopular views—but gentle reminders are all that is necessary for civil discussion to proceed. In Israel, however, students often do not wait for another even to finish his or her sentence before jumping in to voice disagreement, to suggest modifications to what was said, or to dismiss what was said altogether. (Indeed, interrupting others seems to be a national pastime. Israeli television talk-show hosts rarely allow a guest to finish answering a question that the host has asked, and lawyers in courtrooms easily interrupt judges while the judges are talking!) My Israeli students are so much in the habit of interrupting others while they are speaking that rarely does a student get to finish a point he or she is making before being cut off by another student. I myself am interrupted repeatedly while speaking. I have spoken to students about the annoyance of constant interruptions and of how, from an American perspective, the habit of constantly interrupting others appears quite rude. The Israeli student response is almost univocal: they tell me that they themselves do not take offense at being interrupted and see cutting into the conversation of others as participating in the conversation in a way that is "dynamic." They see discussions in which each person waits quietly until the other has finished and only then has his or her turn as stilted and artificial. After many years of hearing this reply from different students in different classes, I accept that Israeli students' interrupting their classmates or me is not meant to be rude and is merely reflective of a cultural pattern that is in evidence everywhere in the country. Still, I find it difficult to conduct a class where continuous interruptions are a constant feature of every discussion. I haven't as yet found a solution with which I am satisfied.

Related to Israeli students' habit of interrupting while others are speaking is their habit of chatting while I or one of their classmates makes a point or asks a question. There is always a "hum" of chatter in the background of every Israeli class. Of course, one finds American students chatting during class as well, but usually my request for quiet is sufficient to bring private conversations between classmates to a close. Israeli students, again much like the Israeli public at large, are not disciplined in this respect. (Israelis often chat with each other during wedding ceremonies, at public lectures, at song concerts, in the theatre, at the cinema, and even at funerals and memorial services. The one exception seems to be orchestral concerts where, during the performance, Israeli audiences are respectfully silent.) I voice my displeasure at the constant chatting in class but I am aware that the students are behaving much as the general public—and even as much of the university faculty—does.

- There is less formality in Israel than there is in America with respect to how I am addressed. My American students almost always request that I address them by their given names (though sometimes there are exceptions). But almost all my American students address me either by my last name preceded by a title (Dr. or Professor) or simply address me as "Professor." (The first day of class I write my first and family name on the board and leave it to students to address me as they wish. None has ever chosen to address me by my first name.) In Israel, students would find it unfriendly to be addressed by their last name, and they find it natural to address their instructors by their first names

as well. I do not have any sense of whether the difference in the way American and Israeli students address me (and their other instructors) makes a difference in the ease of their relations with faculty.

- Both American and Israeli students are concerned—some would say even pre-occupied—with their grades and their grade-point averages. This is understandable given that in both countries a great deal hinges on the grades that students receive. For both American and Israeli students' grades determine financial aid and, depending on other features of a student's college record, sometimes even the ability to continue to take classes. In addition, grades determine the likelihood of receiving scholarship money as well as acceptance into graduate study. I find little difference between American and Israeli students regarding end-of-semester "bargaining" for better grades than the ones they have received. Typically, both groups offer to do extra-credit work, or appeal to what (so they argue) mercy—even if not justice—requires: there were problems at home; there was illness; there was too much material; the material was too difficult; a great deal of effort was expended even if the results were not forthcoming; sacrifices were made for the course; there was loyal attendance; there was class participation; and so on.

In conclusion, I would say that insofar as they exist, the differences between teaching philosophy in the States and teaching it in Israel have more to do with differences that are to be found in the culture at large than with differences that are specific either to the university classroom in general or to the philosophy classroom in particular. This is true with the one exception noted above, namely, the unavailability, in Israel but not in the United States, of contemporary philosophical material in the students' native language.

Endnotes

1. There are a great many colleges in this country, some offering associate degrees that cap a two-year study in the liberal arts with others offering associate degrees for completion of programs of vocational studies of one sort or another. Some colleges offer primarily four-year general liberal arts degrees while others—for example, Carnegie Mellon, The Bernard Baruch School of Business, Stevens Institute of Technology, and the Military Academy at West Point—orient their curricula along lines of specific specialties. In addition, some of our colleges are private while others public, some secular while others religious.
2. On first hearing this, I did not believe it. Upon finding out that it was indeed true, I had a counterexample to the claim that "knowing implies believing."

On Teaching Abroad: The Middle East and China

Eugene Kelly

New York Institute of Technology

The conditions under which Dr. Kasachkoff taught in Israel and the United States are quite different from my own. Most of my teaching has been done at one four-year college in the New York area during the past thirty years. However, that college, the New York Institute of Technology, has entered into joint ventures with colleges and universities abroad, and I have traveled to three of those overseas colleges and have spent or am spending a semester in each. These are NYIT-Amman, Jordan, NYIT-Bahrain, and, where I am located as I write this, Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications (NUPT-NYIT Joint Venture).

My task at each of these college communities is to represent the home faculty of NYIT. I teach, in conjunction with other volunteers from home, and with full-time and adjunct faculty hired from local and international candidates by NYIT or its partner colleges, courses equivalent to those offered on the home campus. The American volunteers, who receive a travel stipend, housing and expenses for food, laundry, and similar necessities in addition to their regular salaries, teach the required courses in the core curriculum or the foundational courses in their major field. My courses are Problems of Philosophy and Ethics and Social Philosophy. The permanent local employees develop program offerings in various majors on both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Students follow the same degree requirements as those on the home campus, and they receive either the NYIT degree upon the completion of their studies, or, in Nanjing, a dual NUPT-NYIT degree. All instruction conducted by NYIT employees is or is supposed to be in English; unlike Dr. Kasachkoff, who lectures in Hebrew, I was not required to conduct classes in Arabic or Chinese. In Jordan and in Bahrain, class size was twenty to thirty-five; the number of men and women students was approximately equal. In Bahrain, most of the women wore the traditional dress and head covering, while in Jordan very few did. Their English in almost all cases was excellent.

The problems and advantages I met with in teaching my Middle Eastern students were quite similar to those of Dr. Kasachkoff: the desire of the students for good grades is an advantage, for they can be motivated to work. However, like Dr. Kasachkoff, and indeed inspired by her, I decided in Bahrain to offer, outside of class time, a slow reading of one of the assigned works. I scheduled these sessions for Saturday morning, when no courses are held. Many students expressed an interest in taking part, but not one showed up for the two sessions. Moreover, I am afraid that in their desire for good grades, many turned to plagiarism and to outright cheating (I found crib notes on the floor after one exam) and, most frequently, into whining and pleading. I came to believe that students considered the use of their energies to get good grades in a straightforward way, as by studying hard, to be in some manner dishonorable. In Jordan, one young woman was outraged when I failed her paper; "Women in Islam," after I found that the entire paper had been pasted together from material on three websites. "I thought you wanted to learn about women in Islam," she said indignantly. "Didn't I give you what you wanted?" She was persistent, and I still have a long e-mail correspondence with her that demonstrates that neither of us was willing to change our attitudes and judgment on the matter. Of course I had explained to the class that the work must be their own, that any material in it that is not their own must be clearly designated as such, and referenced. Yet plagiarism was only one of several problems I encountered.

It was usually not difficult to get a good percentage of the students in the Middle East to discuss material in class with me, and about the same number would discuss the coursework after class or during my office hours. Usually, however, the discussion would tend to lose its focus quickly and reduce to talk about students' everyday experiences, unless I nudged it gently back to the question at hand. One incident in Jordan is worth retelling. Early in the semester, I was having difficulty in one class getting students to respond to my discussion questions. At about that time, a young man appeared who said he was interested in philosophy, and wanted to sit in on the class. Of course, I assented. From the first, he asked interesting and insightful questions about the material, and I engaged in discussion with him. After a few sessions, the discontent in the class was palpable; finally, it broke out in thunder. The oldest student spoke first. "He doesn't belong here. He's not paying

tuition and he is taking time from our instruction!" Others followed with remarks of this kind, while the poor man sat there quietly as he was damned as a pariah. "This man is not taking time from your studies," I thundered back. He's asking good questions about the very material I want you to learn. Which of you has contributed good questions or comments to the class?" A delegation of students went to the dean, and the dean came to me later and, very apologetically, told me that the interloper would have to go. I invited the young man to visit me at my hotel if he wanted to discuss philosophy with me. He called, but he never came. However, during the next class session my students were all full of questions and comments—perhaps trying to make up for having banished that poor enquirer:

The foremost motivation of students to come to these NYIT campuses, insofar as I was able to read their motives, was to get an American degree. One of my students had failed out of the prestigious American University in Lebanon, and was trying an easier course of studies with us. Some of my Bahraini students were Saudis who lived near the Saudi-Bahrain Causeway, and opted to drive to Bahrain (if they were men) for their studies, in part because the atmosphere and the laws in Bahrain are far freer than in Saudi Arabia, and in part, as at least one student told me, because in Bahrain they were separated for a time from their disciplinarian parents and extended families. Most of them came from well-to-do families, else they could not have afforded the tuition and their lifestyles. (The campus in Bahrain was a long block away from a Ferrari dealership, though I do not think any of them were quite that far advanced in their lifestyles yet.) There was something of the spoiled brat or the Saudi Arabian Princess in them, but I found that charming: how different from my students in Old Westbury, NY!

The problem of textbooks could not be effectively solved on any of the three campuses. The bookstores in Jordan and Bahrain at first simply refused to order the texts because, they said, students would not buy them, and the bookstores would have to return them across thousands of miles. Nonetheless, a few copies of the assigned readings for my class were purchased by the bookstores in both Bahrain and Jordan, and many students had photocopies made from them. Alternatively, I photocopied short papers or excerpts from longer works and distributed these to the students (I once asked the class where I could purchase recorded music—CDs—in Amman. They laughed. "No one buys CDs," one said, "we just take music off the web."). In other cases, I imagine, students were unable to get the material at all, and never were able to read the assignments. They therefore had to write their exams based on their memories of the class sessions, or learn to cheat cleverly and effectively.

Counter to my expectations, the free exploration of controversial topics rarely upset my students, the great majority of whom were Arab Muslims, mostly Sunnis, but with a few Coptic Christians among them. Many seemed quite fundamentalist in their religious beliefs, and would bristle a bit at some of the ideas I would introduce, but I never encountered any ire, only incredulity at times. "Why are you asking these questions?" one student asked. (In this case, Aristotle's question of being as being or, more simply and preliminarily, "What exists, and what is it for it to exist?") "Those questions are answered by (our) religion." "Why not question our beliefs?" another student interjected. "Didn't the Prophet ask the people, 'why do you believe in these idols? He too wanted to get people thinking about what they believe in.'" Yes, indeed.

My situation in Nanjing is entirely different from that in the Middle East. I teach two sections of Problems of Philosophy to a total audience of 320 students. Each class meets twice a week for two fifty-minute sections, so I am in class eight hours each

week. The students meet in smaller groups for discussion with my Chinese assistant and colleague, Xuetai Qi, who consults with me regularly. He tells me, among other things, that I talk too rapidly, that most of the students find what I am teaching to be incomprehensible or merely irrelevant, and that I should not try to teach Euthyphro, as students find all talk of religion useless. (He teaches a course on Maoism, which, perhaps, students find closer to their hearts and minds.) Later, one of my students asked, "Do all the students at NYIT in America have to take philosophy?" (Almost all do, but I caught the negative point of the question.) A bit discouraged by such critical and skeptical remarks and attitudes, whose authenticity I do not doubt, I try to rethink what I am going to do in order to give earned grades and three college credits to 320 people at the end of the semester.

The language barrier Chinese/English/Chinese is quite formidable. The difficulty in oral and written communication is far worse than what I encountered in the Arab world. So in China I have taken to lecturing from my own introductory textbook while I have the words projected on a screen from a file on my laptop. I cannot always hear the responses of students in the large hall, so I asked for a wireless microphone that I can bring to students as I walk about the class. They do not have the textbooks, but the university has given them a general introduction to Western philosophy by a Chinese scholar. I cannot read it, but I asked Professor Qi to give me a picture of what is in it. As he described it, the book seems like a sound introduction, with much overlap with the material used in my own text. Perhaps because of their difficulties in speaking English, students are generally unwilling to talk in class. To illustrate this problem: Once, when I ate alone at a local restaurant, the son of the restaurant owner turned out to be one of my students. He introduced himself when I was leaving refused to take payment for my meal, and walked me home while chatting with me. So great was his nervousness at his difficulties in English, he was literally shaking as he spoke, and seemed very glad that the walk home was not far. To encourage such students to speak in class, I have decided to follow a suggestion from Nicholas Bloom, a colleague at home, and give an initialed card to every student who asks a decent question or responds well to one of my own. The students will collect them and turn them in at the end of the course for credit in class participation (getting to know them personally is difficult; one has, after all, no other introduction than 320 Chinese names, written in Pinyin, on a roster). I write, "Go slowly" on the chalkboard to remind myself to speak slowly. I have not given up Euthyphro, but read it with the class as a human conflict, as the question of whether Euthyphro was justified in bringing charges against his father; based on an analysis of his position, to which questions of religion are secondary. After all, Euthyphro could have argued, if religion had meant nothing to him, for the thesis that a good citizen (one who pleases or obeys or serves the people or the Party or the Emperor) is one who would prosecute his father in this case. What troubles me (among many other things) is that my assistant may be right in his belief that Chinese students are simply incapable of entering imaginatively into foreign cultural spaces. Perhaps this is so; perhaps I will soon find out.

I concluded my first day of lecturing in Nanjing with Aristotle's notion that all philosophy begins in wonder. And isn't it wondrous, I said, that we are here, alive—the only creatures we know of who are aware of their existence, and wonder about it. And isn't it also wondrous that you of China and I of the United States are here together to discuss great and universal human questions? Wondrous that we are given a time and a place to work together, to develop cordial relations between our two nations and two colleges, and to enhance each other's

knowledge and understanding and good will? I am very happy to be here! I will try to learn from you, and I hope, when we are done, that you will feel that we have had a wonderful journey together. They all broke out in spontaneous applause, and I went home happy that night.

Postscript. The semester is over, it is Christmas Day 2007, and I leave China in two days. Students, faculty, and staff could not have been more cordial and helpful during these three months. Neighboring institutions—the University of Nanjing and the Philosophy Institute in Shanghai—invited me to lecture while I was here. I met regularly with American and Chinese faculty to discuss teaching. Young students (almost all were eighteen-year-old freshmen, as I soon found out) and graduate students met with me alone or in groups to discuss philosophy, or life, or politics. I cannot agree, now that I have run through ideas in Plato, Kant, Darwin, Sartre, and others, that students are unable to enter imaginatively into foreign cultural and intellectual spaces. Their papers and examinations showed otherwise.

Students in my class were given the following assignments. They wrote two short papers at home on topics concerning the material we were discussing. Students who turned in one, two, or three of the slips of paper I gave them for speaking in class were given grades for class participation of A-, A, or A+ for one, two, and three slips; students who remained just faces were given a pass. The final examination was in two parts: a one-hour essay exam and a one-hour short-answer exam on the two last Saturdays of the semester respectively. Requiring the essays earlier made it possible for me to grade them before the semester was over. Reading 322 (as it turned out) handwritten essays was a daunting job. Student aides graded the short-answer exam. The written English was far better than the spoken English was, though there were many students whose knowledge of English was such that they should not have been selected for this program.

This lack of English skills, rather than a wish for good grades, led to some cheating, but more frequently it led to memorizing long passages related to some aspect of an exam topic (I had given them a list of topics for the examination, but not, of course, the questions themselves) and then spewing it out on the Chinese equivalent to a blue book. This tactic resulted in answers that were often not relevant to the question. On a few occasions, I received homework essays that made absolutely no sense to me as English. On questioning, one student who had turned in such an essay admitted that he had cut material on his topic from an on-line Chinese textbook, pasted it into an on-line Chinese/English translation program, and gave me a printout of the results. (I tried one of these programs myself: in order to keep from getting lost at the Nanjing railroad station, I typed into one of these programs the simple English sentence, “Where is the train to Shanghai?” and printed out the result. Professor Qi later told me that it made no sense in Chinese.) Two students who were caught cheating wept, and were told to write a letter of apology to me—an attitude quite different from the indignation of my Arab students and the indifference of their administration.

Did I give the students something of value—at least as much value as I received from them? I think so, but as we all may tell ourselves after such a new and stressful experience with an uncertain outcome: “If I had it to do over another time, I would do much, much better!”

Sketches from a Lecturer’s Notebook, Johannesburg

David B. Martens

University of the Witwatersrand

Let me try to give you some sense of what it is like for me to teach philosophy at my university in South Africa rather than at a university in North America. If I succeed, then you might be tempted to try to imagine what it would be like for you to teach philosophy in a developing country (if you have not already) or to compare notes with me (if you have).¹

But first let me be clear about my approach. This is not a social science article. So I will not speculate about causes and remedies for South Africa’s difficult social problems beyond stating the obvious, that apartheid had a causal role and higher education surely must have a remedial role.² My own experiences really are far too limited even to support generalizations, say, about what it is like for anyone to teach philosophy anywhere in South Africa. Nor is this a philosophy article. I will not argue for any thesis about how philosophy ought to be taught in South Africa, though no doubt some of my predilections will be plain enough. Nor is this an article on pedagogy. Contrary to what you might expect, I think nothing very much within my classrooms marks them out as being in Johannesburg rather than, say, Atlanta or Toronto. What it is like for me to teach philosophy here rather than there is largely determined by differences of external contexts. Really this article is a memoir about some particular recent events in my life as a teacher. If my anecdotes and remarks are apt, then you will gain some sense of what it is like for me to teach philosophy here now.

* * *

Skeptical questions were asked when I accepted an ongoing lecturing position at the University of the Witwatersrand.

A colleague in the U.S.A.: “But Dave...South Africa?” An aunt in Canada: “Johannesburg, South Africa? Why?”

I suppose some people were doubtful in view of South Africa’s well-known social problems.³ But I had read and been very impressed by the founding provisions and bill of rights included in South Africa’s post-apartheid constitution.⁴ And I knew that South Africa produced good philosophers.⁵ It stood to reason that South Africa was a good place to teach philosophy. And so it is.

* * *

The voice on the phone seemed thin with stress.

“Doctor Martens, do you know when the deferred will be for philosophy? I’ve been to the clinic and they said I have tonsillitis and I mustn’t write the exam tomorrow. And I will be overseas in January. Is it true that you can’t pass the course unless you get at least forty-five on the exam?”

I couldn’t remember the rules about deferreds. So I put down my office phone and went to ask the department secretary.

“The date for the deferred has not yet been determined,” I reported on my return. “But you must apply at the faculty office within three days if you miss the exam because of illness.”

I paused and thought of jacarandas.

“And yes the subminimum requirement for the course is 45 percent on the exam. All the course requirements are on the pink sheet.”

Lore has it that you will fail your exams if the jacarandas bloom before you start studying. “A harsh maxim,” I thought. But

I hung up the phone before recalling the other bit of jacaranda lore, that you will pass your exams if you are struck by a falling blossom. “Should have recommended a walk by the library lawns,” I thought.

My students are flesh and blood embodiments of South Africa’s extremes and complexities—extremes of high and low income, and of good and poor educational preparation, for example, and complexities of diverse languages, histories, and cultures.⁶ My colleagues in the Wits philosophy department are diverse, too, originating in Canada, Israel, South Africa, Sweden, the U.S.A., and Zimbabwe.⁷ Our department offers instruction in philosophy from a broadly analytic perspective at all levels from first-year undergraduate through doctoral postgraduate.⁸ We teach, learn, and live within a system that paradoxically is undergoing fundamental changes at all levels while at the same time remaining quite bureaucratic.⁹ But we make a plan.¹⁰ It is not unlikely that the stressed student on the phone did pass the course in the end.¹¹

* * *

One day in my first semester at Wits I stood in front of a first-year tutorial group of students of whom none had done any of the assigned reading. For a moment I felt like I hadn’t left North America. I gathered my thoughts to give my students a sketch of the reading as a basis for discussion. But perhaps I had a puzzled expression on my face as I was about to begin. One of my students piped up glumly, “We’re the slow group.”

In some key respects I found the undergraduate philosophy major program at Wits to be similar to some programs I had encountered in Canada.¹² But some teaching practices at Wits did take some getting used to.

For example, the philosophy department’s practice when I arrived was to “stream” incoming first-year students on the basis of their high-school marks. Incoming students whose high-school marks fell below a certain level were put in a “foundational” introduction-to-philosophy course (with more critical reasoning and writing) while those whose high-school marks were higher were put in the “regular” introduction-to-philosophy course (with more reading of primary texts). Students in each course were then grouped in tutorials for that course with other students with similar high-school marks.¹³

From the outset I took a very dim view of streaming and I took my student’s glum remark to confirm my view.¹⁴ “We’re the slow group,” the student said. And, in fact, that was the tutorial in the foundational course comprising the students with the lowest high-school marks. The students seemed to have adjusted their view of themselves to match what they took to be the university’s view of them.¹⁵

I think my opposition to streaming might be slower to jell now. But circumstances have changed rapidly in any case. The university changed its admission criteria and procedures so students admitted now are better prepared on the whole. At the same time somehow the number of students entering first-year philosophy rose dramatically. And the university shifted its strategic goals to put a greater emphasis on research.¹⁶ So incoming first-year philosophy students now are not streamed as they previously were. Students who do need extra help are still provided with academic development opportunities in the form of weekly review sessions in addition to lecturers’ and tutors’ regular consultation hours. But students are not obligated to attend those review sessions provided they maintain passing grades on their term work.¹⁷

* * *

It was a hot day and traffic was moving slowly. So the taxi driver turned under the overarching shade trees of a residential side street. We were taking the long way around. But the meter was not running and the driver knew that I knew the fare.

I had not been to this neighborhood before. It was not unusual that the houses were mostly hidden behind perimeter security walls topped with razor and high-voltage wires. Nor was it unusual that uniformed private street guards patrolled the public sidewalks. But substantial wealth was evident from the size of the security walls and from the automatic weapons carried by the street guards.

“Very rich people,” the driver said. “Money like dust.”

I thought of the people who come out onto the city streets early in the morning pulling their trolleys to scavenge for recyclables. Many people at my university likely are unaware that under a bridge only a few steps from our perimeter security fence is an unnamed but long-standing informal settlement of migrant squatters.¹⁸

Still under the overarching shade trees, the driver drew my attention to a house belonging to a prominent political figure.

“They say that one is going to be president,” I remarked. “A very popular leader; the newspapers say.”

“The party doesn’t want that one to be president,” the driver replied.

“You mean the old people who run the party want someone else?” I asked rhetorically. “But that’s the leader the young people want. And the young people are the country’s future, aren’t they?”

I knew it was foolish for a foreigner to pretend to understand South African politics. But I thought a bromide could do no worse than be uninteresting.

The driver silently turned the taxi from the shady side street onto a busy main road again. When the turn was completed safely, the driver pointed to a car we were overtaking in the adjacent lane.

“See that old car?” came the question. “Still in perfect condition. Very well maintained.” There was a pause. “Young people don’t take care of their cars.”

I could see that I had been out-argued and sorted out.

But as I now write this, only a few days have passed since that prominent political figure was elected president of the party despite the taxi driver’s argument. It seems likely that the direction of South Africa’s development will change and that there will be implications for higher education in South Africa. There may be implications, too, for the way I teach philosophy at my university.

* * *

The dentist poked gently in my mouth with what looked like a small flashlight attached to a long cable. I had never seen such a device used by any dentist in North America, but I guessed it was a video camera of some sort. The dentist’s assistant briefly poked the side of my jaw with another small device.

When the poking was finished, the dentist turned my chair and drew my attention to the images on a computer monitor on a side table, color video images of my teeth. The dentist pointed to the clearly visible place where my lost filling had been. Then a key was pressed and different images appeared on the screen, black and white x-ray images.

“That’s impressive equipment,” I said. It was very cool.

“In deepest darkest Africa, you mean?” the dentist asked skeptically.

“I hadn’t heard that expression before I came here,” I said, and I hadn’t. But I’ve heard it more than a few times here. I think

my North American accent makes some people wonder, “Why is he here when so many have left?”

Didn’t I hear similarly skeptical questions in North America before I came here three years ago?

I think such skepticism is mainly due to certain attitudes—diffidence on one side and ignorance on the other—that can understandably follow a failure to keep the full range of relevant facts in view. South Africa undeniably faces difficult problems. But it is no secret that South Africa possesses great strengths of mind, will, and character.¹⁹

Ignorance of global affairs often seems resident in the developed world. One well-known and otherwise useful reputational ranking of philosophy departments touts itself as covering “the English-speaking world.” Actually, that ranking covers only Britain and four of its wealthiest ex-colonies and omits the four dozen other English-speaking countries in the Commonwealth of Nations, for example, with their billion-plus citizens and thousands of universities.²⁰ International professional opportunities seem to be much greater yet for academics fluent also in other languages. Most of the world’s roughly seven billion people and ten- or twenty-odd thousand universities are outside the English-speaking world.²¹ And despite their great wealth, Britain and those four ex-colonies have fewer than half of the world’s top four hundred universities on one well-known ranking. South Africa, by the way, has two universities in the top four hundred.

* * *

The always delightful university choir left the stage still singing²² Then the congregation was constituted, the graduands and guests were welcomed, and a convocation speech was delivered. Then conferment of degrees began. At some point a tall thin student stood at one side of the stage while the dean announced that the student’s degree was conferred with distinction. The congregation applauded politely and the student smiled nervously but did not move. The dean announced that the student had received an award. The vice-chancellor smiled and nodded approvingly and with evident pride for the student. The dean announced that the student had received a second award. And a third. And.... By the time the dean finished announcing the student’s many awards and the student began walking across the stage to be capped by the chancellor; the vice-chancellor’s nodding smile had broadened to a rocking grin and all the on-stage officials had joined the whistling and ululating congregation in applauding the student.²³

South Africa, it is said, is an emerging economy, an emerging power, an emerging democracy. Similar things are said about some other countries, too, though it is not always clear whether anything very precise is meant. I suppose South Africa is viewed as being in a time and a process of change, with a desire and an expectation neither unreasonable nor guaranteed that the changes will be for the better on the whole and in the longer term. If South Africa truly is emerging in that sense, then uncertainty and hopefulness are both understandable attitudes. But one might simply prefer to dwell on the grounds for hope, while yet acknowledging with open eyes the caveat that “everyone in this society must accept the status of being emergent.”²⁴

* * *

This morning was cool, with only light rain. So I opened my umbrella and set out walking to the university instead of riding the Metrobus. Along the way a billboard displayed a message from one of the city’s many newspapers. “Enough talk. Break it. Or build it. You choose.”²⁵

Endnotes

1. For precision, let the developed world be the World Bank’s upper income group of countries and let developing countries be those not in the developed world. See World Bank, *World Development Indicators, 2007* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2007).
2. It is uncontroversial that the post-apartheid role of South African higher education is “to forge a new identity as nonracist, nonsexist institutions”; “to address and respond to the development needs of a democratic South Africa”; and “to produce through research and teaching-learning programs the knowledge and human resources that will enable South Africa to engage with and participate in a highly competitive global economy.” See Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela, “South African Higher Education: Emergent Issues and Debates,” *International Higher Education* 12 (Summer 1998): 14-15, and Saleem Badat, “South African Higher Education: The Challenge of Change,” *International Higher Education* 15 (Spring 1999): 19-20. Quotations above are from Mabokela, p. 15, and Badat, p. 19.
3. The complexity of South Africa’s difficulties is suggested already by a quick statistical comparison with China (another developing country) and Israel (a developed country).
 - Income class and per capita income: South Africa, upper middle income, US\$13,300; China, lower middle income, US\$7,700; Israel, upper income, US\$26,800
 - Unemployment rate: South Africa, 25.5%; China, 4.2%; Israel, 8.3%
 - Poverty rate: South Africa, 50%; China, 10%; Israel, 21.6%
 - Gini index: South Africa, 59.3; China, 44; Israel, 38.6
 - HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate: South Africa, 21.5%; China, 0.1%; Israel, 0.1%.
 - Life expectancy at birth: South Africa, 42.45 years; China, 72.88 years; Israel, 79.59 years.
 - Largest ethnic group: South Africa, black African, 79%; China, Han Chinese, 91.9%; Israel, Jewish, 76.4%.Evidently South Africa provides a healthy income for its citizens collectively, but distributes very unequally that income, the goods the income buys, and the jobs producing the income, with the consequence that very many South Africans have very poor life prospects. Country income classes here are from World Bank, *World Development Indicators, 2007*. Statistics are from Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook, 2007*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (accessed 12 November 2007).
4. See chapter 1 and chapter 2 of Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996, amended), <http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/> (accessed 31 December 2007). That constitution includes non-racialism and non-sexism among the values explicitly enumerated in its founding provisions and includes sexual orientation among the grounds of discrimination explicitly prohibited by the equality provisions in its bill of rights. In keeping with South Africans’ constitutional values of non-racialism and non-sexism, the text of the present article omits all reference to individuals’ ethnicity and gender (besides my own). Readers are invited to consider how that omission affects their sense of what it is like for me to teach philosophy at my university in South Africa rather than at a university in North America.
5. Philosophers produced in South Africa who hold or have held positions at North American universities include, for example, Anne Bezuidenhout, J.N. Findlay, Debra Nails, and Michael Pendlebury. For general discussions of philosophy in South Africa, see Pieter Duvenage, “Is There a South African Philosophical Tradition?” *APA Newsletter on International Cooperation* 01 (Fall 2001): 112-17, and Maboko P. More, “Philosophy in South Africa Under and After Apartheid,” in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, edited by Kwasi Wiredu (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 149-60. The Philosophical Society of Southern Africa has its

homepage at <http://www.phil.ac.za/> (accessed 1 January 2008).

6. Wits is a large, public, urban university that annually enrolls roughly twenty-five thousand students, more than 60 percent of whom are black. The proportion of philosophy students who are black is lower, ranging from roughly 40 percent in first-year to about 14 percent in third-year in 2007. Students from materially less well-off backgrounds might be drawn more strongly to such majors as commerce, law, and engineering. Instruction is in English at some of South Africa's twenty-odd universities including mine and in Afrikaans at others. In 2005 I surveyed the twenty-three students in one of my undergraduate classes and discovered that my students were collectively fluent in all of South Africa's eleven official languages (Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu). My students knew nine other languages, too (Arabic, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Malayam, Portuguese, Spanish, and Yoruba). There were no monolingual students but English was the only language known by every student in the class.
7. In 2007 my department colleagues comprised a department secretary, five work-study office assistants, a post-doctoral fellow, three part-time teaching staff, six full-time teaching staff, and thirteen postgraduate tutors. As I now write this, my Swedish colleague has left Wits and a South African replacement has been hired.
8. In 2007 I co-taught a first-year introduction-to-philosophy course with two hundred thirty-seven students and a second-year philosophy of mind course with seventy-five students, taught a third-year philosophy of language course with twenty-two students and a postgraduate metaphysics course with nine students, supervised six honors and masters students, wrote comments on a draft doctoral thesis, and served as external examiner for several undergraduate courses at another university. There were research, administration, and service activities, too.
9. For a summary description of South Africa's higher education system, see International Association of Universities, *World Higher Education Database*, 2006/7, 9th ed. (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), or Association of African Universities and International Association of Universities, *Guide to Higher Education in Africa*, 3rd ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). For overviews of some of the fundamental and ongoing changes initiated in South Africa's higher education system in the past decade, see the articles by Badat and Mabokela mentioned in note 2 above, as well as Kader Asmal, "Knowledge Is Not a Product To Be Bought or Sold: A South African Perspective," *International Higher Education* 34 (Winter 2004): 2-3; David Cooper, "The South African National Plan for Higher Education," *International Higher Education* 25 (Fall 2001): 7-9; Martin Hall and Ashley Symes, "South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy: From Cooperative Governance to Conditional Autonomy," *Studies in Higher Education* 30 (2005): 199-212; Charlton Koen, "Moving Toward Uncertainty: Higher Education Restructuring in South Africa," *International Higher Education* 32 (Summer 2003): 12-13; and Joseph Stetar, "The Future of South African Research Universities," *International Higher Education* 19 (Spring 2000): 22-23.
10. "We make a plan. Ons maak 'n plan." The literal sense of this common South African saying is that we "devise a way of doing something, esp. of overcoming some difficulty." (Penny Silva et al., eds., *A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1996], 436) It seems to me that this saying is commonly used as a maxim reflecting South Africans' collective resilience and resourcefulness in coping with difficulties as they arise in changing and complex circumstances. Ways of responding to particular difficulties are negotiated, implemented, and discarded as required by circumstances, on the spot and on the fly. To ask after the fact, "What is the plan?" is to badly misunderstand the maxim, I would say.
11. For a true-to-life fictional account of urban university student culture in South Africa, see Niq Mhlongo, *Dog Eat Dog* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2004). For a penetrating critical perspective, see Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like: Selected Writings*, edited by Aelred Stubbs (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).
12. Our undergraduate major program leads to a three-year BA and each undergraduate course usually involves some combination of both lecture and tutorial instruction. Though we teach philosophy from a broadly analytic perspective, our courses increasingly include specifically African topics (such as ubuntu ethics) and authors (such as Kwasi Wiredu).
13. It was thought that the benefits of this practice (higher pass rates among students with poorer academic preparation, redress for past injustices) outweighed its costs (especially the time and effort to administer it and to implement it pedagogically).
14. Another practice that took some getting used to is the relatively high degree of collective oversight of course content and marking. For each course, the course outline, assignments, exam questions, and marks are subject to review and perhaps suggestions for changes by at least one department faculty member other than the faculty member teaching the course. For most courses, a faculty member from another university also reviews and perhaps suggests changes to the course's content and marks. It is thought that this system of collective oversight produces benefits (stability and quality of curriculum and assessment standards) that outweigh its costs (duplication of time and effort, interference with individual autonomy).
15. Actually that group's academic performance was not that bad, as I recall. Motivation was often a problem, mainly because of low self-assessments, I think. And writing was often a problem when English was a student's second or third or fourth language. But those are both fixable problems.
16. Changes made by the university were associated with changes in the broader higher education system. See the references in note 9 above.
17. On the whole my undergraduate students' academic performance now compares well, I suspect, to what one might expect of students at American universities whose positions in the THES-QS world rankings flank Wits's position. Those American universities include, for example, the Universities of Alabama, California Riverside, Kansas, and Tennessee. See Times Higher Education Supplement and Quacquarelli Symonds, "THES-QS World University Rankings, 2007," <http://www.topuniversities.com/> (accessed 6 December 2007).
18. Israel Nkate. "Broken Dreams Under a Bridge," *Sowetan*, 26 November 2007, p. 12. An informal settlement is "one erected in an unregulated and unplanned manner on unproclaimed land, with no infrastructure provided by the local authority" (Silva et al., p. 314). Close to 10 percent of South Africa's population lives in informal settlements, where conditions mostly are very bad. See Robin Richards, Brian O'Leary, and Kingstone Mutsonziwa, "Measuring Quality of Life in Informal Settlements in South Africa," *Social Indicators Research* 81 (2007): 375-88.
19. Measures of those strengths are not hard to find. South Africa has so far produced ten Nobel Prize winners including four for Peace and the dismantling of apartheid. And South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1995-1998) and national constitution (1996) are global benchmarks. For extensive popular lists of South African achievements, see Brett Bowes and Stuart Pennington, *South Africa: The Good News and South Africa: More Good News* (Hyde Park, South Africa: South Africa—The Good News, 2003) and *South Africa: The Good News* homepage, <http://www.sagoodnews.co.za> (accessed 10 December 2007).
20. Commonwealth Secretariat homepage, <http://www.thecommonwealth.org> (accessed 6 December 2007);

Association of Commonwealth Universities, *Commonwealth Universities Yearbook, 2007: A Directory to the Universities of the Commonwealth and the Handbook of their Association*, 81st ed. (London: Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2007); and James Murray, ed., *American Universities and Colleges*, 16th ed. (New York and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001).

21. International Association of Universities, *International Handbook of Universities*, 19th ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), and International Association of Universities, *World List of Universities and Other Institutions of Higher Education*, 25th ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
22. The sketch in this paragraph likely is a composite of memory-fragments of more than one of the convocations I attended in 2007.
23. The best students at South African universities are among the best globally. Each of South Africa's two universities in the world's top four hundred, for example, has produced four Nobel Prize winners and many Rhodes Scholars.
24. Mbongisi Dyantyi. "Talkback," *Vuvuzela*, 28 September 2007, p. 4. The present article is an initial response to Dyantyi's article.
25. Billboard advertisement on Empire Road in Johannesburg for City Press (viewed 9 December 2007). I am grateful to Mbongisi Dyantyi, Tziporah Kasachkoff, Eugene Kelly, Penelope Levitt, and Brian Penrose for helpful comments and to Dyantyi for drawing my attention to Biko.

BOOK REVIEWS

Tracking the Meaning of Life: A Philosophical Journey

Yuval Lurie (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006). 337 pp., \$49.95

Reviewed by Eugene Kelly
New York Institute of Technology

George Santayana once remarked that he did not know why men turn to mysticism when the world of experience is so full of items that beg for careful examination. The mind that rests content with an exploration of the material world will be sufficiently joyful in the light of the demonstrable truths found by science, and we will never want for new things to discover and examine. Each day in our laboratories we may push the horizons of our knowledge back a few steps towards the unknown, achieve new understanding, unveil current beliefs as errors, and return home secure in the belief that more is still to do. For all the lack of mysticism in science, there may be no lack of reverence for the whole framework of nature as we inquire into it; each new discovery may send our imagination reverentially toward whatever new wonders may appear upon the horizon tomorrow.

No doubt, the choice posed by Santayana seems forced. Must one be either a mystic or a scientist in one's basic tenor; that is, be in one's aims either a seeker after the noumenal, or an explorer of the phenomenal? The former seeks something of ultimate value, yet he is grasping after the ineffable and perhaps non-existent foundation of life beyond life. The latter seeks something less: real but nonetheless partial lucidity, and comprehensive but nonetheless forever incomplete understanding. To Santayana, the latter undertaking is wisdom, the former a forgivable foolishness. Is there no alternative

between mystical religion and scientific naturalism? Are, then, the discovery of truth about things and, perhaps, an uncommitted reverence for the being of the beings into which we enquire, their own rewards and the only possible wisdom for humankind?

When one poses the question of the meaning of life, as does Yuval Lurie in the book at hand, the alternative between science and mystical faith may take on a different appearance. The fundamental dichotomy seems to remain for him, and the choice between them is still stark and forced, but we are looking not for the truth about the world but, rather, the meaning of life. Even if we understood the world perfectly, as in Faust's demand to know "was die Welt/Im Innersten zusammenhält," we still would not have the meaning or the sense, or the purpose either of life in general or of my life in particular. Yet what are we trying to grasp in our search—the meaning of life in general? Why things are the way they are? God's purposes and the reasons God has for those purposes? Or is our search simply a quest for the meaning of our individual life, and for a deeper or more comprehensive understanding of the purposes we may be forging and reconstructing as we live from day to day? Perhaps we are merely trying to distinguish what, in the end, matters to us more and what less, or to construct a sensible narrative of our lives: a story that reveals what they were all about? Both the general and the specific questions seem sterile because futile. I recall a friend asking me one day, "You're a philosopher, eh? Well, what is the meaning of life?" followed by sarcastic laughter. His sarcasm touched on the gap between supposed pretenses and actual achievements of philosophy. Of course, most contemporary philosophers themselves scorn the question of the meaning of life as meaningless when asked on either the transcendental or the ontic level on grounds that the question involves a misuse of language. There is, therefore, no room for sarcasm or pathos.

Throughout Lurie's book, this separation of the mystical and the scientific, the transcendental and the earthly, appears in different guises. Lurie identifies Leon Tolstoy as having posed the riddle of life in its modern form, that is, at a time when humankind could no longer take the existence of God and an afterlife for granted, and as part of the natural way of regarding the world. At first satisfied with the general course of his life, which was successful by any quotidian measure, Tolstoy took the dangerous step of regarding his life from the outside, as it were, and sought to see it from "the standpoint of eternity." But from that perspective, he found that he could no longer find any meaning in it. There was an absence, as Lurie puts it, of some objective justification that could authenticate the value that Tolstoy implicitly ascribed to his life by finding it meaningful. And given the inevitability of his death, he thought that the attempt to merely suck whatever sweetness he could out of his life would be to live like the birds and the beasts. Tolstoy's solution was to live a simple peasant life, hoping in this way eventually to sense some transcendental dimension to life, to feel, perhaps, divine Providence in the struggle to manage the daily affairs of survival.

Tolstoy is Lurie's starting point. His "tracking" of the meaning of life takes us through familiar territory and much surrounding terrain. His mapping of this territory is frequently original, but also idiosyncratic. Lurie perhaps recognizes this uniqueness of his presentation, for he often reverts to the formula "on this reading... [of some passage by some author...]." That is, one can either take his reading or leave it, but he wishes the reader to get his point and its relevance to the theme of his book. The style of writing is brilliant and engaging, though at times repetitive; he tends to use some beautiful descriptive phrases a bit too often. He reaches great philosophical heights but is never stuffy

or unclear. His criticism of each of the men we meet along the way is philosophical or Socratic in the most professional way. In addition to Tolstoy, Lurie's main subjects are Wittgenstein, Sartre, and Camus, but many other figures in the history of philosophy and literature, who are thought to have influenced these four or who took their thought in a new direction, are tracked as well. Figures as diverse as Descartes, Kafka, Hare, Heidegger, MacIntyre, and Thomas Nagel come into the range of Lurie's tracking and mapmaking. Oddly, Nietzsche receives only a paragraph of consideration, though his reflections on the meaning of life were significant for Sartre and for almost everyone who considered the question after him, and his thoughts on the subject were full-bodied and multifaceted. Indeed, he first articulated the collapse of metaphysics and religion that Tolstoy felt so strongly in his own way.

It is impossible to do justice to Lurie's efforts by giving a brief summary of the theses that he draws from each of his chosen thinkers, his criticism of these theses, and his reasons for moving on from each of them to track theories from other regions of thought. But at the risk of trivializing the immense efforts of analysis that went into the writing of this long book, I shall at least try to summarize his conclusions.

A transcendental perspective on life is indeed impossible for most, though certainly not all, men and women. But the attempt to meet the demand for such a perspective, which we see so starkly in Tolstoy's and Wittgenstein's lives, is admirable. We groan under a question we know makes no real sense, for we have no way to connect a transcendental world-view to what is meaningful to us personally. On Lurie's reading, Sartre's dismantling of the question of the meaning of life, by claiming that all our efforts to create a meaningful life are mere inventions, is simply a dismissal of the issue of transcendence without offering any other foundation to a life that is at all worth living. Lurie's Sartre embraces this lack of transcendence, perhaps even welcomes it. However, a human need for transcendence is affirmed by Sartre. Consider the passage in *Being and Nothingness* where Sartre argues that man wishes to be God—a being in and for itself—(a thought worthy of Nietzsche), but a being thus conceived is senseless. “Man is a useless passion,” but a passion for transcendence nonetheless. Surely that passion rightly, if hopelessly, informs any authentic life. The distance of Sartre from Wittgenstein and Tolstoy is no doubt considerable; for while Sartre says we want to be God but cannot, Wittgenstein and Tolstoy demand a transcendental validation of their lives—lives which they do not, as does Lurie's Sartre, dismiss as founded on mere fictions.

Lurie focuses on Camus's *The Stranger* for its “uncanny” figure of Meursault, a man who, he says, understands other persons' feelings, attitudes, and beliefs without sharing any sense of their significance. He lives in the world of men without being a part of it. This reading is no doubt true up to a point, yet one might argue that Meursault lives among us, but he is more lucid than most of us. That lucidity is meaningful to him, but he cannot take as seriously as others do what is not eternal or permanent, or, perhaps, what is not rational and necessary. Like Sartre's character Pablo Ibbeta in “The Wall,” Meursault becomes disenchanted with life once he realizes the groundlessness of it. Lurie draws from his reading of this character the truism that life can be made meaningful—can make sense—not by means of a dialectical trick or some insight into the numinous, but by means of our attitudes towards the events and activities of our lives. Meursault, Lurie tells us, takes no attitude towards the conditions of his life: they do not matter to him.

At this point, Lurie holds, philosophy fails us. We have used it to discover a foundational logic, develop an ontology of the

human condition, and to explore the literature of absurdity, and we are led in the end to Tolstoy's initial realization that viewed externally, without complete immersion in the attitudes and events that make a life personally meaningful, our situation is hopeless. In Tolstoy's horrible allegory, our situation is like this: mice are nibbling on the ropes that hold us over the abyss. We may climb out and be devoured by a lion, or we may wait for the ropes to snap, trying while we wait, to suck some sweetness out of life.

We are left with what Lurie calls “five banalities” about attitudes towards life, out of which attitudes some semblance of a meaningful personal life may emerge. The first “banality,” that the subjective meaning of one's life is “embodied” in our attitudes towards them, is no doubt true but does not solve the problem of our subjective need for transcendence—the “melancholy” that Kierkegaard, as a “pre-Christian,” felt at the overwhelming gap between man and God, between this life and eternity. Nor does Lurie maintain that it does. He leaves unanswered the question why anyone should bother developing positive attitudes toward his life.

In *The Tragic Sense of Life*, Unamuno, whom Lurie does not mention, identified the source of our internal conflict. The enjoyment of this moment, this pleasant experience here and now, is what makes persons whose thought touches the essential in life long for an end to the torment of confronting nothingness and so for death. We want eternal life because only then can our life in this world take on weight and significance. We wish our actions to have meaning not only for a brief moment, but to have implications for our life in eternity. For just as my choices today determine my existence tomorrow, so too, if I am eternal, will my actions today have infinite significance for an eternity of tomorrows, and my pleasures and pains, my joys and sorrows, and I myself will participate in eternal life with each one of them: this moment will not be lost. Knowing that life is ephemeral, losing the illusion of immortality, having to accept that we cannot hold on to our life forever, destroys any possibility of enjoying life. Even in our most joyous moments we may feel galled at the fact that indeed they are only moments and, however beautiful, will not stay awhile. Of course, one may observe breezily, life can be worth living, as it is for the birds and the beasts. Yet our joys and struggles, as we live them, seem to have worth only for that moment. Thus, Camus found suicide to be the most serious problem, and Dostoyevsky's “ridiculous man” came home to his lonely room each evening, opened a desk drawer and gazed at the pistol: Will this be the night?

I am surprised that Lurie did not, here at the end of his deeply engaging peregrinations, when he is enumerating “banalities” about the meaning embodied in our attitudes towards life, mention the solution of Proust to the meaning of life—hardly one that is original, but expressed in perhaps the greatest creation of world literature, *The Remembrance of Things Past*. This is not a MacIntyrean narrative account of Proust's own life, as a reader might at first think. It is a recreation and interweaving of themes and concerns in “Marcel's” life as they manifested themselves in the events of this character's life. The varying objects and outcomes of his loves and hates, of his yearnings and fears, are ordered architecturally in entire concreteness and fullness of detail, so that they relate to each other internally. The secret structure of an otherwise not especially adventurous life reveals the interrelated meaning each detail embodied. In this way, the moment is not lost. If we are to invent our lives, as Sartre says, then let us try to do a Proustian job of it!

Nicolai Hartmann once wrote, “In actual life only one thing is different from what it is in dramatic art. There is lacking the guiding hand of a master, who unobtrusively brings the

significant into the foreground, so that it also becomes evident to the eye of the common person. But life throughout is a drama, and if we could only see plastically the situation in which we are placed, as the poet sees it, it would appear to us just as rich and as filled with values as in his creation." In tracking the meaning of life, this is the best we poor mortals can do, it is our wisest foolishness; we need to be poets rather than philosophers. There is a great deal of poetry and a great deal of his personal inner life in Lurie's book, and that is high praise for what is essentially a work of philosophical analysis. Tenacious young (and not so young) students will love it. Many philosophers, even those who think the issue is meaningless and may be dismissed with a shrug will discover that reflection on the meaning of life still has the power to generate philosophical puzzles that rightly demand their attention.

Is Philosophy Androcentric?

Iddo Landau (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006). viii + 181pp.

Reviewed by John Kleinig

John Jay College of Criminal Justice, The City University of New York

It has become common, particularly in feminist circles, to argue that the Western philosophical tradition reflects the maleness of its predominant contributors. The claim—both with regard to its scope and its consequences—is none too clear, though it is often argued that the effects have been pervasive and distorting and call for a reorientation and rewriting of the philosophical tradition.

In *Is Philosophy Androcentric?* Iddo Landau has painstakingly expanded a 1996 *Philosophical Quarterly* article—"How Androcentric is Western Philosophy?"—into a monograph-length study. Landau first provides a series of justificatory readings for the claim that the Western philosophical tradition is androcentric, which he then illustrates from the literature. Each of these readings is followed by a detailed consideration of whether, if they are androcentric, they are pervasively or nonpervasively so. Finally, he briefly reviews what are put forward as nonandrocentric alternatives. Landau conceives androcentricity fairly broadly as encompassing that which not only descriptively "suits men's experiences or minds more than women's, or involves male discrimination against women, or leads to the domination of men by women" but also normatively should be rejected or reformed because it does so (p. 6). Critical to that discussion is the pervasive/nonpervasive distinction. To the extent that a philosophical position's androcentricity is pervasive, what is called for is its "complete rejection or extensive changes in the system in which it appears" (p. 11). If the position's androcentricity is nonpervasive, however, it can be excised without requiring any significant alterations to the philosophical theory or position that it infects.

Landau distinguishes seven kinds of argument for androcentricity and devotes a chapter to each: explicit claims to androcentricity (ch 2); reliance on notions associated with androcentricity (ch 3); reliance on ideas that have been injurious to the cause of women (ch 4); the employment of androcentric metaphors (ch 5); arguments that stress the differences between men's and women's interests (ch 6); arguments that emphasize cognitive and psychological differences between women and men (ch 7); and theories that fail either to consider women's issues or to condemn androcentricity (ch 8). Two final chapters consider, on the one hand, efforts

to construct a nonandrocentric philosophy (ch 9), and some general objections to the book's project (ch 10). Landau's overall conclusion is that although some Western philosophy is androcentric (he tracks instances in chs 2, 5, and 8), it is not pervasively so. He quotes liberally from sources lest, on an issue that excites considerable passion, he stand accused of distorting the claims he is examining.

For the most part, Landau's discussion is very careful and presented with an evenness of tone that is commendable in an area that attracts ideologues and ranters on both sides. It is not too hard to read Landau's characterization and critique of positions as those of a sympathetic critic who is sensitive to feminist claims that our social history has been deplorably sexist. Yet he resists the claim that our philosophical tradition has been deeply corrupted by androcentricity. If anything, he argues that we might see our philosophical tradition as one that carries within it tools for discerning and critiquing our sexist social traditions.

And yet for all the acuity of Landau's arguments, I found something somewhat worrying—I refrain from calling it androcentric—about his overall strategy. Like a lot of philosophers, Landau is wedded to tight connections: arguments are deductive or defective. Indeed, he often expresses the various claims to androcentricity in syllogistic form before taking them apart. But that is only one way of establishing a conclusion. It is not the form of reasoning employed by historians, lawyers, and others (even applied philosophers) who must operate in the everyday world in which connections are rarely as tight as logicians would like them to be. I suspect that the case for androcentricity is not to be resolved by reference to a series of discrete syllogisms—chains of arguments that are only as strong as their weakest links—but is to be seen as a cumulative argument buttressed by a variety of considerations (not unlike those that Landau discretely discusses) and which collectively show a tradition to have been colored, indeed permeated, by a set of attitudes and perspectives that are androcentric.

Although I am inclined to take the view that the situation is not as dire as some feminists make it out to be, it does not seem implausible to me that the Western philosophical tradition has tended to emphasize certain perspectives that are more commonly associated with and reflective of men than of women. I don't mean simply that priority is given to reason over passion and that in the philosophical literature men and women are sometimes distinguished (somewhat disparagingly) by their identification with one rather than the other; rather, it is the failure to give weight to care in developing an ethical understanding or to trust—topics that men have not completely neglected but which women have brought to the fore. Even if, as I believe, the replacement of an ethic of responsibility (or justice) by an ethic of care mischaracterizes the options, there is little doubt that feminists have been responsible for highlighting certain facets of our ethical tradition that tend to have been underplayed. Landau might have been a bit more appreciative of the corrective contributions made by feminist writers had he been a bit more sensitive to the politics (and not merely the formalities) of argument.

This is not a case of either/or but of both/and, of recognizing that just as traditions of argument reflect the dominant perspective of Western or white or American or Judaeo-Christian thinkers, they may also reflect the perspective of those who have been enculturated to look at issues through a masculine lens. It is not as though I—a Western, Christian, male—cannot appreciate, accommodate, or reflect in my writing the viewpoint or perspective of an Eastern, Buddhist, female, but there is a significant chance that I will not. It may well be that feminists who see epistemology, the philosophy

of mind, and the philosophy of science as embedded in a masculinist perspective have overstated their case in the desire for recognition; nevertheless, we should not be closed to the likelihood that a philosophical tradition that has been so dominated by men will tend to emphasize positions and considerations that have been colored by the dominant patriarchy more than those more prevalently manifested among the ranks of women.

None of the foregoing constitutes “hard” philosophical argument in the sense in which I think Landau sees it; yet it endeavors to capture something of what is going on when feminists complain about the androcentricity of Western philosophy.

I think that one other aspect of Landau’s argumentative strategy tends to distort his conclusions. His concern is to determine whether any androcentricity in philosophical texts is pervasive or nonpervasive. But pervasiveness isn’t a matter of either/or but of degree, and so there is a certain misleadingness about showing that a particular case of androcentrism is less than “pervasive.” Aristotle’s androcentrism may not have been so pervasive as to require the “complete rejection” of or “extensive revisions” (how extensive?) to his system, but it is hardly as benign as Landau suggests.

In a crowded field, those who wish to innovate tend to caricature their opposition in order to create conceptual and argumentative space for their own positions. I think that is true of many feminists—a point that Landau persuasively argues in chapter 9. But this may also be true of Landau’s own position, which employs an argumentative strategy that has the effect of obscuring the cumulative character of the feminist critique of traditional philosophy. Both are right and both are wrong. Landau is not ungenerous in his recognition of androcentric claims in representatives of the philosophical canon. At the same time, he employs a philosophical methodology that is biased against an affirmative answer to his title question. His critics, unfortunately, are guilty of their own excess. In the end, one is left with a sense that the truth lies somewhere between.

How would *Is Philosophy Androcentric?* work as a class text? At a certain level it would work very well—this is philosophy without journalistic histrionics or ideological axes to grind. Moreover, it is clearly written and is sufficiently well thought out and richly illustrated to inform and provoke. It also grapples with an issue of potentially great significance. My concern is that the argument exhibits a certain kind of empathetic failure, one that reveals itself in the argumentative strategy adopted rather than in the author’s stated sympathies. Landau’s approach takes us so far. But I think there is further to go.

Ido Landau replies:

I would like to thank John Kleinig for his review. I think it is very helpful, informative, and fair. There are, however, some points in Kleinig’s review with which I do not agree, and would like to discuss further:

One issue has to do with the pervasive/nonpervasive androcentricity distinction. I agree with Kleinig that pervasiveness is not a matter of either/or but of degree. But I suggest that this should not deter us from concluding that a particular case of androcentricity is less than pervasively androcentric. Compare with other cases where distinctions are of a degree, such as those between comfortable and uncomfortable chairs, good and bad marital relationships, or small and big dogs. In all those cases there is a continuum and some borderline cases that are difficult to categorize. Yet, at certain points, beyond the “gray areas,” we do judge some chairs to be uncomfortable, some marital relationships good, etc. I think this applies also to the

pervasiveness, or nonpervasiveness, of the androcentricity of philosophies. When the nonpervasiveness of the androcentricity of a certain philosophical system is safely beyond a certain “gray area,” we can judge that philosophical system to be nonpervasively androcentric. In the case of Aristotle, for example, I suggest that very little else in Aristotle’s philosophy needs to be rejected or revised as a result of rejection of his androcentric claims. I should also note that although I do not take the androcentricity in Aristotle’s theory to be pervasive (i.e., rejecting it does not require rejecting much else in the theory), I do not take his androcentricity to be benign; I see it (as I see other androcentric expressions in philosophical systems) as very disturbing, and call for its rejection.

I also agree that arguments should not be rejected merely because they are non-deductive, or because they do not exhibit the logical necessity found in syllogisms. But I suggest that my critique of the arguments for the androcentricity of philosophy does not adopt these strict criteria for accepting arguments and is not based on the “deductive or defective” presupposition. My critique aims to convince not only logicians or philosophers, but also historians, lawyers, and others who operate in the everyday world. And in all cases except one (the exception being postmodernist claims), I employ the same standards of argumentation and rational criteria used by feminist writers when they argue that philosophy is androcentric. Examining whether their rational arguments prove what they profess to prove by employing laxer rational criteria would be unhelpful, and perhaps also disrespectful to these feminist authors.

Another issue has to do with the famous “justice” and “care” perspectives. Kleinig and I concur that some discussions of these perspectives mischaracterize the options, and that feminists are responsible for highlighting “care” facets of our ethical tradition that have been underplayed in contemporary analytic ethics. But I would like to argue that this does not make ethics, or contemporary analytic ethics, androcentric. Much in Greek, Roman, Medieval, and Romantic ethical theory has many of the characteristics of “care,” but is authored by openly sexist male philosophers who present, within their “care”-oriented theories, sexist views.

Yet another issue pertains to the accumulative affect of the arguments for the androcentricity of philosophy. I think that Kleinig is right in pointing out that we should examine whether the arguments are not stronger when considered together rather than separately. However, I suggest that considering them together does not strengthen the case for the androcentricity of philosophy, since the objections to each argument are not invalidated, or responded to, by the other arguments.

Finally, I agree with Kleinig that we should be open to the likelihood that philosophy, so dominated by men, will emphasize patriarchal positions and considerations. Philosophers should be interested in and worried about this possibility. But this likelihood only raises a suspicion that calls for an investigation, and is insufficient for a conviction. In the book I tried to conduct such an investigation, and suggested that examining the different arguments for the androcentricity of philosophy shows that philosophy is indeed androcentric in some ways, but only nonpervasively so and significantly less than has been frequently claimed.

Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Society

Iris Parush (Brandeis University Press, 2004).

Reviewed by Mark Zelcer*

The Jewish Enlightenment—the *haskalah*—was roughly contemporaneous with the European Enlightenment and was a period that produced a number of noteworthy Jewish philosophers, including Moses Mendelssohn, Solomon Maimon, and Nachman Krochmal. Although initially centered in Berlin in the late eighteenth century, by the 1820s the *haskalah* had spread through Eastern Europe. Among its aims were an alteration of the character of European Jewry through the revival and secularization of the Hebrew language, the elimination of the use of Yiddish, the education of Jews in both the sciences and the arts, and the overhauling of Jewish education. The European Enlightenment served as a catalyst for the *haskalah*, whose undertaking was not unconnected to the desire on the part of its advocates to win social and political rights for European Jewry.

Iris Parush's book, *Reading Jewish Women*, provides the background to the social and philosophical views of those thinkers who played a part in the *haskalah* and thus provides important keys to understanding both these thinkers' outlook on the world and the writings they produced. Parush's focus is on the significant role of Jewish women in the transition of Jews generally from the intellectual insularity of the religious ghetto to the wider secularized world, a transition influenced both by the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant and the idealistic philosophies of Schelling and Hegel. Parush argues that it is precisely through the influence of literate Jewish women that Enlightenment-era Jews came to read the works of these philosophers as well as the poetry of Schiller, the novels of Tolstoy, and the scientific writings of Darwin.

Parush's thesis is straightforward and insightful. She argues that to a large extent *haskalah* ideals were realized and, indeed, promoted by women, that is, by those who seemed least likely to wield influence in the religious Jewish society of the time. The rabbinic elite in Eastern Europe had attempted to insulate their communities from *haskalah* and secular ideas in the attempt to stave off the influences of the Enlightenment, and one of their chief means of doing so was to restrict the education of males to religious topics. However, since women were neither religiously educated nor religiously influential, they were assumed to pose no threat to the Jewish establishment by their contact with the secular world. Thus, the education of women went largely unscrutinized, and they were free to learn, among other things, the languages local to their places of residence. In contrast to men, who were often unable to communicate in the vernacular, women could engage in commerce, an activity that required communicative skills that, generally speaking, Jewish males lacked. Because of this—and because men were expected to be engaged in the study of religious works—the task of earning a living often fell to women, thus further affording them access to the larger and more secular world.¹ Moreover, women were not only capable of reading literature in non-Jewish European languages, but popular Yiddish fiction, considered taboo for men, was available to them as well.

This engaging thesis is put forth by Parush through her gleaning of a great deal of information about the reading experiences of *haskalah*-oriented males of the time, experiences

that they recorded in numerous memoirs.² It is through these memoirs that Parush shows how enlightenment ideas often spread surreptitiously from sister to brother and from mother to son, and also how different were the reading experiences of Jewish men from those of Jewish women of the time. For men, the reading of Enlightenment and secular literature was viewed as a subversive activity and was thus accompanied for them by a great deal of soul-searching and self-doubt, even if, in the end, it was a reading experience that proved both cathartic and liberating. In contrast, for women, the reading of secular literature was generally seen as a normal and expected part of their development.

Parush's book thus provides a social context that makes understandable the transmission of *haskalah* values in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe despite the initial insularity of the Jewish community from the surrounding non-Jewish culture. In the process, Parush gives the reader a fascinating picture of the linguistic politics of the time. When, in August 1782, Ferdinand Klein—the then assistant councilor of Law in Breslau—asked Mendelssohn for assistance in drafting an oath to be taken by Jews for certain court procedures, Mendelssohn replied,

I should...not at all like to see a legal authorization of the Jewish German dialect, nor a mixture of Hebrew and German... [T]his jargon has contributed more than a little to the uncivilized bearing of the common man. In contrast, it seems to me that the recent usage of pure German among my brethren promises to have a most salutary effect on them.

It would vex me greatly, therefore, if even the law of the land were to promote, so to speak, the abuse of either language. It would be much better...to put the entire admonition in pure Hebrew so that it could be read in either pure German or pure Hebrew, or possibly both, whichever might be best under the circumstances. Anything at all rather than a mishmash of languages.³

Mendelssohn's view was one of many used against the legitimization of Yiddish, on grounds that it was an "impure" language (i.e., a mixture of German and Hebrew), and mere "jargon." It was often maintained that the use of Yiddish was the real reason that Jews were not accorded respect by non-Jews (or indeed by German-speaking Jews), a view that had some currency throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Parush offers valuable insights as to how and why various arguments against the use of Yiddish gained appeal and momentum in Eastern Europe. She writes that "Hebrew was the exclusively 'masculine' language and Yiddish the 'feminine' and [therefore] inferior one. A man who wrote in Yiddish and identified himself with this language...seemed to be adopting a female identity" (p. 142).

Although this view was prevalent in the *haskalah* literature, it was not lost on *haskalah* proponents that only by means of the use of Yiddish would they be capable of bringing *haskalah* ideals to the masses, a realization that worked towards overcoming the traditional enlightenment prejudices (often said to have been) inherited from Rousseau and Kant that denied women a place in the community of intellectuals and scholars.⁴ And so it was that *haskalah* intellectuals began to write books in Yiddish for both women and men, the men who were thus targeted being those who did not have sufficient knowledge of Hebrew to read and understand "real" *haskalah* literature. But not only were men afforded entry into popular *haskalah* literature through "women's" Yiddish language, the literature was infused with and therefore encouraged enlightenment messages of many

themes of especial interest to women, such as the abolition of arranged marriages. In this way, a class of people emerged who, free from rabbinic censorship, read about, absorbed, and passed on the values of the Jewish Enlightenment.⁵ (Against this background, it is not surprising that J.B. Soloveitchik, the scion and heir to the most prominent nineteenth-century European rabbinic dynasty, and viewed as having changed the nature of twentieth-century Orthodox Judaism through the generation of a movement whose principles reflected a merger between modernity and orthodox Judaism, was known to have credited part of his development to his mother reading Russian and Yiddish literature to him in his youth.)

A second thesis of Parush's book concerns the nature of marginality. On the face of it, Jewish women could be thought of as a quintessentially marginalized class of people. They were excluded from the spheres of power and influence in all of the areas that were deemed by mainstream Jews to be most significant, namely, areas having to do with religious study and teaching. What Parush shows is that by being excluded from the spheres of religious power, women were inadvertently, but inevitably, pushed to occupy positions within the spheres of secular influence. Thus, we are brought to realize—and Parush argues for this forcefully—that the notion of marginalization is a relative one: Women were marginalized in the world where rabbinic control not only dominated but determined the “important roles,” roles that were accorded to men trained in the rabbinic tradition and conversant with the rabbinic literature. But women are also to be considered to have been in the avant garde when it came to the dissemination of Jewish enlightenment ideas.

Reading *Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Society* is carefully researched and compellingly argued. There is no doubt that the thesis that Parush puts forth will influence the view that is now taken of Jewish women during the period of the *haskalah*.

I have only the following quibbles: Parush leaves the reader without an appreciation of the relevant class differences or regional variations—in so far as these might have affected the reading habits and educational background and opportunities—of the women that she otherwise so scrupulously deals with. We are also not told just how typical were some of the reading practices on which Parush relies for much of her thesis. Did the female-to-male transmission of secular information and values that Parush describes take place in most of the households of the time, in an increasing number as time went on, or, at best, in a select but important few? These omissions, however, are very much eclipsed by the creativity of Parush's thesis and the clearly thorough study that underlies it.

Modern feminist literature often seeks to uncover previously unidentified sources of female power. Parush does this extremely well. She provides a fascinating case study of the politics of language and the nature of marginality and otherness. She challenges any simplistic picture of life in the margins that depicts that life as devoid of influence, and shows the opportunity for change that can emerge directly from that social space.⁶

*Thanks to Heshey Zelcer, Dahlia Kozlowsky, and an editor of the Newsletter for valuable help with earlier drafts.

Endnotes

1. This is a practice with parallels in today's Orthodox Jewish communities.
2. Women's reading practices have been studied from the perspective of their own memoirs, too. For an example from the pre-*haskalah* era, see Erin Henriksen and Mark Zelcer “Much could be written”: Glikl of Hameln's Life in Writing” in *Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400-1700*, edited by Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb (Ashgate Press, 2006).

3. Moses Mendelssohn: Selections from his Writings, edited by Eva Jospie (The Viking Press, 1975), 106
4. See Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 196
5. An interesting allusion to the role of women in spreading enlightenment literature can be found in S.Y. Agnon's *A Simple Story*. The 1935 Hebrew novel, set in a *haskalah*-influenced town in the early twentieth century, recounts a curious flirtation ritual where “it was the custom in those days for a boy and a girl getting together to recite poems to each other, such as Schiller's “The Bell” or “The Lad at the Fountain,” taking turns saying each line by heart. It might take them a long while, but then this was precisely the point.” (S.Y. Agnon, *A Simple Story*, translated by Hillel Halkin (Shoken Press: 1985), 75
6. Irshad Manji attests to a related phenomenon in the Muslim world today. She reports seeing a sign in a new school for girls in Afghanistan: “Educate a boy and you educate only that boy; educate a girl and you educate her entire family.” (Quoted in Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell* [Penguin Books, 2006], 511, n. 15)

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Eugene Kelly

New York Institute of Technology

Department of Social Science

Old Westbury, NY 11568

ekelly@nyit.edu

David Martens

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Department of Philosophy

School of Social Sciences

Private Bag 3

PO WITS

2050

Gauteng

Republic of South Africa

david.martens@gmail.com

Lou Matz

University of the Pacific

College Dean's Office

3601 Pacific Ave.

Stockton, CA 95211

lmatz@pacific.edu

Mark Nowacki

School of Social Sciences

Singapore Management University

90 Stamford Road

Singapore 178903

Republic of Singapore

nowacki@smu.edu.sg

ADDRESSES OF CONTRIBUTORS

Wilfried Ver Eecke

Philosophy Department

Georgetown University

New North 215

37th & O Streets, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20057

vereeckw@georgetown.edu

Tziporah Kasachkoff

September 1 - February 1

The Graduate School and University Center, The City University
of New York

PhD Program in Philosophy

365 Fifth Avenue

New York City, New York 10016

&

February 2 - July 1

Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Department of Philosophy

Beer Sheva, ISRAEL

tkasachkoff@yahoo.com