AAPT News

The Newsletter of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers

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A NEW MEMBER'S PERSPECTIVE: AAPT IN MONTREAL

Teaching is a complicated business. It is also a practice for which most professors have little or no formal preparation during their student years. The American Association of Philosophy Teachers appears to have the unique status of being the only national professional organization of philosophers whose sole mission is to address the issues of teaching head-on. It was, therefore, with a great deal of anticipation that I joined the Association and made the six hour drive from Bangor, Maine to Montreal. This anticipation was only partially, and temporarily, dampened by the heat and humidity of that first day!

The Montreal meeting of AAPT took place at a particularly auspicious time for me. In September 1994, I return to the profession after a three-year hiatus, taking up my first tenure-track job only ten years after receiving my doctorate from Boston University! Graduate students take heart; it is possible to survive the job market! While I have taught and published during those intervening years, the time had come to re-think my teaching goals and strategies. The Montreal conference was certainly an appropriate place to invigorate that reflective process.

So what are my observations as a newcomer about AAPT and the conference's success in advancing the cause of good philosophy teaching? I have three observations which I hope will interest other members of the Association.

First, through chance or design, I am happy to say that I was stimulated by all the sessions I attended. Of particular interest to me were the two sessions on the Philosophy of Art: one on collaborating with the local art museum and one interdisciplinary panel on approaching aesthetics through first-hand experiences with art works. These two sessions provided excellent examples of how philosophy can be enriched by more thorough acquaintance and interaction with other disciplines.

Too frequently the rhetoric of philosophers suggests a belief that the adequacy of other disciplines depends upon their receptivity to philosophy, while philosophy can and should remain autonomous. Being something of a pragmatist at heart, I find it more compelling to ask whether an inquiry is interesting, intelligent, and fruitful than whether it meets narrow disciplinary standards of purity. Both of these sessions suggested ways in which knowledge and experience in the visual arts might be essential both to good philosophical thinking in aesthetics and to good teaching.

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From the President

Betsy Newell Decyk
California State University at Long Beach

Montreal, Canada, 1994! We have always called our conferences "International Workshop/Conferences" because we have had participants from all over the world. This past August, however, the AAPT actually held its first Workshop/Conference outside of the United States! Our Canadian hosts, local program chairs, and on-site coordinators were outstanding and cannot be adequately thanked in words or gifts. Without Sister Eileen McIlwaine, the President of Marianopolis College, James Pettit, co-program chair, Marlene Bonneau and Cuauhtemoc Aviles, local co-coordinators, Dianne Eddy in the computer center, Claude Marchand, our chef, Stacey Lundell and others at the McGill University Housing Office, and everyone else who worked behind the scenes this conference just wouldn't have happened! Please accept our sincere thanks for a wonderful conference!

There were many excellent workshops and one could feel the excitement for improving the teaching of philosophy in the ongoing conversations that the workshops generated. Because of my own broad interests in philosophy I was pleased to see the variety of workshops available. There were workshops that explored the interdisciplinary edges of philosophy, workshops that called upon innovative techniques and technologies, and workshops that challenged us to think about what it is we teach and how to teach it well. I want to thank all the presenters and the participants for generously sharing their experiences and ideas in order to advance the teaching of philosophy.

I was also glad that the APA sponsored a teaching seminar for graduate students in conjunction with the AAPT conference. This seminar, like the one in 1990 at the AAPT conference in Indiana, was excellently led by Martin Benjamin. There were fifteen graduate students, representing both Canada and the U.S., selected for the seminar: Brad Abernathy, Ralph Acampora, Zhen Chen, Cheryl Cline, Brian Fogelman, Geoff Goddu, Nick Huggett, Amy Knisely, Rosa Maria Mayorga, Kevin E. Moon, Louisa Moon, John D. Musselman, Catherine C. Newman, Jacqueline Scott, and Tracey Stark. In discussions with the graduate students I was impressed by their enthusiasm to take up the challenge of teaching philosophy well. It made me realize that while we perhaps tend to look for inspiration in the good examples of people who came before us, we can also be inspired by the good people who are coming after us! I thank the people who saw that the future of the profession starts now: Eric Hoffman, Donna Benedetti, and Gary Iseminger of the APA and Rosalind Ladd and Phil Hamlin of the AAPT.

In addition to the workshops we had thoughtful and thought- provoking addresses by several people. Carl Witchell spoke on "The Place of Philosophy in the Context of Quebec's New Conception of Competency-Based General Education," a topic not only of interest to Canadians at the conference, but also one that has ramifications for us involved in critical thinking and assessment issues in the U.S. Kai Nielsen presented a paper on

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TYPESETTING AND LAYOUT
The Philosophy Documentation Center

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his vision for the future of philosophy and philosophy teaching called "Transforming Philosophy." Louise Marcil-Lacoste, former president of the Canadian Philosophical Association, carefully developed a philosophical pluralism in her paper "From Relativism to Pluralism." And on the last day of the conference Phil Hamlin challenged us to return, renewed and rededicated, to our jobs with his presidential address, "The Moral Imperative to Teach Well." Copies of Kai Nielsen's address and Louise Marcil-Lacoste's address are available from James Pettit, Department of Philosophy, Marianopolis College, 3880 Cote des Neiges, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3H 1W1. Please send $3.00 U.S. or $4.00 Canadian to cover photocopying and postage. A short version of Phil Hamlin's address will appear in the Newsletter.

As is customary, the Board of the AAPT met during the conference, and there was also a general business meeting. First of all, the Board is proud to announce that we have a new Executive Director, Nancy A. Slonneger. We are confident that with her excellent organizational skills and enthusiasm for the AAPT she will serve the most critical job in our organization with great distinction. She is busy setting up a national office of the AAPT and you can reach her at the Department of Philosophy, Transylvania University, Lexington, KY 41076.

In keeping with the Constitution of the AAPT, the program committee and the Newsletter should have been considered standing committees of the AAPT. The chairs of those committees should have been, and will be from now on, officially recognized as members of the Board of the AAPT.

The Board approved two new amendments for the Constitution: (1) That the number of members-at-large elected to the Board be increased by one, so that there would be three members-at-large on the Board; (2) that the past Executive Director of the AAPT be a member of the Board. These amendments and Officers of the AAPT will be voted on by a mail ballot of the membership.

The Board also agreed that it was finally necessary to raise the dues of the AAPT. The dues as of January 1, 1995 will be $20.00 for one year or $30.00 for two years. New members of the AAPT who did not receive any Newsletters in 1994 and who paid dues in connection with the conference will be members of the AAPT immediately and will be continued as members through 1995. For previous members of the AAPT who received Newsletters through 1994 and paid dues in connection with the conference, their dues will be applied to cover 1994 membership costs and should pay dues again in 1995. A dues notice and a call for member information will be included with this Newsletter.

It is my honor to serve all of you as the President of the AAPT for the next two years. I have always been deeply dedicated to excellence in the teaching of philosophy, and so it is easy for me to be committed to the purpose of this organization "...to promote and improve the quality of instruction in philosophy at all educational levels..." But more than this, the AAPT is like a family to me: with each conference I am impressed by the wonderful people in the AAPT and how they care about students, education, and philosophy. This organization has vitality because of you and the work you do. I wish for all of you that you may have the insights and energy to teach well, and that your work may be appreciated and valued.

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Equally stimulating, though more problematic, was the session on "explore" assignments. These assignments ask students to address particular philosophical works, arguments, or ideas through short stories, poetry, sculpture, photography, or other visual representations. As the discussion in this session revealed, there are many difficulties with this approach, not the least of which is assessing to what extent the students have truly understood the philosophical issues involved in their projects. Despite the difficulties with this particular strategy, this workshop made it clear to me how important it is to discover effective ways to improve our teaching in philosophy.

All the sessions I attended revealed a commitment to finding better ways to teach particular subject areas: aesthetics, critical reasoning, environmental ethics, feminist ethics, or introduction to

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philosophy. Yet, I eventually realized how many of our efforts are based on trial and error rather than on the scholarly work that may already have been done in education or psychology on different learning styles, teaching strategies, and the cognitive development of students. Clearly, interdisciplinary studies of educational and psychological theory and practice would make an important contribution to our understanding of the teaching process. As a newcomer , I was struck by how useful it would be to include this body of knowledge somehow in the discussions of the AAPT.

My final observation relates to Phil Hamlin's argument in his Presidential Address that professors have a moral obligation to teach well. No doubt taxpayers and legislators would applaud the position. And there, sadly is the rub. Moral obligation here enters the nexus of politics and the conflicting needs and responsibilities of university professors.

Increasingly taxpayers and legislators are pressuring universities to make teaching more central to their missions as a way of making universities more accountable to the public. Business metaphors of client, product, and provider obscure and confuse attempts to educate students and advance knowledge. The public would have us believe that the student is the client, not the product, of university services and that clients must have their demands satisfied. To the extent that these demands are for saleable skills, public scrutiny falls on the quality of teaching and assesses it with reference to the marketability or satisfaction of graduates.

However, education is not simply about marketability and universities are not just for students. Education is also about the actualization of human potentials, the search for knowledge, and the development of cultural insights essential to living in a democratic society. Colleges and universities are also communities of academics who depend upon the autonomy and integrity of those communities to carry on an intellectual life. And the substance of this kind of life always involves something more than teaching students. Hence, we should be careful, in our enthusiasm for excellence in teaching, to acknowledge the full diversity of the academic life and the existence of conflicting professional obligations in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and public service. The moral complexity of an academic life lies to some extent in the difficulties of interpreting these professional and moral obligations to one's discipline, students, university community, and society.

To insist upon the obligation to teach well redresses an imbalance in current academic culture. Most of the sessions I attended or heard about at the Montreal conference addressed the question of means. How can we teach environmental ethics, critical reasoning, or feminist ethics better to a given type of student? How can we make Introduction to Philosophy interesting to non-philosophy majors? These issues are crucial for us educators. At the same time, as philosophers and members of a somewhat beleaguered academy, we must raise the question of ends.

What are we teaching philosophy, or any other discipline, for? What do we hope to accomplish by teaching critical reasoning rather than metaphysics, or feminist ethics rather than logical positivism? How do we understand the relationship of philosophy, and other disciplines, to the notion of an educated person? And how can we best communicate our understanding of the ends of philosophy teaching and scholarship to our institutions and to the public? These questions are forced on us both by the nature of our own discipline and by the political context within which our institutions presently compete for funds, students, and public approval. We should work to ensure that our commitment to teaching does not play into the hands of those outside the academy who would marginalize other dimensions of professional academic life, while at the same time working with our colleagues to insist upon the centrality of good teaching to the sustainability of future philosophical discourse.

I started by saying that teaching is a complicated business. I don't think I have said anything here that would contradict that statement. Teaching is complicated because it requires learning how to communicate difficult ideas to multiple audiences. It is complicated because developing the skills for good teaching is something that professors must frequently do on their own, without expert or adequate resources. Finally, teaching is complicated because the teaching is subject to political forces that may sometimes have less interest in educational excellence than they have in attempts to extend control over the activities of the professoriate.

As a newcomer to the American Association of Philosophy Teachers I am impressed with its role as a forum for exploration of all aspects of this complex practice. I look forward to continuing participation in AAPT's already on-going discussions about how we may teach well, what we should teach and why, and how teaching relates to who we are as philosophers and citizens.

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Philosophy Teaching Exchange

A regular feature of *AAPT News* sharing course materials and classroom experiences. Replies to the editors or the author are welcome.

CREATING YOUR OWN RELIGON AS A WAY OF TEACHING THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

William L. Blizek
University of Nebraska at Omaha

I was recently asked to teach the philosophy of religion for the first time in my career. After considering possible texts and formats, I decided to ask my students, as a class, to create their own religion.

There were two reasons for this decision. First, I wanted to get my students involved in the process of understanding religion. I have used similar techniques in other classes and have found them to be very successful. I think that students learn more and more of what is important if the course in some sense *belongs to them.*

Second, I wanted my students to have a broader understanding of religion than I thought they would get by following the usual philosophy of religion texts. I see the philosophy of religion as an effort to understand religion, rather than as an effort to understand a particular set of problems in religion and I think that students are more interested in the former than the latter.

I

In what follows I wish to share with you some of the highlights of the course and some reflections from hindsight.

We began by attempting to find a definition of religion. What was it we were trying to create? We were unsuccessful in finding a list of necessary and sufficient conditions that both *included* all of the major religions of the world and *excluded* things that are similar to religion, such as philosophy, science, politics, and ideology. Along the way, however, we encountered some interesting ideas.

First, we distinguished between religion in general and particular religions, and some students suggested that understanding religion in general was less important than understanding particular religions. And, the understanding of a particular religion might be accomplished better by practicing that religion than by defining it.

Second, rather than defining religion, some students thought that we ought to ask what purpose(s) religion serves. There seemed to be a sense among many of the students that seeking necessary and sufficient conditions for religion was only one way to understand it, and that this may not be the most important way of understanding religion. As long as a religion had to fit the conditions of any definition, it could not be understood in its fullness.

Third, we considered the possibility that things commonly called religions were related to each other by family resemblance. Each religion shared some characteristics with other religions, even if all religions did not share the same characteristics.

In order to move forward, the class decided to adopt a definition of religion offered by one group, as long as we considered it a working definition subject to modification along the way. All religions, then, were to be characterized by a belief in some kind of supernatural power, an attitude of reverence toward some things (or an experience of the sacred), a set of rites, rituals, or ceremonies, guidelines for how to live (ethics), and some kind of institutional structure.

In the next phase of the course we took up the issue of what kind of supernatural power we wanted for our religion. At this stage of development, many students felt strongly that our religion should be inclusive. That is, they wanted our religion to embrace as many differences as possible. We called our supernatural power the ESSENCE. The ESSENCE has infinite duration and is not a personality. Everything is a part of the ESSENCE and the ESSENCE is

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part of everything. There was little more to the description, and I believe that its generality was the result of the students' desire for inclusiveness.

Given the nature of the ESSENCE above, we turned to the experience of the sacred and the task of establishing a set of rites, rituals, or ceremonies. Here we encountered a serious difficulty. While some people wanted to leave these matters up to each individual, most of the students found this prospect unacceptable. It was unacceptable just because it included everything and there would be no way to distinguish those who belonged to our religion from those who did not.[1] Where should we draw the line?

We considered two options. First, we could draw the line wherever we wanted. Second, we could draw the line in accordance with the "expectations" of the ESSENCE. The former option was rejected because it seemed to disconnect our religion from the ESSENCE. But, to accept the second option meant that we would have to return to the nature of the ESSENCE and define it more clearly so that the connection between the ESSENCE and the sacred/rites could be determined.

In returning to the nature of the ESSENCE, we quickly discovered that there was not much agreement about the ESSENCE after all. At this point in the course, I decided to have my students break into groups of like minded students. Each group, then, would create its own religion, rather than the class as a whole continuing to seek majority agreement. The result was the creation of six different religions.

The first group, which we called "humanists," was comprised of students who had not voted to have a supernatural power in our religion in the first place. They seemed relieved that they could now pursue the answers to various questions without having to refer to a supernatural power.

The second group, the "spiritualists," seemed to form the core of those who had wanted the widest possible inclusion of beliefs in their religion. Within this group, each individual student provided his or her own answers to the questions of religion and everyone's answer was equally acceptable.

The third group, the "lionists," started out as only one student. His powers of persuasion, however, soon won him a "convert" from among the spiritualists. The lionists believed that there is a supernatural power, but that all of the answers would come from members of the religion by agreement. Someone said of this view that it was the Lion's Club view of religion—hence the name lionism.

The final three groups all believed in a supernatural power from which answers to important questions are derived. Some of these believed that the supernatural power has no personality, while others believed that the supernatural does have a personality. Among the former, there were two groups. One believed that the supernatural was chaos (the chaotics) and that it made itself known to human beings through three deities or lesser gods. These lesser gods also had human representatives, and, sure enough, the three students in this group turned out to be the three human representatives. The other group of impersonalists (we called them nopnods) believed that the supernatural has *no p*ersonality and that there are *no d*eities.

From this point forward, each religion offered its answers to several of the traditional questions of the philosophy of religion (life after death, how we should live our lives, and the explanation of evil). It was interesting to me that at this point in the class, the discussion became more vehement, less civil. I will say more about this later.

Before turning to these questions, however, we did take up the issue of how such questions were to be answered. For most of our religions, the important questions to which religions were seen as providing answers, were answered through revelation or through a spokesperson for the supernatural to whom the answers had been revealed.

The two exceptions to religious knowledge as revealed knowledge were the humanists and the lionists. The humanists believed that they could answer all of the important questions on their own, from a human perspective, without reference to the supernatural or any kind of revelation. The knowledge of the humanists was available to everyone—it was not privileged in any way. The lionists also held that they could answer the important questions on their own, on the basis of what they called "accumulated wisdom." Again, the knowledge of the humanists was not privileged knowledge, but there was a belief that whatever knowledge the lionists gained, it was approved of or sanctioned by the supernatural.

In our discussions of ethics, life after death,

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and evil, the answers provided by each group's religion covered a range similar to that of actual religions. For example, one of the spiritualists concluded that we should treat others with unconditional love, that what looks like evil is not really evil because it leads to some greater good, and that we simply do not know anything about a life after death. At this point, people began to express, I believe, their own already established views. It was also at this point that disagreements between groups became more heated.

II

One of the most positive aspects of the course was the enthusiasm with which students participated in the project of creating their own religion. Although not every student worked as hard as every other student, most of the students seemed to me to work very hard at each phase of the project and at the project as a whole. I believe that students worked hard because they took the project seriously, and I believe that they took it seriously because in some important sense it was their project and not my project. (The issue of "for whom we are learning" seems to me to be a crucial one in education generally.)

A second positive feature of the course was that students were able to talk about issues of great importance to them without defensiveness or hostility. I believe that this was possible because while the project "belonged" to the students, the religion that they were creating was not "really" their own religion. That is, there was an important psychological distance between each student and the religion we were creating. There is no such distance between a student and his or her own religion. Yet, since the project was theirs and not mine, there was an ownership that encouraged participation in the project, from which there was much to be learned. In some sense, I believe the course had just the right balance of involvement and distance.

I want to qualify what I just said about the balance of involvement and distance by noting that after the class broke into groups and each group began to create its own religion, the tone of the discussion seemed to me to be "less pleasant." It seemed to take on a bit of a competitive edge. It was not exactly hostile, but it was not as cooperative as it had been during the first half of the semester.

I take this to be the result of students bringing more of their own religious beliefs into the discussion, which they were able to do because they could team up with like-minded students. As this occurred, things became more personal and students lost some of the distance they had maintained in the first half of the semester. When we broke into groups and each group went in a different direction, we thought that the class was doing what actual religions do, but I now think that it would have been preferable to keep the entire class on the task of creating a single religion. We would just as likely have encountered many interesting issues, but we could have done so without antagonism between groups.

A third positive feature of the class was that we learned that religion is a difficult thing to understand. We often found ourselves puzzled. We recognized the problem, but did not know how to solve it. It seems to me that my task, as a philosophy teacher, is to help students to recognize problems. My task is not to solve them.

One of the major negative features of the class is that as the teacher I have given up much of my control over the class, allowing the issues and discussion to control the direction the class will take. I say that this is a negative feature because it raised my anxiety level to new heights, but the truth is that it also made the class very exciting for me. I am sure that this feature of the class, not knowing exactly where we were headed, was also anxiety producing for the students, but I believe that they appreciated their participation in the process.

A second negative feature of the class was that the more students talked about their own ideas and beliefs, the less they seemed willing to learn about those ideas and beliefs. One of my students said on the evaluation that other students were "just sharing what they already believed, rather than considering the issues carefully." In some important sense, I think that this was an astute observation. How can we get students to share with us their ideas and yet help them to be critical of their own beliefs and ways of thinking? Some of the worse teachers with the highest student evaluations on my campus are those who simply let their students say whatever they wish. Students feel very good about this, but is seems to me that they often learn very

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American Association of Philosophy Teachers

Membership Dues Form

NOTE: To be eligible to participate in elections and to ensure receipt of all publications for 1995, dues must be received in the National Office by December 31, 1995.

MEMBERSHIP RATES

	One yr.	Two yrs.
Regular	$20	$30
Student	$12	$20
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Life	$500	

(The full amount for life membership may be paid over the period of one year.)

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS INCLUDE:

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Philosophy Teaching Exchange

A regular feature of *AAPT News* sharing course materials and classroom experiences. Replies to the editors or the author are welcome.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY THROUGH LITERATURE

Ray G. Wright
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Someone has said that teaching is like trying to put out a fire: one tries everything until he finds something that works. Some of us who teach philosophy, especially to beginning freshman students, may decide that teaching philosophy to these students is analogous to trying to put out a particularly onerous fire. I have found, however, in my own teaching career, that using selected prose fiction, drama, and poetry provides a useful approach to teaching philosophy. The use of literature can broaden a student's exposure to various ways to reflect on a philosophical problem, and some forms of literature, especially poetry because of its rhetorical structure, may help a student to learn to think more clearly and to read more critically. I realize that not all philosophy teachers would recommend the use of literature to teach philosophy, so in this paper, first, I want to show why I believe that the "differences" between philosophical and fictional discourse are much overrated and that instead of contradicting each other's principles, philosophy and literature share much common ground and may complement and enhance each other. Then, I will show how I have used some literary works to address specific philosophical problems.

Literature and philosophy are more alike than different. Each deals with human situations, and both use the same tools. Poets may accuse philosophers of being too rational and too literal in their use of language, and philosophers may accuse poets of stressing imagination and figurative language too much, but both use language as their medium of communication. Words may slip and slide as the poet T.S. Eliot discovered, and they may limit and dilute meaning as some Buddhist philosophers have said, but ultimately all writers and thinkers are forced to use them.

Further, philosophers and poets do not use words so differently. Paul Tillich has pointed out that words are always symbols. By definition they point to and participate in a reality beyond themselves, a reality each poet and philosopher, indeed each person, interprets for himself. I realize that it is precisely interpretation that is most troublesome to some philosophers who would prefer to avoid interpretation, thinking it is potentially subjective. But, of course, one cannot avoid interpretation, and even if one could, to sterilize words in such a way would deprive them of much of their power and us of their enrichment and their potential to take us, if not to higher levels, at least to other levels of understanding. The difference between philosophical literature and fictional literature is one of degree and not of kind. And at times, this difference blurs. One has only to read the writing of Heraclitus or Plato or even of Nietzsche to see what I mean, to see how fine the line between philosophy and literature may be. Of course, some will insist that the language of fiction is much different in degree from that of philosophy, and we should examine this argument carefully.

Early Greeks had two concerns with language: 1) the study of correct reasoning which we know today as logic, and 2) the study of the art of persuasion which we know as rhetoric. The philosopher is likely to contend that he is interested only or at least primarily in logic, that he is interested in the truth, not in persuading his audience with rhetoric. Therefore, he will reject rhetoric, contending it is mostly tropes and embellishments. But ideal as it might be if they could, neither philosophers nor poets can establish a one to one relationship between their words and their ideas. They both have more ideas than they do words, and so they are forced to expand the meaning of the words, to create metaphorical constructions. I believe that metaphorical language is both aesthetically and epistemologically justifiable.

From an aesthetic standpoint, consider the following two sentences: 1) I watched a man pick up his guitar and begin to play, and 2)

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Teaching through Literature. . .

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With what attentive courtesy he bent
Over the instrument
Not as a lordly conqueror who could
Command both wire and wood,
But as a man with a loved woman might
Inquiring with delight
What slight essential things she had to say
Before they started, he and she, to play.

I think anyone, philosophers and poets alike, would agree that the second sentence is more aesthetically pleasing, but it is important to see also that it is more refractive of meaning. It opens more possibilities for the reader. Some philosophers might insist that the first sentence is more "accurate," but by what criterion? In nature, there are laws of centripetal motion and of centrifugal motion. They are different, but which is better? In discourse, logic tends to be centripetal; poetry is centrifugal. But is one better than the other?

I agree with Paul Ricoeur that metaphorical language is not just ornamental; it brings new meaning to discourse. As Ricoeur points out, to say, "Time is a beggar," may be literally absurd, but to think of time in this way adds new meaning to our concept of time that literal language cannot provide.

Metaphors do not just establish a "like" or "as" relationship between words. Actually, metaphors are not much concerned with words at all; they are concerned with predication. For example, when one takes a piece of flint and a piece of steel and strikes them together, he gets, not steel, not flint, and not both flint and steel, but he gets a spark, a new creation. So when John Donne, in his poem, "The Flea," brings together the flea and sex he does not just elucidate the character of the flea or just analyze sex; he creates a whole new way of thinking about male and female relationships. Metaphorical language does not only reflect ordinary meanings; it stimulates new meanings. Metaphors are not just semantic innovations; they have reference to new experiences of reality. The scientist using an image to illustrate the invisible world of electrons and neutrons is resorting to poetry.

Having tried to show how much common ground philosophers and poets share, I would like next to give some practical applications of my thesis that the use of literature may enhance the study of philosophy. The examples I am including here are not intended to be exhaustive at all. I will choose a few philosophical topics such as free will/determinism and ethics and then provide some pieces of literature which might be used to teach them. Obviously, every teacher who decides to use this approach will have his or her own favorite philosophical topics and will find his or her own pieces of literature to elucidate the philosophical points.

Let me, at the outset of this section of my paper, make two points: 1) I would never recommend substituting fictional texts of any kind for philosophy texts. I believe firmly in the importance of requiring students to read from the primary sources of philosophers. I see literary texts as only supplementary. 2) My second point is a general statement about the value of literature in demonstrating philosophical theory. Literature presents real life characters. It formulates human situations.

It complements philosophy in that it reaches parts of our psyche that philosophy by its nature cannot reach. It opens up new levels of reality, often in a surprising and pleasing way. It brings us features of a world otherwise closed to us, and it reveals to us new levels of our selves. Deeply moved by a work of art, we experience reality differently. The catharsis of tragic drama is only one example.

It remains now to do two things: 1) to look at some literary pieces that examine different aspects of philosophical issues, and 2) to show briefly how some poetry because of its structure can be a valuable tool in teaching students how to think critically.

One of the best uses of literature in philosophy that I know of is the use of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* to illustrate not only fundamental ethical principles but to probe to the very heart of ethics and to ask why one should be moral at all. I am sure that most of us who teach ethics require our students to confront the question, Why be moral? Many of my students have never thought about the question, and in attempting to answer it, they find it difficult to avoid the circular reasoning of giving moral reasons to be moral. Of course, Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan* has given a classical philosophical response to the question, but Golding humanizes the problem. Watching the developing relationship among the children on the island, we learn the threat of chaos, the value of a world fostering human flourishing, and the need to resolve conflicts in just ways, in other words, reasons to be moral. Hobbes does the same thing, but we need not choose between him and Golding; they give us different, complementary views, and our students are richer for them.

There are other questions in ethics which have received literary treatment. One of the dramatic masterpieces of all time, the story of Antigone, is particularly rewarding to those looking for insight into ethics. Sophocles' *Antigone* delved into the relationship between individual and establishmentarian ethics, the conflict between authority and the individual conscience. It is also one of the best early treatments of feminism and its ethical issues. Anouilh's *Antigone*, on the other hand, looks at formal and utilitarian ethics and helps students to

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see these sometimes abstract theories at work under human conditions. It is well known that Antigone has served as the foundation for the whole tradition of civil disobedience traced through Thoreau, Ghandi, and Martin Luther King.

The concepts of free will and determinism perplex some students and putting these concepts into literary form may make them more palatable. For example, to illustrate fatalism there is one of the classic masterpieces of literature, *Oedipus Rex*. Here, larger than life characters act out their fates, struggle with concepts that have shaped our Western culture, and no one can think of free will and determinism in the same way after he has read and studied this work. He may still defend free will—most of my students do—but he will have a much better informed view of the whole problem. Shades of determinism are illustrated in a wide variety of literary pieces. Stephen Crane's "Open Boat" and *The Red Badge of Courage* are both classics, not only of naturalistic determinism but of literary characterization and style.

Few philosophical problems receive as much literary attention as the concept of the self. From a philosophical viewpoint, Descartes is indispensable on this topic; subjectivism came of age with him. But poets and fiction writers have written about the same issues he did. They did it differently, but therein lies their advantage for those of us who teach philosophy and want to give our students the widest possible exposure to the problem of the self. There are Rilke's Notebooks with their disturbing questions of whether we can ever really "know" ourselves, and their haunting depiction of our alienation from our "selves." There is Kafka's "Metamorphosis," guaranteed to attract attention and to get students to thinking about what it means to be a "self." Ibsen's drama, *Peer Gynt*, is simple, well organized, and raises many questions about how a person may define his or her self.

We have looked at only a few examples of how literature and philosophy can be used together, and I am convinced that both disciplines are the better for the blending. Now to my final point, the use of poetry to teach students to think more critically. The topic is quite broad and complex, but I would like to make just a few rudimentary suggestions for the use of poetry in training students in critical thinking. I do not advocate a special section of a philosophy course devoted to poetry. There is not time in a semester for that. But examples from poetry may be introduced in any class discussion stressing critical reading and thinking. For example, poetry is the richest source of figurative language we have, and examples from it serve well to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of such language. Such a study may encourage students to question the meaning and value of words in any context. But the greatest advantage of poetry for training in critical thinking lies in the syntax of poetry. Good poetry is typically tightly organized; it must be dissected like any logical construction. The argument of good poetry demands undivided attention. So do exercises in logic, but poetry gives the student a different perspective. Consider, for example, John Donne's poem, "The Flea." Space does not permit the inclusion of the whole poem, but here is a sample from it. The instructor may choose, of course, to clean up the archaic language of the poem. Donne, attempting to seduce his lady friend, watches her kill a flea which has just bitten both of them and he says: Wherein could this flea guilty be?

> Except in that drop it sucked from thee?
> Yet thou triumph'st and say'st thou
> Find'st not thyself, nor me, weaker now.
> Tis true, then learn how false fears be.
> Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me
> Will waste, as this flea's death took life
> from thee.

Here is clever poem of seduction, but it is not just poetry; it is a remarkable argument. One may say, "But is it a good argument"? But it seems to me that is exactly what we want our students to ask.

And we hope then that they will try to determine what makes it a good argument or not and learn something about argumentation. This poem is only one of many such poetic constructions that illustrate logic in some of its more pleasing aspects. Logic can be dry, let us admit it; but logic is still very important, and if we can make it more pleasing to our students without compromising its rigor, then why not? Such an exposure to logic as this poem provides can change a student's whole view of the formulation of logic. Not all poetry lends itself to such analysis, but the argumentative poetry of John Donne works especially well.

Will literature work for all philosophy teachers? I doubt it. Will it work equally well from semester to semester for those who use it? I doubt that also. But surely we can safely conclude that literature brings another dimension to philosophical discourse, and there may be times when students having just looked at literary treatments of philosophical problems may leave the classroom thinking that what they have just read and discussed in literature had often been said in philosophy but had never been so well expressed.

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[The following notice originated as a presentation of AAPT's Montreal conference. Author's Notice is a new feature of AAPT News. Submissions are invited. Eds.]

AUTHORS' NOTICE

A Classical Introduction to African Philosophy[1]

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I. Our Motive for Writing *A Classical Introduction to African Philosophy*

Anyone of you who has taught a course on African philosophy has not failed to encounter at least two related problems:

A. The Poverty of Extant Textbooks or **Anthologies.**

Typically, the available textbooks are dominated by metaphilosophical discussions grounded in themes and concepts introduced by certain primary texts. **The problem is that the discussants hardly ever bother to reproduce these texts in any substantial manner**. As a result, the student is left wondering what the original texts themselves have to say. Among the textbooks on the market one can mention the following four:

1. Diemer Alwin, ed., *Philosophy in the Present Situation of Africa*, (Wiesbaden: Frantz Steiner Verlag, 1981).
2. Guttorm Floistan, ed., *Contemporary* Philosophy: *A New Survey, Vol. 5, African Philosophy,* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987).
3. Tsenay Serequeberhan, ed., *African Philosophy: The Essential Readings,* (New York: Paragon House, 1991).
4. R. A. Wright, ed., *African Philosophy* (New York: University Press of America, 1984).

B. The Rarity of Primary Texts.

But anyone who has tried to supplement the above and similar textbooks with primary sources has realized that these sources are either out of print or otherwise difficult to secure. So, Parker English and I have responded to this problem by compiling an anthology focused on these very primary texts which we think deserve to be called the classics of African philosophy. **For our purposes, a classic text is defined by high frequency of citation or presupposition in contemporary African philosophical discussions.**

II. Structure of the Book

The first three sections are structured around representative classics in **ethnophilosophy, sagacity**, and **liberation philosophy**, respectively, the first three trends of Henry Oruka's fourfold classification of African philosophy. Relevant selections from **professional philosophy**, Oruka's fourth trend, are interspersed at appropriate places within the three sections. There is also a fourth section devoted to a comparison of traditional African theoretical methods to Western/scientific ones. The section comprises selections from the works of Robin Horton, Barry Hallen, and Kwame Appiah.[3]

Ethnophilosophy consists of various attempts to reconstruct the traditional, communal world views of ethnic Africans.

African Sagacity focuses on the views of individual traditional Africans who are regarded as exceptionally wise by their communities.

Liberation philosophy (called nationalist/ideological philosophy by Oruka) comprises the anticolonial, pro-independence literature of the 1950's and early 1960's.

Professional philosophy in Africa comprises the works of those, mainly Western-educated, philosophers who share the conviction that philosophy is a second order discipline. In addition to doing research in the traditional areas of Western philosophy, professional philosophers often seek to critically engage traditional African world views.

We envisaged an anthology of roughly 230 printed pages of text with some 75 pages of introductory material.

III. The 5 Criteria

We employed **five** criteria to guide our selection of material:

1) **popularity:** high frequency of citation or presupposition in current African philosophical literature;
2) **supplementarity:** usefulness in clarifying or augmenting other texts;
3) **universality:** themes, institutions, etc., common to the entire African continent;
4) **rarity**: material that is either out of print or not readily available in English;

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5) **timeliness:** significance for current African issues.

It would be noted that for the purposes of isolating classics in African philosophy, **popularity** is our single most important criterion. Once a text had been thus isolated, however, the final decision regarding its inclusion in the book was made in light of all the other four criteria.

IV. Anticipated Problems

Several problems engendered by the nature of the anthology are addressed in the introductory material. We will mention three of the most general of these problems and indicate the general direction of our effort to tackle them.

A. The Problem of Classification

Why, it could be asked, do we prefer Orukas's fourfold classification to its competitors? After all, Oruka himself has since added two "trends" to the original four.[4] And, besides, there are other attempts to classify African philosophy such as those of O. Nkombe and A. J. Smet, and V. Y. Mudimbe.[5]

There are several reasons behind our preference for the fourfold approach. First, unlike its competitors, the fourfold classification has such well entrenched and widespread usage that it deserves to be called the standard, if not classic, classification of African philosophy. Second, except for Oruka's sixfold classification, the other competitors don't appear to pick out any more material than the fourfold classification; they provide no quantitative advantage. Third, the fourfold classification seems to incorporate all the classics of African philosophy, the focus of our anthology. The additional material introduced by Oruka's sixfold classification, for example, have yet to earn the title "classic." This is at least true by our definition of the term.

B. The Problem of Sexism

Some may object to what appears to be the sexist character of our selections. All of our classic texts are by men, and very few of our professional philosophers are women.

What cannot be lost track of is the unique nature of our test. It is sharply focused on the classics of African philosophy. We have not deliberately ignored selecting classic texts by women. It just so happens that, given our definition of a classic, there are simply no such texts. It might be worth mentioning here that this situation is not unique to African philosophy. Plato, Descartes, Kant, etc., the classic philosophers of Western philosophy are all men. What goes for classic texts goes for professional philosophy as well. There are presently very few female African professional philosophers.

C. The Problem of Defining "African Philosophy."

Those who, like Paulin Hountondji, insist on defining "African Philosophy" in terms of production by Africans will object to the fact that some of our authors (Tempels, Hallen, Horton, etc.) are not Africans. On this point, we agree with Kwasi Wiredu and others who maintain that one need not be a native of a given region for one's work to be part of that region's philosophy. As Wiredu observes, Wittgenstein was an Austrian, yet his works are part of British Philosophy.[6] Likewise A. N. Whitehead was born in England, and yet his later works appropriately belong to American philosophy. We embrace an inclusive definition of "African philosophy." For us, **a philosophical work x is part of African philosophy just in case x is produced either by an African or in the African context or x deals with African issues.** This definition definitely embraces the works of the European expatriates in Africa who are included in our book.

V. Summary

The poverty of the available textbooks in African philosophy calls for their supplementation with certain primary sources. But, as we have seen, these sources are not readily available. Our book, focused as it is on these very sources, comes as a timely solution to this problem. The book is adequate for many of the needs of a full semester course on African philosophy. It presents the most significant works of philosophers who are widely regarded as most important in the evolution of African philosophy. As much as possible, it brings together works unified around common themes. The extensive editorial introductions help to put things in context as well as to show interesting connections. In short, there are currently no competitors to our textbook; it is the first book of its kind in African philosophy.

Endnotes

1. Presented by Kibujjo M. Kalumba at the AAPT 10th International Workshop-Conference on Teaching Philosophy, Marianopolis College, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, August 5, 1994

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2. Parker English and Kibujjo M. Kalumba, *A Classical Introduction to African Philosophy*, Forthcoming from Prentice-Hall, 1995.

3. See table of contents Section III.

4. See Henry Odera Oruka's "Introduction" to *Sage Philosophy* (table of contents, Section II, 8), pp. xx-xxi.

5. On these two classifications, see V. Y. Mudimbe, "African Philosophy as an Ideological Practice: The Case of French-Speaking Africa," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 26, Nos 3/4 (Sept./Dec. 1983), pp. 133-154.

6. Kwasi Wiredu, "On Defining African Philosophy," in Tsenay Serequeberhan, ed., *African Philosophy: The Essential Readings*, (New York: Paragon House, 1991), pp. 87-110.

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1. Peter Bodunrin, "The Question of African Philosophy," *Philosophy* 56 (1981).

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2. Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959). (Selections of "life-force" and the "living dead.")

3. Leopold Senghor, *Prose and Poetry*, John Reed and Clive Wake, eds. (Oxford: OUP, 1965). (Selections on negritude.)

4. John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969). (Selections on time, life-force, the living-dead, negritude.)

4a. Kwame Gyekye, Review of *African Religions and Philosophy*, *Second Order*, IV, No. 1 (January, 1975), pp. 86-94)

5. Alexis Kagame, "The Empirical Apperception of Time and the Conception of History in Bantu Thought," in *Cultures and Time* (NY: The UNESCO Press, 1976).

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SAGACITY

7. Marcel Griaule, *Conversations with* Ogotemmeli (London: OUP, 1965). (Selections on Dogon concepts of life-force and the living-dead.)

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9. Henry Odera Oruka, Introduction to *Sage* Philosophy. (Responses to various criticisms of the sagacity approach to African philosophy.)

9a. Anthony O. Oseghare, "Sage Philosophy: A New Orientation In African Philosophy," *Sage Philosophy*, Chapter 10 (pp. 248-258).

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10. Robin Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science," *Africa,* XXVII (1967), nos. 1 and 2.

11. Barry Hallen, "Robin Horton on Critical Philosophy and Traditional Thought," *Second Order*, VI (1977), no. 1.

12. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). (Discussion of Horton, Hallen, and rational versus accommodative styles of inquire.)

Section IV
LIBERATION PHILOSOPHY

13. Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1970). (Selections on materialism, egalitarianism, communalism, humanism, socialism, neocolonialism, positive action.)

14. Paulin Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983). (Commentary on Consciencism.)

15. Julius Nyerere, *Free and Socialism* (London: OUP, 1968). (Selections on communalism, pan-Africanism, socialism in Africa, relations with the West.)

16. Nelson Mandela, "The Rivonia Trial, 1963-64," in *The Struggle is My Life* (NY: Pathfinder, 1990), pp. 161-181.

16a. _____, "The Freedom Charter, 1955" in *The Struggle is My Life.*

16b. _____, "Freedom in Our Lifetime," *The Struggle is My Life,* pp. 54-58.

Book Review

Feminist Philosophies: Problems, Theories, and Applications. Janet A. Kourany, James P. Sterba, and Rosemarie Tong, eds. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1992. Pp. 384. Paper $30. ISBN 0-13-313560-8.

This anthology of primary source reading is excellent for any class in which both the teachers and students are willing to work hard. The book is brimming with ideas and information that will educate and provoke both teachers and students. However, many of the readings are challenging and the text offers a minimum of guidance to student readers. Below I shall describe the text, discuss what courses it is suitable for and give some tips to teachers who are interested in using the text.

The title of this text uses the word "philosophy" in the sense of a perspective on life, rather than an academic pursuit. Part One presents feminist perspectives on socialization, sex, work, violence, and the family. Part Two presents articles representative of the different schools of feminist thought: liberal, radical, psychoanalytic, socialist, postmodern, and multicultural feminism. Each article also stands as an independent, fully developed argument for a point of view, enabling students to see some of the disagreements and diversity within each school of feminism. The book includes no reading or discussion questions, and no head notes for the articles. However, the book begins with a long introduction which puts each section of the book in a historical and conceptual context.

The book's preface says it is designed to be "a basic text for a first course in feminist philosophy or a first course in women's studies." My experience using this book has led me to conclude that the book would be an excellent text for a "first course" in feminist philosophy, but not for a "first course" in women's studies. When I used the book in my Feminist Thought course, focusing on Part Two, it worked extremely well. That course was filled with junior and senior students interested in learning about feminist theory and willing to work hard to read, understand and think. Students were less interested in consciousness-raising and more interested in in-depth feminist views on various subjects. When I used the book in my Introduction to Women's Studies course, focusing on Part One, it did not work well. Many of the articles were too long or too technical for the students in that course, who would have preferred short articles stimulating them to think broadly but not deeply about gender.

If you choose to use this book in a course on Feminist Philosophy, Theory or Thought, then you will have to do a good deal of signposting for students. For example, the long introduction to the book is very helpful and you should keep referring students to that introduction throughout the course. For another example, if you use Part One, it might be helpful if you could say about each article which "school" of feminist theory the article reflects most closely, to help you weave the two sections of the book together. Although using this text was labor intensive for me, I found it rewarding because the articles stimulated me to do what I needed to do for students: (1) research and present background information on authors or schools of thought; (2) outline carefully the ideas in each article for myself and students; and (3) build bridges between the theoretical ideas and personal experience.

My favorite section of the text is the radical feminism section, as it presents the most diverse and challenging set of ideas. My least favorite section is the one on cultural invisibility, which is really not accessible to the majority of college students. Since the articles critique fields of research rather than cultural practices, I would use them only with carefully chosen groups of students. The two articles that energized my students the most are, from Part One, "Gender Socialization" by Renzetti and Curran and, from Part Two, "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women" by Bell Hooks. The students in Introduction to Women's Studies found "Gender Socialization" the perfect catalyst to begin seeing the importance of gender in daily life. And the students in Feminist Thought found "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women" to be the most honest, plausible, and relevant essay in the book, as it directly addressed both racial and sexual stereotypes and blamed all parties equally.

Some of the most interesting articles in the anthology are not well-edited for students and go on much longer than they need to in order to make a substantial point. However, you can make excellent use of those articles if you assign only portions of them. For example, when teaching Catharine MacKinnon's "Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech," you can assign only the first two thirds of

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