

In This Issue

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This year marks a transition for the *Agora* as the publication changes editorial hands. Lyndall Nairn, the publication's longtime editor, is sorely missed. It is my hope that the 23rd issue of the *Agora* will continue the outstanding tradition that Lyndall established. The 2014 issue of the *Agora* presents a rich collection of work from undergraduate students across humanities disciplines. The authors' hard work and thoughtful insights continue to illustrate the importance and relevance of liberal arts education and core texts in higher education.

The first two essays in this issue advocate for core texts in the liberal arts curriculum. In the first essay, "What Good Is a Liberal Arts Education?" **Mary Kathryn Shiraef** of Shimer College uses de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* to demonstrate the importance of the classics and theoretical concepts in contemporary education. Shiraef's discussion emphasizes the perils for the public good of overlooking the humanities in today's increasingly pragmatic educational environment. Following this eloquent introduction, **Anthony Fredette** of Fresno Pacific University argues for the inclusion of the 6th century thinker Boethius in general education. His essay, "*Carmina Qui Qiondam studio Florente Peregimus: Why Boethius Should Be a Standard Component of General Education*," was presented at the April 2014 ACTC Conference in Los Angeles. Fredette masterfully links the intellectual contributions of Boethius to the values of liberal arts education and the relevance of philosophical concerns in contemporary discourse.

Following these thoughtful analyses of the value of liberal arts education, the next several essays explore the meaning and value of a diversity of philosophical concepts. In “Liberty by Necessity: An Examination of Fate and Free Will in Homer and Boethius,” **Isaac Johnson** of Samford University employs two paragons of classical learning to explore the perennial philosophical questions with new insight. Johnson’s juxtaposition of Boethius and Homer allows the reader to consider the many ways in which the timeless questions of fate and free will can be conceptualized across vastly different cultures, historical eras, and religious worldviews. **Daniel Whitten** of Dalhousie University also employs two thinkers, Machiavelli and Plato, to explore conceptions of the ideal leader. His essay, “Similarities in Plato and Machiavelli’s Treatment of Ideal Leaders,” sheds new light on the familiar works *The Republic* and *The Prince* by illustrating similarities between two thinkers presumed to hold disparate notions of leadership. Whitten’s conclusion, that both Plato and Machiavelli depict an ideal leader as one who seeks to redeem his corrupt society, remains central to political philosophy today.

Alex Enescu of Concordia University delves further into the metaphysical with his discussion of Schopenhauer’s links to both Buddhism and Hinduism in “Schopenhauer’s Transcendental Problem.” Enescu’s essay eloquently illuminates Schopenhauer’s philosophy by exploring its roots in Vedic and Buddhist texts. This challenging project allows Enescu to show the connections between Eastern and Western philosophies that contributed to Schopenhauer’s distinctive contribution to philosophy. Further exploring the importance of Eastern philosophy, **Jared Taylor** of Pepperdine University discusses epistemology and existence through the lens of Zen

Buddhism in “Separating the Milk from the Butter.” Taylor’s work is an important step towards incorporating classic texts outside the Western tradition in liberal education. Through his study of the Buddhist Scriptures and *The Iron Flute*, Taylor illustrates the contrast between seeking knowledge and achieving wisdom. Next, in her essay, “Whispering Determinism: A Critique of Sartre’s Theory of Radical Freedom,” **Shinece Owens** of Fresno Pacific University challenges the existential notion of radical freedom in relation to personhood and individual responsibility. This essay was presented at the April 2014 ACTC conference in Los Angeles. Owens’ discussion of Sartre illustrates how theoretical concepts like free will and determinism can directly influence our thinking on practical issues such as capital punishment.

The next two essays, by **Nick Olivier** of Lynchburg College and **Jacob Turner** of Rhodes College, are refreshingly creative approaches to writing and thinking about classical texts. Olivier’s essay, “The Historically Indicative Nature of Byzantine Architecture” examines St. Mark’s Cathedral in Venice and the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Reading these structures as “texts”, Olivier eloquently demonstrates how cultural and historical influences are found in evidence within these architectural masterpieces. In another creative approach, Jacob Turner’s “Vergil, Augustus and Aeneas: An Imagined Dialogue on Virtue and Manhood” constructs a conversation between Vergil and Augustus regarding Vergil’s epic poem. By putting these figures in dialogue, Turner creates a captivating and dynamic atmosphere in which to explore the meaning of virtue and nobility as well as the historical context surrounding *The Aeneid*.

The final group of essays in this issue employ fictional characters as a means of examining complex the philosophical and psychological concepts of power and

masculinity, double consciousness, moral character and judgment, and sensuality.

Hilary Ball of Rhodes College focuses on the relationship between the King and his female counterparts in Shakespeare's *Richard III*. In "A Lover or a Villain?: Women and Fortune in Shakespeare's *Richard III*," Ball deconstructs Richard III's interactions with women as adversaries and objects of conquest. Ball's analysis illuminates the discrepancy between Richard III's insatiable lust for power and his ultimate inability to dominate and dispose of his wife, Anne. "A Lover or a Villain" aptly demonstrates the importance of classical texts in relation to more contemporary academic concerns of gender and power. **Nikita Chaudrhi** of St. Mary's College of California addresses gender and race in her essay, "A Struggle for Peace in the Warring Soul." In this work, Chaudrhi explores the phenomenon of "passing" as depicted in Nella Larsen's 1929 novel of the same name. In *Passing*, W.E.B. DuBois' notion of double consciousness is illustrated through the characters of Irene Redfield and Clare Kendry. Chaudrhi's essay illustrates the complex and perilous world inhabited by African American women during the time of the Harlem Renaissance.

In her examination of morality as portrayed in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, **Michaela MacDougall** of St. John's College demonstrates the contrast between character and judgment; Jane and Mr. Bennett represent moral character and moral judgment, respectively. MacDougall uses this contrast to show the importance of self-knowledge in creating an integrated moral personality; something that each character lacks on his or her own. Achieving self-knowledge, a prominent goal of liberal arts education, is also the theme of **Gwendolyn Moncrieff-Gould's** essay, "Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*." Moncrieff-Gould, of University of Kings College, explores the

Appolonian and Dionysian forces at work in Aschenbach's journey from Munich to Venice. Her depiction of Aschenbach's inability to retain his rationality in embracing the sensual illustrates the difficulty of achieving personal harmony addressed throughout classical literature, and in many other essays in this volume.

The outstanding work of this year's authors would not be possible without dedicated mentoring by faculty. The *Agora* thanks Dr. William Shapiro at Shimer College (Shiraef), Dr. Bryan Johnson of Samford University (Johnson), Dr. Marcella Firmini of University of Kings College (Whitten), Dr. Katharine Streip of Concordia University (Enescu), Dr. Jane Kelley Rodeheffer of Pepperdine University (Taylor), Dr. Delane Karalow of Lynchburg College (Olivier), Dr. Geoffrey Bakewell of Rhodes College (Turner), Dr. Randall Martin of St. Thomas University (Ball), Dr. Jeannine King of St. Mary's College of California (Chaudrhi), Dr. Emily Langston of St. John's College (MacDougall), and Dr. Neil Robertson of University of King's College (Moncrieff-Gould).

The twenty-third issue of the *Agora* continues the journal's esteemed tradition of encouraging thoughtful student exploration of classical texts and ideas. The student authors are to be commended for their insight into the continuing importance and relevance of the core values of a liberal arts education.

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