Featuring

The Life of a Liberal State

Science as a Vocation and the Academic Ethic

United States of Europe

The Janissaries

Mao’s Anti-Revisionism and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

Zhuangzi: Skepticism, Relativism, and His Negative Project

Applications of Dr. Scott Peck’s Interpretation of Human Evil in People of the Lie

Beowulf, Not Abel

Exploring the Boundaries of Humanism and Animalism in Kate Chopin’s The Awakening

Economic Justice in Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene

Interview with Dean Celenza
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The Editor’s Desk

Dear Reader,

In the defense of religious liberty that he proffers in his Notes on the State of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson claims that “reason and free inquiry are the only effectual agents against error.”1 For Jefferson, the health of a society is largely predicated on the ease with which ideas can be debated, discussed, and evaluated; through this polyphony of opinions and beliefs society repudiates falsehoods, tempers its own fanatic and militant tendencies, and invariably stretches towards greater truths. This theory, which lauds those forums that facilitate the exploration of ideas, is one that extends from Milton to Mill and beyond. And it is this ideal—this vision of a place for students to discuss, debate, and dive deeply into their academic pursuits—that the journal you hold in your hands seeks to pursue.

I am eternally grateful to Georgetown University for creating an environment in which the journal has grown and prospered, and I pray that it continues welcoming and amplifying a wide array of voices, theories, and beliefs. I also want to extend my thanks to Professor Thomas Kerch and Professor Richard Boyd for their inspiring and invaluable guidance, and to my talented, dedicated, and genuinely wonderful board of editors: Micah Musser, Benjamin Brazzel, Carrie Connelly, Mark McNiskin, and Joe Sonza. Without their immense acuity and dedication the journal would not be here today. Finally, I want to direct my deepest gratitude to the authors whose work is contained within these pages; the ardor and passion they brought to the editing process proved both inspiring and motivating.

The greatest threat to the health of the contemporary campus comes, not from any Procrustean policies or burgeoning sophism, but from a paucity of spaces that showcase student voices. My only hope is that this journal can fill that role—that, as you peruse these pieces, the acumen and refinement they display impresses upon you the immense vitality of the 21st century campus.

Sincerely,

Jacob R. Dyson
Editor-in-Chief
Most readers would concur that we are living in the proverbial “interesting times.” Whether a blessing or a curse, this uncanny aphorism captures the chaotic, unprecedented, and morally ambivalent nature of much that has come to pass in American politics in the last year or so. Little original can or should be said in these pages about these dizzying political dramas. But maybe something ought to be said about how these events affect the scholarly activities of the liberal arts university.

Max Weber’s famous 1917 essay “Science as a Vocation” is often invoked in defense of a certain version of the academic ethic, one which posits a separation between the internal standards of truth and academic inquiry upon which the University operates and external, political standards. Weber asserts that “The true teacher will beware of imposing from the platform any political position upon the student, whether it is expressed or suggested.” Can this admonition be heeded today in the United States, we might wonder, at least in the sense in which Weber originally intended? And if so, does Weber’s stipulation of neutrality condemn academics to a stance of apolitical indifference in the face of potential moral and political abuses? In the current political environment—one in which the modern university finds itself on the frontlines of political battles—his essay merits re-visititation.

At first glance Weber’s prescription of political neutrality may look like a bitter pill to swallow. For read in the strict sense his essay appears to call for academics to remain silent in the face of moral or political injustices. Presumably not just natural scientists, but even those working in the humanities and social sciences, ought to confine themselves to matters of empirical fact while steering clear of normative statements and “ultimate ideals.” This so-called “fact-value” distinction has been accused famously by Leo Strauss—of mandating that social science “fiddles while Rome burns,” with the perverse excuse “that it does not know that it fiddles,” nor that “Rome burns.”

Yet there are nuances to Weber’s argument that bear closer scrutiny. First, it is important to note that Weber is not denying that there will always be some blurring between intellectual debates at the heart of a university and political conflicts raging outside its Ivy-clad walls. For Weber, a German academic writing in 1917, the implications of political developments for scholarly inquiry—not to mention the imminent politicization of academic debates—would have been hard to miss. Weber is not denying that politics might have some bearing on the way in which subjects are approached within a university. In fact, the point of his argument—that we should try to resist this tendency as much as possible—is predicated on the assumption that political debates do have such effects. Academics must be mindful of this danger by resisting the temptation to politicize their research and teaching. “To take a practical political stand is one thing,” Weber notes, “and to analyze political structures and party positions is another.” Research and advocacy are two distinct but related enterprises, he insists.
Why and how is this idealized separation to be upheld, one might wonder? And is the distinction really tenable? Insofar as possible Weber’s solution is to bracket one’s political commitments in all instances when their indulgence might detract from the responsible conduct of scientific research or the objective presentation of the results of that inquiry to students. Political science, for example, must ideally represent the dispassionate scientific exploration of the nature of politics and the tendencies of political regimes. Political science is not to be confused with politicized science. Likewise, whatever one’s political predilections, the pursuit of research related to vexing issues such as climate change, economic development, distributive justice, immigration, race, gender, or inequality must be undertaken not with tendentious ideological conclusions in mind, but rather in a sincere spirit of discovering the truth. Standards for adjudicating the results of this process of scientific inquiry must be endogenous to the scholarly methods of the disciplines involved and not inflected by ultimate values that are external or political. To take one example, climate change is (or isn’t) real insofar as its existence is supported by the best evidence of the scholarly community; it is not true merely because it is politically fashionable.

Nevertheless, Weber concedes, academic life is irreducible to the collation of dull empirical facts. It is also, he notes, a matter of “taking a stand” with respect to “ultimate ideals.” How can we best foster in students the skills not just to compile and classify empirical information—for example, how do democracies operate, or what institutional arrangements distinguish them from non-democratic regimes?—but also and more importantly an ability to “come to a position where the student may find a point from which, in terms of his ultimate ideals, he can take a stand”? This issue of “taking a stand” involves teaching students how to reckon with the existence of what Weber calls “inconvenient facts,” that is to say data, arguments, or perspectives that run contrary to a given partisan position—including and especially the professor’s own position. One might go so far as to say that the basic task of a liberal education is to accustom students to the “existence of such facts.” Drawing attention to these inexplicable, counterfactual, and even morally uncomfortable facts was crucial for the likes of Francis Bacon, John Stuart Mill, Karl Popper, and Thomas Kuhn, among many other defenders of the scientific project.

This is not to say that Weber forbids academics from assuming a political stance outside the classroom. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Weber assumes that they will feel it to be their sacred responsibility to do so: “When speaking in a political meeting about democracy, one does not hide one’s personal standpoint; indeed to come out clearly and take a stand is one’s damned duty.” Yet political speech is essentially hortatory, a matter of political struggle as much as logical persuasion, invoking “words as weapons.” What Weber is rejecting is the indulgence of partisan or polemical language in one’s capacity as an academic. In the classroom words are not “swords against the enemies” but “plowshares to loosen the soil of contemplative thought.”

Shifting between these roles as engaged citizen and critical expositor of inconvenient facts can be frustratingly hard, as I’m sure every academic knows. Yet the stakes are high. It is not just that the progress of science, say, or our understanding of human society will suffer if academics pursue their vocations with an ideological slant—although Weber is clearly worried about this. The evidence of history is that “whenever the man of science introduces his personal value judgments, a full understanding of the facts ceases.” But the preeminent danger of the politicization of academic inquiry is that it opens the door to interference by politicians in the internal workings of the university. Once universities declare themselves to be political battlegrounds—animated by dueling ideological agendas rather than the dispassionate quest for truth—they become susceptible to political manipulation. This can be direct and explicit—as public and even private universities and their
curricula fall under the weight of state or federal legislation. Or it can be indirect insofar as various streams of federal funding give politicians say-so over what research is done—or not done—in universities.

To summarize: Weber thinks that universities ought to be in the business of pursuing truth and disseminating knowledge. They are to do so by deploying rigorous standards of judgment and discernment which are intrinsic to the practices of academic research. The scholarly knowledge that emerges from this process is to be valued—or discounted—based on internal practices and not by prevailing political winds. Weber offered these sober judgments about the operation of the university in the fraught political climate of his own day, and they seem well worth considering in ours. If Weber’s modest counsel for navigating the perpetual tension between the demands of Caesar and those of the university look hopelessly idealistic in our age, it is worth considering the perils of the likely alternative: namely, the outright politicization of the university and the predictable costs both to academic integrity and responsible politics. Liberal democracy and the liberal arts seem to have a necessary and mutually supportive relationship.

It is in this spirit that we turn to the following essays, each of which in its own way embodies the Weberian vocation of dispassionate judgment guided by standards of sober reason, perspicuous logic, and scrupulous scholarship. They are shining examples of an academic ethic in a liberal arts university at its very best.

Richard Boyd
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Charles is praised as *Pater Europae* for uniting Gallia and Germania in the 9th century. Pope Leo III bestowed upon him the title *Imperator Romanorum* for constructing, through brutal conquest, a new Rome. More than a millennium later, Jean Monnet is praised as *le père de l’Europe* for unifying France and Germany. Charles de Gaulle derided him as “l’homme des Américains” for constructing, through negotiations and treaties, what appeared to be a new America. Today, the blue and gold flag of the European Union flies over much of the continent—from Lisbon to Helsinki, from Athens to Amsterdam.

Jean Monnet was the most influential figure in the creation of a united Europe. His personal experience of both World Wars and his exposure to the immense strength of the United States deeply impressed Monnet. It was clear to him that America represented progress, modernity, and the future: Europe’s internal divisions were no longer sustainable in a bipolar world. In conceiving a United States of Europe, Monnet envisioned a strong and equal partner of the United States. In order to recover prestige, influence, and power on the world stage, the former *grandes puissances* of Europe needed to become like America. For Monnet, the economic and political restructuring of Europe in the image of America was a means to a higher end. Europe was not to adopt the American way of life and erase national differences; rather, Europe needed to reassert its autonomy in the face of American and Soviet hegemony.

Monnet was first exposed to America as a young man in the first decade of the 20th century. A weak student, Monnet decided to travel at age sixteen, first to London and later to North America. In this *Mundus Novus* “où tout semble possible et où les frontières sociales paraissent moins infranchissables qu’en Europe,” Monnet experienced culture shock. He was refreshed by a greater sense of equality in America, where social class was less significant and less rigid than it was in hierarchical European societies. Furthermore, the people were different—they possessed a largeness of purpose, a great sense of challenge, an entrepreneurial and practical spirit, and a belief in equality through common hardship. Monnet admired these qualities and remarked, “In this new world always on the move, I learned to get rid of the old atavistic suspicions which are so much a pointless worry and a waste of time.”

This last remark begs the question: how much was Monnet as an individual Americanized? Such an inquiry can only be subjective, but some observations may be of interest. Following World War I, Monnet used English as the primary language of his work. He even corresponded with some French colleagues, notably René Pleven, in English and spoke English with his family. A State Department official and friend of Monnet, Henry Owen, stated that Monnet’s “optimism, his dedication to action, were in a way more American than European.”

Richard Mayne, a British advisor to Jean Monnet, observed that “in American company, Monnet changed character, laughing more, being more one of the boys.” The French diplomat and politician Maurice Couve de Murville, who knew Monnet well, said of him, “Il était un vrai Français du terroir, de son pays de Cognac ; en même
temps il était américain, alors qu’il n’avait rien d’américain dans son comportement.”16 Monnet himself commented that he was partly American in his outlook, work habits, and pragmatism.17

Can one conclude that Jean Monnet was American in his character? Perhaps. But such a conclusion risks a departure from the empirical for the speculative. Optimism and pragmatism, for instance, are not inherently American; moreover, quantifying one’s optimism or pragmatism is impossible. One’s political perspective may also color one’s opinion as to whether Monnet’s character was American: Gaullists, for instance, may call him American because they were anti-American. Americans who disliked Monnet’s politics would be more prone to say that he was not American. US ambassador Murphy, for example, noted that Monnet “is definitely out to gain every advantage for the French he possibly can.”18 Thus, although speculation over the degree to which Monnet had an Americanized personality is certainly interesting, a critical analysis of the American influence on Monnet’s actions and motivations is more revealing.

The Great War ruptured Monnet’s life and brought him into politics. He witnessed chaos and disorder—the French and the British, despite fighting as allies, were hardly coordinating their war efforts. Monnet claimed “il me semblait qu’il y avait en fait deux entités séparées bien que les objectifs aient été les mêmes. Cela me paraissait absurde.”19 Evidently he believed that there would be greater efficiency if France and Britain worked in unison. Fortunately, Monnet succeeded in meeting with René Viviani, the president of the Council, to explain his ideas as a result of a personal connection between the president and a friend.20 He encouraged the united organization of production, buying, and maritime transports between France and the UK; specifically, he asked the British to set up joint purchase commissions in order to avoid the bidding up of prices for Scandinavian and American steel, oil, and coal. His request was successful and Monnet secured 100 million francs from the Hudson Bay Company for this initiative.21 The success of his project made it clear to Monnet that separate countries needed to work cooperatively for a common good.

In 1919, Monnet became the secretary general of the League of Nations. Yet by 1923, he left his post in Genève disenchanted; each member state, in true Machiavellian Realpolitik fashion, only looked out for its own interests.22 In 1926 Jean Monnet became vice president of a US investment firm, Blair and Co.23 He moved to the US and realized that the era of interbank cooperation had arrived: he was the intermediary between the Bank of France and the US,24 and he helped stabilize the Polish złoty and the Romanian leu.25 In 1929, two events profoundly marked Monnet’s life: he had a coup de foudre26 and married the Italian Sylvia Giannini, and the Stock Market crash ruined his finances.27 Over the next decade, Monnet came to appreciate Roosevelt’s state programs to fight unemployment.28

As the dark clouds of revanchism clustered over Hitler’s Reich, Monnet lobbied on behalf of the French government. La Troisième République was gravely unprepared for German Blitzkrieg; Monnet wrote in his Memoirs, “The French Air Minister asked his Chief of Staff if the Air Force could defend France; ‘Feebly’ was his reply. He added that all that could be done was to build more aircraft, since there was a shortage of hangars and pilots. I could not help being struck by the contrast between this state of mind and that of America’s leaders. With them, the word ‘feeibly’ was taboo.”29 The gulf between the French and American psychological state was enormous: the French were fatalistic, pessimistic, not too far from the Nietzschean letzte Mensch;30 the Americans were industrious, ambitious, and optimistic.

Monnet knew that when war once again erupted on the European continent, America’s immense productive capacity and financial means would be vital for victory. A true éminence grise, Monnet possessed disproportional influence over key figures in the Roosevelt administration. In 1938, he convinced Morgenthau, the treasury secretary, to use private French investments available in the US—which
encompassed around $500 million—to place orders for 555 combat planes and trainers in 1939 and another 1000 in 1940 for the French air force. When Panzers and the Luftwaffe poured across the Ardennes, the French forces were overwhelmed. Monnet—fearing the same coordination problems he witnessed during the Great War—argued for a union of the British and French governments: “pour toute la conduite de la guerre, les deux gouvernements fusionnent et constituent un seul cabinet, avec la réunion des deux Parlements.” Although the proposal never came into fruition, it demonstrates Monnet’s loyalty to the idea of inter-European cooperation. By 1943 it was clear that the tide of war had turned and an Allied victory was inevitable.

At the war’s end, much of Europe lay in Schutt und Asche. The two superpowers—the US and the USSR eclipsed France, Germany, Italy, and Great Britain. American asymmetrical power and influence in Western Europe meant the Americanization of that region. In this context, Jean Monnet succeeded in transforming the European landscape. He wrote in his memoirs that after the war, “Our countries have become too small for the present-day world, for the scale of modern technology and of America and Russia today, or China and India tomorrow.” Europeans had to acknowledge the necessity of new institutions which would serve to overcome nationalist resentments in favor of rapprochement. Europe’s bloody descent into war made it clear to Monnet that something needed to change—Europe would learn from its past and unite in a sort of Hegelian Aufhebung process.

Faced with decadence or modernity, Monnet prescribed the bitter pill of an Americanization of Europe’s political system. A strong believer in institutional inertia, Monnet envisaged a federated Europe modeled after the United States. He greatly admired the American political model, which enshrined liberty, equality, and democracy: Europe needed to emulate this structure. Monnet explained his vision to William Tomlinson, the American treasury representative in Paris, “When the thirteen States of your continent were forming the United States of America, they needed friends to help them overcome the immense difficulties they faced. To succeed in what we have undertaken, we too need friends.” Evidently, the great American experiment was a historical model for what Monnet imagined for the future of Europe: what the thirteen colonies had done, Europe was to do. According to George Ball, an American diplomat who collaborated with Monnet over the Marshall plan, Monnet envisioned a Europe “endowed with efficient institutions resembling even very remotely, the United States constitution.”

A united European government, however, was always an arrière pensée; the most important step towards a United States of Europe was economic integration. France—and Europe as a whole—needed to modernize. To Monnet, the United States’ economy was the ultimate model of economic progress: as previously mentioned, he was enthralled by America’s productive capacity and America’s robust response to the Great Depression.

Having returned to France, Monnet was instrumental to the future of the French economy. His ‘Monnet plan’ was an ambitious economic initiative which gave priority to six basic sectors: coal, electricity, steel, transport, cement, and farm machinery. Monnet diagnosed the problem of the backwardness of the French economy as primarily psychological, noting the problem “was undoubtedly the lack of enterprise, which had led to a serious neglect of productive investment and modernization.” Indeed, he believed it was less important for the French farmer to have a new tractor than to think differently about output. One way of changing the French mindset was to mimic the informal contact of American and British business culture: he insisted, for instance, on having a dining room in the planning offices.

With the aid of American economists Stacy May and Robert Nathan, Monnet emphasized productivity, profitability, competitiveness, and labor mobility.
economic model on his thinking. Working with Libert Bou, an agronomist, Monnet promoted mechanization, agricultural expansion, fewer farmers, and larger farms. Bou claimed that Jean Monnet voulait que je me rende compte aux USA de ce qui avait été fait. » Monnet clearly wanted Bou to copy America, and purportedly claimed “Le Tennessee c’était l’Auvergne.” What works in America will work in Europe.

In 1945, Monnet convinced Jean Fourastié to become an economic advisor on the Commissariat général du Plan. Fourastié, who coined the term les Trentes Glorieuses, was advised to go to America to learn about productivity. He wrote “au cours de ma tournée en Amérique, je m’étais de plus en plus convaincu que les problèmes de productivité étaient des questions majeures commandant l’avenir. Jean Monnet lui-même en était très conscient.” Clearly Monnet believed that the Americans were far advanced because they were so productive. The French had much to learn from them, and Monnet had “l’idée de montrer aux Français comment les Américains travaillaient.” To modernize, the French needed to work like the Americans.

Monnet’s chef d’œuvre, however, was the European Coal and Steel Community. Believing that the small European states could not compete when isolated in a chaotic Hobbesian atmosphere, Jean Monnet advocated tirelessly for a supranational body to regulate European coal and steel output under a central authority. Monnet asserted “Seule la création d’une entité européenne large, fusionnant les productions, les marchés permettra de donner un essor nouveau à ces pays qui, autrement, ne peuvent pas sortir de leur traditionalisme…s’ils ne se transforment pas constamment, ils ne feront pas face au progrès [des] USA.” The Schuman plan, named after the French foreign minister Robert Schuman, was announced on May 9th, 1950. The plan was the first step towards a united Europe, and passed in the French Assembly with 377 to 233 votes, and in the German Bundestag with 232 to 143 votes; it came into being August 10th, 1952. According to Monnet, “Le charbon et l’acier ont été choisis à cet effet parce qu’ils constituent à nos yeux les éléments de base de l’économie moderne.”

Evidently Monnet sought to Americanize the European economy and political system—but why? Did he want to uproot European cultures and replace it with American culture? Did he believe that Americanization was an end in itself; that Europe should be a sort of vassal of the United States? Was not the surrender of French sovereignty to a supranational institution a lèse majeste? Charles de Gaulle, who believed that the fundamental reality of international politics is the nation-state, epitomized French nationalism and sought French leadership in Europe.

He supported Monnet’s plan to revitalize the French economy, but fervently denounced the Schuman plan. For de Gaulle, the world was a zero-sum game: he would never accept heteronomy. He passionately decried the Pleven Plan, which Monnet supported, deriding the idea of a European Defense Community and a common European army as a “stateless melting pot.” To de Gaulle, Monnet did not want a strong France, but a second America.

Jean Monnet never wished for an Americanization of Europe to mean American domination of the Old Continent. Above all, Monnet wanted the European states to understand the new reality: if Europe did not unite, America would dominate. Monnet’s criticism of de Gaulle clarifies his perspective, “Ce que nous offre le général de Gaulle…n’est pas l’indépendance, c’est la domination économique des USA et la domination politique de l’URSS.” Monnet wanted Europe to once again be a great power, to be equal with the United States. Hence, he asserted “Europe cannot long afford to remain almost exclusively dependent on American credit for her production and American strength for her security, without harmful results both here and in Europe.” An equal partnership between Europe and the US, the “arsenal of democracy,” would be advantageous for all partners, according to Monnet.

Furthermore, Monnet did not want to supplant European culture with American culture.
To convince Chancellor Adenauer to agree to the ECSC, Monnet argued unity would mean that Europe could repossess “le rôle dirigeant que, du point de vue intellectuel et du point de vue de la civilisation, elle a eu jadis dans le monde et qu’elle doit de nouveau y avoir. L’Europe bénéficie d’une diversité qui fait sa richesse et qui manque à l’Amérique. Si elle retrouvait sa prospérité, elle influerait, pour cette raison, sur l’évolution de l’Amérique elle-même.”60 Europe would become prosperous and influential again—Europe’s rich diversity may even influence the United States itself. Éric Roussel asserts that a United States of Europe did not mean uniformity for Monnet; “Raboter les différences, effacer des siècles d’histoire, étendre au monde entier l’américan way of life, rien n’est plus éloigné de sa pensée.”61

More than anything, Monnet never saw an Americanized Europe as a threat to national differences. He emphasized the common civilization and values of the West. For him, a strong Europe would serve to help America promote democracy, liberty, and equality around the world. Thus, one must not misconstrue Monnet’s intentions when he reflected, “Equality is possible now only because France and Germany together have begun to build a great European entity with the prospect of becoming a sort of second America.”62 Monnet did not want to recreate America in Europe; rather, he sought to use Americanization as a means to give Europe a voice again. He never feared that national cultures were threatened by a supranational entity; he considered such anxieties immaterial, writing that “While fifty-five countries were meeting in Lomé or Brussels to seek their common interests, our diplomats were holding pointless debates about a ‘European identity’. Paradoxically it already existed in the eyes of observers overseas.”63

One can fault Monnet for disregarding such qualms. Prime Minister Michel Debré accused Monnet of wanting “la fin de l’Histoire.”64 Such a criticism is largely accurate: Monnet repeated constantly that Europe does not have a choice but to unite.65 He failed to sufficiently appreciate the attachment to traditional cultures, and succumbed to a Fukuyama-esque historical fatalism. His response to British reluctance to join the European Community reveals this, “Great Britain had no choice, now, except solitary decline or integration into a larger grouping. To tell the truth, that had been obvious for twenty-five years; but it takes a good quarter-century to efface the illusions that dead realities leave in the minds of nations and of men.”66 Individuals require more than just democracy and economic prosperity. Everyone possesses a cultural attitude and sense of place which must be addressed and supported.

Jean Monnet remains the single most influential figure in the establishment of European unity. Monnet was deeply impressed by America’s wealth, power, industry, and cultural outlook; according to many of those who knew him, he had adopted somewhat of an American attitude towards life. An advocate of coordination and cooperation through both World Wars and afterwards, Monnet grew to believe that Europe had to reform in the style of America. Progress and modernization implied an imitation of the American economy and a political federation of European states based on the model of the United States. Yet Americanization for Monnet never implied the importation of American culture at the expense of European culture. He argued Europe could only escape American and Soviet cultural and political domination by uniting. Once that happened—and he believed it necessarily would happen—Europe would regain influence over world affairs and once again contribute to the progress of Western civilization. Unfortunately, Monnet failed to adequately respond to fears over the dissolution of European culture and to the popular attachment to national sovereignty. Internal divisions and a crisis of leadership broke up the Carolingian Empire in the late 9th century; will the same be true of the European Union?

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Prior to and after establishing the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Mao Zedong was firmly committed to the complete “[transformation of] Chinese society, including the economic system, political structure, and social life, under the leadership of the Communist regime.”¹ From his birth, Mao had been disgusted by China’s catastrophic fall from powerful empire to second-class citizen in global affairs—a decline catalyzed by repeated Chinese defeats at the hands of technologically advanced “imperialist” powers. When coupled with his long-standing belief in China’s status as the “Middle Kingdom,” Mao’s disgust evolved into his aspiration of reforming China and reasserting her past glory. Crucial to such grassroots reform, Mao believed, was avoiding complacency, and refusing to succumb to the “sugar-coated bullets” of capitalist and bourgeois elements within and without the Chinese Communist Party which sought to sabotage the Chinese revolution.² To this end, Mao did his utmost to promote “continuous revolution” and maintain revolutionary fervor in the Chinese people through such nationwide programs as “The Great Movement to Resist America and Aid Korea” in 1950, “The Great Leap Forward” in 1958, and the greatest—and arguably most disastrous—of all, “The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” in 1966. In large part, Mao Zedong used the Cultural Revolution to counter what he perceived to be “revisionist” elements in the CCP and the USSR.

In 1958, Mao instituted “The Great Leap Forward,” a massive economic mobilization movement; through the Leap, Mao aimed to turn China into a world industrial powerhouse capable of “surpassing Britain economically within fifteen years.”³ The Chinese populace began working fervently in large agricultural communes, and smelting whatever metals they could lay their hands on in small backyard furnaces in attempts to produce steel. Alarmingly, however, Chinese laborers soon found that they could not keep pace with the unrealistic production goals set by Mao and the CCP leaders.

The Great Leap Forward ended in economic calamity: China’s gross national product dipped by around 25%, while industrial production—the increasing of which had been the Leap’s primary goal—“[fell] by more than 40 per cent.”⁴ With Mao having taken a step back (albeit only a symbolic one) in 1959 by ceding the presidency to Liu Shaoqi, CCP leaders worked fervently to reverse the immense damage the Leap had wrought on China’s population and economy. The party adopted more moderate policies, such as the offering of material incentives and returning collectivized land to private owners, as the commune system slowly dissolved and “in some ways [China moved] back towards the old meld of individual property and land held by lineage
clans.”\(^5\) To Mao, these regressions were unacceptable: he wanted to reform old China, not return to it.

Mao grew increasingly dissatisfied by the CCP’s new focus on maintaining an efficient bureaucracy to facilitate China’s recovery while ignoring the revolutionary ideals which he believed were of utmost importance. Mao’s fear that revisionism was beginning to penetrate the CCP was expressed in his 1962 speech, when he reminded his comrades to “never forget the class struggle,” and asked them, “In the final analysis, are we going to take the socialist road or the capitalist road?”\(^6\) Such rhetoric signals that Mao began to perceive—and push back against—counter-revolutionary elements in the new Chinese leadership; thus, the seeds of the Cultural Revolution were sown.

Revisionism, however, was also rearing its ugly head in China’s former ally, the Soviet Union. Premier Nikita Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization policies and pursuance of diplomatic talks with the “imperialist” United States were perceived by Mao as a sign of the USSR’s betrayal of Marxist-Leninist thought. In 1963, Mao made clear his thoughts on the USSR with his comments on Yugoslavia, stating that “even after it seizes power it is possible for a working-class party to fall under the control of new bourgeois elements” and “a restoration of capitalism in a socialist country can be achieved… through the degradation of the leadership group in that country.”\(^7\) Mao’s thinly veiled jab at Khrushchev paralleled his view of China at the time; the CCP leadership’s introduction of capitalist elements into the Chinese economy to recover from the Great Leap Forward was, Mao feared, an indication that China was faltering in its commitment to revolution, and might follow the path of the “bourgeoisified” Soviet Union.

In 1965, Mao escalated his anti-revisionist rhetoric, calling “Soviet revisionism” an “apostasy” and proposing a twenty-three article socialist education movement,\(^8\) one article of which described the “necessity to rectify ‘those people in the Party who are in authority and are taking the capitalist road…”\(^9\) Such statements demonstrated Mao’s growing frustration with revisionism at home and abroad, and, in 1965, the play “Hai Rui Dismissed from Office” was published. Mao took it as a criticism of his decision to sack Defense Minister Peng Dehuai in 1959, and, with this perceived affront, the opportunity for Mao’s final revolution presented itself.\(^10\)

In June 1966, Mao launched “The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,” with the stated goal of eliminating the “Four Olds.” This meant “old ideas, old values, old customs, and old traditions,”\(^11\) and thus makes perfect sense when considered in light of Mao’s desire to completely reform Chinese society. However, the revolution also provided Mao the perfect chance to launch a counterattack on the counter-revolutionary “capitalist roaders” who had been standing in the way of this goal—and he immediately set to work doing so.

Mao began by stating his support for the “Red Guard,” a massive leftist and militant student uprising which played an important role in proselytizing Maoist thought and eliminating perceived rightist threats. Wielding the “Little Red Book” of Mao Zedong thought like “the national bible,”\(^12\) the Red Guard viciously attacked, humiliated, and tortured “persons and institutions identified, very arbitrarily, with… habits [which] were denounced as revisionist.”\(^13\) In response to the Red Guard of Tsinghua University Middle School, Mao stated that “I will give enthusiastic support to all who take an attitude similar to yours in the Cultural Revolution movement”\(^14\) (with said attitude being anti-rightist).

The Red Guard’s anti-bourgeois crusade resulted in “The Cult of Mao,” through which, Mao recognized, revisionist ideology could be purged and his revolutionary ideals promoted. During the revolution, the Chinese people began to regard Mao as a demigod, with some even confessing their daily sins to portraits of “The Great Helmsman.”\(^15\) Historian Paul J. Hiniker, however, makes “the important distinction between the cult of personality, which Mao repudiated, and spreading the Thought of Mao
Zedong, which Mao never repudiated.” While Mao disapproved of his idolization—preferring instead to be regarded as a humble teacher—he nevertheless valued the cult’s effectiveness in propagating his ideology, which stressed the importance of class struggle and vilified “counterrevolutionary” capitalism.

Mao also responded to the USSR’s regressions, inciting a wave of revolutionary fury against China’s former ally. In 1968, Mao accused the Soviet Union of being a “social-imperialist country” and stated that “Moscow had replaced Washington as the bastion of reactionary forces in the world.” The Chinese people supplemented Mao’s denunciations with “venomous insults and accusations hurled at Soviet leaders, along with frenzied round-the-clock protests around the Soviet embassy in Beijing and harassment of Soviet diplomats.” Mao made his message clear: just as revisionism would not be tolerated domestically, its manifestations abroad would not be met without criticism.

At home, Mao stated that the revolution was to take aim at “those within the Party who are in authority and are taking the capitalist road”—and central to the supposed rightist movement was President Liu Shaoqi. In 1965, Mao had identified Liu as a capitalist-roader due to Liu’s opposition toward his socialist education program, and in 1966 Liu was replaced by Lin Biao as deputy chairman. Under the pressure of virulent attacks from Mao and the Chinese people—his nickname was “China’s Khrushchev”—Liu withdrew from the public eye in December 1966 and was put under house arrest. Mao refused Liu’s requests to resign and, in 1969, moved him to a prison in Kaifeng, where Liu was refused medical attention and eventually died of pneumonia. Mao’s treatment of Liu Shaoqi was emblematic of his anti-rightist sentiment and the lengths to which he would go to eliminate revisionism. Liu was not the only counterrevolutionary Mao targeted; policymaker Deng Xiaoping, among a great many others, was stripped of his Party position and was subject to public criticism and humiliation.

Some have viewed the Cultural Revolution predominantly as a power struggle, in which Mao was attempting to reassert control over the CCP after his loss of prestige following the Great Leap Forward. It is undeniable that a power struggle was involved in the Cultural Revolution: prior to 1959, Mao had enjoyed unquestioned supremacy over the CCP, and it is unreasonable to believe that the 1966 revolution was not in some way a move to reclaim such status. However, as historian Paul Hiniker asserts, “[Mao] did not seek arbitrary power in the sense of trying to make Central Committee members responsive to his every whim. Rather, he sought power for the implementation of a particular programme of development for China.” Mao valued power not for its own sake, but as a means for him to promote revolution. Furthermore, the consistency of his anti-revisionist rhetoric suggests that to purge China of rightist elements—elements which endangered his ultimate goal of reforming Chinese society—was his primary motive in launching the Cultural Revolution.

Mao’s desire to regain China’s forgotten glory and for her to assume her rightful place in the world dominated his decisions throughout his life; thus, it comes as no surprise that he reacted brutally and decisively against any threats to this goal. Revisionism within and without the CCP in the years 1958 through the 1960s was such a threat—and the Cultural Revolution was a means for Mao to annihilate it.

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Zhuangzi
Skepticism, Relativism, and His Negative Project

Lawrence Huang

In this paper, I interpret the Zhuangzi as a negative project to convince us not to use ordinary knowledge to try grasp the Way. By making clear his distinction between ‘ordinary’ and ‘unordinary,’ or superior knowledge, I demonstrate that the real target of Zhuangzi’s skepticism is our ability to use ordinary knowledge to grasp the Way. Ordinary knowledge differentiates between right and wrong; not only are these differentiations endless, but they also reinforce the differences between our perspectives. As a perspectival relativist, Zhuangzi argues that our perspectives shape our knowledge, so the differentiations we make are dependent on our perspectives and an unreliable linguistic framework. Therefore, his project is to convince us to reject ordinary knowledge, which would open us up to superior knowledge, which allows us to transcend our perspectives; only then can we grasp the Way.

Preliminaries

With a text with as complex a material and philosophical history as Zhuangzi’s, it is helpful to establish the key definitions needed for this paper. When I refer to Zhuangzi, I refer to the author who wrote the text, Zhuangzi. While we do not have exact dates, he lived in the fourth century BCE, during the chaotic Warring State period in China. Writing after Confucius and Mozi, he criticizes their absolutist moral doctrines as flawed solutions to moral disorder. Both philosophers teach normative ways of life. Confucius teaches his students to be ‘gentlemen,’ following filial piety and ritual propriety, while Mozi rejects this Confucius concern for the family by advocating for impartial caring. Instead, Zhuangzi embraces a skepticism of the type of knowledge that clings to perspectives, or of ordinary knowledge.

Skepticism in Zhuangzi is the doctrine that we cannot grasp the Way through ordinary knowledge. While the Way for Confucius and Mozi are ways of life, the Way in Daoist thought, like Zhuangzi’s Way, simply is. It is grasped only by the sage and only after the rejection of ordinary knowledge. Ordinary knowledge, or little knowledge (小知), is the type of knowledge that makes differentiations between right and wrong. We use these differentiations, especially moral conceptions of right and wrong, to decide on the right course of action, but the sage, represented by Zhuangzi, does not make these differentiations. Instead they use what I call superior knowledge, or big knowledge (大知). This knowledge is capable of grasping the Way because it is all-encompassing in scope and not contained by one perspective.

Perspectival relativism in Zhuangzi manifests in how our perspectives shape our ordinary knowledge. Ordinary knowledge, which is how we make differentiations, is necessarily shaped
by our individual perspectives; superior knowledge, on the other hand, allows us to transcend and not cling to our perspectives. Therefore, we need to reject ordinary knowledge and use superior knowledge. I call this Zhuangzi’s negative project, meaning that he tells us not to do something. The standard interpretations of Zhuangzi are either purely skeptical, meaning the entire effort of knowledge is futile, purely normative, meaning that Zhuangzi is teaching his students to follow prescription or a way of life, or as Bryan Van Norden argues, Zhuangzi can be purely therapeutic, meaning that students should read his philosophy as an effort to push readers towards skepticism. By framing the Zhuangzi as a negative, I make a fundamental pivot away from the normative understanding of philosophy in general and away from typical interpretations of Zhuangzi.

Skepticism, Relativism, and Ordinary Knowledge
Zhuangzi is skeptical that we can use ordinary knowledge to grasp the Way. Since ordinary knowledge makes differentiations, using ordinary knowledge is futile because there are infinite differentiations to make. Zhuangzi writes that “Life is bounded. Knowledge is unbounded. Using the bounded to follow the unbounded is dangerous.” Life is bounded in that it has a definite time span, while knowledge is unbounded in that there are endless differentiations. Spending an entire temporally-limited life to pursue an unbounded process of differentiating is dangerous and counterproductive. Since every decision can be a moral decision, there are endless moral decisions to make, so using ordinary knowledge to agonize over every differentiation between right and wrong cannot provide a satisfactory or bounded moral framework.

Zhuangzi is skeptical about ordinary knowledge not only because there are endless differentiations to be made, but also because ordinary knowledge allows all people to convince themselves they are right. Zhuangzi asks “If a made-up mind counts as a teacher, then who doesn’t have a teacher? Why should it be just self-chosen experts on the order of things who have them? Stupid people would have them, too.” Since all people have ordinary knowledge, even the ‘stupid people,’ are able to make up their own minds. But by making up our own minds, we become our own teachers in our own echo-chambers which make us more convinced of our conceptions of right and wrong. And the more convinced we are that our differentiation between right and wrong is the objectively correct differentiation, the further we stray from the Way.

By convincing us that we have the correct differentiation between right and wrong, ordinary knowledge reinforces the influence of our perspectives on our knowledge, a manifestation of Zhuangzi’s perspectival relativism. The differentiations that stem from ordinary knowledge are inherently dependent on our perspectives, for it is not uncommon for me to have a different idea of right and wrong than others. Zhuangzi asks “once you and I have started arguing, if you win and I lose, then are you really right and am I really wrong?... If you and I and [others] can’t understand each other, should we wait for someone else?” This is a remarkably direct rhetorical question from a man who avoids clarity in the rest of his work. Since our perspectives shape what we think of as right and wrong, it is possible that we cannot reconcile competing differentiations of right and wrong, especially given the limitations of language.

Zhuangzi is a perspectival relativist and a skeptic of ordinary knowledge because that knowledge relies on a linguistic framework that the Way transcends. Following Laozi, the other foundational Daoist thinker, Zhuangzi argues that words cannot express the Way. Ordinary knowledge at its heart makes differentiations between right and wrong using language, but Zhuangzi undermines the usefulness of the word for right (是). Since 是 can mean this (vs. that) or right (vs. wrong), the word is inherently perspective-dependent. Just like I use ‘this’ or ‘that’ depending on which pronoun makes sense
from my perspective, I can use ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ depending on which adjective makes sense from my perspective. Zhuangzi follows up this demonstration of the inadequacy of the word for ‘right’ with “the Way is lost in the glorification of right and wrong,” for using ordinary knowledge overemphasizes the perspective-dependent distinction between the words, and the concepts, of right and wrong.11

Furthermore, Zhuangzi makes reference to the School of Names, a group of philosophers who worked to undermine the value of language in philosophy. He gives the example of the Masters whose “knowledge was almost perfect... what they liked they tried to illuminate... [but they] ended in the gloom of ‘hard and white. Their followers ended up tangled in the string of works and were incomplete their whole lives.”12 This story makes subtle jabs at Confucius, who attempted to convince rulers to change policy and to teach his followers the virtuous way, only to leave a legacy of students struggling to understand his words instead of acting in their natural tendencies. Confucius, the rulers, and his students all came from different perspectives, so Confucius was unable to use language and argumentation alone to spread his differentiations between the right and virtuous, and the wrong. The reference to “hard and white” represents all rational arguments, the effectiveness of which was undermined by the School of Names. In response, Zhuangzi rejects the ability of ordinary knowledge, which relies heavily on a faulty linguistic framework, to grasp the Way.

This interpretation of Zhuangzi as a perspectival relativist and skeptic of ordinary knowledge is evident in his stories and examples. He asks “How do I know that loving life is not a mistake? How do I know that hating death is not like a lost child forgetting its way home?”13 By questioning what we think of as universally and naturally right, loving life and hating death, Zhuangzi demonstrates that all things in life are subject to never-ending differentiations. And because we each have ordinary knowledge, we each convince ourselves that we should rightly love life and hate death, thereby resisting people with contrary opinions. But by comparing hating death to a child ‘forgetting its way home,’ Zhuangzi switches perspectives to demonstrate how right and wrong is perspective-dependent. We could all be lost and death could be a comforting home for us, but we are instead acculturated to fear death and love life.14 This perspectival relativism and skepticism of even the most basic differentiations undermines the value of ordinary knowledge in grasping the Way. Using ordinary knowledge is futile because differentiations between right and wrong are never-ending and convince us that we are right. Given that our perspectives and language insufficiencies shape our knowledge, we cannot use ordinary knowledge to grasp something that is cosmic and ineffable.

Ordinary knowledge vs. Superior knowledge

The first major contrast between ordinary knowledge and superior knowledge is that the latter is not constrained by perspective. This is most evident in Zhuangzi’s classic butterfly story:

One night, Zhuangzi dreamed of being a butterfly—a happy butterfly, showing off and doing as he pleased, unaware of being Zhuangzi. Suddenly, he awoke, drowsily, Zhuangzi again. And he could not tell whether it was Zhuangzi who had dreamt the butterfly or the butterfly dreaming Zhuangzi.15

In this story, Zhuangzi makes the contrast between the sage (himself), who is unsure which perspective is the reality, and the “stupid ones [who] think they are awake and confidently claim to know it.”16 In doing so, Zhuangzi represents the sage who uses superior knowledge and is aware of other perspectives, while the butterfly represents the stupid one who uses ordinary knowledge and is oblivious to other perspectives. Zhuangzi refrains from making value judgments about which type of knowledge is better, because value or moral judgements are a useless exercise in ordinary knowledge. Nonetheless,
the sage uses superior knowledge, so they transcend their perspectives and are open to others.

Superior knowledge is distinct from ordinary knowledge not only because it is unrestricted by perspectives, but also because it is cosmic in scale. Zhuangzi writes that “the blind can’t appreciate beautiful patterns or the deaf bells and drums. But are blindness and deafness confined to the physical form? Your knowledge has them, too.” Using ordinary knowledge is like being blind to beauty and cosmic nature of the Way, which only superior knowledge can grasp. When asked where is the Way, Zhuangzi replies, “There’s nowhere it isn’t... It’s in an ant... It’s in the grass... It’s in dung and urine.” Given the cosmic nature of the Way, grasping the Way requires a cosmic knowledge, or a superior knowledge. And this superior knowledge gives the sages remarkable skills like staying dry in water or unharmed in fire. By not making differentiations between right and wrong, superior knowledge allows the sage to live a natural life following the ‘beautiful patterns’ of the Way.

Zhuangzi’s negative project

The sections above demonstrated Zhuangzi’s skepticism of ordinary knowledge, which makes never-ending differentiations between right and wrong and allows us to convince ourselves that we are right. They established his perspectival relativism in relation to ordinary knowledge, for the differentiations made are shaped by our perspectives and are reliant on a faulty linguistic framework. Finally, they contrasted this ordinary knowledge with the superior knowledge, which is not constrained by perspectives and is cosmic in scope. The following section will describe Zhuangzi’s negative advice, or his advice to not use ordinary knowledge.

Zhuangzi tells his students to fast the mind, or to clear the mind of the distractions of ordinary knowledge. He teaches:

Do not listen with your ears but listen with your mind. Do not listen with your mind but listen with your qi [vital energy/stuff].

Listening stops with the ear. The mind stops with signs. Qi is empty and waits on external things. Only the Way gathers in emptiness. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind.

We cannot use our senses, or our ears, to grasp the Way, because the senses are inherently unreliable. We cannot use our ordinary knowledge to grasp the Way because it ‘stops with signs,’ meaning it relies on abstract differentiations that are never-ending. By refusing to use ordinary knowledge, we make space for qi, which ‘is emptiness’ or ‘empty air.’ Fasting the mind involves clarifying our mind, removing the clutter of ordinary knowledge and differentiations, leaving only emptiness, or qi. Since ‘the Way gathers in emptiness,’ the only way to grasp the Way is to remove artificial differentiations from the mind, making the mind empty and allowing the Way to gather. We listen with qi when we use superior knowledge, for superior knowledge transcends these differentiations, just like qi.

This abstract advice manifests in the story of the butcher. In response to Lord Wenhui, who is impressed by his remarkable ox-cutting technique, the butcher says “What your servant values is the Way, which goes beyond technique... Sensible knowledge stops... I rely on Heavenly patterns.” When he started to cut ox, he “did not see anything but oxen. Three years later, he couldn’t see the whole ox. And now, I encounter them with spirit and don’t look with my eyes.” At first, the butcher uses his senses, but can only see the ox because his physical field of vision is entirely taken up by the large ox. Once he has rejected the senses, he listens with his mind, but he cannot see the whole ox since his reliance on ordinary knowledge like technique causes him to zone in on which joints he was cutting between. Once he has rejected ordinary knowledge, he is left with emptiness, allowing him to use existing ‘Heavenly patterns,’ which are the ‘beautiful patterns’ that the blind cannot appreciate. This manifestation of Zhuangzi’s negative project leads the butcher to be uniquely efficient, just like the sage can walk through fire without getting burnt.
Zhuangzi provides other abstract examples of his negative project, which I see in my experience playing piano. Improvement on the path to grasping the Way involves forgetting “benevolence and righteousness…rites and music.”23 These represent Confucianism and Confucian values such as making distinction between right and wrong, which Zhuangzi believes are symptomatic of the social decay of his time. Similarly, people can have no essence because “by no essence I mean people not letting in good and bad to hurt them.”24 The sage lets in neither the good nor the bad, but rather refuses to distinguish between the two.

I’m a classical pianist, and, at times, I have felt hints of following Zhuangzi’s negative advice. Normally I worry about differentiating between the right and wrong interpretations, but there are endless interpretations, and by forcing myself to choose one, I close myself off from others. My peers and teachers always have different interpretations of the same music, and we struggle to articulate why we like our interpretations beyond just saying ‘because I like it better.’ However, in performance I endeavor to put all that behind me—to stop thinking about how each note sounds and the perfection of my technique, both manifestations of ordinary knowledge. I don’t try to think of anything else, and in that process I find myself playing music unlike anything I’d played before. Zhuangzi’s negative advice is a rejection of ordinary knowledge, stemming from his skepticism of a knowledge that is relative to each perspective.

Conclusion
In this paper, I make progress in the grand debate on Zhuangzi’s skepticism and relativism by distinguishing his conception of ordinary knowledge from his conception of superior knowledge. While it could not fully examine the distinction between ordinary and superior knowledge and its comparisons to the Neoconfucian idea of true knowledge, it does argue that ordinary knowledge is dependent on perspectives and on a linguistic framework, so it is not a viable method of grasping the Way. The latter transcends perspectives and therefore is able to grasp the cosmic Way. Superior knowledge comes about when we stop using ordinary knowledge, so Zhuangzi gives us a negative project to reject ordinary knowledge. This alone allows us to grasp the Way.

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Applications of Dr. Scott Peck’s Interpretation of Human Evil in *People of the Lie*

Zach Gallin

In 2003, during the Iraq War, American soldiers of the 372nd Military Police Company were sent to the Abu Ghraib prison camp to watch over Iraqi civilian prisoners. A year later, the first photos were leaked of Iraqis being burned, threatened, beaten, and sodomized by these soldiers. The leaked pictures spread like wildfire, sparking global outrage at the US military. In 2007, as America reeled in response to the tortures at Abu Ghraib, the psychologist Philip Zimbardo published *The Lucifer Effect* and revolutionized Americans’ understanding of human evil. Zimbardo argued that evil like Abu Ghraib has a psychology which can be explained through scientific observation.

Yet Zimbardo’s thought process wasn’t new; the psychologist Scott Peck had described his own version of the psychology of evil in his book *People of the Lie* twenty years earlier. Peck conceived of evil as a diagnosable and perhaps treatable psychological disorder, setting off waves of controversy which continue to reverberate. I’ve found by comparing Peck’s ideology with Zimbardo’s and applying it to my life experiences that Peck is about halfway to the truth. On the one hand, evil is psychological, and it can, to an extent, be mitigated. On the other hand, to describe human evil as a scientific disorder is to oversimplify the issue, for evil is both an indigenous trait and a conditional stance. Indeed, the psychology of evil is unique but ubiquitous, terrible but natural.

Peck begins by defining evil through its effects as he describes two of his adolescent patients, Bobby and Roger. He emphasizes the lack of vitality that both boys exhibited, and he uses details from his experiences with them to argue that evil is a force which sucks the life out of its victims. Peck focuses on the human dimension of evil, observing how this life-sucking force manifests itself within evil people. In this vein, he theorizes that the key to human evil is malignant narcissism. According to Peck, a malignantly narcissistic person is centered on their own interests to the point that they harm others for personal protection or gain. Peck is quick to deconstruct the binary between science and religion in his description of evil, and he highlights that malignant narcissism is both a psychological disease and a moral issue. The foremost symptom of this illness is compulsive, repeated, and often subconscious lying about oneself to avoid guilt. Hence, Peck calls evil people “people of the lie,” and he gives his book the same title. Evil driven by malignant narcissism creates a wide range of additional symptoms, all of which relate to lying. These include scapegoating, obsession with maintaining a positive public image,
sensitivity to criticism, attempts to control others, and unwillingness to work through one’s own flaws and emotions. Peck explains that when these traits come together, the result is often confusing and destructive. Thus, evil people generally confuse regular members of society and psychiatrists alike.3

After labeling malignant narcissism and its accompanying traits as the root cause of human evil, Peck returns to the issue of evil’s effects. He reiterates that evil drains the vivacity of its victims, and that although the evil may not realize it, they are repeatedly taking actions contrary to the lives and liveliness of others. Peck then expands on the implications of this in a domestic setting, and he brings in the concept of thralldom-induced psychological symbiosis. He argues that evil people lock their domestic victims in an emotional thralldom from which the victims cannot escape. Many victims of evil are children and many perpetrators of evil are parents because children do not yet have the independence or strength to separate themselves from their parents, and they are therefore more vulnerable to thralldom. After making this point, Peck notes that adults can also be held in thralldom, bringing up a couple in which the wife, Sarah, had total psychological control over her husband, Hartley. Thralldom often results in psychological symbiosis, in which the evil person and their victim become emotionally dependent on one another. This interdependence devastates both parties, as the cycle of evil builds on itself until the perpetrator and the victim are feeding off each other like parasites. Often, thralldom-induced psychological symbiosis causes the original victim to become evil themselves. Thus, evil spreads like a disease from one person to the next with prolonged close contact.4

It must be mentioned that in the absence of additional evidence, there is a disconnect between Peck’s causes and effects of evil. Peck articulately lays out the causes of human evil as malignant narcissism, lying, and the accompanying symptoms of these disorders. He then uses short vignettes accompanied by analyses to portray evil’s effects: draining of vitality, thralldom, psychological symbiosis, and the victim often becoming evil. However, Peck doesn’t account for potential other contributors to the effects he describes. For instance, it is possible that the Bobby and Roger’s loss of vitality was caused by something other than or in addition to their parents’ lies. Peck only spent a few therapy sessions with each of the boys’ parents, so it is unlikely that he fully grasped their situation. The same could be said for the connection between Hartley’s thralldom and his wife’s scapegoating.

Additionally, Peck seems to have a maternal power bias in his accounts of evil. In his case on Roger, although both parents were responsible for the evil deeds they committed towards their son, Peck insinuates that the mom was more deceptive, and perhaps eviler, than the dad was.5 Furthermore, in Peck’s account of Sarah and Hartley, Sarah clearly exerted a maternal dominance over her husband. In two of Peck’s other cases, the cases of the voodoo dream and the spider phobia, daughters were victimized by their mothers.6 It is unclear whether Peck is describing evil as feminine and maternal because he is subconsciously sexist or because he is consciously trying to subvert the reader’s tendency to view evil as a masculine entity. Either way, this bias must be considered when interpreting and assessing Peck’s definitions of evil.

Peck understands that evil people must be able to differentiate between good and evil deeds and choose whether to do good or evil. Therefore, psychopaths and those in impossible situations are not evil. True human evil arises when people know that what they are doing is morally wrong, but continue to do it anyway. In fact, Peck argues that evil people often have a more acute sense of morality than average. Therefore, the evil should be pitied, for they live in constant, though at times subconscious, fear of being ‘found out.’ Peck’s symptoms of evil relate to this concept. The evil find scapegoats to project their own flaws on, for they cannot
accept themselves as they are. They are obsessed with maintaining a positive public appearance to compensate for their internal badness, and they cannot withstand any criticism which exposes their underlying sin. Peck understands that the most egregious product of the evil’s free will and self-awareness is their lies. Evil people are constantly lying to themselves and to others because they are terrified of exposing the truth about what they are.7

In making these assertions, Peck recognizes the importance of moral judgement in any examination of evil. As he deconstructs and scraps the binary between science and religion, he suggests that subjectivity is inherent and necessary in even a scientific investigation of malignant narcissism. Despite our moral aversion to judging, we must judge in order to analyze evil. In providing this argument, Peck makes himself vulnerable, hinting that he might be engaging in evil activity by writing this book. By subjectively criticizing others through his writing, Peck is possibly scapegoating his own evil, and he is certainly doing his case studies harm. It could even be suggested that Peck is manifesting the greatest indicator of evil by lying, as he creates obviously narrow and one-sided portrayals of his patients.8

For instance, Peck focuses his book solely around Western Christian notions of right and wrong. He thus seems to take for granted that the Christian outlook is the truth instead of drawing equally sound definitions of evil from other moral and religious codes. Peck’s Christian bias not only weakens his argument, it suggests that he may be evil for making moral judgements without a diversity of supporting doctrine. Peck at times introduces psychological science as an opposing research paradigm to Christianity, as when he suggests that one of his case studies, Charlene, may have had an Oedipus complex.9 However, he also underscores that modern science does not leave room for morality, so while he brings in two different paradigms for how to research evil, he still only uses the Christian paradigm to judge good from bad.10 Ironically, it is easy to label Peck an evil liar since he establishes solely the Christian paradigm as an absolute moral truth.

Peck effectively counters these critiques, as he states he is not evil since he is writing his book with the intention to disseminate knowledge and to heal victims of evil. His task would be impossible without the freedom to make efficient moral judgements. Indeed, for anyone to conduct research on evil, Peck claims that is essential for them to exercise their free will in being subjective. To immediately criticize or write off subjective analysts of evil is to stymie the study of evil entirely.11

In contrast to Peck, Zimbardo builds his argument off the seeming omnipresence of both good and evil in human societies throughout history. He characterizes evil as a common psychological phenomenon resulting from the specific pressures of an overarching system. Zimbardo weaves his most compelling narrative through the Stanford Prison Experiment, a psychological study he managed in the 1970s. During the Stanford Prison Experiment, Zimbardo enlisted successful Stanford undergraduates to role play in a mock “prison” for a week. Some of the students became guards and were told to treat the prisoners harshly if needed to maintain order, while the other students became the prisoners. Zimbardo observed his experiment in horror as the “guards” perpetrated increasingly evil acts on the “prisoners” in response to pressure from their imaginary wardens. The experiment led Zimbardo to believe that nearly all people are capable of extreme evil in high-stress situations under intimidating leadership. Therefore, Zimbardo views evil as a disorder in certain institutions rather than a disorder in certain people.12

I’m now going to use Peck’s definition of malignant narcissism and its associated symptoms as evil to prove that I was evil when I was 16 years old. I realize this seems to be a contradictory and somewhat self-deprecating exercise, but I feel that critical self-observation is essential to moral understanding. I should emphasize that I do not think I am currently evil, but I do find it interesting to argue I once
was. Throughout my time in high school, one of my close family members was suffering from a traumatic, dangerous, and progressively worsening mental illness. It was through this sickness and the strain it put on my family that I was first introduced to the concept of evil. As I struggled to succeed in spite of my family’s suffering, I became malignantly narcissistic, likely as a self-defense mechanism. I discovered quickly how to push my pain and anger back into my subconscious and to cover my internal fear and conflict with a veneer of lies. In retrospect, it was obvious that I was becoming sick as well, but I refused to admit this. I maintained perfect grades, dressed well, greeted everyone with a smile. I needed targets for my own shortcomings so I scapegoated first my family, then my closest friends. I eventually began to hold one friend in thralldom, where I disclosed all my pain to her, but ignored its underlying internal causes, leaving her confused and scared. When she suggested I see a therapist, I refused, insisting that she help me instead. I became overly sensitive to my parents’ criticism and obsessed with my appearance of perfection even as I slowly fell apart. I had a six pack, excelled at running, and was suicidal, although I didn’t acknowledge this last trait until months later. I became adept at controlling every conversation I was in, focusing it around my petty problems to avoid the bigger questions of why I felt so awful all the time. I seriously hurt my closest friend in this process, and, in her inability to break away from my thralldom, she ultimately hurt me. I was, by Peck’s standards, evil. I was also 16 and growing. Within 6 months I had come to terms with my own illness. I told my parents I was sick and I started seeing a therapist. Within two years I’ve turned my life around.

From my personal case study, I hope to reveal the most glaring way in which Peck oversimplifies evil: he creates a binary between good and evil people. Peck swiftly categorizes those who fit evil’s symptoms as irrevocably evil—he defines Bobby’s and Roger’s parents as evil after spending only a couple sessions with them. Yet, he fails to account for how complex evil is and how dynamic people are. In truth, evil manifests itself differently in various people and situations. Peck somewhat acknowledges this in the case of group evil, but he underestimates the power of circumstance on domestic and interpersonal evil. People are constantly changing, supposedly good people often do evil deeds, supposedly evil people often do good deeds, evil people often become good and good people often turn evil. Depending on how his book is interpreted, Peck might be a hero, or he might be evil. It is therefore logical that none of us are fully evil or fully good. Peck realizes this, and he suggests that morality is a spectrum, with some good people, some evil people, and most of us somewhere in between. However, I feel that even a spectrum doesn’t do evil’s complexity justice. Evil is more like a cloud which we all drift into and out of as we journey through our lives. It accepts and alters people in different ways depending on circumstance. Some drift into it so far that they get lost and can’t find their way back out again without help. No one is truly evil, but we are all affected by evil and we all must actively resist it. In many ways, I believe Peck is right. Evil does suck up vitality, it does spawn lies and feed off malignant narcissism. Scapegoating, obsession with self-image, and thralldom are all associated with evil. Yet, I feel that Peck’s analysis, while insightful, is incomplete.

I was once evil. Peck could be described as evil. We all experience and confront evil at various points in our lives. Human evil is ubiquitous, it surrounds us. It is an essential component of our humanity. My close family member suffers from severe social anxiety. He struggles to form trusting relationships, sometimes judges people irrationally, and feels embarrassed standing in front of crowds. When he was at his sickest, he wouldn’t leave the house or eat meals with us, barely talked except in fits of rage, and was clinically depressed. He had to be hospitalized and spent years in recovery. Of course, he was incredibly sick, and he wasn’t exhibiting normal behavior. Yet, to feel anxiety is normal. I also
hesitate before forming a trusting relationship with someone new, and I also occasionally make rash judgements about others. I too sometimes feel nervous speaking in front of crowds. I think that to an extent all of us do. To feel social anxiety is normal. Someone who never feels any social anxiety seems inhuman. Anxiety is an essential component of the human condition. We all have it, and most of us learn to control it so that it can help us instead of hurting us and others. Anxiety becomes dangerous, it becomes a psychological disorder, when it dominates the mind and inhibits other essential emotions, thoughts, and actions. I believe that evil is the same way.

When Peck defines malignant narcissism as a core component of human evil, he admits that all people are fairly narcissistic. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, “You wouldn’t worry so much about what others think of you if you realized how seldom they do.” It’s true that we think of ourselves more often than anyone else. We, and by ‘we’ I mean all people, have felt an urge to lie or scapegoat someone else at some point in our lives. We care about our public image and are generally sensitive to criticism. We like to have a degree of control over our situation, and we tend to feel shameful when we confront our flaws. Each of these emotions and behaviors is normal. It would be very weird if we spent all our time thinking about other people, didn’t care a bit about our public image, and loved receiving criticism. Therefore, just like we are all a little bit anxious, we are all a little bit evil. Human evil is an essential part of the shared human experience—it sets us apart from other animals. Evil makes us human. We all experience it and we all struggle against it. It becomes dangerous when it takes people over, driving them to commit terrible injustices. In my opinion, human evil exists despite these risks because it is a necessary component of humanity.

Now that I have dedicated a paragraph to explaining how I once was evil and a paragraph to explaining why everyone is somewhat evil, I’m going to prove that I’m not evil. You’re likely skeptical of this ambition—even I had trouble declaring it at first. However, I’ve realized I cannot be evil if I wrote this paper. As described by Peck, a major sign of an evil person is the unwillingness to confront and analyze one’s own sin. Therefore, since I dedicated much of the paper to uncovering my flaws and suggesting that I might have evil attributes, I’m directly contradicting Peck’s description of an evil person. This begs the question, if I have evil characteristics and I used to be evil, then why am I not evil?

My first impulse is to declare that my soul has radically changed and that I’m no longer the person I was as a teenager. However, I realize that this assertion is a lie in itself. Although I’ve had new experiences and I act differently than I used to, I’m still at heart the same as I was. My spirit has not changed. I don’t know how to prove this; it’s just the truth. If anything, I’ve learned to better control the evil side of my soul and to cultivate the good part by setting goals for how I want to act and striving to achieve them. Yet, it doesn’t seem that solely through personal growth with the support of others I would be able to make such radical personal change in a relatively short span of time. As one student exclaimed in class, people can’t change from good to evil or evil to good in a span of only a few months! Therefore, I clearly haven’t changed all that much. One could also argue that I am not evil because Peck’s standards of evil are complete nonsense. Even though I was repeatedly exhibiting all of them, this should not classify me as an evil person. Of course, I don’t agree with this viewpoint either. While Peck didn’t fully address the various realities of human evil, I feel that the symptoms of evil he described were accurate. Here we uncover a sort of paradox in which I am not evil yet I must be evil.

I believe this reveals an important aspect of the way humans deal with evil. As I explained earlier, all people carry some amount of internal evil. Peck recognizes that young children generally go through an ‘evil phase’ in which they demonstrate a variety of evil qualities.
Zimbardo demonstrates how flexible and varied our morality can be depending on the situation we’re in, but he underplays the difficulty of overcoming one’s innate evil once it’s released. It’s as if, when damaged or under extreme pressure, the floodgates that hold back our internal evil break open, and we become outwardly evil. This is what happened at Abu Ghraib, and it is what happened to me under the enormous strain of my family member’s illness. I differ from Peck in that I understand those floodgates can be closed again with effort. Even when broken, they can be repaired. I am no longer evil because, with help, I was able to confront and contain my evil, and to reinforce my floodgates so they won’t break down again. In the end, one could argue that all of us are evil, or that none of us are. It doesn’t matter much either way so long as we maintain our gates.

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Beowulf, Not Abel

Brendan McPherson Clark

Beowulf, Son of Ecgtheow. Hrothgar, Son of Healfdene. Wiglaf, Son of Weohstan. In Beowulf, lineage defines a person, and in many senses, Beowulf is a heroic epic of lineage and ancestors. Swords operate as the primary device for indicating and operationalizing lineage and its respective responsibility within Beowulf. The sword’s inherent connection with battle and glory relate these two things with certain characters in a way that upholds lineage and proper role fulfillment within that lineage. As an Anglo-Saxon epic, Beowulf continually prescribes boundaries on the basis of the status quo’s values within which each death and failure comes as the result of character’s actions outside of a value system. Beowulf works as a grand synthesis of Christianity and paganism. Its sword symbolism operationalizes the pagan value system of duty to one’s lineage, while also working to incorporate that value system into Christianity’s greatest instance of familial betrayal: Cain’s murder of Abel. Through frequent biblical references and allusions, Beowulf upholds both Christian and pagan values by aligning them; Christianity and paganism both advocate for appropriate action according to one’s lineage, and the failure of any character comes as God’s punishment for acting contrary to that value system. Beowulf dies ultimately because God does not grant him victory in response to his transgressions against God and against lineage as a value system.

Grendel acts outside the appropriate actions prescribed by his lineage although he seems almost a sympathetic character by doing so. He is “among Cain’s race” and is thus assigned to a life of suffering;1 Grendel “waited in darkness, wretchedly suffering all the while, for every day he heard the joyful din loud in the hall.”2 We see what appears to be not an inherent evil, but an understandable envy and longing for the lives of these men who “knew no sorrow or human misery.”3 God has designated Grendel to be a “miserable man” because of his place in Cain’s lineage, yet Grendel must still accept his lineage and the misery that accompanies it.4 Instead, he attacks Heorot, Hrothgar’s hall, repeatedly out of anger for what he and his lineage is designated not to have, and he is killed for it by Beowulf.

In reaction to Grendel’s death, his mother seeks wergild, best understood as justifiable revenge for the murder of one’s family member, yet this is again outside the expectations of one’s lineage. Wergild is not condemned in Beowulf. Wergild heavily plays into one’s responsibility toward lineage and kin in that one must avenge the death of one’s kin. According to Beowulf, “it is always better to avenge one’s friend than to mourn overmuch.”5 However, a woman seeking wergild is unacceptable, and, as Jane Nitzsche observes, “[Grendel] insists on arrogating the masculine role of the warrior.”6 Grendel’s mother is “a mighty evil marauder who means to avenge her kin, [but] too far has carried out her revenge.”7 Throughout Beowulf, scops (i.e. Anglo-Saxon bards) offer tales that demonstrate and clarify various aspects of the upheld values of Beowulf. Hildeburh presents the ideal response of a woman in a scop’s song performed after Beowulf’s triumph over Grendel. In the episode at Finnsburg, Hildeburh does not seek vengeance for the death of her son and her brother Hnaef.
even though they were unjustly killed by Finn. Instead, she performs the appropriate role of a mourner. She coordinates the preparation of the funeral pyre of her son and brother and “[sings] a sad lament.”8 It is one of the thanes that takes the responsibility of avenging Hnaef. Hildeburh, put forth as the ideal woman, is passive in grief as she should be since “a kinswoman or mother must passively accept and not actively avenge the loss of her son.”9 Grendel’s mother, as the episode at Finnsburg contrasts by a mere hundred lines, does not act appropriately; she oversteps her familial and gender bounds, seeks *wergild*, and is killed by Beowulf just as her son is. In a society where a woman’s role “primarily depends upon ‘peacemaking,’ either biologically through her marriage ties, or socially and psychologically,” a mother cannot take on a masculine role by seeking *wergild*.10

Hrothgar’s life complicates this idea of proper responsibility according one’s lineage. *Beowulf* begins, not with Beowulf, but with a successful lineage in which a father is unwaveringly succeeded by his only son.11 They are men that are “renowned,”12 “beloved,”13 and “praiseworthy;”14 each is a “good king” and the proper successor.15 Hrothgar perturbs this. He assumes the throne through the death of his eldest brother, Heorogar, even though Heorogar had a son who, as Hrothgar admits, “was better than [Hrothgar].”16 If every transgression against proper familial responsibility results in failure in a way that becomes prescriptive and if Hrothgar inappropriately became king, there should be no reward for this indiscretion. And yet, Hrothgar “was peerless, blameless in everything”: a good king by deeds.17 In his youth, “success in war was given to Hrothgar, honor in battle, so that his beloved kinsmen eagerly serve him.”18 He and his people lived in joy with everything “that God had given him.”19 Thus, we have a character that operates outside his lineage, but is rewarded by God for it. Why? Hrothgar follows almost the exact same chronology as Beowulf whereby both earn respect as warriors, inappropriately become king, and enjoy long periods of peace, but Hrothgar is given victory by God through Beowulf whereas Beowulf dies. It seems that solely becoming king without the proper heritage is not condemned. Rather, it is how Beowulf acts in relation to his lineage and his responsibilities to it that will mark the death difference between him and Hrothgar. In order to demonstrate this, this paper turns to an analysis of the role of swords in *Beowulf*.

The ritualistic bestowment and acceptance of swords confers a place into genealogy. Beowulf at first seems to possess a childhood of promise when, in response to Unferth’s challenge, Beowulf describes a swimming contest that ends in his battle with monsters of which there has “never [been]…a harder night-battle under heaven’s vault.”20 Why then does the narrator depict young Beowulf as “a cowardly nobleman” who “had been long despised?”21 The narrator does this in order to portray the juxtaposition of Beowulf as a child with Beowulf receiving the “Heirloom of Hrothgar” in a dramatic “reversal.”22 The narrator seeks to demonstrate that the bestowment of a sword symbolizes admittance into a lineage. Hygelac proffers a place in his genealogy to Beowulf through the presentation of the sword of Hygelac’s father, which correlates to “a home and native rights.”23 As David Van Meter writes on *Beowulf* in The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, “the artifact [the sword] is the tangible and intergenerational source of status and power for a bloodline; and to transfer the artifact to an heir is to assert the societal rank and authority of the bloodline into another generation.”24 Similarly, Weohstan did not bestow Wiglaf his sword “until his boy could perform brave deeds like his father before him;” the blade is given as a representation of “his kinsman’s legacy.”25 This implicit acceptance into one’s bloodline can also be seen in the complexity of Hrothgar’s bestowment of his father’s blade to Beowulf;26 Wealhtheow, Hrothgar’s wife, intentionally attempts to dissolve this possibility of accepting Beowulf into her genealogy because this would make Beowulf, not her sons, next in line for the throne.27 Wealhtheow’s
intentional denial of Beowulf’s acceptance into her genealogy communicates her implicit understanding that the ritualistic bestowment of a family sword entails acceptance into one’s bloodline.

The bestowment of a sword in *Beowulf* further entails willful acceptance of the duties and obligations attached to that sword, which Beowulf attempts to fulfill in his battle with the dragon. “In the literature, the presentation—and the subsequent possession—of weapons serves to symbolize both the status and the societal obligations of the nobility.”

In the story of Hnaef’s death in the “Frisian slaughter,” it is not until Hengest has placed “a glinting sword, the best of battle-flames, upon his lap” that he does “not refuse the world’s custom” and avenge his father. “Thus, to Hengest, this sword becomes a material symbol of both his authority and his obligation to avenge his dead lord.” Similarly, Hygelac “laid the sword [of Hrethel] in Beowulf’s lap.” Thus, Beowulf acquires “the authority to exploit land, as well as the obligation to defend it.”

Before his battle with the dragon, Beowulf repeatedly and consistently links his obligation to fight with the sword of Hrethel bestowed upon him by Hygelac. In his speech immediately prior to his last fight, Beowulf states, “All my life I will wage war, while this sword endures.” “The blade’s edge...shall fight for the hoard.” It is this desire to “revenge” the Weders and the razed fortress of his kingdom that leads Beowulf to attack the dragon. Even Beowulf’s final words are expressions of gratitude that he is “able to acquire such wealth for [his] people before [his] death-day.” It is this obligation to his people that causes Beowulf to seek treasure for them, to hold “dark thoughts” and the “greatest of sorrows” for the harm done to them by the dragon, and to symbolically fight with the sword of Hrethel to show that he fights the dragon with them in mind.

It is this obligation that causes Beowulf to never mention God or beseech Him for help. His people become his only focus.

There is nothing inherently wrong with care for one’s peoples; Hrothgar, as a near-ideal king, cares well for his people, for Hrothgar “followed good customs.” Beowulf’s use of the sword becomes the marked difference between him and Hrothgar; this, in turn, highlights an important distinction in a character’s relationship to lineage. Hrothgar acts properly by upholding this value system while Beowulf does not. It does not matter if a character prospered as a result of an improper lineage, but rather, how they act in order to reinforce lineage as a value system. As shown, “a significant part of a warrior’s identity was bound up with his ancestry.” “There is no escape from the social system [of inheritance], because the system defines individual identity.” Inheritance defines a person and their expectations. The exigencies of this system are outlined in Hrothgar’s sermon to Beowulf on the errors of a king named Heremod, a speech that embodies the wisdom of a wise king on the actions one must not take. Heremod “has control of everything” so much so that “he himself cannot imagine an end to it, in his folly.” At last his portion of pride within him grows and flourishes” until “his final destiny he neglects and forgets/ since God, Ruler of glories, has given him a portion of honors.” It is “for [Beowulf’s] sake that [Hrothgar is] telling this, in [his] wisdom.” He warns Beowulf, “Defend yourself from wickedness, dear Beowulf, best of men, and choose better, eternal counsel; care not for pride, great champion!” However, Beowulf believes that “him who can bring about fame before death—that is best for the unliving man after he is gone.”

This division puts Hrothgar on the correct side of custom and proper action with Beowulf opposite him. Hrothgar is a “wise old king, [a] grey bearded warrior.” He was once a warrior but no longer fights his battles; “a hundred half-years [Hrothgar] held the Ring-Danes under the skies, and kept them safe from war from many tribes...from spears and swords.” Beowulf fights Grendel, and Beowulf fights Grendel’s mother. Hrothgar best protects his lineage and
his people by acting, not as a warrior, but as a wise king that has a hero fights his battles. In doing so, Hrothgar provides for a successor, protects his people, and acts appropriately in his role toward his lineage. Hrothgar is a god cyning, a “good king.” Beowulf, on the other hand, is warrior in relation to Hrothgar and only becomes king later. Essentially, Beowulf has two parts:

We must dismiss, of course, from our minds the notion that Beowulf is a “narrative poem,” that it tells a tale or intends to tell a tale sequentially...the poem was not meant to advance, steadily or unsteadily. It is essentially a balance, an opposition of ends and beginnings. In its simplest terms it is a contrasted description of two moments in a great life, rising and setting; an elaboration of the ancient and intensely moving contrast between youth and age, first achievement and final death.

We see both Beowulf’s youth and old age, his time as a warrior and his time as a king, but besides the temporal division of “fifty winters” of peace, there is little distinction that the audience sees in Beowulf as king and Beowulf as a warrior: he still fights his own battle against the dragon. He takes up the sword.

Beowulf does not act as a wise king who lets another fight his battles; instead, he fights as the warrior that he no longer is. Grendel and Grendel’s mother come, not as punishments for Hrothgar, but rather as opportunities for Hrothgar to act appropriately as king. Likewise, the dragon comes to haunt Beowulf’s kingdom to reveal if Beowulf will act properly as a king rather than as a warrior. “[Beowulf] was then a wise king, old guardian of his homeland, until in the dark nights a dragon began his reign.”

The dragon is more than Beowulf’s fatal downfall; it is also his moral downfall. This dragon will prompt Beowulf to take up the sword and act, not for God, but out of reckless emotion and unreserved loyalty to his kinsmen; it is for this reason that he dies. The dragon comes to its hoard of gold because a previous “guardian of rings” was the last to hold that “rich legacy of a noble race, precious treasures,” but had none left to “bear the sword,” for “death in war and awful deadly harm [had] swept away all of [his] people who have passed from life” so that this last survivor could only “enjoy those ancient treasures for just a little while” before dying as the last of his kinsmen.”

Likewise, Beowulf’s actions will lead to his death, which, as Wiglaf notes, will lead to the vulnerability of his people to attacks from the Swedes. Just as Cain’s pride and envy lead him to kill his own kin and thereby act against God and his lineage, Beowulf acts neither for God or his lineage but rather mistakenly as a prideful warrior “most eager for fame.”

Beowulf’s pride is the downfall of both him and his kin. Both Cain and Beowulf take up a blade and, by doing so, let down their kin and descendants.

Beowulf thus acts against both God and his kin, but furthermore, Beowulf’s use of a sword entails his attempt to fulfill his obligation to his genealogy before his obligation to God. The Beowulf poet consistently connects the notion of fighting for and with God with the notion of not using one’s sword. In Beowulf’s battle with Grendel, God is said to “grant the judgment of glory to whichever hand seems proper.”

The original Old English explicitly uses the term hond, meaning “hand” according to Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary. And, if it were not for Beowulf foregoing a sword in his battle with Grendel, Beowulf could not have defeated him: “no sword, nor the best of iron anywhere in the world, could even touch that evil sinner.” It is “the great gift which God had given him, the greatest might of all mankind” that leads Beowulf to victory against both Grendel and his mother. In earlier advice given to Beowulf that is prophetic in both linguistic expression and narrative scope, it is said that “The glory of [Beowulf’s] might is but a little while; too soon it will be that sickness or the sword will shatter [Beowulf’s] strength.”

The passage ends with a final premonition: “In one fell swoop, death, o warrior, will overwhelm you.” Beowulf takes up the sword of Hrethel and bases its subsequent duties as his primary
motivations for fighting: his duty toward his kinsman becomes prioritized over God. When he learns that many are harmed by the dragon, Beowulf “believed he had bitterly offended the Ruler of all, the eternal Lord, against the old law; his breast groaned with dark thoughts—that was not his custom.” He does not ask for forgiveness or help from God, however, but instead “[devises] revenge” for his kinsman. His final act of using the sword and placing upon it his obligation to fight the dragon denies agency or motivation to God. Thus, Beowulf fails through his own agency by taking up the sword.

The differences in description between this final battle and Beowulf’s two previous battles demonstrate God’s lack of support. In Beowulf’s battle with the dragon, his failure represents God’s lack of support, for “no man in the world would be able to touch that ring-hall [of the dragon] unless God himself, the true king of Victories…granted to whomever he wished to open the hoard, to whatever person seemed proper to Him.” Ergo, because Beowulf fails, it is clear that God did not grant victory to Beowulf. God is not even mentioned in relation to Beowulf throughout this entire battle. Beowulf dies because God does not grant him complete victory in his battle with the dragon. However, Beowulf attributes agency to God in all of his previous successful endeavors. It is “Holy God in His grace [that] has guided [Beowulf] to [the Danes].” It is “God [that] might easily put an end to the deeds of this mad enemy [Grendel].” “The holy God grant[s] the judgment of glory to whichever hand seems proper to Him.” Against Grendel’s mother, “holy God brought about war-victory—the wise Lord, ruler of the Heavens, decided it rightly.” Beowulf is always “given” and “granted” his victories and abilities by God.

The Old English of Beowulf provides further evidence that participation in a genealogy, if coming before God, results in the loss of God’s protection. Oftost wísode winigea léasum, or as The Broadview Anthology of British Literature translates, “He [God] has always guided the friendless one.” The two key words are winigea, derived from wine, and léasum, derived from leás, meaning “void of” or “without.” In Old English, winigea is not a direct translation to “friend” but rather as “one who can protect.” Although translated as “a friend,” wine can be more specifically translated as “a friendly lord” or “a powerful friend.” Thus, this sentence could be better translated as “He [God] has always guided the one without a friendly lord.” Therefore, if Beowulf’s use of a sword constitutes an oath and duty towards the person that bestowed the sword, he is without God’s guidance. Similarly, the etymology of the phrase “Thus can an undoomed man easily survive wrack and ruin, if he holds to the Ruler’s grace and protection” further supports this contention. As Broadview notes, this passage is “the narrator’s version of Beowulf’s comment at lines 572-73” that “Wyrd often spares an undoomed man, when his courage endures.” The narrator applies God instead of wyrd—an expected change for a narrator that espouses a Christian outlook. Furthermore, the “man” whom wyrd protects in Beowulf’s line is referred to as eorl while in the narrator’s version, it is mæg—a change from “an Anglo-Saxon of noble rank” to “a kinsman.” This shift garners significance in the narrator’s description of God’s hyldo, which Broadview translates as “grace.” Hylde is more appropriately translated as “loyalty” and is often connected to the idea of “fidelity to a lord.” Thus, the use of mæg and hylde indicate the narrator’s focus on kinship and that one’s ultimate kinship must be toward God. The narrator intentionally rephrases Beowulf’s words in order to deny fate in favor of God, and his specific language indicates that survival and God’s protection is contingent upon one holding to God as his highest lord. Thus, Beowulf’s use of the sword of Hrethel, and thereby his prioritization of his kinsman above God, results in loss of God’s protection and Beowulf’s death.
Beowulf, Not Abel

observes, “To bestow an article upon another is a gesture which projects a profound obligation to share the repercussion as well as the benefits of a personal relationship.”81 Meter relates this to one of the Venerable Bede’s stories in which “Bede apparently does not feel any need to explain to his reader why Fursa fears that taking the property from a sinner might endanger his soul.”82 By accepting Hrunting, Beowulf also accepts the moral implications of that sword. He willingly accepts the weight of the deeds of Unferth, primarily fratricide.83 Furthermore, it is likely that Hrunting came into the possession of Unferth through this fratricide. Unferth would not have received a sword for any noble deed as Beowulf points out; he most likely would have received Hrunting through inheritance, especially with the level of prestige that this sword is attributed.84 For this reason, it is probable that Hrunting is directly connected to Unferth’s fratricide and thus only comes to Beowulf through this act. Throughout Beowulf, fratricide is specifically condemned, most prevalently in the case of Grendel and his mother. As descendants of Cain, they are assigned to a life of misery and killed by Beowulf when they try to escape this lineage. Even Cain’s murder of Abel himself was committed with a “blade.”85 It is not surprising, then, that “the edge [of Hrunting] failed the man in his need… It was the first time that the fame of that precious treasure had failed.”86 A renowned, ostensibly infallible sword fails Beowulf because of the genealogy attached to it. Only after Beowulf casts aside Hrunting and trusts in his “might,” does God, who is not mentioned until after Beowulf abandons Hrunting, bring about “victory.”87

Along this same reasoning, Nægling, the sword Beowulf uses in his battle with the dragon, fails Beowulf because of its implicit genealogy and connection to the past. As shown, Nægling, the heirloom of Hrethel, leads Beowulf to prioritize his kinship with man over his fidelity to God. However, Nægling is also, although less explicitly, connected to fratricide. Beowulf acquires Nægling through Hygelac,88 who could have either received the sword from Haethcyn, who killed his brother Herebeald,90 or from Hrethel who died from the grief over the fratricide of his son.91 Beowulf is aware of this; he is the one telling these very stories. Although Haethcyn’s fratricide was committed with an arrow, Nægling still would have been passed down to Beowulf because of it. As Meter writes, “to accept the arms of a kinsman or lord is to accept a share in both the crimes and the received wrongs.”91 Thus, because Beowulf willingly accepts the sword of Hrethel, “Nægling shatter[s]” at the moment that Beowulf needs it most against the dragon.92 The two swords that Beowulf holds have too great a context of sin; they are too wundum heard: “when[ever] [Beowulf] bore to battle a wound-hardened weapon—it was no help to him at all.”93 The narrator never shows Beowulf to have success with a weapon and explicitly portrays the two swords he uses as connected with a genealogy tainted by fratricide. Beowulf’s connection with Cain, therefore, is not solely metaphorical. Beowulf explicitly uses swords that are involved in fratricide, which consequently strengthens Beowulf’s association with Cain through these symbols of fratricide. In doing so, the narrator further contends that one should not put genealogy before God through these two specific examples and through the continual allusion to Cain. Beowulf, like Cain, preoccupies himself with lineage rather than with God, and this preoccupation is physically manifested in Beowulf’s use of these two swords.

Yet, Beowulf kills Grendel’s mother with a sword. This event, however, further proves the connection of using a sword of genealogy with God’s subsequent lack of protection. Beowulf is able to kill Grendel’s mother with a sword because the sword is not part of any genealogy and is connected to God as its lord, not any other. After casting aside Hrunting, Beowulf finds “a victorious blade, an ancient giant-sword…the best of weapons,”94 and it is this blade that “cut through [Grendel’s] doomed flesh.”95 For the only time throughout Beowulf’s three battles, a sword benefits Beowulf. Beowulf receives help from a sword even though he is said to not be
able to, and he is able to cut off Grendel’s head, which was supposedly impervious to weapons. The genealogy of this sword is not of man but of “the origin of ancient strife, when the flood slew, rushing seas, the race of giants—they suffered awfully.”96 Although the hilt names the owner of the sword, the Beowulf text offers no specific genealogy; rather, the genealogy seems to be implicitly understood by the characters. The sword seems either from a blessed one or without genealogy, with the former more likely. Moreover, “since the social meaning of weapons as symbols is firmly rooted in the context of their ritual presentation, those weapons may take on a certain ambiguity of meaning once they are outside that context.”97 As such, a genealogy is not necessarily attached to the sword. Because of this, Beowulf can kill Grendel’s mother and decapitate Grendel.

Wiglaf is only able to pierce the dragon with a sword because he was unaware of its past and inherent genealogy. Wiglaf uses the sword known as “the heirloom of Eanmund,” given to Wiglaf by Onela who “had slain his brother’s son.”98 We again see a sword with a tainted genealogy given to a man, yet the sword does not fail Wiglaf. It is through Wyglaf’s ignorance and thereby innocence of the sword’s past that he is able to use it effectively: Onela “never spoke of a feud” when he gave the sword to Wiglaf.100 The writer provides a clear case in which wergild results in a sword being passed down, but also in which intention of entering into a past crime is prevalent. The narrator thereby elucidates wergild through Wiglaf’s sword as not necessarily sinful by itself. Lastly and most importantly, Wiglaf acknowledges God as all-knowing immediately prior to going into battle.100 Thus, Wiglaf can pierce the dragon and weaken it for Beowulf.

It is only after Nægling breaks, after Wiglaf pierces the dragon, and after Beowulf draws a dagger instead of a sword that “the Ruler of victories allowed that [Beowulf], alone with his blade, might avenge himself.”101 The connection of swords with genealogy and, ultimately, with Cain causes swords to be Beowulf’s downfall. Throughout Beowulf, lineage is responsible for family feuds, death, and vengeance: all things associated with Cain. As one who acts as God’s champion, Beowulf must be expected to forego all of this.

Cain exists as the ultimate biblical example of betrayal to lineage, and by portraying Beowulf as Cain, the Beowulf poet illustrates Beowulf as not upholding his responsibility to the value system of lineage. In Beowulf, in which all biblical references come only from the book of Genesis, we can see a God that focuses on lineage, creation, and re-creation. Beowulf fails to uphold God and fails to uphold the responsibilities of his lineage. He attempts to fulfill his familial obligations by taking up the sword, but this is the wrong way to fulfill such obligations. Hrothgar, as the almost ideal king in Beowulf, does not take up the sword when his people are threatened but rather allows another hero to do this. Beowulf acts as a warrior rather than a wise king, yet it is the role of a wise king that is required of him. As a warrior, he dies; fails to protect Hrothgar’s sons as he promised; fails to produce an heir as a good king would; and fails to defend his people as any king must. Beowulf leaves his people vulnerable and, eventually, destroyed, for “when Wiglaf is the only surviving family member [of Beowulf], Hrethel’s dynasty and the Geatish kingdom ends.”103 Beowulf, through his failure, ruins his dynasty and lineage, just as Cain does, exemplified in Cain’s most prominent descendants, Grendel and Grendel’s mother. Beowulf is thus able to reconcile both pagan and Christian values by showing that when Beowulf takes up the sword, he goes against both God and his duty towards his lineage. He becomes Cain.

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The Sleek Animal
Exploring the Boundaries of Humanism and Animalism in Kate Chopin’s The Awakening

Sarah Jackmauh

Kate Chopin’s 1899 The Awakening opens with the image of a caged animal: a green and yellow parrot continuously repeating the phrases “‘\[a\]llez vous-en! Allez vous-en! Sapristi! That's all right!’”1 By introducing the novel with this somewhat human, verbal creature, Chopin presents the theme of liminality between animal and human. While the protagonist, Edna Pontellier, is not mentioned in the opening lines of The Awakening, the caged bird and the “disgusted husband,” Léonce Pontellier, who leaves after being bothered by the bird, set the scene for Edna’s introduction into an odd environment.2 The bird itself represents Edna: a passive human-animal hybrid who submits that all is “all right,” yet breaks the silence and passivity of a Creolean vacation home. So begins The Awakening, where Chopin opens a discussion regarding the blurred boundaries separating the psychological and mental characteristics of a human being and an animal. Edna herself is both a human and animal, like this bird, yet requires an “awakening” to understand the difference between the two characteristics that so define her.

Ultimately, Edna is a human with heightened animalistic passions and instincts that make her as much an animal as a human. Several theories suggest Edna’s awakening as a means of displaying feminism, while others imply a blend of female dominance and animalistic power. In her essay “The Masculine Sea: Gender, Art and Suicide in Kate Chopin’s The Awakening,” Molly J. Hildebrand considers the 1899 novel as one of the first works expressing natural female talent and prowess. Chopin’s work realizes the plight of tragic heroine Edna in a world of limited suffrage and liberty, where “her position as a white, upper middle-class artist allows her to gender herself, and her self-gendering leads her to seek masculine prerogatives—those rights and privileges unavailable to her as a woman.”3 Although Edna attempts to escape the confines of domestic Creole society—be it through her role as a mother, friend, hostess, sexual partner or artist—she is ultimately unable to conquer the unrelenting forces of societal convention, and takes her own life by walking headfirst into the ocean. Yet, feminist author Zoila Clark theorizes that Edna’s suicide represents her own obstinacy and inability to conform. Edna’s death “is proof that she was not willing to compromise the freedom she wished to enjoy.”4 Perhaps Edna’s death is representative of a release from the power of a male-dominated world. Ultimately, instead of conforming to either, she “escapes from the control of her husband, her children, society, and even her author, since her feminist philosophy is to possess her body and mind” through death.5 Erik Margraf, on the other hand, argues that the novel can be read through the lens of Naturalism and, more specifically, argues that The Awakening achieves “naturalism as feminism.”6 Margraf writes that “Edna’s desires are presented throughout the
story as animal instincts,” relating her desires and actions through Darwinian and naturalistic lenses. In this naturalist world, the power of nature is greater than that of humanity.7 Margraf relates this back to *The Awakening* by stating that “Edna realizes that she is herself ‘a solitary soul,’ … and, just like the imaginary figure [of ch.9], she will finally stand alone.”8

While Clark and Hildebrand examine Edna’s choices as reproaches to the male-dominated society and a desire to achieve “the female prerogative,”9 Margraf argues that they are based on a naturalistic, Darwinian tendency for survival. However, Chopin’s ambiguous ending with Edna wading into the Gulf suggests an escape from her conflicted human-and-animalistic identity. Edna’s death is the result of her misery, and therefore is neither a survival tendency nor a feminist progression. Although the work is titled *The Awakening*, Edna Pontellier’s suicide represents a missed awakening, which could have surfaced had she balanced her inner female identity and passion with her animalistic impulse and temperament. Therefore, Chopin suggests that Edna’s ultimate—yet unresolved—awakening would exist in finding her identity as a balance between human emotion and animal instinct. Edna falls prey to the flaws of human emotion, while also allowing herself to be consumed by animalistic passion.

Chopin uses Edna’s suicide to highlight her inability to comprehend her own identity or cope with its ambiguity. She would rather die than live without a purpose, which, for her, comes in the form of a man’s love. Edna’s personality and her happiness are constantly based on the needs of others, which make her unable to understand herself. She is, instead, a composite of her counterparts. For example, the most unique and individual aspect of Edna is her artistic ability and talent. While inherently her own, Chopin gives Edna a sense of confusion by crediting this talent to her father. Chopin writes that Edna’s having talent “would not have surprised him, convinced as he was that he had bequeathed to all of his daughters the germs of a masterful capability, which only depended on their own efforts to be directed toward successful achievement.”10 Thus, it comes as little surprise that Edna is unable to express her own emotions or opinions when they were ultimately framed as offerings from her father. Margraf argues Edna’s traits are inherited from her father. Hildebrand, too, states that “Edna’s artistic articulation has an audience” and, therefore, is entirely public.11 It is difficult for Edna to acknowledge and accept her own identity and self-expression when, as stated by both Margraf and Hildebrand, all credit is ascribed to a wider audience. Therefore, Chopin suggests that Edna’s identity crisis stems from external manifestations. Specifically, she derives her identity and sense of self from the opinions of her peers.

While the suicide offers a first-and-final act of personal expression, Chopin also suggests it represents Edna’s inability to survive as a true human on Earth. Instead, Edna often identifies as an animal. Chopin uses animal imagery to describe her protagonist and to demonstrate her lack of empathy. She writes, “[t]here was no repression in her glance or gesture. She reminded him [Doctor Mandelet] of some beautiful, sleek animal waking up in the sun.”12 Like an animal, Edna chooses her peers based on personal advantage. For example, her lover Alcée Arobin provides her with pleasure, and “appeal[s] to the animalism that stirred impatiently within her.”13 Edna’s own children do not offer the same tendencies, and she subsequently feels no attachment to them. This naturalist tendency to favor advantage is clearly highlighted in Darwinian theory. Margraf explains that this is “naturalism as feminism,”14 and suggests that “this is the life she has come to loath because it offers…the ennui of social conventions and a passionless relationship with her bourgeois husband.”15 Her animalism, in contrast, does provide her with a vitality for life that comes from her romantic endeavors, although they are only fleeting moments. It seems as if Edna’s desire to seek advantage without considering the consequences of her bestial actions emphasizes the flaws inherent
to her animalism, and calls for a balance of more passionate and empathetic human thought.

At other times, however, Chopin explains through free and indirect discourse that Edna is too much a human because she is incapable of using calculated and unbiased thought and often makes judgments based on heightened emotion. In her constant anxiety and overpowering emotions, Edna is utterly human. When discovering that her lover Robert would be going to Mexico, leaving her behind, Chopin writes that Edna was “striving to hold back and to hide, even from herself as she would have hidden from another, the emotion which was troubling—tearing—her. Her eyes were brimming with tears.” Edna seeks to “hide” the feelings from herself, seeking to compromise her undeniable and inherent human emotion. Edna’s emotions take the helm and center her universe. While Margraf often suggests that Edna’s growth throughout the novel is naturalistic and quite animalistic, it is in these moments of heightened emotion where readers are unable to see Edna as this unfettered, unemotional animal.

In these moments of heightened emotion and sadness Chopin suggests a very typical human side of her main character. Yet Edna is just as animalistic at times because of her lack of empathy, as explored through the aforementioned lack of “repression.” In another analysis of her character as an animal, Margraf suggests that Edna’s ability to adapt to her environmental surroundings make her a naturalistic character. Her suicide inverts this theory however, and suggests that despite Edna’s awareness and inner growth in changing environments, she cannot adapt or survive. Margraf explains that “the naturalists believed that a human being is substantially determined by its milieu, both exterior (physical) and interior (social), and many of their stories accordingly relate the downfall of the protagonist in an unfamiliar and dangerous environment.” Edna’s changing moods are proportional to her surroundings—whether characters or places. While it seems that this is animalistic in the sense that she can adapt to new places, it also makes her entirely human, which Chopin implies through Edna’s shifting attitudes and temperaments. After spending the day with Robert at the resort, “she was seeing with different eyes and making the acquaintance of new conditions in herself that colored and changed her environment, she did not yet suspect.” This makes her vulnerable to the varied opinions of her counterparts, and leave her submitting to the wills of her peers. Although she adapts to these new circumstances, Edna is stripped of her own identity and opinion and is left subject to “new conditions.”

Thus, because she is not entirely human nor animal, Edna’s ultimate suicide and demise are difficult to interpret in either a naturalist lens or a humanistic lens. Perhaps, therefore, Chopin is suggesting that it is impossible for Edna to survive on Earth unless she embraces the hybridity of human and animal. Her suicide can be analyzed through both an animalist and humanist lens, yet ultimately it represents an inability to connect the two. The real awakening never comes because Edna cannot survive. Her suicide is an escape. Through the feminist lens, Hildebrand explains that “[h]er decision to take her own life arises from her acknowledgement that she will never be as free, as unencumbered, as men of her race and class.” This is supported by Edna’s dependence on men to enhance her confidence and identity. She commits suicide after Robert leaves her. Thus, her death is very human as it is based in emotion and selfishness. A naturalistic reading of her death, however, can be problematic. Margraf states that “besides the meaningless of romantic love in natural history, The Awakening takes issue with the problem of the female search for fulfillment.” Margraf implies that her death is not from love, nor tactical advantage, or feminist passion. The reader is
left wondering. Margraf further states that Edna is “disillusioned about the futility of her quest for an all-encompassing love, [and] is eventually driven to suicide.” Her death results from a disillusionment because she cannot survive on Earth as only human or only animal, but rather needs a hybrid of these two elements of being.

Edna’s death demonstrates her inability to combine her animalism and humanism. Although Clark argues that Edna’s suicide is ultimately an act of desire to become empowered as a woman, the act itself is rooted in selfishness and flawed human emotion. She is too human, as her death is ultimately rooted in emotion. While Edna is caged in society by the confines of social engenderment, her suicide is not a desire to become independent as a female but, as Chopin suggests, it is because she cannot live without male love. Clark writes that “she has submerged herself in the masculine values of her privileged race and class; yet those unmitigated rights elude her.” While Clark argues that Edna is nearly envious of the male privilege, it seems that Chopin is highlighting Edna’s own innate human flaws of falling in love. The night before walking into the Gulf, Edna realizes that she will never be released from the trap of her human emotions: “[d]espondency had come upon her there in the wakeful night, and had never lifted there was no one thing in the world that she desired. There was no human being whom she wanted near her except Robert.” Edna is utterly alone and consumed by her lack of self-awareness. Despite her freedoms and privileges, Edna’s inability to disconnect herself from her lovers makes her all-consumed by men. Therefore, her death is not an act defying her power as a woman, but represents her inability to live in an ‘awakened’ life of balance between emotion and natural, animalistic rationale.

Chopin uses the sea as the means of Edna’s suicide to demonstrate the protagonist’s liminality in her role as a creature and as a sufferer of human passion. As Edna is lost between these two personae, she is also lost at sea. When Edna first swims in the ocean, she “seemed to be reaching out for the unlimited in which to lose herself.” She is attracted to the vastness and openness of the sea as it appeals to both her animalism and her humanism. Like her inability to bridge the gulf between her creature-like sexual desires and overpowering emotional psyche, the sea is an abyss where she can shed both personae and be in solitude. The sea is attractive to both her animalist and human qualities. In the ocean she is a “new-born creature, openings its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known.” Yet, the sea also provides her room to explore human passion and sexuality, as “[t]he touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace.” In the sea, she is entirely human and animal, while on Earth she suffers between the two. Therefore, it seems Edna is only truly awakened when eternally asleep by her death in the ocean.

Edna’s failed awakening is represented by her inability to balance her impulsive animal character with her female identity (or lack thereof). The closest that the protagonist ever comes to achieving a moment of clarity comes as she submerges herself in the ocean, never to come back again. Chopin parallels her opening of The Awakening with the conclusion, juxtaposing the “cage[d]” parrot against that of the image of a “bird with a broken wing … beating the air above.” These two birds, each representing Edna in her submissive presence and ‘broken’ identity, frame Edna’s struggle as a mother, woman, human, and animal. While Clark and Hildebrand theorize Edna’s awakening in terms of human independence and realization through feminism, Margraf posits Edna as a naturalist-feminist. However, these three arguments fail to demonstrate Edna’s inability to balance her identity as either an animal or a female. The ‘awakening’ never comes until Edna is dead, and the struggle between human emotion and animal instinct vanishes and comes to an equilibrium as she sinks beneath the surface of the Gulf.

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The Divine Order of Change

Economic Justice in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*

Itua Uduebo

Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, one of the greatest epic poems put to paper in the English language, holds a place in the annals of literature for both its allegorical scope and its poetic form, known today as the Spenserian stanza. The tale follows knights in the world of Faerie Land who seek to complete quests for their queen, Gloriana (a not-so-subtle homage to Queen Elizabeth) and, on occasion, Prince Arthur. A master of the allegorical art, Spenser’s characters struggle with and develop the virtues that Spenser imbues them with. Holiness fights against theological error and deception, Temperance must keep himself under constant control, Chastity maintains her innocence in pursuit of gentlemanly love, Courtesy battles slander with elegant diction, and a dynamic duo of knights-in-arms embrace Friendship through their camaraderie. The Spenserian hero of focus in this paper is Artegall, the knight of Justice, modeled after Prince Arthur himself (Lat. “like Arthur”), who must learn to temper his mighty justice with mercy. Artegall must navigate between the oftentimes cruel nature of justice and the noble benevolence of mercy; this dichotomy, in turn, provides the perfect setting for Spenser to explore issues of systemic economic inequality.

The second canto of Book V is traditionally seen as Spenser repudiating radical economic change in both his demonization of extortion and his takedown of redistributionist sentiment amongst the common classes. Under this interpretation, radically changing the nature of God’s blessings, whether through violent theft or societal upheaval, is an act against the created order. Instead, Artegall’s actions show that Spenser’s message isn’t that God’s blessings are to be left unaltered by man in the name of justice, but that the required justice can only be delivered by God’s divine will. The current state is unjust under God, but man is not meant to take God’s necessary justice upon himself. The framing of the narrative, the way Spenser characterizes God’s design, and the discussions of change that occur in the Faerie Queene will serve to provide evidence for this alternative take on Artegall’s actions.

In the second canto of Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, Spencer’s knight of Justice, Artegall, confronts two opposing yet equally undesirable elements of economic injustice: extortion and redistribution. Artegall and his metallic sidekick Talus, a hyper-violent automaton, first come across the Saracen Pollente, “so puissant and strong,” and his daughter Munera in their tower. The father/daughter pair take from all those they come across, rich and poor, wholly embodying Munera’s etymological root (Lat.
Munus; bribery), which connotes an image of wealth accrued through illegal means. These two represent avarice at its purest, two individuals with a desire to acquire more regardless of the morality of their methods. After Artegall and Talus dispatch of these thieving fellows and destroy their castle they come across their second foe, the charismatic Gyant and his foolish followers. Essentially, the Gyant believes that the world is out of its natural order and that it is up to the people to right nature’s wrongs and put all back in its proper place. Spenser uses the allotment of natural elements as an analogy for wealth and income inequality. Artegall rebukes the giant over his preaching that the only way to right the wrongs of inequality and injustice is to “all the earth vptake, and all the sea… the fire… and one of th’ayre” and heaven and the underworld, and set everything to “the same againe.” The messages of equality and the gaining of what was unfairly taken appeal to the crowd of “fooles, women, and boys… in hope by him great benefit to gaine, and vncontrolled freedome to obtaine,” so Artegall attempts to show the people and their large leader the error of his ways.

The knight of justice espouses the divine mandate that justifies the current state of order, and proves that nothing has been stolen from anywhere, but rather simply shifted and changed according to the will of nature. The earth, air, fire and water, all of which have been shifted and changed over time from their original states, subscribe to heavenly justice. Artegall argues that the changes that do occur are contained within the divine order, and when the Gyant again points out how inegalitarian the estates currently are, we see Artegall ask him how of “things unseen… [he] can deeme aright… sith [he] misdeem’st so much of things in sight.” He goes on to educate him on the transitive nature of matter in the universe. The sea may swallow the earth, but the earth is not lost—it is simply somewhere new. Likewise, whatever lives on earth will die, but after death our bodies become dust and remain in the physical realm. In the crescendo of this conversation, Artegall challenges the Gyant to weigh the air, the light, thoughts, words, and even the very concepts of right and wrong in his scale to determine their weights. The essence of this final exchange is the Gyant’s incapability to determine the weight of that which he cannot properly conceptualize in the physical space. Unfortunately, the finer points of the discussion are lost in the end as the affair concludes with Gyant and the crowd being dispatched by Talus.

The framing of this canto is an essential aspect of examining the meaning behind Spenser’s message. The narrative begins with a very prototypical display of what the reader would likely consider “justice”: Artegall and Talus coming across the classic thief archetype scenario. The knight and his uber-violent companion deliver a version of justice that corresponds with the universal standards of right and wrong. This first encounter establishes that taking from others that which is not yours is wrong, but more importantly, because Pollente takes from both rich and poor, it establishes that the act is inherently wrong no matter how fortunate a victim may be. When we meet the Gyant and he preaches his radical redistribution as the only way to erase inequality, the reader knows that this is meant to exist in the same realm of immorality as Pollente’s extortion. Spenser frames the sequence of events to make it clear that the act itself is wrong, even if the reader can empathize with the intentions behind it, and this is critically important to understanding the different ways that the canto can be interpreted.

Artegall makes it clear in his opening statement that the world, as it is, is how God originally created it. All was put in place “in goodly measure, by their Makers might, and weighed out in ballaunces so nere;” the act of creation set God’s order into motion, and the divine authority makes the results of that creation inherently infallible. Without further analysis, this could be seen as the be-all-and-end-all of the discussion, but Artegall doesn’t simply end with a declaration; rather, he concedes that “All change is perilous, and all chance vnsound/Therefore leave off to weigh them all againe/Till we may be assur’d
they shall their course retaine.” This is the foundational belief behind the alternative reading of this canto: the virtue of temperance and consideration in the face of injustice. The Gyant, after all, makes an irrefutable point (so irrefutable that Artegall himself doesn’t deny it): there have been changes made to God’s original balance. Even Spenser, who begins with a rosy reflection on the antique world (when man was in his “freshest prime”) before lamenting that “the world is runne quite out of square” and the “present dayes [are] corrupted sore,” seems to echo the Gyant’s sentiments. The world that Spenser laments doesn’t reflect the ideal balance that Artegall preaches about to the Gyant, amounting to a concession on behalf of Spenser that the world is not in its ideal state. If the world isn’t as good and balanced as it used to be, then why is the Gyant so wrong in wanting to return to the equal state? Again, simply putting down Spenser’s message to “because God said so” would be missing the larger role that he places upon the people themselves. In order to evaluate this claim, however, it is essential to analyze the nature of change in the world of The Faerie Queene.

Artegall and the Gyant’s conversation delves into the difference between two conceptions of redistribution. Spenser introduces us to the Gyant holding his balancing scales, and in the course of their discourse, Artegall challenges the Gyant to use his scales to balance air, light, truth, falsehoods, right and wrong; naturally, he fails, and thus violence ensues. Spenser uses the image of balance with precision in this canto, and he shows through Artegall that the problem of determining the optimal balance is a difficult one. The Gyant states that the world has grown more unequal since it was created, for as time has passed “the sea it selve doest... Encroch upon the land there ynder thee/ And th’earth it selve... increast, By all that dying to it turned be.” This idea of imbalance reflects the exact line of thinking of the Anabaptists that Spenser was clearly criticizing with the Gyant’s character. Because God created all things at Point X, and at Point Y the sea has encroached upon land and the earth has grown, things are unequal and must be forced back into their Point X state; in the same way, because at Point X man was made in the natural state, and now at Point Y the masses suffer under hierarchy of the few and gluttonous, things are unequal and must also be reverted. If the changes between Point X and Point Y in and of themselves constitute an injustice that requires correction, then the Gyant is correct, and since Spenser himself already admits that the world is “out of square,” the words of the Gyant hold a significant weight. Both Spenser and Artegall address the conceptual faults in this idea of change, in two different sections of the text. In the canto itself, Artegall defines what the Gyant calls unjust change as re-location of that which never ceases to be. The sea who eats the earth “is no more at all,” neither is “the earth the lesse,” because the laws of reality dictate that “whatsoever from one place doth fall/is with the tide vnto an other brought” — as a result, nothing is truly lost or gone from the physical realm. This thought process is echoed in Canto VII of the tragically unfinished Book of Mutabilitie where we once again are faced with competing ideas about change during the Trial of Mutabilitie.

The Book of Mutabilitie appeared posthumously in the 1609 edition of Spenser’s work (the original was published in 1596), and was likely meant as the next continuation of the tale. The two Cantos recount the challenge from the unyielding Titaness Mutabilitie against the cosmic order of Jove, conducted in a trial judged by Nature herself. At the end of the affair, Nature herself delivers her final deliberation and rejects the oft-repeated insinuation from the Titaness that she deserves control over Nature because nature is constantly bending to change. This, Nature says, is a misinterpretation of reality; change is not an outside force that inflicts its will upon nature, but rather a contained component of the natural process through which all things reach their most Platonic state. Change is something that is inherent in God’s design, not a force that disrupts it.
This general line of thinking reflects a core tenet of the ancient philosophical tradition of alchemy, the study of matter and the universe. The concept of equivalent exchange, which states that in order to gain something you must also forfeit something else, is an extremely rudimentary ancestor to the contemporaneously accepted law of the conservation of mass. The point in referencing these two scientific principles is to show that Spenser bases Artegall’s counterargument in an advanced scientific framework meant to highlight the foolishness of the Gyant’s simplistic understandings. This dichotomy between crude egalitarianism and a refined understanding of how different amounts of matter interact is essential to arriving at a new understanding of the text.

Spenser believes the world is out of order and in need of justice, but explicitly rejects the call to radical societal change of the Gyant. The narrative framing establishes the immorality of both the prototypical economic injustice displayed by Pollente and the radical upheaval of the Gyant through Artegall’s differing actions. The former is removed with haste and his daughter’s treasure thrown in the sea, while Artegall speaks with the latter and rhetorically eviscerates the arguments. The concept of change is argued by the Gyant to be a win-loss dichotomy, while Artegall and Spenser paint change as an essential, inevitable and ultimately inconsequential part of the natural order. Radical upheaval of the order is equally as immoral as avaricious theft, but in an “out of square” world, change is part of the order of things. Reducing the message to a blanket defense of God’s order misses Spenser’s portrayal of how economic justice can be achieved. Before he begins with the Gyant at all, Artegall and Talus deal with economic injustice with righteous fury and decisive action. In the face of extortion and bribery, the two dispense quick, uncompromising justice in recompense. There is no dialogue, no attempt to dissuade, no rhetorical engagement between right and wrong; the problem is solved swiftly and unswervingly with swords alone. God’s justice here is simple because Pollente’s contribution to the world’s disorder is an unnatural addition to the divine cycles of change. The text leaves a revealing example of the simplicity at play here: “There being both together in the floud, They each at other tyrannously flew.” Here, Spencer draws a direct similarity between the authoritative, decisive nature of justice and the authoritative, despotic nature of the stationary bandit Pollente. Both men exercise their authority tyrannically, but in the case of justice, where righteousness and correct judgment is inherent, we accept the tyranny as a necessity. This is critical for this discussion because it is another sign of Artegall’s role as the divinely authoritative justice in the world of The Faerie Queene. When he comes across the Gyant, violence is not his first reaction, and in fact never crosses his mind, because the Gyant’s call to radical revolution is, in fact, not antithetical to the authoritative justice of Artegall, but rather a challenge to the methodology employed to achieve it. In framing the difference between Pollente and the Gyant as the difference between violent eradication and logical dismissal, Spenser establishes the vastly differing validity of the antagonists. This is not, to be clear, a sign of respect for the ideas of the Anabaptists, but rather a concession that their fundamental logic is objectively true: Spenser makes it clear in the Proem and indicates in the second canto that there is a degree of injustice contained in the hierarchical, aristocratic society that he lives in. The difference, as has been discussed, is how to deal with it.

The standard interpretation reads that Artegall’s main point of contention to the Gyant is that the Maker’s might and the divine plan are not to be challenged. Artegall specifically addresses the society of the court by saying that God “maketh Kings to sit in souerainty... subjects to their powre obey.” This is the order; this is what exists; this is what God has deemed. The problem, however, with this interpretation, is that it creates the connection between the Gyant’s inequality and Artegall’s divinely ordained monarchy.
Artegall makes it clear that God created the world but the reader knows that within that creation came the elements of evil, and economic evil is embodied explicitly within Pollente. For Spenser, his existence serves as a mark against the notion that the monarchy is inherently connected with economic injustice. To the modern sensibility this might simply seem like trading one master for another, but for Spenser, who truly believed in the monarchy and hierarchy, this is how economic justice exists. Spencer once again frames these concepts under divine purview instead of individual determination by characterizing change as an integral component of God’s plan, not able to be influenced by the medieval conservation of mass theory and the Book of Mutabilitie. This is, again, crucial to understanding that Spenser’s view of economic justice is something achieved through God within the limits of the created order. We cannot say that Artegall is defending the status quo because the status quo is constantly changing, just as Nature says, and that whatever the most perfect version of the order is, it does not currently exist. Forces like Pollente exist in the world and require the swift, tyrannical hand of justice to be dealt with properly, and Artegall exists to fulfill this goal through his authoritative mandate. Yet, this authority does not belong with those like the Gyant, who lack the capability to conceptualize the realities of truth and right so much so as to believe they can be weighed, along with the mountains and the seas. Spenser’s message is not that economic justice is unnecessary, but rather that achieving this goal is something that can only be done in a certain way, by certain forces, and within the system that God ordained to be good; anything else is as wrong as literal robbery.

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Christopher Celenza is the new Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences as well as a Professor in the Departments of History and Classics. Prior to joining the faculty at Georgetown, Dean Celenza was Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Charles Homer Haskins Professor in Classics at Johns Hopkins University. In the past, he has been Director of the Johns Hopkins University Singleton Center for the Study of Premodern Europe (2008-2010) as well as Director of the American Academy in Rome (2010-2014). Dean Celenza is an expert on a broad array of classical subjects, with specialties in Roman poetry and the Italian Renaissance. He recently published *Machiavelli: A Portrait* (2015) and has two forthcoming books: *Petrarch: Everywhere a Wanderer* and *The Intellectual World of the Italian Renaissance: Language, Philosophy, and the Search for Meaning*. Recently, Dean Celenza sat down with *Utraque Unum* to discuss his scholarship, paradigms of academia, and his transition to Georgetown.

Q. During your time in various higher education administrative offices, you played an integral role in the founding of the Alexander Grass Institute, which seeks to facilitate interdisciplinary discourse in the humanities. This is also a goal you pursued during your tenure as president of the American Academy in Rome. Finally, in your praise of the Fulbright Program, you described the program as “dynamic, interdisciplinary, and necessary.” Focusing on the second of those two adjectives, my question is: what value do you find in interdisciplinary discourse, both in the humanities and in academia more generally?

A. That’s a very important question. I tend to think of the process of interdisciplinary discourse as if it’s a bridge. And in order to have a good bridge, you need to have very strong pillars. In this case, the pillars are like the disciplines. This means that we really have to trust in expertise, we have to trust in accumulated knowledge, we have to trust our colleagues with whom we’re surrounded. One of the tendencies in academic life is to go deep into things. Isaiah Berlin used the famous image from Archilochus, of the Hedgehog and the Fox—the hedgehog knows one thing and the fox knows many things. We faculty members, and I consider myself a faculty member in deep ways, tend to be hedgehogs. The beauty of interdisciplinary work is that it can introduce that fox-like element—that span over the bridge. This work has to be nimble; it has to be able to pass over those pillars of different disciplines while also connecting them in meaningful ways. And that’s a big challenge in higher education—for Georgetown included. The biggest tension for universities is between passing down traditions that have worked and have been proven over time, while at the same time being nimble—being able to respond to the world, and being aware that some of the problems in the world aren’t necessarily situated in this or that department alone, but instead need combined resources. The challenge of interdisciplinary work lies in bringing all of that together. In an ideal world this process would be a harmony—all the more melodious the more voices
there are in the right places and in the right propor-
tions. That’s the way I think about it.

Q. One of the chief criticisms that’s sometimes
levied against institutes of higher education is
that they’re insular—that the discourse and dis-
cussions that occur within those settings rarely
extend into the fields of public policy and re-
form. This seems to be a tendency that you have
adamantly opposed throughout your career.
One of the tenets of the Alexander Grass in-
stitute was the promotion of the “public humani-
ties,” and during your time at the American
Academy in Rome you hosted a series of talks
titled “Conversations that Matter,” through
which you sought to join the worlds of academia
and public policy. Do you believe that this sort
of “insular,” self-contained academia is a prob-
lem? And if so, how do we go about bridging
the dissonance between these two worlds?

A. I think the perception of academia as insu-
lated and out-of-touch is very important for us
to recognize and address. It’s a perception that’s
out there—there have even been books written
on topics such as the “death of expertise.” As
a result, our task from within higher education
has to be to do two things. First, we have to make
sure we still believe in and foster that deep-dive
style of research. It’s only through our scientists
coming up with new experiments in their labs,
or our humanities scholars digging into new ar-
chives or re-theorizing works in new and inno-
vative ways that we’re really going to advance
human knowledge. It’s for humanity. At the
most basic, idealistic level, this pursuit is for hu-
manity and its future. However, I think we also
have to build in ways of translating what we do
culturally to audiences who have different goals
in mind. There’s no real reason why people
in different facets of the world should need to
know about the inner-workings of universities.
A lot of our potential audience out there, even
if they have been to universities, only went for
a short time before doing other things—things
that have their own complexities and internal
functionings. We in academia, and especially
people in roles like mine, need to make the case
to people why what we do is meaningful for
the world outside. When I was at the American
Academy in Rome that was one of the goals—
we wanted to have specialized work going on,
while also having fora in which we could bring
in scholarly practitioners to facilitate that sort of
cultural translation. With the Grass Institute at
Hopkins I got a big committee of people together
to talk about some of these issues. And it was out
of those conversations that the process began.
Right away one of those people, a good friend
of mine named Bill Egginton who later became
the director of the institute, really took over the
process. He and I always had a meeting of the
minds on the issue of public humanities.

Q. When facilitating those public humanities,
we seem as though much of the translation
process comes down to the issue of language.
Within academia there’s often a tendency to-
wards a more erudite language—a jargon of
sorts. Do you believe it’s important to establish
a language that can take those complex, nu-
anced ideas and bring them into spaces where
that language isn’t commonly used?

A. I do. I’ve seen with in my own experience that
there’s a public out there of people who aren’t
professional scholars, who are doing widely
varying things in the world, but who want to
hear about advances in knowledge. They don’t
want to be condescended to. It’s not dumbing it
down. Sometimes we use professional jargon as
a convenience; we have communities of people,
all of whom have been working on one field or
one author, and sometimes there are specialized
terms that serve as a sort of shorthand. By using
one term the scholar is really referring to a whole
series of debates.

Q. It’s more expedient.

A. Yeah, and it’s always been like that. They
sometimes did that in scholastic philosophy in
medieval universities. Even Aristotle’s ten categories were shorthands for whole debates about how the world is structured. There’s nothing wrong with that. However, I believe that it’s important, especially in the current climate, to build a translation process into what we do. Again, this doesn’t mean dumbing it down. It simply entails explicating the shorthand. If a word that you and I as specialists use has a meaning for us, it means that we also need to explicate and expand that meaning. The old Latin meaning of the word explicate, explicare, means to unfold. We have to unfold what we’re doing.

Q. Do you think it can be dangerous if a discipline looks inwards too much—if it becomes dependent on this jargon and particular type of language? Could it become hard to explicate some of those terms if they become too interdependent on one another?

A. Yes. It’s happened in history, and it’s happened in conjunction with universities. Let’s look at two dates: 1300 and 1500. In the year 1300 there were about sixteen universities in Europe. By the year 1500 there were over sixty. The number had grown and the university model had proven successful. During that time, however, there were pockets of university life where certain subjects were being taught simply because they were on the curriculum, and not because they were necessarily enriching. As a result, by the late fourteenth century you had voices calling for new ways of teaching the subjects that would have more applicability. At the University of Paris, for instance, there was a famous chancellor named Jean Gerson who was active in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century. Gerson championed the revival of an older form of writing called the tractate which, although it was written in medieval Latin, would have applicability outside of the University. We see similar calls for reform in the Italian Humanist movement as well. Petrarch, for instance, was an early example. He was almost exaggeratedly against universities—it was almost a posture for him.

For him, the fundamental question was: how is this helping us in the world? I think universities do some of the most important work in forming citizenry and equipping people with skills. On the other hand, there is sometimes a tendency for retreat in the University setting—a tendency of getting so wrapped up in specialized work that we forget that there’s a world out there.

Q. Many of the books you’ve written are biographies. What draws you to that genre?

A. That’s interesting. I didn’t start out writing biographies, but I was always interested in the people who were writing the texts I was studying. When I started out my scholarly work, I wanted to showcase works that were written in Latin during the Italian Renaissance that had either never been translated before or that had never been professionally edited. The more I did that style of work, however, the more I started to wonder: where did this field come from? Why did it matter? So I wrote this book called The Lost Italian Renaissance in which I tried to answer some of those questions. A large part of my focus was institutional history; I examined what the institutional tendencies of nineteenth century universities were that led to our fields being shaped the way they are now. And the more I did that, the more I realized that it was always people—it was always individuals and their impetus that had a great deal of effect on these developments. There are two legendary scholars in the field of Italian Renaissance Studies that I talk about in the book. One was Italian, and one was German. One was named Paul Oskar Kristeller, and the other was named Eugenio Garin. Kristeller was German and Jewish, and so he had to leave Germany when the racial laws began to be passed. He spent five years in Italy, and when racial laws began being passed there, he left Italy and came to the United States. During that time he fearlessly explored old manuscript libraries, first in Italy, and then all over the world. He had a lifelong project of doggedly listing the texts. After all, many of them were uncatalogued, so he
spent time listing the texts from about 1300-1600 that were written in Latin and were available in the libraries. Although I level a little bit of criticism against some of Kristeller’s methods in the book, everything he did was positive for the field. We wouldn’t know nearly as much about the Italian Renaissance without him.

Eugenio Garin, on the other hand, much more believed that philosophy was a broad enterprise—a style of life. In his autobiography, Garin says that he learned, through reading authors like Dostoevsky, that you could practice philosophy outside of the University. Garin was very opposed to Kristeller in this way, and although the two men knew each other, they came to profoundly disagree with one another. Together, however, these two figures affected institutions.

Fast forwarding a bit, I personally got interested in the figure of Machiavelli almost serendipitously. I got invited to do a visiting professor week at the University of Sydney. It was the 500th anniversary of the composition of *The Prince*, and they asked me to do a public lecture on the book. At first I was fairly reticent; Machiavelli scholars are a specialized community, and that wasn’t really my field. However, the more I started preparing for that lecture, the more I started realizing that there was a story to be told about Machiavelli and his life that I could probably do in a slightly different way from other biographies. He’s a very interesting figure.

Q. You’ve described the historical figure of Machiavelli as more nuanced than the traditional “Machiavellian” archetype.

A. He’s become an adjective. He’s the most well-known of all the European thinkers. I’d argue that he’s more well-known than Plato and Aristotle. Almost everyone has heard that term, “Machiavellian,” and has associations with it. It’s not often, however, that when you think of the adjective you also think of a figure who wrote comedic plays. He wrote this play called *Mandragnola* and another work called *Clizia*, for instance. A lot of the works deal with issues such as masculinity and life, and are largely modeled on ancient Roman comedies—the comedies of Terence and Plautus, for instance. He also wrote histories, the dialogue *The Art of War*, and, of course, *The Prince*.

What most people really don’t think of when they think of the term Machiavellian, however, is the period of his life from 1498-1512 when he was an active diplomat. Machiavelli went on over forty diplomatic missions for the city of Florence. And all of that service really shaped the later work that he did.

Q. We were talking about engagement with the public sphere, and he certainly seemed to be someone who advocated getting politically and publicly involved. In an article that you wrote in 2015, you said that people who practice true Machiavellianism “are realistic about how to get things done in a fallen world, [and] are still hopeful that the institutions we have, rather than those we might imagine, can still be made to work.”

A. That’s true. At one point in *The Prince*, Machiavelli says he wants to talk about the *la verità effettuale*, which roughly translates to “the effective truth of the matter.” Machiavelli wasn’t someone with illusions. What I wanted to do with my biography of Machiavelli was to show that to understand someone like that, yes we need to look at his texts, but we also need to look at his life too. He was a public servant; he never stopped trying to get into government, even after his fall in 1512 and 1513. He never succeeded in getting back in, but he always held on to a desire to serve. It’s almost paradoxical with the term Machiavellian.

Q. Speaking of paradoxes, you also recently finished a biography of Petrarch entitled *Petrarch: Everywhere a Wanderer*. One thing you discuss in that book are the ostensible paradoxes that imbued Petrarch’s life and work. Chief among these was his devout Christianity, which often came into contention with his
love of classicism. How did Petrarch harmonize these worlds? How did he unite his love of the ephemeral, temporal expressions of classicism with the divine, interminable elements of Christianity?

A. One way to look at Petrarch is the way my recently departed mentor and friend Ronald Witt did, as a third-generation Italian humanist who took a largely secular movement and reoriented it toward religion. I think there’s a lot to be said for that. If you think of each intellectual generation as about thirty years, Italian thinkers about two generations before Petrarch were deliberately trying to write in Classical Latin. We used to call these thinkers pre-humanists. My mentor argued that they should be called humanists, and he makes a very good case for the shift. Petrarch, however, changes things.

Petrarch was born to a Florentine family in 1304. Right away, however, his family had to flee Florence because his father belonged to a political faction (the same faction as Dante, actually) that was exiled. So Petrarch’s father took his skills as a notary, which was a sort of lawyer in those days, and brought them to the Papal Court which was located in Avignon, France at the time. Petrarch grew up in a small town outside of Avignon, he was educated by an Italian, and was always close to this intense religious environment. His whole life he held a real commitment to personal spirituality and a very harsh view of himself—a belief that he wasn’t living up to the right ideals. The dichotomies and paradoxes that you see in his character are manifold. On one hand there’s the paradox you identified. Petrarch was completely devoted to expression in a classical idiom; he wanted to write Latin like the ancients wrote Latin, and he wants to model his life off of the stoic virtues of ancient figures—he almost wants the martial, militaristic ethos of the ancient Romans to rise again. On the other hand, Petrarch was deeply influenced by Augustine.

Q. *Confessions* was particularly influential for him.

A. So influential. You can consider *Confessions* the first major Western autobiography. There are a few other thinkers, Libanius and others, for instance, who write some autobiographical works. But *Confessions* is really a tale of personal conversion. It’s about Augustine finding himself, and finding himself through God. That image was always there for Petrarch. As a result, Petrarch constantly struggled with the conflict between the life of the world and the life of contemplation—in his view, a life of Christ, of humility, and of retreat.

Q. Be in the world not of it.

A. That’s right. On the other hand, however, Petrarch loved public recognition. He wanted to succeed, he wanted to be famous as a poet and a scholar. He was an inveterate letter-writer, and we can see all of these letters in which he’s clearly trying to set things up—to set himself up for recognition. The funny thing about it, though, is that whenever Petrarch’s ego begins to become unbearable, you also find this self-lacerating element to the work he writes. He wrote this work entitled *The Secret*, for instance, which he genuinely intended to keep secret. He wrote this as a personal spiritual exercise and had no intention of publishing it—which in those days simply meant circulating it in your social circles. He really kept it pretty close-to-the-chest.

The dialogue is Petrarch telling Augustine about his own traits and personality, with Augustine sometimes correcting him. In the text Augustine often tells Petrarch that he needs to leave the world behind, and Petrarch responds that he wants to but isn’t ready. Petrarch also confessed his guilt about sex. He had a muse, Laura, who was a woman whom he idealized and saw from afar.

Q. Was she an actual historical figure?
A. Opinions are divided on this. There is a candidate that existed, but it’s unclear if he ever actually talked to her. He held this pre-modern view of women. For him, women weren’t people. It’s the same way with Machiavelli. With both of them you ask the question: did they ever have a real conversation with a woman, person-to-person, equal-to-equal? And so Petrarch feels guilty about his sexual thoughts too. At one point he tells Augustine that two chains are holding him down; one chain is the love of fame, and the other is the chain of sexual desire. In response, the Augustine character tells him to leave the world, to abandon these earthly pursuits.

Q. Did he ever harmonize these two worlds?

A. I don’t think he did. Petrarch wrote The Secret between the late 1340s and the early 1350s, and by that point he was a mature man. And in one of the last parts of the dialogue, after all of Petrarch’s promises that he’ll leave the world behind, he includes the line: ‘but I’m not sure that I can.’

After he wrote The Secret, Petrarch moved from France to Italy, where he accepted the patronage of a series of autocrats, most of whom ruled in Northern Italy. While serving as a court intellectual Petrarch, despite claiming that he only wrote in Latin, continued to revise his Italian poetry until the year he died. So no, I don’t think he ever solved this paradox. He had two children but never says who the mothers were. He had taken minor orders but never fully became a priest. His daughter came to live with him during the last four years of his life, so he had a little peace then, but he had a bifurcated nature till the end.

Q. Academic treatment of the Italian Renaissance arguably began with Jacob Burckhardt’s 1860 publication of The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy. Since that time, the historiography of the field has undergone countless pivots and changes. My next question has two parts: where do you locate your own scholarship in the history of this discipline, and where do you see the field moving in the future?

A. You’re right to identify Burckhardt’s presence as seminal. I don’t know if there has been any other book of scholarship and criticism that has stimulated so much writing after it. He was the one who crystallized certain images about the Italian Renaissance—chief among them that the Renaissance was both a rediscovery of the ancient world and, more importantly, the birth of the modern one. Burckhardt saw the birth of modern individualism in the Renaissance.

After that, some scholars began looking at the Renaissance in terms of what the Germans call Geisteswissenschaften: the history of the human spirit. Over time, however, their studies began to get more granular. They decided to test some of these ideas, so they went to archives to examine what the Renaissance political systems really looked like. Burkhardt idealized those political systems in some ways, and so these scholars wanted to study how the systems actually worked.

By the 1960s and 1970s you see the introduction of “social history.” These historians tried to figure out even more granular things about Renaissance society: what were relations between men and women like? How many people, even men, really partook in the “renewal?” Was it a movement just for elites?

Through the whole time, the Latin literature of the period was largely ignored. In the 19th century, many scholars had made the enlightenment argument that you can only express culture through a native language. The humanists had been blamed for writing in Latin and portrayed as pedants who were only concerned with antiquity. As a result, there were all these dialogues and philosophical works that simply went unread. Those are what I spent the first part of my career studying.

That process of exploring these disregarded texts has largely come to fruition. Through all that effort, a very small portion of which was
mine, but which also owes much of its success to James Hankins at Harvard, a lot of these Latin works are now published with good English translations—they’re available for us to study. The question now is: who will study them? And where and how? There was a time when the Italian Renaissance had a fixed place in the history departments of United States universities. That’s not always the case anymore. We have a brilliant Renaissance historian here at Georgetown—Tommaso Astarita—but that’s not the case at all universities.

Q. As you enter your new role as Dean, what things have you found most surprising here at Georgetown—either in the minutiae of administrative duties or with Georgetown as a campus and a community?

A. The way that the light but discernable footprint of the Jesuit Order finds its way at the University. It’s been a tremendously pleasant surprise. And I think the service ethos is its most visible manifestation among students. Almost every student I’ve met has some sort of service interest or project—it seems cultural. It seems like it’s baked into the culture—not something that’s forced from above or without. That’s been a real eye-opener for me. I’ve learned from it already, and I love it. I’m glad it’s here, and I want to do everything I can to foster it.

Q. Thank you so much, and we’re honored to have you.

Jacob Dyson is a junior in the Georgetown College of Arts and Sciences studying Government, English, and Film.
From the Editor’s Desk


FROM THE DIRECTOR

Science as a Vocation and the Academic Ethic


2 Weber, p. 145


5 Weber, p. 147.

6 Weber, p. 145.

7 Weber, p. 145.

8 Weber, p. 146.

THE FORUM

The Life of a Liberal State

1 Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (trans. George Lawrence and edited by J.P. Mayer), 10.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 11.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 13.


7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 227

11 Ibid., 226

12 Ibid., 227

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., 228
| 15 | Ibid.                        |
| 16 | Ibid.                        |
| 17 | Ibid., 230.                 |
| 18 | Ibid.                        |
| 19 | Ibid.                        |
| 20 | Ibid., 235.                 |
| 22 | Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Book II, 213 |
| 23 | Ibid., 216                  |
| 24 | Ibid., 217                  |
| 25 | Ibid., 218                  |
| 26 | Ibid., 219                  |
| 27 | Ibid., 220                  |
| 28 | Ibid., 231                  |
| 29 | Ibid.                       |
| 30 | Ibid., 307                  |
| 31 | Ibid., 308                  |
| 32 | Federalist No. 6            |
| 33 | Ibid.                       |
| 34 | Ibid.                       |
| 35 | Federalist No. 8            |
| 36 | Ibid.                       |
| 38 | Ibid.                       |
| 39 | Ibid., 554                  |
| 40 | Ibid., 283                  |
| 41 | Ibid., 432                  |
| 42 | Ibid., 507                  |
| 43 | Ibid., 530                  |
| 44 | Ibid.                       |
| 45 | Ibid., 646                  |
| 46 | Ibid., 647                  |
| 47 | Ibid., 655                  |
| 48 | Ibid., 656                  |
| 49 | Ibid., 122                  |
| 50 | Ibid., 278                  |

**THE ARCHIVE United States of Europe**


2. Father of Europe

3. Emperor of the Romans

4. The Father of Europe


6. Great Powers

7. Roussel, p. 33.

8. New World

9. Where everything seemed possible and where social frontiers seemed less impassable than in Europe.

10. Roussel, p. 36.


16. Roussel, p. 730-731. Translation: He was a true Frenchman from the land, from his country of Cognac; at the same time he was American, even when he had nothing American in his conduct.

17. Hackett, p. 65.


19. Roussel, p. 48. Translation: It seemed that there were actually two separate entities although the objectives were the same. It seemed absurd to me.


22. Roussel, p. 103-105.


25. Wells, p. 23.
26 Love at first sight
27 Roussel, p. 136.
28 Roussel, p. 170.
29 Monnet, Memoirs p. 123.
30 Last man
31 Wells, p. 48-49.
32 Roussel, p. 234. Translation: Through the entire course of the war, the two governments would join and constitute one sole cabinet, with the assembly of the two parliaments.
33 Rubble and ashes
34 Monnet, Memoirs p. 399-400.
35 Hackett, p. 96.
36 Roussel, p. 570.
37 Monnet, Memoirs p. 379.
38 Hackett, p. 150.
40 Monnet, Memoirs p. 233.
41 Wells, p. 101.
42 Kuisel, p. 229.
43 Kuisel, p. 220.
44 Kuisel, p. 244.
45 Roussel, p. 493.
46 Jean Monnet wanted me to recognize what had been done in the United States.
47 Roussel, p. 494. Translation: Tennessee was Auvergne.
48 Roussel, p. 496. Translation: Throughout my tour in America, I was more and more convinced that the productivity problems were major questions about the future. Jean Monnet himself was very conscious of it.
49 Roussel, p. 487. Translation: The idea of showing the French how the Americans worked.
50 Roussel, p. 585. Translation: Only the creation of a large European entity, unifying production, markets would permit for a new rise to these countries which, otherwise, could not escape their traditionalism...if they do not constantly transform, they will not make it in the face of the progress of the USA.
51 Hackett, p. 208.
52 Wells, p. 155.
53 Monnet, Europe p. 264. Translation: Carbon and steel were chosen to this effect because they constitute in our eyes the base elements of the modern economy.
54 Wells, p. 231.
55 Wells, p. 135.
56 Wells, p. 151.
Roussel, p. 800. Translation: What General de Gaulle offers us...is not independence, it is the economic domination of the USA and the political domination of the USSR.

Monnet, Memoirs p. 272.

Hackett, p. 39.

Roussel, p. 538. Translation: The leading role that, from the intellectual point of view and the point of view of civilization, it had formerly had in the world and which it must have anew. Europe benefits from a diversity that makes its richness and which lacks in America. If it rediscovers its prosperity, it will influence, for this reason, the evolution of America itself.

Roussel, p. 570. Translation: To flatten differences, to erase centuries of history, to spread across the whole world the American way of life, nothing was further from his thoughts.

Monnet, Memoirs p. 465.

Monnet, Memoirs p. 499.

Roussel, p. 650.

Roussel, p. 16.

Monnet, Memoirs p. 497.

The Janissaries


5. Ibid., 35.


7. Ibid., 123.


10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., 1.

13. Ibid., 99.


**Mao’s Anti-Revisionism and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution**


20 Fenby, Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power, 1850 to the Present, 445.

21 Ibid., 460.


THE SANCTUARY
Zhuangzi: Skepticism, Relativism, and his Negative Project


3 This objection to ordinary knowledge could apply to many Western philosophies. For example, a utilitarian should make every choice based on what creates the most utility, but making a utilitarian calculation at every choice is counterproductive. It would be interesting to see how other philosophers respond to this objection and see if that response is adequate against Zhuangzi’s rejection of ordinary knowledge.


5 Zhuangzi’s point is remarkably relevant in the modern intellectual conflict between universalism and relativism or cosmopolitanism and partiality. Even philosophers interested in contemporary American partisanship can draw powerful lessons from Zhuangzi.

6 Again, Zhuangzi applies remarkably well to contemporary American politics, especially in the controversy over identity politics. As a manifestation of relativism, identity politics claims that inherent social identities shape political and social perspectives. Zhuangzi would argue to reject identity politics, so the question becomes whether his argument is convincing in the modern political context.

7 Zhuangzi, “Zhuangzi,” 223.

8 Ibid., 163.

9 Ibid., 145.

10 Van Norden, Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy, 145.


12 Ibid., 219.

13 Ibid., 222.

14 I argue that there is also no linguistic framework to convince us to not fear death. See Stanley Hauweras “Abortion: Why the Argument Fail” in A Community of Character (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986, 212-229)

15 Ibid., 224.
Interpretation of Human Evil in People of the Lie

1 S.M. Hersh, “Torture at Abu Ghraib,” New Yorker, May 10, 2004,
3 M. Scott Peck, People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil (New York: Touchstone, 1983), 47-69, 77-
4 Ibid., 108-130.
5 Ibid., 87-108.
6 Ibid., 108-120, 130-150.
7 Ibid., 69-77.
8 Ibid., 254-263.
9 Ibid., 154-162.
10 Ibid., 257-260.
11 Ibid., 254-263.
12 Zimbardo, The Lucifer Effect.
13 Peck, People of the Lie, 36-42.

THE PARLOR

Beowulf, Not Abel

2 Beowulf, 86-89.
3 Beowulf, 119-120.
4 Beowulf, 104.
5 Beowulf, 1384-85.
Beowulf, 1339-40.
Beowulf, 1115-1118.
Ibid., 289.
Beowulf, 18.
Beowulf, 53.
Beowulf, 24.
Beowulf, 11.
Beowulf, 467-469.
Beowulf, 1885-1886.
Beowulf, 64-66.
Beowulf, 72.
Beowulf, 576.
Beowulf, 2188, 2183.
Beowulf, 2191, 2188.
Beowulf, 2197-2198.
Beowulf, 2620-2623, 2628.
Beowulf, 1020.
Ibid., 177.
Beowulf, 1070-1144.
Van Meter, “The Ritualized Presentation of Weapons”, 185.
Beowulf, 2194.
Van Meter, “The Ritualized Presentation of Weapons”, 179.
Beowulf, 2498-99.
Beowulf, 2508-09.
Beowulf, 2335-36.
Beowulf, 2797-98.
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Beowulf, 2144.
Ibid., 226.
Beowulf, 1727,1733-34.
Beowulf, 1740-41, 1750-51.
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THE CLOCK TOWER

Interview with Dean Christopher S. Celenza

1 Christopher Celenza, interview by the Fulbright Commission, Fulbright Spotlight, 2014.