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Letter from the Editors

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We welcome readers to the Fall 2010 edition of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy*. Our first article, "Student Group Website Projects," by John Immerwahr of Villanova University, develops a concept for an exercise that exploits students' capacities for collaborative work, both in class and on-line. Students are organized in groups with the purpose of creating a website that presents under several tabs the content and significance of the course material. The student groups each collaborate on a statement of their segment of the material, about which each group member has already written a graded paper, into which diagrams, images, and links to related material are incorporated. The groups eventually meet to criticize the work of each group and together decide upon a common format for the web page. Professor Immerwahr discusses in detail the format of the course. He considers the problems he has encountered in leading projects of this kind and proposes possible solutions to them.

The publication of Professor Immerwahr's article caused considerable controversy among the editors and referees of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching*. We are therefore making a statement that incorporates the more salient views of four members of our executive committee regarding the paper. Readers are invited to send the editors their responses to the issues they raise, which concern questions about the educational contexts in which undergraduate philosophy is taught, and about what constitute legitimate responses to these conditions. The editors will place respondents' letters in the Spring 2011 edition of the *Newsletter*.

The second article, "On the Role of the History of Philosophy in Teaching Philosophy," is by Jonas Pfister of the University of Bern. Professor Pfister takes up critically the "no deep difference" thesis that was argued in a paper entitled "Back to Kant," by Robert Hanna, which was published in the Spring 2009 edition of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching*. Professor Pfister believes that Hanna's thesis is not entirely clear—are we speaking of a deep difference in content or practice or both?—and that in any case we can identify some important differences between teaching philosophy and teaching the history of philosophy. The paper raises some interesting questions about the role of studying texts in the teaching of philosophy, and the relative pedagogical validity of a "problems" vs. an "historical" approach to introducing students to philosophy.

In the **Book Review** section we present reviews of two books. Two volumes of Mengzi (Mencius) comprising new translations of texts and commentaries by Bryan W. Van Norden is reviewed by Xuetai Qi. Russell Marcus reviews Kevin J. Harrelson's new work on the history of the ontological argument.

As always, we encourage our readers to write for our publication. We welcome papers that respond to, comment on, or take issue with any of the material that appears within our pages. (Guidelines for submission follow below.)

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

The following guidelines for submissions should be followed:

- The author's name, the title of the paper, and full mailing address should appear on a *separate* sheet of paper. Nothing that identifies the author or his or her institution should appear within the body or within the endnotes of the paper. The title of the paper should appear on the top of the paper itself.
- Both electronic and paper copies of papers are acceptable. In the case of paper copies, we would appreciate receiving four copies for our review purposes.
- Authors should adhere to the production guidelines that are available from the APA's website.
- In the case of electronic copies, in writing your paper to disk, please do not use your word processor's footnote or endnote function; all notes should be added manually at the end of the paper.

Contributions should be sent to:

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Or to:

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Announcement

Are you a member of Phi Sigma Tau National Honor Society for Philosophy majors? If so, you may wish to join the unofficial Phi Sigma Tau Mailing List, pst@phisigmatau.org. To join send an email to pst-subscribe@phisigmatau.org. If you have any questions, send me, Cindy Smith, the listowner, an email at cms@smith.org. We look forward to seeing you there!

Yours,

Cindy Smith, M.A. Philosophy (Religious Studies), M.A. English

Letter to the Editors

My name is Bill Fish and I am the head of philosophy at Massey University in New Zealand. Massey University offers philosophy classes in both internal face-to-face and distance modes. Where internal students have lectures, distance students have written study guides in lieu of lectures (plus fairly typical forms of e-learning support, etc.). Because of the larger catchment pool, our distance class rolls are typically larger than our internal rolls and, from time-to-time, this has led to queries (from outside the philosophy department) as to whether we would be better served focusing solely on teaching by distance and reducing, or maybe even eliminating, face-to-face philosophy teaching. Yet my colleagues and I are loathe to do this as we believe that the nature of philosophy as a subject is such that contact between teacher and student (and between student and student) is exceedingly valuable for teaching philosophical skills and that, whilst distance learning can provide an adequate substitute for students who are unable to study in class, the absence of contact means that it is not such a good platform. We have been unable to locate any research that supports this view, however, so are left wondering whether this is simply an unsubstantiated opinion on our part. In this light, I was hoping that readers could let us know their own views as to the importance of face-to-face teaching and/or point us to any relevant literature that we may have missed.

Articles

Student Group Website Projects in Introduction to Philosophy Classes

John Immerwahr
Villanova University

Does it make pedagogical sense to supplement the standard learning activities in a philosophy course with different materials (such as films or popular culture) or different activities (debates or case studies)? On the one hand these activities can teach new skills and engage students in a new way, but they take away precious time from the valuable lessons and skills to be gained from working with difficult primary source philosophy texts. In this essay I do not attempt to answer this question in a general way. Instead, I offer one way to supplement the typical activities in a philosophy classroom for those who are interested in doing so. This approach involves having students work in groups to develop websites designed for people who have not studied philosophy. The idea here is to redefine the audience for student work, so that instead of writing for the teacher or for each other, students are presenting their ideas to a wider public.[1] I do not have direct evidence that this has improved my students' learning, but in the end of this article I speculate on some reasons why this may be a valuable supplement to traditional learning activities and I also comment on some of its possible disadvantages.

An Example: The Philosophy for Today Website Project

To give a specific example for discussion purposes, assume an introductory class of twenty-one students, where the students read seven major authors over the semester (e.g., Plato, Augustine, Descartes, Locke, Marx, and some more contemporary author). Assume that the students have already written several traditional essays involving detailed analysis of the texts studied. Also assume that the students have at least limited access to the web and e-mail. The task for the group is to produce a website called *Philosophy for Today*. In our example, this website will have a cover page and seven different subpages or tabs, with one tab for each author read over the semester. Each tab is a subpage done by a group of three students dealing with one of the seven philosophers. The subpage tells a little bit about the philosopher and outlines four or five ways that the philosopher's thinking is relevant to contemporary college students, illustrated with examples and short quotations. The website (in contrast to the traditional papers done previously) is designed for an audience of college students who have *never* studied philosophy. For some examples, see this website: http://www.homepage.villanova.edu/john.immerwahr/student_websites.htm.

Many variations of this basic idea are possible. The websites can be done in smaller classes (with fewer tabs) or in somewhat larger classes by dividing the larger group into smaller teams. Different topics are also possible. The example web page has links to projects done both by philosophy students and by first-year humanities seminar students. All of the examples were created with a program called TaskStream (www.taskstream.com). This program has a handy website builder that makes it simple to create a professional looking website like the ones in the examples in a matter of minutes, using a variety of pre-formulated templates.[2] Obviously, instructors who are familiar with other web creation software will want to use whatever works best for them.

Steps

In what follows, I walk the reader through the steps involved in the website project, with some discussion on the learning objectives in each step. The summary chart gives an overview.

Summary Chart for Student Generated Website Projects

	Steps	Notes
1	Design the project	Instructor chooses topic for overall website and individual sub-pages (tabs).
2	Create groups	Instructor creates groups of three students for each sub-page.
3	Individual preparation papers	To provide individual accountability, each student is required to write a paper dealing with the topic of the sub-page. That paper will be finished before the group work begins.
4	Synthesize individual papers during in-class work session	During an in-class session, the three-person teams work together for the first time, first reading each other's work and synthesizing the material from their individual papers into a single statement.
5	Virtual groups: creating the first draft	As an out of class assignment, the groups work by e-mail to assemble the first draft of their individual page, trying to keep length under 700 words.
6	In-class session for oral presentations and additional editing	Groups give presentations on their individual page, so the other groups see how the project is shaping up.
7	In-class peer reviewing session	Groups meet with other groups to critique each other's work for consistency of style, presentation, and format between pages.
8	Faculty member review of pages	Faculty member puts first draft student pages up on web and embeds comments in the website.
9	Student editing	Students make edits on-line to produce finished project.

1. Design the project. To save class time, it probably makes most sense for the instructor to develop the overall design of the project. In several of the example websites, the project was to develop a website that explains and illustrates some ideas from each of the philosophers studied in a way that makes them clear and relevant to people who know nothing about philosophy. If an instructor is willing to spend more class time on the project, the students could be involved in the initial design as well. The basic dimensions to think about are the overall topic of the website, the number of tabs or pages, and the size of the group that will work on each page.

2. Create groups. The instructor should also determine the size and composition of the teams. There is an extensive literature about creating groups of students. Some of the questions concern the ideal size of a student group, whether the instructor should create the groups or let the students form their own groups, and whether the groups should be randomly selected, heterogeneous, or homogeneous (according to characteristics such as ability and gender).[3] My own preference is instructor-selected groups of three students, where I mix students by ability and, if possible, by gender as well. If the numbers don't work out so I can have everyone in a group of three, I create additional groups of two students each.

3. Assign individual preparation papers. Requiring group projects raises some complex issues. On the one hand, employers always tell us that after students leave college, they will typically be working in teams, and thus they need to build group process skills. Students, however, will often say that they *hate* group projects. One frequently heard concern is that although not everyone in the group contributes equally to the project, everyone gets the same grade. Some faculty members try to combat this by asking students to evaluate their own performance and the contributions of others, but students are notoriously reluctant to "rat out" other students who do not do their share of the work.

To deal with the problem of "free riders," these group projects started with all students doing an individual paper for which they received an individual grade. In effect, each student is assigned an individual version of the project *before* the group work begins. This has several advantages in reducing the free-rider problem. First, all students in a team will not receive the same grade, since the final grade will be based on both individual and group work. Also, if a student does a poor individual paper, the instructor has a "heads up" as to who might be a potential problem in the group and can make extra efforts to make sure that the student is contributing to the group process. Finally, when all of the students start the group project with a completed piece of work that they are bringing to the table, the demands on the group are less, and the temptation for students to shirk responsibility is diminished. Rather than creating material from scratch (which puts a lot of pressure on a group), the groups have a simpler task of combining existing material.[4]

4. Synthesize individual papers during in-class work session. A second problem with group projects is that even if all of the students sincerely desire to contribute equally, they often find it very difficult to find time to meet out of class. My own solution is to give the students class time to work on the parts of the project that involve the most interaction and group work. This, of course, cuts into the amount of time available for covering other subject matter, but it can be critical for a successful project. In this model, once students have completed their individual papers, the next step is for students to synthesize their individual papers into a group product.

There are several important tasks for this first in-class session:

- The students need to read each other's papers. (The students are required to come to class with multiple copies of their papers.) This is in itself a useful exercise, since students rarely have the opportunity to see how other students have tackled exactly the same problem.
- The students also need to synthesize their various materials into a coherent group statement. For example, if the individual preparation-paper assignment requires each of the students in the group to develop four points from Plato, the group will start by working with twelve different points (four from each paper). The students will have to merge some of their points and prioritize others, all of which involves synthesizing and applying what they have learned.
- Shortening. One of the most challenging aspects of the project is a rigid length limit, with no more than 700 words for each individual web page. While this restriction may initially seem arbitrary, the students quickly understand that websites are written for people with little patience for long prose paragraphs. This means, however, that if each individual preparation

paper is three or four pages, the students will have to do some drastic shortening. In my view, this is one of the most useful aspects of the project. Students who are struggling to make their web page shorter sometimes ask questions such as, "Does the title of the page count toward the overall word limit?" To me this suggests that they are learning a valuable lesson about the difficulty of condensing their thoughts.

- Assigning writing tasks for the first draft. At this point, students typically break their document into sections and assign each person to write a part of the page.

At this first work session, students need to come to the class with their completed individual preparation papers, bringing copies for their group members and one for the instructor. It is absolutely essential at this point that all group members attend this class, with their completed preparation papers. I make it clear that no late papers or unexcused absences will be permitted, and I also stress that a student who misses this session will be penalized, dropped from the group, and given additional individual assignments (which I imply will be harder and less fun). I have actually told students who came unprepared to this session that their presence will not be needed and told them to leave the class (this is also something students have not typically seen before). With students who have a legitimate excuse, I create other projects. For example, such a student might be asked to write the initial cover page for the website. This would involve the student synthesizing and giving an overview of all of the pages.

5. Virtual groups: creating the first draft. The next step is for each group of students to write the first draft of their page. Since they have had class time to develop their work plan, and since they are working from existing materials, they are usually able to do this by e-mail. Often the best editor in the group will end up pulling the material together and giving it a consistent style, but since the pages are short, this is not too demanding. Typically the first draft will be longer than the word limit.

6. Oral presentations and additional editing. After the students have created the first draft of their pages, I devote a second class hour to letting them work together to edit and condense their page and to make presentations to the other groups on what they will cover in their page. Knowing what the other groups are doing helps them give a greater consistency to the whole project. One principle that I follow for presentations is that I make it clear to students in advance that I will decide at the last minute which student will begin the presentation, and then at unpredictable moments I may tell another student to continue. The students should know, in other words, that each student must be responsible for every part of the presentation. Without this precaution, the students are likely to prepare different parts of the presentation in complete isolation from each other, so that none has a clear idea of the presentation as a whole.

7. In-class peer review session. Because the different groups are collaborating on a single website, the entire website should have a consistent look and read as though all of the pages were written by a single person. In order to create a greater sense of stylistic and substantive consistency, I have the student groups work together to review each other's pages. Here again we face a pedagogical dilemma. Peer reviewing is clearly an important skill that students need to learn; it will be an important part of work life for many of them. Often, however, peer reviewing does not work well because students are reluctant to criticize each other's work. The fact that the students are doing a joint project makes the task of peer reviewing somewhat less problematic. The peer reviewing aspect of the project is highly task-specific and thus allows students to give useful feedback without appearing to be overly critical of other students' work.

For the day devoted to peer reviewing, each group needs to bring to class multiple copies of the group's page. In the class session two or three groups are teamed together (so, for example, the Plato group might be teamed with the Descartes group). The two exchange materials and review what the other group has written. Since the pages at this point are short, they can read them fairly quickly. After reading the each other's page, they can begin to discuss revisions. In doing the peer reviews, the groups focus on these questions:

- Are the pages stylistically consistent with each other? Do they read as though they were written by one person? Typically there will be differences in style, and the two groups will need to adjust each other's work to make the pages more consistent.
- Are there unnecessary redundancies? Sometimes the pages overlap each other, and need to be adjusted in a way to show the differences.
- Are there opportunities for cross references? So, for example, the overall project will have greater unity if some of the pages have references to other pages.
- Are there parts of the page that are confusing or problematic in some other way?

After this session the groups will need to revise their page again. Then their completed page should be submitted in electronic form to the instructor.[5]

8. Faculty review of pages. At this point, I usually put the material on the web myself in a password protected version. Since the TaskStream program is so easy to do, I find that it takes less time to put up the pages myself than to explain to the students how this is to be done. I then read the pages on-line and embed my comments in the on-line version. I also read the various drafts during the group sessions and give comments then as well.

9. Student rewrites. The final step is for the students to edit and rewrite their page. By now, I have the students working on-line, which involves giving them instructions and a password for accessing the site. At some point the students should also select some graphic images for their individual pages. I sometimes write a cover page myself, or assign a student to do so. A final page could include a picture of the entire group and the names of the students. I make sure that students are comfortable having their name and image on the web.

Advantages and Disadvantages

I have not attempted to do a formal evaluation of whether this approach facilitates learning philosophy as a supplement to more standard activities (reading texts, discussions, and papers). From what I have done, I can see some possible problem areas and also some intriguing advantages:

Problem areas:

- *Class time required.* The main disadvantage is that this approach does take a significant amount of class time. I usually allow a whole week of class for a project (three fifty-minute classes), which takes away from time that could be spent reading another text or discussing new issues.
- *Scaling this up for larger classes.* I have mostly done this in small sections or in larger classes where I have teaching assistants who supervise the projects in smaller discussion sections. I frankly do not know whether this could be done in a large lecture class. During the in-class work sessions, I am able to walk around the room answering questions and keeping the students on track. My guess is that in order to do

it in a class with more than thirty-five students, one would need to choose and train student leaders for the various groups.

- *Technology issues.* I found the TaskStream program very easy to use (and the company has an amazingly responsive help line), but learning a new software package is always tedious. I had the students create the text for their websites on a word processor and then I pasted them—in a plain text format—into TaskStream. Once the text and pictures are in TaskStream, there is an easy-to-use TaskStream editor for formatting and editing the pages. Another potential problem is that I used one TaskStream account for making multiple websites. A disadvantage to this is that all the students had to have access to the username and password, in order to edit their group's website. Theoretically, students could get into other students' projects and somehow sabotage them (I've never seen anything like that actually happen). I only reveal the password for a brief period while students are editing their websites on-line. After they are done with the editing, I change the password.

Some potential advantages:

- *Different skills.* This approach clearly requires different skills from the ones that are required for the rest of my course, and I believe that the students learn something different but also valuable from those activities. For most of their high school career, for example, the pressure was on students to exceed minimum length standards, and many have learned to say things in a wordy way to fatten up their papers. Condensing and shortening their work is a new skill for some of them. Some of my students told me that in thirteen years of schooling they had *never* been told to make something shorter. Outside of school, however, they will often encounter pressure to write in a more concise fashion. In addition, for most of their academic lives students are trained to write for someone (the teacher) who knows much more about the subject than they do. The websites ask them to write for someone who knows nothing about the subject, and as most of us who have taught introductory courses know, explaining something to a complete novice often helps us understand it better. As one mentor of mine remarked, "we learn 90 percent of what we teach." These projects are thus the converse of what we usually require; here the challenge is to make something shorter and simpler, rather than longer and more complex.
- *Project-based learning.* It is sometimes said that contemporary students respond to "learning by doing" and many of our colleagues in sciences and the social sciences are utilizing project-based (or problem-based) learning in their classes as a way to create greater engagement with the material.[6] At the same time, we hear from many employers that college students need to learn to work in teams.[7] Having students work in groups on a project may thus help students learn and understand the material in a new and helpful way and also reinforce valuable skills that are not always taught by most of what happens in philosophy classes.
- *Pride in the product.* Having students work together on a web project can also engage a feeling of purpose and pride in the students. Of course, students are often proud of their traditional papers, but they do not necessarily see their academic papers as something they can share with others. The web projects, however, are different both because they are easy to share and because they are designed for non-specialist audiences. Several students have told me that they put links to their websites on their Facebook pages, or shared the websites with their parents and friends. No one has ever told me about putting a link to a traditional freshman paper on a Facebook page.

Endnotes

1. Peter Filene. *The Joy of Teaching: A Practical Guide for New College Instructors* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 81. The idea is to use websites to create a technological version of what Peter Filene calls "public exhibits." He hypothesizes that having students direct their work toward a wider audience other than the teacher and their fellow students can add "authenticity to what often seems to be an artificial process."
2. The web pages in the examples were created with the TaskStream Learning and Achievement Tools (LAT) program (www.taskstream.com). The program has a module for easily creating web pages, using preset templates. Many schools have institutional subscriptions to TaskStream, in which case individual faculty members can open their own accounts at no cost. Individual subscriptions are also available; at this writing an individual subscription for two years costs $79. The websites are hosted on the TaskStream server and there appears to be no practical limit to how many websites can be created with a single account. In what follows I am assuming that the teacher has the TaskStream account, and that the students create their group web pages using the teacher's account. Individuals who do not have access to this particular package can check with their IT departments for other ways to accomplish the same goals. Although I have not used it myself, I am told that Google Sites (available at www.google.com) provides a free, easy to use tool for creating websites.
3. For an excellent discussion of the pros and cons of various strategies for selecting groups, see Russell Marcus, "Observations on Cooperative Learning Group Assignments," *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy* 09:2 (Spring 2010).
4. See Nancy Stanlick's excellent discussion of how to preserve individual accountability in group projects by combining and grading individual work and group work, in her article "Individual-centered, Collaborative Research: Method and Theory," *Teaching Philosophy* 30:1 (2007): 85-110.
5. For some suggestions and resources on peer reviewing, see "Peer Review of Papers" at http://www.teachphilosophy101.org/Default.aspx?tabid=153 (accessed January 17, 2010).
6. For an overview of project-based learning, see Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 217 ff. There are also a number of extremely useful websites on this topic including: *Team Based Learning*, http://teambasedlearning.org (accessed May 22, 2009), and *Project Based Learning*, http://www.pbl-online.org/ (accessed May 30, 2009). The literature on teaching philosophy has a number of examples of student projects. For a recent example, see Richard A. Jones, "Illuminating the Shadows: The DVD Project Assignment for Philosophy Courses," *Teaching Philosophy* 32:2 (2009): 113-25. Professor Jones' project, which he uses primarily in upper division courses, involves the students creating 20-30 minute videos, including various interviews with both experts and people who have no familiarity with the subject. In another fascinating philosophy project, Michael Strawser assigned no texts whatsoever and asked his students to work together over the semester to create their own "introductory textbook in philosophy, complete with reading selections, commentaries, study questions, and glossary."

See his article, "Creating Philosophy: Using a Cooperative Learning Approach in the Classroom," *Teaching Philosophy* 28:2 (2005): 117.

7. As Johnson, Johnson, and Smith point out, "the heart of most jobs, especially the higher paying more interesting jobs, is teamwork, which involves getting others to cooperate, leading others, coping with complex issues of power and influence, and helping solve people's problems by working with them." D.W. Johnson, R.T. Johnson, and K.A. Smith, *Cooperative Learning: Increasing College Faculty Instructional Productivity*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report 4 (Washington, D.C.: Graduate School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University, 1991), 11.

From the Editors

Professor Immerwahr's paper describes the use of website technology in teaching introductory philosophy, thereby illustrating a general pedagogical strategy called "project-based learning."

Many philosophy teachers are skeptical of pedagogical initiatives such as the one that Professor Immerwahr describes, which seem to emphasize skills that are not germane to philosophy and yet take away classroom time that could better be used to teach the substance of the discipline. Although Professor Immerwahr offers reasons why his project-based instruction "may be a valuable supplement" to "traditional learning activities," some of our readers may feel—as many of the referees of his paper felt—that what Professor Immerwahr calls a "supplement" to traditional learning is in fact an ill-supported substitute for it. Though we grant that projects of the kind that Professor Immerwahr describes may engage students' capacity for synthesis and application (skills we believe are legitimately taught in a college context), competence in *philosophy* is best produced, we think, by courses that are centered on comprehension of philosophical texts and arguments, analysis, and criticism.

One of Professor Immerwahr's supporting reasons for introducing his particular project-based learning strategy is that the project teaches students to work in teams, and teamwork is a skill that they will need in almost any field they work in after leaving college. Referees' response to this claim was twofold: First, like driving and balancing a checkbook, teamwork may indeed be a valuable skill that will stand a student in good stead in his or her post-college life. But however valuable such skills are, what is needed is the presentation of support for the claim that the *philosophy* classroom is an appropriate place for teaching them. (Would anyone suggest that driving and personal finance skills, valuable though they are, should be taught in first-year philosophy classes?) Second, although we do not doubt Professor Immerwahr's contention that working with others in the kind of project he describes encourages teamwork, we *do* question whether the *sort* of teamwork students engage in when working on the described website project prepares them for the sort of teamwork they may eventually engage in. There is no generic teamwork talent: police work, football, playing in a musical orchestra, practicing journalism, acting in a play, and synchronized swimming all involve teamwork, but each requires a set of skills for collaborative work that is different from the others. While Professor Immerwahr's described project may develop a specific kind of ability to work with others, it is an open question whether this specific ability of working with others prepares students to work with others in other, unrelated, contexts.

Moreover, though we agree with Professor Immerwahr that preparation for the workplace is a desirable outcome of education, we question whether participation in projects such as the one Professor Immerwahr describes in his paper is more likely to conduce to the development of workplace skills than conventional philosophy instruction, especially since workplace collaboration of all sorts involves precisely those aptitudes the development of which are at the heart of first-year philosophy courses: comprehension of others' viewpoints, effective articulation of one's ideas, critical thinking, and assessment that takes into consideration information judged relevant to it.

The most important general advantage as far as the rationale of the project is concerned seems to be that the project requires students to "engage" in a "higher level" of learning, a sense that stresses "application," that is, doing tasks that require application of what is acquired in the course of instruction. The "higher" level to be achieved and judged here is the collaborative construction of a website devoted to explaining various philosophers' positions. Professor Immerwahr disavows having any direct evidence as to whether these "higher" levels of learning result in greater competency in the subject of philosophy itself. But of greater importance in our view is the fact that the claim that learning involves application begs the question of *which* applications best achieve learning in a given area. Philosophy is hardly inapplicable, and philosophical skills are in fact rather useful, though philosophical competency is hardly to be judged by completion of practical tasks or projects. There is much worthy applied philosophy, and the exchange of ideas is as much a collaborative project as any other.

Professor Immerwahr suggests that the project of website construction encourages students to be concise in their presentation of various philosophic positions, a concision that demands concentration on the most salient features of those positions. We agree that concision is of value both generally and in philosophy for it presumes—and demonstrates—comprehension of that which is being concisely expressed. However, given that the website project requires students to synthesize the thought of seven philosophers in essays of seven hundred words each and then to reduce these essays to a single statement, what is being aimed at could be described as "a concise presentation" only in jest.

If the above criticisms are justified, why develop exercises of the kind described in this article? No doubt, administrators are attracted to them because (a) such courses can be defended by reference to measurable objectives so necessary to the outcomes requirements of accrediting agencies; (b) they teach what are claimed to be marketable skills. No doubt, such courses are welcomed by students as a softer option than a standard course. So such courses meet both an administrative need and a student desire.

Administrators do not seem to notice the educational values that their demands undermine, and it may be that they do not care very much about this. More worrisome, from our point of view, is that philosophy instructors may be tempted to think that courses involving projects such as the one described in Professor Immerwahr's paper involve the student in a level of "collaborative activity" more conducive to learning than do traditional discussions of philosophical ideas. If the exchange of philosophical ideas in the traditional philosophy course is not collaborative, what is?

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Eugene Kelly

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David Martens

On the Role of the History of Philosophy in Teaching Philosophy

Jonas Pfister
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What is the role of the history of philosophy in teaching philosophy? In a recent article in this publication entitled "Back to Kant: Teaching the First Critique as Contemporary Philosophy,"[1] Robert Hanna claims that there is no deep difference between history of philosophy and contemporary philosophy, and that this has consequences for the teaching of philosophy. My aim in this article is, first, to have a closer look at Hanna's No Deep Difference Thesis, and, second, to show that there are at least some notable differences between the teaching of philosophy and the teaching of the history of philosophy.

1. Hanna's No Deep Difference Thesis

Hanna formulates what he calls the *No Deep Difference Thesis* as follows (p. 2):

> there is no fundamental difference in philosophical content between the history of philosophy and contemporary philosophy.

He then gives the following explanation (p. 2-3):

> What I mean by the No Deep Difference Thesis is that every philosophical text is a logically governed attempt to say something comprehensive, illuminating, and necessarily (or at least universally) true about the rational human condition and our deepest values, including our relationship to each other and to the larger natural and abstract worlds that surround us, and that in order to convey this basic content it does not matter at all when the text was written or when the text is interpreted.
>
> If I'm right about this thesis, then it cuts three ways: first, it means that everything in the history of philosophy also belongs substantively to contemporary philosophy; second, it means that everything in contemporary philosophy also belongs substantively to the history of philosophy; and third, it means that Quine was completely wrong when he wickedly and wittily said that there are two kinds of philosophers: those who are interested in the history of philosophy, and those who are interested in philosophy. In fact, there is really only *one* kind of philosopher, and whether he likes it or not, he *should* be interested in the history of philosophy. The sub-discipline called "History of Philosophy" is real philosophy, as real as it gets, and real philosophy is also History of Philosophy, as historical as it gets. Those who on the contrary are *Deep Differentialists* must hold that History of Philosophy is at best an enterprise in historical scholarship with a superficial philosophical inflection, but not real philosophy, and that real philosophy in effect always begins anew, from argumentative Ground Zero, with every new philosophical text that is written. And that seems to me not only very implausible as a way of thinking about the relation between philosophy and its history, but also apt to trivialize and undermine the very practice of philosophy itself.

This explanation leads to some problems of interpretation. First, Hanna's characterization of what he is opposed to, namely, the *Deep Difference Thesis*—history of philosophy is "not real philosophy" and "always begins anew, from argumentative Ground Zero"—does not correspond to what someone denying the No Deep Difference Thesis would be committed to claiming. This would rather be something like this: There is a fundamental difference in philosophical content between the history of philosophy and contemporary philosophy. Since there are different formulations of the thesis, which seem to involve quite different claims, it is not clear what exactly is stated in the thesis. Second, Hanna formulates the No Deep Difference Thesis in terms of "philosophical content," but later he speaks of the "practice of philosophy." The No Deep Difference Thesis could therefore be interpreted as a claim either about content or about practice or about both content and practice. It may well be the latter, but the distinction is important, and I will come back to it.

2. Teaching philosophy and teaching the history of philosophy

Hanna proposes to draw the line between contemporary philosophy and the history of philosophy as follows: A text belongs to contemporary philosophy if its author is alive, and it belongs to the history of philosophy if its author is dead. The relevant difference is supposed to be this: once an author is dead, she cannot change her mind.[2] Whether a text is of a dead or of a living author does not change its philosophical nature, and there is therefore no reason to distinguish between texts belonging to contemporary philosophy from texts belonging to the history of philosophy in the teaching of philosophy. Hanna then writes (p. 3):

> For this reason [that there is no criterion for segregating pedagogically texts of the history of philosophy from texts of contemporary philosophy], I teach undergraduate and graduate courses on Kant's metaphysics and ethics just as I teach courses in contemporary philosophy of mind and ethics, and conversely, I teach courses in contemporary philosophy of mind and ethics just as I teach courses on Kant's metaphysics and ethics. [...] I take Kant as seriously as I take Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Carnap, Quine, Putnam, Kripke, David Lewis, Frankfurt, Parfit, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of logic, the philosophy of mind-and-cognition, action theory, the metaphysics of free will and moral responsibility, cognitive science, phenomenology, and existentialism.

Is there no significant difference between the teaching of the history of philosophy and the teaching of philosophy? Assuming Hanna's distinction of texts belonging to the history of philosophy and of texts belonging to contemporary philosophy, to teach the history of philosophy essentially involves the teaching of the thoughts (the claims, the arguments) of dead philosophers. One can teach the thoughts of dead philosophers by teaching their texts, but one may also teach them without texts (by simply presenting them). The aim of teaching the thoughts of dead philosophers is to teach both the thoughts themselves (the content) as well as the activity of philosophy (the practice). All these claims apply equally to the teaching of philosophy: it involves the teaching of thoughts, with or without texts and with the aim of teaching both the content of philosophical thoughts and the practice of philosophy.

Is one of the mentioned aims, teaching the content and teaching the practice, primary to the other? Whereas one can teach philosophy without teaching content, one cannot teach philosophy without teaching practice. The primary purpose of teaching philosophy is, I would argue, to teach students the practice of philosophy, i.e., to teach them how to philosophize.

(This is also the view argued for, but with a different argument, by Kant.[3])

One cannot teach the history of philosophy without teaching any contents, but one can teach philosophy without teaching any contents, for example, by using the Socratic method.[4] There is therefore a difference between the teaching of philosophy and the teaching of the history of philosophy, and the difference has to do with the possibility of teaching, in the former, a practice without teaching a specific content. This is a difference worth noting.

A second and related difference between the teaching of the history of philosophy and philosophy is the importance of philosophical texts. Whereas it seems obvious to turn to the study of texts in a course on the history of philosophy, this is not obvious in a course on philosophy. In this sense, texts are more important in the teaching of the history of philosophy than in the teaching of philosophy. This is not to say that texts are unimportant in the teaching of philosophy, nor to say that one cannot teach the history of philosophy without using texts. It is only to say that texts are conceptually less important in the teaching of philosophy than they are in the teaching of the history of philosophy.

The difference in importance may also be seen by looking at the teaching methods. Concerning these methods it seems useful to distinguish with Douglas Lackey between the "problems" approach and the "historical" approach.[5] The problems approach divides the material into topics; the historical approach divides the material into texts. The problems approach starts with a philosophical problem or a philosophical question, the historical approach with a text. According to Lackey, the guiding aim of the problems approach is to find a solution to the problem; the guiding aim of the historical approach is to understand the text.[6]

One can take the problems approach without using any classical philosophical texts and indeed without using any texts at all. For example, one can teach without classical philosophical texts by using contemporary textbooks, and one can teach without any texts at all by presenting problems and arguments and by giving the students the opportunity to discuss these and develop their philosophical thoughts among themselves and with the teacher. Therefore, if the problems approach is a viable method of teaching philosophy in introductory courses, then texts are not necessary in introductory courses to philosophy. I see no reason why a problems approach that does not make use of texts should not be a viable method of teaching introductory courses in philosophical sub-disciplines such as epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and political philosophy. I conclude: If Hanna's pedagogical view implies the use of texts, then that view is too narrow, though the problems approach does not exclude the use of texts, and Hanna's pedagogical view does not, as far as I can see, exclude the problems approach.

Which of the two approaches is to be favored? Lackey thinks it is the problems approach, at least in introductory philosophy courses. He argues as follows. If philosophy is a rational activity, and if a rational activity and understanding its nature can only be taught to students by getting them to engage in the activity themselves, then philosophy can only be taught by getting the students to engage in philosophizing themselves. It is possible to succeed in getting the students to engage in philosophizing themselves by using the historical approach, but the problems approach is much more likely to succeed. The reason for this is that with the historical approach there is the constant risk that the philosophical discussion turns into an exegetical discussion. With the problems approach there is no such risk because the problems approach confronts the students directly with problems that they have to solve. (Hanna's own course on the philosophy of Kant (cp. the appendix to Hanna's article) follows the historical approach and therefore faces the mentioned risk of turning away from philosophy into exegesis.)

This is not to say that philosophy departments should not also provide courses in the so-called history of philosophy and contemporary philosophy where classical and contemporary texts are read, nor is it to say that the historical approach has no role to play in teaching philosophy. There are many reasons for using the historical approach, among them at least the following three (with which Hanna would most probably agree).

First, the historical approach forces the reader to understand a philosophical problem from the perspective or formulation of the author, and this perspective or formulation may be quite different from the reader's.

Second, the historical approach helps to develop knowledge of philosophy. If one knows how a philosophical problem has been formulated and solved, one has philosophical knowledge.

Third, the historical approach helps to develop a common ground for future philosophical discussions. It is very convenient when one can simply refer to Kantian ethics without having to develop the position each time. More reasons could be given, and even more reasons, if one does not restrict the role of the history of philosophy to teaching of philosophy, but to teaching humanities in general.

3. Conclusion

I have shown that Hanna's No Deep Difference Thesis is not entirely clear and that it involves two different aspects of philosophy, the content and the practice of philosophy. I have argued that there is at least one difference in teaching philosophy and in teaching the history of philosophy: whereas one cannot teach the latter without teaching content, one can teach the former without teaching content, for example, by using the Socratic method. And this means that one can teach philosophy without teaching the history of philosophy, but one cannot teach the history of philosophy without teaching philosophy. A related difference is that texts are conceptually less important in the teaching of philosophy than they are in the teaching of the history of philosophy. So there are more differences between the teaching of the history of philosophy and the teaching of philosophy than Hanna seems to concede. My aim has been to show what these differences are.[7]

Endnotes

1. Robert Hanna. "Back to Kant: Teaching the First Critique as Contemporary Philosophy." *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy* 08:2 (2009): 2-6.
2. The purpose of the distinction is unclear to me. Hanna claims that a text of an author which is dead is "semantically closed" to the author's intentions but remains "semantically open" to interpretation, and yet the difference is supposed to be a difference "in how we go about understanding and using a philosophical text." In what sense is the process of understanding a text different when the author is alive and when he is dead?
3. Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*), B 865.
4. Leonard Nelson. "Die sokratische Methode" (1922) In *Abhandlungen der Fries'schen Schule. Neue Folge*, ed. O. Meyerhof et al. Vol. 5:1 (Göttingen 1929): 21-78. English translation "The Socratic Method" available at: http://www.friesian.com/method.htm. Nelson's Socratic Method does not correspond exactly to the method used by Socrates in Plato's dialogue, in particular the leader of a discussion using the method should not be asking philosophical questions; these should be developed by the participants. I do not propagate

the Socratic Method, I am only claiming that it is *one* possible method of teaching philosophy (see my *Fachdidaktik Philosophie*, Bern: Haupt/UTB, 2010, 48-49).

5. Douglas P. Lackey. "The 'Historical' Vs. the 'Problems' Approach to Introduction to Philosophy." *Metaphilosophy* 5 (1974): 169-72.
6. It is not part of the historical approach that the political, economic, social, and other history should be included. For such an approach, see John J. McDermott, "The Teaching of Philosophy – Historically," in *Teaching Philosophy: Theoretical Reflections and Practical Suggestions*, ed. Tziporah Kasachkoff (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 149-61.
7. I would like to thank several anonymous reviewers for very helpful comments on two previous versions of the text.

Book Reviews

Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries

Translated by Bryan W. Van Norden (Hackett Publishing Company, 2008), 207 pp.

The Essential Mengzi: Selected Passages with Traditional Commentary

Translated by Bryan W. Van Norden (Hackett Publishing Company, 2009), 142 pp.

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Known as the Second Sage in Chinese history, Mengzi occupies a prominent place in Confucianism in particular, and in Chinese philosophy in general. His ideas had enormous influence not only on subsequent Confucians, but even on his opponents in non-Confucian schools of Chinese philosophy. For that reason, Mengzi is a must read for anyone who is interested in Chinese philosophy. Intended for college students and the general reader in the English-speaking world, Bryan W. Van Norden's two translated books of the *Mengzi* exactly meet this need and make Mengzi's texts available and accessible to a wide range of Western audiences. Besides its great importance for pedagogical purposes, the new translation is also of significant value to academics, and helps to promote the scholarship on Mengzi in the Western world. Since the two volumes he produced are essentially the same in the introduction, translation, and commentary on the texts, my first comments are targeted to the volume containing the complete translation, although they are indeed applicable to both of the books. After that I will make a brief review on the second book, *The Essential Mengzi*, by focusing on its own distinct features.[1]

One of the remarkable features of Van Norden's books, as he himself emphasizes in the preface and the titles of the books suggest, is to include the translated commentaries of Zhu Xi wherever necessary, who is among the most influential and original interpreters of the *Mengzi* in Chinese history. Due to significant shifts in meaning and usage of the Chinese language over time, contemporary readers frequently experience difficulty and disagreement on how to understand certain concepts and ideas in the canonical text; Zhu Xi's commentaries may serve as one indispensible source of reference for this purpose. Take the first line of 2B5.1 as an example, which can be literally translated as: "Mengzi said to Chi Wa, 'That you declined the post in Ling Qiu and requested an appointment of Chief Warden, is *si*'…". In this sentence, the use of single character "si," which means "seemingly" in modern Chinese, makes the sentence difficult to understand. The standard reading today is from Zhu Xi, who interpreted that the word "reasonable" had been omitted and thus "si" should be understood as meaning "seemingly reasonable." Van Norden adopts such an interpretation by translating it as "sensible" (p. 54).

By the above comments, I do not mean that Zhu Xi's interpretations of Mengzi are without problems at all, as noted by Van Norden. Whenever possible, Zhu Xi read Mengzi into his own metaphysical framework, and it is doubtful whether those tentative or manipulated readings in the translations of Van Norden are what Mengzi really said. Van Norden's citation of traditional commentaries by Zhu Xi and other influential interpreters gives the reader opportunity to critically examine them against the original texts she is reading and interpreting. In so doing, she is not only learning from Mengzi, but more importantly doing philosophy concerning his scholarship. It is in that sense that Van Norden's books go beyond narrow pedagogical usefulness as an exercise in interpretation and evaluation and have great value also for research on Mengzi's philosophy. Judged from this aspect, Van Norden's volumes of the *Mengzi* with traditional commentaries have an obvious advantage over any translation of Mengzi's texts alone.

The second wonderful feature is the translator's cross-reference among associated passages. In the *Mengzi*, Mengzi's philosophical ideas are mainly expressed by his comments on contemporary events. Unfortunately, the comments on any one event are frequently scattered in different chapters, despite the fact that knowledge of the events referred to at one place may be needed to understand those referred to at other places. In addition, alternative ideas expressed on the same theme are also dispersed across chapters. This kind of poor organization of the text gives contemporary readers enormous difficulties. Van Norden's cross-references are a nice solution to this problem, and are thus invaluable both to research work of scholars and to learning activities of the beginner. For instance, the notion of "four sprouts" is a crucial element in the ethics of Mengzi, who discusses it in several different passages. Professor Van Norden helpfully refers the reader to all these passages in 2A6.7 (p.47).

The third merit of the book lies in the translator's useful notes and historical commentaries. The text of the *Mengzi* contains a lot of material whose understanding requires considerable knowledge of the history of this period. This creates difficulties for Western readers, who are often unfamiliar with the historical figures, traditions, and practices in Classical China. Van Norden offers helpful notes and commentaries to identify these persons and events. He also offers a brief overview of each chapter of the *Mengzi*, which is aimed at presenting to the reader the core idea and the most interesting and often-discussed passages in the chapter. All of these measures make the book quite user-friendly. The translator also offers interpretative commentary on difficult passages, aiming to help the reader gain a clear understanding of them. Most of his interpretations are accurate, except the commentary on Gaozi's arguments about human nature in 6A2.1. Let us remark on this matter.

Against Mengzi's position that claims human nature is (morally) good, Gaozi instead holds human nature is (morally) neutral, and human nature cannot be (morally) good. To reject Mengzi's position, Gaozi seems to adopt the following argument, which could be called the substantial equivalence argument:

(1) If human nature is good, then human nature and goodness possess the same properties.

(2) Human nature and goodness do not have the same properties.

Therefore,

(3) Human nature is not good.

Gaozi takes premise (1) as being self-evident and offers no defense for it. His efforts are devoted to establishing the truth of premise (2).To that end, he extensively uses the technique of analogy. He compares human nature to the willow, and goodness to the cups and bowls made of the willow in 6A1.1. Just as the willow and the willow-made cups and bowls do not have the same metaphysical properties in that the former exists naturally but the latter are the product of human activities, human nature and goodness do not have the same metaphysical properties. Therefore, premise (2) is true, and conclusion (3) is true.

As expected, Mengzi's response is to premise (2). But, very unfortunately, we do not see Mengzi responding in the way that one would expect, that is, by trying to reject premise (2) as a factual thesis. Rather, he turns to its normatively harmful implications to show the implausibility of premise (2). His response is this: if Gaozi were correct in arguing that human nature and goodness have different metaphysical status and properties, that is, that human nature exists naturally while goodness is created by human beings, then we would have to manipulate and thus harm human nature in order for them to do good. But to manipulate human nature is wrong. Therefore, Gaozi's argument for premise (2) is unacceptable. I would call this the "manipulation" argument.

It is clear that Mengzi's counterargument is based on the normative dimension of the matter. But the counterargument does not really work because the harmful implications of premise (2) cannot prove at all that it *is* not a fact. So it is reasonable to expect Gaozi to restore the focus of debate back to the factual nature of the matter, instead of taking up the normative dimension proposed by Mengzi. Gaozi does this by continuing to defend his factual thesis that human nature is (morally) neutral with the similar analogy of human nature to water in 6A2.1. According to him, just as water's flowing is directionally neutral by nature, human nature is (morally) neutral, too. This analogous argument is superior to the willow one in that it can avoid the possible involvement of the normative issue and frees itself from Mengzi's possible reapplication of the "manipulation" argument. So Van Norden's readings of Gaozi's water analogy argument as a debate with Mengzi on the harmful consequences of non-good human nature are misleading, as he writes, "just as it does not 'harm' water to make it flow east or west, so it does not harm human nature whether we make it good or bad" (p. 144). The second and stronger evidence for my above interpretation of Gaozi's argument is that, in his direct response to Gaozi's water analogy in 6A2.2, Mengzi does not mention anything about manipulation any longer. Instead, he argues that, although water flows neither eastward nor westward by nature, it does follow downward naturally; thus, human nature, like water having downward-flowing nature, is good. If Gaozi's water analogy were really aimed at continuing the debate about manipulation initiated by Mengzi himself, Mengzi's response would definitely have included it. But the text shows otherwise.

Besides a general introduction, and above-mentioned commentaries and useful notes, the translation also wisely includes a timeline of pre-modern China's history, selected bibliography of works on Mengzi, Zhu Xi, and other Confucians, and an English-Chinese glossary. The timeline, and the detailed accounts of Mengzi's historical context in the Introduction, help to remove the barrier of historical knowledge and pave the way for the reader to follow the text without much trouble. The bibliography covers the important works of scholarship on Confucianism; anyone who wants to do further reading or research may find it useful. Even more important is the English-Chinese Glossary. As we all know, a language often lacks words that are the exact equivalents of words in another language. As a result, some translated terms may well miss the important connotations of their counterparts in the original language. This is especially the case for a language of such concise nature as Classical Chinese. For that reason, it is sometimes necessary for serious readers to read the original, not merely the translated, versions of those terms.[2] Since the volume is not a bilingual one, it is indispensible to include the English-Chinese glossary of important terms, as Van Norden does. The glossary includes the majority of key terms in Mengzi's philosophy, and has four columns, with the Chinese characters, their English-language translations, Chinese Pinyin, and a detailed account usage for each term. If any reader is confused by some terms when reading the English-language text, he would find it helpful to go to the glossary and check its usage there.

Throughout the book, Van Norden's translation can be characterized by faithfulness, great readability, and scholarly erudition, as he "changed the project from a scholarly translation of the *Mengzi* with Zhu Xi's complete commentary to a more idiomatic rendering…" (p. x). It is remarkably faithful to the original text by means of frequently literal translation.[3] The literal translation, combined with a functionally orientated one, produces an accurate English-language representation of the *Mengzi* as well as the Classical Chinese way of thinking contained in the text.

As an example, he translates "tian zi" literally as "Son of Heaven," instead of "King," and offers its detailed explanation in the glossary. Such a literal translation nicely captures the underlying idea of the term being used to refer to a king: the status of a king comes from Heaven and thus has legitimacy. If it were directly translated as "king" and without any note, the connotations here would have been missing. Other examples include the literal (literal)translation of "si hai," which means the world, as "Four Seas" (p. 26, p. 47), and "li ye" as "That is the ritual" (p. 97).

Despite its advantages, however, this kind of faithful literal translation may cause some problems. One is the sentence in 1B15.1, "jie li yi shi da guo, ze bu de mian yan." Van Norden literally and problematically translates this as "it is unavoidable that we put our full effort into serving the large states" (p. 30), neglecting that some words are actually omitted after "mian." With the omissions restored, the line should read as "while we put our full effort into serving the large states, we still cannot escape/avoid suffering from them," where suffering could mean encroachment, invasion, capture of their possessions, etc. This reading, better than Van Norden's, is capable of making consistent the story of King Tai subsequently told by Mengzi in the same passage. According to this story, since King Tai cannot be free from the sufferings continuingly imposed by the tribes of Di even after having offered them a lot of precious things from time to time, he finally chose to leave his land and abandoned the kingship. It is the situation that he and his country cannot avoid the continuous harm from Di that makes him decide to do so.

In 2A1.7, "huo" should be translated as "confused," instead of "mistaken" (p. 34). The "zei" in 2A6.6 is more complicated because it has many meanings in Chinese, and it is hard to figure out its decisive meaning here. Van Norden literally translates it as "steal" and the related sentences as "to have these four sprouts, yet to claim that one is incapable (of virtue), is to steal from oneself. To say that one's ruler is incapable is to steal from one's ruler" (p. 47). I doubt that some English-speaking readers would not be confused by this translation. Instead, if we alternatively take "zei" to mean "do harm to" and substitute it for "steal from" in the lines, the resulting sentences will surely make better sense.[4]

Another problematic translation is that of the sentence "shan yu ren tong, she ji cong ren," which was translated as "he was good at unifying himself with others. He put himself aside and joined with others" (p. 48). The subject of the passage is indeed on showing the admirable attitudes and manners by which virtuous and great people learn goodness from others. But Van Norden's translation here seems to have little to do with that, and this lack may well cause confusion to the reader. A more plausible reading is that "he (the Great Shun) regarded himself no different from others on (pursuing) good, and abandoned his own (evils) and followed others (on good)." The English words in the parentheses were possibly omitted in the original text. In 2A9.2, it would be better to translate the term "xian" as "talents," rather than "what is worthy" literally. Thus, "In taking office, he did not conceal his talents" is more readable than "In taking office, he did not conceal what is worthy" (p. 49).

In Van Norden's translation "and Qi and Chu were to attack it" in 3B5.1 (p. 80), the word "e" (hate) is missing. The correct translation would be "and Qi and Chu hated (its practice of benevolent government) and were to attack it." In the next passage, it is also questionable to translate "lao ruo kui shi" as "the young and weak offered the sacrificial food" (p. 80). It is not that the young and weak offered the sacrificial food, but that they offered food to the people of Bo who were sent to farm for Ge by King Tang. Indeed, the two expressions were put together and formed a complete sentence in the original text, which justifies why we read the expression this way.

Van Norden's second book, as its title suggests, contains those passages from the *Mengzi* that are taken to be the most important and essential ideas of Mengzi. By removing what he considered to be philosophically insignificant passages, this concise book offers the reader a chance of comprehending the core of Mengzi's philosophy more quickly. The selections, for the most part, are accurate in terms of their capturing what is essential in Mengzi's philosophy, but with several exceptions. One is that the translator selects 7A10 and abandons 7A21. Comparing the two, however, I do not see any reason why 7A21 is considered so less significant than 7A10 as to be not included. Actually, 7A21 contains important remarks on the relationships between *xing* (nature), *xin* (heart), and virtues, and should have been included in the selective translation. By the same token, 7B12, which addresses the practical importance of morality to the functioning of a state and society, should be no less important than 7B2 in Mengzi's philosophy. But 7B12 is not selected either.

In the second volume, the translation has been separated from the commentary. This change in format from the first book should be welcomed. The two formats together offer alternative ways of approaching Mengzi from which readers can select. If a person likes to read the original text with the belief that reading commentaries would interfere and bias her potentially faithful understanding of it, she may choose Van Norden's second book. The spatial separation of the text from the commentaries gives her the opportunity to focus on the text alone. On the other hand, the first book may be preferred by those who find it convenient to make a quick reference to the helpful commentaries on the passages they are reading.

In conclusion, while the two books by Van Norden have several minor problems of translation and commentary,[5] they are truly successful and admirable. The works vividly show his meticulous research on Mengzi's philosophy. His insightful commentaries and notes, and the comprehensive introduction, shed light on the Mengzi's canon and are pedagogically invaluable to college students as well as the general reader who wants to study Mengzi's philosophy. Equally significantly, these two serious scholarly works represent important contributions made by him to the project of carrying the Mengzi's heritage into the western world.

Endnotes

1. Cordial thanks go to Dr. Tziporah Kasachkoff for her invitation to write this review. I appreciate the insightful comments of Dr. Eugene Kelly on an earlier version of the review, which identified many errors and helped to improve it significantly.
2. That justifies why many philosophy programs require their graduate students to comprehend at least one foreign language, so that they may read the original texts in the language in which they were originally written.
3. While Van Norden claims explicitly that his translation is often functional rather than literal in the preface, I found literal translations, though not necessarily nonfunctional ones, as I will show in what follows.
4. More on this. Mengzi always believes that benevolent governing by means of virtue is the correct and efficient way of keeping a state in order and prosperity, which would in turn strengthen one's kingship. By saying that a king is incapable of being virtuous, the subordinates actually deny the possibility and legitimacy of following a benevolent governing policy by the king, and thus in turn do harm to the latter. That is also why Mengzi tries to convince King Qi of his capabilities of being virtuous (1A7).
5. I pointed out these problems in this review for the purpose of alerting Prof. Van Norden, who might give a second thought to them if he publishes a second edition of the books.

The Ontological Argument from Descartes to Hegel

Kevin J. Harrelson (Amherst NY: Humanity Books, 2009), 255 pages, $39.98.

Reviewed by Russell Marcus
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The standard undergraduate modern philosophy survey course is an impossible monstrosity. The very idea of paying appropriate philosophical attention, in a mere fourteen weeks, to two extraordinarily fecund centuries of work on topics such as the relation of our minds to our bodies, the methods of science, the nature of space and time, free will and determinism, personal identity, justifications for civil society, and arguments for the existence of God is absurd. The Great-Figures solution to this absurdity limits one's syllabus to a few philosophers, say, Descartes, Hume, and Kant. The Great-Topics alternative covers a wider range of writers on a few themes such as substance, personal identity, and God. In addition to its undeniable utility as a research tool, Kevin J. Harrelson's new study, *The Ontological Argument from Descartes to Hegel*, could be a good addition to a Great-Topics course. The book covers a surprisingly wide range of modern writers, and could also be a useful text for an advanced course that focuses exclusively on the ontological argument.

Harrelson states serious critical goals for the book.

> I argue that the strategy for proving a priori the existence of God that remains in place during [the] period from Descartes' initial argument in the

> *Discourse on Method* (1637) to Hegel's final lectures in Berlin (1831), is both internally consistent and free of any easily identifiable error. More importantly, I try to show that the most common objections to the modern ontological proof...fail to identify any conclusive and universal fallacy. (18)

Harrelson divides the history of the ontological argument into three eras: pre-modern, including Anselm, Gaunilo, and Aquinas; modern, the focus of his volume; and post-Hegelian, which Harrelson mainly ignores. This division is a useful artifice, allowing Harrelson to focus on the era usually covered in Modern Philosophy courses. The book covers the standard presentations of the ontological argument (of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, and Hegel), as well as expositions of it which are less well known (including those of More, Clarke, Wolff, Baumgarten, and Crusius). Harrelson's discussion of Huet's criticisms of Malebranche is amusing and useful, and his exposition of Mendelssohn's post-Kantian work on the argument is enlightening. His omission—with the exception of a few passing references—of Hume is curious. Despite the fact that Hume's criticisms of arguments for the existence of God generally focus on causal arguments (as in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*) the importance of Hume's principle that the truth-value of existence claims can never be discovered a priori deserves greater emphasis, especially in the discussion of Kant's work.

The inclusion of so many minor figures hinders Harrelson's narrative. In places, the book reads not as a monograph that traces the most important advances in the ontological argument but more like a dissertation, in which every mention of the argument by any minor figure is evaluated with every criticism taken to be worth remarking on. Still, Harrelson takes a firm critical stance toward the arguments.

Harrelson also impressively connects earlier work with later discussions of the argument. He consistently credits Aquinas for criticisms that might appear, to the student, as original with later writers. He connects Leibniz's work with that of Duns Scotus and Mersenne, and he cites Arnauld's anticipation of some of Kant's comments.

I would wager that a high proportion of philosophers, when prompted for the major flaw in the ontological argument, would point to Kant's claim that existence is not a predicate. Harrelson gives Gassendi proper credit for that point, and rightly notes that this point, standing alone, begs the question of whether God's existence is a single exception to the general rule that existence does not belong to the nature of an entity. Harrelson correctly insists that the full force and implication of the ontological argument cannot be understood when isolated from the specific contexts in which it appears, especially in the works of Malebranche, Spinoza, and Kant. Furthermore, Harrelson nicely shows that Kant's criticisms of the argument were aimed at versions of the argument found in the work of Leibniz, Wolff, and Baumgarten, and he argues, plausibly, that Kant was unfamiliar with the seventeenth-century expositions of the argument.

Dangers can arise from analyzing a short, if subtle, argument too finely. Harrelson divides Descartes's version of the ontological argument into what he deems its most thorough version, the syllogism from the First Replies, and what he calls the perfection argument. The First-Replies syllogism contains the premises that what we clearly and distinctly perceive as belonging to an object really does belong to that object, and that we clearly and distinctly perceive God's existence as belonging to his nature. The perfection argument alleges just that existence is a perfection. Harrelson follows Harry Wolfson in calling the First-Replies syllogism the primary Cartesian argument.

Aquinas had argued that linking the existence of a thing with its essence in one's thought need not entail that the thing exists independently of thought. The First-Replies syllogism alone does, as Harrelson says, serve to block this important Thomistic objection. Yet its minor premise remains completely unjustified without the addition of the perfection argument. Harrelson's division allows him to trace different portions of the argument through the subsequent two centuries, but only at the cost of losing track of the connections between them. The First-Replies syllogism is not plausible without at least the implicit assumption of the perfection argument. The perfection argument lacks any conclusion about the existence of God without the implicit assumption of the First-Replies syllogism, or something like it. Separating the two arguments is useful for tracing the history of the argument, but unfair for evaluating its success. Harrelson's fine distinction, while likely to be useful to historians of philosophy, will elude many undergraduates, creating more confusion than it merits, pedagogically.

Harrelson's exposition of Descartes's version of the argument might have benefitted from attention to the differences between Descartes's own goals for his analytic exposition, in the *Meditations*, and his synthetic exposition, in the Second Replies. I wonder if the difference between Descartes's presentation of the argument in the Fifth Meditation and his First-Replies syllogism can be explained more effectively by considering Descartes's distinctions between proof, demonstration, and explanation (on which see his Letter to Morin, 13 July 1638, AT II.197-8). Indeed, Harrelson could be a bit more sensitive to the difference between an argument and a proof; he sometimes calls the argument in question the "ontological proof."

In contrast, Harrelson neatly distinguishes versions of the argument which rely on intuitive awareness of God's existence from those which are intended as demonstrations or proofs. The book covers the role of Descartes's mathematical analogy (that existence belongs to God's essence the way that the sum of the angles of a triangle belong to the triangle), the question whether possible existence is attributable to a perfect being, and the worry that there is a gap in the argument between conclusions of the existence of a perfect being and that of a necessarily existent being. His discussion of different versions of the argument, such as those of Malebranche and Hegel, which minimize analogies from human existence to the existence of God and which conclude that being is, rather than that God exists, is helpful. These versions support Kant's "ontological argument" label against those who, finding the term misleading, prefer to call the argument the "a priori" argument, or the Cartesian argument. Harrelson also distinguishes versions of the argument aimed at combating atheism from those versions which would be compelling only to those who already believe in God's existence. I would have preferred less discussion of the latter, intuitive versions, which strike me as insufficiently philosophical.

Descartes's work provides a unifying theme for Harrelson's book. Still, the text would have benefitted from a concluding chapter, looking forward toward the post-Hegelian and contemporary proponents of the argument, especially since Harrelson calls the argument unassailable. Indeed, the lack of a unifying conclusion makes it difficult not to feel that Harrelson has failed to reach his stated goals, even though he has surveyed and criticized an admirable range of arguments and counter-arguments.

I enjoyed reading the book and learned from it, but I do not recommend it for classes in which instructors rely mainly on primary sources. The book does not include enough of the original source material for students to be able to grasp the critical commentary without also consulting the primary texts.

Also, while some chapters in the book stand on their own better than do others, most chapters refer indispensably to earlier discussions, so that students cannot profit from reading them in isolation of the discussions in earlier chapters to which they refer.

Nevertheless, I would recommend the book enthusiastically to students searching for paper topics. It could be valuable for a Great-Topics version of the standard course in modern philosophy, or for more advanced undergraduate and graduate classes covering seventeenth- or eighteenth-century metaphysics. Harrelson's study is accessible and nearly comprehensive over its target era. He generally avoids jargon. He helpfully names some of the major arguments, and provides a useful glossary for unfamiliar terms. Each chapter has many useful endnotes, and there is an excellent bibliography dividing the primary texts from the more recent secondary literature. The book contains a fine index.

I hope that publishers will encourage the production of similar manuscripts covering other salient topics in the modern era. A bookshelf full of such studies would be a valuable resource for the graduate student and beginning researcher. That Harrelson's text will be useful to undergraduates is an added bonus.

One small, final caveat: Harrelson's over-use of quotation marks is distracting, and sometimes misleading. For example, Harrelson writes:

> Descartes justifies this "predication rule" by appeal to the more general rule that "what is distinctly and clearly perceived is thereby true." (46)

The first set of quotation marks is otiose. While it is common to use quotation marks to indicate idiosyncratic usage, Harrelson uses them in almost every paragraph of the book, often repeatedly even within a single sentence. The words contained in the second set are a paraphrase, not a quote, of the cited section. The sentence would be better rendered without any quotation marks at all. Such infelicities are especially unfortunate since the ontological argument requires careful distinctions between uses and mentions, between concepts and objects, and between thoughts and concepts. I would not recommend the text to an undergraduate without first discussing proper usage.[1]

Endnotes

1. Thanks to Shoshana Brassfield for helpful comments.

List of Books Received

Baier, Annette C. *The Cautious Jealous Virtue: Hume on Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

Cohen, Jonathan R. *Science, Culture and Free Spirits. A Study of Nietzsche's* Human, All Too Human (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2010).

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