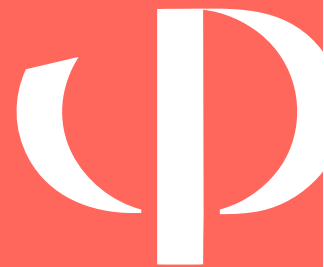


Teaching Philosophy



FALL 2017

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APA NEWSLETTER ON

Teaching Philosophy

TZIPORAH KASACHKOFF AND EUGENE KELLY, CO-EDITORS

VOLUME 17 | NUMBER 1 | FALL 2017

FROM THE EDITORS

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We welcome our readers to the fall 2017 edition of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching*. We offer this month five articles and a list of books for possible review.

In our first paper, Professor Andy German of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev reflects upon how a conception of philosophical history may inform the teaching of philosophy. He begins with a familiar challenge to philosophy professors by their students: When do we pass from the study of historical figures in philosophy to the practice of philosophy itself? German pursues this question throughout his paper. Without wishing to anticipate the conclusions that he reaches after his six pedagogical reflections, he notes that students who raise this challenge may unwittingly stand in the way of a positive response to it. Most of them—and many of the rest of us—are used to thinking of the past as essentially overcome and reduced to irrelevance by the present, much as pocket computers have made adding machines and telephone books obsolete. But the nature of philosophy itself presents an obstacle to a transition from its own history to the philosophical process itself by being both historical and ahistorical. It is rooted in a tradition, but it always has the ambition to overcome its own tradition and to return radically to the roots of things. In his thoughtful reflections, German shows us how such a conception of philosophy may be put to use in the classroom.

Our second paper, "Philosophy That Is Ancient: Teaching Ancient Philosophy in Context," Nickolas Pappas of City College and the Graduate Center, CUNY, concerns himself with the question of how a teacher of ancient philosophy can take advantage of students' natural curiosity about the daily lives of the persons we encounter in the ancient world, especially those in Plato's *Dialogues*. A student's innocent question about the account in *Phaedo* of Socrates' last words, "We owe a cock to Asclepius": "So they had chickens?" inspired Professor Pappas to do quite a bit of research on life in ancient Greece, and he gives us a list of what he considers to be the best sources of such information. He discusses how he puts to pedagogical use such matters as the games and attire of wealthy boys, as the life and social and psychological role of domestic slaves, and as Socrates' famous comparisons between the knowledge and art of

shoemakers or physicians and the knowledge and art of the just person. (What *did* doctors and shoemakers know, and what was their skill?) The understanding of such everyday matters by Plato's audience would surely have informed their response to Socrates' homey comparisons and the questions they raise. Examples of how Greek practices in some area conflict with our own can also be thought-provoking, for such oppositions suggest deeper differences in the emotional or intellectual orientation of members of the two cultures. In conclusion, Professor Pappas suggests three ways in which historical background can be brought into philosophy classrooms.

Steven M. Cahn's brief essay, "Teaching about the Existence of God," takes off from the author's recent book, *Religion within Reason*. He claims that in introductory courses in philosophy where the existence of God figures as a topic, instructors may mislead students by assuming a set of untrue or highly questionable principles. These include the beliefs that if the existence of God is disproved, religion is unreasonable, that if the Abrahamic God exists, then the secular is the profane, that theism implies some specific religious commitment, and that the only correct form of supernaturalism involves a belief in God. He concludes, "A successful defense of traditional theism requires not only that it be more plausible than atheism or agnosticism, but that it be more plausible than all other supernatural alternatives."

The fourth paper, "Considering the Classroom as a Safe Space," by David Sackris of Princeton University, is in part a response to an article in the *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* by Lauren Freeman, which argues for the creation of safe spaces on campuses and in classrooms where women and minority students may feel free of Stereotype Threat and Implicit Bias. The purpose of such practices is to decrease attrition and encourage more women and minorities to pursue philosophy as a career. Professor Sackris approves of Professor Freeman's intentions but believes that it is sufficient to those purposes to create safe spaces of various kinds on campus, and that to do so in the classroom threatens to vitiate academic content and standards. In his discussion, Professor Sackris seems to shift from safe spaces to decrease bias and stereotypes to safe spaces to decrease discomfort with the material they are being asked to master such as units on abortion, race, feminism, or religion. Free self-expression about such topics by one group might well make another group feel threatened in some way. Yet denying students such an atmosphere of conflict may deny them valuable academic experiences. Surely Freeman would agree with that. Sackris further argues that we ought to stop talk of

“safety” or “comfort,” and instead pursue the goals of decreasing stereotypes and bias without injuring the concept of academic freedom and the intellectual conflicts it necessarily fosters. He offers specific suggestions as to how these ends can be met.

The reply to a review, “On Happiness and Goodness,” by Christine Vitrano of Brooklyn College, CUNY, concerns what she takes to be a misunderstanding by Matthew Pinalto in his review of a book that she published recently with Steven M. Cahn, *Happiness and Goodness: Philosophical Reflections on Living Well*. The crux of the misunderstanding concerns a hypothetical thought-question about the abstractly conceived “lives” of two persons. Pinalto holds that the authors’ claim that there is no compelling reason to rate one of the two lives as better than the other neglects recent writers on ethics who give us theoretical reasons for holding that one or the other life is, in fact, better. But Vitrano notes that her book contains an argument that such theories are to be rejected. Pinalto accuses Vitrano and Cahn of uncritically assuming that there are no moral or eudemonistic reasons for preferring one life to another, whereas in fact the book argues that there are no such persuasive reasons. Indeed, against Pinalto, they claim that no other theory than theirs could reach the conclusion that both lives are equally worthy.

We always encourage our readers to suggest themselves as reviewers of books and other material (including technological innovations) that they think may be especially good for classroom use. Though the names of books and other materials that we have recently received from publishers for possible review are listed in our **Books Received** section in each edition of the newsletter, reviewers are welcome to suggest material for review that they have used in the classroom and found useful. However, please remember that our publication is devoted to pedagogy and not to theoretical discussions of philosophical issues. This should be borne in mind not only when writing articles for our publication but also when reviewing material for our publication.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

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

The following guidelines for submissions should be followed:

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

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

All articles submitted to the newsletter are blind-reviewed by the members of the editorial committee:

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ARTICLES

Philosophy and Its History: Six Pedagogical Reflections

Andy German

BEN GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV

What makes teaching the history of philosophy a *philosophical*, rather than merely doxographical, enterprise? That is the guiding question of these reflections. It arises from a conviction—born of experience—that part of teaching the history of philosophy involves exposing oneself to the possibility that such teaching stands in need of justification.

I.

Prima facie, it is unclear why the guiding question should even be a question. What could be more obvious than the fact that Western philosophy, at least, has canonical texts and canonical problems arising from them, and that primarily and for the most part, we philosophize through these texts, which tradition has bequeathed to us. It seems equally unproblematic that being a historian of philosophy simply means having a professional competence in that tradition.

What is more, it is arguably impossible even to conceive how we could begin philosophizing except as part of such a tradition. No one, after all, springs full-grown from the womb declaring that “Being is said in many ways.” One learns to identify what philosophical questions are and how to approach them mostly through participating in the institutional life of philosophy. Contemporary academic philosophy is only the latest incarnation of this life, which has its roots in Plato’s Academy, if not earlier. As this institutional life changes so too do the questions and answers that are treated as philosophical going concerns.

This last fact is important, though easily forgotten. In fact, a solid grounding in the history of philosophy may be the only way to prevent such forgetfulness. Take, for example, the “mind-body problem”—that old war-horse which, by now, has been ridden into the ground many times over. Schematically stated, the problem is as follows: Our bodies are entirely subordinated to unbending natural laws (laws formulated today in the language of mathematical physics). These laws describe a world in which the only things having verifiable existence are mass-points moving in, and influenced by, fields of force. In addition, there is a rather disparate collection of phenomena which, since at least Descartes, have been grouped together under the term “mind” or “the mental.” This collection includes all those events that occupy no readily identifiable position in space and are accompanied by a sense of interiority and immediacy we express with the first person singular. The relationship between these two realms (even the question of whether they are actually separate realms at all) has begotten whole libraries. It is a *quaestio vexata* so relentlessly familiar, so intractable, that it can seem to be coterminous with philosophy itself, simply part of the “frame of this world,” as it were. Of course, it is nothing of the kind.

The problem in its current form was unknown to the Greeks, who did not have a word exactly corresponding to our “mind.” This was not because they were too naïve to be acquainted with the various phenomena we group under that word; everyone is acquainted with these phenomena. It was rather that the Greek concept of *psychē*, and its relationship to body (*sōma*), was understood differently. Aristotle, for example, would likely have judged the early modern concepts “matter” and “body” infected with such incoherence as to be beyond all repair, and the same would then follow for the supposed problem of how “mind” relates to this body.¹

The mind-body problem, then—like the problem of free will and determinism and some others—is neither necessary nor universal. It arises at a particular time, in a specific philosophical tradition with its specific historical trajectory. In order to know that this is so, one must know the history. A small adjustment of the Latin phrase thus seems to yield an unanswerable justification for the history of philosophy—*primum legere, deinde philosophari*; first read, then philosophize.

II.

Unfortunately, matters are not so simple. To read the texts of past philosophers is not necessarily to philosophize;

neither is teaching them. These could just as well be a flight from philosophical thinking into the minutiae of textual exegesis.² Of course, the primary task of the teacher of past philosophical texts is to *make* reading into philosophizing. The question is how one succeeds in doing this and here we encounter two main difficulties, both of them concerned with time or the relationship philosophy has to time.

The first difficulty is raised by our students, whether explicitly or not. Most students (and not only Americans, as one quickly discovers by teaching in Israel) derive their conception of time from their experience of technological change. As Heidegger observed, technology has long since ceased to be merely another, more intricate and powerful, kind of tool.³ For most students, it is the great fact of their lives, an all-encompassing medium through which they relate to the world. The picture of time operative in this medium is of an ever-accelerating progress in which the present does not merely come after the past, but *replaces* it. This is so either because the present does better what the past aimed to do, thus obviating that past as thoroughly as the steam engine obviates the stagecoach, or because the present opens new vistas of need or desire (and the technical apparatus for fulfillment of these) of which the past lacked all conception. The future, by extension, promises more of the same—ever stronger, faster, better. Like the proverbial fish that is always the last to discover water, those who live in this technological medium are unaware that their conception of time is only one among others, and a questionable one at that. In teaching past thinkers, of course, we must impress upon students why this kind of temporal experience cannot apply to philosophy, why philosophical understanding does not progress in this linear fashion, and why the transition from one thinker or philosophical epoch to another is neither accumulation nor replacement *simpliciter*.⁴ In thinking about how to do this, we quickly run up against the second difficulty: How, and in what sense, does philosophy even have a history anyway? Our first difficulty, then, arises from the contemporary context in which philosophical pedagogy takes place, by which I mean the place from which we must begin because that is where our students are. The second, as we will now see, arises from the nature of philosophy itself.

III.

If philosophy is an intrinsically historical, i.e., temporal, phenomenon it would seem that it ought to have a beginning in time. Our ability to identify philosophy depends on our ability to identify when it became something distinguishable from other expressions of man’s spiritual life. When and where was this beginning? The standard introductory answer is at least as old as Aristotle. Thales, Aristotle reports, was the founder of that type of philosophical thinking which sought first principles. For Thales, this principle was material—water.⁵ Customarily, I then tell students that while Thales may very well have had predecessors and while he probably drew on common Near Eastern cosmological motifs, he was nevertheless the first clearly attested thinker to abandon the mythological explanations of Greek and other traditions in favor of the use of the unaided powers of human observation and reasoning about those observations. And so, I conclude

with a flourish, philosophy originated in a transformation of traditional mythical thought.

Now, all this is serviceable as far as it goes, except that it does not go very far beyond the most rudimentary scene setting. On closer examination, in fact, it becomes confused. In order for someone to initiate a conceptual revolution from within an existing intellectual framework (within traditional cosmological myths, say) that person must already intuit that this framework has limits. He must be in a position to see, for example, that it rests on faulty or nonsensical assumptions, that the cosmological myths in question are opaque or self-contradictory or point beyond themselves. To begin to reach beyond traditional cosmological myths, one must already be agitated by a dissatisfaction with partial and limited explanations, and this entails that one has at least a preliminary conception of what comprehensively true explanation would look like. In other words, in order to begin to separate from an intellectual framework one must, in a crucial sense, already be outside it. Philosophy is *not* the result of a gradual distancing from myth. The gradual distancing from myth is the result of philosophizing. Thales' fragments, then, are not the "beginning" of philosophy but an extremely antique trace of the philosophical impetus at work. Indeed, so long as there are rational beings, philosophy cannot have its own, absolute, beginning in time. We encounter it as something that has always already begun.

Aristotle's *Metaphysics* opens with the assertion, "All human beings desire by nature to know." But if this is true and we say—as I believe we would be correct to say—that the philosophical impulse inheres in the very structure of human rationality, it is legitimate to ask why philosophy's past should be in any way dispositive for its present activity. If, for example, we are investigating the nature of moral obligation, it is certainly worthwhile to know what our predecessors had to say about it. This will help in formulating questions more incisively and will save us from making laughable claims about our originality. But these, after all, are instrumental reasons. If we wish to profit from thinking along with Kant, Bishop Butler, or Mill, the reading can only be ministerial to other, unfinished business. We must aim for a maximally accurate phenomenological description of practical life and then extract from it a definition of morally relevant action (as opposed to instinctual reactions, say). We must map and analyze our basic moral concepts and the intuitions they express, seeking to establish their normative valence and testing them to separate the wheat from the chaff. We must try to formulate general rules for moral behavior and defend these from possible refutation. Description, definition, analysis, examination, discernment, argument, refutation—all of these are expressions of rational work that can take place for us only here and now. We may, for example, become convinced that Kant's categorical imperative really is the formal structure of any possible moral obligation, but this conviction is a philosophical act that takes place *in the present*, even when directed toward past thinkers.

In this respect, philosophy is analogous to sight. Seeing is complete at every moment it occurs. There are, no doubt, physiological processes of development and maturation

that are conditions for an organism having a functioning eye, and we can describe these processes. We can also give a chronological account of the various neural events that accompany seeing. None of these is a description of *sight*, however. There is neither development, maturation nor, really, process of any kind in the *act* of seeing. Whenever we see, sight is fully present as itself. The same is true of philosophical reason. If it represents a universal and always available human possibility, it is not a cumulative product of a historical process. *Sensu stricto*, its past is irrelevant to its essence.

I am not surprised, then, when some of my brighter students (as well as some academic colleagues) wonder aloud when they can finally have done with interpreting past philosophers and move on to "actual philosophizing." Why, in other words, not face the philosophical problems directly (something we eventually must do, in any case)? Is there not reasonable cause to suspect that the heavy drapery of old books in which we wrap ourselves is a refuge from thinking *for* ourselves? For those, like me, whose philosophical sensibility inclines toward the past, this charge is not lightly dismissed. The students who voice it are merely restating the central paradox that we have been considering. Philosophy appears in the various great works preserved for us from history. Yet, it is a fundamentally a-historical activity. How exactly is it, then, that philosophy both appears in history and yet is not a historical phenomenon in any simple sense? And this returns us to our opening question: Is the teaching of past thinkers a philosophical activity proper or only an encounter with the residue of philosophical activity?

IV.

Palin ex archēs, Plato's Socrates would say. Let us return to those supposedly obvious first principles from which we begin with our own students. Philosophy, we assert, is the love of wisdom. Now, wisdom involves knowledge or is a kind of knowledge. Certainly, this knowledge has been defined differently throughout the history of Western philosophy: as a grasp of the Idea of the Good, or a beatific vision of the *ens perfectissimum*, or knowledge of the workings of the transcendental Ego, or of the Absolute. Nevertheless, it was never merely one more kind of knowledge alongside others. The wisdom sought by philosophy, including even Kant's critical philosophy in which reason is supposed to uncover its own limits, is not a "body of knowledge," or a "regional" science. Every field of human endeavor requires some kind of knowledge: medical, architectural, political, etc. In order to apply such knowledge effectively in its proper domain we may need to learn and relearn many things, but in order to be competent architects or even statesmen we do not need to constantly revisit questions like "What is knowledge?" or "What explains why the world is knowable at all?" This is not true for philosophy, which cannot even strive toward its goal (to say nothing of achieving it) without seeking a full grounding and justification of itself. Hence, philosophy, by its very nature, cannot but raise the most comprehensive and radical questions—radical in the original meaning of going to the *radix*, the root. We may characterize philosophy, then, as comprehensive radicalism (or radical comprehensiveness). This characterization is hardly simple or unproblematic, but

I find it broadly accurate as a description of the Western philosophical tradition.

However, if philosophy is the exercise of reason in its most comprehensively radical form, philosophers are human beings, necessarily limited and finite. A philosopher is a part of the whole, which raises the question of whether a part can ever encompass the whole in knowledge. A philosopher, moreover, has finite time, in which a definitive grounding of reason may prove unattainable.⁶ It is from these “obvious” reflections that we can begin explaining the oddity of philosophy’s relation to its history and draw some pedagogical consequences. Namely, so long as the love of wisdom has not become wisdom *simpliciter*, all philosophers and all philosophical teachings, including those that have undoubtedly expanded the horizons of our understanding, are doomed to fall short in some way. The fate of all philosophical teachings is refutation.⁷ Refutation, however, is nothing other than a reaffirmation of the comprehensive radicalism of philosophy.

And here we come to the crux. The competence of the scholar is the rigorous explication of philosophical texts and doctrines in their specificity and difference from one another. This remains true even where the scholar intends to show how certain texts are intimately related, or how one philosopher prefigures or can only be understood from the vantage point of another. Over and above the differences between philosophers, however, is the comprehensive radicalism that is the *same* in all of them. Now, in the nature of the case, the differences are more apparent than the sameness, and it is on these that we focus in our teaching. This is why the history of philosophy can sometimes seem like a march of intellectual follies, substantiating Cicero’s complaint that “there is nothing so absurd that some philosopher has not said it.”⁸ One key to transforming this march of follies into reason’s effort at self-understanding lies in bringing students to a fuller appreciation of what refutation actually is. In the next section, I argue that, up to a point, there are practical methods for achieving this in the classroom; but only up to a point. In the final analysis, the philosophical historian qua teacher requires something that is irreducible to professional competence or methodology.

V.

In the classroom, a student will most often encounter refutation as the main engine for philosophical transformation. A classic example is the role of thought experiments. I articulate what appears to me to be an airtight rule for moral judgment applicable in certain circumstances. If my interlocutor demolishes the appearance of universality or necessary entailment by constructing a sufficiently devastating counterexample, I am duty-bound to dispense with that rule or argument. When one expedient fails, I try another. If the damage is more general, I may be compelled to abandon wider philosophical commitments.

The same will hold for a historical class. If I am to teach Aristotle or Hegel, for example, I must articulate, in the most accurate and forceful terms possible, why each thinker believed himself to have superseded his great predecessor, to have refuted the sufficiency or finality of

this or that teaching of Plato or Kant, respectively. Usually, then, refutation marks a kind of hiatus or caesura between one philosophical claim or doctrine, now defunct, and another, which takes its place. But this would only serve to confirm students in their technological conception of change as mere replacement. How do we make them see the peculiar character of philosophy that allows it to appear variously throughout the flow of history without being subsumed in that flow?

The key lies in leading students toward a deeper, more reflective level at which refutation, and disagreement more generally, are a mark of *identity* or *continuity*, i.e., of the enduring characteristics of a philosophical milieu, and ultimately of philosophical reason itself. That is to say, they must learn to see refutations as conceivable at all only thanks to shared assumptions about the nature of intelligibility, on the one hand, and the nature of philosophy, on the other. Interlocutors must share these precisely in order to be able to disagree. In a genuinely philosophical argument (which, for all we know, may be exceedingly rare), my triumphantly pointing out to my interlocutor that his game is up is actually my *appeal* to a shared standard, one which I know he accepts. This might be a common doctrinal assumption or a rule of formal logic or the overarching philosophical commitment to follow logos wherever it leads.⁹ Ultimately, though, the “shared standard” is the basic philosophical insight that the world is (at least partly) intelligible and that we are striving to articulate this intelligibility. This is what the disagreement is actually “about.” To appeal to another image, philosophical conversation is warfare, but of an utterly unique kind. The “combatants” want to conquer, of course. But to the extent that they are genuine philosophers, they are altogether more eager to be struck down themselves, by the truth.¹⁰ The pedagogical task is to make the relation between past thinkers into such a philosophical conversation, one in which the student is trained not only in articulating competing positions, and taking sides between them, but in seeing the conversation in its underlying, integral wholeness.

I will take Plato and Aristotle as an example. Plato argues that form (*eidos*) is the primary cause of the determinacy and intelligibility of beings. The form is the essence of its instantiation (i.e., the form Justice enables us to identify particular just acts) but form is nevertheless somehow separate from its instances. It does not come into being and pass away like them. Rather, the instances “imitate” or “participate” in their paradigmatic form.

The fulcrum of Aristotle’s critique is this separation (*chōrismos* in Greek). Aristotle argues that it is senseless to claim that the essential being of something is separate from that thing of which it is the essence.¹¹ Once this gap is opened up, all attempts to traverse it are futile. To call the relationship between form and instance “imitation” or “participation” is to play with names while explaining nothing at all.¹²

The degree to which Aristotle has done justice to Plato’s teaching, and hence the degree to which his critique is actually decisive, have been the subjects of a truly ancient debate. Let us leave this debate to one side and grant, for

the sake of argument, that the critique is convincing and that Aristotle's form/matter distinction and his concepts of *energeia* and *dynamis* succeed where Plato fails. Has Plato's account been replaced or discarded? In one respect it has, and this would normally be the pedagogical focus. That is, I will point out to students the dilemmas raised by Plato's account of the basic structure of intelligibility. We will then discuss why Aristotle thinks he moves our understanding forward or why we can at least claim that he prepares the way for later advances, by having the good sense to see that essence must be discoverable *in* the world and so on.

Just like the standard chronology that begins with Thales, this account is sufficient to the moment for an introductory class, but it skates over the deeper dynamic at play. In an advanced class, with a smaller number of students and thus room for a more expansive discussion, the focus can and should be elsewhere. Both thinkers, after all, agree about the causal primacy of form in explaining what it means to be something determinate (i.e., their disagreement is not about the existence and causal importance of form, but about its mode of being). More importantly, Aristotle also shares Plato's conviction that the world is intelligible and his view of the types of questions that this intelligibility imposes on us. In fact, it is only because of this shared basis, which is altogether more fundamental than their differences, that Aristotle could set out to refute his teacher in the first place. For this reason there can be no doubt that he *is* doing justice to the deeper impulse behind the Platonic position as he refutes, or perhaps even misinterprets, it. That position and its Aristotelian negation manifest how philosophy remains identical to itself throughout the variegated history of its doctrinal appearances. The student should come to see how, through refutation, philosophical thinking constantly crucifies and resurrects itself in one and the same act.

Now, the teacher must, of course, present all the doctrinal details of the Platonic hypothesis or of Aristotle's critique and test students' grasp of these details. But, at some point, the student must undergo the experience of discovering and articulating the continuity of philosophical commitments and intentions beneath the multiplicity of details. In advanced seminars, this is an excellent assignment for an oral presentation following on the study of the relevant passages from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. It has also served me well as a question prompt for an unorthodox writing assignment: "What assumptions about the nature of being and the nature of thinking must Plato and Aristotle *share* in order for it to be possible for them to *disagree* about the nature of form?"

Another example: In an upper-level undergraduate seminar on Hegel, the mid-semester paper asked students to explain how (i) Kant's conception of moral law and (ii) Hegel's strictures, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, against the formalism of that conception, both expressed certain uniquely modern convictions about the status of self-consciousness. Having thought through this question, students then prepared oral arguments debating (at a much higher level than they otherwise could have achieved) whether Hegel or Kant succeeds better in substantiating their shared insight about normativity as the product of self-conscious legislation by rational actors.

Stated otherwise, effective teaching of historical figures in philosophy should require students to go *beyond* those figures, and here teaching the history of philosophy differs from teaching history. Certainly, in both cases, the first goal is to understand a historical figure and to enter into his thought in as objective a manner as possible: viz., to understand historical figures as they understood themselves. In teaching history, however, we must be on guard against judging an historical actor by standards entirely alien to the relevant historical context. This cannot be the case in quite the same way in philosophy. In focusing pedagogical attention on refutation as a sign of philosophical continuity, I also train the student to locate, in temporally and doctrinally diverse thinkers, evidence of a kind of philosophical impetus that does not belong exclusively to any thinker. The ultimate goal of this training is not for the student to be taught or told, but rather to *experience* what it means to measure particular philosophers against the standard of philosophy's comprehensive radicalness, a standard which cannot be identified with any historical epoch because it is common to all of them.

VI.

This, however, has far-reaching consequences for the efficacy of any pedagogical tool or method. To understand any thinker, or the relationship between two thinkers, a teacher requires the full complement of scholarly tools: mastery of language and historical context, argument analysis, logical acumen, etc. In order to expose students to the substantial unity underlying all philosophical activity, however, there are neither tools nor methods, while "competence," if applicable at all, receives a completely transformed meaning. Philosophy is not a *technē*. Here it is primarily a matter of having philosophy's comprehensive desire for wisdom constantly in view.

Can pedagogical practices create an environment in which that desire can be ignited in the student? This is akin to asking whether one can motivate students to love philosophy. In *Nicomachean Ethics* X, 7, Aristotle seems to think that one can build a non-question-begging case for the superiority of the contemplative life by showing, in a dialectical manner, how that life takes up into itself, and perfects, those things that people *ordinarily* identify with goodness and happiness (power, pleasure, leisure, independence, freedom from the vicissitudes of fortune).¹³ In an analogous way, I believe, philosophical pedagogy must be a demonstration *in actu* of how philosophy is a more complete, more powerful, and more enduring form of the same pleasure with which students are already familiar through the ordinary, pre-philosophical exercise of their cognitive powers, the experience of "getting it right."

And in fact, the teacher of the history of philosophy, specifically, is not lacking in opportunities for just such a demonstration, which can be effected by means of a controlled "chemical reaction" between philosophical texts and a certain prevalent belief system which most of our students take in *cum lacte*. That system has several salient elements. First, there is the distinctive temporal phenomenology I discussed earlier. Related to this is a pious, if largely uninformed, faith in "science" (usually a somewhat hasty concoction of some physical materialism

sans any real awareness of the full consequences of quantum mechanics, a dash of evolutionary biology, and a staunch neurological focus on the mind as “what the brain does”). Lastly, there is an almost universal, and initially unconquerable, conviction that ethical judgments are, at bottom, strictly relative to an individual or a society. In trying to make students aware of this system of beliefs as only a system of *beliefs*, I have found certain (perhaps unexpected and often ignored) Greek texts to be highly effective agents of philosophical sedition.¹⁴

Of course, a teacher owes his students a philologically and historically sound account of philosophical texts and this means, at a bare minimum, avoiding crudely anachronistic readings which fish around in those texts to find an immediate, “contemporary relevance” which is often not there. Happily, though, in the case of historical examples of first-rate philosophical power, “contemporary relevance” is irrelevant. They can serve as a direct challenge to contemporary doxa precisely by virtue of their remoteness and foreignness. Herewith, some examples, all from an undergraduate, introductory context.

For Aristotle, “nature” (*physis*) is not simply everything that is. It is a term of distinction, arrived at by contrasting natural with artificial beings.¹⁵ In teaching these passages in the *Physics*, I ask students whether Aristotle would even agree that the contemporary physicist, who applies mathematical laws that are necessarily blind to the difference between natural and artificial beings, is actually studying nature at all. Invariably, this question leaves them flummoxed since they assume either (i) that Aristotle was simply staggering about in a pre-modern fog or (ii) that he was trying to do what *our* science does but at an amateur level dictated by his primitive mathematics and hopeless experimental machinery. That Aristotle might be in a position to mount a critique of the fundamental ontological and methodological assumptions of *our* standpoint is utterly perverse to them—exactly the reaction the teacher should want.

In introductory classes, I never fail to teach the passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that treats greatness of soul (*megalopsychia*), the odd virtue concerned with desiring honors. First-year students are baffled to learn that humility, for Aristotle, is not an ethical virtue—a perfect starting point for a discussion in which they are forced to justify why humility seems to them so obviously a positive trait. A similar dynamic can be extracted from Books II and III of the *Republic* in which Socrates undertakes his shockingly frank and ruthless purge of all poetry and music. Everyone is familiar with the pedagogic effect of Socrates’ declaration, in the *Apology*, that “the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being.” Less familiar, but superbly effective, is the use of Socratic censorship in order to force students to justify their own assumptions about freedom of expression. Socrates justifies censorship with an account of human flourishing in which the unity of the polis plays the central role. Of course, we together with our students believe nearly unfettered freedom of expression and publication is good. But good for *what*, exactly? And according to what conception of human nature and human flourishing? Which conception, Socrates’ or ours, is truer to the facts of our nature as we experience those facts?

In all these cases, we overcome—if only for a moment—the student’s linear and merely cumulative sense of time and convert the teaching of historical texts into a conversation with direct implications for his or her life. We do so not by making those texts “relevant” to students’ lives, but by forcing on them the opposite (and, in my estimation, much more profound) question: Are their lives and opinions relevant, when viewed from the radical and comprehensive standpoint aimed at by philosophical thought? When the philosophical text is deployed in this way, it finds an ally in the natural adventurousness of youth, and the pleasure youth feels in being liberated from the merely given and familiar.

Clearly, however, not everyone will experience this particular form of liberation as pleasurable. Many students regularly find it less enticing than other pleasures, or even intolerable. Nor is there a recipe for which texts to choose and how to deploy them that can be easily replicated by any teacher. These well-known facts of life bring us up against what I hinted at earlier: the outer limits of all method when dealing with a subject like philosophy.

Without in any way meaning to undercut the practical lessons set forth above, there are—at the deepest stratum of philosophical education—no “models” for achieving desired “learning outcomes” nor “metrics” for enhancing the effectiveness of the teacher. Teaching the history of philosophy becomes philosophical most fully only when the teacher is *actively philosophizing*, that is, when he or she is gripped entirely by the question: “Could this thinker be right about the highest and most comprehensive matters?” To expect otherwise, to seek first to teach the history of philosophy and then engage in “real” philosophizing, is akin to Hegel’s example of the fellow who is determined to learn how to swim before getting wet.¹⁶ And, for similar reasons, a student will really grasp the trans-historical unity of philosophical eros behind the bewildering variety of positions and doctrines only when he or she is already seized by that same eros—the surest mark of philosophically inclined spirit. It is thus a pedagogical achievement of great philosophical significance to recognize when, and why, method must finally yield the floor to nature.

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NOTES

1. Why? Because for Aristotle, matter is not an independently understandable concept, as much modern philosophy seems to assume. It can be understood, if at all, only in relation to form. Taken by itself, matter is something exists only *en logōi*, in our thinking, and specifically in the act of abstracting from all the identifiable properties of some determinate being. Similarly, “body” is a radically ambiguous term for Aristotle, since there is a fundamental difference between a natural self-organizing body and other bodies. Natural self-organized bodies are ensouled, and it is the soul which is both the principle of nutrition and maintenance of the living body and the principle of many of the activities we call “mental” (such as perception,

mental representation, and thinking). From an Aristotelian point of view, then, the mind-body problem only becomes a problem by ignoring the unique status of natural, ensouled bodies and redefining all bodies as inert mass-points, at which point the anguished question arises of how body thus understood relates to mind thus understood—i.e., as something completely discontinuous with body. This is a perfect example of how the study of ancient texts, approached properly, can be a critical enterprise directed at modernity, rather than merely a doxastic museum tour of the past. For more on this, see p. 7.

2. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I, iv, 13: "By this it appears how necessary it is for any man that aspires to true knowledge, to examine the definitions of former authors, and either to correct them when they are negligently set down or to make them himself. For the errors of definitions multiply themselves according as the reckoning proceeds, and lead men into absurdities, which at last they see, but cannot avoid without reckoning anew from the beginning, in which lies the foundation of their errors. From whence it happens that they which trust to books do as they that cast up many little sums into a greater, without considering whether those little sums were rightly cast up or not; and at last finding the error visible, and not mistrusting their first grounds, know not which way to clear themselves but spend their time fluttering over their books as birds that, entering by the chimney and finding themselves enclosed in a chamber, flutter at the false light of a glass window, for want of wit to consider which way they came in." Note that in the 1668 Latin version of this passage, those "first grounds" which Hobbes intimates are untrustworthy are the *Magistrorum principis* ("the principles of their teachers").
3. Martin Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 2000), 8-9 and 14-20. In English, see *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 5-6 and 13-19.
4. This, of course, is not to deny that some philosophers will explicitly *claim* to have replaced and made obsolete an earlier form of thinking. Such claims were especially characteristic of the early modern philosophical struggle against the scholastics. One thinks here of Hobbes or Descartes as examples. But, of course, in teaching such philosophers we cannot take such a claim at face value. It must be thought through and challenged.
5. *Metaphysics*, A, 3, 983b6-27. And cf. Simplicius' testimony: "Thales is reported to be the first to reveal the investigation of nature to the Greeks," cited in *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, ed. G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 86.
6. This is how I understand the gnomic, but profound, statement attributed to Alcmaeon: "Human beings die for this reason, that they cannot join the beginning to the end." Aristotle, *Problemata*, XVII, 3, 916a33.
7. Or, at least, emendation or qualification. But these only serve to highlight the main point, viz., that this or that teaching is *not yet* wisdom.
8. *Nihil tam absurde dici potest, quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum*. Cicero, *De Divinatione*, II, 58, 119.
9. Cf. Heraclitus' fragments 22B1, 22B2, and 22B50 in Hermann Diels and Walter Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 3 vols, 6th edition (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951-1952).
10. See Plato, *Gorgias*, 505e4-5. While I cannot argue for it fully here, I believe it demonstrable that this applies even to what purports to be a frontal assault, such as we find in Nietzsche, on traditional philosophical rationalism *tout court*.
11. *Metaphysics*, A, 9, 991b1-2. This chapter contains a detailed critique of what Aristotle took to be the doctrine of Ideas.
12. *Metaphysics*, A, 6, 987b7-14, and 9, 991a20-22.
13. This is why Aristotle can simply assert that the theoretical life *is* happiness and that "this has already been said," even though this is the first time he actually says it. Chapter 7 is his demonstration that the superiority of the theoretical life "seems to be in agreement with what has been said and with the truth." *Ethica Nicomachea*, X, 7, 1177a12-b26.
14. The history of philosophy can doubtless provide numerous other examples, but I prefer to speak whereof I know.

15. "Of the things which are, some are by nature and others through other causes..." See *Physics*, B, I, 192b8-13.

16. G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §10 and §41A1.

"Philosophy That Is Ancient": Teaching Ancient Philosophy in Context

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"Ancient philosophy is philosophy that is ancient." I have taught a course in ancient philosophy almost every year for the last thirty years. Lately I've taken to beginning it with this sentence, cribbed from other pedagogical tautologies.¹

The truism about philosophy that is ancient is my way of bringing students into the double experience, hermeneutically speaking, of reading the pre-Socratics, Plato, and Aristotle. Ancient philosophy really is philosophy, which is to say that it confronts topics of perennial interest at the level of generality we associate with philosophy that is *not* ancient, and deploys many of the argumentative and interpretive methods found in contemporary philosophy. Ancient philosophy *is* philosophy (and we use the present tense of the verb "to be" in saying so) as ancient weather is weather, and as ancient architecture and geometry are architecture and geometry.

But we also speak in the past tense. This is what philosophy was. In archaic and classical Greece, philosophy was materialist cosmology or Sophistic ethics. We distinguish ancient philosophy as ancient by virtue of its differences from later traditions: differences in scientific knowledge, in religious thought and practices, in political and social assumptions, etc. Its antiquity creates a distance. At the introductory level as well as the scholarly, reading ancient philosophers calls for historical contextualization that goes beyond anything we do with Descartes or Hobbes, or even with Aquinas or Anselm.

Reading ancient philosophy is a double game, in other words, and some doubleness enters fruitfully even into a student's first glimpse of the subject. Socrates is our contemporary as an inquirer into matters of human life and death—but also an antiquarian figure dressed in clothes we can hardly imagine, observing the rules of an etiquette that no one today lives by.

Add to the interpretive predicament the very mundane difficulty of students entering a course like this one unprepared to move back and forth between ancient and modern contexts. The mundane difficulty has increased for me over the years, as it may have increased for other people who teach ancient philosophy. At the City College of New York, my course has evolved (for a collection of good reasons) from serving philosophy majors to functioning as a general graduation requirement, and to some degree as one of my department's introductions to philosophy. I now routinely have one hundred students in the classroom, most of them arriving without backgrounds in philosophy.

Even passing details about “the porch of the king archon” or Aristotle’s inquiry into “that for the sake of which something happens” threaten to make the philosophy in the course resemble a museum piece. Worse than that, such reminders of the differences between then and now threaten to make philosophy as such, all philosophy, look not like an ongoing and widespread human activity, but something that a few people *used* to do.

Now, when it comes to antiquity itself, my experience is that students find information about the ancient world interesting—more interesting than we assume—and over the past decade I have altered my teaching of ancient philosophy to immerse students in the daily life of the antiquity that gave birth to that philosophy. This is the single greatest change I’ve made in my teaching method, and I believe it engages students in their reading of ancient philosophy. The only problem, practically speaking, is the question of how much class time can be devoted to readings and topics that are not strictly philosophical. Pedagogically, the question is what philosophical value such teaching has. When is a detail about ancient life significant to the reading of philosophy, and when is it just local color?

Student questions. It was questions from students that originally prompted me to say more about the ancient world when teaching ancient philosophy. Some of those questions sound trivial. One year we had reached the end of Plato’s *Phaedo* and the last words Socrates said: “We owe a cock to Asclepius” (118a).² (It is a weighty utterance; it inspired Nietzsche’s merciless remark that Socrates considered life a disease.³) A student asked: “So they had chickens?” I’d never thought to ask. It wouldn’t make a difference to the significance of those last words, but I was struck that someone would want to know the answer.

In another class the topic was Socrates’ craft analogy, his practice (in some dialogues) of making *technê* “profession, skill, craft” the paradigm for knowledge. Socrates would press people to see whether they understood what they said as shoemakers understood how to make shoes or as doctors understand sickness and health. One student called out, “What *did* doctors know in Socrates’ time?” Another one added, “What did shoemakers know?” We speculated together about apprenticeship and debated how much the answer would matter.

In this case what does matter are the differences between the two professions. On one ancient view of the physician, a doctor *should* be comparable to a shoemaker: knowing certain techniques and the results they would have. But the practice of medicine was divided, in a way that would lead to debates in later antiquity, between the doctors who confined themselves to empirically demonstrated methods for alleviating symptoms, and those who purported (“dogmatically,” as their opponents said) to account for disease and the functioning body with theories of humors and oppositions between hot and cold, wet and dry.⁴ Shoemakers did not claim to think cosmologically about the true nature of the shoe—Plato mocks the very idea of their learning philosophy (*Theaetetus* 180d)—so we have reason to question whether the *technê* analogy can offer a univocal image of knowledge.

It is hard to be certain which treatises in the Hippocratic corpus would have been part of medical theory during the lifetimes of Socrates and Plato. Over a period of centuries, the corpus acquired works all of which came to be associated with Hippocrates. Plato knew something about Hippocrates (see a mention at *Protagoras* 311b-c as well as a statement of medical method at *Phaedrus* 270c-e), but we hesitate to assign dates to most of the treatises.⁵ Two works that do seem to come early, however, are *On the Sacred Disease* and *On Ancient Medicine*. The former is a short account of epilepsy that can look refreshingly scientific to the modern reader for its refusal to call epilepsy any more sacred than any other disease (chapter 1). Epilepsy begins in the brain, the author insists (chapter 17). Reading this work, one wants to make Hippocratic medicine a standard for knowledge. But the confidence with which its author attributes epilepsy to *phlegm* at work in the brain (chapter 18) foretells a long tradition of medical inquiry misled by this theory of humors that stands at such a remove from experience.

This is not to condemn the Hippocratics but rather to say that however we interpret the work, *On the Sacred Disease* opens up the Socratic *technê* analogy. The treatise *On Ancient Medicine*, also likely to date from this time, dwells on the question of what makes medicine a *technê* (chapter 3), and so also might enter the process of understanding Socrates. (*Phaedrus* 270c-e might even be a reference to that work.)

The students’ questions that I have referred to might have come out of no more than idle curiosity. But their specificity convinced me that I had been presenting ancient authors in the classroom without enough background information. I started moving consciously toward learning more about the political, scientific, and social history that we need for understanding our ancient authors, and then bringing what I’d learned into the classroom. Now I teach Plato and Aristotle amid details of political, scientific, and social history. Not only how the Athenians governed themselves and what cities they warred against, but every other aspect of their lives as well, is welcome. What did their doctors do? What did people wear? Where did they go on a free afternoon, and what did they do there? Diet, religious practice, romantic love, and physical labor are all important to our conceptions of our own lives today. And my gamble (when I brought the subjects into the classroom) was that seeing the persons of the ancient world as people who cared about comparable things would help my students see the names in their books as concrete persons. Even as a more detailed description of the ancient world situates Socrates in a setting very different from our own, it might help to bring out something of his ordinariness as well.

Aristotle and science. Before moving on to my main examples, which come from Plato, let me qualify what I am saying in connection with Aristotle. Daily life does not enter his writings as it enters Plato’s. We possess none of Aristotle’s dialogues, so we are less likely to find in him the details to be elaborated that we see everywhere in Plato. This is no reason to give up on the larger world when we come to Aristotle’s writings, but it might be a reason to include some of his biological writings, even in an introductory course,

alongside his logical, ethical, and metaphysical works. This is because in a way Aristotle's biological writings offer the best opportunity of all for seeing where the ancient world lies far from ours and where it touches ours. Sometimes Aristotle generalizes about animal life or medical principles based on what he himself encountered when he spent a few years on the island of Lesbos and where he catalogued the land and sea animals he found there. A recent book, *The Lagoon*, by Armand Marie Leroi, returns to the lagoon on Lesbos that still contains many of the marine species Aristotle observed. Unlike shoes, schools, and social clubs, the fish and fowl of today are the fish and fowl of Aristotle's time. "His favorite animal," Leroi writes, "was that weirdly intelligent invertebrate, the cuttlefish."⁶ Leroi's expertise at returning to an Aristotelian species with a contrasting modern description shows another way to keep ancient philosophy both accurately ancient and philosophically contemporary.

Aristotle also plays a part in C. R. S. Harris's work on ancient theories of circulation, a work that looks at the heart and blood vessels as they were described by Aristotle, Galen, and other ancients.⁷ But I should say that Harris treats the cardiovascular anatomy in greater detail than most nonexpert readers have the patience for. I am grateful for his expertise, but I would not assign this book to a student.

Plato's *Lysis*. Among the works of Plato, there are some that almost always find their way into the classroom. The defense speech of Socrates in the *Apology* has obvious appeal and significance, and its portrayal of moments in the life of Socrates leads easily to talk about the Peloponnesian War and the subsequent tyranny in Athens, all of which informs the question of how philosophy can coexist with democratic culture. But the speech also leads to more prosaic matters. Socrates proposes a fine he can pay (38b), and we need to say what those amounts mean in modern currency. He compares himself to a foreigner in the courtroom (17d), and it is worth asking what kinds of foreigners did live in Athens, and what kind of lives they lived.

But Socrates is on trial for his life in the *Apology*. This is not the place to observe him in the midst of ordinary existence. Longer dialogues like the *Protagoras* and *Symposium* set the stage for Socratic conversations so extensively that a class could happily move at a slow pace through one of those dialogues and not miss a detail. To make my point about teaching Plato, however, I prefer those slices of philosophical life in which Socrates turns casual conversations into incipient theorizing: the *Alcibiades I*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Hippias Major*, *Hippias Minor*, *Laches*, and *Lysis*. Especially in their opening moments, these dialogues communicate glimpses of daily life as it took place in a city like Athens before Alexander reshaped the political and cultural landscape. And because they are all short, these dialogues move quickly into the heart of their philosophical inquiries so the student can get both a snapshot of ancient life and an abstruse conceptual tangle in a single night's reading.

The *Lysis* contains both sides of ancient philosophy as I have been talking about it. In one way it doesn't need any

historical context. For even though some of the dialogue's serpentine arguments are hard to translate into concrete English, the conclusion is clear in every language, as is the idea of philosophical life that the conclusion implies. The *Lysis*'s main conversation is about *philia*—"friendship" in the most common rendering, or "affection" (but often applying where "friendship" does not). Socrates and his teenage interlocutors try to determine what *philia* is and how it comes into existence. Whether they begin with the premise that "like is friend to like" or, instead, that "unlike is friend to unlike," they fail at achieving the theory they want. Then *Lysis* and Menexenus, the boys that Socrates has been talking to, have to go home. Socrates has the last word:

"Now," I said, "Lysis and Menexenus, we've made ourselves ridiculous, both I an old man and you. For when these others go away they'll say that we consider ourselves one another's friends—I put myself with the two of you—but we haven't been able to discover what the friend is." (223b)

I translate the last clause as literally as possible to bring forward its provocation. We don't know what we're talking about and yet we help ourselves to impressive words. It is common to accuse a disloyal friend of *not knowing* what it is to be a friend, and to confess you hadn't *known* what love was until one great love came along. Likewise we speak of coming to know or failing to know what courage, grace, courtesy, anger, or greed is like. The Socratic provocation consists in claiming that we achieve such knowledge—that we can *only* achieve such knowledge—through the process of defining our terms.

The *Lysis* begins a long way from that challenge to existence, and I want to focus on those opening pages to suggest how much an instructor can draw out of the dialogue's beginning in the classroom.

Socrates is walking, outside the city walls, from one Athenian gymnasium to another, from the Academy to the Lyceum (203a). He sees Hippothales⁸ and other young men near a *palaistra* "wrestling-room, wrestling school" and they all propose going in (204a). Socrates learns that there are good-looking younger boys inside, including *Lysis* whom Hippothales is infatuated with (204b). Hippothales has been writing songs about *Lysis*'s father, Democrates, and about his grandfather, *Lysis* (204d).

They enter to find that *Lysis* and his friends have completed their sacrifice to *Hermes* and are now sitting, nicely dressed, around a game of knucklebones (206e). Socrates begins his conversation with *Lysis* and his friend Menexenus. As a warm-up, and to show Hippothales how one wins a boy over, he asks *Lysis* what liberties his parents allow him (207e-210d). The family's mule-driver, not *Lysis*, drives the mule cart, even though the mule-driver is a slave (208b). Another household slave is his tutor (208c). So how (Socrates asks) can *Lysis* consider himself free and not enslaved (207e, 208e)?

Reading these few pages of the *Lysis* along with my students, I add conversational footnotes along these lines to the beginning of the dialogue:

- **outside the city walls.** Athens included both the walled city and considerable countryside outside those walls. It is easy to focus on urban life, but many Athenians lived in villages in the Attic countryside; others may have lived on their land in family farms. (Victor Hanson's work has done much to fill in our sense of Athenian rural life.⁹) And we can already raise one obvious question about Socrates. How is he able to pass his days far from any workplace, given the popular portrayal of him as a poor man?
- **from Academy to Lyceum.** This reference touches on the exhaustively discussed topic of ancient Greek athletics. By the time of Socrates, many Greek cities had public places devoted to exercise and athletics. There seem to have been three main gymnasia at Athens: the Academy, the Lyceum, and the Cynosarges. It has widely been noted that Plato founded his school at the first of these and Aristotle later made the second one his own school. (Later testimony tells us the Cynics got their name from the Cynosarges.) Plato cannot have intended a joke about Socrates drifting from Platonic into Aristotelian studies, because although he may well have founded the Academy before writing the *Lysis*, the Lyceum did not become a philosophical school until after his death.
- **palaistra.** We are still in the domain of athletics. A *palaistra* was not a *gymnasium*. These smaller institutions appeared in many cities, as gymnasia did, although unlike the public gymnasium, a *palaistra* apparently could be privately owned. A younger crowd exercised here. That Socrates carries on a discussion on these grounds reinforces our sense that Athenian philosophers linked their enterprise with physical exercise.
 - Passages in Plato's *Charmides*, *Euthydemus*, and *Theaetetus* suggest the popularity of gymnastic spaces among friends of Socrates. Ancient sources about athletics include Philostratus *Gymnasticus* and Lucian *Anacharsis*. For selections from other primary sources, Miller's *Arete* is the sourcebook to consult.¹⁰
 - Excellent secondary sources include Kyle, Miller, and Scanlon.¹¹
- **Hippothales infatuated with Lysis.** Given that the motivating force behind Socrates' conversation with Lysis is said to be the infatuation that Hippothales has, there is no reading the *Lysis* without discussing ancient Greek same-sex love, another broad topic with (these days, after a long period of the opposite) an extensive bibliography. Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* are incomprehensible without some explanation of these ancient same-sex customs. In connection with the *Lysis*, essential facts include the difference in age between the man (often a young-enough man) who pursued the object of love, and the younger adolescent boy he pursued who, according to the stereotype, could never be an adult. Because the object of love played a passive role in this pursuit, and because Greek men had to represent themselves as active parties, there was some ambivalence surrounding these romances. The younger partners had to make at least a show of resisting the older men's attentions.
 - Primary sources include Plato's *Symposium* and Aeschines' *Against Timarchus*, a courtroom speech against an Athenian citizen on the grounds of his past as a prostitute.
 - As Dover's pioneering work has already shown, there is evidence to be collected from every part of both Greek life and Greek art to inform our understanding of ancient male-male relationships; Halperin, Davidson, and Winkler round out and qualify some of Dover's conclusions.¹²
 - **Hippothales writing songs.** I like this tidbit about Hippothales composing songs for the very specific light in which it casts Greek homosexuality, making the ancient romantic relationships look similar to modern ones in some ways and distinctly different in others. The anecdote cited here tells against an excessively "anthropological" reading of ancient homosexuality according to which the relationships were based on "coming-of-age" rituals. There may well have been initiation rites behind Greek pederasty, but ritual practices do not call for individualized strategies of seduction. Hippothales is in love. And then, as now, there is no more reliable impetus to song-writing than unrequited love. But while such songwriting today is expected to be about the loved one, I am hard-pressed to name one love song written during my lifetime that celebrates the athletic achievement of the loved one's parents or grandparents.¹³
 - **Lysis, the grandfather of Lysis.** This one is a small detail. Students sometimes wonder where ancient Greek names came from. According to one dominant custom, the first boy in a family would be named after his father's father, as Lysis was.
 - **Hermes.** Athenian gymnasia, and perhaps many around Greece, had three statues of their governing deities: Heracles, Eros, and Hermes. Heracles was an obvious choice given his legendary strength, and the connections between athletic culture and romantic love made Eros a natural choice as well. But Hermes, a god with numerous functions, is harder to pin down. Does his inclusion, and the performance of a prayer in this dialogue, attest to the intellectual side of life at the gym?
 - It is hard to know where to begin reading about ancient religion given that (unlike some of these topics) it has been studied by scholars

for centuries. And students may already know something about ancient religious beliefs and practices. Still it's worth having sources on hand. Along with only three other gods (Zeus, Poseidon, Athena), Hermes joins in much of the action of Homer's *Odyssey*, which affords us a good first profile of this divinity. Homeric Hymn 4 *To Hermes* tells the story of the god's birth.

- Among recent secondary sources, Burkert's *Greek Religion* is the acknowledged authority. See also books by Buxton, Mikalson, and Zaidman and Pantel. On Hermes specifically (but also on mythology generally) Vernant is both a necessity and a pleasure to consult.¹⁴
- **nicely dressed.** Socrates (as narrator) tells us that Lysis and the other boys were "done up" attractively. (The contrast with Socrates' own appearance goes without saying.) This is a point at which a reader may ask what Athenians wore when they were "nicely dressed." When exercising, they wore nothing; but what was the attire of a man of property? For an answer, see the following:
 - Scattered anecdotes in Herodotus's *Histories* and an atypical passage in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* (1.6), both of which create a first impression, as does a speech by Persia's Queen Atossa in Aeschylus's *Persians* (lines 176-196).
 - On Athenian clothing of the time, Geddes; on nudity, Bonfante.¹⁵
- **knucklebones.** This one is a small detail too, and not much information is available, but knucklebones apparently could be thrown like dice.
 - For available facts about board games in antiquity, see Kurke.¹⁶
- **household slaves.** I emphasize this point because although in one way modern American society is highly sensitive to mentions of slavery, in another respect references to slavery in literature from the distant past tend to be taken for granted as something that was done "back then." But even a mention of slaves in ancient sources, such as these asides in a conversation that is putatively about Lysis's minority status, suggests how large a role slaves played in Greek society and economy. Although many cultures owned slaves in ancient, medieval, and early modern periods, they differed widely in the degrees to which they depended on slaves. Like the U.S. South before the Civil War, and like a few other times and places—but unlike many or most—Greek and Roman antiquity *relied* on slavery. Slaves amounted to one-fifth or more of the population, they were essential to the production of food, and they were omnipresent in urban life.

- Primary sources again include Plato. He gives one slave a rare speaking part in the *Meno* when Socrates leads that slave through a geometrical proof. And to the extent that his dialogues dramatize philosophical theory's emergence out of quotidian conversation, the recurring appearance of slaves in these quotidian settings makes the most powerful suggestion we have of their place in Athenian life. See the opening scenes of Aristophanes' *Wasps*, *Knights*, and *Frogs* for other representations of slaves. Aristophanes has the advantage of letting himself depict the most mundane elements of life, although the fact that he plays scenes for laughs limits the historical use we can make of those scenes as evidence. Surely, the necessity of slavery to the culture's existence helps to explain Aristotle's defense of the practice (*Politics* I, 1253b14-1255b40), although such a defense was unusual even in his own time and might have been heard with embarrassment.
- For contemporary discussions, see, first of all, Finley, who initiated the scholarly discussion of ancient slavery. Works by Garlan and de Ste-Croix are thorough and, though controversial in places, necessary reading. For a most recent work, see duBois, who insightfully calls Greek slaves both ubiquitous and invisible.¹⁷

In speaking of the *Lysis* as I am doing here, more or less spying its arguments from the periphery, I do not mean to play down the dialogue's arguments. I am only assuming that an instructor knows how to follow the Socratic conversation through its logical turns, and will be doing so after having situated that conversation in the Athenian wrestling room. Those in search of a guide to the arguments themselves may consult, for example, Penner and Rowe.¹⁸

Historical information in the philosophical classroom.

We are back at the question of what makes this history philosophical. I pointed out that some Hippocratic treatises, which you might think belong in the history of science, illuminate the Socratic analogy between knowledge and *technê*. There will be student questions, and informed answers to them, that end up providing no more than local color. But it is not always clear in advance what will be merely local color and what is philosophically significant.

Take the biographical detail that Socrates walked around Athens barefoot (*Phaedrus* 229a, *Symposium* 174a). Is this proof of his poverty? If so, it would make a mystery of the fact that he has so much leisure time and knows so many aristocratic Athenians. At one time Socrates' lover was Alcibiades, the foster son of Athens's de facto political leader. Athenian culture would have to have been highly democratic to permit such class-crossing, and Socrates would have to have been not only poor but *ungrateful* not to acknowledge his good luck in living in such a democracy.

More likely, Socrates went barefoot not out of poverty but out of personal preference. Do we want to say he was being

hardy? (See *Symposium* 220b, where he is said to have walked barefoot even on snow.) Or that he had his mind on higher things and ignored mere discomforts in his feet?

Of course, even hardiness calls for further interpretation. We should not rush to think that Socrates was merely denying himself comforts for he dressed not like any old poor man but in that particular unostentatious way that the governing class of Sparta did, i.e., the military elite in that city who called themselves *homoioi* ("equals, peers") and who dressed to efface differences in wealth within their numbers.¹⁹ In other words, Socrates dressed to display his solidarity with Spartan culture, even in the midst of the bitter twenty-seven-year war between Athens and Sparta.²⁰ This view of him supports the Athenian suspicion of Socrates as anti-democratic and even as disloyal to the state.

Who were those Athenians who suspected him of disloyalty? Again, what might look like non-philosophical details can move us toward an informed assessment of which elements of the population he most offended.

When we read about the trial of Socrates—I've already drawn students' attention to the points in Plato's *Apology* at which Socrates asks the jurors to be quiet—I invite my students to picture 501 jurors getting noisily impatient.²¹ I draw on the first half of Aristophanes' *Wasps* for a profile of the stereotypical juror. Philocleon, the hero of *Wasps*, claims to have carried his jury-pay home in his mouth (lines 609, 787-795)—apparently the way in which the ancient Greeks carried their small change.²² An aging male citizen counted on jury duty for extra money and would have voiced his displeasure at Socrates' highhandedness about the system that had given rise to juried trials.

Aristophanic stereotypes aside, we know that the jurors were not the wealthy men that Socrates mostly kept company with. Most ancient people worked on farms, but farming life and other sorts of field labor have been left out of our picture of classical Greece. I mentioned Victor Hanson's book, *The Other Greeks*, in which he writes about the farmers who made up most of Athens's citizen population. Theophrastus' character sketch of "the rustic" supplements Hanson's descriptions; see also the opening scenes of Aristophanes' *Acharnians* and *Clouds* in which those plays' heroes Dikaiopolis and Strepsiades, respectively, describe the life of Athenian farmers in what they take to be an alienating big city.

From a social and legal point of view, Josiah Ober is essential reading to understanding what was said in Athenian courts and how the rhetoric used there was intended to be understood. And John Dillon's *Salt and Olives* fills out our sense of the moral worldview that went into many jury decisions.²³ Learning more about who the jurors were and how they viewed their city helps to shift your sense of the trial of Socrates from needless blundering into an unjust verdict to deeper worries about how the committed participants in a democracy are likely to perceive an intellectual critique of democracy.

Back to the *Lysis*: *philia*, athletics, and slavery. What is local color for readers of the *Lysis*, and what is philosophically significant?

I think that just about everyone will agree on the necessity of knowing what the Greek word "*philia*" means and whom to call a "*philos*." No sound interpretation of the *Lysis* can ignore the question of how best to render its subject in English.

Although "friendship" and "fondness" and even "liking" do capture much of the semantic field of *philia*, that semantic field also has broader applications. "*Philia*" is the most natural word in classical Greek for the feeling that parents and children have for one another, and one spouse for the other. "Friendship" has a forced sound in the latter case and is controversial in the other (having your children as your friends). The *Republic* calls one who loves an artistic spectacle a "*philotheamôn*" ("lover of sights") (5.475d), whereas we naturally call ourselves music-lovers but rarely, or only awkwardly, "friends" of music.

There is, however, a way in which the words "friend" and "friendship" fit right in with the discussion in the *Lysis*, a way which returns to the erotic or romantic sense of the *philos*: no words are more automatic to our romantic lives than "girlfriend" and "boyfriend." With such examples, and others we can draw from Books 8 and 9 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, we preface our reading of the *Lysis*.

Taking the translation of *philia* as an unproblematic case of non-philosophical information that matters to a philosophical reading, consider two aspects of the *Lysis*'s opening scene that I discussed above. First there is athletics. Not only did Socrates frequent the gyms and wrestling-rooms of Athens, but those places seem to have been considered natural sites for philosophical exchange. The philosophers who founded schools in or near gymnasia drew on the existing pedagogical aspect of gym culture. Thanks to them, but really thanks to their understanding of athleticism, three modern words for educational institutions have come down to us from the gymnasia of Athens.²⁴ It is worth remembering that it was not a Socratic philosopher but rather Isocrates, a student of Gorgias and a very different type of intellectual, who first spelled out the parallel between gymnastic training for the body and philosophy for the soul.²⁵

Even more established in Athenian thought, as well as in Greek cities outside Athens, was the connection between athletic spaces and romantic encounters. The earliest evidence for love at the gym dates from a century before Socrates, when the archaic poet Theognis wrote, in lines now often quoted, "Happy is the one who exercises while he loves and comes back home to sleep all day with a good-looking boy."²⁶ To emphasize the connection among such uses of the athletic space, Plato has Socrates perform his cross-examination as an example of seduction.²⁷ As a character in the *Symposium* will say explicitly, exercise and philosophy and pederasty all flourish in the same places and among the same people (182b-c).

Maybe because the three—sports, romantic seduction, and philosophizing—flourish together, they are all more readily conceived as competitions. Sports in classical Greece were contests between individual athletes, the only cooperative effort being that between an athlete and his trainer. This difference between ancient Greek sports and our team games appears at the metaphorical or proverbial level. A lot of sports language today describes rule-abiding behavior and its violations, and athletes' collective effort;²⁸ in Greek culture, metaphors from athletics focus on *individual* accomplishment and victory. When Apollo gets his way with the Fates he is said to have "tripped them up"; even the apostle Paul follows Greek tradition when he contrasts what he is doing with inefficacious "beating the air," i.e. shadow boxing.²⁹

We may ask whether the athletic setting of the *Lysis* leads the conversation held between Socrates and the boys to take on an air of victory and defeat. People often still philosophize that way today, believing that the enterprise calls for arguments that "defeat" all others: "knock-down," "drag-out" arguments, as they are called without embarrassment. Is argumentative "victory" essential to clear thinking and the pursuit of the truth, or is it a legacy of Socrates' version of conceptual gymnastics?

The intermingling of athletics, philosophy, and love also forces a more uncomfortable question—whether we can speak of love without reference to active and passive participants or even of winners and losers in affectionate relationships. John Winkler has written poignantly about the *kinaidos*, the adult man in ancient Greece who wanted to play a passive role in same-sex relations: "Since sexual activity is symbolic of (or constructed as) zero-sum competition and the restless conjunction of winners with losers, the *kinaidos* is a man who desires to lose."³⁰ Gender may have been fluid for lovers in classical Greece; victory and loss were not.

Once alerted to the competitive spirit in athletics that comes to apply to philosophical cross-examination on the one hand and to romantic affections on the other, we can review the dialogue's philosophical arguments more attuned to their assumptions of asymmetry in love. And then, when what Socrates says appears to translate most smoothly into things we say about friendship and love, we may ask to what degree our own thinking presupposes a polarity in romantic relationships between pursuer and pursued, between the active and passive.

For instance, it might look surprising that although Socrates begins with the friendship between Lysis and Menexenus, a reciprocal relationship in which each is the other's *philos* (212b), his subsequent discussion and the puzzles worried over have to do with *unequal* love—as if *that* sort of relationship were found to be the conceptually more interesting one.

Do we want an antipodal organization of phenomena in our discussions of love? I propose that by now what you might have considered an extraneous detail in the setting of *Lysis* is seen to be a point of some philosophical significance.

It might also have seemed extraneous to the philosophical point of the dialogue (or at least tangential to it) that I pointed to the talk of slavery in Socrates' opening conversation with Lysis. My purpose was not to reiterate that slavery is wrong nor to condemn ancient Greek civilization for its callous dependence on slaves (not that I do not have those concerns). The work of Page duBois has convinced me that although the Greeks rarely spoke about their slaves, they can be seen to speak about themselves *in light of the fact of slavery*. For to explicate your own nature is to show how you differ from those persons whose nature you would never imagine to be worth explicating.

In the *Lysis*, the use of slaves as a foil for free Athenian citizens does not end with the contrasts that Socrates draws early on when he asks Lysis why a slave should be allowed to drive the mules while Lysis, the son of the family, is not. The dialogue ends, and the whole philosophical inquiry is interrupted when the *paidagōgoi* ("tutors, attendants of children") of Lysis and Menexenus appear and call the boys to come home (223a). This is when Socrates says (more or less), "I say I'm a friend but I don't know what a friend is," or as we might also put it, "I have not defined myself. There is this thing that I am and I don't know what it is."

The scene has a realistic touch. The tutors are drunk and speak *hupobarbarizontes* ("with foreign accents") (223b) as most Athenian slaves would have spoken. The Spartans had reduced an indigenous Greek population to serfdom while Athens mostly used chattel slaves, most of them non-Greeks normally captives taken in battle. Having foreign-born slaves in the city probably helped Athens guard against revolts for partly Scythian, partly Thracian, partly Persian, and also partly Greek, the slaves of Athens would not have seen themselves as a unity nor have been able to communicate easily. By comparison, Sparta's Helots revolted on several occasions, ruinously for their Spartiate oppressors.

The foreign origin of Athenian slaves also made it easier for a citizen to distinguish himself from them. These particular tutors' drunkenness only underscores their difference from good citizens, as does Socrates' saying that the tutors appeared *hōsper daimones tines* ("like sprites, spirits") (223a). As duBois observes, the liberty that Athenian free citizens place at the center of their sense of themselves is not liberty as a positive quality they possess but liberty as the negation of the undesirable subordinate status of the slaves they see around them. Liberty is not being conceptualized in modern terms, as escape from governmental intrusion, but instead seems to derive its value from signifying that the one who possesses it is not a slave.

In other words, although the dramatic entry of the slaves is made to end this pursuit of self-knowledge, thus figuratively associating self-definition with the work of a free man, the idea of enslavement had (like sprites or spirits) been haunting the conversation all along. Indeed, I would even argue that an unexamined fear of enslavement contributes to the tension around the final conclusion Socrates springs on the boys, namely, that *anagkaion* ("it is necessary that") the legitimate *erastēs* ("lover") *phileisthai*

hupo tôn paidikôn (“is loved by his darling”) (222a). By now Lysis is silent (222a). He and Menexenus nod their assent to this conclusion, but *mogis* (“barely, with difficulty”) (222b). The argument is telling them: Someone loves you, and you are to perform his friend. You are no freer than a slave when it comes to choosing your associates.

The conclusion Socrates brings them to is paradoxical, to be sure, and almost certainly false. But would it feel so important to ward off that conclusion if you did not think you had to demonstrate your status as free citizen? Is being a non-slave more fundamental than being a friend? To my mind this question is a philosophical outcome of attending to the slaves and the condition they represent in and around this dialogue.

A last practical thought. I’ve knocked at your door and delivered a sales pitch—but where are my vacuum cleaners? I have failed to say how this splendid illuminating information can actually make its way into the classroom.

I’m no expert at pedagogical techniques, so I won’t waste time and space pretending to say how an instructor can best bring historical background into a philosophy course. I imagine that it can be done either casually or formally. Some people will introduce the kind of context I’ve been describing only now and then, as needed and in response to student questions. Others will want to add reading assignments to their syllabus. The most formal option would be to plan student presentations timed to coincide with the main reading a class is doing: The students have just read Plato’s *Apology*, so one student reads selections from *Wasps* and describes its image of the juror, or when the class begins the *Symposium*, one student presents part of Dover’s *Greek Homosexuality*.

Under the best conditions, the third option makes the most learning possible. But instructors will have to decide for themselves how close their classrooms come to the best conditions. Are all students prepared to research and present necessary information? Will they require so much coaching that a side project turns into a major time commitment for both student and instructor?

At the other extreme, the first of the options merely calls on the instructor to possess all this additional information ready to be dropped into a lecture or classroom discussion. Those who already know a fair amount about classical life and culture will find it easiest to introduce the material this way. To those who don’t, it sounds like a disproportionate amount of outside reading.

In many cases I think that the second option will work best. Choose the topic you want to amplify in any given semester and find good primary and secondary readings; then assign those readings in tandem with the philosophy that students are reading. The selections I have identified from ancient sources are brief. The secondary sources vary from article-length to big, thick, book-length, but even the very long sources can be edited for classroom use. It takes surprisingly little work, in the end, to enhance the charm that antiquity still possesses for modern students.

NOTES

1. One example turns up in guides to creative writing: “A short story is a story that is short.”
2. In what follows I will specify passages in ancient works using standard page or line numbers. In the case of Plato’s dialogues, this means the Stephanus pages, a number followed by a letter from a to e, which appear in nearly every edition and translation of the dialogues. In the case of most other ancient authors I will cite, it means the line numbers. Passages in Thucydides are marked by book, chapter, and section.
3. Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, § 340.
4. See G. E. R. Lloyd, *Revolutions of Wisdom: Studies in the Claims and Practice of Ancient Greek Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 158–67.
5. On some of the questions of dating, and what Plato knew about Hippocrates, see Jaap Mansfeld, “Plato and the Method of Hippocrates,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantium Studies* 21 (1980): 341–362.
6. Armand Marie Leroi, *The Lagoon: How Aristotle Invented Science* (New York: Viking Press, 2014). The author is both a biologist and a historian of science, but this book is written to be accessible to any educated reader. “His favorite animal,” p. 8.
7. C. R. S. Harris, *The Heart and the Vascular System in Ancient Greek Medicine* (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1973).
8. The appearance of a name prompts me to mention a reference work that I have found both invaluable and irresistible: Debra Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2002). Look up any name you notice in one of Plato’s dialogues, and Nails will supply all the information available about that person. Nails offers the reminder that “Hippothes” was an aristocratic name in Athens (xliv, citing Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 60–67); as for Lysis, she reconstructs his family tree, cites relevant archaeological inscriptions, and adds what is known about his extended family. His father-in-law “was very likely the Isthmionic who is known to have signed the Peace of Nicias and fifty-year alliance with Sparta in 421” (196).
9. On ancient Greek farming see Victor D. Hanson, *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (New York: The Free Press, 1995).
10. Stephen G. Miller (ed.) *Arete: Greek Sports from Ancient Sources*, 3rd and expanded ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
11. Donald G. Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015); Stephen G. Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Thomas F. Scanlon, *Eros and Greek Athletics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
12. K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, updated and with a new postscript (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990); James M. Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love: A Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2007); John Winkler, “Laying Down the Law: The Oversight of Men’s Sexual Behavior in Classical Athens,” in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, eds. David Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 171–209.
13. Chance the Rapper just announced that he will be paying homage to Muhammad Ali at the 2016 ESPY Awards. I know of songs that refer to Kobe Bryant, Joe DiMaggio, Rubin Carter, and LeBron James. But if such a song were written today by someone in love with the athlete’s descendant, it would come around to identifying that true object of attention: “You’re the one who really knocks me down”; “you can score better than him,” etc. To modern tastes, what Hippothales does is excessively indirect, almost deceptive.
14. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. John Raffan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Richard Buxton, *Imaginary Greece: The Contexts of Mythology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Jon D. Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion*,

2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, trans. Paul Cartledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). On Hermes specifically, see Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Hestia-Hermes," in *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, trans. Janet Lloyd with Jeff Fort (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1983), 127–75; on mythology generally, see *Mortals and Immortals*, ed. Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

15. A. G. Geddes, "Rags and Riches: The Costume of Athenian Men in the Fifth Century," *Classical Quarterly* 37 (1987): 307–31; Larissa Bonfante, "Nudity as a Costume in Classical Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* 93 (1989): 543-70.
16. Leslie Kurke, "Ancient Greek Board Games and How to Play Them," *Classical Philology* 94, no. 3 (1999): 247–67.
17. Moses Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: Viking Press, 1980); Yvon Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); G. E. M. de Ste-Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London: Duckworth, 1981); Page DuBois, *Slaves and Other Objects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
18. Terry Penner and Christopher Rowe, *Plato's Lysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
19. Spartans called "equals," Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 3.3.5, *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, 13.1; dressed modestly, Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 1.6.4; went barefoot, Xenophon, *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, 2.3. For an introduction, the essential book to read is Paul Cartledge, *The Spartans: The World of the Warrior-Heroes of Ancient Greece, from Utopia to Crisis and Collapse* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2003). For advanced discussions, the essential book is Paul Cartledge, *Spartan Reflections* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
20. Debra Nails, "Socrates," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/socrates/>.
21. If students do not notice it, they quickly grasp the significance of the fact once it's pointed out to them, that Socrates keeps asking the jurors not to *thorubein* ("make a disturbance"): *Apology*, 17d, 21a, 27b, and 30c.
22. Also see Aristophanes, *Women in the Assembly*, lines 815-822; in Theophrastus Characters, "the reckless man" charges interest on small loans and puts the interest in his cheek.
23. On courtroom rhetoric, see Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); and John Dillon, *Salt and Olives: Morality and Custom in Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).
24. Besides "academy" we have German *Gymnasium*, Albanian *gjimnaz*, Polish *gimnazjum*, and similar words in Scandinavian languages; meanwhile the Lyceum lent its name to the French *lycée*, Romanian *liceu*, and Italian *liceo*.
25. Isocrates, *Antidosis*, 181.
26. Theognis, 1335-1336; also see Plato, *Laws*, 636a-c.
27. See Socrates at *Lysis*, 210e: "I looked over toward Hippothales . . . it occurred to me to say, 'This is how to talk to a boyfriend, Hippothales, humbling him and trimming him back, not pampering and making him vain as you do.'"
28. Rule-abiding behavior and violations: "a level playing field" versus being "out of bounds," "over the line," or "below the belt." Collective effort: "a team player," "stepping up to the plate," "inside baseball."
29. Apollo trips up Fates, Euripides, *Alcestis*, 33-34; Paul doesn't beat the air, 1 Corinthians 9.26.
30. John Winkler, "Laying Down the Law," 186.

Teaching about the Existence of God

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Relatively few philosophers specialize in the philosophy of religion, but many teach an introductory problems course in which one usual topic is the existence of God. The routine approach is to present and assess the three traditional arguments for the existence of God, then shift to the problem of evil, and finally the unit on God's existence ends.

My new book, *Religion Within Reason* (Columbia University Press) suggests that this approach often takes place within a set of misleading assumptions that may be shared by students and faculty members. One of these assumptions is that if God's existence were disproved, then religious commitment would have been shown to be unreasonable. Various religions, however, reject the notion of a supernatural God. These include Jainism, Theravada Buddhism, Mimamsa and Samkhya Hinduism, as well as "death of God" versions of Christianity and Reconstructionist Judaism.

Here, for example, is how Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, an opponent of supernaturalism, responds to a skeptic who asks why, if the Bible isn't taken literally, Jews should nevertheless observe the Sabbath:

We observe the Sabbath not so much because of the account of its origin in Genesis, as because of the role it has come to play in the spiritual life of our People and of mankind. . . . The Sabbath day sanctifies our life by what it contributes to making us truly human and helping us transcend those instincts and passions that are part of our heritage from the sub-human.¹

Consider next the outlook of one of the major figures in the Christian "Death of God" movement, the Anglican Bishop of Woolwich John A. T. Robinson, who denies the existence of a God "up there," or "out there." Here is his account of the Holy Communion:

[T]oo often . . . it ceases to be the holy meal, and becomes a religious service in which we turn our backs on the common and the community and in individualistic devotion go to 'make our communion' with 'the God out there.' This is the essence of the religious perversion, when worship becomes a realm into which to withdraw from the world to 'be with God'—even if it is only to receive strength to go back into it. In this case the entire realm of the non-religious (in other words 'life') is relegated to the profane.²

Of course, a naturalistic religion can also be developed without deriving it from a supernatural religion. Take, for example, the outlook of philosopher Charles Frankel, another opponent of supernaturalism, who nevertheless believes that religion, shorn of irrationality, can make a

distinctive contribution to human life, providing deliverance from vanity, triumph over meanness, and endurance in the face of tragedy. As he puts it, "it seems to me not impossible that a religion could draw the genuine and passionate adherence of its members while it claimed nothing more than to be poetry in which [people] might participate and from which they might draw strength and light."³

Such naturalistic options are philosophically respectable. Whether to choose any of them is for each person to decide.

Teachers and students should also recognize that theism does not imply religious commitment. After all, even if someone believes that one or more of the proofs for God's existence is sound, the question remains whether to join a religion and, if so, which one. The proofs contain not a clue as to which religion, if any, is favored by God. Indeed, God may oppose all religious activity. Perhaps God does not wish to be prayed to, worshipped, or adored, and might even reward those who shun such activities.

Yet another misleading assumption is implicit in the definitions which are usually offered: a theist believes in God, an atheist disbelieves in God, and an agnostic neither believes or disbelieves in God. Notice that the only hypothesis being considered is the existence of God as traditionally conceived; no other supernatural alternatives are taken seriously. Why not?

Suppose, for example, the world is the scene of a struggle between God and the Demon. Both are powerful, but neither is omnipotent. When events go well, God's benevolence is ascendant; when events go badly, the Demon's malevolence is ascendant. Is this sort of doctrine, historically associated with Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, unnecessarily complex and therefore to be rejected? No, for even though in one sense it is more complex than monotheism, because it involves two supernatural beings rather than one, in another sense it is simpler, because it leaves no aspect of the world beyond human understanding. After all, theism faces the problem of evil, while dualistic hypotheses have no difficulty accounting for both good and evil.

In sum, I would suggest that both faculty members and students should remember the following four essential points: (1) belief in the existence of God is not a necessary condition for religious commitment; (2) belief in the existence of God is not a sufficient condition for religious commitment; (3) the existence of God is not the only supernatural hypothesis worth serious discussion; and (4) a successful defense of traditional theism requires not only that it be more plausible than atheism or agnosticism but that it be more plausible than all other supernatural alternatives.

I am not suggesting, of course, that the proofs for the existence of God or the problem of evil not be taught. I am urging, however, that all participants be alerted to the limited implications of that discussion.

NOTES

1. Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Judaism Without Supernaturalism* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1958), 115-16.

2. John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 86-87.
 3. Charles Frankel, *The Love of Anxiety, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 1962.

Considering the Classroom as a Safe Space

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INTRODUCTION

In the *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, Lauren Freeman (2014) advocates that faculty turn their classrooms into "safe spaces" as a method for increasing the diversity of philosophy majors. Safe spaces, according to Freeman, are spaces where students can feel "fully self-expressed" and relax "without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, age, or physical or mental ability."¹ Freeman believes that by turning classrooms into safe spaces, students from underrepresented groups will be more likely to pursue philosophy as a major and more actively participate in class.² This goal of increasing diversity among philosophy majors is one I fully support, and I agree that much work needs to be done to increase diversity in higher education. However, even a casual follower of academic news knows that there is much hand-wringing over the demand for, and a willingness to create, safe spaces on college campuses.³ Few commentators believe safe spaces will have positive results: Lukianoff fears that not only will safe spaces (among other practices) infantilize students, but that the turning away from debate supposedly encouraged by safe spaces hinders the development of necessary critical thinking skills.⁴ As part of this pushback against safe spaces, George Yancy, one of our profession's few public philosophers, says he actively works to make his classroom *unsafe*.⁵ The University of Chicago had a similar response: in the spring of 2016 the university sent out an undergraduate admissions letter stating that students will find no support for trigger warnings or the "creation of intellectual 'safe spaces' where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own."⁶

I also reject turning classrooms into "safe spaces" in part because I reject characterizing classroom spaces as safe or unsafe, and I write here to discourage faculty from doing so, but not because I want to force students to "grow up/toughen up," or believe that they need to do so now more than ever. I begin by distinguishing between two kinds of spaces on campus that can be made "safe": classroom spaces and extracurricular spaces. I argue that the extracurricular safe space(s) is consistent with the practice of philosophy and the current conception of the university, and it is a space/practice to which faculty should have few objections. I then argue that making the classroom into a safe space as defined by Freeman is not a practical goal, especially for a subject like philosophy. More significantly, I argue that attempting to turn the classroom into a safe

space is at odds with the pedagogical goals of philosophy, as well as with how the university currently conceives itself. Many of Freeman's ultimate aims can be achieved in other ways, and, I believe, more effectively. Finally, I argue that faculty calls for safe spaces creates confusion concerning the educative environment one should expect to find at the majority of American universities. If faculty and students want to advocate for safe campuses that include "safe" classrooms, then they should do so by arguing for a change in a given university's code of conduct or mission statement. Given different educative aims, classroom safe spaces could well be consistent with those aims.

SAFE SPACE(S) AND THE GOALS OF A UNIVERSITY

We can distinguish between at least two kinds of "safe spaces": extracurricular spaces where students can go to find a supportive community in order to "have a conversation with students, staff, and faculty knowing that they have a basic understanding of the challenges these students face in developing their identities";⁷ and the creation of safe spaces as a pedagogical approach to the classroom, as advocated by Freeman.⁸ The University of Chicago admissions letter decries safe spaces on the grounds that they supposedly interfere with what the letter describes as the "defining characteristics" of a university: "commitment to freedom of inquiry and expression."⁹ Safe spaces are typically assailed without any attempt to make the foregoing distinction,¹⁰ yet it is hard to see how spending time in an *extracurricular* space with practices and rules that faculty might disapprove of is much different from a student going home each weekend to parents/guardians with practices and rules that faculty might disapprove of, and for this reason it is hard to see how faculty could have grounds for objecting to extracurricular safe spaces. Therefore, although the admissions letter never explicitly makes this distinction, the letter must be objecting to the classroom as a safe space.¹¹ The admissions letter also references the University of Chicago's faculty report on freedom of expression, which reiterates the point that "universities exist for the sake of free inquiry."¹² The "Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression at Yale" makes explicit what is perhaps implicit in the Chicago report: that the main goal of a university is the production and dissemination of knowledge, and that freedom of inquiry supports that goal.¹³ So if the *curricular* safe space is, in fact, objectionable, the objection must be on the grounds that such spaces will interfere with that goal.

So even if we think extracurricular safe spaces are "coddling," they aren't directly impacting what we can take as the default goals of a university, the production and dissemination of knowledge.¹⁴ Surely students should be able to make a dorm room or a student lounge into a "safe space" if they so wish, and refuse to make their dorm room into a safe space as well—decisions like these would be an example of freedom of association and expression on campus. Students, however, do not live in classrooms, and the classroom, laboratory, and faculty office are the primary places where the goals of the modern university are carried out. Should these places be turned into "safe spaces" as well? Given current conditions, I argue that the answer should be "No." Nonetheless, I accept and support many of Freeman's recommendations, as I shall explain.

CURRICULAR SAFE SPACES

Freeman takes her definition of "safe space" from Kenney¹⁵ and fully defines it as the following:

A place where anyone can relax and be fully self-expressed, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, age, or physical or mental ability; a place where the rules guard each person's self-respect and dignity and strongly encourage everyone to respect others.¹⁶

Freeman believes that fashioning one's classroom into a safe space will both reduce Stereotype Threat (ST) and Implicit Bias (IB). ST is a well-studied phenomenon in which the salience of negative stereotypes about an individual can affect that individual's performance. ST involves anxiety about being judged on the basis of one's group membership or confirming negative stereotypes about one's group through one's performance. For example, a woman taking a math test may fear confirming negative stereotypes regarding women and math, and this anxiety ironically leads her to confirm the stereotype: the anxiety leads to a worse performance.¹⁷ IB is a concern in the classroom because unconscious bias can lead faculty to treat students from underrepresented groups unfairly, e.g., by calling on minority students less often, or by grading their work more harshly.¹⁸ The hope is that by reducing ST and IB women and minority students will feel less "unsafe" and as a result more willing to pursue philosophy as a major and, perhaps, as a career.

In order to fashion one's classroom into a safe space, Freeman recommends a number of strategies: that faculty distribute a survey which asks about classroom climate in the first week, that faculty actively discuss stereotype threat with students to disarm its effects, that faculty discuss classroom climate/department climate in informal meetings with students outside the classroom, that faculty encourage and mentor students from underrepresented groups outside the classroom, and that faculty work to make philosophers from underrepresented groups more visible in the classroom or in the department.

I wholeheartedly agree with several of Freeman's suggestions. The first thing to note about the suggested interventions is that two of them do not even occur in the classroom, and so there is little reason to think that they will disrupt the goals of the university: discussing concerns of students outside the classroom in a setting with special norms and expectations is similar to an extracurricular safe space, a place where students can interact by their own lights and at will, which, as I argued in section 2, are student activities that faculty members should, at the very least, be indifferent towards. For example, Freeman states that she "started a task force on the status of underrepresented groups in philosophy" that she says "enabled underrepresented students to feel solidarity with one another and created a safe space within the department where they could share their experiences with other students who were in the same boat."¹⁹ Notably,

this task force was not associated with enrollment in a particular course. I would encourage any department to take steps to make students from diverse backgrounds feel more welcome, as well as engage in encouraging students from underrepresented groups outside the classroom to follow their potential interests in philosophy. I take this to be something that any faculty member who cares about the future of the profession should engage in.²⁰

A reason for making philosophers from underrepresented groups more visible is that it reduces both ST and IB: students see people like themselves who have succeeded thereby potentially encouraging them, and a faculty member's own biases regarding what a successful philosopher looks like may be reduced.²¹ There are a number of ways to make underrepresented philosophers more visible: hire faculty members from underrepresented groups, invite speakers from underrepresented groups, hang posters of successful philosophers from underrepresented groups in the halls of the philosophy department, and encourage faculty to assign readings from underrepresented groups. A further method for reducing ST is to actively discuss ST with students, which helps to disarm its effects.²²

The hiring of another faculty member will not necessarily have an impact on what I do in the classroom, nor does said hiring *necessarily* affect any classroom practices—we can't be sure the new faculty member will implement "safe" classrooms regardless of their background.²³ The invitation of a speaker does not necessarily directly impact what happens in the classroom and could well be viewed as an extracurricular activity—student and faculty attendance is typically optional. Those who want to safeguard the mission of the university, it would seem, have nothing to fear from these practices. Presenting these practices as *practices that can be pursued outside the classroom* might well make them more palatable to the critics of safe spaces. For this reason it would be helpful for Freeman to make the distinction I drew in section 2. The activities described thus far that do have the potential to directly impact classroom practice are encouragement to diversify assigned readings as well as encouragement to discuss ST in the classroom. Again, I take both of these things to be goods: if faculty care about tapping into student potential, and encouraging students from all backgrounds, then these are things they should consider doing—even if diversifying their syllabus is a bit "uncomfortable."²⁴ An astute reader may now wonder why exactly I have written in response to Freeman. I turn to those issues now.

AGAINST CURRICULAR SAFE SPACES

After laying out her preferred definition of "safe space," Freeman asks whether the definition is compromised by the fact that it is, as defined, unachievable. She answers that "even if such a space can never exist, it can still be a normative goal towards which we should strive and which we should aim to achieve to the best of our abilities, acknowledging that a fully safe space might never be possible."²⁵

As Freeman admits, her goal is unachievable; I believe it should be rejected as teaching advice on those grounds, as I believe the goal is inconsistent with the human condition.

Here is why: one person's "being fully self-expressed" always has the potential to make another person uncomfortable—the goal of full-expression and full comfort in many cases will be on a collision course.²⁶ Stengel points out that it is an unavoidable fact that the conservative Christian students who made up a large share of the university population she taught at likely felt uncomfortable in her class, *Women and Education: Socialization and Liberation*, due to the students' commitments in relation to the subject matter, as well as the fact that they were no longer in an environment where their own viewpoint aligned with the majority. As Stengel states, "There are reasons to think that both sets of students [the conservative Christian students and the avowed feminist students who made up the class] experienced both comfort and discomfort, both privilege and threat in this particular pedagogical environment."²⁷ Hence such an environment could never effectively be made "safe" for all—when groups of students have opposing viewpoints on an issue (or whole way of life, which may be the case with this example), one group's being at ease will often imply that another group will be ill at ease.

Further, attempting to achieve Freeman's goal could require a radical revision of the curriculum: as Stengel's example highlights, it is very likely that some students, given their commitments, won't be completely comfortable discussing the ethics of abortion or considering arguments for positions with which they strongly disagree, and it is hard to see how having a diverse faculty or discussing ST would help to mitigate this particular problem. This isn't to say that therefore we shouldn't care about faculty diversity; it is to raise questions about Freeman's method in relation to her definition of "safe space"—i.e, whether her recommendations actually make the classroom "safe" and facilitate learning. When teaching large sections of ethics (or multiple sections), for example, there is some chance that a student in the class has had, or considered having, an abortion—these are real-life issues that make people feel uncomfortable! A student who has had or considered having an abortion will almost certainly feel uncomfortable when the moral status of abortion comes up, and may well have wished that that topic was not included in the syllabus, and even dreaded the week in which it would be discussed. Nonetheless, it's hard to see how such a topic could be justifiably scrapped from an applied ethics course on those grounds, or discussed in such a way that *no* one felt uncomfortable. Having one's values challenged on any issue that one cares about is typically uncomfortable, and the interrogation of values is a frequent occurrence in a philosophy class.

It is true that Freeman never tells the reader not to discuss certain topics.²⁸ However, she does recommend use of the following survey in the first week of class:

During the first week of the semester, we can have students write down, share, and as a class, discuss answers to the following questions:

- i) What was a classroom situation in which you felt unsafe?
- ii) How could this situation have been avoided?

- iii) What was a classroom situation in which you felt safe?
- iv) How did the professor facilitate this situation?
- v) What have teachers/professors done to create safe classroom environments?
- vi) What are your goals for this class?
- vii) How can we as a class help you to achieve them?
- viii) How can we make this classroom a safe environment?

Although I support some of the stated goals of the survey, such as giving students a stake in how the class proceeds, I reject such a survey for the following reasons: 1) a student may well answer this survey by saying that certain topics make him or her feel unsafe; 2) faculty should reject tools that encourage students to conceptualize classrooms as safe/unsafe.²⁹

Reason (1) has basically been addressed. It may well be that a student answers (i) by responding "I felt unsafe in a class in which race was discussed"; this situation has the faculty member put him or herself in a bind: they either modify course content or risk ignoring the student's comments, defeating the purpose of the survey. Freeman gives no advice on how to deal with a student who claims that a whole topic would make him or her feel uncomfortable. Freeman maintains that for sensitive topics to be fruitfully discussed the classroom must be a minimally safe environment,³⁰ but when the topic itself is the cause of uncomfortable feelings, it is hard to see how this is to be achieved.

The more pressing problem is (2): that the survey encourages the student to cast ordinary classroom experience, and I take ordinary classroom experiences to sometimes involve feelings of discomfort, as "safe" and "unsafe."³¹ As Stengel points out, by using the "safe/unsafe" language, we encourage students to interpret feelings of unease or uncomfortableness as fear of a certain topic, position, or certain individual(s), which entrenches the problem:

First, feelings, even uncomfortable ones, don't dictate action. Uncomfortable students may well be students on the brink of some new understanding. Fearful students, that is, students whose uncomfortable feelings have been bound—by situation or by habit—to particular objects and attendant behaviors of withdrawal and avoidance, require pedagogical intervention that makes engagement possible again. That means that students (whether privileged or oppressed) have to feel safe enough. It does not necessarily mean comfort.³²

For Stengel, the ordinary classroom is "safe enough," and to encourage students to seek out "safer" spaces is to forego learning opportunities for all kinds of students. Encouraging a student to interpret feelings of unease regarding a topic or situation as "unsafe" is encouraging

that student to be fearful and withdraw from the object of fear—be it other students or the subject matter—resulting in a failure to truly consider the issue. I believe it would be a dereliction of my duty as a philosophy professor to expose students only to arguments *for* the permissibility of abortion at some predominantly liberal institution or to expose students only to arguments *against* abortion at a predominately conservative one, thereby reaffirming their pre-existing beliefs and maintaining, or even thereby increasing, feelings of ease and comfort.³³ It would also violate the stated mission of many universities: it would be a stifling of inquiry on the part of the students, as well as a failure to disseminate knowledge on the part of me, the faculty member. In short: prioritizing student comfort may be a pedagogical disservice to them.

Freeman is missing the point made by Stengel: it is not the case that in every single philosophy class underrepresented students are going to feel uncomfortable and white male students are going to feel comfortable as a default; women students might feel comfortable in a course on feminist ethics or when a particular topic is discussed and white male students might feel uncomfortable—presumably this can serve as a learning opportunity for both groups. Additionally, by challenging the assumptions of the majority group in a classroom, it seems that this could well signal to members not in that group that no person's beliefs are exempt from scrutiny, thereby increasing that person's relative level of comfort. Hopefully, in a philosophy class, each student is forced to examine some previously unexamined belief, e.g., his or her unreflective meat-eating, and this may well make that student uniquely uncomfortable. Does this render the classroom unsafe on Freeman's view? Given her definition of "safe space," if the student did not welcome such feelings, then the answer is "Yes." Such a conclusion is so at odds with our ordinary understanding of "safety," as well as the practice of philosophy.

Although none of the activities described by Freeman is presented as necessary conditions for making one's classroom "safe," the line of thinking present in her definition of "safe space" and encouraged by her survey worries the pundits of academia; I believe that worry is well placed. This survey invites students to conceptualize the college classroom as an unsafe space to begin with—one that needs to be made "safe." It does so by implicitly inviting students to think of topics as off-limits, or of certain positions as unassailable, thinking that Freeman herself claims to reject.³⁴ Yet I have seen this very thinking firsthand, and I believe many of my colleagues have as well.³⁵ It is wishful thinking to believe that students can easily separate out class content from class experience. We press slippery slope arguments when they slide our way and call them fallacious when they slide against us. But some slopes really are slippery and we shouldn't ignore the mounting evidence when we really are sliding down. There are other teaching strategies that can be used so that students are more likely to feel that they are being treated fairly, or more likely to participate in class whatever the subject matter, without characterizing the classroom as a place where one's well-being is at severe risk.

ACHIEVING FREEMAN'S GOALS WITHOUT TALKING ABOUT SAFETY

As I have frequently stated, I agree with most of Freeman's recommendations: faculty should seek to encourage all students in philosophy, encourage them to believe that they are all capable of succeeding, and work to reduce their own implicit biases; I agree with these recommendations because these practices enhance learning outcomes, whatever else they may do in relation to feelings of comfort. All these things can be done without invoking the concept of "safety," or encouraging your students to "fear being uncomfortable." Steele, one of the pioneers of ST research, holds that one way of mitigating ST is to make clear that you hold all students to high standards, and that you believe that all students are capable of meeting those standards.³⁶ Fostering the belief that all students are capable of improving is a way of combating feelings of inadequacy. This can be carried out by asking your students to revise their papers in light of your thorough feedback, as giving rigorous commentary on student assignments indicates that you believe that each student is capable of doing better.³⁷ Further, faculty can reduce IB by grading papers using student ID numbers instead of student names, as well as simply making an effort to attempt to call on all students, e.g., by referring to the student roster instead of looking out at a sea of faces, which might invite unconscious preference. They can also more effectively engage shyer students, or students who are diffident, and do not wish to give their opinion to the whole class by having students work in small groups on a set of questions before they are discussed by the whole class.³⁸

These are little things, but that doesn't mean that they don't take effort and that faculty aren't commendable for doing them; these are actions that facilitate learning and student success, and to describe them as efforts to make the classroom "safe" is a disservice to their real effects and the real goal of the classroom: the dissemination of knowledge. I believe that these are the activities that should be promoted to foster inclusion in philosophy, as they may well serve two goods: promoting the learning of all students, and making students from underrepresented backgrounds feel capable of succeeding. Characterizing classrooms as safe or unsafe is counterproductive, and Strenge is likely right to maintain that occasions of uncomfortableness are opportunities for growth—not occasions to be avoided at all costs. We can't necessarily predict who feels comfortable and who feels uncomfortable within a given classroom dynamic, and to attempt to do so is a kind of giving in to stereotyping. Caring about ST and attempting to counteract it makes one a conscientious instructor; however, it can be combatted without ever asking your students to conceive of the classroom environment as "unsafe." Safe/unsafe talk encourages students to think of themselves as victims and other students or experiences (like taking a test) as fearful and victimizing. Further, it fosters the belief that complete ease facilitates learning, or that it is required to learn. However, it may be that great growth comes from moments of unease.

CONCLUSION

Safe spaces as described by Freeman are inconsistent with the practice of philosophy and the university mission as it is currently conceived because it is likely very difficult to separate classroom experience from classroom content, and the goal of making the classroom "safe" could interfere with the purpose of the classroom: the dissemination of knowledge. Students should likely expect to feel somewhat uncomfortable during their college careers, as they are challenged by ideas they have never considered before. To then encourage students to characterize those feelings as feelings of a lack of safety serves to turn whatever circumstances caused those feelings into ones that should be avoided—this is what a survey like Freeman's seems to facilitate.³⁹ That does not mean, however, that a campus should not have spaces where like-minded students can get together and support each other on their own terms. Likely current unrest on campus cannot be easily explained, contrary to the popular belief that it can all be blamed on millennial coddling. Colleges themselves deserve some blame. Faculty and administrators send mixed messages by describing classroom conditions as safe/unsafe, thereby encouraging students to reject one of the major values of the university environment: free and open inquiry. This confusion is further compounded by administrative practices such as referring to the campus community as a "family"⁴⁰—I haven't heard of many families that have explicitly stated conditions for expulsion; however, many families have certain topics they just don't talk about, and this is precisely the outcome that faculty and administrators should fear. To present academic spaces on campus as "safe" or "unsafe," to refer to the university community as a "family," is to create confusion about the institutional goal of the university in the minds of those institution members.

It may be the case that universities should adopt other missions and goals. Some universities do, in fact, have quite different missions from the typical state or secular institution. The Brigham Young University mission statement states that the university aims to "assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life."⁴¹ There is a reason I didn't apply to BYU as a student, and there is a reason that I would be unlikely to apply there for a faculty position,⁴² the reason being that my values do not match well enough with the broader mission of BYU.

To bring about the sort of space that Freeman calls for would require radical changes. A place where no person need worry about feeling uncomfortable due to identity markers sounds like a place of potentially heavy thought policing indeed. Freeman should be arguing for a change in the very mission of a college or university, not for classroom by classroom changes within the paradigm of the open-inquiry university, as this is likely to interfere with the existing goals of the open-inquiry university and thereby create confusion for institution members. Faculty should take steps to facilitate student success, as that is part of the dissemination of knowledge. Acting to reduce ST and IB is believed to facilitate student success, and so conscientious faculty should take steps to reduce ST and IB. However, it is not clear where identifying classroom

spaces as safe and unsafe actually fits into those practices, and efforts to make classrooms into “safe spaces” seems contrary to the practice of free and open inquiry. On these grounds they should be resisted.

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NOTES

1. Freeman, “Creating Safe Spaces,” 4.
2. Ibid.
3. Shapiro, a former faculty member and college president, says that many students have a “prolonged umbilical cord” (“From Strength to Strength”); Haidt (a psychology professor) and Lukianoff are well known for their *Atlantic* article on millennial infantilization (“The Coddling of the American Mind”); Posner, a law professor, argues that “[college] students are children,” although he is not dismissive of student demands—he uses that claim to explain their demands (“Colleges Need Speech Codes because Their Students Are Still Children”).
4. Lukianoff, *Unlearning Liberty*, 11-12.
5. Yancy, “Loving Wisdom and the Effort to Make Philosophy ‘Unsafe.’”
6. The content of this letter was reported in a number of media outlets. See, for example, Vivanco and Rhodes, “U. of C. Tells Incoming Freshmen It Does Not Support ‘Trigger Warnings’ or ‘Safe Spaces.’”
7. I drew this quote from a University of Chicago web page to show that the very university that denounced safe spaces maintained safe spaces on campus at the time of the denouncing, which indicates that there are multiple ways to understand the term “safe space.” <https://lgbtq.uchicago.edu/page/safe-space>
8. A classroom safe space could have the very same goals as an extracurricular safe space, in theory. However, it is important to note that the extracurricular space will not have university-mandated or discipline-specific educational goals.
9. Here is an image of the admissions letter: <http://thefederalist.com/2016/08/25/university-of-chicago-sends-the-acceptance-letter-every-college-should/>
10. See note 1.
11. The University of Chicago admissions letter does use the phrase “intellectual safe space,” which may serve as an attempt at differentiation—although we might hope that intellectual activity is happening all over the campus of the University of Chicago. As stated, most commentators don’t bother to make this distinction; nonetheless, some do explicitly object to extracurricular safe spaces even without making the distinction. Shulevitz (“In College Hiding from Scary Places”) complains that Brown University student activists set up a calming room that students could go to instead of, or in response to, a talk on campus sexual assault. Shulevitz seems to dislike the fact that this room was set up with “cookies, coloring books, bubbles, Play-Doh, calming music, pillows, blankets and a video of frolicking puppies, as well as students and staff members trained to deal with trauma.” Yes, it sounds silly, but I am sure many students blew off the talk on campus sexual assault to go to a bar, or play video games. Which is worse? We should expect students to use their free time as they see fit—it is important to note that it was a student who organized the described room, just as a student might have organized a bar crawl that competed with the campus speaker’s time slot.
12. <http://freeexpression.uchicago.edu/sites/freeexpression.uchicago.edu/files/FOECommitteeReport.pdf>
13. <http://yalecollege.yale.edu/deans-office/policies-reports/report-committee-freedom-expression-yale>
14. I think taking the production and dissemination of knowledge as the default goals for most universities is appropriate, but universities with special missions, say, religiously focused institutions, may take themselves to have different primary goals. For example, Biola University’s mission statement includes “impact[ing] the world for the Lord Jesus Christ.” See <http://offices.biola.edu/hr/e handbook/1.3/>.
15. Kenney, *Mapping Gay L.A.*
16. Freeman, “Creating Safe Spaces,” 4.
17. For a very accessible overview of ST, see Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi*. See also Steele and Aronson, “Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans.”
18. For example, Steinpreis et. al (“The Impact of Gender on the Review of the Curricula Vitae of Job Applicants and Tenure Candidates”) found that both women and men show a preference for a CV when it is randomly assigned a male name. Saul (“Implicit Bias, Stereotype Threat, and Women in Philosophy”) notes that studies of stereotype threat and implicit bias have not been conducted specifically on individuals studying or working in philosophy. Saul argues that there is no reason to think that philosophers are exceptions to the results found in other fields of study.
19. Freeman, “Creating Safe Spaces,” 7.
20. Stark (“Overcoming a Puzzle about Inclusion and Racism”) also argues that faculty work to change or challenge institutional racism, e.g., by advocating for the removal of names from buildings that honor racist individuals. Faculty should advocate for the issues they believe in *outside* of the classroom if those issues do not pertain to course content.
21. Saul, “Implicit Bias, Stereotype Threat, and Women in Philosophy”; Freeman, “Creating Safe Spaces.”
22. Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi*.
23. Doing so would be just the kind of thing, it would seem, that Freeman would want us to combat!
24. The Princeton University “pre-read,” a book the whole campus is encouraged to read over the summer, was Steele’s *Whistling Vivaldi* in 2015. As part of the “pre-read” program, incoming freshman discuss the pre-read with their residence advisors (e.g., an extracurricular setting). This is a nice way of raising awareness of a pedagogical obstacle for both faculty and students without taking away from classroom time devoted to course content. See <http://www.princeton.edu/president/eisgruber/pre-read/>.
25. Freeman, “Creating Safe Spaces,” 4.
26. Alison Bailey makes a similar point about this definition: topics that feel safe to some may well seem annoying or fraught with meaning to others. See Bailey, “Navigating Epistemic Pushback in Feminist and Critical Race Philosophy Classes.” Stark also states that some topics will make some students feel included while alienating others (“Overcoming a Puzzle about Inclusion and Racism”). An anonymous reviewer rejected my calling the goal “incoherent” on these grounds. The reviewer believes although empirically the goal may be unachievable, that does not make it incoherent. I take the reviewer’s point, but I have trouble even imagining a situation in which “everyone is fully expressed” yet no one feels uncomfortable!
27. Stengel, “The Complex Case of Fear and Safe Space,” 535.
28. However, Stark does. She suggests faculty avoid Eurocentric authors or Eurocentric topics, as “the particular answers given to philosophical questions often reflect the Eurocentric and racist culture of the authors” (“Overcoming a Puzzle about Inclusion and Racism,” 3). Yes, e.g., Aristotle and Kant were racists/sexists. Faculty would be remiss not to challenge the assumptions of Kant and Aristotle and point out how they are inconsistent with the theorists’ own thinking. But to avoid the authors/topics seems like professional misconduct. Further, Kant and Aristotle have been fruitfully studied by people from all over the world—Aristotle’s racism did not stop Middle Eastern scholars from studying him 1,000 years ago. I don’t think Aristotle thought too highly of any non-Greek, yet that has hardly slowed any non-Greek down in admiring what is admirable in his work. Further, to call Plato and Aristotle “male, cis-gender, straight” authors seems anachronistic (3-4). I doubt they thought of themselves as straight or white—although they were certainly part of the elite of their time. Both the Buddha and Confucius were “straight” and “cis-gendered,” and the Buddha came from the ruling class, yet I’ve never heard anyone lamenting these facts (perhaps I haven’t

looked hard enough). Faculty should teach topics/figures that interest them and would do well to increase authorial diversity; however, I don't believe they should leave off central figures solely because of the name of the author.

29. We might also wonder if all students have a shared understanding of what constitutes classroom safety, which could also throw a wrench in effectively administering such a survey. It is not clear if Freeman defines what she means by "safe space" to the students prior to the survey.
30. Freeman, "Creating Safe Spaces," 9.
31. I am assuming that no one threatens the students in class, has a weapon, or preys upon students in some fashion. I take it that these things aren't occurring in ordinary classroom experiences. Perhaps these things happen more frequently than I imagine, and so some object to the use of "ordinary." In that case, I use "ordinary" for lack of a better term.
32. Stengel, "The Complex Case of Fear and Safe Space," 536.
33. There is little more comforting than having one's unexamined assumptions confirmed as truth!
34. Freeman, "Creating Safe Spaces," 8-9.
35. Consider the case of Peter Singer. Students at the University of Victoria shouted down his Q&A session via Skype because they disliked his views on what to do about individuals with severe disabilities. On his *DailyNous* site, Justin Weinberg says the following about the incident: "As with the case of Charles Murray at Middlebury (still being discussed here), the protestors against Singer seem motivated by both a mix of well-informed perceptive criticism and misunderstanding and misrepresentation." That sounds about right—it sounds like the very thing that should be challenged in a philosophy class, regardless of whatever pre-existing beliefs students have about disability or their desire to discuss the topic. See <http://dailynous.com/2017/03/09/peter-singer-event-disrupted-protestors/>. I picked this case because it concerns a philosopher. Rest assured there are many more like it.
36. Steele, "Thin Ice"; and Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi*.
37. Cohen, Steele, and Ross ("The Mentor's Dilemma") have found that giving students rigorous feedback as well as reminding them that you hold all students to high standards leads black students to attribute less bias to the instructor by demonstrating that the instructor takes their work seriously and is holding the student to the same standard as everyone else. Additionally, work by Aronson, Fried, and Good ("Reducing the Effects of Stereotype Threat on African American College Students By Shaping Theories of Intelligence") has shown that encouraging students to think of intelligence as malleable boosted student engagement with course material as well as college grades. This is consistent with the Steele finding: by giving students constructive criticism and holding them to high standards, this shows that you expect them to improve and that intelligence is malleable.
38. See, for example, Jelinek, "Using Small Group Learning in the Philosophy Classroom"; and Gettings, "Student-Centered Discussions in Introductory Philosophy."
39. In a follow-up mid-semester survey she asks students to complete the following sentence: "Please stop ..." (Freeman, "Creating Safe Spaces," 7). We can imagine a student completing that sentence with "challenging my pre-existing beliefs."
40. Sandoval, "Why Do So Many College Presidents Call Their Campuses a 'Family'?"
41. http://aims.byu.edu/mission_statement
42. And I would be extremely unlikely to be seriously considered; I've probably really blown my chances with this article.

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REPLY TO A REVIEW

On Happiness and Goodness

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In Matthew Pianalto's recent discussion of Steven M. Cahn's and my book *Happiness and Goodness: Philosophical Reflections on Living Well* (Oxford University Press, 2015),¹ Pianalto suggests that the work could be used effectively in both introductory philosophy and ethics courses. I agree, but the pedagogical effectiveness of the book depends on recognizing a crucial point about the main example that Pianalto appears to have missed.

Here's the hypothetical:

Pat received a bachelor's degree from a prestigious college and a Ph.D. in philosophy from a leading university, then was awarded an academic position at a first-rate school, and eventually earned tenure there. Pat is the author of numerous books, articles, and reviews, is widely regarded as a leading scholar and teacher, and is admired by colleagues and students for fairness and helpfulness. Pat is happily married, has two children, enjoys playing bridge and the cello, and vacations each summer in a modest house on Cape Cod. Physically and mentally healthy, Pat is in good spirits, looking forward to years of happiness.

Lee, on the other hand, did not attend college. After high school Lee moved to a beach community in California and is devoted to sunbathing, swimming, and surfing. Lee has never married but has experienced numerous romances. Having inherited wealth from deceased parents, Lee has no financial needs but, while donating generously to worthy causes, spends money freely on magnificent homes, luxury cars, designer clothes, fine dining, golfing holidays, and extensive travel. Lee has many friends and is admired for honesty and kindness. Physically and mentally healthy, Lee is in good spirits, looking forward to years of happiness.

As an aside, I should mention that Pianalto, for some unknown reason, assumes that Pat and Lee are both male. Yet their genders are intentionally left unspecified.

These cases are presented as a challenge to the views of Ronald Dworkin, Susan Wolf, Richard Kraut, and Stephen Darwall, each of whom presumes that the good life involves what Dworkin calls "works of art," Wolf calls "projects of worth," Kraut calls "flourishing," and Darwall calls "things that matter." The question is, do any of these theories imply that Pat or Lee enjoys a better life than the other? Having students grapple with this question would lead students to explore a wide range of important and engaging philosophical issues, including the nature of morality, the relationship between morality and happiness, Nozick's

experience machine, the divine command theory of ethics, and the impact of death on life, including the question of whether death is actually bad for us.

According to Pianalto, we dismiss the theories of Dworkin, Kraut, Wolf, and Darwall as "too vague," yet we "come to the conclusion that there is no general reason to rate either Pat's or Lee's life—as better than the other's."² Put simply, our view is that one is living well if one is happy and has a morally decent life, and we deny the view favored by most philosophers that the intrinsic value or worthiness of one's activities also makes one's life better. Pianalto wonders whether our own view has "made no progress" either, and he suggests that we overlook the possibility that someone like Wolf could agree with us that "while Pat and Lee do different things, there are projects of worth in both lives, and so both lives are good."³

But the view we put forth implies there is *no* difference between the lives of Pat and Lee in terms of their worthwhileness because we reject the very criteria these other theories seek to impose when evaluating the good life. We do not differentiate between Pat's and Lee's lives in terms of their quality because, in our view, living well is simply living happily within the bounds of morality. Views that explicitly reject our position cannot view the two lives of Pat and of Lee as of equal quality for they appeal to standards (such as the worthiness or objective value of one's projects) that must be met if one is to live well.

Although Lee's life is morally decent, Lee's choices do not include any of the admirable, worthy, objectively valuable activities these theorists invoke when explaining why some lives are better than others. (Lee is not married, and does not engage in intellectual or aesthetic pursuits, etc.) Thus it is not clear what "projects of worth" these theorists could appeal to in justifying the judgment that Lee's life is of equal value to Pat's.

According to Dworkin, Wolf, Kraut, and Darwall, living well must involve more than simply enjoying one's life; their theories require a feature that presumably Pat's life contains, but Lee's does not. Our view rejects the imposition of such additional requirements because, as we argue, no standard is plausible as *the* standard for a good life.

The consequences for students in thinking about their own lives are striking.⁴

NOTES

1. Matthew Pianalto, "Happiness, Goodness, and the Best Things in Life: A Review of Some Recent Books," *Teaching Philosophy* 39, no. 2 (June 2016): 209–20.
2. *Ibid.*, 215–16.
3. *Ibid.*, 216.
4. One historical note: Pianalto notes that we associate our approach with that of Epicurus, but fails to mention that we find more satisfying the same outlook found in the Book of Ecclesiastes. As we explain, while the dating of Ecclesiastes is uncertain, several leading authorities believe it to be a work of the fourth or third centuries B. C. E., that is, about the time of Epicurus or somewhat later. Given the interaction between the Hebrew and Greek cultures that occurred during this period, certain common themes might have influenced both Epicurus and the author of

Ecclesiastes. The matter remains murky, but the similarities in outlook between the two are striking, although rarely, if ever, noted.) In light of this, using our book at an introductory level also offers the opportunity to demonstrate to students that philosophy and the Bible may have themes in common. In this case, both Epicurus and Ecclesiastes offer the same advice: Be good and enjoy.

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

To the Editors: We have all no doubt heard of efforts to rewrite Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and remove the N word wherever it appears. I have decided to rewrite Dostoyevsky's *The Siblings Karamazov* to make it impossible to determine whether Ivan, Alyosha, and Dmitri are men or women, or some combination thereof. Readers will not be able to tell whether Dmitri's lusting after Grushenka is that of a man for a woman, a woman for a man, or two men or two women, only one of which does the lusting. Readers will also not be able to tell whether the elder Zossima is a monk or a nun. Captain Snegiryov will be identified only as an officer, and readers will not be able to tell whether he is the mother or the father of Ilyusha, and whether the latter is a boy or a girl or of ambiguous sexuality.

This will help provide a safe space in libraries for students who are perhaps challenged by the fact of being gendered at all, and they will be less confused when asked which lives in the novel are better, happier, or more moral by not having to bring gender into their judgment.

I'll be glad to work on other novels, too!

Respectfully submitted,
Eugene Kelly

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