

Teaching Philosophy



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FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

Katheryn Doran

ARTICLES

Jamie Robertson

Theory Informed Practice: An Activity-Based Approach to Introducing Ethical Theory to Professionals in Health and Public Service

Katheryn Doran

De Beauvoir in the Prison Yard

POEMS

Felicia Nimue Ackerman

How Doth Professor Superstar

When Spousal Hiring Infects Universities

BOOK REVIEW

Puqun Li: A Guide to Asian Philosophy Classics

Reviewed by Karsten J. Struhl

ADDRESSES OF CONTRIBUTORS



APA NEWSLETTER ON

Teaching Philosophy

TZIPORAH KASACHKOFF AND EUGENE KELLY, CO-EDITORS

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FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

Katheryn Doran

HAMILTON COLLEGE (KDORAN@HAMILTON.EDU)

I am happy as guest editor to welcome our readers to the fall 2015 edition of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy* special issue on teaching philosophy in non-traditional settings. In this issue we present two articles, a book review, two poems, and a list of books we have received from publishers.

In recent years the profession has taken an interesting and hopeful turn towards trying to have a greater voice in public matters where professional philosophers could and should have an impact. In 2010, for example, the American Philosophical Association established a contest for the best opinion-editorials published by philosophers, with the intention of honoring five standout pieces that incorporated philosophical argumentation into mainstream, accessible writing. And the preamble to Sally Haslanger's APA Eastern Division presidential address in December 2013 states: "The way I would like to frame my critique, at least today, is not in terms of what is included in philosophy, but in terms of what is often left out or devalued. The spirit behind my talk is one of invitation: an invitation to think about more issues, to explore different histories, topics, and methods deserving of philosophical attention."

The writers of the two papers in this special issue of the newsletter have responded to the spirit of Professor Haslanger's invitation. They were motivated to teach in non-traditional settings because they think philosophers can be of service in a wider range of settings than the traditional classroom. They had also expected to learn new things about teaching philosophy and perhaps about philosophy itself: from the challenge of new settings and audiences might emerge new strategies in teaching and novel insights into philosophical positions. Both writers taught philosophy in non-traditional settings in part because they wanted to reach a wider and often philosophically naïve (or even disenfranchised) audience than one finds in traditional academic classroom settings. Their papers touch on interesting questions about some practical pedagogical challenges that one might expect to encounter and document some surprises.

In the first article, "Theory Informed Practice: An Activity-Based Approach to Introducing Ethical Theory to Professionals in Health and Public Service," Jamie Robertson gives a detailed critical overview of her classroom experiences

with eager professionals in the health and public service sectors who are philosophical novices, but no longer matriculated students. She and her colleagues responded to an interest among practitioners in these fields for practice-oriented ethics education. The practice-centered approach Robertson and colleagues adopted attempted to reflect the specific challenges and priorities of this population. Her contribution outlines a number of activities and strategies they employed to introduce participants to ethical theory and to help them feel more comfortable addressing the ethical issues they encounter in their professional lives.

In the second article, "De Beauvoir in the Prison Yard," Katheryn Doran chronicles her changing views about both philosophy and philosophical pedagogy through her many years running a philosophy book group in a medium security men's prison. In particular, she remarks on what she notices—and fails to notice—in philosophy texts that she is (in many cases) long familiar with. These amount to changes in her perception of the meaning and value of a text brought about by her reflecting on the responses of the audience with whom she reads and discusses that text. Many men in this by and large uneducated group take up with both passion and commitment philosophical problems professional philosophers work on, for example, the question of the extent (if at all) to which we can have language-independent knowledge of the external world. Doran's work with prisoners attempts to realize three values that characterize the study of philosophy: the practical (preparation for a career), the intellectual (training in analytical skills), and the moral (the edification of the self as a purposeful agent). These values are central to contemporary educational controversies such as those documented by William Deresiewicz's *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*.

We are also happy to publish two poems in this issue by Felicia Nimue Ackerman of Brown University, "How Doth Professor Superstar" (previously published in *The Providence Journal*, March 13, 2015), and "When Spousal Hiring Infects Universities" (previously published in *The Providence Journal*, April 24, 2015). Professor Ackerman writes of "When Spousal Hiring Infects Universities": "Spousal hiring comes in many forms. The trailing spouse can be the wife of either a man or a woman or the husband of either a woman or man, and there are also transgender and intersex versions. So is it fair to single out the trailing wife of a man for criticism as violating feminist principles? I think so, since feminist principles should preclude a woman's getting a job through her romantic or sexual connection with a man. What do readers think?"

The fourth feature in the issue is Karsten J. Struhl's review of Puqun Li's *A Guide to Asian Philosophy Classics*. We hope readers will find this review useful when considering this book for classroom use.

In the Books Received section, readers will find books we have received for possible review. We encourage readers to suggest themselves as reviewers for any of the books listed. 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. (We will send specific review guidelines to all who review material for our newsletter.)

As always, we encourage our readers to write of their experience as teachers for our publication. We also welcome articles that respond to, comment on, or take issue with any of the material that appears within our pages.

The following guidelines for submissions should be followed:

All papers should be sent to the regular editors electronically. The author's name, full mailing address, and the title of the paper should appear on a separate page. Nothing that identifies the author or his or her institution should appear within the body or within the endnotes of the paper. The title of the paper should appear on the top of the paper itself.

Authors should adhere to the production guidelines that are available on the APA website. For example, in writing your paper to disk, please do not use your word processor's footnote or endnote function; all notes must be added manually at the end of the paper. This rule is extremely important, for it makes formatting the papers for publication much easier.

Contributions should be posted to:

Tziporah Kasachkoff, PhD Program in Philosophy,
The City University Graduate School and University
Center, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016,
tkasachkoff@yahoo.com

or

Eugene Kelly, Department of Social Science, New
York Institute of Technology, Old Westbury, NY
11568, ekelly@nyit.edu

All articles submitted to the newsletter are anonymously reviewed by the members of the editorial committee, as follows:

Tziporah Kasachkoff, Co-editor
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ARTICLES

Theory-Informed Practice: An Activity-Based Approach to Introducing Ethical Theory to Professionals in Health and Public Service

Jamie Robertson
YORK UNIVERSITY, CANADA

What would you teach if you had only one session with a group of non-philosophers to demonstrate the value of your area of philosophy, and to help them put its major insights into practice?

My colleagues and I were presented with this unusual question in the work we pursued through our university's ethics center between 2012 and 2014.¹ While most centers for the study of philosophy host some events (talks, philosophical cafés) aimed at promoting awareness and understanding of philosophy among the general public, this is our center's primary activity. In the aim of increasing awareness of ethical issues among, and providing resources for, members of the larger community, we developed programs to engage both general and specialized audiences. The specialized audiences we worked with included professionals and students in the areas of health and public service. Our activities in this area were initiated in response to the interest people in these fields expressed in accessing practice-oriented ethics education.² What makes the members of this audience unusual is not their lack of familiarity with ethics or moral reasoning,³ but that they are seeking out philosophical insights with a specific practical purpose in mind and in order to address a perceived weakness in their theoretical background. This audience is often looking for more than to take in passively a presentation on an issue in their field. Rather, they want to learn about ethics in a way that will help them better integrate an awareness of ethical principles into their professional practices. Given the working realities in health care and public service, namely, ambiguity, complexity, high-stakes decision making, and public accountability, professionals in these fields are

regularly faced with questions of an ethical nature. So, it is understandable that they would want to develop their competence in responding to such questions in well-reasoned ways. However, since they are usually not able to commit to regular meetings or course work, many conventional learning formats and settings are not available to them. This article is about the methods my colleagues and I employed in boardrooms, public meetings spaces, and conference halls while offering learning opportunities oriented to the practical needs of this audience.

A PRACTICE-ORIENTED APPROACH

Since the aim was informing the practice of the participants, a considerable amount of time was spent helping the host group identify the specific questions they wanted to address and the outcomes they wanted to achieve. Sometimes a number of preliminary consultations were required, and these were often complicated by the host agencies' lack of specificity about their aims. We found it valuable to learn about the missions of the organizations we were serving so we might tailor the sessions not just to the general challenges of the field, but to challenges particular to the host agency. The time taken at this stage helped ensure that the material presented was relevant to participants, so that they could directly appreciate the applicability of ethical thought to their field. Because the facilitators were then able to draw clear connections between theory and practice in that participant's area and had some familiarity with the experience of the participants, participants left the sessions feeling more confident of their ability to think through the ethical issues they faced in their roles.⁴

We encouraged participants' use of philosophical ideas in activities for two reasons. These activities gave participants the power to align the discussion of philosophical ideas with their lived experiences. The discussions prompted by the activities permitted participants to draw connections that we could not between their work and the theoretical concepts and tools under discussion. Moreover, focusing on activities allowed participants to deliberate about ethics in a safe and collaborative environment. Our experience has been that even many of those who have substantial experience engaging with ethical questions find deliberating about ethical issues a difficult task. Through interactive exercises, participants experimented with basic theoretical concepts, exploring the power and limitations of a variety of moral stances. They discovered the implications of ethical positions and principles, and achieved a more thorough grasp of major ideas. In addition, the activities aimed to introduce participants to structured and systematic forms of reasoning, and to important reflective practices like questioning the terms in which a dilemma is articulated and thinking creatively about values. While these practices might be natural for philosophers, we noticed that it was helpful to provide explicit cues for participants as they worked to frame and analyze ethical issues.

The role that the session leader played was that of facilitator rather than presenter. We often worked with people who knew little about the various theories of ethics (or philosophy more generally), so some presentation was inevitable. But, because of our focus on activities, we kept presentation

time during the sessions very short, and interspersed presentations with activities that made use of the concepts presented. The descriptions of the activities we used (below) exemplify this approach. The activities were used to stimulate conversation and discovery before the facilitator intervened to offer explanations or elaborations from a more scholarly philosophical perspective. This procedure allowed sufficient space for participant engagement, and accommodated the diverse disciplinary perspectives that are relevant in practical settings.⁵ Participants in our sessions were regularly much better versed in these other perspectives than we. So, the sessions often involved an integration of perspectives.

ACTIVITIES

The sessions we delivered took the form of one-time workshops. These lasted as little as fifty minutes, or as long as six hours. Most were an hour to an hour and a half in length. While it was usually not possible to use exactly the same workshop for each group, it was often possible to recombine a relatively consistent set of activities. They were used during workshops conducted for three different audiences: high school students, post-secondary students in professional programs, and professionals. (Where relevant, I will indicate which audience.) The activities we employed generally served one of three purposes: the introduction of concepts, the reinforcement of concepts, and the application of concepts. In a normal workshop, it was usually possible to go through only one round of introduction, reinforcement, and application.

Many of the activities will be familiar to the reader as they are based on the case study model, which is a common instructional method. In general, our approach to case studies, as well as the other activities, involved making discussion central, using audiovisual or physical media to promote active engagement, and providing visual representations of reflective processes.

I. INTRODUCTION OF TOPIC AND BASIC CONCEPTS

Because we worked primarily with people with little or no formal training in philosophy, we usually began with a brief introduction to ethics.

a. What Is Ethics?

Because "ethics" and "morality" are terms used in everyday language, received interpretations of these terms could be leveraged to initiate the discussion. The facilitator might elaborate on the ideas offered by participants during an informal discussion until the group arrived at an understanding of the terms that is philosophically accurate and sufficient for the purposes of the meeting. We found that it is better to ask what people *think of* in connection with the term "ethics," rather than asking them what "ethics" *means*. This was a more effective strategy in this setting because we were trying to do more than just convey a some sense of what "ethics" might mean, and why it might be important, from a philosophical perspective. In the process of the discussion we wanted both to gain the trust of the participants, whom we were usually meeting for the first

time, and to get them accustomed to participating. What a person *thinks of* in relation to ethics is part of their subjective experience. People tend to be more likely to answer this question since they no longer have to worry about being wrong. At this stage, correcting people’s contributions was not a major aim. Usually, participants offered some pretty reasonable responses (such as: “how to act,” “right and wrong,” “what we should do,” or “justice”). We wrote their responses on a board or chart paper to help everyone remember the key ideas that had been put forward. After hearing from the group, a facilitator tied the ideas together to offer a more coherent explanation of what ethics is, and how it is done. We found that making use of the ideas raised by participants helped establish their confidence with the subject and the setting.

Giving a further introduction to ethical theories required some form of presentation. There are two techniques that we used to make this process more exploratory and interactive.

b. Ethics-Themed People Bingo

This is an exercise we used with younger groups, especially high school students. People Bingo is a common icebreaking exercise used in medium to large groups of youth at camps, conferences, and other venues where interpersonal connection and interaction are important. In an icebreaking context, each participant is given a printed grid in which each box contains a personal attribute (for example: has brown eyes, has traveled to Mexico, or loves reading). In our ethical adaptation of the exercise, each column represents an ethical theory, and each row an ethical question (see Figure 1).

What Do You Think? Is It Ethical?			
Is it ethical to...			
...lie?	Yes. As long as it is the way to get the best outcome.	No. It's against the point of communication.	Maybe. It isn't good, but it might be the best thing to do in a particular situation.
...take one person's organs to heal several others?	Yes. Because many people will benefit while only one will be harmed.	No. It's not right to use people like tools.	No. An ideal doctor won't harm anyone.
...mistreat animals?	Yes. So long as more benefits are created than harms.	No. Mistreating animals leads us to mistreat people.	No. Cruelty is a character flaw.
...disobey the law?	Yes. If it is for the greater good.	No. If it was okay to disobey there would be chaos.	Maybe. If a law is unjust it might be right to disobey.

Figure 1. Ethical people bingo grid.

The inside boxes come to represent the responses each theory might give to a particular question. Participants are given a set amount of time to circulate around the room to find a person who espouses each of the positions presented. The goal is for students to record the responses of everyone in the room. If each position is espoused by at least one person, then the participants will have filled the card, like in Bingo. By the end of the activity, participants

will have lots of checkmarks or signatures distributed throughout their grids. Though the names of the theories were withheld, the activity teaches the participants about the kinds of questions that arise in ethics, that a number of plausible responses are usually possible (and implausible ones are too), and that people hold differing views.

After the allotted time, participants were led through a reflective discussion about their experience. The questions posed included:

- Were there any options in the grid they found surprising?
- Were there any possible responses that they would have wanted to add?
- Were there any similarities among the answers given in each column?
 - Was there one column that seemed most strict?
 - Was there a column that was most concerned with the effects of an action?
 - Was there a column that provided flexibility to the decision-maker depending on the situation?

The reflective questions helped prepare the students for a more formal presentation of the theories. The final series of questions in particular prompted the students to think about what the responses in each column might have in common.

c. The Inverted Case Study

We employed a different introductory activity, which I am calling an inverted case study, when working with more mature audiences or in professional settings. In this case, “inversion” is meant to indicate a reversal of the standard order for using case studies, where they are used as a tool to get students to apply ethical theories to which they have already been introduced. We, in contrast, started participants with a case, and used it as the basis for introducing theories. The exercise began by giving participants a few minutes to read the case. Participants were usually willing to read the case aloud, a responsibility that was designated to one or more group members. Participants then had the opportunity to suggest how and why they might respond to the situation presented. Their responses were articulations of their pre-theoretical intuitions and were recorded for future reference. The facilitator then alternated between describing ethical theories and allowing the participants a chance to discuss how each theory would deal with the case. Doing this supports the practice-based approach by giving the participants a chance to apply new material thoughtfully and in manageable amounts. It was also possible to see substantial changes in some participants’ initial perspectives as they learned what kinds of considerations might be relevant in ethical deliberation.

II. REINFORCEMENT OF CONCEPTS

When time permitted, we used the activities described in this section to help participants develop a firmer grasp of the concepts by giving them the chance to use the material in a new way. We viewed this as an intermediate stage between learning the concepts and using them to analyze a case. Participants were applying the ethical theories they had just learned, but the scope of application was limited to previous exercises or other theoretical frameworks with which they might be familiar. The purpose was to give participants a further opportunity to explore the basic precepts of the moral theories that were presented before taking on a case, which is a much more complex undertaking.

a. People Bingo Follow-Up

As noted above, the People Bingo activity was followed by an explicit discussion of the theories represented in the columns of the grid. The facilitator identified and outlined the theory represented in each column. The grid continued to play a role in this process. Once the organization of the grid was made clear, the table came to serve as a visual representation of the practical implications of different ethical outlooks. As each theory was described, participants were prompted to return to the grid to find places where key features of the theories were suggested by the responses offered to the ethical questions presented in the rows. Taking this step seems to have helped participants connect the theoretical with the practical.

b. The Principles Game

This reinforcement activity is particularly appropriate for students and professionals in the health care sector. In health care, practitioners are often taught to think about ethics in terms of principles rather than theories. While four main bioethical principles are recognized (autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice,⁶ there are a host of others that are relevant, such as paternalism, sanctity of life, quality of life, and utility. This exercise was presented in some sessions after the participants had been introduced to a few ethical theories either through a previous activity or through a brief presentation. In this activity, a set of PowerPoint slides was prepared with the names and definitions of various principles. The participants worked as a group to classify each principle under one or more ethical theories. This often resulted in interesting conversations about the possible interpretations of the principles, and about the full implications of the theories. It was also an opportunity for participants to connect abstract concepts with principles, which are arguably closer to everyday value-based language, and to discover new knowledge through supported reasoning.

III. APPLICATION OF ETHICAL THEORY TO PRACTICES

Largely, our approach to facilitating more sophisticated applications of moral theory involved regular or modified case studies. This will be clear in the first two strategies described in this section. However, the final example is a departure in that it describes an activity where participants

applied moral theory to their routine professional practices in order to cultivate self-understanding.

a. Supported Case Analysis

Given the short duration of the sessions, it was unfair to expect groups of younger, less experienced participants (particularly at the high school level) to follow through with a systematic application of ethical theories or principles to a case. So, we altered our aims regarding the use of a case study. We decided that the objective for the case study, when working with high-school-age participants, would be to introduce participants to the *structure* of ethical argumentation. The components (premises and conclusion) of a simplified ethical argument pertaining to a specific case were printed on large posters. Participants were coached by the facilitators as they worked together to place the different components in order. Once the elements of the argument were put into a logical order, students discussed *which* theory their argument represented. If there were enough participants, several sets of posters would be used. Each set would contain an argument from the standpoint of a different ethical theory. In these cases, the participants were divided into several groups. After each group had reconstructed the argument on their posters, they explained the argument to the groups working on arguments about the same case, but made against the background of other ethical theories. In this way, they collaborated in discovery of the arguments that might be given for or against the action in the case. This approach gave the participants the opportunity to make use of the concepts they had just learned without causing them to become unnecessarily confused or frustrated by the difficulty of the material.

b. The Audiovisual Case Study

Presenting a case in an audiovisual form can also be quite effective. When conducting a workshop with a group of midwifery students, I played them clips from an episode of the popular show, *House MD*, in which a mother wants to keep her fetus despite complications that have put her health at risk. I stopped the clip at the point when Dr. House is about to enter the patient's room to discuss her course of treatment. The students were asked to formulate how they would approach this discussion and what considerations they would take into account if, as midwives, they were put into a similar situation. Compared to a written case, the multimedia component presented the case in a more compelling, if not more realistic, way. Two additional supports were used during the discussion. First, the participants used a structured case-analysis tool, which acted as a guide to ensure their reasoning was structured and thorough.⁷ Second, the participants, who were part of a professional college, worked through the case using their college's Code of Ethics. While participants were aware that their profession had a Code of Ethics, they reported that they developed a better appreciation of the relevance of this policy when they were made to connect its stipulations with ethical theory during the analysis of a case.

c. Analysis of Practices

As an alternative to case studies, participants can be led to use ethical theories to uncover the values that are implicit in their professional practices. This method was used in a workshop delivered to the employees of a local municipality as part of the creation of a departmental ethics statement. The department consisted of a large number of divisions responsible for functions as varied as archives, city parks, libraries, and social services. It was important that departmental representatives identified values that all divisions held in common, so that the document would be relevant to everyone. To help identify the common values, we developed an activity in which participants dissected their major tasks to reveal the underlying values inherent in and associated with those tasks.

Participants were presented with a schematic composed of concentric circles (see Figure 2) and filled it in by working from the periphery to the center. In the outer circle, participants listed some of their primary work-related activities or “practices.” In the mid-section of the wheel, participants described the “ways of doing,” that is, how they had been taught to do a practice correctly. They were instructed to connect these “right ways of doing” with particular values, which they placed at the center of the wheel. The members of the group then discussed the values they had identified and found the ones that they held most closely and most in common. In this case, participants applied their learning to their habitual practices and were aided in this process by the use of a method for representing their reasoning process visually.



Figure 2. Practices and values schematic.

FINAL THOUGHTS

These workshops were very well received by their audiences and were rewarding for the facilitators. Our approach allowed us to convey the relevance of philosophical thought to a number of unusual audiences in our community. While it may be the case that, of all

areas in philosophy, ethics is particularly well suited for being presented in this way, it seems to me that many of these exercises could be adapted to other subdisciplines in the field. For example, the People Bingo exercise could easily be adapted to questions in epistemology (what is it to know?) or philosophy of biology (what is innateness?). Or, the Principles Game could be used to provide clarity where two or more sets of concepts are used to map a single discursive space. What may be less clear is who the audience for workshops in these other areas would be. Students of philosophy would be an obvious place to start. These techniques could be used to convey and reinforce information for students in introductory courses or at recruitment events.

NOTES

1. I would like to acknowledge my collaborators in this project, Paolo Biondi, Réal Fillion, and Rachel Haliburton of the University of Sudbury, in Sudbury, Canada, as well as the contribution of our student assistants, Amanda Lindenbach and Jenna Del Riccio.
2. This interest was discovered through a community consultation conducted in 2012.
3. One of the reviewers rightly noted this is also true of most undergraduate students in introductory philosophy courses. Further, it is important to note that many people in the health and public service sectors have had some exposure to ethics either through schooling or through immersion in employment settings where compliance with ethical standards is stressed. I suspect that many professionals in these fields do not feel the amount or kind of ethics training they receive is adequate preparation for the challenges they face in the workplace. The work described in this article represents how institutions and different disciplinary perspectives can collaborate to make progress in addressing this shortfall, though admittedly not resolving it.
4. The scope and duration of the activities I am discussing in this article did not permit for an extensive evaluation of outcomes. Our assessment of the effectiveness of these practices was based on subjective self-reports, which were part of an evaluation participants completed at the end of the sessions. Participants reported overwhelmingly that participating in the session had made them *feel* more prepared to address ethical questions in their workplaces. The question of how these kinds of sessions affect actual individual or institutional practices is an important one, but was not something we were able to address.
5. Other relevant disciplinary perspectives might include ones familiar with organizational policy, laws, and legal precedents, as well as the know-how and professional experience of practitioners.
6. Rachel Haliburton and Carol Collier, *Bioethics in Canada: A Philosophical Introduction* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 2011), 303-304.
7. We used the RESOLVEDD method by Jonathan L. Kvanvig as it is found in Raymond Pfeiffer and Ralph Forsberg, eds., *Ethics on the Job: Cases and Strategies*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: Wadsworth Press, 2004).

De Beauvoir in the Prison Yard

Katheryn Doran
HAMILTON COLLEGE

The question the men in my prison philosophy book group most often ask me is, Why you do this? Or, What makes you come back year after year? The question everyone else most often asks me is, What is it like to teach philosophy in prison?

In answer to the first question, I would propose that there are four phases of motivation for a lot of volunteer projects, including this one:

- (1) The Do Goodism phase: My first forays into prison volunteer work consisted of visits two or three times a year to three local prisons. I would swoop down with an education coordinator and give a lecture on philosophy to a group of ten to twelve inmates. The discussions were generally short, polite, and impersonal: a low impact contribution.
- (2) The Prurient Value phase: The prison book group provided an antidote to the insular life of teaching at a highly selective liberal arts college. This motivation was coupled with (1).
- (3) The Civic Virtue phase: There is evidence that this work, when done in a sustained and systematic way, can have a positive impact on the lives and futures of incarcerated people, who are among the most disadvantaged in the United States. This belief kept me committed to the work. But there is some evidence against this “correctional” view, too, and so I have sometimes resorted to the old starfish cliché about having to be satisfied with knowing the work has had an impact on at least a few of the people in the group.
- (4) The Intellectual phase: Over time, the work has taken me full circle to my own self-interests being served (a mark of Do Goodism) along with the interests of the men, in at least two ways: first, reading the texts through the eyes of a radically different population than the young and usually privileged students I teach, affords fresh insights into the texts’ strengths, weaknesses, and assumptions. And second, working with a group that has been disenfranchised intellectually and otherwise, and seeing the personal transformation and intellectual growth afforded to its members, has not only been among my most rewarding professional experiences, but it has vividly confirmed my deep commitment to the singular value of studying philosophy.

In this paper, I will focus on the fourth phase, and in particular on the pedagogical and philosophical insights I have gotten from teaching philosophy in prison. I also hope to answer both questions I began the paper with.

THE SHAPE OF THE PROGRAM/SHAPING UP THE PROGRAM

The work started at three upstate men’s prisons in 2002. For three or four years, I met the philosophy book group a few times a year. This group consisted of eight to twelve men. I was always in the presence of a paid staff member from the facility. The main order of business was a lecture on some assigned reading followed by a question and answer session, followed by some discussion. I managed to scare up ten copies of the first text in question—*The Trial and Death of Socrates*—through libraries. The education

coordinator for the system distributed them a few weeks before the meetings began, and I collected them after the meetings: an imperfect, seat-of-the-pants operation, run on a strictly volunteer basis (with no participation at the time of my home institution, Hamilton College). The first leap into a more regular, systematic schedule began in 2005 in another prison, where the librarian took over recruiting for and organizing the group, and the college gave us an official budget line for book purchases (at around the same time that we volunteers had also become quite proficient at securing book donations from publishers). After that, I committed to volunteering in that prison only, and met with my group every other week. This change took place around the same time that other Hamilton faculty volunteered to do topics in their disciplines (classics, art history, and literature), with other groups. I was the only philosopher. The librarian wanted the prison to keep the books on reserve for future book group use, but we faculty felt strongly that it was important to have the men keep the books as their own. Who won that battle? It was a toss-up—the librarian selectively repossessed a fair number of books, but many men managed to keep their copies.

The books we have done over the years, in roughly the order in which we read them, include:

The Trial and Death of Socrates, Plato
Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings, John Perry
Practical Ethics, Peter Singer
Justice, Michael Sandel
Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud
The Ethics of Ambiguity, Simone de Beauvoir
Why We Can’t Wait, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Ten Theories of Human Nature, Leslie Stevenson
Lectures on Ethics, Immanuel Kant
The World’s Religions, Huston Smith
Predictably Irrational, Dan Ariely
The Power of Habit, Charles Duhigg
The World Before Yesterday, Jared Diamond
The Art of Living, Epictetus
1984, Orwell
The Symposium, Plato

I try to group readings by theme. For example, the Singer and Sandel books both raise questions about what we owe to others, especially to the least well off, and this has been supported by the explorations of basic ethical frameworks in Plato and Kant. Group interest has also been an important guide to me in selecting themes. That was the case with Huston Smith’s work on the world’s religions, with the books by Duhigg and Ariely on cognitive science, and with Orwell’s philosophical novel, for which we prepared by reading his essay “Politics and the English Language.”

But much as I’d like to draw a coherent line linking the texts, the truth is that the group chose the next text for study on the basis of their interests at the moment (though I usually give them two or three books I think would be appropriate and they choose from those options). Since the group’s membership shifts dramatically, sometimes in the space of just weeks, there’s no point in attempting to impose any long-term structure to the readings.

The ten or so men in the group come for the love of the experience alone: no credit towards the GED, or towards anything, is awarded, and I do not, and in fact cannot assign any written work. Because the meetings are not part of a credit-bearing program, I am not allowed to bring anything into the meetings other than my driver's license, a pen, and the book we are currently discussing, into which I can jot notes on the sessions, as needed. I have to mail any materials we will use in the group to someone in the prison to vet and distribute. No other correspondence with the men is allowed. The men are likewise not allowed to correspond with us volunteers, which would be the only way they could get written work into my hands as long as they are in the prison system. The only requirement is that they commit to attend regularly the sessions devoted to the books they sign up for. Making good on that commitment is a lot harder than one might think. When I tell people I do a prison book group, many often joke that the men in it are probably super well-prepared because, well, what else do they have to do? In fact, all of the men in the prison where I work have jobs. Many of them are studying and preparing to take the high school GED test; passing that test is a condition for release in New York, and many of the men in my group have failed it multiple times. Many of them, by choice or court mandate or both, attend regular Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meetings, or parenting classes. Some are prevented from coming because they are in trouble—they might miss class for a week or two because of time in the Special Housing Unit (solitary confinement), and in the worst cases, they are in prison for reasons that bar them permanently from participating in any optional activities like ours. Men are transferred regularly to other prisons, often with no notice at all. Several men have been released. And finally, men often run into a problem with the correctional officers on duty connected either with getting out of their dorms or into the school, or both. The bureaucratic wheels in prison can be compared only to the Soviet Union pre-*Glasnost*. Rules change or are enforced idiosyncratically, for their enforcement depends on the officers on duty, the prisoner in question, and even on the volunteer. Many an awful night I have made my way to the prison through blinding snow or rain only to be turned away because of red tape, leaving the men sitting in the classroom awaiting me. Conspiracy theories among the men run rampant, and I believed these theories to be paranoid inventions until much later I learned that some of the views I had been certain were paranoid were, in fact, true.

It has certainly been gratifying to have interested (in the material and what I had to say about it) and grateful adults eager to profit from my teaching. But for a long time it was more personally than philosophically interesting to me. We volunteers usually taught in the library of the facility until spring 2012 when the three book-group volunteers convinced the deputy superintendent of programs to move the operation into the prison school building where we could meet as often as once a week and with no supervising staff. The removal of staff turned out to have a salutary effect on the students' willingness to speak. I learned many of them were afraid of the librarian, thought she engaged in favoritism, and did not in general trust her. From that point forward I began meeting—weekly during the summer months—with the group in a school-building

classroom down the hall from the nearest correction officer. At last, we were working on philosophy together.

Though we work on the material together, the group is run in a traditional hierarchy: I lecture and explain quite a bit. I am in charge in this way in part because the men are eager to take advantage of my expertise, though what they want more than anything else is to be taken seriously as students, and their views of what that means are quite traditional. They demand explanations of terms and concepts, and revel in mastering new ideas and vocabularies and theories—from what is involved in the categorical imperative or utilitarianism, to what is meant by "Orwellian," to Simone de Beauvoir's use of (what's translated as) "shilly shallying."

CONTENT AND PEDAGOGY

Chief among the challenges I faced (apart from getting in to the prison system to teach in the first place) is a familiar one to any teacher: the difficulty of getting the students to stick to the text. At first I found their wandering off into personal thickets deeply frustrating and flummoxing (and of course the question about how and when to exercise my authority to bring us back to the material under discussion is more complicated with members of this group). Yet unlike traditional classrooms, here there is a startlingly high level of tolerance for these departures. I have come to understand that this work demands an open ear and open heart to the outpouring of thoughts and sentiments, and respect is a necessary condition of participating in this group. Almost everyone finds that the material at one point or another strikes a personal chord that calls forth complicated and often emotional connections. There is true empathy; any of the men may lose his way while commenting, and the others have a good idea about what he is feeling when he struggles to put his ideas into words. Going off the topic is a problem only if it is perceived as a problem, and I take my lead from the people in the group. Patient attention is the better pedagogy in this setting; I've gotten better at it by following their example. (This freedom is one of the luxuries of our work not being tied to academic credit.) When it *is* time to move on, the men appreciate my talent for highlighting themes among their comments and connecting them to the readings we have been discussing. It is worth mentioning that the differences in educational backgrounds among the men is extreme; one man may be a well-read attorney, while others, still in their thirties, have barely finished middle school and have not yet passed the GED. These disparities call for forbearance, and among those who display it the most (somewhat to my surprise) are those who are best educationally prepared to participate.

I responded to both of these challenges by choosing books that were philosophical only in a broad sense, and aimed at an introductory reading level, such as Huston Smith's wonderful *The World's Great Religions*, a text we covered in three months during weekly summer meetings. But the men hungered for what they saw as the "real" thing, and insisted always on finishing the books in their entirety, even those that were quite difficult, such as de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and Sandel's *Justice*.

The most important insight I have gained from this group of students is that their determination with respect to their studies gives the lie to the charge that most philosophical problems are philosophers' inventions. Many in the group eagerly enter into the very same intellectual battles that we professional philosophers fondly remember as our entrée into the profession. These students are also intensely interested in the integrity and authenticity of the works we are reading, and they earnestly patrol what they read, always on the lookout for strawmen. This kind of "holding a work to accountability" is, in my view, unusual enough to bring home to one the extent to which even the most critical of us often bow down in some ways to the authority of the text. These readers can be counted on to question that authority.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

Philosophy is hard, but not too hard even for the many quite uneducated people in my group to understand, either at the macroscopic level or at the level of detailed argument. Not surprisingly, this affinity may be accounted for, at least in some measure, by the men's degree of motivation and relative maturity, and by the paucity of opportunities in prison for engaging in other intellectual projects and distractions. The men want Sandel and de Beauvoir and Martin Luther King, not just secondary texts that tell us what someone else thought of these thinkers.

Experience matters; intuitions are themselves affected by many features of one's background. Much has been written exploring the ways in which race, class, culture, and education affect how we respond to philosophical thought experiments, and in the prison classes I teach I see, over and over again, that "obvious" responses to cases, thought experiments, and plain old claims that appear in the text, are rightly called into question by members of the group. When we recently discussed some examples (from Jared Diamond's *The World Until Yesterday*) of rival theories about knowledge-gathering in radically different cultures, I recounted Quine's notion of the radical translation of "Gavagai." I was stopped right away at what I thought was a commonsense claim that the English-speaking translator would first (at least tentatively) translate the term as "rabbit." One man insisted that even if the thought "rabbit" went through his head at the sight of the animal when "gavagai" was uttered, the utterly foreign circumstances would have been enough to get him to resist any such even tentative projection, so vivid was his sense of how little he knew about where he was and the sort of people he was with.

Several of the most eye-opening examples of (perhaps mistaken) assumptions that neither I nor my traditionally college-aged and (on the whole) middle- to upper-middle-class students would have noticed or made much of came to light when we discussed Dan Ariely's *Predictably Irrational*. First, the men in the group found laughable Ariely's uncritical assumption that his studies' usual subjects—undergraduates from Duke or Berkeley—present a good gauge of human irrationality in light of the subjects' age, privileged economic/social status, and educational backgrounds. In several of Ariely's examples, the subjects make seemingly less good short-term decisions about

spending money on things that would have cost much less per item if they'd bought them in bulk. The men quite reasonably make the point—obvious to them—that while it might be cheaper, for example, to buy two tee shirts for \$15.00 than one at \$8.00, if you have only \$10.00 in your pocket and you don't have a credit card, the better deal is not an option. And finally, in one discussion of the supposedly (predictable) irrationality of viewing a guest at a family Thanksgiving dinner as having insulted the host by offering to pay for part of the cost of the meal when it would nevertheless have been perfectly acceptable to bring a bottle of wine or two to the party (at roughly the cost of what the guest might have offered the host), several men in the group said that it was completely normal (and not insulting at all) in their families for guests to give their hosts money towards the cost of a family holiday dinner, beforehand in some cases or on the spot, sometimes privately and sometimes not. As soon as they pointed this out, the cultural- and class-specificity of such practices became completely obvious. Still, if the reader and Ariely are from similar enough backgrounds, she might not even notice these differences and instead be led straightaway to reflect on what would then be seen as an interesting instance of irrational or inconsistent judgments about social practices. These examples made me think how easily I might have contributed to an unfortunate classroom climate in which students from different class or cultural backgrounds would have been made to feel uncomfortable when dissenting from an example that presented as a "neutral" starting point for discussion.

The ethics of authenticity, ownership, originality, of giving another person what is due him or her, and of faithfully crediting those who should be credited, are deeply and persistently important to these readers. Since these readers see, time and again, how mistaken writers can be regarding what is (or is supposed to be) *the normal* response to a case or situation (see (2) above), they subject reports about what people (are supposed to) say or do or mean to a very high level of scrutiny. They never lose sight of the fact that reports are infected with the attitudes of the reporter. Accordingly, they take almost all secondary literature with huge grains of salt: We're not finding out about Buddhism, we're finding out about Huston Smith's understanding of Buddhism; this is not Kantianism, this is Sandel's interpretation of his professor's interpretation of Kant applied to a particular case, etc. They want primary-source materials where possible, and when there are multiple perspectives on, for example, the meaning of Buddhism, they'll be keenly mindful of the particular perspective of the writer.

Knowledge is power. If ever there were a setting in which very crude, and very physical dimensions of power are on constant display, it is a prison setting. A correction officer has one of the most stressful careers one can have: it's dirty, scary, and dangerous, and the constant undercurrent of threat often surfaces as actual violence. But for the most part, it is even more dangerous and stressful to be an inmate where backing down in the face of conflict can have drastic consequences. Several long-time serving prisoners have reported that since backing down is usually interpreted as a sign of weakness, they have sometimes

felt that they had no choice but to fight back, and even, in some cases, to instigate fights.

How on earth could philosophy change any of that? I would like to suggest two ways: The first and perhaps more interesting way is that studying philosophy helps these prisoners change their attitudes about their own agency. They come to see themselves as they are treated in the group, namely, as people who have something to say—as stakeholders in understanding the world and as people who have figured out how to make arguments to support their positions. I would say that some have recovered their humanity or personhood, in the Kantian sense, and take themselves to be able to *make choices* about how to think and feel about things, and about how to respond to things.

They then see that backing down—just because they choose to do so—can manifest strength. In this regard, work on particular figures and schools of philosophy, such as Epictetus, Kant, and de Beauvoir, has been empowering, as have recent reports in popular science and studies in behavioral economics.

These men never take education for granted and never take knowledge for granted. All of them are actively and vocally grateful for the services of the volunteers who come to do the book groups with them. No doubt, they realize that if we volunteers felt a lack of commitment on their part we would probably tire of the work sooner rather than later given that our prison work takes us away from our paid-job responsibilities. They are also not unaware that regardless of the time of year or awfulness of the weather, we arrive at the prison not knowing for certain that we will even be able to get into the prison to hold class. There is always the risk that, for one reason or another having to do with prison bureaucracy, we will be sent home without having met with the group. But the gratitude of the men in the group goes beyond recognition of the sacrifices and good will of the volunteers. Many of the men, over time, start to see the value of ideas and the value of understanding intellectual history and intellectual traditions. They develop a sense of themselves as transformed into learners and knowers. Several men have reported that their work in the group has helped them to understand their lives and to think about what is important to them. They can then try to use that understanding to guide their immediate and longer-term choices. They see themselves as lucky to have been given a set of tools for living, tools that appeal to something other than emotion, impulse, or self-interest.

In the current environment of hostility to the humanities, the often heard response to that hostility is that we should teach *practical* skills (such as close reading, clear writing, and problem solving). True enough! But we need urgently to enlarge this perspective. When someone is drawn into the activity of philosophical conversation, he comes to see himself as a new voice participating in the West's long human tradition of examining the hardest questions about what there is, what we value in life, how we know (and deceive) ourselves, and the range and limits of our knowledge of the world. Along that path, one may acquire a new sense of significant selfhood, transformed and metaphysical. In one recent meeting of our group, one of

the men declared joyfully of *Symposium*, 199d, ["Is Love such a thing as to be a love of something or nothing?"]: "I'd have known blindfolded that Plato was in the house; now it's gonna get good!" To be sure, this man loved Plato's account of love that follows, but at least a large part of his pleasure came from an appreciation of his own appreciation.

I have thought a lot about what factors go into creating the academic or at least intellectual ethos of the prison book group. What combination of age, experience, racial and class discrimination, and reasons-for-confinement contribute to a prisoner's developing a respect for knowledge—a sense of its power and, especially its power to transform the knower?

I have wondered about the extent to which the positive impact of philosophical study on the student-prisoners in my own class comes from their being intellectually engaged in general, as opposed to their being drawn into the study of particular issues *in philosophy*.

While it is hard to separate the general educational aspect from the specifically philosophical aspect of the work I did with my students in prison, the convergence of the growth of the men in my prison group with that of the students in my small liberal arts college is striking. In both groups, one sees a transformation emerge from the process of looking at the deep questions we philosophers ask about agency, responsibility, personhood, meaning, knowledge, the good life, and the like. Study of these topics requires reflection and argument before one can even begin to try to find answers to the questions that they raise. At selective colleges, most students arrive with an excellent grasp of how to master even very challenging material. But few arrive at college having learned how to ask critical questions about the intellectual foundations of the material they have been expected to master. The men I work with in my prison book group could show them, as they have me, a thing or two about how to practice that philosophical skill, and even more so, the value of learning to do so. And they have allowed me to see at first hand the power that studying philosophy can have. I gauge this change not by exams or papers—for better or worse—but by seeing many men who have been silent for as long as they can remember come to have views they are eager to articulate, refine, and defend in the marketplace of ideas that our book group provides.

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POEMS

How Doth Professor Superstar

Felicia Nimue Ackerman

BROWN UNIVERSITY

How doth Professor Superstar
Pursue his shining quest.
His glory awes us from afar.
He dwells atop the crest.

How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly wields his clout,
To welcome all his cronies in
And keep outsiders out.

When Spousal Hiring Infects Universities

Felicia Nimue Ackerman

BROWN UNIVERSITY

It's hard to resist
The urge to disparage
A man who gets hired
Because of his marriage.

And fairness, of course,
Is equally dead
When a man uses pull
And his wife gets ahead.

Unfairness and farce
Will later combine
If his wife's teaching follows
A feminist line.

BOOK REVIEW

A Guide to Asian Philosophy Classics

Puqun Li (Buffalo, New York: Broadview Press, 2012).
Paperback, 346 pages, \$34.95.

Reviewed by Karsten J. Struhl

JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE (CUNY)

It was not so long ago that many Western philosophers regarded Asian philosophy as a second-class philosophy. Asian philosophy, the indictment said, was at best a kind of "wisdom thinking." It perhaps offered some useful advice as to how one might live, but did not offer systematic arguments and philosophical reflections on its often religious assumptions.

There are signs that this view of Asian philosophy is beginning to change, as comparative or, to use a term I prefer, cross-cultural philosophy is making inroads into professional Western philosophical circles. Groups like the

Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, the Society for Indian Philosophy and Religion, the International Society for Buddhist Philosophy, the Association of Chinese Philosophers in America, the Society for Tibetan and Buddhist Philosophy, the International Society for Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Philosophy, and the International Society for Chinese Philosophy are standard fare for the group programs of the APA divisional conferences. English translations of classical Asian philosophy and of at least some contemporary Asian philosophers are now part of the philosophical offerings of American, British, and Australian publishers.

Nonetheless, discussion of Asian philosophy in the United States tends to remain in an intellectual ghetto. It is, unfortunately, still the case that a student majoring in philosophy on the undergraduate level or even in a graduate program can safely ignore Asian thinkers. Of course, there are often one or two course offerings with titles such as "Indian Philosophy" or "Chinese Philosophy," but these are usually optional. In the required courses, beginning with "Introductory Philosophy," there is at best a token Indian, Chinese, or Japanese philosopher included. Core requirements like ancient philosophy, modern philosophy, ethics, and political philosophy are often presented as wholly Western enterprises.¹

When I have discussed the importance of having students learn non-Western and especially Asian philosophy with my colleagues, the response I often get is an agreement that while this would be a good thing, they are simply not themselves trained or prepared to do this. In short, the problem of neglecting Asian philosophy is self-perpetuating in practice. Undergraduate and graduate students learn, for the most part, Western philosophy, and when some of them become professors, they are indeed not equipped to teach Asian philosophy. How to break this cycle of neglect is a problem that concerns comparative philosophers but should, in fact, concern everyone in the profession. I have argued previously that Western philosophical thinking is deficient if it does not include attention to at least one other tradition, not only because, in the absence of another philosophical tradition, it is missing some rich philosophical discussion but also because, without attention to another tradition, it cannot begin adequately to question its own assumptions.²

The possibility of Asian philosophy moving outside the intellectual ghetto requires some fundamental changes in the curriculum and tools that can prepare philosophy instructors to teach Asian philosophy. A few (but all too few) introductory philosophy anthologies have been published which contain significant selections from both Western and Asian (and other non-Western) sources.³ Still, if the majority of those in the philosophical profession are unfamiliar with non-Western philosophy, they are unlikely to use these anthologies, which, in turn, means that publishers will be less interested in publishing such anthologies. Of course, some philosophers who are conversant with both Western and Asian philosophy have written systematic analyses of certain classical works of Asian philosophy, often referencing phenomenology, existentialism, pragmatism, and the analytic school. However, while a number of

these works present Asian philosophy in a way that can be comfortably understood by Western philosophers, they do not very much emphasize how one might teach Asian philosophy.

One of the notable exceptions to this is Puqun Li's *A Guide to Asian Philosophy Classics*, which focuses on ten philosophical Asian classics and gives a full chapter to each one.⁴ Li's choice of the ten Asian classics nicely spans the field. The first three chapters address Indian philosophy. His first chapter discusses the *Upanishads*, which are the concluding section of the Vedas and which, while they are written in verse form, introduce many of the fundamental philosophical concepts of Indian philosophy. The second chapter discusses the *Dhammapada*, which gives a good overview of the views ascribed to Buddha and which is one of the most important texts of early Buddhism. The third chapter focuses on the *Mulamadhyamakakarika* (*The Fundamental Verses of the Middle Way*), which was written in the second century by Nagarjuna, who many consider the greatest Indian Buddhist philosopher and who is often given credit for having provided the philosophical grounding for Mahayana Buddhism. Chapters four through eight focus on classical texts of ancient Chinese philosophy. Chapter four presents an analysis of the major work of Confucius—*The Analects*. Chapter five discusses *The Mengzi*, which contains the discourses and dialogues of Mengzi, who is generally recognized as the greatest philosophical disciple of Confucius. Chapter six develops an analysis of the *Daodejing*, the seminal text of Daoism attributed to Laozi. Chapter seven focuses on the *Zhuangzi*, which presents the core ideas of Zhuangzi, generally considered the greatest Daoist philosopher after Laozi. Chapter eight discusses the *Xunzi*, which was written by the Confucian philosopher Xunzi who also appropriated the ideas of other major schools of thought (including Daoism). Chapters nine and ten return to Buddhism. Chapter nine discusses *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, which contains the teachings of the Chan Buddhist master Hui Neng and is generally regarded as the major text of the Chan Buddhist tradition in China. Chapter ten elucidates the *Shobogenzo*, which was written by the Japanese Zen master Dogen, who is the founder of the Soto Zen lineage.

In each of these chapters Li succeeds in doing six things well. First, he situates the text in its historical context, with special attention to the ideas of its philosophical predecessors and contemporaries. For example, when discussing Buddhism's claim that there is no self, he compares the Buddhist understanding of the self with what five other Indian schools had to say about the idea of an enduring self. When discussing Mengzi's view of human nature, he contrasts it with three other views of human nature held by Mengzi's contemporaries.

Second, Li gives a systematic account of the philosophical assumptions and arguments which are often explicit and at least implicit in each of these classics, thus challenging the all too common assumption that Asian philosophy does not have very much argumentation. For example, he nicely demonstrates how within the predominantly narrative form of the *Upanishads* there are a variety of analogical and *reductio ad absurdum* arguments. He also offers an

especially clear exposition and analysis of Nagarjuna's logical techniques, his two truths doctrine, and the meaning of his concept of emptiness.

Third, Li's *Guide* confronts a number of misunderstandings based on problems of translation and pays special attention to the confusions that result from failure to make careful analytic distinctions. For example, Li compares several translations of the first stanza of the *Daodejing*, on the basis of which the Dao is often interpreted as indescribable in the sense of being ineffable, thus generating the paradox of how it could be put into practice. To resolve the paradox, Li distinguishes two senses of the term "indescribable," the relative and the absolute, and argues that the Dao should be understood as indescribable only in the relative sense, which entails that it is only inaccessible to those whose obsessions and attitudes make them unable to understand it. In his discussion of the commonly held view that Xunzi claimed that human nature is innately bad, Li argues that this rests on a mistranslation of the Chinese term "*xing e*," which misunderstands the argument that certain innate tendencies which are themselves amoral can lead to bad consequences if not properly regulated.

Fourth, the above examples are also examples of another strength of Li's *Guide* in that they provide a challenge to a number of commonly held assumptions about the philosophers represented by these texts and the contrasts that are typically drawn. To take another example, Mengzi and Xunzi are often thought to have diametrically opposed positions on human nature; the former is taken to be claiming that human nature is good, the latter that human nature is bad. In contrast, after arguing against the standard translation as indicated above, Li further argues that while these two philosophers do hold somewhat different ideas about human nature, which have important implications for moral education, both thinkers are "really aiming at the same destination, though through different routes" (251). Similarly, Li challenges the often held claim that the *Analects* and the *Daodejing* are diametrically opposed to each other and suggests ways in which their ideas overlap.

Fifth, Li suggests a number of interesting comparisons of these texts with each other as well as with Western philosophy. In addition to the above, he compares Mengzi's analysis of human nature with Chan Buddhism's analysis of Buddha-Nature. He also indicates some affinities between Chan Buddhism and Daoism. He compares the allegory of the Lord of the chariots in the *Upanishads* with Plato's chariot allegory. He contrasts the idea of the Dao as a generative impersonal power with the idea of God as the creator of the universe, and he discusses the affinity and differences between the Dao and the ancient Greek concept of logos. He contrasts Mengzi's thought experiment of the adult's response to a child who is about to fall into the well, a thought experiment from which Mengzi argues that compassion is an innate human quality, with Plato's thought experiment of the myth of Gyges, which leads to a very different conclusion about human nature.

Finally, Li raises a number of critical questions that help to further elucidate the texts as well as to push the reader to think critically about the implications of the philosophical

ideas and arguments. Here are three examples in relation to early Buddhism. How can there be a moral causality and responsibility without an agent? In what sense can the awakened mind transcend good and evil? Since Hume and Buddha reached similar conclusions about the self, why wasn't Hume's life also radically transformed?

While each chapter can be read independently, the book develops certain themes that run like threads through all these chapters, and Li nicely puts these texts in dialogue with one another. Each chapter contains useful pedagogical features. Each chapter begins with a suggested specific translation or translations of the text to be discussed. Each chapter also has a section on learning objectives, key words, and concluding remarks. There are also within each chapter several boxes called "Doing Philosophy," each of which contains questions and ideas for further discussion. The book has a short concluding chapter entitled "How to Live a Human Life," which brings together insights from the Buddhist, Confucian, and Daoist traditions. There are at the end of the book several appendices with selected journals on Asian philosophy and their websites, selected graduate programs in Chinese philosophy, other useful websites, and a note on Pinyin pronunciation. Finally, there is an excellent glossary of key terms and a useful index.

There is much more to say about this exceptionally illuminating work, which for reasons of space I cannot discuss here. I will simply conclude that I highly recommend this work as an excellent guide to Asian philosophy and to these specific texts for both students and their professors as well as for anyone who wants a clearer understanding of these thinkers.

NOTES

1. There are a few notable exceptions to this, e.g., the graduate philosophy program at the University of Hawaii.
2. See my "No (More) Philosophy Without Cross-Cultural Philosophy," *Philosophy Compass* 5, no. 4 (April 2010).
3. I am a co-editor of one such reader: *The Philosophical Quest: A Cross-Cultural Reader*, 2nd ed., eds. Gail Presbey, Karsten Struhl, and Richard Olsen (McGraw-Hill, 2000). Two currently available cross-cultural readers for introductory philosophy courses are *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader*, 8th ed., ed. Gary E. Kessler (Wadsworth, 2013); and *Traversing Philosophical Boundaries*, 4th ed., ed. Max O. Hallman (Wadsworth, 2012).
4. Another notable exception is Joel J. Kupperman's *Classic Asian Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2001), which covers many of the same classical texts. However, while Kupperman's work is an excellent short introduction to the key arguments of each of these texts, Li's work discusses more classical texts, provides a more developed analysis, and has a number of excellent pedagogical suggestions.

ADDRESSES OF CONTRIBUTORS

Felicia Nimue Ackerman
Brown University Department of Philosophy
Box 1918
Providence, RI 02912
Phone: 401-863-3240
felicia_ackerman@brown.edu

Katheryn Doran
Hamilton College
Department of Philosophy
198 College Hill Road
Clinton, NY 13323
kdoran@hamilton.edu

Jamie Robertson
c/o Department of Philosophy
York University
4700 Keele St.
Toronto, ON
Canada M3J 1P3
jkrob@yorku.ca

Karsten J. Struhl
Department of Philosophy
John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY)
524 West 59th Street
New York, NY, 10019
kstruhl@jjay.cuny.edu