



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

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We welcome readers to the Spring 2010 edition of the APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy. Our present edition consists of five papers. The first two, "Observations on Cooperative-Learning Group Assignments" and "A Cooperative-Learning Lesson Using Objections and Replies," are both authored by Russell Marcus. In the first paper, Marcus explains what he takes to be cooperative learning and how it might be used to further student interest and participation in philosophical topics. He discusses various options for dividing students into learning groups and the merits and disadvantages of each, with Marcus himself defending for the purpose of cooperative learning the "random" assignment of students into groups.

In Marcus's second paper, he shows how cooperative learning lessons can be used to good effect in the classroom for the study and analysis of the Objections and Replies to Descartes' Meditations. We encourage readers to try out such classroom projects and share their experiences—both positive and negative—with other Newsletter readers.

Our third paper is a review essay by Patrick Frierson and Ido Geiger entitled "Kant's Empirical Philosophy: A Review Essay of Immanuel Kant—Anthropology, History, and Education" (the reviewed volume is edited by Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden). Although generally it is not our custom to publish review essays of great length, given the importance of the volume and the publicity it has received, we decided to include the lengthy review/analysis of it that Frierson and Geiger have authored. Frierson and Geiger have taken pains to make clear to readers not merely what is in the various essays of this volume, but how reading and discussing Kant's views in these essays can profitably be used to prompt students to think carefully about the following: (a) the place of the a priori in Kant's philosophizing about morality; (b) Kant's views about the determinants of human nature and the way we develop a moral sense; (c) Kant's views on education, pedagogy, and childrearing; (d) Kant's views on biology and teleology; and (e) Kant's views on race and on gender. The review provides helpful advice on how to use some of the essays in this volume to supplement other of Kant's writings, and how to get our students to think more deeply and less simply about Kant, regarded generally as a—perhaps the—principal "champion of reason."

Article four, "Maieutikos, Maypoles, and Metacognition: Teaching Undergraduates about Aristotelian Substance," by

Tony Roark, suggests that the use of the visual metaphor of a maypole, with its many different but overlapping ribbons emanating from a single pole, can be used in the classroom to help students think about the way in which Aristotle's different works may relate to one another to form a unified corpus. Roark helpfully suggests that even critique of the appropriateness of the maypole metaphor as a way of understanding Aristotle's various positions may have instructional value as students discuss whether a coherent unified picture is indeed to be found in Aristotle's writings. At the end of the paper, Roark helpfully reproduces a quiz that he gave to his students in order to determine both their comprehension of Aristotle's view of substance and the pedagogical effectiveness of the maypole metaphor in getting that view across to them. He includes several student responses to his quiz.

Article five, "Why I Don't Teach Philosophy of Religion Any More," is by Michael Davis, who first describes what he perceives to be the predominant practice in the teaching of Introduction to Philosophy of Religion courses and then goes on to explain why he finds the syllabi and readings of such courses wanting. He outlines an alternative way of teaching such courses and laments the fact that the alternative that he outlines has, at present, no supporting text or collection of articles. Davis offers his perspective as a personal view developed in response to discussions he has had with undergraduate students who have an interest in taking an Introduction to Philosophy of Religion course but whose primary academic interests lay in some non-religious field.

In the **Book Review** section we present reviews of two books. The first is by Yakir Levin, of *Harry Frankfurt's Demons, Dreamers, & Madmen: The Defense of Reason in Descartes's Meditations*. The second is by Nils Ch. Rauhut, of *Michael J. Sandel's Justice: What is the Right Thing to Do?*

As always, we 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. (Guidelines for submission follow below.)

Under the section of our Newsletter entitled **Books Received**, readers will find books that we have received for review. We encourage readers to suggest themselves as reviewers for any of the books listed. Books preceded by an asterisk are already committed to reviewers. We also encourage readers to suggest themselves as reviewers of books and other materials that may not appear on our **Books Received** list but which they have found especially good for classroom use. When writing a review of material for our Newsletter, please remember that our publication is devoted to matters of pedagogy and not to theoretical discussions of philosophical issues. That should be borne in mind when reviewing material for our publication. (We will send specific review guidelines to all who review material for our Newsletter.)

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. 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.
- Both electronic and paper copies of papers are acceptable. In the case of paper copies, we would appreciate receiving four copies for our review purposes.
- Authors should adhere to the production guidelines that are available from the APA and that are available from the APA's website.
- In the case of electronic copies, in writing your paper to disk, please do not use your word processor's footnote or endnote function; all notes should be added manually at the end of the paper:

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ideas, but listening to those of others. They demand active engagement in class.

Both presenting one's ideas and listening to those of others are essential to philosophical practice. What other academic discipline, outside of the arts, has so much of its canon written in dialogue? While there is very little written about how to teach cooperative-learning philosophy classes, many philosophy instructors integrate such lessons into their courses. Those who use group work quickly discover that it is hard work to design a successful cooperative lesson. Such lessons require significantly more preparation than ordinary lectures. I use cooperative-learning exercises in a range of undergraduate philosophy classes, including Logic, as well as classes in which discussion comes more naturally.²

Well-constructed cooperative-learning exercises may be distinguished from simple group work by attention to four factors: 1) Careful distribution of students into groups; 2) Assignments of specific roles and responsibilities to each member of the group; 3) Specific and attainable objectives; and 4) A balance of emphasis on both group dynamic and individual accountability. This article explores the first factor. Dividing students into groups is an area in which instructors are liable to make the most deleterious errors. Careful consideration of some subtle factors can facilitate successful lessons. In dividing a class into groups, there are two main factors to consider: the method by which students are assigned to groups and the range of ability levels in each resultant group. I discuss both, starting with the latter. In the end, I defend uses of random assignments of students to groups.

Group Types

All groups of students will be heterogeneous according to many factors, some of which are likely to be irrelevant to any philosophy lesson (e.g., students' heights), others of which may be salient (e.g., their reading abilities). Typical research on cooperative learning tends to focus on grouping according to characteristics like gender and race. Indeed, many cooperative-learning techniques were developed in order to facilitate interactions among children of different backgrounds, using heterogeneous groupings. Elliot Aronson's jigsaw classroom, developed around Austin, Texas, in the early 1970s to facilitate racial integration, is notable in this regard. A jigsaw lesson is one in which students, as members of base groups assigned a task with multiple discrete components, each contribute distinct elements to the larger task, fitting the pieces together like a puzzle. Prior to convening the base groups, students master their separate tasks individually or in distinct sets of work groups. Jigsaw lessons thus emphasize interdependence among students.³

While factors like race and gender may be considered in designing a cooperative lesson in philosophy, for the purposes of this article, I will mainly consider groupings only according to student abilities. I will not specify measures of these abilities, leaving them to the instructor:

There are three types of groupings of students by ability: heterogeneous, homogeneous, and random. Heterogeneous groupings are those in which each group has students with a range of abilities. Most obviously, one can group academically strong, middle, and weak students together. Less obviously, one can group students according to their ability to negotiate social interactions, distributing the most gregarious and the most reticent students among the different groups. Note that to form heterogeneous groups, the instructor must know the abilities of her/his students in advance. The same holds for forming homogeneous groups. As I will discuss, this is one factor which leads me frequently to dispense with such prescribed groupings.

ARTICLES

Observations on Cooperative-Learning Group Assignments

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Introduction

Cooperative learning, known more colloquially as group work, plays an uneasy role in the undergraduate classroom.¹ It can seem inefficient to the instructor who is pressed to complete a syllabus. It can seem insufficiently sophisticated to students who are reminded of elementary-school lessons. And, it can be seen as an excuse for not preparing a proper lecture. Yet, students in all disciplines, at all levels, benefit from learning to present their work orally, and to their peers. Cooperative-learning exercises require not only discussing one's own

Here is a simple method for assigning heterogeneous groups. First, determine the desired size of each group. Optimal group sizes depend on the lesson, but are best kept small, since the number of interpersonal interactions in a group grows quickly with the size of the group. The number of groups will be approximately the number of students in the class divided by the desired number of students in each group. (The quotient will often not come out evenly, and the instructor must decide between an extra, small group and a small number of slightly larger groups.) Let's consider an example in which there are eight groups, of three students each, in a class of twenty-four students. To form heterogeneous groups, assign each of the eight strongest students (however one defines "strongest") to a different group and each of the eight weakest students to a different group. Lastly, distribute the remaining eight, medium-ability students to different groups. Each group of three will then have a strong, medium, and weak student. These group assignments are best done before class, so that when class begins, the group assignments are easily announced.

Heterogeneous groupings facilitate productivity throughout the class. Consider a cooperative-learning exercise which involves group discussions of students' pre-theoretic views on the moral permissibility of torture. Such a lesson would require extensive and delicate interpersonal interactions. It would be helpful to have a student in each group who could start discussions and elicit participation from other students without letting the discussion become too highly charged. In this lesson, grouping students heterogeneously according to their social skills could be useful. In a more technical exercise, e.g., a collaborative analysis of Gettier-style cases, groups will be more productive if each one has at least one student who has a good grasp of the questions going in. In such a lesson, grouping students heterogeneously according to their philosophical abilities may be more advantageous.

Still, heterogeneous groupings suffer from some significant failings. Stronger students can become frustrated with weaker students, and take over the work. When faced with a task to be completed in a short class period, stronger students often become impatient: "Class is almost over. Just let me write it up, OK?" Defenders of heterogeneous groupings point out that stronger students can learn by teaching weaker students. Some teachers even explicitly give some of their stronger students roles like group leader, or student instructor. While stronger students may learn some content by adopting an instructional role, one must sincerely ask whether such students are well-served in this role, or whether such procedures substitute the learning of social skills for course content. Strong students in heterogeneous groups can feel slighted by the undeserved pressure to adopt a pedagogical role, or to carry the brunt of the group's work. Indeed, I had to overcome memories of my own such feelings when I started using cooperative learning in my classes.

Conversely, weaker students, when grouped with stronger students, often become frustrated with themselves and embarrassed, and, feeling that they have little to contribute, turn off. In classes with heterogeneous groups, I always find some students feeling excluded from their groups, having little to contribute. In a lecture class, weaker students can quietly pay attention and take notes. In a cooperative-learning exercise, their weaknesses are made evident, to themselves and their peers.⁴

Homogeneous groupings, in which students in each group are evenly matched, avoid some of the difficulties of heterogeneous groupings. To assign homogeneous groups of size n , assign the n strongest students to one group, the next n strongest students to another group, and so on until all of the

students are grouped. Again, one may organize according to students' strengths in various areas including philosophical ability and social adeptness. Again, group assignments are best determined beforehand, and merely announced in class.

Assigning groups of homogeneous ability avoids the problem of having some students naturally take over a group, excluding their weaker peers. Groups of stronger students are usually highly productive. Students in weaker groups find that they cannot rely on someone else to do the work and are forced to get involved. The instructor, moving around the classroom, can easily work with many of his weakest students at the same time.

Assigning groups of homogeneous inter-personal skills can also protect the quieter student, who is not stampeded by more extroverted partners. I have encouraged boisterous groups to work elsewhere, in a nearby lounge or empty room, in order to reduce the noise that inevitably arises in the classroom during a cooperative-learning exercise. Indeed, I usually extend the offer to work elsewhere to all groups, and find that some students feel empowered by the freedom to work independently for a while.

While homogeneous groupings avoid some of the problems of heterogeneous groupings, they lead to other difficulties. I have found it tempting, especially in classes with homogeneous groups, to admire the work done by stronger students. Such groups can serve as models to the other students. For some students, watching the stronger students engaging in serious debate, or working out a difficult problem, can be as exciting as it is for the instructor. But, I have found that many students are intimidated by their stronger peers, and dismiss their work as irrelevant to their own.

Weaker groups have difficulty getting started on an assigned task. Low-achieving groups tend to drop out of the lesson. The instructor who wants to circulate and work a bit with all the students finds herself spending most of the class time with the weaker groups, ignoring the stronger students who could benefit from further challenges. Also, if the tasks for each group are roughly the same level of difficulty, the stronger groups will complete their work quickly, while the weaker groups struggle, and lag. Often, a weaker group will abandon all hope of completing an assigned task, and attempt to use the time for remedial instruction.

Furthermore, as I mentioned, for the instructor to establish either homogeneous or heterogeneous groups, he must have a pretty good sense of the students in advance. If he wants to conduct a cooperative-learning exercise early in the term, or in a large class, the instructor generally lacks relevant information about the students. Such a deficit is especially problematic if one wants to establish long-term groups, for projects like setting up a course wiki or blog. If groups are assigned early in the term, they are likely to need re-evaluation along the way, disrupting the often-delicate social arrangements that have already been established among the students.

Both heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings have advantages. They allow the instructor to manipulate groups to ensure a desired distribution, which can be useful, depending on the goals of the instructor and the specific assignment.⁵ In contrast, random groupings, which are often the default option for instructors who do not take the time to prepare groupings of either other sort, seem to have little besides spontaneity in their favor. If students are grouped randomly, some groups will be more homogeneous and some will be more heterogeneous. The instructor of a cooperative lesson with random groupings is faced with a confusing assortment of group types and must manage the problems of both kinds of groups, without being able to ensure the benefits of either:

Still, both heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings have significant disadvantages, too. Furthermore, there are factors favoring the method in which random groupings can be assigned that often outweigh concerns about the mixture of group types. I discuss these factors in the next section.

Assignment methods

Call a method for partitioning a class top-down when an instructor assigns students to groups. Call a method for partitioning bottom-up when students choose their own groups. Lastly, call a method independent when groups are chosen neither by students nor an instructor. Independent methods naturally lead to random groupings, though random groupings can be made by top-down, bottom-up, or independent methods.⁶ In contrast, despite the differences between heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings, both are normally the result of top-down assignments.

There are many independent methods of grouping. The easiest one involves counting-off by the number of students in the class divided by the number in each resulting group. For example, if we wanted three-membered groups in a class of twenty-four students, we would count-off by eights. After counting-off, all the ones form a group, all the twos, all the threes, etc. Classes of twenty-five and twenty-six students can also count by eights; one or two groups will have four members.⁷

It is important to note that counting-off is sharply different from having students form groups according to who is sitting nearby (e.g., “Just turn your desk to the person next to you”) unless the seating assignments themselves are independent. Students often sit with their friends, so forming groups with the students closest to them is likely to lead to a bottom-up grouping.

For a cooperative lesson using the *Objections and Replies to Descartes’s Meditations*, I use the following independent method of assigning students to groups. I have printed and laminated pictures of Descartes and his objectors. I cut some of these pictures into three pieces, and two of them into four pieces (for classes with a number of students not divisible by three). In class, I mix the pieces into a basket which I have the students pass around, each drawing a piece, while I introduce the lesson. Groups are formed by the students finding the puzzle pieces that fit with their own. Students find their groups quickly, and they tend to enjoy the short exercise. I use a similar technique for a logic lesson, using pictures of logicians.

In the remainder of this section, I argue that independent methods of assigning groups, especially for single-lesson cooperative-learning exercises, are often preferable to both top-down and bottom-up methods. In many cases, the advantages of independent methods outweigh the advantages of either homogenous or heterogeneous groupings, given the problems of top-down methods that I will discuss. My evidence is mainly anecdotal, from twenty years of using cooperative learning in high schools, colleges, and universities.

While the instructor in any cooperative-learning lesson is focused on organizing the class and on the content of the lesson, students are also anxious about interpersonal social issues. To many students, especially at the start of a cooperative lesson, the composition of their group seems as important as the work they will be doing. Cooperative lessons can bring out problems of social hierarchies and cliques, as students are required to interact with each other. As a teacher, I tend to be nearly oblivious to all but the most obvious manifestations of the social strata in my classroom, to who is the star athlete, the cool musician, the geek. I often have little idea who will be eager or reluctant to work with whom. In contrast, I have found that

students are adept at signaling their differences to each other. Even in classes in which students do not know each other at the beginning of the term, their clothes, the ways they talk in class and ask questions, and where and how they sit reveal a lot to one another.

When students are grouped by top-down methods, they often spend a bit of distracted time wondering about the reasons for their placements: “Why am I in this group, rather than that one, with these people rather than those?” Students placed in weak homogeneous groups tend to realize this demoralizing fact quickly. I have seen strong students in heterogeneous groups express disappointment when groups are revealed, anticipating a waste of their time. When I have used top-down methods, I have had students ask to change groups; now I dissuade such requests in advance: “These will be your groups; please do not ask for a change.”

Some students interpret top-down group assignments, especially if they are not grouped with friends, as punishments or manipulations. These problems are not ameliorated by top-down random groupings, since students still wonder why they are being grouped the way that they are. These distractions lead to an unproductive beginning to any group activity. Further, and practically, both heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings require advance planning: classes with any level of absenteeism require rapid, last-minute adjustments.

Problems of social hierarchies and cliques are even more prominent in bottom-up group assignments. If left to choose their own groups, students will almost invariably choose to work with their closest friends in the class. Some students have lots of friends in the class, others have few friends. The instructor is likely to have to facilitate some groupings: “Jon, why don’t you work with Alysha and Noah? And, we’ll put Laura with Daniel and Pedro.” Placing students in groups is often awkward and embarrassing, especially for the lonely students who have to be added to groups which have quickly formed. For long-term group projects, especially ones for which the students must meet outside of the classroom when the instructor is not available to facilitate interactions, bottom-up methods may be useful. For in-class exercises, especially ones in which time is short, I find that bottom-up methods are difficult to manage smoothly.⁸

Independent methods for random groupings avoid having students wondering about manipulation from the instructor: every student starts the task on equal ground. Independent group assignments made transparently in class presume and display no preference among students, and can minimize the harmful effects of students’ concerns about how groups are formed. I have never had students ask to change their groups when they are assigned independently, though I usually only use independent methods for single-class exercises.

Working with the random groups that tend to result from independent methods of assigning groups requires a bit more agility on the part of the instructor than working with uniformly homogeneous or heterogeneous groups. Classes run using cooperative-learning techniques tend to be active and noisy, and it is impossible for the instructor to follow all of the interactions. When using a cooperative lesson, I pick particular traits on which to focus, when walking around the classroom. If each group has at least one academically strong student, I focus on facilitating social interactions, looking for students who are not facing their other group members, or who are reading instead of interacting with their groups. I ask the more reticent students to take social roles within the group, like note-taker. In contrast, if each group has at least one socially adept student, I pay closer attention to the content of the groups’ interactions. When I know that there will be homogeneously strong and weak

groups, I prepare assignments with different levels of difficulty, or I prepare extra questions for the strong groups. With random groups, the instructor must be prepared to perform any and all of those tasks, and to glide smoothly among them.

In any cooperative-learning lesson, some students will work well with others, and some students will not. Some groups will be more productive than others. For long-term group assignments, exercises which span several classes or the whole term, the instructor might be well-served to assign groups, or even to let students choose their own, as the advantages of the instructor's reflective intervention or the students' desires to work with their friends might outweigh the disadvantages I have mentioned.

Conclusion

My claims in this paper, especially those in defense of independent methods of assigning students to groups, draw in large part on my experiences with a variety of cooperative-learning exercises. Most research on cooperative learning is done in elementary and secondary classrooms. I have found that the results from younger classes typically transfer quite naturally to undergraduate university classrooms. But more research, especially in philosophy classes, and on interactions between social dynamics and group composition, would be welcome.

Endnotes

1. "Cooperative learning" has become a term of art in education, referring to exercises in which a class is partitioned into groups. By using the term, I do not mean to imply that traditional lecture-and-discussion classrooms are uncooperative, nor that students engaged in cooperative-learning exercises will always be cooperative!
2. See Marcus 1998, 2010, and In Preparation.
3. See Aronson et al. 1978 and Aronson 2000-9. For a jigsaw lesson in symbolic logic, see Marcus, In preparation.
4. In contrast to some of my experience, Johnson and Johnson 1985's broad survey of cooperative, competitive, and individual styles concludes, "There can be little doubt that the low- and medium-ability students, especially, benefit from working collaboratively with peers from the full range of ability differences. There is also evidence that the high-ability students are better off academically when they collaborate with medium- and low-ability peers than when they work alone; at the worst, it may be argued that high-ability students are not hurt by interacting collaboratively with their medium- and low-ability classmates" (p. 118). Some of the evidence in their survey came from college classes.
5. Schullery and Schullery 2006 found positive outcomes associated with both group heterogeneity and group homogeneity, but they were controlling for personality types, using analogs of Meyer-Briggs Type Indicators, rather than for academic ability levels. Heterogeneous groups correlated with student reports of improvements in speaking up, arguing a point, and organizing and presenting thoughts (for females), among others. Homogeneous groups were correlated with student reports of improvements in shyness among males, and with higher grades.
6. Actually, bottom-up methods for assigning groups may undermine an intended random grouping since students tend to gravitate toward peers of similar ability levels.
7. See Johnson, Johnson and Smith 1998: 2-8 for other interesting, independent methods of assigning members to groups.
8. Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1998 also discourage bottom-up assignments. "The least recommended procedure is to have students select their own groups" (p. 2:10). As justifications, they cite a tendency toward homogeneity (in ability and race), as well as an increase in off-task behavior.

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A Cooperative-Learning Lesson Using the Objections and Replies

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Introduction

Descartes's *Meditations* are a staple of philosophy courses at all levels. The *Objections and Replies* to the *Meditations* are both an integral part of the original work and a fecund resource for philosophy teachers. In this article, I explain how I use excerpts from the *Objections and Replies* for an in-class cooperative-learning exercise. I begin by discussing the relevance and utility of the material I use in the lesson.

Historical Background

The first edition of Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* was published in Paris in 1641. Descartes was concerned that his work be shown defensible in the face of thorough criticism, and that he deflect attacks. "I would have liked to have the approbation of a number of people so as to prevent the cavils of ignorant contradiction-mongers."¹ To this end, he included not just the six brief *Meditations* and introductory notes, but also a much longer collection of six sets of objections from theologians, scholars, and friends, as well as Descartes's replies to these objections. The objectors were:

1. Johan de Kater (Caterus), a Catholic Dutch theologian;
2. Various theologians and philosophers in a circle centered around the friar and mathematician Marin Mersenne²;
3. Thomas Hobbes, in his 50s, exiled and living in France, still ten years before the publication of *Leviathan*, and a year before De Cive;

- 4 Antoine Arnauld, philosopher and Jansenist theologian, a co-author of *The Port Royal Grammar*, whose comments Descartes said he preferred³;
- 5 Pierre Gassendi, French atomist philosopher; and
- 6 Various theologians and philosophers whose comments were again collected by Mersenne.

The second edition of the *Meditations*, published a year later in Amsterdam, included an additional, harsh seventh set of objections from Pierre Bourdin, a Jesuit priest, along with Descartes's replies.

Descartes had good reason for concern about the acceptability of his work. Galileo's condemnation by the Inquisition in June 1633 created a dangerous climate for Descartes, who was just entering his most productive philosophical period. Descartes immediately scrapped his plans to publish *Le Monde*, which presented a heliocentric system, as well as the foundations of physics and human physiology. In 1637, when Descartes resolved to publish essays on optics, geometry, and meteorology (though omitting the most controversial topics), he did so anonymously. The introductory essay, now known as the *Discourse on Method*, nonetheless provoked severe criticism. Descartes prepared for publication his consequent correspondence with Jean-Baptiste Morin, a professor at the Collège de France who later contributed indispensably to the second set of objections. Morin and Descartes, though, abandoned their plan when it became clear that their differences on many details could not be resolved.

The *Objections and Replies* to Descartes's *Meditations* are no mere auxiliary commentary to a more important, central work. Indeed, they are essential to the *Meditations* themselves. "[I]t would be illegitimate to read the *Meditations* in abstraction from the *Objections and Replies* with which they intentionally form an organic whole..." (Marion 1995: 20). Descartes scholars, of course, know the most important elements of the *Objections and Replies*, as well as the core text.

Still, students studying Descartes for the first or second time, in introductory courses, or in undergraduate surveys of modern philosophy, tend to see only very little, if any, of the *Objections and Replies*. Introductory philosophy readers and texts almost always include selections from the *Meditations*, if not the complete text. Yet, few of the standard introductory readers include selections from the *Objections and Replies*. Many popular editions of the *Meditations* include the *Discourse on Method*, but not the longer *Objections and Replies*.⁴ Even the best modern philosophy readers include only a few, sample, objections.

This widespread neglect by philosophy teachers of the greater portion of the original work is understandable. Teachers in both introductory and modern philosophy courses are often too rushed to spend more time on Descartes. The larger themes (e.g., the disputes with Gassendi on empiricism and atomism) can overwhelm the undergraduate. Marion's claim that it is illegitimate to read the *Meditations* without studying the *Objections and Replies* is too strong when applied to the teaching of undergraduates. The *Meditations* may stand on their own in our classrooms.

But Descartes's oeuvre is not the product of a solitary meditator, working alone. His exchanges with colleagues are edifying. The *Objections and Replies* were passed among the objectors sequentially, so themes can be traced through these exchanges. Caterus, Arnauld, Gassendi, and Mersenne all criticize the arguments for the existence of God. Mersenne, Hobbes, and Gassendi work on the criteria of clear and distinct ideas and the problem of Cartesian circularity. All of the objectors comment on the mind/body distinction. Descartes

and his objectors repeatedly pursue and elaborate arguments first raised earlier in the *Objections and Replies*. For example, after Gassendi uses the example of a straight stick appearing bent in water to raise a worry about Descartes's account of error (AT VII.333), Mersenne returns to the example to argue that the senses, rather than reason, correct the error (AT VII.418). While scholars are able to tease out the interwoven thematic threads of conversation, the student may well find it impossible to follow a single train of argument across different objectors.

The *Objections and Replies* can be alluring to undergraduates, if presented appropriately. Witty and acerbic, they include lively and memorable examples that bring the *Meditations* into sharper focus. The lesson I describe presents small, thematically organized portions of the objections, across objectors. I have refined the following lesson over several years, and the students generally respond favorably.

The Lesson

I introduce my students to the *Objections and Replies* by using a cooperative-learning exercise in which students in three-membered groups adjudicate three objections and replies. This lesson is best suited to a class of at least an hour and fifteen minutes. I generally place the lesson at the end of the portion of a course in which we have been reading and discussing the *Meditations*, before the students have taken an exam or written a paper.

The materials needed for this exercise are just selections of objections and replies for the students to adjudicate. I prepare sets of objections and replies, gently edited for brevity and focus, and organized topically so that each group can focus on one theme. Another option would be to assign pre-determined selections from an assigned text. The second, third, and sixth sets of objections easily lend themselves to the exercise. Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch's single-volume collection of Descartes's work contains a sufficient number of objections for a small group exercise. The full set of objections and replies is available in the second volume of their three-volume collection. The Ariew and Cress collection is less expensive and presents a useful selection.⁵ I have not asked my students to prepare for the class by reading selections in advance, though one could do so. I prefer that the students discover the assigned material together, in their groups.

Good group assignments are essential to the success of any cooperative lesson. For this lesson, I prefer random group assignments.⁶ The easiest method for random group assignments involves counting-off by the number of students in the class divided by the number of people in each group; all the ones form a group, all the twos, all the threes, etc. For the *Objections and Replies* lesson, I use a more interesting way of forming groups. I have printed and laminated pictures of Descartes and his objectors. I cut some of these pictures into three pieces, and two of them into four pieces (for classes with a number of students not divisible by three). In class, I mix the pieces into a basket which the students pass around, each drawing a piece, while I introduce the lesson. Groups are formed by the students finding the puzzle pieces that fit with their own. Students find their groups quickly, and they giggle a bit about the technique.⁷

Once groups are formed, each group either chooses a topic or is assigned one. Different groups can work on the same theme, or each group can focus on a different theme. In introductory courses, I prefer to let students choose topics that interest them. In smaller classes, I have laid six to eight piles of copies of my edited selections on a side table, with topic names prominently displayed, and allowed the students briefly to shop for a topic. In more advanced courses, a desire

to cover a range of specific topics may take precedence, and the instructor may wish to assign specific themes to different groups. Once the readings for each group are distributed, the adjudications can begin.

There are three roles within each group, and three adjudications, so that each member of the group can play each role once. The roles are: 1) Objector; 2) Descartes; and 3) Facilitator/Scribe. The Objector reads the objection aloud to the group. Descartes reads Descartes's reply. Then, all the students in the group discuss the merits of the objection and reply. The Facilitator adjudicates and takes notes. During adjudication, the Objector and Descartes lobby the Facilitator and defend their positions. I urge all members of the group to seek agreement on a result. Thus, to help adjudicate, the students must both play their roles, and step out of them.

The Facilitator/Scribe transcribes a summary of the group's verdict. Not all adjudications result in a clear victor. Many of the debates are best read as referring to larger disagreements. Some exchanges introduce new concepts that require more serious reflection. For example, in response to Arnauld's objection that the argument for the distinction between mind and body would also lead to a distinction between a right triangle and a figure whose side lengths are Pythagorean triples, Descartes refers to adequate and complete knowledge. These terms do not appear in the *Meditations* proper; and are typically new to my students. A group adjudicating this objection may decide that further research into adequate and complete knowledge is required to achieve a verdict. Especially in such cases, the scribe should write down questions for further research. I ask all members of each group to be prepared to present at least one of their three adjudications to the whole class at the end of the group work.

Once the first objection is adjudicated, the students within each group switch roles for the second and third adjudications. If there are one or two groups of four, some members of those groups may not play each role. In such cases, the facilitator and scribe roles can be separated. Alternatively, such groups can be assigned four objections and replies.

After each group has adjudicated each objection and reply, groups dissolve and the class comes together for discussion. In longer classes, I ask individual students to present one of their results, including summaries of an objection and reply and the group's adjudication. Instructors interested in enforcing individual accountability can easily select students at random to present their results.⁸ At the end of the class, I normally collect the groups' transcriptions. I read them and discuss the exercise and some of the results in a future meeting. For classes needing extra motivation, the transcripts may be graded.

Benefits of the Lesson

Reading excerpts from the *Objections and Replies* has allowed my students not only to understand the *Meditations* better, but also to see connections among both earlier and later philosophers. Many lasting criticisms of Descartes's work are initially voiced in the *Objections and Replies*. For example, Mersenne, in the second set of objections, immediately raises the problem of Cartesian circularity. Arnauld objects to innate ideas by considering the ideas of children and madmen. Gassendi insists that existence is not a perfection and claims that the *cogito* presumes that whatever thinks exists. Studying the *Objections and Replies* allows students first-hand access to Descartes's own responses to these well-known difficulties.

Perhaps more importantly, reading the *Objections and Replies* has provided my students with insights into philosophical methodology. When my classes start working on the *Meditations*, I try to present Descartes's work charitably,

seeking understanding and a good interpretation. When we get to the *Objections and Replies*, the students engage the text differently. They are no longer attempting merely to figure out how Descartes's work is best understood. They are now trying to figure out whether he is right. The exchanges in the *Objections and Replies* model actual philosophical discourse, including a wide range in quality of arguments, and Descartes does not always have the better ones. No longer the wise master, Descartes is one among a group of peers, all of whom have their teeth sunk deeply into puzzling questions, and are actively engaged with one another, and very human. Descartes's defensiveness emerges, especially in his responses to Hobbes and Gassendi. Gassendi's arguments against Descartes's mind/body distinction, for example, are deeper than Descartes's dismissive tone toward him indicates. By studying these exchanges, students can learn that they must take their critics seriously, rather than dismissing or insulting them.⁹

While learning about philosophical methods is valuable, some students can become confused by the critical freedom the *Objections and Replies* exemplifies. The shift from analyzing the *Meditations* to adjudicating the *Objections and Replies* can disorient the unprepared student at the same time as it empowers the stronger young philosopher. This lesson actually makes students think, and they recognize it. As I walk around the classroom during adjudications, I have to assure the students that they are free to evaluate the arguments themselves. They can see that I am just as puzzled as they are about some of the arguments. The lesson gives me an opportunity to show, emphatically, that my authority as their teacher does not derive from my knowing all the answers.

In the remainder of this section, as a last illustration of the benefits of this cooperative lesson, I discuss some sample content. For brevity's sake, I will consider only a few objections and replies on one theme: the argument for the distinction between the mind and the body.¹⁰ Let's take Descartes's original argument to be as follows:

1. Whatever I can clearly and distinctly conceive of as separate, can be separated by God, and so are really distinct.
2. I have a clear and distinct understanding of my mind, independent of my body.
3. I have a clear and distinct understanding of my body, independent of my mind.

So, my mind is distinct from my body.

Caterus, citing Duns Scotus, complains about the major premise that the ability to conceive the mind as separate from the body does not entail that there is a real distinction between them. "The formal concepts of the two are distinct prior to any operation of the intellect, so that one is not the same as the other. Yet it does not follow that because [God's] justice and mercy can be conceived apart from one another they can therefore exist apart" (*AT VII.100*).

In response Descartes concedes that we can separate, in our minds, things that cannot really be separated: motion and shape from a body, justice or mercy from just or merciful people. But, these sorts of abstractions only apply to incomplete entities.

[The formal distinction] applies only to incomplete entities. By contrast, I have a complete understanding of what a body is when I think that it is merely something having extension, shape and motion. I deny that it has anything which belongs to the nature of a mind. Conversely, I understand the mind to be a complete thing, which doubts, understands, wills and so on, even though I deny that it has any of the

attributes which are contained in the idea of a body. This would be quite impossible if there were not a real distinction between the mind and the body. (AT VII.120-1)

Arnauld picks up on the contrast between complete ideas of a thing and clear and distinct ideas. He argues that we can clearly and distinctly understand that a triangle is right-angled while failing to understand that the Pythagorean theorem holds of that triangle. Similarly, our clear and distinct understanding of our minds could be compatible with materialism. In response, Descartes emphasizes the importance of the minor premises of the original argument.

Although we can clearly and distinctly understand that a triangle in a semi-circle is right-angled without being aware that the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the squares on the other two sides, we cannot have a clear understanding of a triangle having the square on its hypotenuse equal to the squares on the other sides without at the same time being aware that it is right-angled. And yet we can clearly and distinctly perceive the mind without the body and the body without the mind. (AT VII.224-5, emphasis added)

Note the opportunities for discussion here: Is Descartes correct that we cannot understand that the Pythagorean theorem holds of a polygon without understanding that it has a right angle? Does the original argument work with only one minor premise? Is our understanding of our mind or our body really complete? Mersenne's objections also raise these worries.

What if [the thinking thing] turned out to be a body which, by its various motions and encounters, produces what we call thought? Although you think you have ruled out every kind of body, you could have been mistaken here, since you did not exclude yourself, and you may be a body. How do you demonstrate that a body is incapable of thinking or that corporeal motions are not in fact thought? (AT VII.122-3; see also Hobbes's related concerns at AT VII.172-4)

Lastly on the mind/body distinction, these selections are useful for helping students to avoid taking Descartes's arguments to establish that the body is inessential to the self. Arnauld makes the worry explicit.

It seems that the argument proves too much, and takes us back to the Platonic view (which you reject) that nothing corporeal belongs to our essence, so that man is merely a rational soul and the body merely a vehicle for the soul, a view which gives rise to the definition of man as a soul which makes use of a body. (AT VII.203)

Again, Descartes's use of concrete examples expands and illustrates the original, all-too-brief discussion in the *Meditations*. "[S]omeone who says that a man's arm is a substance that is really distinct from the rest of his body does not thereby deny that the arm belongs to the nature of the whole man. And saying that the arm belongs to the nature of the whole man does not give rise to the suspicion that it cannot subsist in its own right" (AT VII.228).

Summary

Well-constructed cooperative-learning exercises may be distinguished from simple group work by attention to four factors: 1) Careful distribution of students into groups; 2) Assignments of specific roles and responsibilities to each member of the group; 3) Specific and attainable objectives; and

4) A balance of emphasis on both group dynamic and individual accountability.¹¹ In this lesson, I carefully distribute students into small, random groupings. Group members have specific duties throughout the lesson. The students have clear, specific goals at all times: adjudicating all three assigned objections and replies, and making a list of questions for further research. The groups are charged with preparing all students to present one of their adjudications, and individual accountability is easily enforced.

I love working with the students on this lesson. It gives them the tools to discuss philosophy with each other in precisely the ways that I want them to continue outside of class. When the lesson comes, as I use it, at the end of an extensive treatment of the *Meditations*, most of the students have learned enough content to engage the exchanges confidently, and to have fun with it.

In addition to this enjoyable lesson, exposing students to the topics in the *Objections and Replies* is an excellent way to initiate research for essays. Thus, the exercise has the added benefit of providing the instructor with a wide range of new paper topics, helping to alleviate the tedium of reading the same themes term after term.

Besides its obvious application in modern philosophy courses, I have used this in-class exercise successfully in introductory courses, and, in abbreviated fashion, in a sophomore-level philosophy of mind course. If the particular objections and replies are chosen appropriately, they require no prior philosophical background, other than the *Meditations* themselves, and so are a good supplement to any course in which the *Meditations* are read.¹²

Endnotes

1. Letter to Mersenne, 30 September 1640, AT III.184. Translation from Cottingham et al., vol. 3.
2. The second set of objections was collected and presented by Mersenne, who handled the remaining circulation of the manuscript. Cottingham attributes the second set directly to Mersenne (Cottingham 1984 v. II: 64). Garber 1995 attributes many of those objections to Jean Baptiste Morin.
3. "I consider them the best of all" (Descartes, letter to Mersenne, 4 March 1641, AT III.331).
4. Hackett's *Meditations, Objections, and Replies*, edited by Ariew and Cress, contains much of the *Objections and Replies*, though omitting most of the extended exchange with Gassendi and all of the long seventh set.
5. I am currently preparing a ms (Marcus, In preparation) with a complete selection, parsed into over 100 exchanges, arranged topically.
6. In Marcus 2010, I argue for this preference.
7. See Johnson, Johnson and Smith 1998: 2-8 for other methods of randomly assigning students to groups.
8. I have not yet had the opportunity and inclination to ask the students to summarize their findings in a class wiki, though such an activity, outside of class, seems well-suited to the lesson.
9. Thanks to an anonymous referee for helping me formulate this paragraph, and the next.
10. I would be pleased to email interested readers further examples of the benefits of reading the *Objections and Replies*.
11. Slavin 1995 reviews a variety of cooperative-learning techniques, and presents a useful survey of classroom research on its effects.
12. Thanks to four anonymous referees for helpful and encouraging comments, and to the participants in my session at the August 2008 meeting of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers in Guelph.

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Kant's Empirical Philosophy: A Review Essay of Immanuel Kant. Anthropology, History, and Education

Edited by Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden.
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Unlike other volumes in the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, the latest weighty tome is not devoted to a single work or topic nor to important supplementary material (such as Notes and Fragments, Correspondence, and Opus Postumum). Grouped together under the very broad title *Anthropology, History, and Education (AHE)* are no fewer than seventeen pieces written over four decades, shorter reviews, essays and longer published pieces, and edited lectures that discuss a variety of questions. This great diversity of material might lead some to the conclusion that the appearance of this volume is a very happy occasion for advanced students and scholars writing in English, but that it is not particularly valuable either for students taking their first steps in the Kantian thicket or for the teachers guiding them. While the former part of the conclusion is surely correct, it is our opinion that its latter part is not, and it is the purpose of this essay to say something about how the

pieces that make up the bulk of this volume are of significance for contending with a number of key questions which Kant's canonical works raise. Although the volume does not present on its own the empirical part of Kant's answer to his fundamental question "What is the human being?" it is indispensable for grappling with the various ways in which the empirical and a priori aspects of human thought and action are related in Kant's philosophy—and these are key to our understanding of Kant. It is our purpose furthermore to share with other teachers our ideas for and experiences in using pieces collected in AHE in teaching a variety of courses on Kant's philosophy. The sections of the essay focus on one piece or more from AHE; the titles of these pieces are given as section titles. The sections are followed by notes on employing these pieces in the classroom. To these we add a topical section on race and gender in Kant. We note that while both authors contributed to each section of this review, the discussions of Kant's essays on history and on race were primarily written by Ido Geiger; the discussions of Kant's *Observations, Anthropology, Pedagogy*, and race and gender were primarily written by Patrick Frierson.

"Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim" (1784)

"Conjectural Beginning of Human History" (1785)

Ever since the publication of his classic works in moral philosophy, namely, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) and *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), Kant's categorical imperative in its universal-law formulation has held out the greatest promise for moral philosophy. It is commonly understood as offering a purely formal and thus universally applicable test for deriving substantive moral laws or, only slightly less ambitiously, substantive moral permissions and prohibitions. Indeed, it is precisely its formality and purported universality that explain why it has for so long stood at the very center of so many discussions of Kantian morality. At the same time, suspicions that the test cannot serve as the source for substantive moral judgments have plagued many philosophers and charges of emptiness have been lodged against it from the very first (famously by Fichte, Hegel, and Mill).

More recently, systematic attempts have been made to show that despite its formality, the universalization test is indeed productive of substantive results. Most prominently perhaps, Onora O'Neill has claimed that assuming only empirical but no moral knowledge of the world, testing whether a maxim can be universalized without contradiction yields substantive moral permissions and prohibitions.¹ Such systematic reconstructions have led to the discovery of many counter-examples—both maxims presumed morally innocuous that fail the universalization test and maxims that seem to be morally impermissible but pass it. It is perhaps the intractability of these counter-examples that convinced several leading interpreters to deny one of the central tenets of what might be called the formal derivation approach to the formula of universal law and claim that Kant's categorical imperative does presuppose some grasp of substantive moral values. In her seminal "The Practice of Moral Judgment," Barbara Herman claims that agents know "rules of moral salience": "Acquired as elements in a moral education, they structure an agent's perception of his situation so that what he perceives is a world with moral features. They enable him to pick out those elements of his circumstances or his proposed actions that require moral attention."² At the same time, the fact that the formula of universal law is only one of the formulations of the categorical imperative is emphasized. The formula of humanity as an end in itself and the formula of autonomy—Kant makes it perfectly explicit that the three formulations are "at bottom only so many formulae of the very same law" (Gr 4: 436)—do not seem to

be formal procedures for the derivation of moral permissions and prohibitions. Provocatively, Allen W. Wood argues forcefully that the “universalizability tests represent a premature (and only partly successful) attempt to formulate and apply the principle for which Kant is searching.”³ The more adequate formulations of the categorical imperative are the formulas of humanity and autonomy. Significantly, they presuppose a substantive conception of moral value: “We may regard every argument from FH [formula of humanity] to a general duty as resting on an intermediate premise, logically independent of FH itself, which tells us what a kind of action (or its maxim) expresses or fails to express concerning the worth of humanity.”⁴

This brief sketch of recent thinking about the categorical imperative brings home to the reader the controversial contrast between, on the one hand, the dominant formal derivation approach, and, on the other hand, the implication of important recent thinking about Kant that use of the universalization test presupposes some prior knowledge of substantive moral values. It also reveals how Kant’s essays on the philosophy of history might be of great significance for understanding his moral philosophy. For these essays discuss the historical social-political preconditions of morality and thus might be read as offering an explanation of how humanity comes to have knowledge of substantive moral values. Indeed, Kant’s philosophy of history has in recent years received much attention from philosophers with a variety of outlooks on his practical philosophy.

In his “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim” Kant suggests viewing human history as driven by the “unsociable sociability of human beings, i.e., their propensity to enter into society, which, however, is combined with a thoroughgoing resistance that constantly threatens to break up this society” (8 20). According to this view, human beings develop their natural capacities in society, all the while seeking advantage over their fellows and assessing their place in relation to them. Indeed, it is competitive antagonism that fuels the development of human abilities and relations. For this reason, the “greatest problem for the human species, to which nature compels him, is the achievement of a civil society universally administering right” (8 22). (Whatever our position on the relation of the essays on history to Kant’s moral philosophy, they certainly throw light on his view of the historical development of right.) It bears emphasizing that according to Kant’s idea of history humankind creates civil unions and just laws—as well as a “lawful *external relation between states*” (8 24) (Kant’s “Toward Perpetual Peace” definitely belongs and must be read with the essays on history)—not for reasons of morality but for reasons of prudence. Thus, unsociable sociability does not carry humankind to its full formation: “We are civilized... But very much is still lacking before we can be held to be already moralized [moralisiert]” (8 26; see also, 8 116).

The crucial question is whether Kant’s philosophy of social and political history can explain the development or gradual acknowledgement of the values which his moral philosophy presumably takes agents to know. One answer we might be tempted to give is that humankind first obeys the laws of right for prudential reasons and moralization is coming to obey these same laws as moral duties. But this answer is highly problematic for several closely connected reasons: First, the range of moral duties is clearly greater than the range of legal duties. Legal duties are all “narrow” in Kant’s sense: they prohibit or demand taking certain definitive courses of action. In contrast, many moral duties are “wide” in that they can be carried out in a variety of ways, with one doing more or less in fulfillment of them. Indeed, the very notion of a “wide” duty seems foreign to a legal conception of obligation. Second, there may seem to be, at first sight, only a small distance between doing something

because it is a legal duty and doing it because it is a moral duty. But, morally speaking, carrying out the same external course of action for two different reasons is doing two entirely different acts: to be “truthful from duty... is something entirely different from being truthful from anxiety about detrimental results” (Gr 4 402). The problem, finally, is how human beings who obey the laws of the state for egotistic reasons of prudence would come to view other persons as ends in themselves. The principle of right is a principle that prohibits (or commands) certain actions. But how would knowing which acts are permissible reveal to us what ends are moral? If we take the historical essays to give an account of how humanity comes to grasp the substantive ends and values of morality, then it is a mystery how the leap from right to morality is made. It is fascinating to note that the question of the transition from right to virtue was raised by Hegel in his commentary—now long-lost—on Kant’s *Metaphysics of Morals*.⁵

Did Kant conceive of his philosophy of history as laying the ground for our understanding of moral agency? If he did, was he aware of the problem of a transition between our learning what is legally or prudentially right and wrong and our eventual grasp of moral principles? Several of Kant’s claims indicate that the answer to the former question is positive. A passage from “Conjectural Beginning of Human History”—an imaginative and lighthearted philosophical “history of the first development of freedom from its original predisposition in the nature of the human being” (8 109) told as a reading of chapters 2-6 of the book of Genesis—seems to indicate that the answer to the latter question is negative. In this essay Kant describes the last step in the natural development of the human being: the subjection of the animal kingdom, as the moment in which “he comprehended (however obscurely) that he was the genuine end of nature” (8 114). Kant does not explain in these paragraphs how a human being who has in this way entered into a legal equality with other rational beings as an end of nature, that is, as “an equal participant in the gifts of nature” (8 114), first lays claim to “being himself an end... used by no one merely as a means to other ends” (8 114).

Perhaps this gap can be bridged by another argument of Kant’s moral philosophy that has received a great deal of attention, namely, the derivation, in the *Groundwork*, of the formula of humanity as an end in itself (Gr 428-29; cf., CPJ 429-36). It has been suggested that the argument has the structure of a regress: from 1) holding one’s own ends to be valuable, to 2) recognizing the value of one’s own rational capacity to set ends (and so recognizing one’s own humanity), to 3) recognizing the equal value of this capacity in all rational agents, and thus to 4) recognition of the value of humanity as an end in itself.⁶ But what Kant’s philosophy of history seems to reveal is just the fact that recognizing the equal value of the rational capacity of others to set ends establishes a prudential state of right, but not morality. To recognize the equal right of all persons to pursue their own happiness is not to view the humanity of each as an end in itself or my obligations towards others as unconditional. Indeed, Kant explicitly denies the possibility of deriving the capacity to set moral ends from the mere capacity to set ends: “...from the fact that a being has reason [it] does not at all follow that, simply by virtue of representing maxims as suited to universal legislation, this reason contains a faculty for determining the power of choice unconditionally” (R 6 26n).

What, then, is the relation between Kant’s moral philosophy and his philosophy of history? Kant stresses that his universal history is an idea and the “Conjectural Beginning” is a “flight... on the wings of the power of imagination, though not without a guiding thread attached by reason onto experience” (8 109-10). This idea or guiding thread of reason is a regulative conceptual

framework for understanding human history that posits, as its end, a moral world state. Such a framework might be intended for readers who are, in Kant's terms, already moralized and have knowledge of the ends of morality. But this suggestion leaves open the question of how morality and moral knowledge come to exist and makes all the more pressing the difficulties discussed above of the influential interpretations of the formula of humanity and the formula of universal law.

Notes for Classroom Use: The historical essays collected in this book can be used helpfully to supplement classroom discussions of Kant's moral philosophy. Although the questions raised here leave students with no clear answer regarding either the role of the categorical imperative or what Kant took to be the task of his philosophy of history, employing these essays in a variety of courses—even introductory courses that devote only two or three meetings to Kant's practical philosophy—has, in our experience, proved a success. Students eager at first to defend the formal reading of the formula of universal law against challenges, find, on reading “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim” and “Conjectural Beginning of Human History,” that, to their surprise, Kant has a philosophy of history, and his conception of universal history intrigues them. (These readings, and discussions of them, are a great launchpad for discussions of philosophical conceptions of history in nineteenth-century philosophy.) Students are thus introduced to the fundamental question of the relation of the empirical to the a priori in Kant's moral philosophy. They are left furthermore with a grasp of the advantages and disadvantages of two competing views of a fundamental philosophical question and a sense of puzzlement which are themselves important philosophical lessons to teach. Alternatively, one might privilege these historical writings and introduce Kant's moral philosophy as supplementary material. One of us has used Kant's accounts of the origin of morals from “Conjectures” in juxtaposition to alternative accounts of the origin of morality—such as the Torah, the account of Mandeville, and of Nietzsche—to raise the question of how philosophers' accounts of the origin of morals relate to their accounts of morality's content and justification.⁷

“Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime” (1764)

The *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, described by Kant as the work of “an observer [rather] than a philosopher” (2 207), is a highlight of Kant's popular writing. Despite its name, it is closer to Kant's (eventual) pragmatic anthropology than it is to his most famous work in aesthetics, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, for the reason that in the *Observations* Kant uses distinctions between the beautiful and the sublime to offer a set of observations about human nature that eventually develop into the discussions of “character” that are to be found in his *Anthropology*. In the short first section of the book, Kant offers general distinctions between “beautiful” and “sublime” (such as that “the sublime touches, [while] the beautiful charms” (2 209)). The second section applies this distinction to human beings in general and to different human “temperaments.” The third section focuses on differences between the sexes, and the fourth and final section distinguishes between different “national characters” in terms of beauty and sublimity.

By far the most important contribution of this text to our understanding of Kant comes in the second section of the book, where Kant develops an account of “true virtue” as “the feeling of the beauty and the dignity of human nature” (2 216). Kant's later moral philosophy, starting in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, is, in Kant's words, “a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything that may be only

empirical” (Gr 4 389). It thus emphasizes the a priori foundation of morality, the preclusion of inclination as a determining influence in morality, and the connection between morality and freedom. By contrast, in the *Observations* Kant explicitly ties morality to “feeling”—not the abstract feeling of respect for the moral law on which Kant focuses in his *Groundwork* and (most notably) in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, but a feeling for beauty and for dignity (2 217). Thus, in the *Observations* we find discussions of ethics in the context of an empirical and aesthetic account of human nature. Anticipating his later moral theory, in the *Observations* Kant emphasizes that true virtue “can only be grafted upon principles, and it will become the more sublime and noble the more general they are” (2 217). But the *Observations* allows much more room for feelings of sympathy and complaisance to count as “adopted virtues” insofar as they “have a great similarity to the true virtues” and, when properly subordinated to principles, contribute to “the noble attitude that is the beauty of virtue” (2 217). Moreover, in the *Observations*, even the purest virtue is described as a feeling not only of human dignity but of human beauty, grounding not only universal respect but also a “universal affection” for others (2 217). *Observations* thus develops an empirically grounded moral theory that is fundamentally sentimentalist and within which freedom—a central concept of Kant's later moral theory—plays virtually no role. Nevertheless, evident in this early work are the sorts of emphases on universalism and principled action that come to dominate Kant's later ethics of autonomy. Thus, *Observations* provides both an important historical clue to the way in which Kant's moral philosophy developed and a provocative alternative approach to ethics.

Notes for Classroom Use: *Observations* is the single best primary source for discussing the relationship between Kant's early and later moral philosophy. It makes an excellent text for use, either in its own right, or in connection with discussions of Kant's early moral theory. (One of us has used *Observations* in a course on Kant's moral philosophy where it provoked valuable discussion of the relationship between Kant's early and late moral theory and about the relative advantages of each.⁸) The text could also usefully serve as an introduction to Kant's moral philosophy for students who might find the *Groundwork* too difficult. While the view that Kant defends in the *Observations* is not the same as the one in the *Groundwork*, Kant in the *Observations* specifically argues in favor of an ethics rooted in principles and respect for humanity rather than in sympathy or advantage, and he does so in a way that is intuitive and easy to follow. Moreover, precisely because Kant does not introduce “formulae” for morality in this early work, the text allows for substantive discussions both about the role of principled action in moral life and about human dignity, without students being distracted by counter-examples to the formula of universal law. The study of *Observations* thus offers a new way of introducing important Kantian themes to students without their becoming preoccupied by his later formalism.

“Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View” (1798)

In 1773 due to lack of enrollment, Kant cancelled a course he was to teach in theoretical physics and taught *Anthropology* in its place. From that time on, Kant taught *Anthropology* every winter semester until he retired in 1796. *Anthropology* was one of two courses Kant taught annually in “Weltkenntnis” (worldly knowledge), in which his goal was to give students a “working knowledge” of human beings that would otherwise come only from experience (2 443). For Kant, anthropology is not (as it is today) primarily the study of different cultures and peoples. Rather, just as biology is the study of life (bios), Kant takes anthropology to be the study of human beings (anthropos). Thus, Kant fills his *Anthropology* with observations

from daily life organized under various headings to “offer readers many occasions and invitations to make each particular into a theme of its own, so as to place it in the appropriate category” (7: 121). One result of this popular and taxonomic approach to anthropology is that the Anthropology can often be read—as one of its earliest reviewers (the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher) put it in 1799—as a “collection of trivialities.”⁹ While this is a substantial exaggeration, one does find Kant discussing a remarkably wide and varied range of topics, often in ways that are (at best) quasi-systematic. Some topics, such as sociability (cf., 7: 159, 176-7, 207, 240-1) and the dangers of mysticism and religious enthusiasm (7: 161, 167, 181, 187-9, 191-2, 195, 202, 208-9), reflect prominent concerns of Kant’s; others, such as politeness (7: 151-3), suicide and dueling (7: 258-9, cf., MM 6: 422-3, 336), relate to more minor topics that arise elsewhere in Kant’s works. But dozens of topics, such as why men should not cry (7: 255-6, 263), the nature and purpose of sleep and dreaming (7: 166, 175, 189-90), and the value of music (7: 174), are simply issues on which Kant wanted to express his views.

Despite its hodge-podge nature, Anthropology has an overall structure. It is divided into two halves, the first half laying out Kant’s tri-partite “faculty psychology” according to which various different human mental states are classified as different forms of cognition, feeling and “desire” (which here includes volition). With respect to cognition, Kant also distinguishes between a “lower” faculty (which includes the senses and imagination) and a “higher” faculty (which includes reason, the understanding and judgment). The second half of the book discusses human “character” in its many forms, including both “natural character”—“what can be made of the human being”—and “moral character”—“what he is prepared to make of himself” (7: 285). Here Kant discusses the character of individuals, that is, “the character of the person,” as well as the character of the different sexes, of nations, of races, and of the human species as a whole. The end result is a sort of popular “handbook” (7: 122) for making sense of human beings.

The relationship between Kant’s Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View and his more famous Critical writings is, of course, hotly contested. Kant does speak in his Critical works of anthropology, especially in his famous claim in the Groundwork that ethics “will have its empirical part . . . [which] might be given the special name practical anthropology” (Gr 4: 388). Elsewhere, Kant even claims that philosophy as a whole is nothing more than anthropology (LL 9: 25, cf.: Corr 11: 429, LM 28: 533-4). But Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View can be identified with neither the practical anthropology of the Groundwork nor the comprehensive anthropology of these lectures on logic. In connection with the practical, while Anthropology includes much that might make its way into a moral anthropology, it also includes advice about such non-moral topics as how to achieve lasting pleasure in one’s own life and how human beings develop concepts of bodily shape (7: 155). Still, with respect to the question of its comprehensiveness, the empirical nature of the Anthropology prevents it from being able to provide the normative basis or transcendental grounding for the most important issues in epistemology, aesthetics, and moral philosophy.

Nonetheless, for several reasons, Anthropology is an important work for understanding Kant’s philosophy as a whole.¹⁰ First, even if Anthropology includes much that is non-moral, it includes the most substantial moral anthropology to be found in any of Kant’s writings. In his *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant ascribes to moral anthropology the task of describing the “subjective conditions in human nature that help people or hinder them in fulfilling” their moral duties. That is, it deals

with the empirical information needed for “the development, spreading, and strengthening of moral principles” (MM 6: 217). Kant’s accounts of emotional and volitional disorders—which he calls “affects” and “passions”—lay out various subjective conditions that might hinder moral development, while his accounts of polite society and character lay out the subjective conditions that can strengthen and promote moral fortitude. Moreover, the Anthropology provides helpful background information about the psychology that underlies Kant’s moral philosophy (such as the distinction between feeling and desire), and includes details necessary for specifying and carrying out duties, especially with regard to “a human being’s imperfect duties to himself...to develop and increase his natural perfection, that is, for a pragmatic purpose” (MM 6: 444).

The connections between Anthropology and other aspects of Kant’s philosophy are less direct. While Kant spends more than half (by length) of Anthropology discussing human cognitive faculties, anyone accustomed to the Critique of Pure Reason will initially notice more contrasts than similarities between these two works. Whereas the Critique’s a priori arguments are dense and difficult, Anthropology makes empirical observations in a light and popular tone and specifically eschews the sort of metaphysical analysis of the first Critique. Nonetheless, Anthropology lays out an overall Kantian map of human cognition, including details about the imagination’s relation to sensibility and understanding as well as a general account of how different faculties of sensibility and understanding relate. Kant’s psychological account of sensibility contains the important insight that sensibility is both distinct from and inextricably linked with human understanding—an insight crucial to Kant’s critical project.¹¹

The Anthropology provides important empirical detail for the three-fold account of human faculties (cognition, feeling, and desire) and cognitive powers (judgment, understanding, and reason) that structure Kant’s account of how his third Critique, the Critique of the Power of Judgment, relates to the rest of his philosophy. In addition, Anthropology includes a brief account of the distinction between the beautiful and sublime (7: 241); detailed psychological treatments of the imagination (7: 175f.); a discussion of the “tendency” of taste to “promote morality externally” (7: 244); and specific accounts of taste in fashion, rhetoric, and poetry. (These discussions are much less detailed, and a bit more playful, than the corresponding discussions in the third Critique.) But given Kant’s other writings, it is at least arguable that the Anthropology is most importantly connected with the Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment. Like the essays on race and history (also discussed in this latter essay) Kant’s Anthropology is an empirical study of human beings that puts into practice the license to teleological description that Kant defends in the Critique of the Power of Judgment. Moreover, the teleology of Anthropology, especially with regard to human beings as ultimate and final ends of nature, fleshes out similar discussions that appear in the third Critique (compare, for instance, 5: 429-36 with 7: 321-33), adds to those discussions details about the character and vocation of human beings—both as members of particular groups and as individuals—and offers teleological characterizations of particular aspects of human nature (for example, 7: 166, 175, 190, 261, 274, 304-5, 324).

No less important than the foregoing direct connections with Kant’s critical philosophy is the way that Anthropology enriches an otherwise austere conception of human life with details that are neither moral nor epistemic nor aesthetic. Here the fact that Anthropology does not focus entirely on “moral anthropology” is particularly helpful. For it is a reminder that even if (as Kant put it in the Groundwork) the good will is the

only thing “that could be considered good without limitation” (Gr 4: 393), there are other very important, even if “limited,” goods in human life. Kant’s extended discussion of the importance of purposeful work for experiencing the “highest physical good” anticipates Hegelian and Marxist insights into the role of work in human life (7: 276). And his detailed treatment of “a good meal in good company” as the “good living that still seems to harmonize best with true humanity” (including six full pages of instructions on how to run a good dinner party) reminds us that one can sharply distinguish between moral requirements and conditions for human happiness while still giving the latter their due.¹² As a practical guide to living a flourishing life, *Anthropology* thus provides a sort of non-moral complement to Kant’s more strictly moral works, contributing along with his more formal philosophical writings to a truly comprehensive art of living.

Notes for Classroom Use: *Anthropology* may appear to some to be a difficult text to teach. On the one hand, Kant wrote the book as a potential textbook, and it could be used in precisely that way. One could offer seminars on the *Anthropology* and use Kant’s Critical works to supplement the empirical-pragmatic discussions in this text. But Kant’s most important philosophical arguments and insights do not show up clearly in this text, and while its organization provides a rough guide for working through Kant’s Critical texts, this hardly seems to justify centering a course on the *Anthropology* itself. On the other hand, one might use the book to supplement other discussions. As a supplement to courses in Kant’s moral philosophy, it provides material that can be used for fleshing out specific duties, especially imperfect duties of self-perfection. The concluding sections of the book provide a valuable supplement to Kant’s philosophy of history. And Kant’s “Apologia for Sensibility” near the start of the book, not to mention his discussions of self-observation, provides a valuable supplement to the account of cognition in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. But while these parts of the *Anthropology* can and should be included in any detailed study, they are not essential to an initial presentation of Kant’s ideas. Indeed, the best use of the *Anthropology* in the classroom might well be simply as a general and thought-provoking supplement. One might assign the Introduction and a few selections from the *Anthropology* as a way of motivating general questions about the role of the empirical study of human beings in a philosophy—whether moral, epistemic, or aesthetic—that is otherwise so self-consciously *a priori*. In that context, the question of the status of anthropology as a whole within Kant’s philosophy comes to the fore, and this is certainly a question worth asking.

“Lectures on Pedagogy” (1803)

The final section of Kant’s *Anthropology* insists that “the human being must be educated” (7: 325), so it is no surprise that Kant taught a course on pedagogy, nor that he would entrust his personal lecture notes from this course to a former student in order to have them turned into a book. Moreover, for a philosopher who sees enlightenment as “the human being’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity” (WE 8: 35) and who emphasizes autonomy as an exercise of practical reason, it is perhaps unsurprising that Kant developed an approach to teaching his own students that emphasizes “not thoughts but thinking,” not mastery of philosophers and their arguments but “learning to philosophize” (DP 2: 291). Such are the principles laid out in Kant’s “Announcement” of his own lecture courses (Ann 2: 306-308). But although one might well expect Kant to say something about the education of autonomous youths, when one turns to the “Lectures on Pedagogy,” it is a bit surprising to find Kant focusing on such issues as breast-feeding (9: 456-7), the dangers of leading-strings to help babies learn to walk (9:

462), and the advantages of “playing ball” (9: 467). The book begins with a look at infancy and ends with brief remarks about dealing with a “youth as he enters the years of early manhood” (9: 496). So the “immaturity” with which these lectures deal is not the self-incurred immaturity that is Kant’s concern in “What is Enlightenment?” and the students about whom he speaks in these Lectures are not the autonomous agents who make up Kant’s own audience of readers.

The lectures on pedagogy—together with the “Essays regarding the Philanthropinum” [also in AHE] which show Kant’s personal interest in early education—provide an excellent primary source for thinking through how to apply a philosophy of autonomy to human beings who are not (fully) autonomous (yet). The problem that must be grappled with is how one is to cultivate self-governance and how one is to determine the extent to which one must respect the freedom of children in one’s care. Kant is, of course, neither the only nor the first philosopher to attempt to answer these questions. His pedagogy as a whole shows the heavy influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose *Emile* is itself a reflection on the application to the case of young children of a philosophy within which autonomy plays a central role. Even today, the question of how to balance respect for children with recognition of their vulnerability and lack of self-governance continues to play a role in debates about child-rearing and education. Given our contemporary perspective, looking at the pedagogical philosophy of the philosopher who is best known for moral theory that emphasizes respect for humans’ free choices and autonomous self-governance provides both an important contribution to a continuing practical-philosophical problem and an excellent test case for Kant’s autonomy-based philosophy as a whole.

As already noted, the body of Kant’s lectures was heavily influenced by Rousseau. Like Rousseau, Kant argues vigorously against coddling children, insisting that, for example, “to come immediately to the child’s assistance when it cries, to sing something to it, etc., as is the custom of wet-nurses, is very harmful” (9: 459) and suggesting that children should be allowed to accustom themselves to the hardships of life from the earliest possible age. Also, like Rousseau, Kant insists that religious education come very late in a child’s development, though, unlike Rousseau, Kant emphasizes that moral education should be undertaken independently of religion. Like Rousseau, too, Kant’s pedagogy not only suggests specific steps for cultivating self-governance, but also discusses how to cultivate the practical skills needed for “maintenance” and “liv[ing] as a freely acting being” (9: 455).

Kant’s lectures differ fundamentally from Rousseau’s in one important respect, one that shows how each philosopher’s pedagogy can help shed light on his particular conception of autonomy. For both philosophers, true virtue depends upon cultivating a sort of self-governance in accordance with which one does the right thing neither for the sake of others’ esteem nor to avoid punishment, the implication being—for both—that punishing or shaming children into doing what is right should be avoided at all costs (see 9: 481). However, unlike Kant, Rousseau sees it as important to avoid discipline in general. Though *Emile*’s environment is constantly manipulated to ensure that *Emile* suffers (within proper limits) the natural consequences of his actions and finds the opportunities to extend his capabilities, he is never forced to submit to another’s will, even that of his teacher. For Kant, however, discipline is one of the most important parts of education. Kant insists that “discipline not be slavish” (9: 464), but he still sees “breaking [the child’s] self-will” as a worthy goal (9: 464), and allows that for much education “the apprentice...must be obedient to the

direction of someone else [such that others] think for him” (¶ 475).¹³ “Discipline,” Kant claims, “is the taming of savagery” (¶ 449) and must come before any positive instruction (¶ 469) as it cultivates the control over inclinations that makes instruction possible and that will eventually make it possible for children to govern themselves through moral maxims.

These differences between Kant and Rousseau with respect to discipline and child-rearing suggest at least two important facts about Kant’s conception of moral freedom. First, Kant appears willing to suspend the obligation to respect the free choices of others when those others are children. For Rousseau (and some later philosophers interested in pedagogy such as Maria Montessori), autonomy is not merely a goal to be achieved as a result of education but an important principle that should govern how one conducts oneself with one’s pupils. When Kant deals with young adults and the specific teaching of moral maxims, he shares this commitment. But at least for certain stages of life and certain kinds of interaction, Kant is much more willing than Rousseau to allow for subjecting the will of children to their parents. Second, and perhaps more significantly, the importance for Kant and Rousseau of using or avoiding discipline when it comes to child rearing suggests the different emphasis each places on the centrality of autonomy as constitutive of the developing self. For Rousseau, what is difficult about autonomy is giving oneself the law. In our constant striving for esteem, human beings have a natural tendency to submit to the values and opinions of others and education must do everything that it can to counter-act this tendency. For Kant, by contrast, what is really difficult about autonomy is not giving oneself the law, but consistently obeying any law whatsoever. Our inclinations tempt us constantly to shift behaviors and we find it difficult to bring them into check for any reason at all. Discipline frees us “from the despotism of desires” (CPJ ¶ 432) and makes it possible to submit to the (moral) laws that we give ourselves.

This brief discussion of discipline marks just one way in which Kant’s account of education can enrich our understanding of his more general philosophy. His specific advice for instruction in more strictly intellectual matters (such as how to cultivate the memory and understanding) and his advice for the positive parts of moral education (such as how to cultivate character and how to teach moral maxims) add further helpful detail to the attempt to apply his philosophy to the context of children.

Unfortunately, however, the text is not as detailed or as rigorous as it might have been, reflecting as it does, the work of a student compiling cursory notes for a course. Moreover, not only does this particular text not exhaust Kant’s comments on pedagogy (see, for instance, CPJ ¶ 155-7 and MM ¶ 475-88), but the text hardly provides the only way of developing a Kantian approach to education. Nonetheless, it does show Kant’s own personal interest in issues that might seem far from the center of a philosophy based on free and rational self-governance, and it provides an important primary source for thinking both about the empirical dimension of Kant’s thought and about some very real problems in the raising and education of children.

Notes for Classroom Use: Lectures on Pedagogy provides an interesting application of Kant’s philosophy to a particular problem, and could usefully be taught alongside Kantian texts such as the Groundwork, “What Is Enlightenment?” or other texts in the history and philosophy of education. If taught in connection with the Groundwork, discussion of Kant’s conception of autonomy (either in the moral context or in connection with thinking in general) might usefully be followed in the classroom by prompting students to think about how autonomy might apply to the case of children, or about how

one might actually go about cultivating either a good will or enlightenment. One could then focus on the relevant sections of the Lectures on Pedagogy (and perhaps also Kant’s “Essays regarding the Philantropinum”) to see Kant’s own approach to this problem. Alternatively, Kant’s Lectures on Pedagogy might be included in a course that focuses on various different approaches to pedagogy. (For one example of such an approach, see Frierson’s course on “Education and Autonomy,” available at <http://people.whitman.edu/~frierspr/education.htm>.)

“On the Different Races of Human Beings” (1775)

“Determination of the Concept of a Human Race” (1785)

“On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy” (1789)

The issue of Kant’s racism is a topic of great current interest and his papers on the human races are essential for these discussions. (We will return to this topic below.) It is important first to understand Kant’s very interesting biological theory of the human races, which—it is important to emphasize at the outset—is not the ground of his offensive views. The three papers that are the subject of this section of our review deal with (a) defining the biological concept of race, (b) determining the variety of human races, and (c) offering a speculative scientific account of the generation and preservation of that variety. (These essays are thus of particular interest for those working on the history and philosophy of science, especially on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theories of heredity.) For students of Kant’s canonical works, the primary interest of these essays lies in illuminating the relatively neglected Analytic of Teleological Judgment of the third Critique, which discusses the place of teleological language in biology. Kant’s discussion of the concept of organism in this text constitutes a lasting contribution to the methodology of biology, while the papers on race offer a concrete example of the application of a methodology that is not fully explained in them.

In the papers on race Kant sharply distinguishes merely descriptive natural classifications (“descriptions of nature”) such as Linnaean taxonomy from classifications representative of natural causal laws (“natural history”) such as Buffon’s causally informative classification of animals that can bear fertile progeny as members of the same phylum. Indeed, Kant accepts Buffon’s law and further insists that “only that which is unfailingly hereditary in the classificatory differences of the human species can justify the designation of a particular human race” (¶ 89). It is on the basis of this criterion that Kant distinguishes four human races according to the color of their skin: 1) white; 2) black; 3) yellow (Indian); and 4) red (American or Hun). The trait of skin color alone, Kant claims, necessarily expresses itself in reproduction both within a particular race and between different races.

These two observations pose a problem. On the one hand, all human beings belong to the same species because they can procreate and bear fertile progeny. On the other hand, they clearly belong to different races for the four fundamental skin colors are hereditary. How are we to account for this difference? Kant posits a single human race (Stammrassen) from which all races originated. (It is well worth noting that in stark contrast to his contemporaries—including, for example, Buffon, Bonnet, and Blumenbach—Kant did not claim that the variety of human races are degenerations of the Caucasian or white race.) He believed that the original race possessed various germs (Keime) and dispositions (Anlage) of adaptive value in different climates, skin color being the external mark of the bodily mechanisms necessary for the disposal of wastes typical of different climactic regions. (It is the mechanism for the removal of excess phlogiston abundant in the thick forests and marshes of Africa that, according to Kant, is the cause

of black skin [§ 102-3]). Thus, the physical conditions of the geographic region in which human beings found themselves determined which dispositions and mechanisms—and so different skin colors—developed. Kant further claims that the remaining dispositions eventually degenerated so that human beings can now no longer adapt to climates in which they newly find themselves.

The papers on race are fascinating documents for anyone interested in Kant's conception of (non-mathematical) science and empirical knowledge generally. Important is Kant's methodological insistence on sorting natural objects and phenomena according to the causal laws that determine them, as well as his clear grasp of the limits of the sort of speculations with which he is concerned (see: 2: 440, § 96, § 161-62). Especially illuminating is the methodological reasoning that undergirds Kant's speculations about the origin of the human races. He criticizes extant explanations of observable hereditary differences for positing an alteration in the natural forces governing heredity. For example, the plucking out of the beard in entire peoples or the flattening of childrens' noses as explanations of how the lack of facial hair or flat noses became hereditary. To grant a cause the

faculty to alter the generative power itself, to reshape the originary model of nature, or disfigure it by means of additions which afterward would be permanently preserved in subsequent generations... it is as if I conceded even one ghost story or case of magic. The limits of reason are then broken through once, and delusion forces itself through this breach in thousands. (8: 97)

Such explanations are empty for they arbitrarily posit an alteration in a causal principle where unusual effects are observed. In contrast, Kant insists on the Newtonian principle that physical forces and properties must be universal.¹⁴ This indeed is the reason behind his focus on a trait that is "universally and unfaillingly hereditary" (8: 95). For this reason it is necessary in the case of race to posit "created predispositions." Moreover, to posit that these are predispositions of a single original race is far more reasonable than positing distinct original phyla marked by different skin color that nevertheless bear fertile progeny with one another.

At the very opening of "Determination of the Concept of a Human Race" Kant states:

It is of great consequence to have previously determined the concept that one wants to elucidate through observation before questioning experience about it; for one finds in experience what one needs only if one knows in advance what to look for. (8: 91)

But when it comes to the adaptation of species and organisms more generally, Kant fails to explain why we should accept his view that:

Chance or the universal mechanical laws could not produce such agreements. Therefore we must consider such occasional unfoldings as preformed... outer things can well be occasioning causes but not producing ones of what is inherited necessarily and regenerates. (2: 435)

To answer the question of why the concepts which biological research aims to elucidate must be concepts of "preformed" organization which imply purposiveness, we must turn to Kant's often misunderstood claim in the *Analytic of Teleological Judgment*:

For it is quite certain that we can never adequately come to know the organized beings and their internal possibility in accordance with merely mechanical principles of nature, let alone explain them; and indeed this is so certain that we can boldly say that it would be absurd for humans even to make such an attempt or to hope that there may yet arise a Newton who could make comprehensible even the generation of a blade of grass according to natural laws that no intention has ordered; rather, we must absolutely deny this insight to human beings. (CPJ 5: 400)

Kant is sometimes taken to be claiming here that teleological or purposive forces are operative in nature and for this reason it is absurd to hope for a "Newton of the blade of grass," a claim that would clearly beg the question of whether or not teleology inheres in nature.¹⁵ But Kant's claim is in fact quite different. He holds that all forces in nature and thus all scientific explanations (that is, all causal explanations) are mechanistic (a point he does not make in the papers on race). Kant reconciles this position with the apparently contradictory claim about the absurdity of a "Newton of the blade of grass" by distinguishing descriptions of organic phenomena from explanations of them. To be sure, Kant occasionally speaks loosely of the "teleological mode of explanation" (§ 160, see also, e.g., § 179, 182; CPJ 5: 411, 412); but he means the characterization of properties or functions of an organism as purposive, that is, he means the description or characterization of a property and not a causal explanation of its generation. This indeed is what he means by claiming that teleological judgment and teleological descriptions are necessary. When we employ concepts that describe certain objects, functions, and phenomena as self-organizing—thus teleologically—we are indeed offering descriptions of these functions and phenomena (that figure as claims about the explanandum). Yet all natural forces and thus all strictly scientific causal explanations of the phenomena described teleologically are necessarily mechanistic (and so figure in the explanans). Kant's point is conceptual: To attribute to organisms the property of self-organization is to think of them as though they are products that an intention has ordered. But what we describe in this way cannot be explained employing the language of blind mechanistic causality, for which any whole is the arbitrary effect of the parts that constitute it. What is important to see here is that Kant assumes that we identify some objects as self-organizing but he never offers an argument for this assumption. He simply takes it for granted that it is an assumption with which all agree.

An important question remains: Why does Kant devote such an extended discussion to organisms in the third Critique? The obvious answer, namely, that the analysis of their concept establishes the necessity of teleological judgment, that is, the necessity of viewing natural objects as purposive, is unsatisfactory. For, as we just saw, he simply assumes that we employ teleological language to describe certain natural objects and phenomena. Indeed, in the Introduction to the third Critique he says quite explicitly that

no a priori ground at all can be given why there must be objective ends of nature, i.e., things that are possible only as natural ends, indeed not even the possibility of such things is obvious from the concept of a nature as an object of experience in general as well as in particular. (CPJ 5: 193)

But if the existence of organisms is contingent then surely our judgments of them cannot establish the general necessity of teleological judgment. Moreover, the hasty transition Kant sketches from judgments of organisms as teleological to

judgments of the teleological character of nature generally is hardly convincing (see, CPJ 5: 378-79). Furthermore, Kant argues—both in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic of the Critique of Pure Reason and in the Introduction to the third Critique—for the necessity of teleological judgment without analyzing our judgments of organisms. In the Dialectic of Teleological Judgment Kant suggests that the necessity of teleological judgment not of organisms but of nature generally follows from the discursive nature of our cognition alone. (This very important argument is essential for understanding the essays on history, and indeed of Kant's conception of empirical knowledge in general.)

Perhaps Kant's reason for discussing organisms is simply that "No one has doubted the correctness of the fundamental principle that certain things in nature (organized beings) and their possibility must be judged in accordance with the concept of final causes" (CPJ 5: 389). So the argument from our judgments of organisms is meant to address the broadest audience. Moreover, it enables Kant to present his argument, and especially the antinomy of teleological judgment, as a "wholly natural antithetic, for which one does not need to ponder or to lay artificial snares, but rather into which reason falls of itself and even unavoidably" (A 407/B 433-434). If this is indeed the case then it seems that the Analytic of Teleological Judgment and the parts of the Dialectic concerned with judgments of organisms belong with the papers on race and that these texts are primarily of interest for students of the history and philosophy of the life sciences. (For those interested in Kant's scientific methodology and criticism of teleological forces and explanations in particular, it is well worth reading the "Review of J. G. Herder's Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity" in AHE.)

Notes for Classroom Use: We recommend Kant's papers on race and the Critique of Teleological Judgment as texts to read in a seminar devoted to the question of the necessity of teleological language in biology. It is useful for several related reasons. First, Kant clearly defines the problem that the use of teleological language poses: according to the canons of modern science, the properties and forces that a complex whole possesses are explained as the blind effect of the parts constituting it, the properties and forces being independent of the whole of which they are a part. Scientific explanations are thus mechanistic. But our use of teleological language implies the existence of goal-directed or intentional natural forces, and this manifestly violates the fundamental methodological principle that organisms are to be explained mechanistically. Second, as we saw above, Kant answers the puzzle by distinguishing sharply the teleological description of organisms and their functions from their mechanistical explanations. Finally, he seems to hold that it is precisely our use of teleological language to describe organisms and their functions that is definitive of the life sciences. Thus, Kant has an answer to the question of why teleological language is necessary in biology which does not violate the mechanistic conception of natural laws. This answer is still of great interest for the contemporary philosophical debate about the use of teleological language in science.

Race and Gender in Kant

By bringing the empirical dimension of Kant's thought to the forefront of discussions of his philosophy, the present volume helps to enrich Kant's overall philosophy in ways that both complicate our understanding of Kant and help prevent overly simplistic accusations of rationalism and formalism. However, the introduction of an empirical dimension also provides a space within which negative and even offensive remarks about women and other races find their way into Kant's

published works. The collection brings together almost all of Kant's published comments on race and gender, and thus provides a valuable resource for those interested in studying this dimension of his thought.¹⁶ Moreover, by bringing together Kant's systematic, scientific discussion of race (in the essays on race discussed earlier) and his informal and (by present lights) incredibly racist observations about different racial groups, it also provides an excellent opportunity for studying the complex relationship between Kant's systematic account of race and his "racism."¹⁷

The most oft-cited and outrageous remark of Kant's about race is his response, in *Observations*, to a comment made by a "Negro carpenter" about the leniency of white husbands:

There might be something here worth considering except for the fact that this scoundrel was completely black from head to foot, a distinct proof that what he said was stupid. (2: 254-5)

This comment, and other offensive comments about Asians, Native Americans, and various European national groups, appears in the context of a general account of "national characters." Here Kant tries, in the informal mode of the *Observations*, to characterize the different mixes of beauty and sublimity that one finds in other peoples and races, and to do so in a way that his readers will find not merely informative but also entertaining. In a sense, he is "playing to the crowd" here, his comments reflecting the shared prejudices of his time. Still, this comment reveals, at a minimum, Kant's willingness to participate in systems of prejudice that we now recognize to be oppressive, a willingness that is in tension both with his universalism in ethics (see, *Groundwork*) and with his insistence on the importance of daring to think for oneself (see, "What is Enlightenment?").

While Kant's comments in the *Observations* strike us as his most outrageous comments on race, it is his essays on the biological concept of race that have played a far greater role in the rise of what we now think of as racism. Kant was arguably the first to develop a rigorously scientific account of race differences based on differences of skin color. As noted above, Kant saw skin color as the only reliable distinguishing feature between different races precisely because this trait alone was, in his view, universally expressed in generation. As one commentator has argued, by incorporating his discussion of race into an overall philosophy of biology, Kant can be credited with "inventing" the concept of race in that he "gave the concept sufficient definition for subsequent users to believe that they were addressing something whose scientific status could at least be debated."¹⁸ Strikingly, however, Kant's own articulation of the concept of race was in defense of the claim that all races are derived from a single, no longer existent, human race (*Stammrassen*). (In the earliest of the race essays, Kant speculates that human beings originated between the 31st and 52nd parallel north and from there began their migration around the earth; consequently, he suggests, the original race was probably most like the white-skinned, brown-haired humans we know [2: 440-41].) Kant articulated the distinction between the human species and various human races to show how to reconcile the universal heritability of skin color with the claim that all human beings—white, black, red, and yellow—are one species. His race theory thus provides an extremely complex case for the analysis of the relationship between scientific theories of race and "racism." From one perspective, Kant's theory seems to support a greater human universalism; we are all, after all, one and the same species. But the theory also provides a possible foundation for scientific racism by articulating a concept of racial difference that highlights certain biological distinctions among us: even if

we are all one species, we are still of different races. In both cases, however, Kant's arguments are based not on moral considerations but on theoretical ones. In defense of the unity of the human species, for example, Kant argues that "reason will not without need start from two principles if it can make do with one" (8: 165), and the fact that different races can together produce fertile progeny confirms for him that it is a single species that is the generative source of diverse human races. The supposed "unfailingly hereditary" nature of skin color (8: 95) provides Kant with theoretical reasons for distinguishing the races and it is thus fair to say that Kant's race theory is an example of a scientifically rigorous philosophy of biology in which there inheres in the theory itself no denigrating views. Nonetheless, as we know from *Observations*, it is also true that as a person Kant held intensely derogatory views about non-white races. Given this, Kant's writings on race can prompt serious discussion about the relationship between personal prejudice and scientific theory, and between the theoretical pursuit of a scientific investigation and its eventual historical uses.

Moreover, the essays on race contained in this volume raise the question of what connection, if any, there is between unalterable and heritable physical traits on the one hand, and intellectual and moral traits on the other: In *Observations*, Kant insists,

In each people the finest portion contains praiseworthy characters of all sorts, and whoever is affected by one or another criticism will, if he is fine enough, understand it to his advantage, which lies in leaving everyone else to his fate but making an exception of himself. (2: 245 note)

This strongly suggests that whatever Kant says about different races is meant only as a provocative generalization, one that individuals of each race can and should overcome (if bad) or live up to (if good). But in his essays on race, Kant defends a biological determinism, at least regarding the physical characteristic of skin color (e.g., 2: 442). We may wonder whether Kant believed biological determinism to extend as well to moral and intellectual traits. Kant's outrageous claim about the "Negro" in the *Observations* makes it seem so, as do some of the claims in his race essays (see, e.g., 8: 174 note, 175-77). And, of course, insofar as Kant ascribes different moral and intellectual traits to different races, the question that arises is how to reconcile Kant's "racist" prejudices and hereditary race-theory with the universalism of his moral theory and the categorical imperative to respect the value of humanity in all persons.

When it comes to gender, the texts in this volume contribute to a rather complicated story of Kant's relationship with women. Evidence of Kant's misogyny is easy to find, the most popular of which are his remarks about Anna Dacier, the translator into French of Homer's and other classic texts (both Greek and Latin), and about the mathematician and physicist, Marquise de Chastelet: "A woman who has a head full of Greek...or who conducts thorough disputations about mechanics...might as well also wear a beard" (2: 229-30).

But Kant's overall treatment of women is more complicated than these passages suggest. In *Observations*, Kant emphasizes that virtue is a feeling of love and respect for the beauty and sublimity of human nature but argues—in the context of the "difference between the sublime and beautiful in the contrast between the sexes"—that

in a woman all other merits should only be united so as to emphasize the character of the **beautiful**, which is the proper point of reference, while by contrast among

the male qualities the **sublime** should clearly stand out as the criterion of his kind. (2: 228)

Thus, women are to be both beautiful and sublime, but primarily beautiful, while men are to be both, but primarily sublime. As a result, although "it is difficult for [Kant] to believe that the fair sex is capable of principles," women have a "love [of] what is good" grounded in "goodly and benevolent sentiments" that "providence has implanted...in [women's] bosom" (2: 232). While women might not be capable of "masculine," principled virtue, they are more than capable of what Kant calls "beautiful virtue" (2: 231). Kant claims, in *Observations*, at least, to reason from empirically observable differences between the sexes to a difference in the kind of virtue to which each sex should aspire.

Over the years, Kant's willingness to entertain a variety of conceptions of virtue waned; in particular, he increasingly emphasized the principled nature of the good will. Thus, in the *Anthropology* when Kant refers to a "feminine virtue" that "is hard to unite with [moral] character" (7: 307-8), his reference to "virtue" seems, at best, merely analogical. Kant spent much of his Critical philosophy defending a form of "good will" that looks a lot like the "masculine virtue" of *Observations*, and in the context of that moral philosophy Kant's empirical claims about women take on pernicious overtones. In this volume, readers have the opportunity to study in detail the ways in which Kant's empirical discussions of women change, in tone and in substance, from their earliest appearance in *Observations* to their later emergence in *Anthropology*.¹⁹

Finally, in *Observations* we find a touching and autobiographically revealing remark. Kant, who was then forty years old (and destined to remain a life-long bachelor), reflects on the fact that men who refine their taste run the risk of creating an ardent hope for a woman

with all the noble and beautiful qualities that nature rarely unites in one person and even more rarely offers to one who can treasure her and who would be worthy of such a possession. (2: 239)

As a remedy, he says, he would recommend to these noble souls that they refine their feeling as much as they can with regard to those qualities that pertain to themselves or those actions that they themselves perform, but that with regard to what they enjoy or expect from others they should preserve their taste in its simplicity, but adds: "if only I understood how it is possible to bring this off" (2: 239).

Notes for Classroom Use: There is no better English-language text for the study of Kant's ideas on race or sex than the present volume. While there are some references from Kant's other writings and lectures that relate to race, all of the most important published texts regarding race and sex are included here. Moreover, the presentation of Kant's references to race in a broader context helps prevent overly simplistic understandings of Kant's claims, and provoke thoughtful study of the development of his views.

With respect to Kant's views on sex, the present volume requires supplementation by the *Metaphysics of Morals*, which includes Kant's discussions of marriage and women's political rights.²⁰ But the most important of his published work on the differences between the sexes with respect to both marriage and political rights is collected in this volume. Either of these topics (or both combined) would make for an excellent seminar on Kant, and one might use Kant's empirical discussions of race and sex to introduce both his moral theory and his conception of teleology. This volume would also be invaluable for general courses on the development of racism and race theory, or for historically sensitive philosophy courses that focus on the issue of race or gender.²¹

Conclusion

All in all, this volume is a very welcome addition to the Cambridge Edition of the Texts of Immanuel Kant. For scholars, it provides a wealth of primary-source material in English, some of it for the first time and all of it in a standardized and high-quality translation that is supplemented by informative introductions and editorial notes. For teachers and students, it provides valuable resources for enriching discussions of Kant's a priori philosophical works with empirical depth. This allows for the introduction of the question of the relationship between empirical and transcendental studies of human beings, a question that was central to Kant's philosophical project but is often side-lined today.

For teachers, there are some mundane and practical disadvantages of the present volume. First, the book is extremely expensive, so for students who are required to buy their own books, purchasing this book will be a substantial investment. The problem of the high cost of the book is exacerbated by the fact that there are very few topics covered in this volume for which the discussion contained therein can stand alone. To study Kant's philosophy of history, one also needs to read not only "Perpetual Peace" and probably also "What Is Enlightenment?" (both in the Cambridge edition of Kant's Practical Philosophy), but also Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason (available from Cambridge in a stand-alone edition). (Most beneficial would be a 'Kant on History' volume that pulls together the works on history in the present volume with Perpetual Peace, "What is Enlightenment?" and relevant sections from the Critique of the Power of Judgment.)

To study Kant's views on anthropology as a whole, one also needs many of the writings in the Practical Philosophy volume and probably also the Critique of the Power of Judgment.

Even for studying Kant's views on pedagogy, one needs to read the "Announcement" and the discussions of moral pedagogy in the Critique of Practical Reason and the Metaphysics of Morals.

Given the need to supplement so much of the material to be found in this collection, it would be wonderful to see the present volume in a more affordable paperback edition.

Nonetheless, Anthropology, History, and Education is an excellent book not only for scholars but also for teachers and students. The collection invites us to contend with the considerable complexity and internal tensions in the thought of a great systematic philosopher. It complements the picture of Kant as one of history's greatest philosophers of "pure reason" with a picture of him as one who studies the world "more with the eye of an observer than of the philosopher" (2: 207). The empirical dimension of Kant's thought thus opened to us certainly enriches our view of Kant's philosophical thought though it is not always clear how (or even whether) Kant's empirical claims fit with the core claims of his a priori critical philosophy.

The emergence of these problems and tensions drives home an important lesson about philosophy and about teaching students to philosophize: Philosophical views are not monolithic edifices, and studying them closely reveals many cracks and imperfections. These are inescapable in all great philosophical systems, indeed in all philosophical thinking generally. Among other of its virtues, the pieces in Anthropology, History, and Education are of great value in teaching students this important lesson.

Abbreviations:

The numbers following quotations from Kant's works refer to the volume and page numbers in the standard edition of his works, *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Royal

Prussian Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Georg Reimer) and later by the German Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter). The volume and page number also appear in the margins of the English Cambridge Edition translations that we quote. Quotations from the pieces in AHE include only the volume and page number. References to other works add to this an abbreviation of the title of the work.

Ann: "Immanuel Kant's Announcement of the Programme of His Lectures for the Winter Semester (1765-1766)." In *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770*, edited and translated by David Walford in collaboration with Ralf Meerbote. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

AB: *Critique of Pure Reason*, edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 'A' and 'B' refer respectively to the first and second editions of the work.

CPJ: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, edited by Paul Guyer, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Corr: *Correspondence*, edited and translated by Arnulf Zweig. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. References include date and volume number.

CPPr: "Critique of Practical Reason." In *Practical Philosophy*, edited and translated by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

DP: "Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality." In *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770*.

Gr: "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals." In *Practical Philosophy*.

LL: *Lectures on Logic*, edited and translated by J. M. Young. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

LM: *Lectures on Metaphysics*, edited and translated by Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

MM: "The Metaphysics of Morals." In *Practical Philosophy*.

PP: "Toward Perpetual Peace." In *Practical Philosophy*.

R: "Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason." In *Religion and Rational Theology*, edited by Allen W. Wood, and George di Giovanni, translated by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

WE: "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" In *Practical Philosophy*.

Endnotes

1. O'Neill seems to be the author of the most detailed and prominent defense of this reading. Particularly notable are: Onora Nell (O'Neill), *Acting on Principle: An Essay on Kantian Ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975); Onora O'Neill, "Consistency in Action," in *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
2. Barbara Herman, "The Practice of Moral Judgment." In *The Practice of Moral Judgment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 77.
3. Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 97.
4. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, 152.
5. This intriguing fact is reported by Rosenkranz who had before him the commentary. See Karl Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben* (Berlin: Duncker und Humboldt, 1844), 87.
6. See Christine M Korsgaard, "Kant's Formula of Humanity," in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 119-24.

7. For a sample syllabus of a course in which “Conjectures” figures in the latter way, see http://people.whitman.edu/~frierspr/genealogies_of_morals.htm.
8. For the entire syllabus of this course, see http://people.whitman.edu/~frierspr/kant_ethics.htm, especially week 11.
9. Friedrich Schleiermacher. “Rezension von Kants Anthropologie.” In *Athenaeum*, hrsg. August Wilhelm Schlegel und Friedrich Schlegel 2 (1799); reprinted in *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, hrsg. Karl Vorlander, 300.
10. In contemporary discussions of Kant, his *Anthropology* has received sustained treatment in at least five different contexts. Historical work on Kant’s life and works has increased dramatically in recent years, and in that context *Anthropology* has begun to receive detailed historical discussion, a trend furthered by the publication of Kant’s lectures on anthropology in volume 25 of the *Akademie Ausgabe*. See Reinhard Brandt, *Kritischer Kommentar zu Kants Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*: (1798) (Hamburg: Meiner, 1999); Reinhard Brandt und Werner Stark, “Einleitung” to Ak. 25 (1997). Contemporary neo-Kantian moral theorists have turned to selected portions of *Anthropology* to flesh out Kant’s otherwise abstract morals. See Jeanine M Grenberg, “*Anthropology* from a Metaphysical Point of View,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 37 (1999): 92–116; Jeanine M Grenberg “Feeling, Desire, and Interest in Kant’s Theory of Action,” *Kant-Studien* 92 (2001): 153–79; Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*; Robert Louden, *Kant’s Impure Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford, 2000); Nancy Sherman, *Making a Necessity of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Holly Wilson, “Kant’s Integration of Morality and *Anthropology*,” *Kant-Studien* 88 (1997): 87–104. Other recent work has seen in *Anthropology* a historically important and philosophically compelling approach to the human sciences, one that played an important role in the history of anthropology in German and that, by incorporating the empirical study of human beings into a broader context within which humans are seen as free agents, provides a valuable alternative to thoroughgoing naturalism. See R. Brandt’s contribution to *Essays on Kant’s Anthropology*, edited by Brian Jacobs and Patrick Kain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Alix Cohen, *Kant’s Critique of the Human Sciences*, Doctoral Dissertation (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2005); Brian Jacobs, “Kantian Character and the Problem of a Science of Humanity,” in *Essays on Kant’s Anthropology*; and John Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). Still others have turned to *Anthropology* to shed light on central themes in Kant’s Critical work. See contributions by Guyer (on aesthetics) and Caygill (on sensibility) to *Essays on Kant’s Anthropology*; on freedom, see Patrick Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant’s Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and on ethical theory, see: Frierson, *Freedom*; Allen Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought*; G. Felicitas Munzel, *Kant’s Conception of Moral Character: The “Critical” Link of Morality, Anthropology, and Reflective Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and Robert Louden, *Kant’s Impure Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Others focus on the importance of anthropology for more minor issues for which Kant has important insights. For example, on politeness, see Patrick Frierson, “The Moral Importance of Politeness in Kant’s *Anthropology*,” *Kantian Review* 9 (2005): 105–27, and Natalie Brender, *Precarious Positions: Aspects of Kantian Moral Agency*, Doctoral Dissertation (Johns Hopkins University, 1997). Finally, Kant’s anthropological writings and related lectures have been studied for insights into Kant’s views about race and gender. From all of these studies of his *Anthropology*, a fuller picture of Kant is beginning to emerge, one in which the rigor of the great philosopher of pure reason is balanced by the sensitive eye of an observer of human nature.
11. For a helpful and readable discussion of cognition (especially sensibility) in the *Anthropology* in the light of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, see Howard Caygill, “Kant’s Apologia for Sensibility,” in *Essays on Kant’s Anthropology*, edited by Brian Jacobs and Patrick Kain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). (For those teaching Kant’s *Anthropology*, *Essays on Kant’s Anthropology* is the single best secondary resource for delving into Kant’s text.)
12. For an informative and entertaining discussion of Kant on dinner parties, see Alix Cohen, “The Ultimate Kantian Experience: Kant on Dinner Parties,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 25 (2008): 315–36.
13. As an example of discipline that is not slavish, Kant suggests that parents “give the child as much as is useful to it, and then say to it: You have enough! But then it is also absolutely necessary that this be irrevocable” (9: 464). Kant contrasts this approach with overindulgence (giving more than the child needs), excessive discipline (giving less just to test the child’s patience), and inconstancy (refusing but then giving in to cries, the worst option of all).
14. See Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, translated by Andrew Motte, revised by Florian Cajori (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), 389.
15. For one prominent and influential example see Ernst Mayr, “The Multiple Meanings of Teleological,” in *Towards a New Philosophy of Biology: Observations of an Evolutionist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 57–59.
16. The primary published work relevant to these discussions and not included here includes Kant’s discussions of colonialism in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (MM 6: 266, 353) and *Perpetual Peace* (PP 8: 358–60), his discussion of marriage and the civil rights (or lack thereof) of women in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (MM 6: 277–80, 314–15) and his discussions of other religions (especially Jews) in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (e.g., R 6: 136–37 note, 140 note). Important remarks about race are also included in Kant’s lectures on anthropology and physical geography.
17. “Racism” is in quotes here not to indicate that Kant’s views would not amount to racism today, but only to indicate the problems with ascribing “racist” views to historical figures.
18. Robert Bemasconi. “Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant’s Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race.” In *Race*, edited by Robert Bemasconi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 11.
19. One other interesting text for Kant’s account of women is “Conjectures,” also collected in this volume (see especially, 8: 112–13).
20. Ideally, it would also benefit from a published version of Kant’s Remarks on the Observations on the Beautiful and Sublime, a set of handwritten remarks that track Kant’s most extensive engagement with Rousseau and include extensive discussions of the nature of women and marriage. A translation of that work is currently being prepared for publication (along with the Observations) by Cambridge in the near future.
21. Anyone who has been teaching from Bemasconi and Lott’s *The Idea of Race* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000) and has wanted to include a more substantial unit from Kant will find exactly what they need in the present volume.

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Maieutikos, Maypoles, and Metacognition: Teaching Undergraduates about Aristotelian Substance

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Introduction

Many undergraduate courses in Classical or Ancient Greek Philosophy are like mine in that they consciously sacrifice historical breadth in favor of a more detailed treatment of major figures. In my own fifteen-week class, I devote roughly three weeks to the Presocratics (specifically, the Milesians, Heraclitus, and Parmenides), six weeks to Plato, and six weeks to Aristotle. Even having given up later schools and figures, I find that the relative brevity of time allotted to Aristotle presents significant challenges in getting students to appreciate the general shape of his philosophical views, never mind the nuanced detail.

In this paper I discuss a pedagogical strategy I recently tested as a means to address this problem. The strategy involves the implementation of a certain visual aid—an image of children dancing around a maypole, projected onto the classroom's screen—that is treated as a heuristic throughout the six-week segment of the course. The way in which the image is employed is reminiscent of Socrates' (and Plato's) maieutic, or "midwife," method insofar as it presumes that students already possess a bit of knowledge or a skill of which they are unaware. The knowledge in question for my purposes is self-knowledge concerning learning styles and habits, and the skill is a variety of what scholars working in educational theory call "metacognition," which involves both the awareness and regulation of one's own cognitive processes.¹

Before I set out to describe the strategy, several preliminary remarks are in order. First, I do not mean to suggest that the image of a maypole is uniquely apt for serving the goals described below. I do regard it as especially fitting, however, for reasons to be discussed.

Second, the strategy I describe is not suited for use by instructors who resist presenting Aristotle's corpus as embodying a system of interrelated doctrines. There is, of course, significant disagreement among scholars whether Aristotle himself regarded his various treatises as forming a unified and coherent whole, and this is itself a topic worthy of discussion in the classroom. Independently of the historical question whether Aristotle composed his works with a view toward constructing a philosophical system, I believe there are sound pedagogical reasons for presenting them in this way while making students explicitly aware of the fact that to do so is to employ a substantive interpretative hypothesis that might be false. Adopting this particular position strikes me as pedagogically fruitful in several ways, but I recognize that it is a position not everyone is willing to adopt. Since the strategy I describe requires adopting this position, the strategy will not be one that is available to everyone.

Third, some who are willing to adopt the position of presenting Aristotle as a system builder will disagree with me on points of interpretation or emphasis. The strategy under consideration may be employed independently of the details described in the first section below, so I invite those whose views differ to adapt the form of the strategy as they see fit; the details of my own interpretation are given principally for purposes of illustration.

In presenting the strategy, I do three things. First, I describe the "matter" of the strategy: a narrowly constrained selection

of texts from the corpus that form the primary object of study during the six weeks of my course devoted to the study of Aristotle. Second, I describe the “form” of the strategy: how the image of the maypole is intended to serve two purposes simultaneously, one of which is bound up with metacognition (a notion I’ll describe in a bit more detail). Finally, I provide some examples of revealing student comments about the strategy.

I. The “Matter” of the Strategy

The path we trace through the corpus is motivated by the central unifying theme of our treatment, which is Aristotle’s notion of substance (*ousia*). The interpretation that I present is in many ways typical, in other ways controversial.

We begin with the *Categories*, which I characterize as Aristotle’s attempt to construct a common-sense ontology. By “common-sense ontology” I mean a philosophically careful account of what the composition and structure of reality would have to be like in order for our thought and language (as they are actually used in common practice) to be capable of representing it with any degree of accuracy. Aristotle does not blithely assume that ordinary discourse latches on to reality, but he does think it a worthwhile question to consider what our standard linguistic practices commit us to. As it turns out, the common-sense ontology includes various sorts of things (enumerated by kinds in the ten categories), but one sort of thing seems fundamental: substances, and more specifically what Aristotle calls “primary substances.” Primary substances (Aristotle’s examples are “a certain man” and “a certain horse”) are neither said of any other subject (as universals are) nor are in any other subject (as non-substances are), and as such are the ultimate subjects for all cases of predication. Without primary substances, he says in the fifth chapter, there would be nothing else. One of the distinctive facts about substances—indeed, the most distinctive fact, by Aristotle’s lights—is that substances are capable of change, whereas no item from any of the other categories is.

The first book of the *Physics* articulates an account of change according to which three “principles” (*archai*) are involved: an underlying subject of change, and two contrary properties. So, for example, the change consisting in my teakettle’s coming to a boil involves the kettle of water as the subject of change and the contrary properties of being tepid and boiling as the contrary properties. This analysis holds the promise of solving the Parmenidean challenge of explaining how coming-to-be is possible. Parmenides and his followers maintained that coming-to-be is impossible both from what is and from what is not. Nothing can come to be from what is, since it already is; nor can anything come to be from what is not, since nothing comes from nothing—*ex nihilo nihil fit*. Aristotle grasps both horns of the dilemma: in a way, coming to be proceeds from what is, since the underlying subject exists before the change takes place. But in another way, coming to be proceeds from what is not, since the original property in question is not the property that is in the subject when the change is complete.

Yet, although the three-principle analysis proves quite effective as a response to the challenge concerning qualitative change, it gives rise to a puzzle in the case of substantial generation. What, one might fairly ask, is the subject of change in the case of the coming-to-be of a dog, and what are the contrary properties? It won’t do to say that the subject is a dog and that the contrary properties are not existing and existing, for this story lapses into incoherence: “At t_1 there is a non-existent dog whereas at t_2 there is an existent dog.” Parmenides may have had a mistaken conception of coming-to-be, but his rejection of nonexistent objects was sage.

Aristotle solves the puzzle of substantial generation by adopting a hylomorphic conception of substances, according to which every sublunar substance is a composite object consisting of matter (*hylê*) and form, or shape (*morphê*). Now this kind of analysis marks a departure from the common-sense ontology developed in the *Categories*, since neither the notion of matter nor of form appears there. But by having analyzed substances in this way, Aristotle is free to identify a certain parcel of matter as the subject of change, being at one time indeterminate and without form, and at a later time determinate and fully formed. Perhaps the most clear endorsement of hylomorphism within the *Physics* is to be found in the second book, where Aristotle develops his famous doctrine of four causes, of which the material cause and formal cause are two.

We then move to *Metaphysics* IV, VII, and VIII, probably the most treacherous portion of the course. Aristotle maintains that physics is a science that studies beings insofar as they are subject to change. Mathematics is a science that studies beings insofar as they are countable; geometry, insofar as they are bounded by surfaces, edges, and corners. But there is, he says, a perfectly general science that studies beings simply insofar as they are beings. This science, which he dubs “first philosophy,” seeks to identify the being of a substance. Aristotle’s considered view identifies form as the being of a substance, where form is characterized as modification of matter that (a) is stable to a sufficiently high degree (a “this”), and (b) endows the underlying matter with determinate capacities or functions over and above those possessed by the matter itself (a “such”). In VIII.6 we glimpse the core of Aristotle’s view, which has it that form and matter stand in an act-potency relation, such that the matter of some hylomorphic compound is that thing potentially, whereas the form is the thing actually. Aristotle notes in passing that the form of a living thing is its soul, and this propels us into the *De Anima*.

The notion of form as actuality is further developed in *De Anima* II, where Aristotle defines soul (*psychê*) as “the first actuality of a natural organic body.” In this context a first actuality is to be understood in terms of the explication of form offered in *Metaphysics* VII and VIII, according to which form confers on the underlying matter certain determinate capacities that don’t belong to the matter as such. But to label form as a first actuality naturally raises the question of what the corresponding second actuality might be. The answer, as is well known, is the activation of the relevant capacities conferred by the form—activities that constitute the kind of life that is distinctive of the species of living thing in question. Thus, the substance of a living thing is its soul, by virtue of whose nature the living thing is (or maybe) capable of taking nutrition, self-movement, perception, and thought. Rational *psychê* is properly a “form of forms” in that it consists in capacities to acquire new capacities (e.g., skill in carpentry, the ability to speak French).

Aristotle’s psychology is the basis for his ethical theory. By the function argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7, being a good specimen of kind K is to actively (not merely dispositionally) function well in those ways that are distinctive of Ks. The distinctive function of humans includes the activation of an array of rational capacities, both with respect to the moderation of non-rational dispositions and also with respect to acquiring knowledge of the natural world and the good for human beings, and subsequently acting on that knowledge. The substantial form of a human being thus fully determines its end, that for the sake of which it exists.

In summary, the treatment of Aristotelian substance runs as follows: (i) primary substances are *prima facie* fundamental (*Categories*); (ii) hylomorphism is required to explain the generation of substances (*Physics* I, II); (iii) of the

two competitors, form has greater claim than matter to be the substance of a primary substance, for it is what makes something a “this such,” an actual thing of some kind K (*Metaphysics* VII, VIII); (iv) the substance of a living thing is its soul, which is a first actuality (*De Anima* II); (v) simply by virtue of being a member of some natural kind, a living thing is organized or structured for certain activities, in whose proper engagement the organism’s natural end consists (*Ethics* I, II, VI, X).

II. The “Form” of the Strategy

Our campus has a Center for Teaching and Learning which operates under an excellent director. She and I have had several conversations about the interest in metacognition—thinking about how one thinks—in recent literature on teaching and learning. The perceived pedagogical value of metacognition lies in the belief that if students are more reflective about the ways in which they engage with the content and methods within a course, they are more likely both to comprehend the first-order course material and also to identify strengths and weaknesses in their own learning styles. This kind of self-diagnosis can help the student learn how to learn more effectively. And this, it is maintained, is one of the most valuable lessons one can get, insofar as it fosters greater success in college coursework and facilitates lifelong learning.

I decided that I ought to work up an experiment in my course to use metacognition very explicitly. If it proved successful, my students might take more away from the course than they otherwise would have, both in terms of quality content and transferable skills.

I recognized going into this experiment that there was some risk involved. Any time material is added to a course—particularly material that has the potential to distract from the central content—students are more susceptible to confusion. But being a fan of metaphorical devices, I was optimistic about the prospects of finding an apt visual image to help my students appreciate the centrality of Aristotle’s notion of substance both methodologically and doctrinally.

It didn’t take long to land on the image of a maypole, which is a fitting metaphor for several reasons: it literally inhabits a central position within the situational structure of the maypole dance; it is relevantly substantial compared to the ribbons wound around it; and it provides the superstructure for the finished product of colorful, plaited ribbons. No doubt there are other similarities, but this is roughly what I had in mind when I selected the maypole as an image to serve as an occasional touchstone for the class, reminding us that Aristotle’s treatises develop and deploy the notion of substance as a central theoretical and metaphysical principle. I regarded it as important to introduce the image very early on in our treatment of Aristotle and to hint at its utility, since research in metacognition shows that conceptual schemas presented to students before encountering the target text result in greater comprehension and memory than when presented afterward.²

Once I settled on the maypole metaphor, I developed a strategy for implementing it that is based on ten principles.

1. Exploit Plato’s maieutic method. Place the responsibility of learning and discovery squarely on the shoulders of the student. Through structured interrogation, the instructor can act as a “midwife” to induce and guide the painful process (or declare it a failure), but one must resist the temptation to relieve students’ frustration by acting as a proxy in their quest for discovery.

2. Follow Plato’s lead in using images. Socrates very often exhibits his commitment to the view that the ascent to understanding is aided by the use of images. Fixation on the image is detrimental, but its utility when properly used as conceptual scaffolding is not diminished by that fact. The

highly abstract nature of Aristotle’s thought and his intimidating compositional style are (to some degree, at least) counteracted by the visual image of a concrete situation.

3. Pique curiosity about the relation between the image and the original. Display the image on the screen and invite the students to speculate about its relevance. Drop a hint or two and then encourage students to probe the text.

4. Be supremely intentional about the use of the image as a metaphor. No student may be allowed to mistake the image for the primary object of inquiry, nor may any student be allowed to ignore its role in the ensuing investigation.

5. Engage the image intermittently as things progress. Remind the class to reflect on what they know about Aristotle’s views concerning substance, how this might relate to the image, and what they might expect subsequently to discover in the text based on this relation. The centrality of substance for all of Aristotle’s views can hardly be missed when one is thinking about the maypole, and students are much more likely to detect and appreciate the interrelations (aesthetically pleasing interrelations, to my way of thinking) among his various views when they think about the warp and woof of the plaited ribbons.

6. Critique the metaphor. At the end of the journey through the corpus, invite students to describe the ways in which it is inept or even misleading. This activity helps students to dismantle the conceptual scaffolding and provides diagnostic evidence for evaluating their understanding of Aristotle.

7. Reflect on the utility of the exercise. Ask students to reflect on the ways in which their thinking about the issues was affected by the influence of the image. As I indicated above, facilitating this variety of consciousness about one’s own learning styles—metacognition—is a hot topic in recent literature, and deservedly so: the more aware students are of their own intellectual dispositions and habits, the more likely they are to monitor and regulate their progress within the learning process.

8. Close the conceptual loop. Point out that the iterative nature of the matter-form relation, which is so important within Aristotle’s views (and which can be so puzzling to students), is embodied in the very exercise in which they’ve been engaged. The metaphor was initially offered as a way of making Aristotle’s views more comprehensible by providing additional (and more familiar) structure to them. But now we’ve turned that structuring device itself (a certain variety of artificial form) into the matter of our examination. The metaphor therefore informs the text at two different levels: it provides an intuitive framework for understanding the overarching structure of Aristotle’s views, and constitutes an instance of the iterative nature of the matter-form relation.

9. Urge students to practice this kind of exercise in every class. Not every discipline is as well suited to metacognitive activity as is philosophy. But no student will suffer any harm from trying, and some may find great benefit.

10. Have fun with the exercise. There is a kind of playfulness associated with metaphors, and this sense of play is both healthy and fitting in the classroom environment. If the metaphor is treated too seriously, the life will be drained from it and students will be turned off.

III. Sample Student Reactions

On the penultimate day of class I gave a brief quiz that was designed with two purposes in mind: (i) give me some diagnostic information regarding students’ comprehension of Aristotle’s overarching view of substance; and (ii) collect evidence concerning the effectiveness of the experimental strategy.

The quiz questions were these:

1. How is the maypole metaphor intended to function as a heuristic device for understanding Aristotle's treatment of the notion of *ousia* (substance)?
2. In what way(s) is the metaphor inept or otherwise misleading?
3. In your own experience, how valuable are metaphors to learning (whether the subject is philosophy or anything else)?
4. How might you enhance or exploit that value in your future studies?

The first two questions are directed primarily at purpose (i), though the comparative quality of answers provided indirect evidence for (ii). The final two questions are directed principally at purpose (ii) and also embody the metacognitive element that I was hoping to foster through the use of the metaphor in the first place.

I reproduce a few of the more interesting responses below. Some of the responses to questions (1) and (2) are spot-on, while others indicate that their author imagines the metaphor functioning differently from the central ways that I had in mind. In most cases, though, I felt as though putting the question in terms of the metaphor prompted the students to produce responses that were more revealing of their understanding than a "straight" version of the question would likely have been.

1. How is the maypole metaphor intended to function as a heuristic device for understanding Aristotle's treatment of the notion of *ousia* (substance)?
 - (a) "The ribbons on the maypole cannot stay upright by themselves. Likewise the topical claims of Aristotle have a dependence on substance."
 - (b) "The activity of wrapping ribbons around the maypole seems to mirror Aristotle's own style of discussing substance as it pertains to each of his subjects. Each of the ribbon [sic] is separate in the same sense that each of Aristotle's treatises (metaphysics, ethics, etc.) can be taken separately; but each is connected in the sense that they wrap around a single pole, Aristotle's theories are built up around substance."
 - (c) "Furthermore, as the ribbons twist around the maypole, it becomes more complete without loose ribbons just hanging. Similarly, the different branches of Aristotle's philosophy that deal with substance help to complete and explain substance itself."
 - (d) "In regards to the challenge Aristotle sets forth, 'being is spoken of in many ways, but always with reference to one thing—i.e., to some one nature—and not homonymously' (1003a21-35), Aristotle believed that the focal point (primary substance) from which the penumbra (ribbons) of universal substance was connected then flowed outward into the world of reality. The primary substances were fundamental and were the bedrock of reality, whereas the universal substances (the many) were dependent upon the existence of primary, individual particulars. The ribbons are dependent on the pole for their proper function and role in the maypole activity."
 - (e) "Another descriptive quality of the maypole comes with a comparison to Aristotle's views on Intelligence and Virtue. He says that to learn

virtue, we must be intelligent, and to be intelligent means that we have a certain amount of virtue. I see this as being the same with the maypole. The pole alone is just a base for the ribbons to fall on, but the ribbons wouldn't have any structure without the pole. Therefore it requires both the ribbons and the pole to see the beauty of the maypole and its ultimate end."

2. In what way(s) is the metaphor inept or otherwise misleading?
 - (a) "The metaphor could be misleading in the sense that substance runs through the various aspects of Aristotle's philosophies. The pole with the ribbons attached only at the top doesn't accurately portray the depth of the relationship between substance and logic, ethics, physics, etc."
 - (b) "It makes it seem like ethics and, say, politics are not linked very closely together except through substance, but they share more commonalities with each other than just that."
 - (c) "Certainly the maypole is necessary for the formation of the pattern of ribbons. In this respect, the metaphor relates well to substance being necessary for Aristotle's formation of his corpus. However, it is not the case that each ribbon on a maypole is necessary to still have a nice decorative pole. It seems like one ribbon could be left out or removed and everything else would remain intact. But removing one piece of Aristotle's corpus would leave it incomplete. Leaving out the *De Anima* for example would definitely create a dearth in Aristotle's view of the *Ethics*."
 - (d) "The most misleading aspect of the maypole, I think, has to do with temporal relation. The maypole is in the ground before ribbons are attached and then weaved to cover it. Aristotle approaches something much more like a finished maypole, a cylinder of pleated [sic] ribbons, and begins to pull off ribbons, inspecting the ends of ribbons such as linguistic categories and commonplace virtues, eventually leading to a fully uncovered maypole, which offers even more meaning to the ribbons he had been inspecting in his investigation. This is opposite to the notion given by the maypole metaphor; when only a pole that is not yet woven is shown."
3. In your own experience, how valuable are metaphors to learning (whether the subject is philosophy or anything else)?
 - (a) "Very important. I'll admit that I am a rather direct sort of guy. However, the use of analogy is one round-about way of learning that I enjoy. I believe my enjoyment of this mechanism comes from my desire to solve riddles. If I am just given a metaphor and told what it means, then I'm less inclined to learn from it. But, if I am given a metaphor and asked, 'What do you think this is getting at?' and then I have to solve it, then I begin to learn."
 - (b) "Metaphors seem to give me more clarity on subjects which seem at times to be too abstract to fully grasp. When reading Plato, for example, thinking of the analogy of the cave always helped

me to understand where specific objects were in regards to their importance because I would just think where they would sit in the cave. Same for the maypole analogy, it helped me to remember that substance was somehow involved in whatever we would be talking about.”

4. How might you enhance or exploit that value in your future studies?
 - (a) “The most straightforward way to make use of this in futures [sic] studies is to be intentional about the use of metaphor, looking actively for possible connections. This reminds me of Plato’s recollection, the most [sic] lines you draw from one thing to another, the easier it might be to recall it by remembering something more prevalent. This way metaphor can increase understanding while also increasing retention.”
 - (b) “Metaphors are crucial to explain new concepts or new perspectives, as well as being useful in finding strengths or faults in an argument. There is a reason that there is a section on the SAT’s that deal [sic] specifically with these literary devices. I am also an anthropology major, and ethnography writing often deals with trying to capture the meaning systems of the subject people being studied. Often these systems are similar to ones we are accustomed to, but differ in subtle ways, that are not always obvious on the surface. Metaphor can help in pointing out these subtleties as well as how they are used within their own societies.”

IV. Conclusion

All things considered, I regard this experimental strategy as having been sufficiently successful to warrant refining it and trying it again. I will certainly modify the strategy in this respect: instead of relying exclusively on the ready-made metaphor of the maypole, I will instruct my students to produce alternative metaphors and compare their degree of fit with the maypole. Research in cognitive science has shown that self-generated responses to instructional stimuli foster greater understanding and retention than do those provided by others.³

It is worth noting that at the end of our first class meeting on Aristotle, after I had projected the image of the maypole on the screen, I conducted an informal poll by asking the following question: “How many of you think that there’s something a little strange about looking at this photograph in a course on ancient Greek philosophy?” Well over half of the students raised their hand, and many of them laughed audibly. While I cannot claim that every student came to appreciate the value of this particular exercise, I am confident that a strong majority regarded it as interesting, productive, and fun.

It was quite useful from a pedagogical perspective to invite the students to examine the inner-workings of my teaching techniques. I believe that it helped them better learn the material but, perhaps more importantly, it will also encourage them to be more reflective about the learning process, which is something whose value extends well beyond studying the ancients.⁴

Endnotes

1. The term “metacognition” was in use at least as early as the 1970s (see, e.g., Flavell (1979)) and is particularly favored among educational theorists working in childhood and adolescent literacy acquisition. The term also crops up in the work of scholars developing Philosophy for Children programs (see, e.g., Lipman (1985)).

2. Metcalfe et al. (2007), 744-5
3. Metcalfe et al. (2007), 746
4. I am grateful for helpful comments provided by anonymous referees for the Newsletter. I also wish to thank the Center for Teaching and Learning at Boise State University for travel support to help fund my participation in a group session at the 2009 Pacific Division Meetings of The American Philosophical Association, at which I presented a version of this paper.

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*Why I Don’t Teach Philosophy of Religion Any More**

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This article does three things. First, it describes the current introduction to philosophy of religion (or, at least, my perceptions of it), whether a course segment or a free-standing course. Second, it offers a critique of philosophy of religion so described. The course or course segment is, and always has been (at least in living memory), about certain religions, especially Catholicism or mainline Protestantism, not about religion as such. Third, this article sketches an alternative, one for which there now seems to be an interest among students but no textbook, monograph, nor anthology. This article is not a critique of philosophy of religion as such nor of its usefulness to those deeply learned in religion. It is, instead, a summary of what one philosopher has learned about a certain course from discussions with undergraduate students, mostly with vocations in architecture, engineering, science, and other non-religious fields. It is one teacher’s view.

I am merely suggesting a course, not presenting the materials for teaching it. I am suggesting it because I seem to have students who would like such a course and because I would like to teach such a course now and then. I am not presenting the materials myself because, as someone whose own work lies elsewhere (professional ethics, philosophy of law, political philosophy, and moral theory), I lack both the time and knowledge to follow my own suggestion, that is, to sift through the vast literature of philosophy of religion, sociology of religion, and the like for what I feel the need of.

What I say may have occurred to others as well, including some much better prepared to do the work called for. But, as far as I can tell, what I say here has yet to enter the literature or, at least, to enter it in a way likely to affect texts introducing philosophy of religion. I hope this article will open scholarly discussion of alternatives of the sort I suggest—or, even better, provoke a text I could use.

The Problem

I used to like teaching philosophy of religion—as part of an introduction to philosophy. There were, I think, at least four reasons for that. First, philosophy of religion then generally meant the attempt to understand as rational (or, at least, as not clearly irrational) certain beliefs, especially belief in the

existence of “God”—with “God” having a standard definition. Philosophy of religion then bore a family resemblance to philosophy of science.¹ Second, philosophy of religion consisted largely of the evaluation of arguments for the existence of God so defined (the ontological proof, the cosmological proof, and so on) and of arguments against the existence of God (relying on problems associated with free will, evil, and so on). Philosophy of religion was a good way to introduce students to the basic philosophical techniques of analysis, definition, and proof. Third, students, especially Catholic students (nominal as well as practicing), came into class knowing much about such matters already. I could, for example, ask for a definition of “God” and reasonably expect several students to recall their catechism well enough to list the standard attributes (eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good, and so on). Fourth, students generally seemed to find these arguments not only interesting but important. They took philosophy of religion of this kind seriously.

That was several decades ago. There have been at least three changes since then. The first change was the increasing proportion of students of various evangelical, fundamentalist, or enthusiastic denominations (such as Southern Baptists). These found the idea of trying to prove God’s existence odd. They had a “personal relationship” with God. What such a relationship might be is still a mystery to me, but the relation was not (they claimed) mystical.² God’s involvement in their lives was (more than one said) rather like their mother’s or mine, just an ordinary fact. Trying to prove God’s existence by formal argument was, therefore, rather like trying to prove their mother’s existence or mine in that way. Perhaps it could be done but, since they had the fact (more or less) before them, what was the point? Proving God’s existence by formal argument seemed to them some sort of game—one they were not interested in (even in the way Anselm was). They found the proofs amusing rather than interesting—when they did not find them plain “boring.” Other parts of the philosophy of religion seemed more to their liking, for example, explaining the relation between science and the revealed truth of their religion.

The second change started soon after this first. Those students I counted on to know the catechism (or its mainline Protestant equivalent) disappeared. Christian students knew increasingly less about what they “believed.” By the 1980s, seldom could one student in a class of thirty recite the Apostles’ Creed (or any equivalent statement of Christian faith). By the 1990s, I was lucky to find one student in a class who had even heard of it. Religion seemed to be breaking loose from doctrine. Eventually a vague believing-in replaced any specific believing-that. The only exception to this trend has been among the increasing number of Muslim students. A good many of them can still state their faith.

Which brings me to the third change, the religious constitution of my classes. The classes have, if anything, fewer non-religious than when I began teaching. It is the religious who have changed. There is much more variety. In recent years, I always have several Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu students. Occasionally, I also have a Taoist, Confucian, or Shinto (most Japanese students being Shinto whether or not Buddhist). I haven’t yet had anyone who practiced Haitian Voodoo or one of its African relatives, but I have had students who knew a good deal about the “backcountry religion” of their homeland.

This diversity has had at least two effects. One is to raise the question what belief that God exists—or, indeed, belief in God—has to do with religion as such. Of the religions listed in the last paragraph only Islam seems to share with Christianity the idea that religion is (primarily) a matter of belief (or faith) in God. My Jewish students who, in times past, accepted that

idea of religion, begin to draw away from it when they hear Hindus and Shintos describe their religion as concerned with rites, practices, group membership, or a way of life rather than faith, belief, or creed. Many now say, upon reflection, that Judaism is a way of life about which one need have no beliefs at all. But the Buddhists administer the death blow to the automatic equation of religion with belief in God. While having no connection with God, Hinduism and Shintoism are (according to my students) at least in part about gods, spirits, or something like that (even if no specific beliefs about them are required). The Buddhists, however, are clear that they do not believe in God (or gods). Buddhism is what most students suppose an oxymoron, an atheistic religion. Buddhism does, of course, have its beliefs (such as the “Four Noble Truths”). It is a “faith” in a way Hinduism and Shintoism are not. But its “faith” is wholly independent of God. (The scare quotes indicate that “faith” is my word for what some students might prefer to call “beliefs,” “creed,” or “religion,” feeling that “faith” suggests a conflict with reason they do not feel.)

My point here is not that philosophers of religion were unaware of these differences in religion fifty or even a hundred years ago. They certainly were aware of them. My point is, rather, that the introduction to philosophy of religion was designed (more or less) as if belief that God exists were a fundamental feature of all religions (the central feature of philosophy of religion as such). That design made sense when students were mostly Catholic or Protestant. But, with the dramatic increase in students of decidedly different religions, the old design no longer makes sense (or so it seems to me).

The other effect of the growing diversity in the religion of students is an extension of this one. The diversity of religion makes the question, “What is religion?” fundamental. What, if anything, do all the entities the class recognizes as religion have in common? It cannot be belief in God or gods (for the reasons already given). Communal ritual? (Many evangelical students reject this. For them, religion is a relationship with God to which the community of the faithful is a useful but not essential element.) Beliefs? (Some of the religions, such as Hinduism and Shinto, seem to lack any definite beliefs.) An attitude of respect before the infinite? (Confucians and Shintoists do not see what respect for the infinite has to do with them.) And so on. Yet, my students still seem to think all these “religions,” however different, have more to do with each other than any does with physics, literature, philosophy, or mass delusion. They would like help sorting out what, if anything, justifies calling all these entities “religion”—and what, if anything, the point, sense, purpose, or justification of religion so understood is. Any satisfactory definition probably will not be by necessary and sufficient conditions.

While I have taught in Chicago for the last twenty-five years, I do not think the problems just described are merely retribution for my big-city ways. My problem with evangelicals, fundamentalists, and enthusiasts began when I was teaching in central Illinois (part of the “Bible Belt”). And many rural universities now have student bodies which, though not as religiously diverse as my institution’s, are still much more diverse than they used to be (having not only more “minorities” but more international students, immigrants, and children of immigrants from countries outside Europe and Latin America). Globalization is definitely a factor here—as in much else. In addition, some “foreign religions,” especially Buddhism and Islam, seem to be picking up American members. Guessing a student’s religion by skin color, shape of face, family name, or accent, never without risk, is now much riskier. The future is likely to resemble the present—except that religious diversity in the classroom is likely to be more pronounced.

Now, with all this in mind, let us look at some current introductory textbooks in philosophy of religion. What response do they offer the problems just described?

Textbooks

I shall now examine some recent textbooks for introduction to philosophy of religion (both monographs and anthologies) to show that none sufficiently acknowledges the changes noted above. I shall use Wadsworth's list in part because it seems to me typical enough of what I see at other presses to be a good sample but in part because it seems a particularly good list. There is, I think, nothing to be gained by discussing more texts than I discuss here. Those who doubt the sample are free to look beyond it.

I shall begin with four texts which show no acknowledgement of the changes I identified and then consider some texts that do acknowledge them, though not nearly as much as I would like. By "no acknowledgement of the changes I identified," I mean (roughly) that neither the table of contents nor the actual contents of the book should surprise anyone who has read Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (or some other classic text used to introduce students to philosophy of religion). There have, of course, been refinements since Hume, but if the overall structure of analysis, definition, and proof is unmistakably that of the *Dialogues*, then it is, I think, fair to say that we are dealing with a text designed for the classic introduction to philosophy of religion rather than anything like the alternative I have in mind.

Using the *Dialogues* as a baseline does not mean that I trace the current philosophy of religion course back to Hume's day. Indeed, my impression is that the course as we know it began in the twentieth century. In any case, the *Dialogues* could not serve as a text in such a course until philosophers began using primary texts in undergraduate classes rather than surveys, something that seems to have become common only well into the twentieth century. I use the *Dialogues* as a convenience; it is both a familiar text and one old enough to serve as a gentle reminder of the tradition from which the current course descends.

Consider William Rowe's *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction*, now in its fourth edition (2007). Its eleven chapters are (more or less) straight out of Hume: 1. The Idea of God; 2. The Cosmological Argument; 3. The Ontological Argument; 4. The Design Argument (Old and New); 5. Religious and Mystical Experience; 6. Faith and Reason; 7. The Problem of Evil; 8. Miracles and the Modern World View; 9. Life after Death; 10. Predestination, Divine Foreknowledge, and Human Freedom; and 11. Many Religions [how to understand diversity of belief across religions].

To those who think Rowe's final chapter may acknowledge the changes I described above, I say two things. First, recall that Hume was aware of the variety of "popular religions" (*Dialogues*, Part XII). Indeed, for Hume, "natural" or "true" religion (religion resting on reason alone) was in part to be the antidote to that variety (and the necessary implication of that variety, that at least most popular religions must be false insofar as each disagrees with most of the rest). Most of Rowe's Chapter 11 is in fact about how the variety of religions need not undermine claims for religious truth. Second, and more important, Rowe uses this final chapter to argue for the relevance of his preceding ten chapters, with their emphasis on conventional monotheism. So, for example, he argues that it is "a mistake to think that theism is to be found only in these religions [the major religions of the West—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—because those] who worship the great God Vishnu in Hinduism, for example, also belong to the theistic tradition."³ Rowe may, of course, be right

about Vishnuites strictly so called, but that is quite different from being right about most Hindus, even most who worship Vishnu. I have yet to have a Hindu student who thought he (or she) was a monotheist (mostly because Hindus seem to have no specific beliefs about the number of gods).

Richard Gale's *On the Philosophy of Religion* (2007) has only four chapters, but their titles contain no surprises: 1. The Nature of God; 2. Epistemic Justification of Belief; 3. The Problem of Evil; and 4. Nonevidential Justification of Belief [such as mystical experience]. Gale is quite aware that he is covering familiar ground. The book's "underlying question" is, he says, whether it is rational in some sense to believe that the God of traditional Western theism exists.⁴

Though Steven Cahn has a slightly more innovative title for his monograph, *God, Reason, and Religion* (2006), its contents are equally unsurprising (except that he is unusually critical of religion). The first few chapter titles will, I think, give a fair sense of the conventional content of all sixteen (and its surprising take on it): 1. Proving God's Existence?; 2. The Problem of Evil; 3. The Problem of Goodness; 4. The Moriarty Hypothesis [Devil instead of God as the best way of explaining everything, a discussion comparable to *Dialogues*, Part IV-VIII].

William Wainwright's *Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd Edition (1999), is quite similar to Rowe's. Consider the table of contents: 1. Nature of God; 2. Arguments for God's Existence; 3. The Problem of Evil; 4. Immortality; 5. Mysticism and Religious Experience; 6. Anti-Evidentialism [such as James's "will to believe"]; 7. Is Theism the Best Explanation?; 8. The Diversity of Religions.

All four of these books (Rowe's, Gale's, Cahn's, and Wainwright's) are monographs. What about anthologies? Consider Louis Pojman and Michael Rea, *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology* (2008). Now in its fourth edition, its chapters ("Parts," each containing several readings) closely track Rowe's: 1. Traditional Arguments for the Existence of God; 2. The Argument from Religious Experience; 3. The Problem of Evil; 4. The Attributes of God; 5. Miracles; 6. Death and Immortality; 7. Faith and Reason; 8. Science, Religion, and Evolution [design]; 9. Religious Pluralism; and 10. Religion and Ethics [Divine Command Theory and non-religious alternatives]. Yet, this edition of Pojman and Rea acknowledges, in two small ways, the diversity I described in the last section. First, one of the three readings under Death and Mortality is "The Hindu Theory of Life, Death, and Reincarnation" (the author of which, Prasannatma Das, is a member of the Varanasi chapter of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness). Second, one of the four readings under Religious Pluralism is by the Dalai Lama ("Buddhism, Christianity, and the Prospects for World Religion").⁵

Now let us look at three anthologies from the preceding decade. Two promise something more "global." Gary Kessler's *Philosophy of Religion: Toward a Global Perspective* (1999) is superficially conventional—except for the first chapter (What is Religion?) and the use of the vaguer term "ultimate reality" instead of "God" in the titles of the other chapters. Consider the remaining chapter titles: 2. Diverse Views of Ultimate Reality; 3. Can We Prove that Some Kind of Ultimate Reality Exists?; 4. Religious Experience: What is it and What Does it Prove?; 5. Why do Suffering and Evil Occur?; 6. How are Religion and Morality Related?; 7. Are We Immortal?; 8. What is the Meaning of Religious Language?; 9. Do Faith and Reason Conflict?; 10. Humanism, Science, and Miracles; and 11. Are All Religions True?

Though the structure of Kessler's chapters is (more or less) conventional, at least one reading in most chapters is not. For example, half the six readings in Chapter 2 (Ultimate Reality)

are non-Christian (Taoist, Hindu, and Islamic). What Kessler gives us, in effect, is a richer version of the classic philosophy of religion, one at least systematically acknowledging that other religious traditions may differ substantially from the Christian. His anthology, though only a small step in the right direction, is certainly a step in that direction.

Steven Phillips' *Philosophy of Religion: A Global Approach* (1996), though three years older than Kessler's, is more innovative in the way I would like. For example, the book's introduction ("Globalism in Philosophy of Religion") is largely taken up with a brief description of each of the world's "major religions" (including not only all those I mentioned in the last section, except Shinto, but also Amerindian religions). Students are at least alerted to the existence of religions substantially different from their own. The readings in several of the chapters carry through this approach. The most dramatic example of this explicit recognition of differences among religions is in Chapter 1. It is divided into six subsections (God, Absolute Brahman, The Vibrant Void, The Tao, Polytheism and Henotheism, and Speculative Spiritual Metaphysics). Even the first subsection includes several non-Christian writers among its first eleven readings, not only Plato but also the Koran, Philo on Judaism, and Avicenna on Islam. Nonetheless, the overall structure of the book is familiar (as is the content of more than half the chapters). The chapter titles make that clear: 1. Divine Reality; 2. Arguments for a Divine Reality; 3. Mystical Experience; 4. Religion Debunked [various "refutations" of religion: Marx, Freud, Camus, and so on, without any response to them]; 5. Evil; 6. Religious Language; 7. Faith Against Reason (the Heart Against the Mind); 8. Religion and Ethics; 9. Personal Destiny [resurrection, rebirth, immortality, and so on]; and 10. Religious Pluralism [how much religions agree or disagree and why it might matter].

The oldest book on Wadsworth's list of introductions to philosophy of religion, E. D. Klemke's anthology, *To Believe or Not to Believe* (1992), is, as the title suggests, altogether conventional both in organization and content. Klemke understands "the main problem" in the philosophy of religion to be whether "religious belief [is] a viable option for our time."⁶

That is Wadsworth's entire list for introduction to the philosophy of religion. Every one of these texts, despite important differences, seems designed for a course that might conveniently have used Hume's *Dialogues*.

A Very Different Course

What is my alternative to the current course (or course segment) that now constitutes the introduction to philosophy of religion? Thinking about student comments over the years, I have developed the following list of nine topics or questions. They are intended as a sort of menu from which a suitable course or segment might be constructed. A semester course might easily take up most of them.

1. **What is religion?** This question, it seems to me, should be considered before proofs of God's existence are. While "belief in God" may be a proper way of picking out the "religiosity" of some religions, it plainly is not a good way to deal with all. What is?

Related to this question, and perhaps presupposing it, is whether there can be one "philosophy of religion" or whether religions differ so much that each (or a small grouping of them) should have its own "philosophy of." Here an analogy with philosophy of science might be worth thinking about. There is no longer a single philosophy of science so much as a collection of more specific studies (philosophy of physics, philosophy of biology, philosophy of economics, and so). Those who still do "philosophy of science" now try to work out what, if anything the

various sciences might have in common (instead of assuming they share a method, worldview, or attitude). So far, the answer seems to be: they do not have much in common. Some sciences are descriptive; some experimental; some theoretical. Some use a lot of mathematics; some use little or none. Some are concerned with a part of "nature" (stars, animals, the lay of the land, or the like). Others, like computer science, synthetic chemistry, and cultural geography are (primarily) about things not in nature. Some of the sciences (most notably physics, biology, and economics) have a history of conflict with religion, while others (mathematics, chemistry, and physiology) do not. Some, such as engineering are "applied"; others, such as astrophysics, are not. And so on. "Science" as the name for what we now more often identify as "the sciences" seems to have been a nineteenth-century coinage. Many philosophers of science now wonder whether we might be better off without it. Perhaps philosophy of religion should be asking the corresponding question about "religion." Perhaps what is needed are distinct courses (or course segments) in, say, a) varieties of Christianity with developed theologies; b) varieties of Christianity emphasizing a personal (rather than intellectual) relation with God; c) varieties of "Christianity" emphasizing (as Unitarians seem to) moral conduct as the primary way of connecting with God; d) varieties of Islam in which belief is highly disciplined; e) varieties of Islam in which there is a mystical relation with God; f) varieties of Islam in which moral conduct is the primary way of connecting with God; g) Taoism, which features legends whose aim is to suggest the religious significance of nature and the way in which a study of nature can teach one how to achieve what is regarded as spiritual balance and harmony; h) Hinduism and Buddhism—in both their Chinese and Japanese versions—which focus on myths of eternal cycles of creation and destruction, thereby giving history and time a cosmic (and presumably religious) interpretation; and i) cosmic views of various sorts that imbue one's social role (dharma) with greater significance and present the good and bad in one's present life as earned by one's conduct in a previous cosmic cycle (karma).⁷

By philosophy of a particular religion, I do not mean (what is often called) religious philosophy, that is, a systematic statement of a certain religion's doctrine or a defense of a specific way of interpreting it. Like the philosophy of physics, the philosophy of a particular religion is an attempt to understand the enterprise in such a way that rational persons might participate (or, at least, place it among other respectable human activities, such as games, rituals, or story-telling). It is part of a larger philosophical undertaking, the philosophy of religion. Religious philosophies are, in contrast, part of the religion in question, much as theology or Mariology is a part of Catholicism.

2. Closely related to the question of what religion is, is the question of **how to count (or differentiate) religions**. For example, is Christianity one religion or many? (If many, how many?) All the major religions seem to be divided into "sects," "denominations," "schools," "traditions," or the like. Are all these, or at least some of them, distinct religions (and why might the answer to this question matter)? There are also at least two (related) boundary questions.

One concerns how one determines that a certain group is, or is not, part of a larger religious group. How, for example, does one decide whether Unitarians or Christian Scientists are Christians (if they are)? Is that question similar to the biological one about how one identifies distinct species (that is, something decided by such facts as physical appearance, physical separation, history, individual development, or frequency of interbreeding)? Or is it more like a question about membership in a certain club (something the members or the rules they

adopt decide)? Which members? For example, is the decision about Unitarian membership in Christianity one other Christians get to make? Or is it something the Unitarians get to make? Or must both groups agree? What happens if they cannot?

The Unitarians are an interesting case. Most Christian clergy seem sure Unitarians are not Christians because they reject the Trinity and therefore cannot accept the Apostles' Creed. My students, even my Christian students, are, however, inclined to treat them as Christians (though not necessarily as "good Christians"). They have at least two reasons. First, they think avowing oneself a Christian makes one a Christian. The Unitarians do that (explaining that while they deny the divinity of Christ, they follow his teachings). Second, most of my students are unclear about why the dispute between Unitarians and Trinitarians should divide Christian from non-Christian. The dispute is, it seems to them, one about which only Christians are likely to care. Who else cares whether Jesus was altogether human or an aspect of a being that also includes "God the father" and "the holy ghost"? More important perhaps, few of my Christian students are willing to ascribe to the Apostles' Creed once they have read it. Most express surprise at what "some people" think they must believe to be a Christian and, of course, it is the Apostles' Creed that is supposed to bar Unitarians from joining Christianity.⁸

There may, then, be a great difference between Christianity as the clergy (or learned) understand it and as ordinary members understand it. Is this more like the difference between how scientists understand science and how ordinary people do (where we are inclined to side with the learned), or more like the difference between how philosophers of science understand science and how working scientists do (where we may be more inclined to side with the less learned)? Do (or should) different religions answer this question differently (depending, for example, on what the status of "religious authority" is in that religion)? Given how important boundaries between religions seem to be (making the difference between infidel and heretic, for example), there ought to be some discussion of how the boundaries should be drawn, including whether this is a question each religion is free to answer differently. Can philosophy provide some criteria for evaluating different answers—criteria at once useful and relying on reasons all rational persons recognize, whatever their religion?

The other boundary question concerns individual membership in a religion. Is one's religion like one's nationality, something one is born into (as, for example, it seems to be for Judaism and Hinduism)? Or must it involve some formal admission process (such as communion or adult baptism)? Or is it simply a matter of what one believes or how one lives? Can, or should, admission be reversible? For example, can one cease to be a member of a religion by "losing faith," ceasing to practice, or "quitting the church"—or does one remain a member but become subject to discipline? What kind of discipline? What is the rationale for religious claims to control the conduct of unwilling members ("apostates")? Is there any underlying unity to the way religions do, or should, respond to such questions?

3 Is there progress in religion (and how are we to tell)? The monotheistic religions seem to agree that they represent an advance over polytheism. The absence of polytheists from the classroom once made that an easy assumption. With the arrival of Hindus and Shintoists, that assumption became much harder to make. Hindus and Shintoists do not admit the superiority of monotheism. Hindu India is still only a "developing country," still subject to dismissal as "backward," but Shinto Japan is not. In what respect, then, are the Japanese worse off for being Shinto rather than Jewish, Christian, or Muslim? On most measures of

education, practical success, and human decency, Shinto Japan seems at least as well off as any "Christian nation."

With Shintoists and Hindus as modern-day representatives of the "idolaters" of old, it seems reasonable to try to work out criteria for evaluating religions. Is one religion better (more advanced) than another because more of its members will be "saved"? (If so, how are we to know how many of each are saved without begging the question?) Is one religion replacing another proof that it is better (as it would be if the real were always the rational), merely evidence of superiority (as winning at chess is evidence of superior skill at chess), or merely a sign that history is no fairer to religions than to nations? Are there any other criteria beside these to help us evaluate religious "advances" (for example, the absence of animal sacrifice or female circumcision or the encouragement of science or tolerance)? Claims of superiority are a common feature of religions (especially of religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, that require members to have only one religion). How should claims of religious superiority be evaluated? Indeed, can they be evaluated?

4 The sacred. Most religions seem to have sacred books. The rest have other sacred things (buildings, groves of trees, rocks, statues, or the like). We might wonder whether there is any common rationale for designating certain books, objects, or places sacred. Of course, we must first consider what, if anything is common across religions in the idea of the sacred (a question sociology or anthropology can help with). Then we must consider how one might justify the identification of an object as sacred. What is the point, justification, or rationale for such identification?

5 Interpretation Most religions involve the interpretation of special texts; all seem to have traditions that they interpret. Interpretation may even be an essential feature of religions because religions are (or so they seem) at once profoundly conservative, looking back to ancestors, founders, or "old ways," and constantly changing, adjusting to new circumstances (for example, deciding whether watching television is allowed even if watching live theater is not). There are often disputes about how to interpret: "literally," "historically," "poetically," or according to some complex canon taking into account what is "reasonable," what is known in other ways, and the like. How might we adjudicate between competing principles of interpretation? Should the standards of adjudication be constant across religions? Or should one principle dominate in one religion while becoming secondary or even irrelevant in another?

6 Prayer (as ritual, whether or not as request, praise, thanksgiving, devotion, meditation, or the like) seems to be a common feature of religions. Is the point of prayer the same for each? Or does prayer differ fundamentally from religion to religion? Or, at least, does the justification differ from one religion to another? If prayer is common, while everything else is variable, does the idea of prayer itself tell us something about religion? Can one have religion without prayer?

7. Religions seem (as a matter of fact) easily distinguishable by specific "**customs**" or "**religious law**" for example, avoiding meat, wearing certain clothes, celebrating certain holidays (and not celebrating others), bowing, kneeling, sitting, or standing in prayer; and so on. In what respects are such differences in conduct essential, if they are; in what respects, incidental? How are we to tell? What help does the definition of religion offer in answering these questions? What does the answer to these questions tell us about the moral status of these customs or laws, for example, the appropriateness of using them to justify punishing those who do not follow them?

8 All religions seem to go beyond the facts (even if they do not go against them). All religions seem to offer insight into how we may live well or, at least, come out well in the end. They are, in this respect, “experiments in living.” Do religions differ in how they go beyond the facts or in how they justify doing so? Do some religions do a better job of providing justification than others? What should be the criteria for evaluating such justifications? In particular, should moral considerations be relevant (a morality independent of religious belief)?

9 What is the relation between morality and religion? While most religions claim to teach morality, the claim is surprisingly hard to defend. There are at least six difficulties worth discussion (beyond what is now in most textbooks).

First, many religions teach some things that seem morally wrong (for example, that believers may, or even should, kill heretics, witches, apostates, blasphemers, infidels, or the like). Going beyond the facts may take a religion beyond morality as currently understood—and perhaps beyond morality as it should be understood.

Second, there is the fact that most statements of defining belief (such as the Apostles’ Creed) have nothing to say about morality. (Indeed, most introductions to philosophy of religion do not include morality in religion’s definition.) For those religions that are not faiths, beliefs, or creeds, what does seem to define them—rituals, practices (such as meditation), group membership, or way of life—also seems to have little or nothing to do with morality.

Third, there is the (standard) claim for the “divine command theory” (what God commands is morally required). Few of my students, even those who think God necessary for morality, believe that whatever God commands is morally required. Some God-commanded conduct, such as keeping the Sabbath or avoiding alcohol, is (they say) “just a religious requirement” (at best a practical aid to acting morally).⁹ Such judgments suggest that the criterion of what is moral is at least in part, and perhaps entirely, independent of religion. The question, then, is why any religion should claim to decide moral questions—and what arguments could justify such a claim.

Fourth, for those religions that require submission to God (primarily Christianity, Islam, and Judaism), there is, it seems, a serious inconsistency between ordinary morality and religion—of which the God-commanded sacrifice of Isaac is the classic example. Defining God as “all good” only changes the terms of the problem to how one is to know that a command is God’s (and not the work of some lesser being easily mistaken for God). In fact, many religions have explicit discussions of how to identify “false prophets.” The exact criteria of recognition are important both for avoiding fanaticism and for protecting against such disasters as the mass suicide at Jonestown. Many of my students, even many of those who claim to have a religious faith requiring submission to God’s command, recognize a tension between religion and morality—one that may someday require a choice like Abraham’s. Is the existence of such tension an argument against the religion in question—as well as against the necessary connection of morality with religion? How good are the criteria for recognition of “false prophets”? How might they be improved?

Fifth, while most religions claim to support morality, their support (or at least much of it) seems to be in the form of extrinsic punishment or reward (heaven and hell, higher or lower reincarnation, bad luck, or the like). On some theories of morality, ones many students implicitly accept, this form of support threatens to rob good conduct of its specifically moral status—turning it into self-interested conduct of the sort associated with obedience to criminal law or marketplace. On this understanding of morality (and such an understanding

of religion’s “support”), morality and religion are enemies. In addition, some of this support of morality itself seems unjust. So, for example, the Christian belief in hell seems to accept infinite suffering as a just response to finite wrong—a response infinitely out of proportion to the crime. The learned discussion of these questions is both long and rich. Why then not include some of it in an introductory textbook?

Sixth, there seem to be some religions (such as Shinto) that do not claim to support morality. That raises the fundamental question of why any religion should claim to support morality. Why should religions not treat morality as an independent sphere (much as most religions treat art or sport) rather than trying to absorb it?

The relation of religion to morality may seem to some a topic more appropriate to a moral theory course than to a course in philosophy of religion. It is not—for at least three reasons. First, none of the important moral theories (utilitarianism, Kantianism, virtue theory, and so on) rely on religion. They are all notably secular.¹⁰ Second, few moral philosophers treat “divine command theory” as a serious competitor among contemporary moral theories. Hobbes is, I think, the last major theorist to give much space to showing that his moral theory is consistent with the Christian religion. Third, moral theory courses generally try to separate morality from religion as quickly as possible—in order to get to the “important” moral theories. One class hour may, for example, be devoted to *The Euthyphro*. (Texts in moral theory generally do the same.) Leaving the topic of religion’s relationship to morality to a course in moral theory probably means the relation will be ignored or discussed only superficially and with little sympathy for religion’s claims.

Philosophically Interesting?

One response some philosophers of religion make when I challenge the classic introduction to philosophy of religion as I have here is, “The classic questions are the philosophically interesting ones.” When I ask what makes a question philosophically interesting, I get several rather uncertain responses. The most common is, “Well, that’s what interests me (and philosophers like me).” True, no doubt, but hardly decisive. Less common is the claim that the classic course is “traditional” or “belongs to the philosophic canon” (whereas, admittedly, my questions generally do not). Philosophy (they imply) is defined by that tradition. Again, that is hardly a decisive answer. The classic course in philosophy of religion seems to have developed during the twentieth century (though its roots undoubtedly reach back several centuries—into an increasingly mainline Christian environment). The tradition does not seem to be something reason requires. In general, philosophy seems to consist of questions philosophers (and their students) find interesting—in part because no one else knows how to answer them. Those questions change over time. Such change is part of the tradition. The tradition does not stand in the way of the changes I have proposed here.

The nine questions I listed in the last section do not seem to me inherently less interesting or less philosophical, than the questions now typically discussed in an introduction to the philosophy of religion. Indeed, they seem to resemble the questions we now discuss in other philosophy-of courses, not only philosophy of science (or one of its splinters, such as philosophy of physics) but also philosophy of law, philosophy of medicine, philosophy of sport, and so on. These questions also seem to me to be likely to interest the students I now have more than the classic introduction to philosophy of religion. Indeed, when my students ask for a philosophy course “on religion,” they seem to be asking for the course I have suggested. Why

then do we not have a textbook that would allow us to teach such a course (or course segment)?

The answer may seem to be “academic standards.” A student who did not have the classic course in philosophy of religion could not be said to be competent in philosophy of religion. That answer might be relevant for a student planning to go to graduate school in philosophy or divinity. But few, if any, of my students will do that. They would take the philosophy of religion course to round out their education. I have no doubt that their education will be at least as well-rounded if they learn more about the definition of religion or the relation of religion to morality instead of the four proofs of God’s existence. I imagine the same is true of most students who now take philosophy of religion elsewhere. Indeed, would not even those (relatively few) future graduate students in philosophy or divinity be better prepared overall for thinking about philosophy of religion with a course such as I have suggested than with one deeply rooted in a past now increasingly foreign?

Endnotes

- * An early version of this article was presented to the Humanities Colloquium, Illinois Institute of Technology, December 5, 2008. I should like to thank those present, as well as several reviewers for the Newsletter, for many helpful comments.
- 1. I am, I stress, speaking of the course, not the field. The field then included, and continues to include, other ways of understanding its subject. For example, some philosophers whom Wittgenstein influenced have tried to understand religion as “a form of life”—and therefore as not concerned with belief (or, at least, propositions that can be true or false). But even such alternatives allowed for discussion of religion’s “rationality.” Is religion rational in the way playing a game is, or irrational in the way psychotic rituals are?
- 2. My use of “mystery” here is not intended to belittle the experience of these students but merely to express my incomprehension (which I freely admit in class). Perhaps that incomprehension owes something to the religious tradition I was brought up in (which lacks a personal God); or perhaps it is owing to absence of grace; or perhaps I am just blind in a certain way (as William James would have it). The fact remains that I find my students’ descriptions of their personal relationship with God “a mystery”—as I do some classic descriptions of more mystical experiences, such as Augustine’s in *Confessions* bk. 8.
- 3. Rowe, 178
- 4. Gale, vii.
- 5. I am ignoring two other readings that might seem to add to the non-Christian offerings in Pojman and Rea (under Religion and Ethics), that is, a) Plato’s discussion of the relation of morality to religion (because Plato’s discussion belongs to the tradition Hume knew) and b) Bertrand Russell’s discussion of the compatibility of atheism and moral conduct (because Russell is clearly a “fallen Christian” trying to persuade other Christians).
- 6. Klemke, 7.
- 7. I should like to thank one reviewer for the Newsletter for substantially augmenting my original list.
- 8. For those who have forgotten (or never knew) the Apostles’ Creed, here it is (in the Catholic version):
 1. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
 2. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
 3. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
 4. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
 5. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again.
 6. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

7. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
 8. I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 9. the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
 10. the forgiveness of sins,
 11. the resurrection of the body,
 12. and the life everlasting
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostles%27_Creed (September 20, 2008).

9. One reviewer asked, “Does any religion state its judgments as to what religion requires as ‘just’ a religious requirement?” That is a question without an answer. What I report here is what my students say. The students can speak for themselves. Religions cannot. They have only representatives who may, or may not, be right about what “the religion says.” Indeed, how one is to know the content even of one’s own religion (“what it says”) is one of the questions a philosophy of religion course might cover, perhaps under interpretation. Nonetheless, there are religions whose representatives at least seem to make something like this distinction, for example, between those commands of God that can be known by reason alone (natural law) and those that depend on religious authority (such as the order of a service, the clothing of the priest, or what one may eat on Friday). These representatives might reject my use of “just” for what is no more than a religious requirement but there will have to be some way to express the difference between what is “religious law” and what is “natural law” that acknowledges the parochial character of religious law.
10. Even natural law theory treats all but revealed law as the product of a reason all humans share, even those who do not believe in God.

BOOK REVIEWS

Demons, Dreamers, & Madmen: The Defense of Reason in Descartes’s Meditations

Harry G. Frankfurt (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). xviii + 264 pp.

Reviewed by Yakir Levin

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Descartes’ First Meditation consists of a series of skeptical arguments of increasing strength and range, culminating with an argument to the effect of radical doubt even in our most evident beliefs. In the Second Meditation Descartes provides an argument to the effect that his belief that he exists (*sum*) is immune to the radical doubt of the First Meditation. He then also argues that the claim that he exists as a thinking thing (*sum res cogitans*) also enjoys this epistemic status. However, this is but a first step towards overcoming the radical doubt of the First Meditation. In the Third and Fourth Meditations Descartes seeks to generalize the rather limited anti-skeptical conclusions of the Second Meditation to all the claims which, like *sum* and *sum res cogitans*, state what (he thinks) he perceives “clearly and distinctly” (CSMII, 24). To this end he provides in the Third Meditation two cosmological arguments for the existence of God (further supported, in the Fifth Meditation, by an ontological argument). On this basis Descartes then argues in the Fourth Meditation that God’s existence guarantees immunity from radical doubt to all claims the truth of which he perceives clearly and distinctly. Among these claims are the truths of geometry which, in Descartes’ view, are the key to knowledge of the

physical world: “My entire physics is nothing but geometry,” he famously wrote to Mersenne (CSMK, 119). Thus, the generalizing move of the Third and Fourth Meditations provides Descartes with a basis for claiming that a most significant body of knowledge is immune to the radical doubt.

This is, of course, but a very schematic bird’s eye view of Descartes’ skeptical and counter-skeptical moves in the first four meditations. Nevertheless it brings into relief the questions these moves give rise to and the difficulties they involve. To begin with, it is not all together clear what the point of Descartes’ strategy is in the First Meditation. Since each member of the series of skeptical arguments constituting the First Meditation renders superfluous the member that precedes it with the last and strongest member rendering redundant all other preceding members, what exactly is the point of the exercise? And isn’t the radical doubt entailed by the last and strongest member rather “exaggerated” (CSMI, 159 & 308), and “like phantoms and empty images which appear at night in the uncertain glimmer of a weak light” (CSMI, 408-409) not really to be taken seriously? If so, what is its point? Indeed, Descartes’ stated skeptical goal is to suspend his judgments until he can establish something “stable and likely to last” in the sciences (CSMI, 12), a goal achievable, he claims, if we “resolve not to affirm or deny anything which we have previously affirmed or denied” (CSM II, 270). But if his goal can be achieved in this way, that would seem to make his whole skeptical apparatus otiose. Second, given the more general anti-skeptical move of the Third and Fourth Meditations, the limited anti-skeptical moves regarding the sum and sum res cogitans in the Second Meditation appear pointless. Third, what exactly does it mean for a perception to be “clear and distinct”? Descartes says fairly little about his concept of clearness and distinctness; indeed, as Markie has observed, this concept appears to be “the least clear and distinct concept in his philosophy” (Markie 1992, 161). Fourth, since Descartes’ proofs of the existence of God rely on clear and distinct perception, his anti-skeptical move of the Third and Fourth Meditations, which involves these proofs, is, it appears, viciously circular: In seeking to show that our clear and distinct perceptions are immune to radical doubt it presupposes this very conclusion. As Arnauld put it in the Fourth Objection (albeit in terms of truth rather than immunity to doubt), “we can be sure that God exists only because we clearly and distinctly perceive this. Hence, before we can be sure that God exists, we ought to be able to be sure that whatever we perceive clearly and distinctly is true” (CSMI, 150). Finally, and in light of the difference between Arnauld’s and my formulations of the notorious “Cartesian circle,” how is the relation between immunity to doubt and truth to be understood?

Frankfurt’s *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen* (hereafter, DDM), first published in 1970 and now reissued by Princeton University Press, is a classic attempt to answer all these questions by way of a close, very rich, and most insightful and stimulating reading of the first two Meditations. As Frankfurt sees it,

the skeptical excursion of the First Meditation is designed to ... [discredit] the thoughtless confidence in sense perception with which common sense is generally content ... [thereby rendering] the philosophical novice to whom Descartes addresses himself ... susceptible to an intellectual conversion—a conversion from reliance on the senses to appreciation of the essential role of reason in the acquisition of knowledge. (DDM, 19-20)

Given how difficult it is to overcome long-standing and deeply-rooted intellectual habits and ways of thinking what is required for this conversion to take place, Frankfurt notes, is not only

a change of mind but also a “shaking up” of the will. The especially vivid and compelling rhetoric of the First Meditation is strikingly well suited to this purpose, as is also Descartes’ use of a series of skeptical arguments of increasing strength and range. But there is more to Descartes’ argumentative strategy. Frankfurt writes:

Although he believes he can overthrow all his opinions by an act of will at the very outset of his enterprise, [Descartes] also regards the skeptical arguments of the First Meditation as essential in overcoming the weight of his [own] long-held prejudices and in preventing them from exerting an illicit influence in the reconstruction of the sciences that he proposes to undertake. (DDM, 29)

In addition, these arguments are supposed to help him “keep his judgments effectively suspended” (ibid.). Finally, but not less important, these arguments serve to discriminate “between those of his beliefs that are and those that are not to be rejected” (DDM, 27-28); they are supposed to enable Descartes to “cast aside the loose earth and sand so as to come upon rock or clay” (CSMI, 125). Indeed, in Frankfurt’s view, “Descartes’ skeptical arguments have to do [more] with the task of deciding which of his former opinions are worthy of being reinstated than ... [with the task of bringing] about the general overthrow of his beliefs” (DDM, 27).

Descartes’ attempt to discredit the empiricist common-sensical view by way of his skeptical chain of arguments presupposes the pre-eminent authority of reason. Indeed, for Frankfurt, this authority is “built into the very conception of his enterprise” of establishing the sciences on solid ground (DDM, 40). Nevertheless, at this early stage, Descartes’ commitment to reason is neither unequivocal nor irrevocable but rather provisional and open to examination (ibid.). Indeed, the final skeptical argument of the First Meditation is meant to cast doubt on Descartes’ presupposition of the authority of reason as it seeks not only to show that no sensory beliefs “can reasonably be regarded as certain by someone who has no resources other than those provided by common sense” (DDM, 68), but also that reason can be invalidated by means of a *reductio ad absurdum* of sorts. Descartes’ response to this skeptical move of the First Meditation must therefore show not only how we can gain certain knowledge of sensory beliefs, but also, and perhaps more importantly, that reason can indeed be validated. The role played by the final argument of the First Meditation with respect to reason may thus be taken to have special importance despite its being rather “hyperbolic.” But it is important also because of the clue it provides us to the Cartesian procedure (outlined below) for validating reason without resort to vicious circularity.

Early in the Second Meditation Descartes seeks to arrest the spate of destructive doubt generated in the First Meditation by way of a *reductio ad absurdum* argument to the effect that “he cannot reasonably doubt sum [i.e., his own existence]” (DDM, 136) because “there is a contradiction in supposing that sum is falsely believed” (ibid.). Although the conclusion of this argument does not say anything about the nature of the “I” whose existence cannot be doubted, the way Descartes has reached this conclusion serves as a basis for his confidently ascribing to himself the characteristic of a thinking being (DDM, 167).

Sum, then, appears to be a claim whose justificatory basis excludes all reasonable grounds for doubting it. Insofar as it does not merely appear to have this characteristic but is actually recognized as having it, sum is clearly perceived (DDM, 188). In addition, in seeing that sum res cogitans, Descartes appears to

understand what is and what is not entailed by the justificatory basis that renders his perception of sum clear. Insofar as he actually understands this rather than merely appears to, sum is perceived distinctly (*ibid.*). Thus, sum appears to be perceived clearly and distinctly. But is it really perceived in this way?

When a claim appears to be perceived clearly and distinctly, the perceiver cannot help believing it for under these conditions it would appear to the perceiver that he has “the best possible basis for assenting to its truth (DDM, 227). However, Frankfurt argues, so long as Descartes does not directly counter the radical doubts (and their implications) concerning reason with which the First Meditation ends, what appears to be clearly and distinctly perceived need not be actually thus perceived. Since the argument for sum does not counter these radical doubts or their implications, although sum appears to be perceived clearly and distinctly it need not actually be perceived thus, and this means that the sum and *sum res cogitans* moves do not have their intended anti-skeptical implications. Nevertheless, these moves are important because of the clue they provide to how we are to understand the notions of “clearness and distinctness” and, I would add, because the reasons for their failure in rebutting the radical doubt expressed in the First Meditation make clear that the specific aspect of this doubt that should be tackled concerns the validity of reason.

The anti-skeptical move of the Third and Fourth Meditations is directed towards exactly this end, that is, showing that not only is the authority of reason that is assumed in the First Meditation not undermined by the *reductio ad absurdum* that is claimed to undermine it, but also and on the contrary, that we have positive reasons for accepting this assumption. As Frankfurt explains:

The point of... [this move] is that if reason is properly employed—that is, if we give assent only to what we clearly and distinctly perceive—we are not led to doubt that reason is reliable. We are led, on the contrary, to assent to the propositions that God exists and that He guarantees the reliability of reason. ... Since the proof of God’s existence eliminates not only the... [grounds for radical doubt in the First Meditation] but every hypothesis that might serve as a basis for mistrusting reason, its value is in effect a proof of the consistency of reason, i.e., a proof that no set of clear and distinct perceptions can be self-contradictory. For it shows that no proposition entailing the unreliability of reason can be clearly and distinctly perceived. (DDM, 243-244)

Blocking a *reductio ad absurdum* of the assumption that reason is valid by showing that that *reductio* is itself not valid is not a circular move; it merely exposes a flaw in that *reductio*. However, as Frankfurt notes, this falls short of showing that what is indubitable—namely, the outcome of clear and distinct perception—is true. But, Frankfurt notes, this is wholly consistent with Descartes’ vision for, according to Frankfurt, Descartes’ whole procedure aims at establishing “truths by removing the grounds for doubting them rather than by proving their truth in a direct way” (DDM, 240), and he “recognizes that ... [this procedure] entails that from our knowing something with perfect certitude it does not follow that it is, “speaking absolutely,” true” (DDM, 248). Frankfurt continues:

What he [Descartes] suggests is that if something that is perfectly certain may be absolutely false, then the notions of absolute truth and absolute falsity are irrelevant to the purposes of inquiry.... [In his view,] the notion of truth that is relevant is a notion of coherence. Descartes cares less about the correspondence of his beliefs to “reality” than he does about their permanence and constancy. What

he wishes above all to avoid is not error; in the sense of non-correspondence, but betrayal. What might be found out to be false is what he wishes to guard against. If a belief can confidently be expected to remain unshaken by any further inquiry, that is all the truth he cares to demand. (DDM, 249)

If Frankfurt is right about this, then, Descartes’ move for validating reason does not suffer from the commonly charged circularity. For, as Frankfurt argues,

Metaphysical doubt concerns the truth of what is clearly and distinctly perceived, and the removal of this doubt is effected without assuming that what is clearly and distinctly perceived is true. It is removed simply by the knowledge that a certain demonstration has been successfully accomplished. This knowledge is, of course, that certain things have been clearly and distinctly perceived. But that the truth of these things be supposed is not required, and so the question is not begged. (DDM, 245)

Nevertheless, Frankfurt admits, Descartes’ move is not altogether free of circularity because, given that it is reason that is used to show the reliability of reason, it might well have been the case that reason would show the contrary as well—in which case reason could not be said to be reliable. In the end, then, although Descartes attempts to provide what amounts to a proof of the consistency of reason, his proof is decisive only if one makes the question-begging assumption that reason is in fact consistent (DDM, 245-246). So Descartes’ grand defense of reason ultimately fails. But it is a glorious failure, worthy—to paraphrase Leibniz—of his genius.

While this review could not go into all the subtleties, deep insights, and fine details of DDM, I hope it gives at least a taste of them. It should also be mentioned that besides all its other considerable merits, DDM is very elegantly as well as most engagingly written. It also masterfully keeps the delicate balance between clarity-cum-simplicity, on the one hand, and precision of formulation on the other: The book can be used in introductory courses on Descartes and early-modern philosophy—I, for one, use it in such courses—but more advanced students as well as faculty may also greatly benefit from it. I whole-heartedly, indeed most enthusiastically, recommend it to all these audiences. Despite the enormous and highly sophisticated literature on Descartes’ validation of reason and the Cartesian circle, much of it published after DDM’s first publication—for a fine survey see Hatfield 2006—DDM still stands out as one of the very best discussions of these topics.

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Justice: What Is the Right Thing To Do?

Michael J. Sandel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009). 308 pp. \$25

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There is, it seems, a pronounced difference between writing a book and teaching a class—even if class and book are on the same subject. Teaching gives us the opportunity to be spontaneous, flexible, and responsive to students' concerns. Writing, on the other hand, forces us to be systematic, organized, and much more formal. Michael J. Sandel's book *Justice: What Is the Right Thing To Do?* shows that there does not have to be a gulf separating writing and teaching. The book, which is actually based on Sandel's well-known Harvard course on justice, left me with the impression of just having attended a series of stimulating lectures. My reading experience was so enjoyable that it was hard to believe that I had just made my way through 269 pages and ten chapters of political philosophy. How was such a quick and pleasant intellectual journey possible?

It turns out that Michael Sandel is the master of the anecdote. There are anecdotes about famous philosophers (Bentham's pauper management plan), famous politicians (Robert Kennedy, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama), natural disasters and some of their unfortunate human sequelae (price gouging after Hurricane Charlie), recent events (U.S. Navy Seals missions in Afghanistan, government bailout for banks), contemporary moral problems (such as those associated with Affirmative Action, surrogate motherhood, same-sex marriage), and interesting Supreme Court cases (Casey Martin vs. PGA). Sandel has a remarkable talent for picking the right anecdote for the right purpose. Every chapter opens with a story that provokes the reader to contemplate issues which are explored in greater detail in the subsequent discussion. Moreover, Sandel frequently uses anecdotes within chapters to raise crucial objections to particular moral theories. When he wants us to see a particular problem about utilitarianism, he describes the fate of Richard Parker, the fifteen-year-old cabin boy who in 1884 was cannibalized in a lifeboat by three other sailors who, dying of starvation, were desperate for nourishment. When Sandel wants us to see moral issues with market-oriented thinking, he does not only talk abstractly about selling organs or outsourcing of pregnancies but tells us about Suman Dodia, who is one of the more than fifty Indian women in the city of Amand who were carrying pregnancies for couples in the United States and Britain. By talking about specific persons and particular events Sandel makes it easy for students to enter the philosophical conversation about distributive justice. This is effective because students find it more engaging to think about the fairness of Tiger Woods' enormous income instead of thinking in abstract terms about the justice of Rawls' difference principle. Through his frequent use of anecdotes, Sandel skillfully moves the debate from the Platonic realm of universals to the realm of particulars inside the cave. This is one of the book's central strengths. It is written with students in mind and is thus truly student centered. In Sandel's own words the book is an invitation for readers "to subject their own views about justice to critical examination and to figure out what they think and why" (p. 30). It thus resembles a Socratic conversation in that the numerous anecdotes provoke readers to connect their own moral judgments with the larger and more abstract conversation among great moral thinkers. Any instructor who assigns *Justice: What Is the Right Thing To Do?* to his students will have an easy time initiating lively and engaging class discussions.

Let us take a closer look at the content. After a stage-setting first chapter, the remaining nine chapters can be grouped into three larger parts that correspond to the three competing regulative principles of distributive justice which are emphasized by Sandel: welfare, freedom, and virtue. The discussion of welfare, and hence utilitarianism, as a guiding principle for distributive justice occurs in one chapter of twenty-six pages. The discussion that links justice to freedom takes place in four chapters and contains a discussion of Libertarianism, Kant, and Rawls. The last three chapters are dedicated to an exploration of the Aristotelian approach to distributive justice. Throughout the book—which contains an index and useful endnotes—Sandel's exposition of various moral theories is clearheaded, free of jargon, and, again, refreshingly sensitive to students' concerns. A good example occurs on pages 124–129 where, as part of his larger discussion and explanation of Kant, Sandel addresses four questions that are frequently raised by students. He deals, for instance, with the question of whether the Categorical Imperative is the same thing as the Golden Rule. His willingness to address such questions head-on helps students avoid common misconceptions and makes the text a great learning tool. Sandel is also not afraid to use quite ordinary examples to illustrate lofty philosophical concepts. In order to illustrate teleological reasoning he uses an example based on the tale of Winnie the Pooh (p. 190). In order to explain Rawls' rejection of moral desert as a principle for distributive justice, he quotes a passage from Woody Allen's movie *Stardust* (p. 164). Sandel's discussion of political Libertarianism in chapters three and four is also an attractive feature of the book. I have found that many of my students are attracted to free market solutions to questions about distributive justice. Sandel does a much better job than most standard textbooks in describing Robert Nozick's approach to distributive justice in the context of the economic and political thought of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, and he succeeds in presenting numerous arguments in defense of Libertarianism that will resonate well with what many students think. Given that he is able to present Libertarianism in such a seductive way, his subsequent discussion of the moral limits of markets in chapter four is especially effective and thought provoking.

While most textbooks that introduce moral theory to students try to present the material from a neutral perspective (that is, they aim to provide the best possible case for all of the—at least major—contending moral theories), Sandel's book lays no claim to neutrality. Rather, Sandel has a clear and well-defined point of view from which he argues for a particular moral perspective, namely one that sees the good (virtue) as being prior to the right. This means that liberal theories of justice (such as those of the libertarian, of Kant, and of Rawls)—according to which a fair and just distribution of honors, rewards, and opportunities must be neutral among competing conceptions of the good—figure as Sandel's main dialectical opponent. Is this a problem for using the book in the classroom? I do not think so. Although Sandel argues that neither utilitarianism nor any of the liberal theories of justice succeeds in developing satisfactory frameworks for distributive justice, his discussion of the various liberal theories is nevertheless very insightful and illuminating. His eventual rejection of these approaches to distributive justice does not lead him to distort them. On the contrary, he takes pains to explain their attractions.

What is surprising however, is that the last three chapters of the book, wherein Sandel presents his own favored Aristotelian approach to justice, are somewhat cursory. Given the fact that Sandel thinks that satisfactory principles of justice can only be found if we "reason together about the meaning of the good life and create a public culture hospitable to the disagreements that will inevitably arise" (p. 261), one would expect that his

discussion of the good life would be the best part of his book. However, in my view, this part of the book ends up being somewhat of a letdown. After a short general introduction to Aristotle in chapter eight, Sandel spends most of the remainder of the book arguing that we have moral responsibilities to our family, country, and fellow citizens that can only be accounted for if we acknowledge our nature as “as situated selves” (p. 241). But liberal theories with their focus on freedom of choice and moral individualism cannot account for these moral obligations. In addition, Sandel tries to establish that most hotly contested issues of justice and rights cannot be debated without taking up controversial moral and religious questions. Take, for example, Sandel’s discussion of same-sex marriage. Sandel argues that neutral principles like nondiscrimination and freedom of choice are insufficient to settle the question whether the state ought to recognize same-sex marriages. What is necessary is a clarification of the function and purpose of marriage that invariably involves substantial moral and religious claims. Suppose Sandel is right about this. Does this mean that any resolution of the same-sex marriage debate requires that all citizens need to come to an agreement on what role marriage plays in the good life? Or does it mean that the debate about same-sex marriage will go unresolved so long as different members of the same community have different moral and religious beliefs? I find both alternatives unappealing. It is surprising that Sandel tells us so little about how different segments of a pluralistic society that reason together about the good life have any chance of finding agreement once they renounce the neutrality of classical liberalism.

In spite of my reservations about the last part of the book, I recommend it highly. It can be used as a textbook in any introductory course on ethics, or in a course on contemporary moral problems. Any instructor who decides to use *Justice: What Is the Right Thing To Do?* will undoubtedly experience hours of engaged and stimulating classroom discussions.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

We encourage our readers to suggest themselves as reviewers of any of the books listed or of any others they have used in the classroom and which they wish to review.

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