

# **PROGRAMMA**

A Newsletter for Graduates of the Program of Liberal Studies  
The University of Notre Dame  
Volume XVIII, No. 1 January 2007

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## THE VIEW FROM 215

Henry Weinfield

The “view from 215” is slightly different than it was in the past because last summer the PLS office was expanded and renovated and the chair’s office is now situated in what was formerly an adjacent classroom. So, from the chair in which he sits, the chair now has a different view. The undergraduate advisor’s office is now where the chair’s office had been, and the undergraduate advisor (Professor Felicitas Munzel) is actually able to speak to more than one student at a time without resorting to a shoehorn to squeeze everyone in! In addition, we now have a conference room for professors to shoot the breeze and more lounge space for the benefit of students who want to discuss Plato after hours (which, as you know, is what PLS students always do in their spare time). The new furniture didn’t arrive until the middle of the fall semester, so everything was at sixes and sevens for a time, but now we’re more or less settled in. So, the next time you’re in town, come visit us in our new digs!

It has often been said that academic departments are like families. Like family members, academic colleagues are always quarreling and making up, only to find something new to argue about. Nevertheless, I can honestly say that, all in all, things are going very well in PLS. (Knock on wood.) We have a wonderful incoming sophomore class, as we always do, and *esprit de corps* is extremely high. This year we welcomed a new faculty member, Pierpaolo Polzonetti, to our midst. As the profile on him written by Bernd Goehring indicates (see p. 18), Professor Polzonetti is a musicologist whose training in classics and the humanities makes him especially well-suited to the Program.

If you haven’t checked out our new web-site yet, be sure to do so at <http://pls.nd.edu>. It’s still a work in progress, but a vast improvement on our previous, rather

antediluvian, effort. We were fortunate to have Erin Flynn (PLS 2001) as the web editor on the project. Erin’s senior essay (directed by yours truly) was on “Dante’s Journey of Poetic Creation in the *Divine Comedy*” and won the Bird Award. No doubt the work she did on it prepared her for the poetic task of creating our web site. (This is an example of how PLS prepares its graduates for practical life.) I’m grateful both to Erin and to the valuable advice and help that Professor Tom Stapleford provided on the project.

Speaking of awards, we had co-winners of the Otto Bird Award last year: Megan Eckerle, who plans to go to graduate school in English, and Kevin McCabe, who will be going in Theology. Megan Eckerle also won our Susan Clements Memorial Award. The Willis D. Nutting Award was given to Michael McGinley, who is now at Harvard studying Political Science. And finally the Stephen Rogers Award went to Katie Burns, who is a graduate student in Spanish Literature at Marquette University. Congratulations to all of these marvelous students!

We’ve had a raft of books published by PLS faculty this year – almost too many to count. First, from our medievalists, Kent Emery’s edition of Duns Scotus’ commentary on Aristotle’s *De Anima* was published (it has a long Latin title), as was Julia Marvin’s translation and edition of the oldest Anglo-Norman prose *Brut* chronicle. In addition, the past year saw the publication of Steve Fallon’s book, *Milton’s Peculiar Grace: Self-Representation and Authority*, my verse-translation of Hesiod’s *Theogony* and *Works and Days* (done in collaboration with Catherine Schlegel of the ND Classics Department), and Father Nicholas

Ayo's study of Saint Nicholas.

Congratulations also to Walt Nicgorski, who organized a very successful international conference on Cicero that was held on campus this past semester. As usual, PLS faculty published many articles and won a number of grants, but I'll spare you a complete listing.

This issue of *Programma* contains Julia Marvin's Boethian Opening Charge, "The Consolations of Great Books," Patrick Manning's Cronin-award winning essay on Francis Bacon's project of "instauration," and Father Nicholas Ayo's homily from the PLS All Souls' Mass. We're grateful to Father Ayo for presiding at the Mass, as he has done on so many previous occasions, even though he is now retired.

I think that's about it. Oh, yes . . . the Summer Alumni Symposium! We've decided to hold it at a different time this year, from June 3 to June 8, because we've found that many alumni are tied up around the July 4 period. Steve Fallon, who is coordinating the summer symposium, tells me that this year's

offerings are going to be terrific. The two stars are Katherine Tillman (professor emerita), who will be leading a week-long seminar on Cardinal Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, and Steve Fallon himself, who will be leading another week-long seminar, this one on Melville's *Moby Dick*. Constellated around these seminars will be Walt Nicgorski's seminar on John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, Phil Sloan's seminar on Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* and Darwin's Reflections on *The Origin of Species*, Felicitas Munzel's seminar on "The Implications of Modern Science," and Pierpaolo Polzonetti's seminar on Faith and Reason in Nineteenth-Century Opera. It's a nineteenth-century extravaganza and promises to be a whale of a summer symposium. So make plans to be at ND between June 3 and June 8!

I wish all of you a happy New Year for 2007.

Henry Weinfield

*Programma* (the Greek word means "public notice") is published once or twice each year by the Program of Liberal Studies for its graduates.

Faculty Editor

Bernd Goehring

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**ALL SOUL'S DAY MASS  
HOMILY FOR THE  
PLS ANNUAL  
MASS OF COMMEMORATION  
Log Cabin Chapel**

November 2, 2006  
Nicholas Ayo, C.S.C.

We are gathered here every year as a community of learning and of belief that commemorates the dead. And to what end? To support our faith and to ease our hearts. There are presuppositions that underlie this gathering. I will name three of them and talk of each of them. (1) What happens to us when we die, in so far as we know anything of such a mystery. (2) How do justice and mercy meet, righteousness and forgiveness kiss? (3) What happens to all of us when we come to the "in the ending" that book-ends the "in the beginning," when God created the heavens and the earth.

(1) What happens to us when we die, in so far as we know anything of such a mystery. The Christian faith argues for the immortality of the soul. Neither Greek philosophy nor Christian revelation pretends that the body is not in the grave. However, the immortality of the soul in the Christian faith is not the Greek argument for a separate existence of the soul split from the body. It is a belief that the human person perdures and lives through death. One can imagine the unimaginable. At the moment of death we know something of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. A resurrected body is not a resuscitated body, nor one that we can truly imagine, but we live in that hope. All the dead await the promise of the fullness of the resurrection, when the human community has been fulfilled and in the ending the "resurrection of the dead and life everlasting," as spoken at the end of the ancient baptismal Creed.

(2) How do justice and mercy meet, righteousness and forgiveness kiss? Justice requires that our sinful deeds be undone. Some form of karma prevails in all religions. The Hebrew scriptures thought for many centuries that justice would be in this world, and if not with the perpetrator then justice would be done with their descendants, but justice would be done. Some notion of Purgatory, and not particularly one of fire and length of days imagined by private revelations culturally bound, seems to me very Catholic. We want to be clean; we want others to be clean. Dante was right when he argued that those in Purgatory worked at straightening themselves out and that was their joy. They wanted to ascend the seven-story mountain and arrive in heaven capable of entering the divine dance of love. They do not wish to be a wall-flower at the dance, unable to enter in because they never learned how to love in this life nor were given a chance to learn in the next life. We believe in this compassionate justice, which is a justice tempered by mercy, or a mercy tempered by justice.

(3) What happens to all of us when we come to the "in the ending" that book-ends the "in the beginning," when God created the heavens and the earth. How will it all end? How would you want it all to end — this wonderful world of billions of galaxies of billions of stars, thirteen billion years old and still expanding from an explosion of light from something smaller than the period of a sentence or a tiny atom, according as one credits the big-bang theory very much

favored in contemporary physics? The sun will burn out some billion or so years from now, but in the meantime it is estimated that it consumes four million tons of itself to warm our bones and our houses every second. The creator of the universe thought very big in the beginning, and we would have been satisfied with so much less, as Annie Dillard says in "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek." What about "in the ending"? Shall the infinite provider think just as big as the infinite creator? We can imagine so and of course we can hope so. We want everyone at the table. If people are hungry in South Bend, Thanksgiving dinner is not quite all it should be for me. If anyone in the family must be absent for whatever reason, death included, Thanksgiving dinner is not quite all it should be for me. And I think you are the same. We are made to love everyone and want everyone to remain in our life, no matter what we have been sold by previous education or experience. And we are made for self-sacrifice even if the mimetic desire enkindled by the culture around us confuses us about what is dearest to us.

Let me add a personal story. My niece restored an old home in Weehawkin, New Jersey, directly across the Hudson river from the center of Manhattan, a hundred feet from the spot where Aaron Burr shot and killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel. She is married to a genial Muslim business man from Sri Lanka. Her view of the world trade center was spectacular, and some time after that sad event she called me to say she did not want Mohammed Atta to go to heaven. I read between her lines that she thought he thought he was a martyr for the faith and so forth. I cannot remember how I finessed her tearful demand, but I know in the end we all do want him in heaven, but in heaven all cleaned up and all straightened out. He was born an innocent baby and he also suffered as we all do the slow crucifixion which is this life, where we are neither loved as we should be nor loving as we could be. What goes on in the mind and heart of anyone of

us caught up in our sinfulness is hard to imagine and to assess, but it is not beyond the mercy of God. I believe that the resurrection of the body is postponed in its fullness to the end of time for a reason. We are not full in our own selves, in our bodies, and in our own lives until and when all of us are at the table. At heart we belong to each other and we need each other and we want each other. Can someone fail utterly at being human and outrun the mercy and justice of God? If so, they must outrun an infinitely resourceful God whose grace is awesome and whose love is infinite. Can we hope for any and all of us that God's love is greater than our misery and sinfulness? Of course, that is why we are gathered here today to pray and to keep that hope alive one more year.

Just last week I listened to the Notre Dame orchestra and wondered to myself how did we come from giant clouds of helium and hydrogen to a women's slender fingers dancing over cello strings and following with her eyes and mind a string of black dots on a sheet of paper in order to make sounds that move the human heart to dream of harmony, unity, and beauty that comes to our ears and into our souls and slays our imagination with a tug toward something or someone way beyond this world and this moment? God must be so proud of how far we have come. Why would we not have reason to hope for yet more to come? Let me conclude with Father Faber's lyrics to this evening's concluding hymn. An English priest of the 19th century when Catholics were yet second-class citizens in the British Empire, he wrote the lyrics to hymns that gave hope:

There's a wideness in God's mercy  
Like the wideness of the sea;  
There's a kindness in God's justice  
Which is more than liberty.  
There is plentiful redemption  
In the blood that has been shed;  
There is joy for all the members

In the sorrows of the Head.  
For the love of God is broader  
Than the measures of our mind,  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind.  
If our love were but more simple  
We should take him at his word,  
And our lives would be thanksgiving  
For the goodness of the Lord.

Troubled souls, why will you scatter  
Like a crowd of frightened sheep?  
Foolish hearts, why will you wander  
From a love so true and deep?  
There is welcome for the sinner  
And more graces for the good;  
There is mercy with the Savior,  
There is healing in his blood



**ANNOUNCING THE NINTH ANNUAL  
PLS/GP SUMMER SYMPOSIUM  
JUNE 3—8, 2007**

We are happy to announce that the Program of Liberal Studies will hold its ninth annual Summer Symposium on campus the week of June 3-8, 2007. By popular demand, we've moved the seminar from the week of July 4 to the week immediately following Alumni/ae Reunions. All sessions will be led by PLS faculty. The theme this year is

The Nineteenth Century: Faith and Skepticism

Week-long seminars

Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* — Katherine Tillman

Melville's *Moby-Dick* — Steve Fallon

One to three sessions

“Freedom, Truth and Human Development: Two Seminars on J. S. Mill’s *On Liberty*. ” — Walter Nicgorski

Darwin’s *Voyage of the Beagle* and Reflections on *The Origin of Species* — Phil Sloan

“Reflections on the Implications of Modern Science” — Felicitas Munzel

“Verdi and 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Catholicism: Evidence from his Music and Drama” — Pierpaolo Polzonetti

“Tennyson’s ‘Tithonus’ and the Question of Mortality” — Henry Weinfield

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Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, PLS Professor Emerita Katherine Tillman

From his boyhood days, his close friendships in college and university, the influences (people, books, doctrines) that affected him and led him back to the Church Fathers, Newman tells the compelling story of his life-changing conversion, with all of its shattering insights, its real doubts and difficulties intellectual and emotional, its loneliness and pain, and all of its prayers and graces. The final chapter explodes into a rhetorical tour de force on the necessary correlation of reason and faith, of conscience and authority. This five-day seminar will have as its sole text Newman’s 1863 classic, each of its five chapters the subject of one day’s discussion. Any edition of the text or [newmanreader.org](http://newmanreader.org).

Melville's *Moby-Dick*, Steve Fallon

Having completed *Moby-Dick*, Melville wrote to his friend Nathaniel Hawthorne, “I have written a wicked book and feel spotless as the lamb.” In this extraordinary novel, Melville searches for the grounds of faith and skepticism even as Ahab searches for the white whale. On the one hand, Starbuck concludes, “Let faith oust fact; let fancy oust memory; I look deep down and do believe”; on the other, Ishmael (or is it Melville?) meditates on “the colorless all-color of atheism.” We will enjoy his language and art of *Moby-Dick* and keep an eye on Melville’s participation in the nineteenth-century conversation on faith and skepticism.

WHO: PROGRAM FACULTY, ALUMNI/AE, FRIENDS, AND FAMILY  
WHAT: NINTH ANNUAL PLS/GP SUMMER SYMPOSIUM  
WHEN: JUNE 3-8, 2007  
WHERE: NOTRE DAME CAMPUS  
WHY: TO SHARE BOOKS, REFLECTIONS, FRIENDSHIP

Housing will be available in an air-conditioned dormitory on campus. Information on rates to follow. They should be in the neighborhood of the 2006 rates (\$44 per day for single, \$32/person/day for double).

We need to collect a registration fee to cover costs for the week. The cost will be \$350 for the week, or \$500 for two. We will try to make arrangements for those eager to attend but for whom the registration fee would be an obstacle.

If you think that you might be interested in the 2007 Symposium, please mail the form below to Summer Symposium 2007, Program of Liberal Studies, U of ND, Notre Dame, IN 46556, or e-mail the requested information to [al.pls.1@nd.edu](mailto:al.pls.1@nd.edu). The course is open to friends of the Program as well as to alumni/ae, so if you have a friend who would jump at the chance to be involved, feel free to share this information.

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#### 2007 Summer Symposium Questionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in hearing more about the June 3-8, 2007 Summer Symposium.

\_\_\_\_\_ I already know that I want to attend.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in a room in an air-conditioned dormitory on campus. (We anticipate that our participants will be clustered together.)

I have the following suggestion for future texts or topics. (The reading for single-day sessions should be manageable.)

You may mail this form to PLS, U of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556 or e-mail responses to [pls@nd.edu](mailto:pls@nd.edu).

# OPENING CHARGE 2006

## *The Consolations of Great Books*

August 30, 2006

Julia Marvin

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the oldest recorded use of the word *consolation* in the English language comes in the 1370s, in Chaucer's great epic *Troilus and Criseyde*. I quote: "Men seyn, 'to wrecche is consolacioun / To have another felawe in hys peyne.'"<sup>1</sup> That is, "Men say that it is consolation for a wretch"—someone in misery—"to have a companion in suffering." In other words, "Misery loves company." These lines are spoken by the Trojan knight Pandarus, who is telling his lovelorn friend Troilus that it will do him good to share his sorrow. But, as is so often the case with Chaucer, it's hard to know how to take this.

The scene is very obviously modeled on Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, a sixth-century work of unequalled importance to medieval thought and literature. When Lady Philosophy appears to the wretched prisoner Boethius, she verbally dopeslaps him out of his despairing lethargy and begins to set him straight on what really matters in life: she ends up convincing him that true happiness lies in loving only the eternal (namely, the divine) and escaping from the control of Fortune through complete indifference to the transitory things of this world (which traditionally come to be called "false worldly goods")—things like fame, wealth, and even bodily well-being and the love of his own wife and children.

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<sup>1</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) s.v. "consolation"; *Troilus and Criseyde*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 1.708-9.

However, when Pandarus plays Lady Philosophy to Troilus's Boethius, he ends up convincing Troilus that it is a good idea to crawl through a sewer to reach the bedroom of the lady Criseyde and find out whether or not she is willing to sleep with him. You may not be too surprised to hear that things don't go well for Troilus (although Criseyde does sleep with him), and Pandarus's reputation as a dispenser of good advice suffers. It's from his name that the word *pander* enters the English language. The first two lessons of this Opening Charge, which I hope you will put into immediate application, are thus: consider the source of all purported wisdom you hear, and beware of aphorisms.

Now, why have I chosen to welcome you to the Program of Liberal Studies with the thought that misery loves company? Is it because by joining our company you've let yourself in for three years of misery? In a sense, yes. You'll be reading many tragedies, contemplating one terrible dilemma after another, and examining one writer after another's attempts to come to grips with what it is to be alive and know that we are going to die. As Max Weber says in the introduction to *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, "it is true that the path of human destiny cannot but appall him who surveys a section of it."<sup>2</sup> So, happy reading!

But tonight I hope to make the case that all the suffering you are about to undergo, vicariously or actually, is a good thing. While I'm at it, I'll not only advocate

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<sup>2</sup> Trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Routledge, 1930), 29.

misery, but confusion, following in the footsteps of Erasmus's Folly, who in praising herself declares,

I think I hear the philosophers raising objections. It's utter misery, they say, to be in the clutches of folly, to be bewildered, to blunder, never to know anything for sure. On the contrary, I say, that's what it is to be a man.<sup>3</sup>

Let me remind you at this point that I am speaking for myself alone here, not for PLS, or for Notre Dame, or for the Church.

Speaking for myself, then, let me offer you some cautions and encouragements about your time here.

First, PLS is an integrated program of education. In part, that means that we on the faculty want all of you to read the same books, so that you will have them in common to consider and discuss—not only on the day that they're assigned in class, but for all of your years here, and for that matter, for the rest of your life. Those of you who have already taken a couple of seminars can vouch for what a fruitful thing that common grounding can be.

But the design of the seminar reading lists, incorporating works across the disciplines and genres, in roughly chronological order, also serves as a reminder of something very important: namely, that academic disciplinary divisions and genres of writing themselves are human constructs, notions that we make up for our own use and convenience. The same goes for just about every word ending in “ism.”

One of the great dangers of such devices is that we may forget that we have invented them ourselves and lapse into reifying them,

that is, making them into things, which we believe to have some kind of independent, objective, real existence. I'd say myself that there is no such thing, in the abstract, as philosophy, or art, or literature, or science: there are instead works, ideas, questions, arguments, and methodologies that we find it helpful to group and label under those names. Those are the sorts of things you will investigate in the tutorials given over to particular areas of human inquiry and expression.

But I ask you never to forget that all human schemes of classification are notional, artificial, provisional, and heavily influenced by the culture in which we live, even those grounded in what we like to think of as empirical observation. Developments in genetic mapping, for instance, are putting biological taxonomy into a very dynamic state: how we classify organisms continues to depend on which traits we choose to use as the basis for classification. Or think of the impassioned debates in the past few weeks over how we are to label the celestial object Pluto.

I'm belaboring this point because labels do matter. They can in fact become tyrannical, never more so than when they are uncritically taken to be adequate representations of reality. Labels themselves can become terrible engines of human misery. We see this every day.

It seems that once we human beings have begun to label and classify, the urge to assign value and hierarchy to those labels and classifications becomes nearly irresistible, in the intellectual realm no less than the social. That is, we start to say that one kind of thing is innately better than another—say, that so-called “pure” math is better, or higher, than applied math. But if things like disciplinary divisions are mental constructs, then hierarchies of knowledge are constructs built out of constructs, and they must be recognized as such. The great risk,

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<sup>3</sup> In *The Praise of Folly and Other Writings*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Adams (New York: Norton, 1989), 32.

of course, is that we may become so enamoured of our own intellectual or moral schemes that we condemn or become literally incapable of perceiving whatever doesn't fit into them. The tools we build to help ourselves see can end up blinding us if we don't use them judiciously.

I'm not arguing that we shouldn't assign value to anything, or that everything is somehow equivalent, just that we should recognize that value is something we assign, and it's dangerous to think that we can easily or adequately universalize it. A very simple case: you will find as you go through PLS that you gravitate towards certain books and writers, and approaches to them, and those won't be the same ones that attract the person who sits next to you in class. One of you is not therefore better or smarter than the other, and you may both end up the richer for your differences.

So as you read and discuss this fall, be alert to habits of mind that may not always serve you well. I'm not saying these things on the assumption that you don't already know them, by the way—I at least need to remind myself of them all the time.

There's a deeply entrenched habit in Western thought of considering things in terms of "either-or," or binary opposites, good versus evil being a perennial favorite. If you find yourself wondering who the "real" hero of the *Iliad* is, Achilles or Hector, take note of the limitations you impose on yourself and the book by framing the question that way—you've already shut down a lot of ways of thinking about those two figures and the conflict in which they are embroiled. Similarly, if you ask whether Homer is a pro-war or anti-war poet, you are already presupposing that he must be one *or* the other, and there may be many more possibilities than that.

Don't be led astray by abstract nouns, either—words like *justice* or *beauty*. As

Francis Bacon and many other thinkers have observed, we can spend an astonishing amount of energy trying to track and capture the thing that corresponds to a word in the questionable belief that if the word exists, the thing must exist, too.<sup>4</sup> Maybe it does, but not necessarily. Ludwig Wittgenstein goes so far as to call philosophy "a fight against the fascination which forms of expression exert upon us."<sup>5</sup>

The myth of Procrustes illustrates another potential hazard in reading. When Procrustes had guests for the night, he forced them to fit exactly into the bed that he provided. If they were too tall, he chopped their legs down to size. If they were too short, he stretched them until they filled the bed. It's not nice to do this to your guests, or to the books you read. Don't just throw out the parts you don't like, or add stuff until you've got something you like better than what's there. That's what you're doing, for instance, when you're tempted to impute proto-monotheism to Homer and thus bring him better into line with Judeo-Christian values. Don't judge a book's success or failure on the basis of how well you can assimilate it into what you already think.

For it's the books that trouble and frustrate you from which you stand to learn the most. They're the ones that are most likely to provoke you to think new thoughts and ask new questions, and especially to practice seeing the world through another's eyes, even when that perspective seems impossibly alien or repugnant. Your discomfort is an important signal that there's something there calling out for your real attention. Even boredom is such a signal, telling you that the book is making some

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., "The New Organon," in *The New Organon and Related Writings*, ed. Fulton H. Anderson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960), book 1, aphorism 60.

<sup>5</sup> *The Blue Book*, in *The Blue and Brown Books*, 2d ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 27.

kind of demand on you that you don't really want to meet.

My greatest hope for your education is that while you strengthen your powers of analysis, argument, and expression, you also extend the reach of your sympathy so far, and so constantly, that reaching out becomes second nature to you. When you do that, it becomes very hard to hate other people, no matter how vehemently you disagree with them, and it also becomes much harder to fear them and their ideas. PLS offers a tremendous opportunity to stretch your empathetic imagination as well as your intellect.

When Aristotle mentions in passing that a play with an intelligent, brave female protagonist is unrealistic and therefore inferior, don't throw all of Aristotle out the window, but don't be too quick to stuff that awkward bit of misogyny in your "Product of His Time" file in order to be able to ignore it and continue as if nothing has happened.<sup>6</sup> Stop and think about if and how it affects your understanding of the ways in which Aristotle views, analyzes, and presents his world.

Don't just hate Medea for killing her own children, or say that no one would ever do that and dismiss the play as "unrealistic"—consider instead how, through the character of Medea, Euripides gives us a way of seeing what may drive any of us to destroy what we love most.

Always give both likeness and difference their due, and remember that it may be the questions that these writers ask, rather than the answers that they propose, which stay with you the longest and sustain you best.

One last bit of advice before I move on to

other things. Please, with all due respect to Plato and much of the Western philosophical tradition, don't feel obliged to take for granted that what is general and abstract is truer, or better, or more important than what is particular and concrete. The same goes for the eternal and the temporal, the immaterial and the physical, the emotional and the rational, and so on.

You yourself are a particular, not an abstraction, and you are infinitely precious and interesting as such. What you have to contribute to this community and the world is exactly your particular self, here and now, with your own history and gifts, with all your quirks, strengths, and foibles. We welcome you, and we learn from one another, as we are, and not as we might be. The same goes for the books we read, in all their weirdness and undomesticability.

So if you've come to PLS looking for security, for eternal, immutable truths that you can rely on to get you through life unscathed, then I expect, and frankly hope, that sooner or later you will be terribly disappointed. And the sooner, the better. You may find a home here—and I hope you do—but you've also come to a very dangerous and unpredictable place of testing. It's a bit like Teresa of Avila's interior castle of the soul, where the architecture keeps changing as you move through it.

Great books don't offer safety. No books offer safety. No people do, either. There is no such thing as safety, physical or metaphysical. The vain expectation that there is such a thing, that we have some kind of right to it, that it can be sought and captured and held—that is a false, pernicious idea. It drives men and nations mad, as we can see all too well in our own time. That's the bad news.

The good news is that although you can't have safety, you don't really need it either,

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<sup>6</sup> "De Poetica," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), ch. 15, p. 1469.

and great books offer something better than safety. Sometimes, though not too often, they provide a solution to a problem you face. Sometimes they offer an escape, a respite from sorrow—that's something we all need from time to time, and it's a genuine good, even though I'm not going to consider it at any length this evening. What I want to tell you is that great books offer consolation, in the form of reconciliation with what it is to be alive.

Reconciliation doesn't mean resignation to the evils of the world. Far from it. It hurts to extend our compassion—that's what compassion means, to suffer along with another. But when we truly recognize the range and depth of human suffering, not to mention our own complicity in it, that recognition only brings into high relief the need to repair this broken world in all the ways that it can be repaired—which on the one hand are far too few, and on the other go constantly unaddressed, few as they are.

But then there's the suffering, our own and others', that cannot be fixed or justified, or even understood. What's the good of that? What's the good of contemplating millennia of human folly and misery, if it's not going to help you avoid going through the exact same thing yourself? (Which, unless you're reading about something like which mushrooms not to eat, it generally doesn't.) That's not a question I can respond to by analytical or argumentative means. I'll turn to a poem instead, a famous one, Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach."

The poem begins with the speaker calling his beloved to the window to see the beauty of the evening and taste the sweetness of the night air. But then he hears the sound of the surf:

Listen! You hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back,  
and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,

Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.<sup>7</sup>

These long, pulsing lines don't simply tell us about the eternal note of sadness, they sound that note, they make us hear and feel it. Arnold reaches out to draw us into the melancholy of the poem, and then in the next stanza he reaches back to Sophocles, most implacably clear-eyed of the ancient Greek playwrights. The speaker continues,

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing by this distant northern sea.<sup>8</sup>

The ancient wisdom invoked here doesn't explain or solve human suffering, it only reminds us of its omnipresence. Suffering surrounds us forever as the sea itself does. "There is no end of it," as another poet observes in drawing very much the same analogy.<sup>9</sup>

"Dover Beach" reaches a terrible ending, which for me at least never loses the power to shock:

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which  
seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor  
light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for  
pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain

<sup>7</sup> In *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, gen. ed. M. H. Abrams, 4th ed. (New York: Norton, 1979), ll. 9-14, 2: 1378-79.

<sup>8</sup> Ll. 15-20.

<sup>9</sup> T. S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," in *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971), l. 79, p. 38.

Swept with confused alarms of struggle  
and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.<sup>10</sup>

What's left to us now, benighted as we are? The crucial word here is *for*: "Ah, love, let us be true to one another, for," not "although," the world has lost its certainties and fond illusions. That loss does not vitiate love, it makes it all the more important, for in this view, meaning is something we are to give to life, not take from it, if life is to have any meaning at all. What remains here is our own power to choose and create fidelity, even and especially when we cannot take it for granted as part of the natural order. What also remains is the incontestable presence of beauty, embodied in the poem's own language. Like *King Lear*, this poem manifests bleakness and horror in words that make you glad to be alive.

Sometimes beauty is almost all that's left to us. Sometimes, although I pray this never happens to you, even the sense of beauty vanishes. This is the state that Coleridge presents in his Dejection Ode, when he describes for us the evening sky, the clouds, the stars, and the crescent moon, and then concludes, "I see them all so excellently fair, / I see, not feel, how beautiful they are."<sup>11</sup>

What can remain even at this last resort, however trivial it may seem when you are at the last resort, is the knowledge that although you are unique, you are not alone in any of your joys or sorrows. That is one of the many things that great books can show you. They serve as a reminder that suffering and loss are fundamental to being human—they are part of the price we pay for a life of significance, and they are something we all share. The shared suffering of compassion is at the heart of consolation, a word that contains the prefix *con-*, meaning

"with," even though it is not always very clear with what or whom we are finding solace when we feel consoled. That is what Virgil's Aeneas is getting at when he speaks of "lacrimae rerum," the tears in, or of, or for things.<sup>12</sup> We don't always need to know who's weeping to know that the tears are there.

Readers have been fascinated and challenged by Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* from his day to this one with good reason. Lady Philosophy makes a vital point—if you let your happiness depend on being able to hang on to the things of this world, you are doomed to unhappiness. Plato expresses a similar idea in the *Symposium*, in which Socrates eventually reaches a definition of love as "desire for the perpetual possession of the good."<sup>13</sup> If *perpetual* possession is the true goal, then indeed the wise approach is to love only that which can be had perpetually, which in this life is not much. The Socrates of the *Symposium* allows for emotional and erotic attachments to individuals, for instance, only as the first steps on a path toward the contemplation of absolute beauty. In themselves, human beings offer only "beauty tainted by flesh and colour and a mass of perishable rubbish."<sup>14</sup>

But is a worldly good necessarily a false good, incomplete in itself, praiseworthy only as a reflection or anticipation of something else? I can't accept that. I find that an insult to the Creation. I believe that we can rightly and truly love the good things of this world, even in the knowledge that we cannot have them perpetually, and in the knowledge of just how terrible a thing loss is.

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<sup>12</sup> *Aeneid*, in *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. ed., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1.462.

<sup>13</sup> Trans. Walter Hamilton (New York: Penguin, 1951), 86.

<sup>14</sup> 95.

<sup>10</sup> Ll. 29-37.

<sup>11</sup> "Dejection: An Ode," in *Norton Anthology*, ll. 36-37, 2: 373-77.

Boethius's Lady Philosophy suggests that the less we have, the less we have to lose, and therefore the better off we are. She says, "You yourself are apprehensive at present, . . . but if as a traveller on life's path you had first set out with empty pockets, you could face the highwayman"—that is, a robber—"with a song on your lips."<sup>15</sup>

Well, it is true that in many ways less is more, but if you go through life with empty pockets because you won't take the risk of cherishing anything that Fortune can take away from you, you miss the chance to love most of the things that there are to love in this life, and they are wonderful things, for all their fragility and transience. You may avoid some bereavement, but it will be at the cost of impoverishment.

You've heard the myth of Orpheus and his bride Eurydice, who dies of a snakebite on their wedding day. Orpheus takes his harp and follows his wife down to the underworld, and the power of his art and his love are such as to win her release from death itself, if he can make the journey back up to the land of the living looking only ahead, while trusting that she is following him. He can't do it, and when he looks back for assurance that she is really there with him, he loses her forever. That is, by succumbing to the desire to doublecheck, to grasp at the ungraspable, to know for certain that he has her back, he loses the very happiness that he has risked so much to gain. There's a lot of wisdom in that story.

It is both futile and destructive to try to avert loss, either by clutching at what cannot be held, or by never seeking anything that it might hurt to lose. Instead, put your energies into forming the deepest attachments that you can. Know the price that you may pay for them, and pay it willingly when the time

comes. I'm not saying that if you just have a plucky enough attitude, you will necessarily be able to bear your losses. Well-meaning people, with what I think can be unintentional cruelty, sometimes say that God doesn't give us more than we can handle. But what we see in life doesn't seem to bear out that claim, and a better supposition might be that destruction is exactly what we risk by loving. So be it.

Of course I wish you joy, but I also wish you a life too real, too committed, too intense for you to avoid suffering. I hope that all sources of consolation will always remain open to you. But if times come, as they did for Coleridge and do for many of us, when suffering deadens and stifles you, when everything you've ever felt or heard about joy seems like an empty fairy tale, when all your brains and willpower seem to be good for nothing, then I wish you simple endurance, friends you can trust, and the strength to hang onto the hope, grounded in what you know of the experience of others, that joy does return, if you have taken the risk of becoming susceptible to joy in the first place.

The mysterious truth of human experience is that even our most terrible, excruciating, apparently senseless losses can, by a strange alchemy, become gifts. I can't account for it. I can only testify to it. It's almost impossible to believe such a thing when you're in the midst of the dark wood—when you've lost the one thing you've considered absolutely necessary to life or the thing that has always defined your identity, when the vagaries of biochemistry plunge you into depression, when someone you love and trust betrays you, or worse yet, when you betray yourself or someone else.

I'm not claiming that you'll find an adequate or better replacement for what you've lost, or you'll discover that whatever it was wasn't that important anyhow, or you'll get over it and it won't bother you any more, or

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<sup>15</sup> *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 31.

even that you'll become stronger and wiser for the experience—though any of those things and more may happen. The most I can manage to put into words is that I believe if you honor your losses—seeing them for what they are, no bigger *or* smaller than they are—they can become a vital and unrejectable part of you.

Strangely few books seem to address the question of this alchemy—or at least when they do so in narrative form, they often draw a crude, unrealistic, even distasteful picture of virtue rewarded and vice punished in some tangible way of which everyone can take note. Think of all the psalms that end with the hope of divine vindication for the righteous and vengeance on the wicked in this world. Take Psalm 118, for example, in the beautiful and influential, if not always historically accurate, translation of the 1662 Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*: “The Lord is on my side : I will not fear what man doeth unto me. / The Lord taketh my part with them that help me : therefore shall I see my desire upon mine enemies.”<sup>16</sup> You don’t have to know much history to know perfectly well that that is escapism. Far more to the point and truer to human experience is Psalm 84: “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee : in whose heart are thy ways. / Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well: and the pools are filled with water.”<sup>17</sup>

I’ll once again remind you that the very idea that there is such a thing as safety, that we can protect ourselves or those we love, is itself a false good, an illusion to be shunned. Safety can no more be gained through learning or experience than it can through wealth or power.

I think of Edgar at the beginning of Act 4 of *King Lear*. A good man suffering under a

false accusation that has turned his father against him, Edgar believes that he has weathered the storm of the night before, and that the worst is over. No sooner does he say so than his father appears, ruined, blinded by his enemies, and half mad with remorse and grief at what he has done to his son. Edgar concludes,

O Gods! Who is 't can say “I am at the worst”?

I am worse than e'er I was . . . .  
And worse I may be yet: the worst is not  
So long as we can say “This is the  
worst.”<sup>18</sup>

The words are double-edged. While there’s life, there may be hope, but there’s always also room for things to get worse.

Our yearning to have order, to know what to expect and what’s going on, to be able to declare that the worst is over—all that may trap us. The desire to systematize our understanding of the world and to try to conceive of it as a coherent whole may be all to the good if it grows from the honest, humble desire to contemplate and accept the beauty and terror of all there is. The great medieval mystic Julian of Norwich exemplifies this magnificent inclusiveness. To quote only one of her observations, but one of my favorites:

A man walks upright, and the food in his body is shut as if in a well-made purse. When the time of his necessity comes, the purse is opened and then shut again, in most seemly fashion. And it is God who does this, as it is shown when he says that he comes down to us in our humblest needs. For he does not despise what he has made, nor does he disdain to serve us in the simplest natural functions of our body, for love of the soul which he created in his own likeness. For as the body is clad in the cloth, and the flesh in the skin, and the bones in the flesh, and

<sup>16</sup> The *Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, n.d.), Psalm 118: 7-8.

<sup>17</sup> Psalm 84: 5-6.

<sup>18</sup> Ed. Russell Fraser (New York: Signet, 1987), 4.1.25-26, 27-28.

the heart in the trunk, so are we, soul and body, clad and enclosed in the goodness of God.<sup>19</sup>

When instead we seek order in a quest for mastery, in the prideful, desperate hope of controlling and limiting reality, when we ignore, exclude, deprecate, or demonize vast tracts of human experience because they menace the schemes that we think we need in order to survive, then we are building our own tower of Babel.

It may be worth noting that, according to the Bible, the Lord Jehovah seems not to be overly troubled by issues of consistency. Think of the book of Jonah: God sends Jonah to Nineveh to prophesy that the city will be destroyed in forty days. The people repent, and God relents, and, despite having himself benefitted from God's mercy, Jonah is furious that God has gone back on the deal.

Jonah rebukes God: "I knew that you were a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, relenting from evil. So now Yahweh, please take away my life, for I might as well be dead as go on living."

God replies, "Are you right to be angry?"<sup>20</sup> It's a very good thing that God applies less rigorous standards than many of us would like to.

And then there is the still more outrageous case of God's irrational, unjustifiable generosity, in the form of the Incarnation itself. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ embody the mystery of meaningless sacrifice, degradation, loss, and desolation, transformed by willing acceptance into something of miraculous power.

Having begun with such distinguished moral authorities as Pandarus and Folly, I'll end with the wisdom of Lord Goring, from Oscar Wilde's play *An Ideal Husband*. Lord Goring knows that Lady Chiltern's illusions concerning her perfect husband are about to be shattered, and he is trying to prepare her for the blow. When he mildly enough says, "Nobody is incapable of doing a foolish thing. Nobody is incapable of doing a wrong thing," she accuses him of Pessimism.

His response, and my conclusion this evening, with apologies to the academic discipline here invoked:

"No, Lady Chiltern, I am not a Pessimist," Lord Goring says. "Indeed I am not sure that I quite know what Pessimism really means. All I do know is that life cannot be understood without much charity, cannot be lived without much charity. It is love, and not German philosophy, that is the true explanation of this world, whatever may be the explanation of the next."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Showings*, trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (New York: Paulist, 1978), 186.

<sup>20</sup> *The Jerusalem Bible*, reader's edition (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1968), Jonah 4: 2-4.

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<sup>21</sup> In *Plays, Prose Writings and Poems*, ed. Anthony Fothergill (London: Dent, 1996), act 2, pp. 365-66.

## NEW FACULTY INTRODUCTIONS

Bernd Goehring

We are delighted to welcome **Pierpaolo Polzonetti** to the PLS faculty.

Pierpaolo is a musicologist specializing in opera studies; he joined the Notre Dame community after serving for three years as an assistant professor at the School of Music at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Polzonetti grew up in Fabriano, a town in the Italian Appennini mountains between Le Marche and Umbria. Here he dedicated himself to Classical studies in the local Liceo Classico, where the study of Greek and Latin grammar, literature, and rhetoric hold a central position in the curriculum, and to the practice of music as a choral singer and a dilettante of several instruments.

At the University of Rome he pursued a degree in the humanities, studying in the College of Literature and Philosophy (“Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia”). In Rome he also studied composition, baroque flute, and jazz improvisation, primarily at the Music School of Monte Testaccio. As he claims, the best school in Rome is the city itself, which constantly reveals with tragic irony the grandness and precariousness of history. And it is a fun place to be!

During the two years after his graduation in 1995, Pierpaolo spent his time perfecting ideas developed in his senior thesis on Giuseppe Tartini (written under the guidance of Pierluigi Petrobelli), took private lessons in musicology by Harvard emeritus professor Nino Pirrotta and conducted further research in Slovenia as a fellow of the Filosofka Fakulteta of Ljubljana. The result was the award-winning book *Giuseppe Tartini e la musica secondo natura* (Lucca: LIM, 2001), which was granted the International Prize in Musical Studies by the Petrassi Institute. The

book investigates the neo-Platonic philosophy informing Tartini’s late treatises on harmony (1750-1770) and this composer’s fascination with folk music.

As a graduate student of musicology at Cornell University, Polzonetti continued to take courses in the humanities beyond his area of specialization, such as literary theory with Jonathan Culler, and completed a dissertation on the representation of Revolutionary America in Italian eighteenth-century opera under the guidance of James Webster. This research, which he plans to turn into a book, is a study of cultural and political history through the opera glasses. It reveals how the American Revolution affected the most important and internationally disseminated genre of opera buffa, or Italian comic opera. This approach to opera as part of a broader intellectual, cultural, and political history is visible in all his publications, especially in his article “Mesmerizing adultery: *Così fan tutte* and the Kornman scandal,” published in the *Cambridge Opera Journal*, and recipient of the 2004 Einstein Award granted by the American Musicological Society, and in his two ‘gastromusicological’ essays on the semiotics of food in opera, revealing how the gastronomic sign is both universal and culturally bound. Polzonetti is also co-editing, with Professor Anthony DelDonna of Georgetown University, the *Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Opera*. Pierpaolo, his wife Lena Rose, and their cat Gatta live in a little house originally built in 1884 (1890 according to some sources) for the manager of the Central Union Telephone and Standard Electric companies of South Bend, Indiana.

## FACULTY NEWS

In the fall semester **Fr. Nicholas Ayo** taught a course in theology to seminarians and audited a course in Church History. A long-time interest in Saint Nicholas (one can guess why) has issued finally in a small book: "Saint Nicholas in America: Christmas Holy Day and Holiday." It is available through the Notre Dame Bookstore, or I am told, from Amazon. Another more scholarly book devoted to doxology is scheduled for publication by Notre Dame Press in the fall of 2007. The annual PLS mass on November 2nd reminded me of how much I miss both the faculty and students of the Great Books Program. Retirement has blessings and it has costs, but overall I am grateful for good health and the freedom to serve others according to need, willingness, and opportunity.

**Michael Crowe**, who became emeritus in 2002, has been enjoying his retirement. In Spring of 2005, he and his wife traveled for a period in the national parks of Utah and plan on Italy this Spring. In Fall, 2006, he taught a College Seminar from PLS titled "The Extraterrestrial Life Debate: A Historical Perspective." He continues to work on two books. Green Lion Press will be publishing his *Mechanics from Aristotle to Einstein* in 2007. He is also finishing his *Source Book for the Extraterrestrial Life Debate: From Antiquity to 1915*.

**Steve Fallon** reports that he had a rich summer. In June he and his new blended family of seven bonded while on safari in Kenya and Tanzania; all marveled at the people, the landscapes, and the animals. In July he had the great pleasure of reading *Paradise Lost* with the Program grads, spouses, and friends who returned to campus for the PLS Summer Symposium (see the announcement of the 2007 Summer Symposium in this issue). Steve's new Milton book, *Milton's Peculiar Grace: Self-Representation and Authority*, has just been

published by Cornell University Press. At the same time, Cornell published a paperback edition of his first book, *Milton among the Philosophers*. He continues to learn a lot about the university through his service on the Faculty Board on Athletics. Board members for the first time have been assigned as liaisons to varsity teams, and Steve is happy to report that his two teams, women's soccer and men's and women's fencing, are ranked first in the country.

Last summer **Bernd Goehring** successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation on *Henry of Ghent on Cognition and Mental Representation* at Cornell University. He presented some of his findings at the International Conference on Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Villanova University. When he is not teaching or doing research on medieval philosophy, Bernd enjoys playing the piano, especially jazz standards with the maestro Pierpaolo Polzonetti on clarinet.

Courtesy of the National Science Foundation, **Tom Stapleford** took a leave in the spring semester of 2006 to work on his book manuscript about cost-of-living statistics and American political economy in the twentieth century. Although he spent most of his time squirreled away in his office, he was able to present papers at several conferences, conduct archival research in Washington, D.C., and best of all, complete a substantial chunk of the book. While enjoying this productive stretch of research and writing, he was also glad to return to teaching this fall and to begin a new round of conversations with the lively and intelligent community of PLS undergraduates.



# THE 2006 EDWARD J. CRONIN AWARD WINNER

## “A Grain of Truth and Plenty of Confusion”: The Project of the Instauration of Humanity

Patrick Manning  
Class of 2007

Francis Bacon writes in his *New Organon*, “For man by the fall fell at the same time from innocence and from his dominion over creation. Both of these losses, however, can even in this life be in some part repaired.”<sup>1</sup> With these words, Bacon engages what he calls the “great instauration,” the task of isolating and correcting the corruption in human nature so as to improve the condition of humanity. In the centuries that follow, this project is taken up by numerous authors, each of whom determines a slightly different source of error and, correspondingly, a different solution. The object of this paper will be to detail the efforts of a few of these authors in the project of the instauration of humanity and, in particular, how Goethe critiques the efforts of those authors who came before him.

Bacon concludes the above quote with the claim that man’s lost innocence can be regained through religion and faith and his dominion over creation by the arts and sciences. The latter task occupies his attention in *New Organon*. Therein, he identifies the cause of error in human knowledge and constructs a method for overcoming that error. He does not claim to be able to correct the error, only to overcome it (a motif we shall see developed in most of the authors in our inquiry). “The cause and root of nearly all evils in science,” he claims, is that “while we falsely admire

and extol the powers of the mind we neglect to seek for its true helps” (Bacon, I. 9). Therefore, in an effort to reclaim our dominion over creation, he offers what he believes to be the requisite helps.

Bacon claims our present scientific process has led us astray by allowing the understanding to “jump and fly from particulars to remote axioms and of almost the highest generalities” (Bacon, I. 104). In order to rectify the situation, he proposes, “The understanding must not therefore be supplied with wings, but rather hung with weights” (I. 104). Bacon accordingly warns against relying on custom and generalizing beyond the particular experience. If we can avoid such pitfalls, then we will be able to arrive at an understanding of the latent processes in nature, even though such processes escape the senses. Knowledge of these will then inevitably lead to “an improvement of man’s estate, and an enlargement of his power over nature” (II. 52).

Jonathan Swift does not share Bacon’s optimism in science’s ability to rescue humanity from its depraved condition. Nonetheless, although *Gulliver’s Travels* does not explicitly propose a solution to the problem of human depravity as does *New Organon*, Swift’s work does manifest some hope for the future. Through the voice of Gulliver, he expresses the intention that his work might “help a philosopher to enlarge his thoughts and imagination, and apply them to the benefit of public as well as

<sup>1</sup> Francis Bacon, *New Organon* in *Selected Philosophical Works*, ed. Rose-Mary Sargent (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), II. 52.

private life.”<sup>2</sup> He elects to present his insights through a mixture of praise, satire, and outright abuse of his own culture and of those he encounters, challenging the reader to decipher his meaning.

After presenting a stingingly satirical account of the scientific endeavors of the Grand Academy of Lagado, the author finds himself in the land of the Houyhnhnms, who represent a seemingly ideal existence. He praises this noble species for their cultivation of reason and the simplicity of their lifestyle, among other things. The Houyhnhnms stand in stark contrast to the depraved Yahoos, who resemble humans in every way except that humans are “a little more civilized, and qualified with the gift of speech, but making no other use of reason than to improve and multiply those vices” (Swift, 262). After a short while, the author comes to revere the Houyhnhnms and disdain the Yahoos to the point that when he returns home he cannot so much as bear the touch of any member of his own family.

Though much of the Houyhnhnms’ way of life is worth emulation, a number of particulars in the author’s account seem to hint that humanity should not be abandoned utterly. For example, Houyhnhnm conversation only expresses “the fewest and most significant words,” and they determine their marriages based on the agreeability of the combination of coat colors (Swift, 260). Details such as these suggest a way of life peculiarly devoid of any passion or emotion. In addition, the absurdity of the author’s abuse of his rescuer, the impeccably civil Don Pedro, and of his conversing with his horses for “at least four hours every day” makes it difficult for the reader to take seriously his derision of humanity (Swift,

272). It might also be noted that, for all the Houyhnhnms’ complaints about the savage Yahoos, none of them makes the least effort to reform them. Lastly, the author’s failed attempt to isolate himself upon an island further suggests that Swift wants the reader to receive the author’s opinions with a judicious ear. Try as he might to separate himself from the depravity of humankind, Gulliver is unable to escape the fact of his own humanity. Swift seems to conclude that though humanity is indeed corrupt, we cannot give up on it. In the last pages of the work, he writes:

My reconcilement to the Yahoo-kind in general might not be so difficult if they would be content with those vices and follies only which nature hath entitled them to... but when I behold a lump of deformity and disease both in body and mind, smitten with pride, it immediately breaks all the measures of my patience.

(Swift, 276-77)

Swift accepts that humanity is depraved and that we cannot do anything to remedy the situation. He harbors no notions of a Baconian instauration, but rather admonishes his fellow man not to make matters any worse by proudly denying its depravity.

In David Hume’s *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, we observe a return to Baconian optimism. Like Bacon, he sets out to liberate learning from uncertainty and error, professing a hope “that the industry, good fortune, or improved sagacity of succeeding generations may reach discoveries unknown to former ages.”<sup>3</sup> For

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, ed. Miriam Kosh Starkman (New York: Bantam Books, 1962), 102.

<sup>3</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 2<sup>nd</sup>, ed. Eric Steinberg (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 6.

his own part, he proposes that the solution to a problem that has plagued philosophers since antiquity (viz. the unreliability of our perceptions) lies in applying the understanding correctly. He argues that, contrary to the assumptions of his predecessors, error lies not in the senses themselves, but rather in our interpretation of that which we sense. Consequently, we need not despair in our experiences; we must simply accept them as “effects of custom, not of reasoning” (Hume, 28).

With such an understanding of our abilities and limitations, Hume assures us we can avoid falling into error. Though we cannot know the causes of the events we perceive, custom, “the great guide of human life,” enables us to learn from our experiences and thereby conduct ourselves in a profitable manner (Hume, 29). From these conclusions Hume determines “that nature has pointed out a mixed kind of life as most suitable to the human race” (Hume, 3). A mixed life is best because it allows “none of these biases to draw too much, so as to incapacitate them for other occupations and entertainments” (Hume, 3). In effect, the result of his investigation is a resolution to live a prudent, yet full life. Hence, he admonishes us, “Be a philosopher; but, amidst all your philosophy, be still a man” (Hume, 4).

Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, by contrast, comes as a warning siren against incessant development of the human faculties. Though he does not go so far as to proscribe intellectual progress, he does cite it as the primary cause of inequality among members of the human species. Rousseau writes:

since inequality is practically non-existent in the state of nature, it derives its force and growth from the development of our faculties and the progress of

the human mind, and eventually becomes stable and legitimate through the establishment of property and laws.<sup>4</sup>

Since he identifies the mind as the source of humanity’s problems, Rousseau must necessarily go against the precedent set by Bacon and Hume and propose a solution independent of reason. Though he writes this treatise with the intent of merely “shedding light on the nature of things,” he does allow for a number of suggestions concerning how the present human condition might be improved (Rousseau, 38-9).

Rousseau expresses his understanding of the human predicament most explicitly when he writes, “this period of development of human faculties, maintaining a middle state between the indolence of our primitive state and the petulant activity of our egocentrism, must have been the happiest” (Rousseau, 65). This assertion implies that, though our primitive condition contained something now worth reclaiming, it would be imprudent to repudiate our present civilization in order to recover it. Additionally, his claim that “humanity must renounce enlightenment in order to renounce vice,” suggests that depravity has become an inextricable aspect of modern humanity (Rousseau, 94). In sum, “perfectibility... is the source of all man’s misfortunes,” the perfection of the individual being gained to the detriment of the species as a whole (Rousseau, 45). A middle ground, therefore, must be struck between self-perfection and compassion in order to remedy the inequality rife in human society.

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<sup>4</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality in The Basic Political Writings*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 81.

Approaching the matter from an economic perspective, Adam Smith identifies the same inverse relationship between the self-perfection of the individual and the well-being of society as a whole. In Smith's case, he claims that the improved efficiency and productivity of an economy which results from the division of labor comes "at the expence of [the individual worker's] intellectual, social, and martial values."<sup>5</sup> Because the workers spend their entire lives executing a few simple tasks they lose their capacity for understanding and invention out of sheer lack of use. As a result, they become incapable of "conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiments, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life" (Smith, 340).

In a sense, Smith sees education as equally the cause and solution of the decadence of the individual. According to him, the division of labor is a natural process by which differences in talents arise among the population "not so much from nature, as from habit, custom, and education" (Smith, 17). In this way, society's progression toward the economic ideal creates an artificial inequality among its citizens and causes widespread ignorance in the long run. Nonetheless, Smith assures us that "the more they are instructed, the less susceptible they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders" (Smith, 846). Education, therefore, can overcome the ills that education has wrought. Thus, like Rousseau, Smith presents a scenario in which the progress of humanity and that of the individual oppose each other. Smith believes

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<sup>5</sup> Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: The Modern Library, 1994), 840.

that the adverse effects can be counteracted, but he realizes nonetheless that some defect in human nature prevents us from attaining perfection individually as well as collectively.

Returning to the epistemological view of human imperfection addressed by Hume, Immanuel Kant frames his investigation of humans' ability to know in terms of the question of whether or not "metaphysics be even possible at all."<sup>6</sup> He pursues this inquiry by picking up where he believes Hume stopped short, namely at experience. Hume thought the connections we formulate in our minds were derived solely from experience, but Kant insists that we merely come to understand through experience the "concepts of the understanding," which we already know *a priori* (Kant, 46). However, since our experiences do not account for all of objective reality, pure reason pushes the understanding beyond the chain of sense experience to "transcendental Ideas," which cannot be known by appearances (Kant, 81). In this way, Kant proposes to overcome Hume's skepticism and assures us that metaphysics is indeed possible.

Further, the realization that there exist Ideas which transcend our understanding deters us from "the narrowing assertions of materialism, of naturalism, and of fatalism, and thus affords scope for the moral Ideas beyond the field of speculation" (Kant, 112). In other words, Kant asserts that, although we cannot fully know these transcendental Ideas, we can know what we need to know in order to live moral, contented lives. This discovery marks not only a triumph over Hume's skepticism, but also a reversal in the perception of the apparent problem of

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<sup>6</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 3.

human fallibility. Rather than viewing the bounds on human understanding as an infirmity, Kant reveals the apparent impairment to be an aid in man's moral formation.

Addressing the social dimension of the human condition, Robert Malthus, like Kant, views humanity's woes as an opportunity for improvement. Malthus presents the problem of an arithmetically growing source of subsistence and a geometrically expanding population, which results in a profusion of human suffering and inequality. After a thorough examination of the causes and effects of this dilemma, he concludes that, though we cannot remove suffering, we can alleviate it. Furthermore, we cannot know how much we can alleviate the problem, even if we know that we cannot resolve it completely.

Following this train of thought, Malthus makes the bold claim that "moral evil is absolutely necessary to the production of moral excellence."<sup>7</sup> In his understanding, human suffering (particularly that caused by the insufficiency of subsistence) serves as a school of virtue, which prepares us for a state of superior happiness. As Malthus sees it, for God to put an end to suffering would be the worst punishment he could inflict upon humanity because such an action "would act like the touch of a torpedo on all intellectual exertion and would almost put an end to the existence of virtue" (Malthus, 122). While this observation extends the hope of moral improvement beyond the intellectual elite who alone could follow Kant's inquiry, Malthus still accepts that, in terms of moral progress, "we ought to consider chiefly the mass of mankind and

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Philip Appleman (New York/London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004), 119.

not individual instances" (Malthus, 117). Man can better himself through overcoming adversity, but not necessarily every man.

Jane Austen succeeds precisely where Kant and Malthus fall short, bringing hope of human progress down from the realm of the theoretical to the world of everyday life. Tracing the events in the life of the Bennet family, the reader of *Pride and Prejudice* encounters the difficulties of societal pressures as well as a struggle for personal integrity. While these themes do not bear the all-encompassing nature of those addressed by the above authors, they are no less, and perhaps even more, applicable to the individual living in society. Darcy demonstrates that theories and principles do not always infuse themselves into our lives when he admits, "I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit."<sup>8</sup> In truth, he did not realize the falseness of his pretensions until Elizabeth rejected him. He had lived in a world of false security until that moment when he experienced what it was to suffer the unexpected, "a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous" (Austen, 277).

His illusions thus swept away, Darcy undergoes on a personal level what Malthus describes humanity undergoing as a species. Rather than resisting the difficulty he has forestalled all his life, Darcy finally accepts that "painful recollections will intrude which cannot, which ought not to be repelled" (Austen, 276). He embraces the pain and turmoil he has experienced, and that enables him to overcome the insecurities which he had hitherto only been able to cover up. Thus, in the experiences of Darcy and Elizabeth, Austen conveys the possibility of moral progress through personal struggle. Like Malthus, she claims that, though we

<sup>8</sup> Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 276.

may not be able to correct the wrongs in the world or society we live in; we do have the ability to overcome the flaws in ourselves.

Whether or not they know they are dealing with the same problem, each of the above authors focuses on a specific aspect (or perhaps symptom) of human depravity. Only Goethe attempts to address the problem as a whole, and he clearly indicates that it is his intention to do so in the Prelude to *Faust*:

That's the kind of play we ought to give—  
The whole parade of life that people live!  
Plunge in and take it as it is, and you  
Can offer something interesting and new.  
Some vivid scenes, a measure of illusion,  
A grain of truth and plenty of confusion,  
That's the surest way to mix a brew  
To please them all – and teach them  
something, too.<sup>9</sup>

In the words of the clown, Goethe determines not to dissect or categorize the matter, but to address the problem of human imperfection as it arises in the “whole parade of life.”

*Faust* begins as most of the above works do, acknowledging error in human nature. Goethe confronts the issue through the mouth of God when the Lord declares to Mephistopheles, “man will err as long as he can strive” (Williams, I. 317). In this succinct statement, Goethe puts forth a conjecture – anticipated by Rousseau alone (and possibly Swift) – that man encounters error precisely because he strives for what he expects to be a better condition of existence. As the story unfolds, Faust’s experiences demonstrate to us how the error arises and how, ironically, it eventually leads to that so often sought better state.

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<sup>9</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, trans. John R. Williams (Chatham: Wordsworth Classics, 1999), I. 166-173. Translations by Kaufmann and Taylor will also be referenced herein.

From the start, Goethe hints that the sought-after end is to be found in the trial. God willingly permits Mephisto to lead Faust down the path to perdition with the assurance:

I give you freedom to appear at will;  
For you and your kind I feel no hate.  
Of all the spirits of denial and of ill,  
Such rogues as you I can well tolerate.  
For man's activity can slacken all too fast,  
He falls too soon into a slothful ease;  
The Devil's companion who will tease  
And spur him on, and work creatively at last.

(Williams, I. 340-343)

God talks to the tempter warmly, insinuating that his provocation can only serve to better the tempted and so further providence. Mephisto accepts the Lord’s terms and promptly leads Faust to likewise wager:

If I should ever choose a life of slothful  
or leisure,  
Then let that moment be my end!  
Or if you can beguile or flatter me  
Into a state of self-contented ease,  
Delude me with delight or luxury –  
That day will be my last.

(Williams, I. 1692-1697)

Under the terms of both wagers, sloth will signify the loss of Faust’s life. He willingly enters into the gamble with Mephisto, as God did. Evidently he has nothing to fear in the trial itself; it is when his activity stops and he falls into self-contented ease that the wager will be lost.

Faust enters into the wager so readily because he has been frustrated in his previous efforts to satisfy the sense of insufficiency within. Having devoted his life to learning, he finally comes to the realization that all his books will never

provide him with the truth he seeks. So realizing, he laments:

And for ten years all you've been able to do  
Is lead your students a fearful dance  
Through a maze of error and ignorance.  
And all this misery goes to show  
There's nothing we can ever know.

(Williams, I. 361-365)

Through the words of Faust, Goethe criticizes the approach taken by the likes of Bacon, Hume, and Kant towards the instauration. Rousseau had foreshadowed Goethe's conclusion when he denied reason as a fundamental faculty of the human species; but Goethe goes further yet by claiming that, if there is a way to restore humanity, it will not be achieved by reason. Faust renounces all his knowledge and turns to worldly pursuits in order to find satisfaction.

Yet, his pursuit of temporal security only leads Faust to the same lament, albeit with a different tone, "For this is the most cruel rack, / To feel in riches what we lack."<sup>10</sup> Despite acquiring dominion over everything he could want his sense of incompleteness only becomes more acute than it was before. We never learn exactly what he lacks – he does not seem to know himself – but we receive the vague impression that he yearns for a sense of certainty or security against the confusion and unpredictability of the world. In essence, Faust longs to overcome the insecurity that plagued Bacon, Rousseau, and all the rest, albeit in a much more confused and general sense than they did. Furthermore, just as Faust's renunciation of learning undermines the efforts of Bacon, Hume, and Kant, likewise his inability to find peace of mind in subjecting the world seems a rejection of the theories of

<sup>10</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), II. 11251-52.

Rousseau, Malthus, and Smith. Indeed, Faust appears to come to the realization that no attempts to comprehend or alter the external world will ever bring contentment: he declares, "Stood I, O Nature! Man alone in thee, / Then were it worth one's while a man to be!"<sup>11</sup> Thus, Goethe asserts the bold claim that, even if man's reason were free of error and the world existed in perfect harmony, humanity would no more be at peace than it is now.

The words of Mephisto support this claim. After Faust's death, the devil comments upon how people today cling pathetically to the temporal world:

Once with the last breath left the soul her house;  
I kept good watch, and like the nimblest mouse,  
Whack! was she caught, and fast my claws her hide in!  
Now she delays, and is not fain to quit  
The dismal place, the corpse's hideous mansion;  
The elements, in hostile, fierce expansion,  
Drive her, at last, disgracefully from it.

(Taylor, V. VI, 110-116)

At one time souls quickly abandoned the body in favor of a better state, but now they cling to the false security of flesh and blood. People today presume that if they cannot of their own power find security in the material

<sup>11</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: The Second Part*, trans. Bayard Taylor [book online] (James R. Osgood and Company, 1873, accessed 23 April 2005); available from [http://lion.chadwyck.com.libproxy.nd.edu/searchFulltext.do?id=Z000776591&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1114506964\\_28303&area=Drama&forwar=textsFT&pageSize=&warn=No&size=906Kb](http://lion.chadwyck.com.libproxy.nd.edu/searchFulltext.do?id=Z000776591&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1114506964_28303&area=Drama&forwar=textsFT&pageSize=&warn=No&size=906Kb); Internet, V. 23-24.

world, then it will never be had. In fact, Mephisto declares that for humans to achieve what they seek is the worst thing for them:

You know how we, atrociously  
contented,  
Destruction for the human race have  
planned:  
But the most infamous that we've  
invented  
Is just the thing their prayers demand.  
(Taylor, V. VI, 167-170)

Clearly, if there is any security to be had by humans, they cannot achieve it by their own efforts.

Though the journey as a whole serves to convey the importance of struggle in personal development, Goethe expresses this theme most explicitly in Care's (*Sorge*) visit to Faust. To begin with, of the four of his visitors – Want, Guilt, Need, and Care – only Care gains access to Faust's lair. All the others have no business with a rich man such as Faust; but as for Care, “Though no ear should choose to hear me, / Yet the shrinking heart must fear me... / Always found, yet never sought” (Taylor, V. V, 33-34, 39). That no one wants *Sorge* is clear in the efforts of Bacon, Hume, Rousseau, Kant, etc., all of whom struggled (Goethe would say in vain) to liberate themselves of the anxiety of uncertainty and insecurity. Yet, as Faust discovers, no one is free from anxiety and care, not even the man who knows and has it all.

Nonetheless, though nobody wants care, Goethe asserts that it alone can lead to true contentment. When Faust tells Care to get out, the unwanted visitor replies, “I am where I should be” (Taylor, V. V, 39). Care's retort should remind us of God's nonchalant handling of Mephisto in the Prologue, where he said he bears no

animosity towards him and his kind because their temptations spur man out of his complacency and on to activity. That Faust, by contrast, fears Care's arrival indicates that he has not yet learned the lesson God had in mind when he made the wager. However, this is precisely the lesson that Care bestows upon him when she declares:

Whom I once possess, shall never  
Find the world worth his endeavor:  
.....

Perfect in external senses,  
Inwardly his darkness dense is;  
And he knows not how to measure  
True possession of his treasure.

(Taylor, V. V, [61])

Care here relates to Faust what he should have realized from the frustrations he experienced in his studies and worldly conquests, namely that any efforts directed at security in this world are futile. Though he may be “perfect in external senses,” that is, know all there is to know or control all there is to be acquired, he will still be plagued by care within.

When Care breathes upon him, Faust suddenly understands and so declares, “The Night seems deeper now to press around me, / But in my inmost spirit all is light” (Taylor, V. V, 74-75). His perceptions are reversed so that now he sees the falseness of the security he had created for himself in the world, yet an inner calm comes over him. He finally understands that Care is a blessing rather than a curse, and exalts:

Yes! to this thought I hold with firm persistence;  
The last result of wisdom stamps it true:  
He only earns his freedom and existence,  
Who daily conquers them anew.  
[Surrounded by such danger, each one thrives,

Childhood, manhood, and age lead active lives.]<sup>\*</sup>  
(Taylor, V. VI, 62-69)

As God had stated in the Prologue, the dangers that surround man force him to lead an active life. He can never find freedom from anxiety by guarding against the dangers of the next day, which no man can know. Rather, only he can enjoy his existence who welcomes the new day's challenges and who strives to better himself by those very challenges.

At the moment of Faust's revelation, he appears to succumb to the very trap towards which Mephisto had been leading him for years, yet somehow he escapes punishment. Seemingly falling into that moment of "self-contented ease" that he vowed would be his last (Williams, I. 1695), Faust exclaims:

Then dared I hail the Moment fleeing:  
*"Ah, still delay---thou art so fair!"*  
The traces cannot, of mine earthly  
being,  
In æons perish,---they are there!---  
In proud fore-feeling of such lofty bliss,  
I now enjoy the highest Moment,---this!  
(Taylor, V. V, 72-77)

Yet when Mephisto is in position to take possession of the doctor's soul, angels descend to steal it away to heaven. The devil fumes, "My rare, great treasure they have peculated" (Taylor, V. V, 263), but Goethe would not have us believe that God would take something that was not his, much less reward an unjust man. Though Faust does come to relish the moment, he does not succumb to momentary "delight or luxury" (Williams, I. 1696), nor does he succumb to complacency. He finally comes to enjoy the moment because it is the "highest Moment,"

the moment in which he accepts the challenges of his existence and thereby realizes the fullness of his being. Thus, even apparent defeat proves only to serve God's plan and benefit the striving man.

Goethe further vindicates Faust and emphasizes the lesson he has learned after his death in the conversation among the holy anchorites. In their desert seclusion the angels proclaim:

What is not part of your sphere  
You may not share;  
What fills you with fear,  
You cannot bear.  
If the attack succeeds,  
We must do our valiant deeds.  
Love alone leads  
Loving ones there.  
(Kaufmann, 11745-52)

Man should seek neither that which God alone knows, nor a security that he cannot possibly create for himself; but rather he must simply strive and struggle with the confusion and insecurity of this world. Love alone can achieve security, a fact Faust first began to understand from his relationship with Margareta. Bewailing the meddling presence of Mephisto, who pollutes the bliss Margareta bestows upon him, Faust had professed, "But now I see that we can never know / Perfection here on earth" (I. 3241-2). Through loving eyes he had begun to see the darkness of the external world and the light that shone within. He began to realize, as proclaimed by the Pater Profundus, that "to Love, almighty Love, 't is given / All things to form, and all to bear" (Taylor, V. VII). In the end, neither his knowledge nor his acquisitions gain him access into heaven; rather it is his love, Margareta, who welcomes him into eternal bliss.

Thus, rebelling against the predominating trend among his predecessors, Goethe

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\* Lines 11577-78 (68-68 in Taylor) taken from Kaufmann translation.

asserts that this life is supposed to be difficult and confusing. In wrestling with the problem of the fallibility of human nature, Bacon, Swift, Hume, Rousseau, Smith, and, to a degree, Kant each view uncertainty, instability, and insecurity as things to be overcome. Only Malthus and Austen (and, in a sense, Kant) viewed the challenges facing humanity as more beneficial than detrimental to our development as a species. However, Austen touches only indirectly upon the issue and only as it pertains to social pressures, which, while applicable for nearly everyone, do not encompass the full range of life's difficulties. Nor does Malthus quite achieve the scope of Goethe because, even though he ultimately addresses the human experience as a whole, the style of *On Population* simply does not appeal to as wide an audience as that of *Faust*. In the end, the message is of little value if the audience does not receive it. Therefore, only Goethe accepts life's difficulties in all their various manifestations – whether they be epistemological, moral, economic, social, or personal – as the solution rather than the cause of man's inner turmoil while expressing this message in such a way that

every individual can understand it and relate to it.

In light of the multiplicity of diagnoses and solutions proposed across the centuries, Goethe's capturing of the human condition in the word *Sorge* exhibits exceptional insight. It should come as no surprise that translators have trouble retaining the full sense of this word considering the trouble that all the authors we have examined experienced in attempting to describe in a single phrase the spiritual malady afflicting them and the rest of mankind. Goethe stands out from the pack because, without dissecting and categorizing human life into symptoms that do not really address the bigger problem, he manages to offer a solution. According to him, whether we call it care, anxiety, sorrow, distress, turmoil, concern, or by any other name, it is a part of human existence; and a part from which we benefit greatly. Life, like the play Goethe presents, consists of "a grain of truth and plenty of confusion" (I. 171). However, we discover that truth through, not in spite of, the confusion.

## COMMENCEMENT BRUNCH

### *On Preserving One's Inner Child*

May 21, 2006

Henry Weinfield

Last week I had a discussion about *Alice in Wonderland* with my thirteen-year old daughter, Vera. This is one of her favorite books, and she has been studying it in her eighth grade class. She was very irritated with her teacher, who was insisting that the Alice books (*Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*) needed to be read as satire on English life and as political allegory. The poor children were being told that those delightful stories were really all about Gladstone and Disraeli. “That’s baloney!” my daughter exclaimed, and I must say that I was rather proud of her, both because she refrained from using a harsher expletive (she showed greater forbearance than I myself would have done under the circumstances) and because she had the good taste to want to preserve her experience of the Alice books as beautiful works of literature, works that make the inner-life of childhood and of the imagination vivid to us (even if she wouldn’t express it in this way). Heaven help us if we have reached the point at which we are only able to read the Alice books in the way Mr. Gradgrind from Charles Dickens’ novel *Hard Times* would read them – for the facts they give us about Victorian England.

Like my daughter, Vera, and like your own sons and daughters, who will graduate this afternoon from the Program of Liberal Studies, Notre Dame’s Great Books program, Alice loves to read – not in the way Mr. Gradgrind does, because he thinks it will help him make money and become a “success” in life, but simply because it gives her pleasure – although of course in giving her pleasure it also nourishes her imagination and develops her cognitive

capacities (so that when Alice goes looking for a job, even in the business world, she’ll have a leg up on other candidates). When Alice is reading she is fully absorbed in her life, she isn’t postponing it; but I’m afraid that our own society, including our educational system, is increasingly following the baneful example of Mr. Gradgrind, who, if he reads at all, reads only for the “profit” he will derive from that act, and who doesn’t enjoy life because he is living only for the future. After work, Mr. Gradgrind is too tired to do anything but watch “reality” shows on TV. Poor Mr. Gradgrind! His life is nothing but postponement, and when he retires (with the pot of gold he has accrued over the years) it will be too late for him to enjoy anything.

Of course, when Alice reads, even if it’s a fairy tale or a romance or work of the imagination that is seemingly far away from “reality,” she is nevertheless encountering reality, and the reality she encounters is often not a particularly happy or benign one—indeed, it is often bewildering and sometimes even terrifying. The same happens when we read the Alice books—especially when we are children, but even now. My daughter Vera’s teacher did have an insight after all, though she didn’t formulate it very cogently. Alice finds herself in a bewildering world of adulthood—a caricature of the adult world, actually—in which all of the creatures behave as though they considered themselves perfectly rational and yet everything is utterly insane! A Caterpillar says to her accusingly, “Who are you?” She doesn’t know who she is, or how she “measures up,” because nothing seems to make sense any longer (one moment she is

nine feet tall, and the next, only ten inches). “I hardly know, Sir,” she answers the Caterpillar; “at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then.”

As the Roman poet Horace says in Book 1 of his *Satires*, “De te fabula narratur”: “This story is about you!” When you leave Our Lady’s university behind and go out into what people call “the world,” you are often going to be bewildered by what you see and whom you meet. Prospective employers are going to say to you, “Who are you?”, and you may find yourself answering, “I hardly know, Sir. When I got up this morning, I was a student in the Program of Liberal Studies, but I think I must have changed several times since then.”

It’s very important, therefore, that you don’t get so caught up in the workaday world that you lose your soul. “What does it profit a man if he gain the world and lose his soul?” Of course, as all PLS students know, the question of what exactly *is* the soul isn’t an easy one. Plato sees it as an eternal essence distinct from the body; Aristotle says it’s the life of the body. And having now gone through Seminar VI this past semester, you are certainly aware that modern psychology scarcely believes in a *self*, let alone a soul. For William James, for instance, the self consists mainly of the “social me,” and the social-me is a mere *construct* that is formed through the perceptions that others have of you and that you derive from social interactions. Though the word “psychology” means “study of the soul,” most psychologists nowadays wouldn’t be caught dead talking about the soul. But if one doesn’t have a soul, how is one to make one’s way in the world?

Take it from me, you *do* have a soul – at least most of you. I know this because I lived for many years in New York City and I knew lots of people who had lost their souls. Some of them lost their souls working for

corporations (that’s easy enough to do); but don’t kid yourself, there are plenty of poets and artists who lose their souls in Greenwich Village or Soho. I love New York, but there are all sorts of ways to lose one’s soul there. You can lose it in a taxi cab or on the subway. Dante’s inferno is full of New Yorkers (many of them hailing from the mid-west, I might add), who at some point in their lives lost their souls.

If you can lose your soul, that’s infallible proof that you had one originally. (You see that my logic is impeccable on this score.) And the thing of it is, once you’ve lost your soul, it’s very hard to find it again. It’s almost impossible to find anything you’ve lost in New York City, let alone a soul. Maybe that’s why there are so many lost souls wandering up and down Broadway.

Once you leave the Program of Liberal Studies, how do you avoid losing your soul? That’s the question all of you should be pondering right now. My favorite answer, the one that I’ve found to be most useful, is from John Keats, the English Romantic poet. In a famous letter that many of you read in the Lyric Poetry course, Keats calls the world a “Vale of Soul-Making,” and he says that from the moment we come into the world our task in life is to fashion a soul. “Call the world if you Please ‘The vale of Soul-Making’,” he writes: “Then you will find out the use of the world.” And he adds:

I will call the *world* a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read — I will call the *human heart* the *horn Book* [i.e., primer] used in that School — and I will call the *Child able to read, the Soul* made from that school and its *hornbook*. Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul? A place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways!

And Keats concludes: “As various as the Lives of Men are — so various become their souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls . . .”

*De te fabula narratur.* As graduates of the Program of Liberal Studies, you are certainly able to read, and you are now about to go out into the world. But though the process of soul-making that Keats describes begins in earliest childhood, it can’t end when one enters the world; it never ends. The world is itself a school in Keats’s metaphor (“Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul?”) and we are always responsible for making our souls; indeed, if we ever stop, then that’s when we are in danger of losing them. Yes, we have to leave childhood behind. Saint Paul rightly says: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” But we also have to remember what it was like when we were children, and we have to preserve the integrity we had as children,

when we were first learning how to read and had only begun to fashion a soul.

This brings me back to *Alice in Wonderland* (I bet you thought I’d never get there). In focusing on childhood, Lewis Carroll was following in the footsteps of the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth, and Carroll is himself a late-Romantic. The reason the Romantics emphasized childhood as much as they did is simply because they saw childhood as a time of innocence and purity, a time when our imaginations are intact and our spirits are most open. “Child of the pure unclouded brow / And dreaming eyes of wonder,” Lewis Carroll writes in the poetic preface to *Through the Looking-Glass*. And so, graduates of the Program of Liberal Studies, as you go out in the world and make your way in it, shaping your lives and having all sorts of experiences, accomplishing all the things that you are going to accomplish, and having children of your own, I hope that you will hold onto that inner child in you, the one who was filled with wonder and was fully absorbed in the experiences she had and the great books she read.

## 2006 SENIOR ESSAY TITLES

Margaret (Meg) Barr	False Paradises and the Ascent to God in Tennyson's Early Poetry	Henry Weinfield
Juan Bernal	The Power of Poetry: The Poetics of Revelation in Dante's <i>Comedy</i>	Christian Moevs
Sally Boman	Passing by the Dragon: Shock, Violence, and Redemption in Three Short Stories of Flannery O'Connor	Ruthann Johansen
Katharine (Katie) Burns	Where the Minimum and the Maximum Coincide: Infinity and Imagination in the Fiction of Jorge Luis Borges	Robert Goulding
Lindsay Byrne	Making Sense of Spinoza's <i>A Theologico-Political Treatise</i> in Light of his <i>Ethics</i>	Kent Emery, Jr.
Mairead Case	Escape, Come Back: Memory, Mourning & the Self in <i>Krapp's Last Tape</i>	Steven Affeldt
Shauna Dee	Rebaptism in the Donatist Controversy: The Struggle for Unity in Early Christianity in North Africa	Fabian Udoh
Benjamin Dougherty	Malthus's Theodicy: A Revaluation of the <i>Essay on the Principle of Population</i>	Felicitas Munzel
Mary Ann Doughton	The Transformative Power of a Liberal Arts Education: A Case Study of the World Masterpieces Program at the South Bend Center for the Homeless	Clark Power
Megan Eckerle	Reading and <i>Pite</i> in Chaucer's <i>Book of the Duchess</i>	Julia Marvin
Anne Edelbrock	Freedom Through Destruction: The Birth of the Powerful Woman	Gretchen Reydams-Schils
Jorge Fragoso	Abre Los Ojos	Robert Goulding
Raquel Giffard	"But rather to tell, if art could tell": Nature and Art in John Milton's <i>Eden</i>	Stephen Fallon
Anne Heltzel	C.S. Lewis's <i>Moral Philosophies</i> , <i>Narnia</i> , and the Children Lewis Creates	Ruthann Johansen
Geoff Hoppe	"Scorn for Scorn:" William Blake's Reaction to Lockean philosophy in <i>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</i>	Henry Weinfield

Michele Jeffers	Charles Williams: Co-inherence in <i>All Hallows' Eve</i>	Kevin Mongrain
Melissa Flores Johnson	Tocqueville's Women in Contemporary America	Walter Nicgorski
Mary Beth Kries	The Virtue of Romance: Jane Austen and Aristotelian Ethics	Henry Weinfield
Thomas (Patrick) Kurz	"The Infinitude of Man." The True Faith of Ralph Waldo Emerson	Steven Affeldt
Aurora (Elena) Lacayo	Reasonable Faith: An Exploration of the Use and Limits of Human Reason in the Writings of Descartes and Pascal	Felicitas Munzel
Mary Catherine Levri	The Sacrament of Marriage: A Reconstruction of Doctrine?	Kent Emery, Jr.
Helios Mac Naught	The Becoming of the Self-Reliant Nature in Emerson's Thought	Steven Affeldt
Dane Macaulay	A Survey of Christian Reconstruction	Fabian Udoh
Kevin McCabe	A Mystery of Love: Jean-Luc Marion and Henri de Lubac on the Nature and Progress of Christian Theology	Kevin Mongrain
Michael McGinley	Bridging the Adjudicative Gap Between Pragmatism and Textualism: Judge Richard Posner and the Rule of Law	Walter Nicgorski
Christopher Muth	Dante's Boethian Resonances: A Window into Dante's Two Loves and the Relationship between Poetry and Philosophy	Kent Emery, Jr.
Anna Nussbaum	The Beatific Vision Is Now	Jessica Murdoch
Timothy O'Shaughnessy	The Doctrine of Liberty	Rev. Jeffrey Schneibel, C.S.C.
Nathan Origer	'Third Way' Distributive Economics: Catholicism, Democracy, and the Good Life	Bernd Goehring
Elizabeth Pappano	Death and Dying in the 21st Century	Felicitas Munzel
Michael Eric Quisao	Shakespeare's Hamlet and Timothy Bright's Melancholic Man	Stephen Fallon

Diana Rdzanek	Redefining Historical Law: An Examination of Free Will and Determinism in Tolstoy's <i>War and Peace</i>	Phillip Sloan
Michael Schmitt	Sport and Spirituality: Exploring the Sacred in America's Foremost Civic Religion	Clark Power
John Paul Slonkosky	I Am Yours: A Reflection on and Critical Examination of Karol Wojtyla's <i>The Jeweler's Shop</i>	Jessica Murdoch
Daniel Smith	The Eternal Character: An Odyssey Across the Ulyssian Sea of Western Literature	Ruthann Johansen
Lauren Stanisic	Science, Morality and Human Dignity: Examining Terminal Care in an Age of Biotechnology	Phillip Sloan
Mary Elizabeth Steffan	Thomas Merton: Prophetic Implications of Restless Renewal	Kevin Mongrain
Michael Szaro	Alasdair MacIntyre and the Possibility of a Virtue Ethics Grounded in Human Nature	Bernd Goehring
Megan Trucano	Poet as Lover, Lover as Poet: Love and Art in Guillaume de Machaut's <i>Remede de Fortune</i>	Julia Marvin
Mary Twetten	Can Virtue be Taught? A Comparison between Aristotle and John Henry Newman on Moral Education	Walter Nicgorski
Annie Weidert	Gendered Discourse: From Limitation to Liberatory Possibility	Gretchen Reydams-Schils
Whitney (Paige) White	One Spirit, One Flesh: An Exploration of Companionate Marriage in Catholic Tradition	Gretchen Reydams-Schils
Casey Wong	On Rational Self-Interest	Rev. Jeffrey Schneibel, C.S.C.

## ALUMNI NEWS

The editorial staff of *Programma* welcomes contributions and reserves the right to edit them for publication. For information about becoming a class correspondent, please contact the Program of Liberal Studies Office.

### Class of 1954

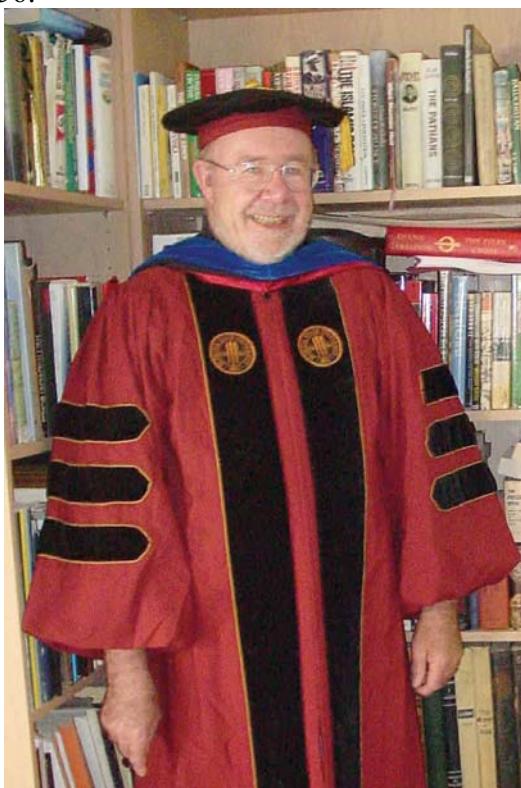
### Class of 1955

(Class Correspondent: George Vosmik, 21151 Lake Rd., Rocky River, OH 44116-1217, e-mail: flyty@apk.net)

### Class of 1956

Added by the PLS Office:

**Jack Sigler** writes, "In the interim, and to prove that after Bird, Nutting, Thompson, and Cronin learning never stops, the attached picture – my graduation picture as a PhD in history from Florida State University -- 49 years and 348 days after my graduation from the General Program of Liberal Education in 1956."



### Class of 1957

### Class of 1958

(Class Correspondent: Michael Crowe, PLS, 215 O'Shaughnessy, U. of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556)

### Class of 1959

### Class of 1960

(Class Correspondent: Anthony Intintoli, Jr., 912 Georgia St., Vallejo, CA 94590-6239)

### Class of 1961

### Class of 1962

(Class Correspondent: John Hutton, Box 1307, Tybee Island, GA 31328)

### Class of 1963

Added by the PLS Office:

**James R. Wyrsch** is featured in an article entitled "The Defense never rests" in the 2006 edition of Missouri & Kansas *Super Lawyers* Magazine (as well as on the cover page). Some excerpts from this interesting article: "Law was a natural path for Wyrsch, who says he always admired lawyers, particularly those who became politicians. Thinking he might one day want to try his hand in politics, he chose Georgetown University Law School in Washington, D.C., after finishing his undergraduate degree at the University of Notre Dame. [...] Since starting his law practice, Wyrsch has led by example. He lectures, publishes, has received his master of law degree in trial practice from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law and is an adjunct professor there, teaching a criminal trial techniques

course with the firm's vice president, J. R. Hobbs. In 1994 he co-authored *Missouri Criminal Trial Practice* (Harrison Books) with Susan Hunt and Judge Anthony Nugent. [...] It's easy for Wyrsh to spend time with his wife Darlene. With her job as a paralegal at the firm, they have been able to work together often, especially in the early years of their relationship. [...] Most of their five grown children and 12 grandchildren live within five or 10 miles of their home in Blue Springs."

### **Class of 1964**

### **Class of 1965**

(Class Correspondent: Lee Foster, P.O. Box 5715, Berkeley, CA 94705)

### **Class of 1966**

(Class Correspondent: Paul Ahr, P.O. Box 1248, Fenton, MO 63026-1248)

### **Class of 1967**

(Class Correspondent: Robert Mc Clelland, 584 Flying Jib Ct., Lafayette, CO 80026-1291)

### **Class of 1968**

### **Class of 1969**

### **Class of 1970**

(Class Correspondent: William Maloney, M.D., P.O. Box 8835, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067-8835/2023 West Vista Way, Suite A, Vista, CA 92083 619/941-1400 ph. 74044.2361@compuserve.com)

### **Class of 1971**

(Class Correspondent: Raymond Condon, 4508 Hyridge Dr., Austin, TX 78759-8054)

### **Class of 1972**

(Class Correspondent: Otto Barry Bird, 15013 Bauer Drive, Rockville, MD 20853  
e-mail: BarryBird@hotmail.com)

### **Class of 1973**

(Class Correspondents: John Astuno, 16 Meadowview Lane, Greenwood, CO 80121, and John Burkley, 200 Law Road, Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510, burkley@optonline.net)

Added by the PLS Office:

**Albert Brenner** is publishing a new journal titled *Asset Allocation Advisor for Endowment Managers and Fiduciaries*. Its target audience is comprised of finance executives and trustees who oversee non-profit endowment and charitable trust management. Interested persons can see the premier issue of this handsome journal at [www.aametrics.com](http://www.aametrics.com). Bert can be contacted at ajbrenner@sbcglobal.net.

### **Class of 1974**

(Class Correspondent: Jan Waltman Hessling, 5613 Frenchman's Creek, Durham, NC 27713-2647 (919) 544-4914 hessling@mindspring.com)

### **Class of 1975**

(Class Correspondent: David Miller, 4605 Aberdeen Avenue, Dublin, OH 43016)

### **Class of 1976**

### **Class of 1977**

(Class Correspondent: Richard Magjuka, Department of Management, Room 630C, School of Business, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47501)

Added by the PLS Office:

**Anne Dilenschneider** writes, "At this point, I'm finishing my second (of three years) of clinical psychology PhD coursework. I can't believe I'm more than half-way through my studies—it's gone so fast!

After nine months of unemployment & some temp work (and running through and beyond all my resources), I've been hired full-time (Mon & Tues days & Wed

nights) as a counselor at Redwood House, the county's only crisis residential treatment facility for people who are working through acute psychiatric crises—it's their alternative to hospitalization. People come to us from hospital psychiatric emergency units or from jail. The goal is to help each person move toward independent living during their 30 days with us. The agency that runs this program is Caminar—and they've been doing this work (based on a wellness model rather than a medical model) for nearly 40 years for three counties in CA and one in NV.

Last week in a group I led there on current events, the 16 residents came up with the questions they would like to see on a high school "exit exam": 1) Can you change a tire? 2) Can you change your oil? 3) Can you balance a checkbook? 4) Can you use public transit? 5) Can you ask for help—and do you know how to access social services? 6) And—this one was their first suggestion, and my personal favorite—Are you a compassionate person? The San Francisco Chronicle is printing this version of an "exit exam" next week in their "letters" section!

Next week I'll begin my internship with the San Mateo County Juvenile Probation Mental Health team—that will be another 24 hours/week, Wed day, Thurs & Fri. (It's unpaid—as virtually all psychology internships are—a challenge given that I have to complete 4,000 internship hours for licensing.) A piece of good news is that I just found out that I will get one of San Mateo County's 15 cross-cultural internship stipends—\$5k—for 2006/2007 because of my additional languages and extensive cross-cultural experience, so that helps some. This spring I will be conducting psychological assessments for the courts to help determine what is best for each child/teenager, and working within the overall juvenile probation mental health system. And, now that the

federal government has determined that girls differ from boys, I've already begun training for work this fall in a new program with teenage girls who are in the care of our juvenile justice system. Most of them have PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) as a result of violence and prostitution. This new program will include horticulture therapy (growing organic vegetables for their meals and for the farmer's market, as well as flowers for ikebana classes), yoga and body-work, art therapy, and spirituality (including building a labyrinth).

The pay isn't much (typical of the field for psychology interns), but the two teams I'm working with are some of the best in the state. And—finally—I'm not unemployed. Deeper in student-loan debt, but oh well...

Thanks for your prayers and support!"

Imagine my delight when driving across Oregon recently I tuned in to NPR and picked up former student (class of 1977) **Ken Taylor's** "Philosophy Talk" program, evidently a regular program on west coast NPR, with a discussion of Hegel. Ken is now chair of philosophy at Stanford and was one of our "distinguished alums" we had back for the 50th. His web page and info on "Philosophy Talk" is:  
<http://www.stanford.edu/~ktaylor/>. He is currently completing a new book: *Referring to the World: An Introduction to the Theory of Reference*.

Prof. Phillip Sloan

### **Class of 1978**

### **Class of 1979**

(Class Correspondent: Thomas Livingston,  
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**Class of 1980**

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**Class of 1985**

(Class Correspondent: Laurie Denn, 5816  
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**Class of 1986**

(Class Correspondent: Margaret (Neis) Kulis,  
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**Class of 1988**

(Class Correspondent: Michele Martin, 3106  
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**Class of 1989**

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**Class of 1990**

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[barbnjohn@wideopenwest.com](mailto:barbnjohn@wideopenwest.com))

**Class of 1991**

(Class correspondent: Ann Mariani  
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01776-3454 [annie@rickmorris.com](mailto:annie@rickmorris.com))

**Class of 1992**

(Class correspondent: Jennifer Adams  
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Cincinnati, OH 45244  
[Jenroe@cinci.rr.com](mailto:Jenroe@cinci.rr.com))

**Class of 1993**

(Class correspondent: Anthony Valle, 147-  
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**Class of 1994****Class of 1995**

(Class Correspondent: Andrew Saldino,  
586 Greenleaf Dr., Lavonia, GA 30553-  
2124 [saldino@excite.com](mailto:saldino@excite.com))

**Class of 1996**

(Class Correspondent: Stacy Mosesso,  
351 Ayr Hill Ave. NE, Vienna,  
VA 22180-4726)

Added by the PLS Office:

**Greg Beatty** writes, "After graduation I spent 6 years in the Navy as an officer in the submarine force. A year of that time was in Navy schools (talk about a shift from education to training—the schools were an object lesson in applied learning!). I then spent 3 years on the USS Florida homeported in Bangor, WA, which is near Seattle. My final tour of duty was working for the Navy's design and acquisition bureau in Washington DC. I left the Navy in 2002 and stayed in the DC area working as an engineer for Lockheed

Martin where I have been trying to learn as much as possible about computer programming. I am also pursuing a master's degree in Systems Engineering from Johns Hopkins as a part time student. It looks like I have done it—I got the liberal education that I wanted and the career as an engineer.

Though I cannot say I am surprised, I am continually delighted at how well my PLS background has equipped me to handle the challenges that each of my jobs has presented. I have found that the instincts I developed in seminar to engage ideas and present opinions clearly and thoughtfully are important in any pursuit. I look back on days (and nights) as a young officer struggling to get a 2 billion dollar submarine ready to go to sea and appreciate the perspective that I learned in PLS—the knowledge of a bigger universe is a lifesaver when one's hour-to-hour activities are completely overwhelming. In my current day-to-day activities—working with other engineers to use iSCSI, NFS, java, bash, the 2.6 Linux kernel, and TCP/IP networks to create a working sonar system—the ability to clarify a conversation and the confidence to admit that I am lost and need the group to help me out are wonderful gifts.

If you still have copies of "We Called It the Program of Liberal Studies" I would be very interested in reading one, please send to my above address or point me to a link if it is online."

### **Class of 1997**

(Class Correspondent: Brien Flanagan, 1211 SW Fifth Ave., Suite 1600-1900, Portland, OR 97204, bflanagan@schwabe.com)

### **Class of 1998**

(Class Correspondents: Katie Bagley, 259 Rayford Farm, Earlysville, VA 22936-2224 (804) 984-6666, ksbagley@hotmail.com, and Clare Murphy, 848 El Quanito Drive, Danville, CA 94526-1829 cmshalom@hotmail.com)

### **Class of 1999**

(Class Correspondent: Kate Hibey Fritz, 10642 Montrose #2, Bethesda, MD 20814 kefritz@gmail.com)

### **Class of 2000**

### **Class of 2001**

### **Class of 2002**

(Class Correspondent: Ricky Klee, 4504 NE Cleveland Ave., Portland, OR 97211 rickyklee3@hotmail.com)

### **Class of 2003**

### **Class of 2004**

### **Class of 2005**

Added by the PLS Office:

**Allison Murphy** writes, "I've been meaning all summer to update you on my first year at Leuven, but my good intentions seem to have gone out the window. Technically my classes don't begin until Tuesday, however, so I should still be in the clear. I hope this letter finds you all well and refreshed after the summer holidays!

I love living in Europe. I spend the school week in Leuven and then often return home on weekends since Mons (in Wallonia) is only about an hour away. It's quite strange traveling back and forth between the French and Flemish sections; they are very different. The economic disparity between the two sections (the Flemish are wealthier than the French for the most part) is visible, and the further differences in the languages and customs of the two peoples makes me feel like I live in two different countries at once.

Leuven originated as a Viking settlement in the 800s. It later became an important commercial settlement and key player in the cloth-manufacturing business of the

time, though currently it is better known as the location of the Stella Artois brewery, one of the many (over 500) varieties of Belgian beer. The university itself was founded in 1425 and is the world's oldest extant Catholic University. Let me rephrase that: it is the world's oldest extant *nominal* Catholic University, since the university for all practical purposes is now about as secular as the rest of the country. It was an important center of learning in the middle ages, attracting, among other well-known scholars of the day, our friend Erasmus.

It has also had its fair share of setbacks, suffering under the German invasions in both World Wars (during which much of the greater city of Leuven went up in flames, including the main University library) and most recently in the 1960s, when mounting tensions between the French and Flemish resulted in a division within the University itself. The French half of the university – Université Catholique de Louvain- packed up and moved to a new town in Wallonia, called, inventively enough, Louvain-la-Neuve. And in the great spirit of equality the two universities divided the library by walking down the shelves and splitting up the books one by one; I believe the odd number books stayed in Leuven while the even numbered ones moved to Louvain-la-Neuve. Despite these difficulties Leuven has recovered well. They have restored or rebuilt the buildings damaged in the various wars, and the now charming city is home to 100,000 residents and 30,000 students.

The university is spread out throughout the town. There is not much sense of a common university life, certainly not in comparison to ND. It's difficult to imagine questions about the character of the university, the importance of core requirements, etc, arousing as much interest and heated debate at Leuven as they do at Notre Dame.

The students in the philosophy program are talented and serious about their work (perhaps

a little too serious; an inordinate number of them, my age, have hair that is already graying!). There are about 45 students in the program, with a male-female ratio of about 5:1 – quite a difference. It seems that most of the students are North Americans, though there are also a fair number of European (mostly Eastern European), African and Asian students as well. There is of course a large Flemish philosophy program at the same institute, though for the most part they have separate classes and we rarely cross paths.

In the first year we had 12 classes plus a research paper. It is a lot, but the classes are pretty much straight lectures and only meet once a week. The topics this past year ranged from Spinoza's *Ethics* to Heidegger (lots of Heidegger, naturally), Plato's *Statesman*, Continental Philosophy of Religion, Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena*, Logic and a few others. The person I'm most interested in over here is William Desmond, a former pupil of Stanley Rosen's and a very sharp thinker. I had two classes from him this year, Philosophy of Ethics and Philosophy of God. Both focused on Desmond's own assessment of some of the limitations of modern philosophy and his response to these limitations, which he has developed in works such as *Being and the Between* and *Ethics and the Between*.

I confess it has taken me a bit of time to adjust to the European way of doing things (I think I only had three papers all year!) but I'm more or less settled in now and am enjoying the program. I'm glad I decided to go to Leuven rather than straight to a PhD program for several reasons, most especially because it gives me more time to figure out what I want to focus on in the future, and also because it gives me the chance to study continental philosophy in an atmosphere quite different from that found in most mainstream American programs.

I have noticed, however, that for all their antagonism the analytic/continental thinkers share a) a tendency to historicism and b) a habit of viewing themselves as the only two ways of approaching philosophy. But I am not inclined to accept either a) or b) and therefore am not at home in either “camp.”

They are indeed camps, and there is, I think, a greater tradition of philosophy that stands outside both of them. We were arguably closer to this tradition in PLS in so far as most people attracted to PLS share a basic wonder at life and the experiences it offers, largely untouched by much of the “intellectualism” too often found in the academic world. In a sense I find PLS to be more honest, and arguably more philosophical, than many philosophy departments, because our questioning was at times more genuinely rooted in the everyday experience of human life.

Outside of classes things are well. Mom and I are taking advantage of the many opportunities to travel, visit museums, see friends, etc. etc. It certainly is different from life in the States, but, as I said, I'm very much enjoying it.

Best wishes for a good semester. Write and let me know how things are going!"

### **Class of 2006**

Added by the PLS Office:

**Ann Heltzel** writes, “I just recently started a full-time job as an assistant literary agent at Curtis Brown, Ltd., in the children’s division. I’m also in my first year of the New School’s MFA program, where hopefully I’ll be graduating with a master’s in Fiction Writing (concentration: Writing for Children) in May ’08. So I’m definitely staying busy, but trying to enjoy New York a little, too.”

# MANY THANKS TO ALL CONTRIBUTORS

## Contributions Received at the PLS Office for Support of *Programma* and the Program of Liberal Studies since the Last Issue

### Contributions to the University Designated for PLS since the Last Issue

These contributions provide the department funds for the many faculty and student functions (Opening Charge, Christmas Party, Senior Dinner, Senior Brunch), office equipment, and much more. They also provide us the means to send *Programma* to over 1,900 alumni/ae all over the world

Joseph Bellavance	Thomas Neuburger
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### Contributions to the Rev. Nicholas Ayo, C.S.C. Award

A new award established to honor Nicholas Ayo after his retirement from teaching in the Program.

Mr. & Mrs. George Macor  
Dr. John Macor

## **Contributions to the Otto A. Bird Fund**

This is a tribute to the faculty member who worked with Mortimer Adler in founding the General Program. Otto A. Bird started the department in 1950. This award recognizes the graduating senior who wrote the year's outstanding senior essay. The announcement of this award is keenly anticipated each year at the Senior Dinner, when students and faculty gather to celebrate the completion of the final requirement for graduation.

Peter Frank  
Mark Kromkowski

Thomas Kwiecien  
Gary Raisl

## **Contributions to the Susan Clements Fund**

Susan was an extraordinary student and a remarkable young woman who graduated in 1990 and met an early and tragic death in 1992. This award is presented each year at the Senior Dinner, to the Program of Liberal Studies female student who exemplifies outstanding qualities of scholarly achievement, industry, compassion, and service.

Wendy Chambers Beuter  
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Browning  
Edward Clements

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Clements  
David Glenn  
James Otteson

## **Contributions to the Edward J. Cronin Fund**

The Cronin Fund both honors a legendary teacher and helps to reward (and thus to encourage) undergraduate efforts to write lucidly and gracefully. The Award is for the finest piece of writing each year by a student in the Program of Liberal Studies. This is a distinct honor; it constitutes the Program's highest prize for writing in the course of ordinary course work. Your gift will help us to recognize Program students who meet the high standards for writing set by our invaluable senior colleague.

Dr. David Carlyle  
Robert Dini  
Robert Donnellan

Brian Kenney  
Rev. Michael Kwiecien, O'Carm.

## **Contributions to the Program of Liberal Studies Center for the Homeless Project**

In 1998 the Program of Liberal Studies began a community outreach seminar with students from the South Bend Center for the Homeless. The World Masterpieces Seminar runs for the entire academic year. Contributions help defray the cost of the books and outings to plays, concerts, and operas.

Jeremiah Murphy

## **Contributions to the Jay Kelly Memorial Scholarship**

The Jay Kelly Memorial Scholarship was established in memory of a PLS student who came to Notre Dame in the fall of 1988. He battled cancer for two years and passed away after his junior year of college. This award, commemorating Jay's spirit, is awarded annually to a junior in the Program who is in financial need.

Terrence Murphy

## **Contributions to the Willis D. Nutting Fund**

The Willis Nutting award was established to memorialize one of the great teachers in the Program. Those who taught with or studied under Willis remember his gentle style, his clever wit, and his deep faith. The Willis Nutting tree outside the Art Department bears this motto from Chaucer: "And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche." This was his style, and we hope that it will always be yours as well. The Award is for "that senior who has contributed most to the education of his or her fellow students and teachers."

Katie Ellgass  
William Goebel

Thomas Livingston

Robert McClelland  
Jeremiah Murphy

## **Contributions to the Stephen Rogers Memorial Fund**

Stephen Rogers graduated from our department in 1956. He later became a remarkable asset to our department faculty. Steve was physically challenged; he was blind. In 1985, Steve died during the final portion of senior essay time. We can't think of a better way to keep Steve's ideals alive than to fund a scholarship in his name. The Stephen Rogers Fund helps us to assist worthy students facing unexpected financial difficulties. The fund is given to the PLS student with the most financial need. On more than one occasion, the Fund has allowed students to remain in school when otherwise they would have had to withdraw.

William Brittan  
Dr. David Carlyle  
Elizabeth Drumm  
Thomas Fleming

Dena Marino Fredrickson  
Paul & Maureen McElroy  
John Muench  
Claire Perona Murphy  
Daniel Smith

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Mary Elizabeth  
Wackowski Wittenauer

## **Contributions to the Stephen Rogers Endowment for Graduate School Studies**

The endowment will be used to support Graduate School Studies for students of the Program of Liberal Studies.

Dennis Dunigan