COLLOQUY

continuing the conversation

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COLLOQUY

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We are thrilled to present the fifth issue of *Colloquy*. In this issue we have attempted to represent a portion of the serious thinking and questioning that goes on in the Graduate Institute. As has been demonstrated in previous issues, there are many ways to make that attempt. It seems worth noting that while essays predominate in this issue, this may not follow in the long term. *Colloquy* is so new a publication as to admit of trial and experiment.

The goal—ambiguous though it may be—is to continue the conversation. In that spirit, much of the writing in this issue relates to the conversation which is held every fall at the Graduate Institute in Annapolis. Our essays address the subjects of the courses offered for the fall semester: literature and mathematics. Our hope is that this issue might serve as a companion to conversations past and a catalyst for conversation in the future.

For our next issue we are soliciting writing from students, tutors, and alumni that make use of the Great Books to investigate questions of political, philosophical, and theological import. Conversations change of course—yet the form of education one participates in at St. John's suggests that the greatest conversations are peculiarly perennial.

–*The Colloquy Editorial Board*

Jaime Marquez

The Joy of Recognition

Emily Langston

Emily Langston is Associate Dean of Graduate Programs at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland. *The following is excerpted from her welcoming speech to the new class of Graduate Institute students starting in spring of 2019.*

It's been my practice to write these addresses based upon something that I've read with Graduate Institute students over the past semester. And so, this afternoon, I find myself giving a convocation address based on what we read together in the tutorial of the Mathematics & Natural Science segment of the Graduate Institute program. I'm happy to have a reason, even if self-imposed, to address this topic. First of all, this tutorial is one I love to lead, and it raises questions that I enjoy thinking about. Secondly and perhaps surprisingly, it often ends up being one of the favorite tutorials even of students who initially approached it with some trepidation. It's this second point that is the starting point for my reflections today.

I'll start my investigation with the name, specifically with the word "mathematics." Our English word "mathematics" comes from the Greek noun, *ta mathemata*, which in turn is related to the verb *manthano*, meaning "I learn, I perceive, I understand, I know." *Ta mathemata*, then—or in English, "mathematics"—are the most *characteristically knowable* things. But, as I have already suggested, this is certainly not everyone's experience of math. I often have conversations with students who tell me that they are "not math people," that they "just don't get math." They are frustrated because they have encountered this subject that still today is seen as a model of the knowable, as unknowable and even alien. Still—thanks to the intellectual curiosity without which you wouldn't be here—most of those who are initially hesitant give it a try. And, as we begin working our way through Book I of Euclid's *Elements*, students almost invariably begin to

find that somehow these things are "knowable" after all. As I suggested, seeing the joyful response of students to this realization is one of the reasons I love leading this tutorial. So can we say more about how this great thing comes to pass?

The fact that mathematics claims to be about the "knowable," and the fact that we (and I do mean all of us!) can experience it *as* knowable, begs one of the most profound questions that we confront in every segment of the Graduate Institute curriculum. What is it to know? What do we mean when we say something is "knowable?" The question is placed squarely in front of us by Plato's dialogue *Meno*, the one text I know we all have in common; at the very heart of *this* dialogue we find a mathematical example functioning as a case study in what it is to learn and to know. The specific demonstration is hard to follow without my drawing lines in the sand for us to examine, though I assure you it repays every bit of attention you can give to it. In the absence of any sand, I will lay these details aside and move to what I take to be one of the important lessons Socrates would have us glean from the example; the myth he recounts claims—and the demonstration involving the slave boy is meant to illustrate—that learning is really *recollection of something that was already within us*. We see it in the dialogue as, at various points, Socrates asks the boy questions about the diagram he is drawing. And the boy, though he has never been taught geometry, is somehow able to look at the diagram Socrates sketches and then turn to something within himself to make a judgment about what has been proposed. The example makes the case that learning involves something like recollection and *recognition*.

Let's take this suggestion back to the material of the Mathematics tutorial, to our reading of Euclid's *Elements*. Perhaps the place where Euclid most explicitly demands that we check something within ourselves and give our assent is in the postulates. The very word "postulate"—which comes from the Latin *postulare*, meaning to ask or pray—makes the case clear. The claims made in the postulates are not proven to us; we are simply asked to

accept them. Like the slave boy, who consults something within himself when questioned about various candidates for the side of the double square, we consult something within *our*selves when confronted with Euclid's fifth postulate. The postulate tells us that two straight lines angled so that they are sloping toward one another will eventually meet. Now it's hard to say exactly *what* within ourselves we consult when we are asked to assent to the truth of this statement, or where it comes from. Whether it is there due to some previous experience or there inherently I will not here speculate. But surely it is not something that Euclid taught us; it was there already. I will venture a bit further and claim that it seems to be something in the structure of our visual imaginations; and that the act we perform when we ask ourselves whether this postulate is true is more an act of visualization than of reasoning. If I sweep my inner eye far enough along these straight lines that are angled toward one another, I seem to "see" that they must meet. Our recognition of the congruence between what Euclid proposes and what we see with the inner eye is very satisfying and feels like a type of knowledge.

"But wait!"—those of you who have taken the tutorial may object. This emphasis on recollection and recognition may work well enough with the postulates, which are a special case. But what about the material with which we *actually* begin the Mathematics tutorial—not Euclid's postulates, but his definitions. To take the first definition, it doesn't seem true to say that we "already know" *a point is that which has no part*. Going on to definition two, I certainly can't visualize a line that is "breadthless length." Does it make sense to say that in seeking to understand these we refer to our spatial imaginations? Based on my own experience, and on conversations with students over many years, I'll try to describe part of what happens in the encounter with Euclid in the math tutorial: somehow—as we examine the possibilities determined for us by the definitions, common notions, and postulates, and move proposition by proposition through book one of the Elements—a spatial world is described which seems to coincide with our

own lived and intuited experience of space. By this I mean that the clumsy attempts at straight lines we draw on the chalkboard, and the only somewhat more precise ones that mark the edge of the board, behave (always within the limits of their gross imperfections) like Euclidean "breadthless lengths" would behave. The love affair that almost every student has with Euclid springs partly from the fact that Euclid takes our own sense of interior and exterior space and re-presents it to us for our delighted recognition.

I'm making everything overly simple, of course. There are elements to understanding a Euclidean proposition that even analogously are not "seeing." And even in Book I, Euclid presents me with truths that are confounding to my visual imagination; for example, in Proposition 36, we learn that the two longer sides of a parallelogram can approach each other indefinitely, yet never meet, as the shape is stretched between two parallels. In the end however, contemplating such unexpected truths does not violate our sense of space; rather, it adds an additional element of satisfaction to our reading of Euclid, as we realize that we can learn more about the structure of space than we would ever have seen ourselves by moving step by step through the propositions. Our intuitions about space, and our reason, can inform each other.

I hope you all now have at least an inkling of what I've been trying to describe; these moments of recognition and increased understanding—when we "see" what Euclid means and agree that space we know really is like that—are moments of exhilaration. These things were in us all along, even in confirmed non-math people! It's hard to know why we never realized this before. Perhaps it's simply that no one asked us the right questions. But one of the defining characteristics of Great Books, in the Mathematics & Natural Science segment and in every part of the program, is that they *do* ask the right questions, and by doing so engage us on many levels.

As I draw this talk to a close, I'll note that the coherence we sense between the space Euclid describes and the space we perceive within us, and within which we perceive, is not simply a source of joy—it is a source of wonder, wonder that this should be so. Many students confront this wonder most directly when, somewhat more than halfway through the tutorial, we leave behind the world of Euclid and enter the world of the Russian geometer Nicolai Lobachevski. In ways I won't attempt to describe, he disrupts entirely the easy alliance I've sketched between our study of geometry and our intuitions about space. And yet, this doesn't keep us from moving forward with Lobachevski, reasoning carefully from one step to another in a sort of space which feels like it is quite definitely *not* my own.

The fact that we can do this opens the door to a host of new questions: about space; about the relationship between knowing and seeing; and about the nature of knowledge itself. I won't begin to explore these questions here, but I look forward to exploring them throughout the program with many of you. Welcome to the conversation; Welcome to the Graduate Institute!

Jaime Marquez

A Student's Apology: Confronting Myself in the Study of Geometry

Jaime Marquez[1]

Listening to Ms. Langston's convocation for the Spring 2019 term,[2] I felt an unsettling nostalgia about my introduction to Euclid's geometry. Ms. Langston noted that students "are frustrated because they have encountered a subject that, though still today is seen as a model of the knowable, seems unknowable and even alien." She also notes that "one of the defining characteristics of Great Books, in the Mathematics and Natural Science segment and in every part of the program, is that they do ask the right questions, and by doing so engage us on many levels." Furthermore, she asks "*What is it to know? What do we mean when we say something is* '*knowable*'?"[3] Hearing that I realized that to ask *what are the right questions* is precisely the right question I need to ask: what have I learned from studying geometry at St. John's? And what does Ms. Langston mean when she says that the Great Books engage us "on many levels"?

I would have been more successful dealing with aliens than dealing with my insecurities. Indeed, prior to taking the Math & Natural Science Tutorial, I saw myself as having a solid training in mathematics (calculus, real analysis, statistics, matrix algebra). So I figured that a bunch of triangles would not pose a challenge to me. But in my initial dealings with Book I of Euclid's *Elements*, I failed miserably to understand the life of Euclid's propositions: if we're just dealing in lines without equations, why is it so hard to get the point? To be sure, the steps, when considered individually,

[1] This material is based on an essay that I prepared for Ms. Leah Lasell's Math & Natural Science Tutorial, Summer 2018.

[2] **Ed. note**: the relevant portion of Ms. Langston's address precedes this essay.

[3] Italics are my own.

are not difficult to understand or memorize. To me, the problem was that the proofs lacked a mathematical flow: why is the first step in the proof this one and not that one? I saw alternative first steps and I could not discern why they were deemed irrelevant. It felt as though Euclid had tried several starting points, found one that worked, and discarded the others without giving a sense of why. So my initial perception of the propositions in Book I was akin to opening a cookbook with recipes for increasingly elaborate dishes. Proving that I could "cook" such dishes involved memorizing the steps and the sequence. But asking *why do I mix this ingredient with that one in this order* seemed beside the point: follow this recipe and you will get the dish.

All of this changed with Proposition 37 [Fig. 1]

Proposition 37: Let ABC and DBC be triangles on the same base BC and in the same parallels AD and BC. I say that the triangle ABC equals the triangle DBC.

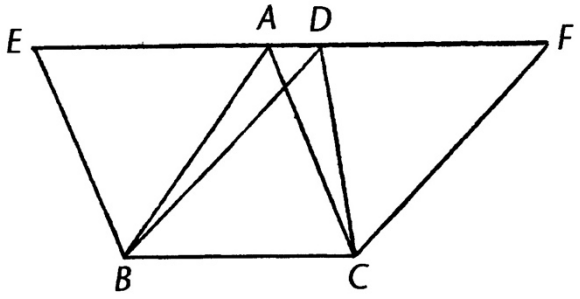

Fig. 1

That these two triangles are equal to each other is not obvious. I could visualize moving points A and D along line EF and not being sure about whether the proposition was correct. Furthermore, the proposition rests on the assumption that the line EF is parallel to the line BC. *So? Did we not prove that already in Propositions 27 and 29?* I asked myself. But I chalked my confusion up to the lack of equations or something similar. As we continued proving the rest of the propositions, the fragility of the proof for the parallel postulate became part of our daily conversation: did Euclid actually prove this postulate? I would be lying if I were to say that Postulate 5 was suspect the first time I read it. To me, the postulate said that water is wet.

We were not the first to be exposed to this fragility. The Greek philosopher Proclus, who lived in the fifth century CE, noted that Euclid's fifth postulate was "plausible but not necessary."[4] Indeed, Proclus's second guessing of Postulate 5 was based on his being aware of the "relation of the hyperbole to its asymptote."[5] Furthermore, as Florence Lewis indicates, there are drafts of the *Elements* in which Postulate 5 appears as a proposition immediately before Proposition 29 and it is possible that Euclid decided to state it as Postulate 5 because "he could neither prove it nor proceed without it."[6] This observation is not about nitpicking or semantics: if Postulate 5 is incorrect, then much of the subsequent architecture of Book I becomes plausible but not necessary. One may ask: so what if this proposition is just plausible but not necessary? For a mathematician, that is the difference between being alive or not. Indeed, Lewis notes that:

> *In the course of centuries the minds of those interested became clear on one point: they did not wish merely to know whether it was possible to substitute some other assumption for Euclid's, though this question has its interest; they wished to know primarily whether exactly his form of the postulate was logically deducible from his other postulates and established theorems. To change the postulate was merely to re-state the problem.*[7]

Having read these views, I began to wonder why Euclid was included in the program: it must be a mistake. So with my arrogance in full swing, I began crafting mental emails to someone in charge with suggestions about changing the curriculum. And to bolster my case, I went through the Greenfield Library's archives to check the arguments that were used in the design of the curriculum. And I found a transcript of the discussion at the

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[4] Florence Lewis, "History of the Parallel Postulate," *The American Mathematical Monthly* 27, no. 1 (1920): 16-23.
[5] Ibid., 16.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 18.

curriculum meetings in 1965, a discussion that is fresh, enlightening, and humbling. Yes, there are arguments against the inclusion of Euclid but the counterarguments from Ms. Brann and Mr. Klein are compelling:

> Ms. Brann: *Most of our students have some sort of vague notion of, to use a technical term, an "axiomatic system," when they come to us. When we begin to study Euclid, one of the interesting topics to discuss is whether this is what they had heard rumors of in high school, whether Euclid's "system" is intended to be an arbitrary axiomatic system in the sense they imagined. Well, three years intervene, and we finally come to the senior year when we begin to study modern axiomatics, and it turns out that in fact there exists a world of difference between an Euclidean axiom and an axiom of Hilbert. And though it is in fact the case that we don't do justice to the ramifications of modern axiomatics, I think that we do do justice to the difference between the approaches. And this does make many students feel that they want to go on with the modern side.*[8]
>
> Mr. Klein: *I would like only to interject one thing. Euclid is not only a great mathematician. He is also a compiler. There are certain things in Euclid which are incredibly valuable for the student. For example, the simple thing that he hits upon at the very beginning: the fifth postulate. Why is it a postulate. Why is it not a definition? This is of incredible value. To make a student understand that this is not a definition, that on this is based non-Euclidean geometry, the possibility of non-Euclidean geometry, is a great thing.*[9]

Notwithstanding these observations, I kept reading Lewis, who notes that:

> *Gauss's meditations were leading him through tedious and painstaking labors to the conclusion that Euclid's fifth postulate was not deducible from*

[8] "Seminar Discussion on the Place and Extent of the Teaching of Mathematics in the Liberal Arts Curriculum," Saint Mary's College, March 25th–March 27th, 1965 (REF LD 4821.S277), 34-35.
[9] Ibid., 41.

> *his other postulates. The minds of those not conversant with the intricacies of the problem might easily rush to the conclusion that Euclid's geometry was therefore untrue, and feel the whole structure of human learning crashing about their ears.*[10]

I wanted to know more about this crashing. So I took Proposition 47 to be the Queen of Book I and worked my way backwards, identifying the chain of propositions that supported it and are connected to Postulate 5 [Fig. 2] My rendering of that chain is as follows (where P stands for postulate and I stands for Proposition):[11]

Whether Proposition 47 is merely plausible matters not just to mathematicians, but also to anyone who makes a living out of measuring distances on flat surfaces. Indeed, Proposition 47 is one of the most elegant proofs of Pythagoras's theorem. So if Postulate 5 is unnecessary, then Euclid's claim to relevance would vanish. This exercise allowed me to visualize a potential mathematical crash and gave me comfort: if it is tough for Gauss, then it is tough for everyone, especially me.

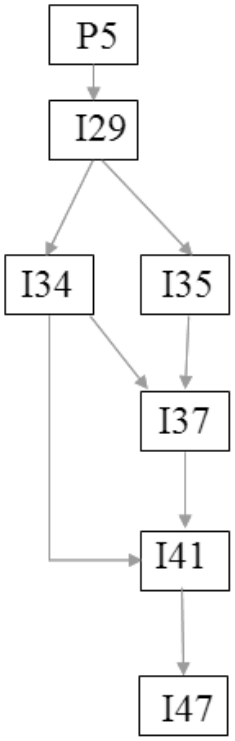

Fig. 2

Relief came finally when we moved on to Lobachevski's work. I liked this portion of the curriculum the most because the proofs of his theorems rely on logic with a compelling and self-sustaining flow, instead of the memory that Euclid's proofs require. Furthermore, Lobachevski's work relies on conventional mathematics: operators

[10] Lewis 19.

[11] To be sure, Proposition 29 influences propositions not shown here and, as a result, they too become plausible instead of necessary; I ignored these other propositions to focus on Proposition 47.

(+ and =), negative numbers, and notation for angles—my kind of thing. But how does Lobachevski's work relate to the life of Postulate 5? By allowing it to be "uncertain." Specifically, his Theorem 16 shows that, in his new geometry, the definition of parallel lines does not demand the angle conditions of Proposition 29: lines that are "pinched" need not cut.[12] And as Lewis indicates:

> *The question,* Is Euclid's fifth postulate logically deducible from his other postulates? *is answered by showing that the denial of this postulate while all the others are retained leads to a geometry as consistent as Euclid's own. […]Thus was Euclid "vindicated" in an unexpected manner. Knowingly or not, the wise Greek had stated the case correctly, and only his followers had been at fault in their efforts for improvement.*[13]

Not content with what Lewis says, I consulted Hardy. This is what he has to say about Greek mathematics:

> *The Greeks first spoke a language which modern mathematicians can understand: as Littlewood said to me once, they are not clever schoolboys or 'scholarship candidates', but 'Fellows of another college'. So Greek mathematics is 'permanent', more permanent even than Greek literature. Archimedes will be remembered when Aeschylus is forgotten, because languages die and mathematical ideas do not. 'Immortality' may be a silly word, but probably a mathematician has the best chance of whatever it may mean.*[14]

Alright, I accepted that I had to suspend whatever arrogant image I had of myself and read Euclid's propositions as though I was in front of him—all else absent.

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[12] Lobachevski, N., 1891, *The Theory of Parallels*, Proposition 16.
[13] Lewis, 19.
[14] G. H. Hardy, *A Mathematician's Apology* (Cambridge University Press, 1967), 81.

I try to apply this lesson to all the other courses I take at St. John's, but, needless to say, I always fail. There are moments, however, in which the very act of trying brings unexpected moments of intense joy that are too brief. In a study group on the economist John Maynard Keynes, I came across the following observation from Keynes:

> *The classical theorists resemble Euclidean geometers in a non-Euclidean world who, discovering that in experience straight lines apparently parallel often meet, rebuke the lines for not keeping straight—as the only remedy for the unfortunate collisions which are occurring. Yet, in truth, there is no remedy except to throw over the axiom of parallels and to work out a non-Euclidean geometry. Something similar is required to-day in economics.*[15]

Keynes is as central to economics as Euclid is to geometry. And being the Keynesian that I am, my study of geometry at St. John's gave me an appreciation for the depth of Keynes' view that I never had and, via a curriculum discussion about the parallel postulate held more than fifty years ago, I joined a conversation that has lasted more than two thousand years. In the process, I was also given an inkling as to what Ms. Langston meant about by being engaged on many levels (I hope).

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[15] John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (1935), Book I, Chapter 2, Section IV.

The Architecture of Reductio ad Absurdum

Alejandro Ehrenberg

If we were to imagine Euclid's mathematical system as a medieval cathedral, *reductio ad absurdum* proofs would primarily play the role of flying buttresses. They provide vital support to the whole edifice, and do so from the exterior, where the absurd gargoyles and chimeras live. Why does Euclid use this kind of reasoning instead of restricting himself to direct argumentation? What do *reductio* proofs contribute to the system developed in Book 1 of the *Elements?*

In order to explore these questions it is pertinent to begin by observing how a specific *reductio* proof works. Proposition 6 is the first one to be demonstrated in this manner. It is the converse of the immediately preceding proposition.

Proposition 5: In isosceles triangles the angles at the base equal one another, and, if the equal straight lines are produced further, then the angles under the base equal one another.

Proposition 6: If in a triangle two angles equal one another, then the sides opposite the equal angles also equal one another.

These can be expressed more schematically thus:

Proposition 5: If a*, then* b.

Proposition 6: If b*, then* a.

It is tempting to assume that, once Euclid has demonstrated the truth of Proposition 5, Proposition 6 only exists for the sake of a complete exposition, but is really redundant. However, after some thought, we can

see that the fact that *a* entails *b* does not automatically mean that *b* entails *a*.

But it is important that it does entail it. Euclid is building an edifice where each level rests upon the previous one: if any given part is weak, the whole is liable to collapse. As an illustration of this, consider the following definition: a square is a four-sided equilateral figure. That this statement is true does not imply that its converse is also true. A definition like this would not do for Euclid's system of truth, which cannot be built on definitions that read one way are true but read the other are false. Reversibility must be explicitly established. Thus, by way of *reductio*, Proposition 6 proves that *if in a triangle two angles equal one another, then the sides opposite the equal angles also equal one another*. The foundation is now firm; the mason can build on.

The following question arises: could Euclid have achieved this end through direct argumentation? Put differently, must the reversibility of a proposition be proven by *reductio?* In this regard, looking at Book 1 as a whole is helpful. A pattern is discernible: almost all converse propositions are demonstrated by *reductio*. Nevertheless, there are notable exceptions—for some converses, like Proposition 48, are proven directly. If the pattern suggests the existence of some kind of necessity between converses and *reductio*, the exceptions point to the possibility that argumentation by *reductio* is, rather, a deliberate choice by Euclid.

But surely there is another way to explore the question at hand. By turning our attention once again to Propositions 5 and 6, we will find support for the view that the use of *reductio* is in fact a carefully considered choice.

Proposition 5: If a*, then* b.

Proposition 5 Absurd: If not a*, then* b.

Proposition 6: If b*, then* a.

Proposition 5 Absurd can only exist when its converse is proven by *reductio*; direct argumentation is incapable of bringing it out. By means of this intermediate step, Euclid shows that the negation of *a* does not entail *b*. This reaffirmation of Proposition 5 is important. If *b* were the consequence of *a* and also of *not a*, then the system as a whole would lose consistency and become weak. Therefore, proving converses through *reductio* achieves, economically, a double end: to establish reversibility and to ensure consistency. Euclid goes outside the structure he is building, into the region of absurdity, and creates a flying buttress—Proposition 5 Absurd—with which he reinforces the cathedral.

Having examined how a particular *reductio* proof works and perceived the double-end it serves, we are now able to explore more generally the use of *reductio* throughout Book 1. But first, a word on the book's structure is in order. There seem to be two parts to it. The first deals mostly with lines, angles, and the relations between them; the universe where this first half takes place is triangular. Then, quite suddenly, at Proposition 29, a change occurs. From here on, Euclid's focus is directed at parallels and, specifically, parallelogrammic areas. It is worth noting that Proposition 29 is where Postulate 5 is first employed. This proposition is the peak of the first part of Book 1; the second peak, the whole book's climax, is Proposition 47.

Taking this separation into account, we can see that most *reductio* proofs in Book 1 appear before Proposition 29, which is itself a *reductio*. Out of a total of 11 such proofs, 9 belong to the book's first half. Now, if it is true that the purpose of the first half is to be able to enunciate Proposition 29, and that Postulate 5 is required for this purpose, then the following speculation becomes plausible. Euclid knows that Postulate 5 is especially hard to accept: we have no way of knowing, for sure, that the two straight lines in question, when produced indefinitely, will really meet. It is a shaky supposition. He therefore invests a considerable amount of his energies

reaffirming Postulate 5 before actually using it in Proposition 29, which in turn is used copiously in the second part of Book 1.

It is worth remembering what Postulate 5 begs the reader to accept: *That, if a straight line falling on two straight lines makes the interior angles on the same side less than two right angles, the two straight lines, if produced indefinitely, meet on that side on which are the angles less than the two right angles*. In the first half of Book 1, there are 4 propositions that refer directly to Postulate 5: 17, 27, 28, and 29. With the help of Proposition 13 and Definition 23, we can reformulate and reduce them as follows:

17. *If two straight lines cut by a third straight line meet, then the interior angles on the side on which the lines meet are less than two right angles.*

27. *If a straight line falling on two straight lines makes the interior angles equal to two right angles, then the lines will not meet when produced indefinitely.*

28. *If a straight line falling on two straight lines makes the interior angles equal to two right angles, then the lines will not meet when produced indefinitely.*

29. *If two straight lines cut by a third straight line do not meet, then the interior angles on the side on which the lines meet are equal to two right angles.*

The table below presents them in a schematized fashion; it also notes each proposition's relation to Postulate 5, and whether it is a *reductio* proof:

Postulate 5	If *a*, then *b*	
Proposition 17	If *b,* then *a*	Converse
Proposition 27 (*reductio*) and Proposition 28	If *not a,* then *not b*	Negation of the premise and conclusion that compose Post. 5
Proposition 29 (*reductio*)	If *not b*, then *not a*	Negation of the premise and conclusion that compose the converse

Proposition 27 in the process of being proven by *reductio* reads thus: if *b*, then *not a,* which is demonstrated as being absurd. This flying buttress

reaffirms Proposition 17: *b* entails *a; b* does *not* also entail *not a.* Not as clear is the statement conjured up by the *reductio* in Proposition 29: if *a*, then *b,* which, in effect, is Postulate 5. In the context of the demonstration, it is absurd because it contradicts the given. Why Proposition 29 goes back to Postulate 5 and not to a previous proposition is a question to be explored in a subsequent essay. For our present purposes it suffices to observe how Euclid has thoroughly reinforced Postulate 5. It has been firmly laid, and supported by a flying buttress.

Hereupon the book's mood changes markedly. Before Proposition 29, Euclid proceeds cautiously, laboriously, even tediously. Now the author seems much more at ease. In the second half of Book 1, Euclid is concerned with the upper part of the cathedral: he is dealing with stained glass and clerestories and spires. Sometimes it seems he is almost doing magic. He cuts up parallelograms into smaller figures and shifts them around to prove things amazing and counterintuitive. In Proposition 47, the two upper squares simply pour into the hypotenuse square; it can only happen thanks to line AL, parallel to BD or CE. And it can only be described as beautiful.

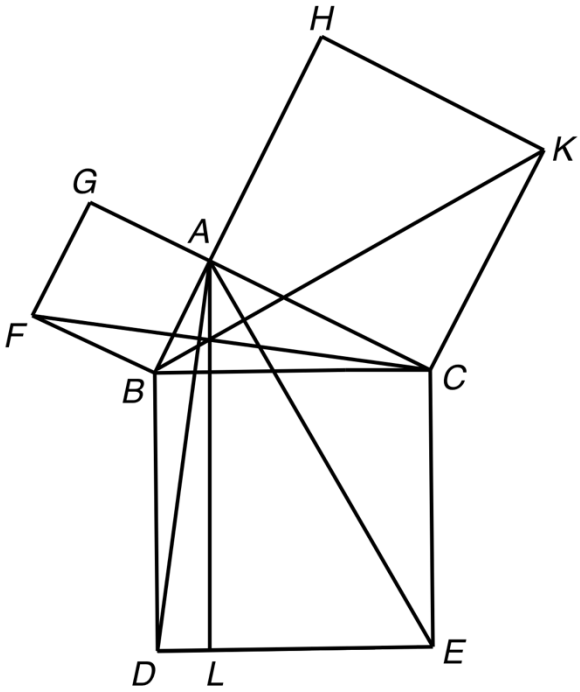

Fig. 1. Illustration of the proof for Proposition 47.

A native of Mexico City, Mr. Ehrenberg (AGI'19) will offer an oral defense of his Master's Essay on Don Quijote *in spring of 2019.*

Does Euclid Start with Axioms?
An Attempt to Not Confuse Circles for Lines

Derek Foret

I can still vividly recall my favorite picture book as a child. It was a story of a little girl, Lily, who said one thing, and one thing only: *why?* To the frustration of her father, she never felt satisfied with any answer given, forcing him to always resort to saying some variation of "it just is." One day, while they are at the park, a UFO lands, and aliens announce that their leader wants them to destroy the planet. Lily, of course, asks why. Eventually, the aliens can only say, "he just does." They realize this is not a satisfactory answer and go back home to think things over. Lily saves the day. However, it is unclear if she even understood that she did. First of all, her dad has to put his hand over her mouth once the aliens announce they are letting the humans live. And at the end of the book, her dad tells her that he was proud of her at the park today. She says what she always says, and he replies, "I just was, Lily. I just was…"[1]

Euclid brings out the inner Lily in all of us. He compels us to ask *why* whenever he makes a claim, and we expect an answer from him based not on faith but on what has already been proven. By referring to previous statements, logical inquiry both assumes and guides us towards some sort of beginning. However, herein lies an inherent problem, as a beginning, by definition, has nothing previous to it. According to our modern conception of mathematics—by which I not only mean the technical conceptions of modern mathematicians, but also our popular conception of mathematics

[1] Lindsay Camp, *Why?*, illustrated by Tony Ross (Anderson Press, 1998).

today—we generally think of this beginning as the axioms given. We see these axioms as similar to the definitions, postulates, and common notations that we find at the beginning of Euclid's *Elements*[2] (what this essay will refer to as the "prelude" for shorthand). We do not want to "have to trust [Euclid's] word" (10/25/18)[3] that any of his steps are justifiable. But simply writing down the prelude does not justify the parts of the prelude, at least not in the same way as Euclid's propositions are justified through proof.

Some great mathematicians have attempted to address this issue. Famed logician and philosopher Bertrand Russell perceived it when he first encountered Euclid. He described encountering the *Elements* as "one of the great events of my life, as dazzling as first love," yet, further clarifying, called that love "not unalloyed. I had been told that Euclid proved things, and was much disappointed that he started with axioms. At first I refused to accept them unless my brother could offer me some reason for doing so, but he said: 'If you don't accept them we cannot go on.'"[4] This bothered Russell so much that it "determined the course of [his] subsequent [mathematical] work."[5] This work culminated in the *Principia Mathematica*, an attempt to at least reduce mathematics to assumptions made by logic itself (if not to de-axiomatize the field completely). Due to Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorems, published a quarter century after the *Principia*, the mathematical community today now considers Russell's desire to be

[2] All references to Euclid are from the following edition: Euclid, *Elements*, ed. Dana Densmore & trans. Thomas L. Heath (Green Lion Press with Sheridan Books, 2017).
[3] These dated references refer to my personal class notes: Math & Natural Science Tutorial, Fall 2018, Emily Langston, tutor.
[4] Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, vol. I (George Allen & Unwin, 1967), 67.
[5] Christopher C. Leary & Lars Kristiansen, *A Friendly Introduction to Mathematical Logic*, 2nd ed. (Milne Library, 2015), 44.

tenable for smaller systems that make up parts of mathematics[6] but not the whole of it.

However, modern mathematicians appear to be at peace with this fact. My textbook defends axiomatic mathematics as a way to be "up front about our need to make assumptions […] [acknowledging] our axiom set in every deduction that we write."[7] This is a proper, respectable, and true concession, and it does appear to solve the issue for mathematicians. However, I do not see how this concession would solve the issue for Lily. If concessions satisfied her, her dad would not have had to cover her mouth when the aliens announced they were not going to destroy the planet. As Lily appears to be the personification of logical inquiry itself, this points to a fundamental problem: Gödel may have proved that Lily cannot be fully satisfied, but Gödel does not make Lily go away. Whether or not we are able to truly satisfy her remains a question. Euclid, for his part, gives off the impression that he possesses less of a care for rigorous axiomatization than modern mathematicians. The rest of this essay will explore the question of whether or not this impression is tied to a method for satisfying Lily that differs from (and so may satisfy her more fully than) the modern approach.

The assumption that Euclid starts with axioms includes the assumption that mathematical logic is linear. By that, I mean that it travels from a beginning (the axioms) to an end (a final proposition). In this case, the postulates of Book I become different points on a unidirectional line. We tend to think of this structure as logical, which obscures the fact that it is also natural: its linear sequentiality is analogous to how we see the events of our own lives as a narrative throughout time. This is the assumption my

[6] For the sake of intellectual honesty, a version of Euclidean geometry is one of these parts. For the mathematics, see: Marvin Jay Greenberg, "Old and New Results in the Foundations of Elementary Plane Euclidean and Non-Geometries," *The American Mathematical Monthly* 117, no. 3 (March 2010): 198-219.

[7] Leary, *Introduction to Mathematical Logic*, 44.

class made when we began our final discussion on Euclid, where we seemed to agree that "we have gone from *a point that has no part* [Definition 1]—or at least from describing an equilateral triangle [Proposition 1]—to the Pythagorean theorem [Proposition 47]" (10/25/18). If a set of axioms is a foundation of admitted assumptions to which all logical inquiry eventually leads back, then Proposition 1 is certainly not an axiom, as it is both proven and seems to rely on prior concepts (specifically Definition 15, Postulate 1, Postulate 3, and Common Notion 1). So our candidates for what Euclid's real axioms are lay in what we commonly agree is his beginning: the parts of the prelude.

The very fact that we were unsure if we started with Definition 1, the beginning of the prelude, or with Proposition 1 reveals that we were uncertain if the former is an axiomatic starting point. Part of this uncertainty stems from Densmore's editorial preface, which provides a helpful, although limited, historical argument against treating the prelude as axiomatic: she casts doubt on the authenticity of the prelude due to inconsistencies between the early printed editions in both form and content. However, we do not even need to turn to scholasticism to see that "Euclid may not have been trying to cover the foundation exhaustively in these sections."[8] Putting aside the postulates for now, this is clear in various ways from the content of the definitions and common notions. First, the definitions do not seem to be intended to be a potential student's first encounter with geometrical ideas. While we may be able to agree that we can understand what it means for a line to be "breadthless length" (Definition 1), it is nigh impossible to explain that understanding without referring to concepts we learned before Euclid. Similarly, the common notions (unlike the postulates) do not read like rules being agreed to but general knowledge being drawn upon. For example, the notion that a part cannot be greater than the whole feels stronger than the claim that if the

[8] Dana Densmore, editor's preface to: Euclid, *Elements*, xvi.

interior angles on one side of two lines cut by a transversal add up to less than two right angles, those two lines will meet on that side (Postulate 5). The fact that we find potential definitions and common notions in the propositions that are not listed in the prelude (i.e., "parallelogram" in Proposition 35 or the Common Notion 2 equivalent for greater things in Proposition 17) only makes this feel more likely.

Most importantly, Euclid never explicitly cites the prelude. While he certainly refers to the concepts found in it, he never refers to them as if they had already been agreed upon. He never writes anything along the lines of "let us draw a circle *according to Proposition 2*," or, at the very least, "let us draw a circle *as stated in the postulates*." A modern reader naturally supplies this kind of thinking: if one does not remember why one is able to assert something, one can flip back to the relevant earlier proposition or part of the prelude. There is a difference, however, between modern readers justifying a logical step to themselves and said logical step being justifiable as such. Logical justification seems to speak to what Socrates says in the *Meno*, that "true opinions […] for so long as they stay put, are a noble thing and accomplish all [manner of] good things. Yet […] they aren't worth much until someone ties them down by means of a calculation of cause."[9] However, true opinions are not made true because they have been adequately tied down; we know this because we are able to tie down false opinions as well.

Euclid makes no indication that he thinks of the definitions and common notions as rules that we agreed cannot be broken. Perhaps this stems from a realization that this does not make them Lily-proof: one could easily ask *why* they cannot be broken. Euclid appears to take a different approach by making the question of *why* self-answering. For example, he implicitly uses the notion of a circle in Proposition 1 to argue that two radii are equal. If

[9] Plato, *Meno*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett, 97e-98a.

Lily were to ask why *this* were true, she would either be confused as to why they are both radii, which a good tutor could clear up, or she would be asking *why are the radii of a circle equal?* The question answers itself: *because they are radii of a circle.* Asking why again creates an infinite regress, an absurdity. Euclid explicitly uses another concept of absurdity in his arguments by *reductio ad absurdum* (as we refer to them). In Proposition 6, for example, he gets to a place where he seemingly violates Common Notion 5, as, due to his assumptions, his logic has lead him to say that a part (the triangle DBC) is equal to a whole (ACB) [Fig. 1]. He does not explicitly argue something like 'this goes against Common Notion 5, which we agreed to, and so we have a contradiction'. Instead, he simply says: "the less [is equal] to the greater: which is absurd."[10] Now, whether or not Common Notion 5, as written, could be violated without absurdity is a question that would require an exploration of mathematics that deals with infinity.[11] However, if one only looks at the notion as it is referenced in Proposition 6 specifically, a violation would always be absurd: "the less" (DBC) cannot be equal to "the greater" (ACB) due to the nature of the two triangles.

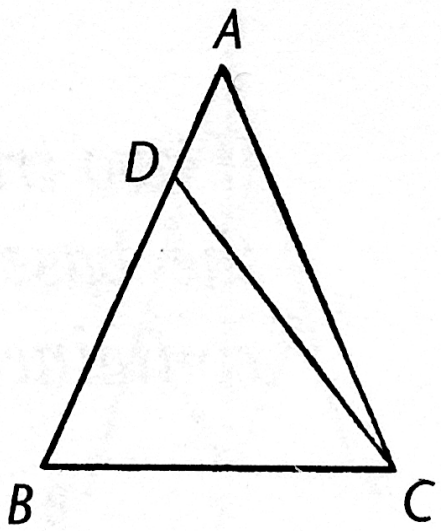

Fig. 1. Triangle BAC from Proposition 6.

Turning to what we previously put aside, our final candidates for axioms are the postulates. While I do not have the space to offer a full analysis of

[10] Euclid, *Elements*, Book I, Proposition 6.

[11] One might be able to argue, for example, that there are "as many" even numbers as there are counting numbers, as (2, 4, 6…) can be listed next to (1, 2, 3…). So a part of the counting numbers is equal to its totality. But whether or not infinity can be a whole is unclear.

them, we can compare them with the definitions and common notions. Like the definitions and common notions, they are never explicitly referenced. Unlike them, however, they do not seem Lily-proof in the same way, as they do read more like rules being agreed to,[12] and absurdity cannot be invoked. Lily could ask why, if the interior angles of two lines cut by a transversal add up to less than two right angles, those two lines must meet on the side of those angles—Lobachevski certainly did. Yet the way Euclid implicitly invokes the postulates may share a similar self-answering character as seen above. He states logical claims that rely on *the first three* postulates in the same way as he states claims that rely on previous QEFs:[13] by using the Ancient Greek third person imperative, translated as let *x* be.[14] This is a complicated notion as the third person imperative does not have a precise equivalent in English.[15] Other than Euclid, God uses it in the Septuagint translation of the Bible (e.g., "let there be light"). The connection it offers is that "the mere act of speaking suffices to bring about the truth of what is being said."[16] This points to a notion of self-explanation: that the why of the action is found in the action itself. If fully achievable, this would allow Lily to be completely satisfied by virtue of doing the proposition.

Is there a similar notion underlying the *last two* postulates: Postulates 4 and 5? Euclid does not use the third person imperative when referring to their

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[12] Proclus defines a postulate as a "statement [that is] unknown and nevertheless [...] taken as true without the student's conceding it." Robert B. Williamson, translator's introduction to *Selections from Nikolai Lobachevski's Theory of Parallels*, published by the Graduate Institute at St. John's College.

[13] Euclid uses two different kinds of proofs: QEFs (i.e., *quod erat faciendum*) when something is being constructed and QEDs (i.e., *quod erat demonstrandum*) when something is not.

[14] For example, Euclid invokes Postulate 2 by saying "let the circle BCD be described" in Proposition 1 and invokes Proposition 1 by saying "let the equilateral triangle DAB be constructed" in Proposition 2.

[15] Cf. Alfred Mollin & Robert Williamson, *An Introduction to Ancient Greek*, 3rd ed. (University Press of America, 1997), 69.

[16] Ibid.

concepts, but perhaps Postulates 4 and 5 somehow relate to the QEDs in a similar way to how Postulates 1–3 relate to the QEFs. But how do the QEDs differ from the QEFs? Last semester, it appeared that my class had our greatest moments of clarity when discussing QEDs. For example, after we went through Proposition 21, we not only felt like we knew *how*, logically, the proposition was true, but also *why*, in a way, it was true. We felt like we could *see* why an interior angle like BDC would be greater than an extreme angle like BAC [Fig. 2] for any triangle we considered. These moments are exciting and pleasurable: they feel similar to an encounter with something overwhelmingly beautiful.

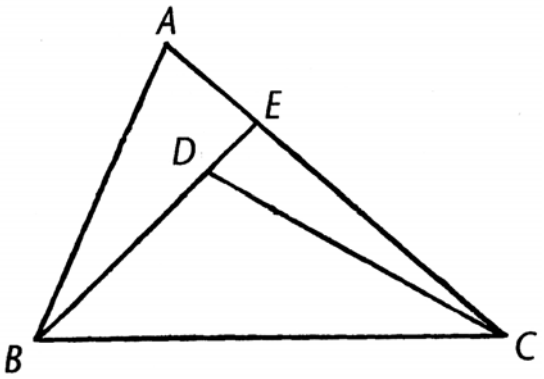

Fig. 2. Triangle BAC from Proposition 21.

Turning back to the *Meno*, Socrates labels the process of tying down as "recollection," which he previously identified as "searching and learning as a whole."[17] In these moments, logic seems to shift from a line to the commonly used metaphor of a circle.[18] We remember something that we already knew: our searching, or asking why, becomes our learning, or our answering of why. It is here, then, that we can perhaps imagine Lily fully satisfied. It is as if she could ride a Euclidean carousel round and round again, eventually both asking and answering in the same place.

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[17] Plato, *Meno*, 98a & 81d.

[18] Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, Book VIII, Ch. 9–10.

A Conversation with Paul Ludwig

Zachary N. Greene

Zachary Greene: Where did you go to graduate school? You went to a couple different places, right?

Paul Ludwig: I graduated from [The University of] Tennessee–Chattanooga in 1987, and then I went to Oxford, England, studied English and Italian literature. You could do both in a weird combo. In one way it was not graduate school, because it was a second bachelor's, which at the time was not so unusual. Oxford was considered so much greater, on a different plane, that a lot of North Americans would go to do a second B.A. Partly it was a bit of an indulgence too. But it was considered a pretty good degree. Actually at the time—I'm not sure if they are still doing this, but their B.A. turned into a master's if you waited for three to five years, or something like that. If you went through another ceremony, it automatically converted as if it were so great to begin with. The education was better than what I was used to, though some Ivy League students complained about it. It was a really good overview of English and Italian Literature.

ZG: Complained in what sense?

PL: Well, they hated the weather and called Britain "Fantasy Island," a TV show at the time—Mr. Roarke and Hervé Villechaize. They thought what they were getting was not as sophisticated as at Harvard, although I think they got a lot more personal attention because it was pretty much one-on-one with your tutor, usually two different tutors once per week each. Other than that, there wasn't too much supervision, you just got two stacks of books and were told to write an essay on each stack, and that's what you did each week for two years.

ZG: Was there less emphasis on dialogue at Oxford comparatively to St. John's?

PL: Yes, you didn't tend to talk to your fellow students except outside of class. Now, there was good dialogue, but it was a bit more like the Higher Gossip [documentary film series] that you guys are pursuing now. It was not quite serious discussion. They used to joke that you shouldn't talk shop. The joke was that you didn't want to show you were making any effort at Oxford. Very aristocratic in that way, it was a holdover. I'm sure it has changed, I hope it has changed. The really smart people didn't have to study at all, they got a first-class degree without any effort whatsoever. I suppose there really were some people like that, but most people who did well had to study fairly hard. My tutor told me this at the time—I don't know if I really knew anybody that did this, so perhaps it was a holdover from a holdover, but what you would do is study late at night when no one knew. After the partying was done and you had already hit the bars, you would do your studying and you would do something to your face to look like you hadn't been up all night, a hot pack or a cold pack or something on your head. Then you would surprise everybody at the end because there was just one exam at the end—no continuous assessment. So when you scored really high on that, everyone would be like, "Wow, he did no work at all," and that would blow people's mind and it would be the gold standard.

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My conversations with tutors were wonderful and conversations with fellow students were very good. There was a lot of leisure, it was more leisurely than St. John's or any American university. Although I didn't do the party thing at a state school, despite going to a state school, so perhaps I wouldn't know. Most people at Oxford were studying their pleasures, and pleasing themselves in rather sophisticated ways. I didn't do everything everybody did, but there were odd things. The students would want to have a ball, and they would get money to have a ball, which is a dance as I

thought of it. But as part of the ball, they would pay for a festival of rides to come into the quad of the college with roller coasters and such. Drinking was pretty intense, but they seemed to have been at it longer. At Tennessee–Chattanooga, people would get utterly smashed. At Oxford they would drink slowly, and get more and more smashed as the night went on, but this could go on for quite a while. You could ride these things for hours, so I don't think they were doing so badly overall. It wouldn't be the lifestyle that I would choose for myself in perpetuity, but at the time it was great.

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After Oxford, I did Social Thought at Chicago for the Ph.D. In between I got a master's because I realized you can't get a job in social thought. As my advisor put it, "You didn't come here because it's the best social thought department in the U.S., you came here because there are no other social thought departments in the U.S." I realized I wasn't going to get a social thought job, and decided I would major in classics. I retroactively applied for a master's in classics because I had taken a lot of classics classes with those professors. So I had a B.A., B.A., M.A., Ph.D., and that was finally it—it was enough.

ZG: What was your focus when you were at the Committee on Social Thought?

PL: Greek and a little bit of Latin was a focus. I had really gone there because I was very interested in Allan Bloom's book *The Closing of the American Mind*, and I really wanted to study with him. That meant political philosophy, whatever that is. Not every political science department would even consider it a thing. I had those two foci, and neither one was a hot ticket to any professional life post-graduation. I got interviews at both political science departments and classics departments, so it wasn't utterly self-destructive. From the pure learning point of view, both were fantastic. The classics department was very interesting indeed. Although I didn't get

a whole lot out of political science as a department, there were Allan Bloom, Nathan Tarcov, and Ralph Lerner, who was my initially assigned advisor. And I never took proper advantage of all he had to offer, which was just idiocy on my part. There were wonderful visiting people like Clifford Orwin, who did Thucydides one year, which was the best course I really ever took. Then Leon Kass was there, and he taught the book of Genesis and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. These were two or three quarter-long courses, kind of line by line, wonderful philosophizing about those things. You, Mr. Interviewer, happen to be in my *Nicomachean Ethics* class right now, and a lot of what you are hearing is partially digested, regurgitated stuff I got from Leon Kass's wonderful teaching. I probably can't even express it properly, I'm probably feeling it more than you're hearing it.

ZG: Our *Nicomachean Ethics* class is probably the best class I've taken at St. John's College. How in-depth we go into the text and how much we go to the Greek, which provides such a valuable context. This is actually one of the questions I wanted to ask you about. Why should a Graduate Institute student take Ancient Greek? Many of our [students] are out of school now. What is the point of taking an ancient language? It's somewhat impractical to a certain extent.

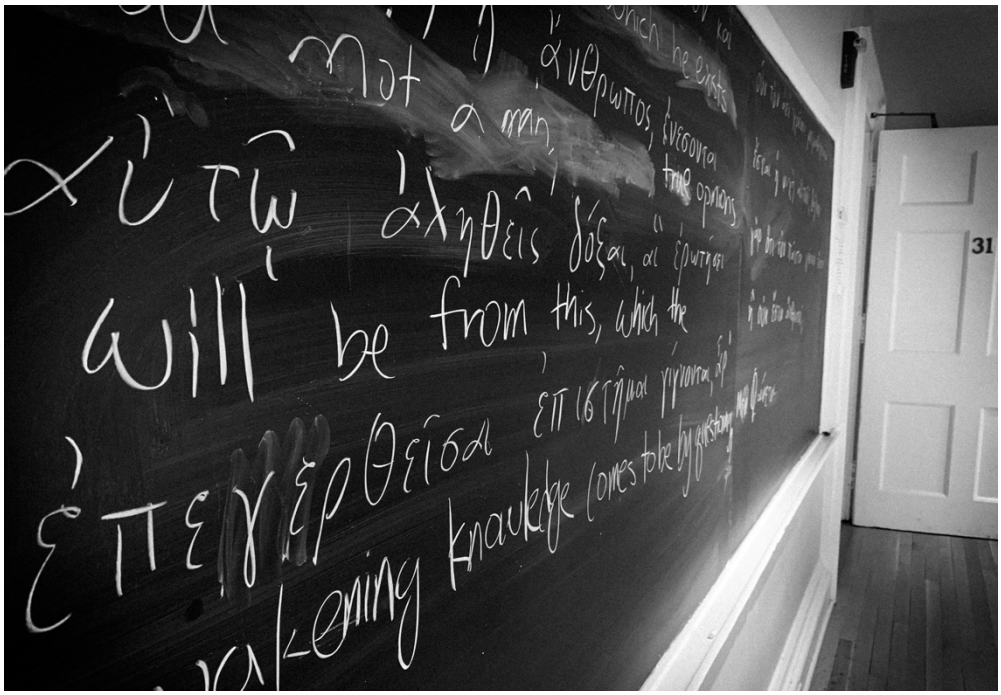
PL: Right, most aren't going to grow up to be classicists. Well, a few of you are, people have been getting interested that way.

ZG: There are some students in our class that are incredible at the language… and there are others that are not. But we see the value in going to the original language of a text, and considering it in that form, which provides something important to the conversation.

PL: It feels strange for me to be an advocate plugging Greek [in the Graduate Institute] because I spent so many years as a tutor neglecting it. Not really knowing—well, I guess I knew on some level [that] the Graduate Institute did something like freshman language. It was odd: it was taught

by tutors I didn't know well, who were themselves part-time tutors that did not always teach in the undergraduate program and were not well known to their colleagues. There tended to be a little anti-Graduate Institute prejudice, that somehow it was a lite version of the Program, and we didn't always put the very best tutors in the Graduate Institute. There might have been real reasons for that, it started out as a way to offer accreditation to teachers in the Annapolis area. You guys who are from someplace else who move in here to do the [graduate program]—I think there were always some like that, but you guys have become a majority. In a way, you're the students I'm most focused on at the moment. I think that prejudice against those kind of teachers was a little silly, and the classes were always very mixed.

In Jon Tuck's *Higher Gossip* interview, he mentions he got to the Graduate Institute somehow early in his tenure here, and he was teaching a poem by Matthew Arnold or some such poet, and one of the students was the



Andrew Dorchester

leading expert in this poetry who had just wanted to come out of retirement to do St. John's. That was pretty early in the history of the Institute, and so my sort of prejudice was just ridiculous. I hope all that is safely in the past. I got interested in teaching Greek [in the Graduate Institute] many years after I taught other [classes there], I had taught several. My best friend at the college, Mrs. Mera Flaumenhaft, was teaching it quite recently. She told me, "You've really got to think about this because these students really want to be there. They come an extra night each week." Maybe you guys have put a number on it, can you quantify how much harder it is to do the Greek preceptorial?

ZG: I started the program in the summer, which was fairly intensive. I did the *Republic* with Mr. Pastille, and I had to put in a lot of hard work. The *Republic* is not an easy text. Comparative to starting Greek in the fall and now finishing it in the spring, I've had to put in at least twice as much effort. The second class per week adds quite a bit, especially when you consider translations, exercises, and trying to do some more on top of that to try and cement things. How easy is it to cement Ancient Greek in a semester? Well, it's not. It's quite a bit of extra work.

PL: To have students with that kind of dedication, as opposed to the undergraduates—all freshmen have to take ancient Greek—I've had wonderful undergraduate students of Greek, but to have the dedication of a small cohort of four or five great graduate students who really want to be there makes a very different sort of conversation. I think in some ways tutors don't realize what's out there. You guys all come with an undergraduate degree, and for a lot of you this is a stepping stone to something else. A blind tutor might think, "Oh they're just stepping on us to get to something else." But come on! That's the kind of thing we want. That we are your springboard means there's something really good here that you're not going to get somewhere else. It shows in the quality of discussions, and the speediness in which you go through Mollin and Williamson. You do as much or more philosophizing about language as the

freshmen do, but getting through it in a semester as opposed to a semester-and-a-half or even longer, or not getting through it... I've actually finished all twenty lessons in the two cycles I've taught it, which is very unusual. Even when Mrs. Flaumenhaft taught the Greek preceptorial, she never got past twelve or fourteen lessons. For us to be able to do twenty, and have the better part of a semester to just concentrate on one book—at last, we can actually see it in the original, not every passage, but the important ones. It makes a big difference.

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I'm now teaching classics at the graduate level, in a sense, which I wasn't doing before, which makes me better from a professional point of view. In addition to just learning a heck of a lot more because you guys have more experience in the world. Very important in a work like the *Ethics*: young people can't learn it. Aristotle himself would say you're wasting this on the freshmen, that's just a necessary glitch of the Program. A difference in the Graduate Institute is that you study things topic by topic, so you remember Aristotle while you're reading Hobbes. As opposed to the chronological way the undergraduates do it. In a way, they've forgotten more than you've ever known. What would be the right way to put it? There's a balance there, both ways have their virtues, but each also has its vice. So for me, it has been wonderful, I can't imagine a better way of spending two nights per week.

ZG: Currently, we are in the second semester and we are reading the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as we've mentioned. You are currently working on a piece on civic friendship, which is towards the end of the book. We haven't actually gotten there yet. Would you care to tell us about that?

PL: It's weird I got started on this almost sixteen years ago. I had done my dissertation, which became a book, on eros and political philosophy, and whether they had anything to do with one another—I claimed they did. It seemed like a natural move to go on to another type of love, from eros to

philia. It also seemed like a quick kind of thing—I know a lot about emotions already, this could be a quick rip-off. It became much more involved very quickly. I've gone through many phases of feeling I knew something, then realizing I was ignorant, then scratching my way back to thinking I knew something, and realizing "wow, talk about ignorance, glad I didn't publish that!" Learning remains a dialectical process, even if you're doing it by yourself with either dead or distant interlocutors.

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The whole need in America for civic friendship, the terrible polarization in a way and really hostility that we are living through now—all that came later. I joke that if I had been smarter about this and got this out earlier, I could have prevented all that and we would be fine. So in a way, events have caught up with the book and made it more relevant than when I first started. I think political communities are forms of friendship. They don't look like it because they pale in comparison to personal friendships, which have the sheer emotional affect you feel for your close friends. I think we feel something analogous to that with fellow citizens without realizing it. In a way it's comparative or contrastive: think about how you feel about fellow citizens compared to how you feel about foreigners, even if they are living in our country. We aren't quite as worried about what they are like. Various hatreds have arisen against immigrants, and that's unfortunate. In that regard, people are currently worried about what they are like. But, in general, we are much more worried about what our fellow citizens are like, we want them to be a certain way, we want them to have certain attitudes—pro-liberty, pro-equality—because these are assumptions of our regime. We share our regime, a shared cooperative scheme, and if people don't believe in equality, they don't fit into our regime as well—same if they don't believe in liberty, and I realize these are in tension in the current liberal-conservative divide right now between valuing one more than the other. But if you don't value both, you make an odd fit in America. To that degree,

worrying about immigrants who maybe don't share those regime assumptions is legitimate.

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Mostly I think we are worried about each other though. We wouldn't worry that way if we didn't favor each other. That's the kind of worry you have about your brother, he's not holding up his end. "Dad, he's not doing his part! I'm doing the mowing every week!" That's a kind of favoritism—you aren't worried about your neighbor, you're worried about your brother. From that, I think there is room to build and see each other as sisters and brothers, which is what Aristotle said too. It's natural, there's something natural here, but there's also something artificial, especially the modern state. Within the modern state, there are tons of things that are still natural. It's very natural to feel concerned about your fellow citizens, what they believe, what they ought to believe, how they are faring, who is persecuting them. A test case of that would be the pathetic story of someone's job that has been outsourced, you immediately feel outraged. "You did that to an American!" I think we all feel that. I think it's time for theorists, especially, to admit that, not just to concentrate entirely on self-interest, which is great, it motivates us, it does a lot of things. I would never think that self-interest is *not* a great political motivator. Civic friendship is another, and they are in some forms of tension. When people pursue their self-interest utterly, to the detriment of their fellow citizens, a price is to be paid and they lose the political support of their fellow citizens. I think cosmopolitan elites have lost a little political support recently, that's what we call populism. Really a lot of the passions that I see as being out there, and somewhat misguided or even debased today, are civic friendship that doesn't know its name. At an earlier stage, it dared not speak its name.

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Liberalism wanted to get us away from civic friendship. Classical liberals—such as John Locke, Thomas Jefferson—they lived through an era of robust civic friendship, both in theory and practice. I think the wars of

religion had already showed them that it was very dangerous, civic passions can be fanatical, especially when connected to religion, but in other ways too. Geography, maybe? We have a little bit of fanaticism about our border right now, on both sides. Those passions needed to be defused, so liberal theorists stopped talking about civic friendship for very good reasons, but we might now be ready for another corrective, moving back in the other direction slightly.

ZG: Can a city without civic friendship be just?

PL: We seem to be trying that experiment, don't we? "Let's forget about civic friendship and just try to focus on justice." As conceived as equal freedom, equal opportunity, or equal result, that would be the basis for justice. But I think the answer is "no." Maybe it can be just without recognizing that it's a civic friendship and without talking about it. I think liberal societies have always been civic friendships without recognizing it, without knowing it, and without calling it by its name. I certainly believe justice has undergone a manifold improvement since the liberal revolution, since Locke, Montesquieu, and give Hobbes his credit, and especially Machiavelli. That justly decried name! Without that revolution, the kinds of justice we enjoy today wouldn't be possible.

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I think all through that period, civic friendship was always there, but people just slowly forgot about it as a thing and began to redescribe it as morality—therefore fitting [it] into justice itself, or even as patriotism. It just got redescribed. We may have now hit a limit on what we can do with a civic friendship that no one knows about. It's just there, in the air, where people are breathing it without thinking about it. Maybe to move on from where we are now, we would need a more self-aware civic friendship. It seems we are pretty unlikely to associate it with religion again. I think maybe we've made that distinction. I hope religion stays private. I'm religious myself, but my hope is that it will remain a private issue and not

become a political issue. Civic friendship could be just political, and not have to have that fatal connection, which is why I think it faded in modern theory to begin with. But I'm not sure if I've given you a strict "yes" or "no."

ZG: I think that was rather sufficient. Congratulations on the book, do you have a release date?

PL: Thank you, about a year from now. Hopefully it's all blown over by then, and it will be dated before it comes out. But somehow I doubt it.

ZG: I'd like to ask you a question that we've been asking other tutors. What makes a great book?

PL: Oof!

ZG: I know, that's a big question.

PL: I think we're so spoiled here with not having to set curricula the way all academics in all other departments are constantly battling about what makes a book worth reading, battling against other competing visions. We tutors have a lot of agreement because we are quite conservative of the canon. Though you guys may not realize it, tutors do deliberate endlessly about the Program. We are worried there might be better stuff out there, that we aren't using or reading, or some stuff might have lost its zing or not be appealing to people. Since we have so much that's great, we want to make sure the things we are reading makes that connection for students. I think a great book often has a surface that will grip you. There's also a certain authority it carries. For whatever reason, you usually know that other people think it's a great book, and therefore it has a claim on your attention. But each tutor definitely thinks he knows some books are great that other tutors don't realize are great.

ZG: What would those be for you?

PL: My favorite books are the comedies of Aristophanes, of which some are on the Program—*The Frogs* and *The Clouds*. People just don't know about a play like *The Acharnians*, that even most of my colleagues haven't read. Each one of these plays displays something about Athenian democracy. The *Assembly of Women*—more people know about it. The Acharnians are mentioned by Thucydides, they were a faction—pro-war, and opposed to peace because their land was destroyed first when the Spartans invaded. The Spartan King Archidamus would destroy some crops when the Athenians retreated within the walls, but leave others undestroyed purely to create factions. It's all there in Thucydides but in a nutshell, and then you see it played out dramatically in Aristophanes. It's just marvelous. All of his plays are like that. *The Knights* is an oligarchic revolution, the knights being a higher class than the heavy armed [soldiers] or rowers. The highest of the three orders. They of course need a demagogue. It's very relevant to today's populism, where elites make compromises by using the demagogue to get their own way.

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Leo Strauss has a wonderful lesser-known book—but very long and involved—of studies called *Socrates and Aristophanes*. Ostensibly to find out more about Socrates by reading Aristophanes' take in *The Clouds*: partly fictionalized, but probably some type of trick mirror that's supposed to exaggerate features that are truly there. In order to understand *The Clouds* that well, with his usual thoroughness, Strauss reads every extant play with his wonderful political eye. Just reading that book in tandem with the plays is a political education of the highest order that I've ever come across. You can't really understand what's in Aristotle if you don't have that kind of cultural background, that kind of give and take, the street speech that's present throughout Aristophanes. I think a great book has to speak to us at our most profound levels. It has to tell us about something we really want, or [that] we come to learn through the book itself that is something we were really wanting all this time without realizing it. It has got that odd

surface-to-core dialectic where there's something superficially attractive about it beyond any cultural authority that it might have. But as you get deeper into it, there are these amazing turnarounds that happen. You think you're going down a path, and it's like, "Oh my gosh! That was at the end of this path, and I feel like I'm back at the beginning."

ZG: Is there anything you would like to see added or subtracted from the curriculum?

PL: I obviously think it's very good. I feel like the Math & Natural Science segment is the weakest, and I would probably subtract the social science at the end of it—the Freud and Jung. My own feeling, and I'm not sure I share this with a lot of tutors, is that psychologists have moved beyond Freud. There were intentionally fraudulent aspects of his work. He wanted a moneymaker and he found one. Some of those case studies, though they have incredible intrinsic interest (he knew how to interest me)—I think they weren't well documented. I think he made some stuff up. I don't think there's any reason to think that social science is truly related to math and natural science. If you really want to have a math and natural science segment, then you have to leave social science out, because to the extent it's mathematized, it's no longer true of politics, and to the extent it's social, it can't be scientific. Nature does play a role in politics—I guess *I*, more than others, am saying that when I say civic friendship is natural. There's a big difference because you can't be empirical in the same way about social matters. It would be nice to have a separate segment, but then it just becomes our Politics & Society segment. I would add more math and natural science, and create the space for it by taking out Freud and whatever else we do at the end.

ZG: Do you think we should introduce more American authors into the Program? That's one thing I've noticed that's rather lacking. You don't see many American thinkers in the Program, it's very German influenced.

PL: Yeah, I think that's fair. Graduate students—but especially undergraduates—do go through this very long American saga, which isn't quite the right word for it. But to truly call these "great books"—a collection of Lincoln speeches or the Supreme Court cases—they aren't great books. We read them because of who *we* are. It's a little bit more of the American identity. It's a concession, I think, to the kinds of things that departmental academia has made vast concessions to. They're way beyond an American identity, they want to read about a smaller identity, conceding that students should read more black authors because they have been kept down all these years, or more female authors. So, in a way, the Program concedes we have an American identity, and today we have to try to interest more and more people from all of the world in it, since we are getting a much more international student body than ever. It's a concession and a tension—you have to think: to what extent are these great books or just *our* great books.

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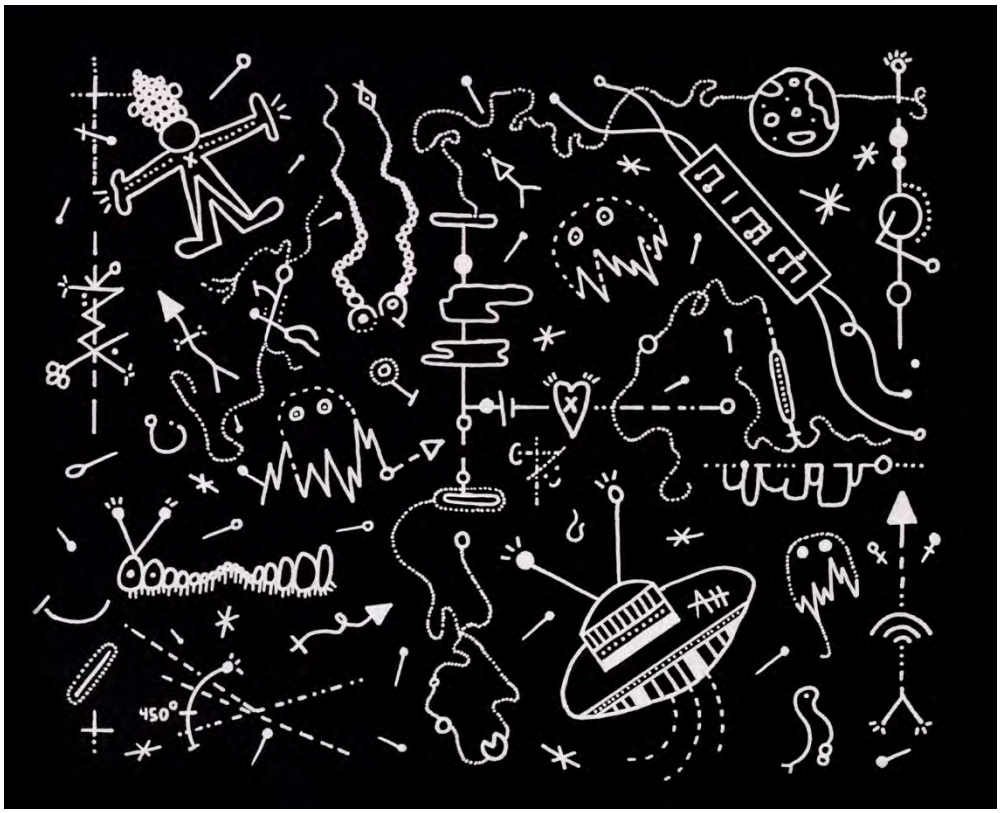
There have been recent ideas bandied about, like having a whole American segment of both literature and politics for the Graduate Institute. It would be like the History segment: an option not everyone took. I might be in favor of something like that if it stayed optional. Everyone has to take their own path. Like you and I, who grew up in middle America, an American path to greatness is a true path to greatness. If I can come through the Lincoln–Douglas debates to understand something about greatness of soul, I'll recognize it better when I come to Aristotle. We can bypass the Germans entirely. It's a little bit weirder to ask a Korean student to move through that, or get interested in American Civil War issues. That Korean student might say, "I've never discriminated against anyone on the basis of race anyway. The Japanese discriminate against me, but I like them," or something like that. "Why should I have to go through it? Let me read Hegel so I can go to the fuller stuff directly." There is a tension here, I'm not sure if I have any great answers. I wouldn't change the Program just to add a bunch of Americans, by switching out Kant or something.



Adam Hurwitz, *Cosmic Petri Dish #1*, 2018, Black ink and 24k gold leaf on heavyweight cotton paper. Color inversion with Adobe Illustrator.

The Alumni Association of St. John's College funds a prize for a distinguished graduate preceptorial paper to be awarded at spring commencement. A prize committee, composed of tutors, will consider papers submitted by tutors of preceptorials in the previous spring, summer, and fall terms for this award. Award-winning essays are kept in the Greenfield Library. "Home," by Joseph M. Keegin (AGI'18), is the 2017 award-winning essay.

Home

Joseph M. Keegin

At the beginning of Virgil's *Aeneid*, we find the surviving remnants of Troy floating across the Mediterranean in a mere handful of vessels after suffering defeat at the hands of the allied Achaean army. Waves toss the Trojan ships like a petulant child having a temper tantrum. The goddess Juno, angry about a prophecy foretelling the destruction of her beloved city of Carthage at the hands of the Trojans, petitions Aeolus to loose violent winds upon the already-tattered fleet. He complies. Violent gusts batter the Trojan galleys, breaking several against rocks jutting up from the sea floor. The sea-god Neptune notices what is happening in his domain and rages at the other gods encroaching upon his sovereignty: he dispatches the winds back to their mountain home, rebuking Juno and Aeolus for their impetuousness. The winds calm, the seas still, and the Trojan exiles drift ashore near Carthage. They sprawl out in exhaustion on the beachhead, run an inventory of their remaining equipment and rations, and start fires for their first meal on land since being forced from their home. Aeneas goes on the hunt, killing seven huge bucks: one for each vessel destroyed in Aeolus' storm. The Trojans—"a remnant left by Greeks, harassed by all

disasters known on land and sea, in need of everything"—sorrow at their condition.[1]

However, there is hope. Aeneas, sensing the dejection gnawing at his men, makes a rousing speech: "You have neared the rage of Scylla," he reminds them, "and her caves' resounding rocks; and you have known the Cyclops' crags; call back your courage, send away your grieving fear."[2] Then he reveals a second prophecy concerning the future of the Trojan people: "Through many crises and calamities we make for Latium, where fates have promised a peaceful settlement. It is decreed that there the realm of Troy will rise again."[3] Though driven from their homeland, the Trojans are fated for a new home.

A new home is a strange idea. For us modern, twenty-first-century Americans, "home" is often merely a euphemism for "where you happen to live": it is not uncommon to see billboards along highways advertising "New Luxury Estate Homes," "1 & 2 Bedroom Apartment Homes," "New Homes For Sale." But for most of human history, home has been something familiar, old, and beloved—it precedes us, produces us, and remains a permanent part of the background of our lives even if we leave it for somewhere new. "You can take a boy out of the country," they say—you know the rest of the story. Like Ithaca for Odysseus, home awaits your return, because one belongs to one's home as much as one's home belongs to oneself. Which is to say, home is as much a place—a fixed, bounded geographical zone with specific, identifiable qualities and details—as the stories, feelings, things, and—perhaps most importantly—people associated with it. Home is the place where you exist as a midpoint between a succession of generations into the past and a procession of generations into the future. "There's no place like home" may be a cliché, but the saying

[1] Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book I, lines 841-843. All citations refer to Allen Mandelbaum's translation, published 1961 by Bantam Classics.
[2] I.279-282.
[3] I.284-286.

is common for good reason: home is a place and no two places are identical. No two homes are alike—maybe not even for the people who share them.

What happens, then, when one's home disappears? Not mentally, mind you: not as if the place that was once considered "home" is no longer thought of in those terms. What happens when home is *destroyed*? Where do you go when homecoming is impossible? Unlike many peoples whose names have been wiped off of the map and out of the register of human memory for all time, the Trojans are not simply homeless: they have a great destiny, foretold in prophecy. The destruction of their city provides them an opportunity. They are bound for a new home—not for an already-established, foreign city into which they will assimilate, but for a new place entirely. They will *make* a new home: Rome, a city fated to blossom into an empire. Aeneas will "establish a way of life and walls for his own people," Jupiter reveals to Venus. And as for the following generations of Romans, the father of the gods will "give them empire without end."[4]

This essay will explore home: what it is, how one comes into being, and what happens when home and world become identical.

Troy and Beyond

Troy was one of the richest and most beautiful cities in the world. The beautiful face of Helen was not the only thing that brought the Greeks to Trojan shores: the possibilities of plunder to be won from Priam's city and well-wrought armor to be stripped from the bodies of dead Trojan soldiers were not overlooked. Even before Helen's name is mentioned in the *Iliad*, Apollo's priest Chryses relays to Agamemnon and Menelaus that "the gods grant who have their homes on Olympos / Priam's city to be plundered and a fair homecoming thereafter"—treasure was always part of the deal.[5]

[4] I.369, 390.

[5] Homer, *Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore, I.18-19.

Aeneas and the Trojans, even, did their best to rescue as much wealth from their city as they can: after landing in Carthage they draw from this collection to thank Dido for her hospitality. All the more horrible, then, to see it burned and pillaged.

But along with some of the city's riches, the surviving Trojans also escape with the city's "household gods." The night after leading the infamous wooden horse inside the city walls, Aeneas is approached in a dream by Hector: the dead warrior reveals the treachery of the Greeks to our sleeping hero, urging him to wake and flee the flames of his burning home and entrusting to him Troy's "holy things and household gods." "Take them away as comrades of your fortunes," he urges, "seek out for them the great walls that at last, once you have crossed the sea, you will establish."[6] Aeneas wakes, arms himself for battle, and charges into the streets to make vengeance. There he meets Panthus, son of Apollo's priest, desperately leading his grandson to safety while "in his hand he carries the holy vessels and defeated gods."[7] But the existence of these peculiar deities is also mentioned in the first stanza of the poem: once he founds Rome, Aeneas will have "carried in his gods to Latium."[8] And after landing at Carthage, as if to clarify just what "carry" means in this context, Aeneas announces to his disguised mother Venus:

> *[...] I am pious*
> *Aeneas, and I carry in my ships*
> *my household gods together with me, rescued*
> *from Argive enemies; my fame is known*
> *beyond the sky.*[9]

[6] Virgil, *Aeneid*, II.400-404.
[7] II.437-438.
[8] I.10.
[9] I.534-537.

Unfortunately, the poem does not provide any direct description of what these "household gods" are. We learn about them only by way of what happens to them—in their being held, carried, transported across the ocean in the galleys of ships. We learn that Juno is horrified by their fated arrival in Italy. While leaving Troy, Aeneas—hands soiled with Grecian blood—begs his father to carry them. And much later, after landing on Italian shores, we see Aeneas make a tribute to the household gods of his friend and ally Evander.

Every home has its gods, it seems: homes are not just where you and your family live, but also where your gods reside. And unlike the gods of Olympus, the gods of one's home are fragile, transportable, and require a great deal of care. It is unclear what kind of role they play in the lives of mortals: we do not see any children of household gods, they never take human form, they do not intervene in human affairs. Rather, they are quiet elements of city life that seem to grant a sense of the sacred to affairs both domestic (Panthus and Evander seem to have their own household gods) and political (Aeneas carries the gods of Troy).

When home is the home of your family *and* your gods, it could never just be a house—which is why none of the places the Trojans stop on their way to Italy could have been their new home. Many of the places are self-evidently unfit for consideration as the location of a new Troy: Thrace is a poisoned place, the site of an ancient crime; Buthrotum is a sad and hollow replica of the once-great Troy, now shot through with sorrow and anguish. Others, however, are less clear. When the Trojans found the city of Pergamum on the island of Crete, it seems a fitting enough locale for long-term habitation—that is, until a plague befalls the island. Aeneas, sleeping in bed one evening, has a vision of his household gods standing over him: they speak to him, reminding him of the promise of Italy, Rome, and the eventual empire over which his descendants will rule.[10] Clearly, the gods

[10] This is the only occasion in the *Aeneid* in which the household gods are personified and take on an active role.

are not happy in Crete. Aeneas orders the ships loaded and the sails raised, though a small group of Trojans stay behind. By the time they arrive in the comparatively hospitable Actium, it seems they have internalized the lesson taught at Crete: the Trojans spend a year there without founding a city, experience no hardship beyond the coldness of winter, and raise their sails for Buthrotum.

What ruled out Carthage, however, is initially much more opaque. Though initially met with resistance and suspicion, the Trojans are welcomed with open arms by Dido and the Tyrians. Their fame has been preserved in a series of murals—whether painted or etched is unclear—at a shrine to Juno in the heart of the city, depicting both the heroic deeds and the suffering of Trojan warriors in their battle against the Greek invaders. Carthage has built a monument to Trojan courage. And with the heroes themselves suddenly landed upon the shores of their domain, the Tyrians are happy to offer them a home. "[Should] you want to settle in this kingdom on equal terms with me," Dido promises them, "then all the city I am building now is yours. Draw up your ships. *I shall allow no difference between the Tyrian and the Trojan*."[11] So why did this offer not last? The simplest answer is that the gods would not allow it. Indeed, when Hermes approaches Aeneas to remind him of the prophecy, "he sees Aeneas founding fortresses and fashioning new houses."[12] Assimilation seems to be underway. It is only once the god reminds Aeneas of the promise made to his son that the Trojan leader's mind changes. To remain in Carthage would mean to rob Ascanius of the glory for which he is fated. Carthage would provide a happy home for Aeneas and his people—but it could never allow for the glorification of Aeneas' true heir.

[11] I.805-809. Emphasis mine.
[12] IV.347-348.

People in a place with their gods and their families: this is the basic recipe for a home. But if a people cannot simply assimilate with another to have a home, how do they make a new one?

A New Troy

When Jupiter reveals the fate of Aeneas to his mother Venus, the first item in his list of events is that he "shall wage tremendous war in Italy and crush ferocious nations"—only after which he will "establish a way of life and walls for his own people."[13] Rome will happen, but not without conflict. Prophecy does not imply simplicity or ease. But what is the function of war in the founding of a new home? Is it the whim of the gods? Or might conflict be a necessary part of founding a new home?

The Trojans do not simply invade Italy. When they land at Latium they are initially extended a warm welcome by King Latinus, who just recently received a prophecy that his daughter will be married off to foreigners. "For strangers come as sons-in-law," the voice of his dead father tells him—and as if to assuage any doubt about who these strangers might be, he recites the fate of the Trojans: "their blood will raise our name above the stars; and their sons' sons will see all things obedient at their feet, wherever the circling sun looks on both sides of Ocean."[14] Rome, then, will begin with a wedding—but the wedding is the first source of conflict. Princess Lavinia has been all but promised to Turnus, the handsome and young king of the Rutulians, but Latinus' prophecy inspires him to break off the engagement. Juno, furious at the prospect of a Trojan marrying into the Latin royal family, sics the Fury Allecto on the Latins: Lavinia's mother

[13] I.363-369.

[14] VII.123-127. The ghost of Creüsa, Aeneas' wife who died at Troy, had told him of this fate before he and the survivors had escaped the burning city: in Hesperia, "days of gladness lie in wait for you: a kingdom and a royal bride" (II.1056-1057).

Amata and Turnus are roiled into bloodlust. The Rutulian king begins to muster an army against the Trojans.

Allecto also helps sow the second seed of conflict, by leading Ascanius' hunting dogs to the beloved stag of Tyrrhus and Sylvia. Ignorant of the stag's privileged place among the Latins, Ascanius sends an arrow into his gut, killing him. It is a grievous betrayal of custom, but a custom that the Trojans could never have assumed—and which the Latins, being "a race of Saturn, needing no laws and no restraint for righteousness," would never have told them.[15] Sylvia and Tyrrhus rouse the Latin farmers to battle: wielding whatever sharp implements they can find—"anger makes a weapon"—they march against the Trojan encampments.[16] First blood is drawn: Almo, son of Tyrrhus, is struck by an arrow from an unknown bow. Latinus rebukes Turnus and the Latin mobs and refuses to open the city's Gates of War—but Juno does it for him, making the war official. War, however, requires alliances—and while the Trojan encampments are under siege, Aeneas sails down the Italian coast making pacts with friendly kings. The most notable of these is Evander, king of the Arcadians, who entrusts his son Pallas to Aeneas' tutelage. By the time Aeneas returns to assist the Trojan ramparts, he has assembled thirty ships with ten generals from different regions of Italy. It is a motley crew, including gods and mermen, all willing to put their lives on the line for a Trojan victory.

Marriage, the breaking of custom, and alliances: these are the preconditions for the Trojan-Latin war. The marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia, if carried out, would result in the union of two peoples—but beneath the kingship of one: the Trojans. Aeneas and his people would inherit a city, a place to live while raising the walls of Rome, and the Latins will become collaborators in Rome's greatness. And as Rome is destined to be an

[15] VII.268-269.
[16] VII.670.

empire of law—one that is destined to "teach the ways of peace to those [they] conquer, to spare defeated peoples, [and] tame the proud"—the flimsy, ambiguous rule of custom must be overcome.[17] A civilized people must be able to articulate the rules, especially to guests—a tradition of inexpressible cultural habits is no way to teach the ways of peace to others. Furthermore, the alliances crafted in battle set the terms of who will possibly be victor and who the conquered: not only do the Trojans win if Aeneas leads his army to victory, but so too would (for example) the humble and rustic Arcadians. The winning party will determine the character of the peace that takes shape afterward. The conquered will be subject to the laws and customs of the conquerors.

Or so it seems, but the arrangement arrived at by Jupiter and Juno complicates this outcome. "For the Ausonians [Italians] will keep their homeland's words and ways," Jupiter promises his wife:

> *'[...]their name will stay;*
> *the body of the Teucrians will merge*
> *with the Latins, and their name will fall away.*
> *But I will add their rituals and customs*
> *to the Ausonians', and make them all—*
> *and with one language—Latins. You will see*
> *a race arise from this that, mingled with*
> *the blood of the Ausonians, will be*
> *past men, even past gods, in piety;*
> *no other nation will pay you such honor."*[18]

Jupiter turns this expectation on its head: the conquerors will take the name and language of the conquered. In a set of circumstances unique to the Trojans and Latins—and brought about only through divine authorship—Trojan and Latin customs will exist peaceably alongside one another.

[17] VI.1136-1137.
[18] XII.1107-1117.

Neither will dominate. But again, customs are not laws, and the Latins are a lawless people: one may assume that the laws established by Aeneas will be binding for this whole new *race*. Which is, of course, a curious and new term. From the union of these two peoples we will get one: no longer understood as members of family groups (Teucrians descended from Teucer, Dardaans descended from Dardanus, and so forth), the people will comprise a unity of plurality—a many that makes one. And this transformation of peoples into a race is a reflection of another transformation that Rome will effect: that of *home* into *world*.

World

Before meeting with the Latins after landing on the Italian peninsula, Aeneas visited the Sibyl. A deranged priestess of Apollo, the Sibyl was granted the ability to presage the future by writing the fates on a collection of leaves, which are then frequently scattered by the wind. But Aeneas is not here to hear the future from the Sibyl. Rather, he requires her assistance in descending to Hades to visit the soul of his dead father, who will tell him the whole story of Rome. The Sibyl agrees, but Aeneas must first complete a few tasks: so Aeneas picks the golden bough, performs the required sacrifice for Persephone, and the two climb into the bowels of hell.

When they reach Anchises in the Fields of Gladness, he is positively glowing: he stands in the middle of a grassy meadow, telling the story of his bloodline to the souls of his descendants. Aeneas tries to embrace him, but his arms pass through his body like a beam of light through a window. They share tears. Anchises then takes Aeneas on a tour of the blessed part of the underworld, the place where great souls live out their afterlives in joy and gaiety while waiting for the moment of their resurrection—when, a thousand years after death, they will drink from the river of forgetting and return to a bodily form on earth. Then he reveals to him the destiny of Rome: the events that will shape its legacy, the greatness it will win, and the men who will lead it there. "Rome will make her boundaries as broad as

earth itself," Anchises says, "will make her spirit the equal of Olympus, and enclose her seven hills within a single wall, rejoicing in her race of men."[19] Rome, it seems, will be founded as a great city by great men—but then will become something different. Rome will eventually become *the whole world*.

If what was said earlier about home has any validity—that home is a *place*—then this poses a strange problem. Just as home is a place, world is a *space*. Rather than being defined by boundaries, specificity, and uniqueness, the world is that space which transcends all places and inside of which all place loses its place-ness. A place is defined explicitly in opposition to the world: in full knowledge of the vastness of everything and the infinite array of possibilities, I settle myself in a small corner of existence whose contours become as familiar as the backs of my hands. I always live in a place, though I may have knowledge of the world: I can study astronomy, oceanography, and the histories of distant empires without ever leaving my home. Somehow, however, Rome will collapse these category distinctions: it will be an empire that spans the whole world, while remaining the home of a people in the form of a *race*. How does a transformation of this kind take place?

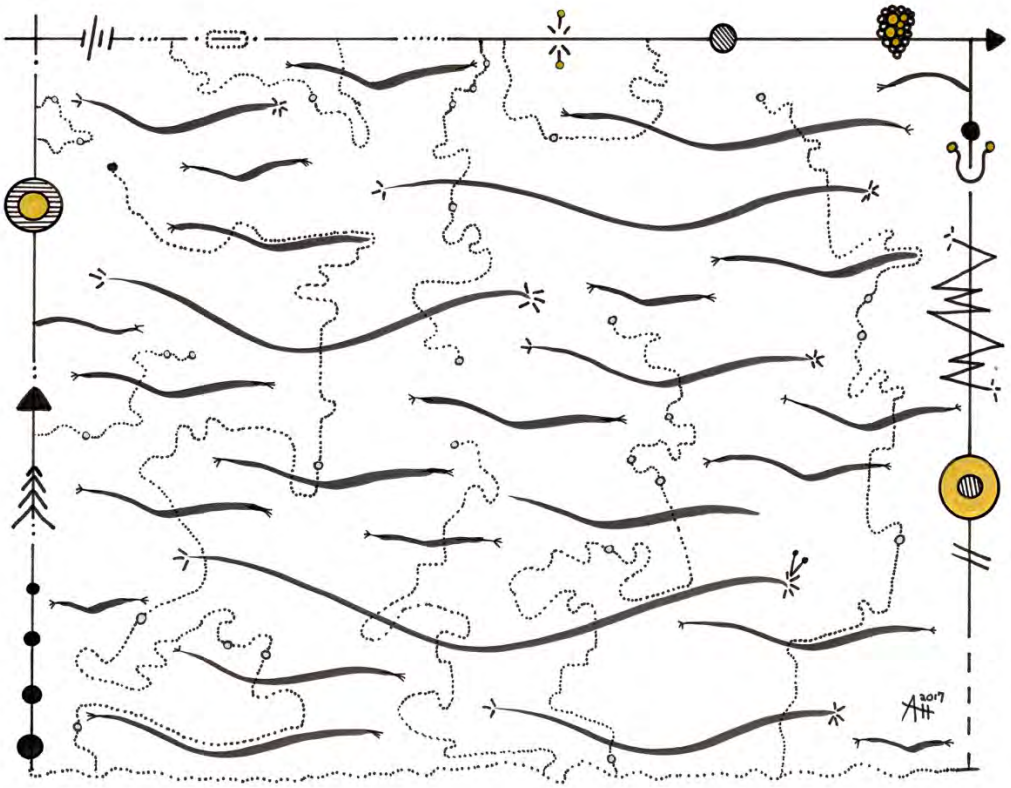
It seems to involve two factors: people and history. World-as-home-for-race carries with it a different set of categories than place-as-home-for-people: as seen before, the category "race" transcends of particular family groupings to constitute a higher-order unification of people. The Trojans and Latins will retain their separate customs and rituals, but will become one inasmuch as they are members of the same race—only this arrangement of people is capable of inhabiting a world-sized home. No longer will separate peoples inhabit far-flung cities ruled by hereditary kings: the boundaries of Rome and those of the world will become

[19] VI.1034-1038.

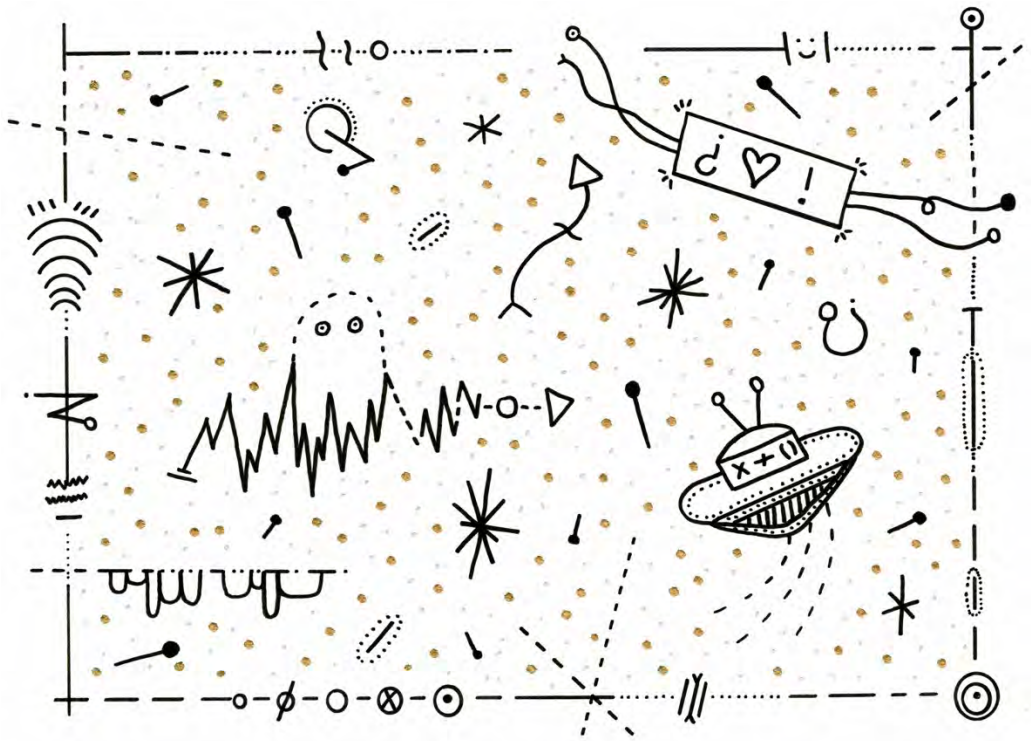
identical, uniting all people under one banner. The whole world will have an order, then—and he who rules Rome rules it all.

It is no accident that Anchises' prophecy takes place over the course of many generations. The founding of Rome will not be like the creation of the heavens and earth (or even, perhaps, like the transformation of the Trojan and Latin peoples into a single race): it will not go from being a city to encompassing the entire earth in a single instant. Rather, though its destiny is already written, the transformation must play out in time. Successive generations will make their contributions to this transformation: specific human beings—people like Tullus, Numa, Romulus, Mummius, and Caesar—will be the agents of the change. Fate does not preclude active human participation in its execution. Gods may author what will happen, but humans must effect the execution. And inasmuch as human beings are beings in time, their actions are events in time—and the memory, or story, of these events constitutes history.

At the end of the *Aeneid*, however, we do not see the founding of Rome. The bleeding body of Turnus does not provide us with a vision of Roman greatness that we expect after reading numerous instances of prophecy: it is hard to see how the merciless, vengeful slaughter of the Rutulian king is a beginning-point for the eventual Roman mission of teaching peace to the conquered, sparing the defeated, and taming the proud. Perhaps the execution of prophecy often plays out like the opening of the poem, where a band of confused refugees float around the Mediterranean, unsure of where they may land. But though we all long for a home, perhaps only a few are called to inhabit their own—and even fewer to see theirs to greatness.



Adam Hurwitz, *Moon Graph #3: Star Birds*, 2018, Black ink and 24k golf leaf on heavyweight cotton paper.



Adam Hurwitz, *Cosmic Petri Dish #3*, 2018, Black ink and 24k gold leaf on heavyweight cotton paper.

Adam Hurwitz's work combines nature with mathematics using a distinctive minimalistic and playful technique. "We are all at once large and small, connected through the depths of our skies and seas, hearts and spirits," Hurwitz suggests. Using Micron Pigma black ink, vivid colors, and negative space, his work explores the miracles of nature, love, and music under the lens of an artist microscope.

Five Poems

Louis Petrich

Waking

I get how Love makes choice,
   her friends to mate:
she sees
            and hears
                        and touches them—
                                                directly.
The man on words dependent,
   senselessly kept distant,
wiser though than these,
   dispenses himself vainly,
present not to please.

Teach him to care—
(his letters archives fill, to glory hers)
                        and not to care—

to face her sideways,
                lean of appetite
                        and shoreline straddling—
                                                uncommitted.

From sea
            come sounds
                        to measure
                                    his up-heaving.

Let's see . . . he'll write his Dear infrequently,
applaud more circumspectly, too, hereafter,
to make himself Love's equal, sporting free,
and take close by her beauties, satisfied.

> Yet still he wonders much
> the fitting thing to do
> with all the waked words fine
> that passed so *nearly* true
> between them heretofore,
> for light, you know, it *bends*
> through human mediums, too.

Who thinks that —
buy them, someone would—
like new?—
Give everything she treasured once before?
Are women—covetous so—of their dreams,
as twenty-thousand times would men try proof?

If only such another he could meet,
rehearsèd mettle, richly hers, he'd keep.

Love Lesson #5

Unshaped the things your words once licked adorn.

Now what impression must I pray be mine?

Give arrows lips to drink me, salt afloat . . . .
Tap wat'ry cheers, no! Nails and teeth, my shore!
Your thirsty arms in rainbow stretch between
the world I'm in and yours! Untangle shy
spurred feet from stirrups, horse let fly on wet
stones, cobbled vain-discrete for leg-gripped ride!

Not wont were you to be obtuse so. What?

Must, like a leaf-blower, I speak? To pile
for binding pages torn by heart's fell winds?
Yes,
it pains me witness cast of smiles from mine
on faces tilting rapture, yours to win,
as entered at the wrong cue for my scene,
I ever after play the man upstaged.
Straight
I'd give and hazard all that I do dream
for one good go with you, and summon rage
if going faints, as Shylock fills with hate,
yet greedy less for years than lusty spill.
No,
I must not think you worse than those before,
to slide rings back and forth 'twixt present mates,
or tricked to swallow, urged by absent core.
Goal—
keep heart-strings taut to penetrate the storm—
writ arrows marry minds, spite bodies torn.

Love Lesson # 7

You laugh—
as if it shouldn't matter,
touching friends like us,
that homeward heart
    lets absent body
make defection:
"*Odysseus, thigh-scarred,*
mends goddess beds—
his love's not home removed."

As I flip eggs in bacon grease
(no doubt, for breakfast, bacon's good),
I think about the fact
you would a vegetarian become,
if bacon were not blameworthy.
So taste of tongue does matter make of life,
    and earth disfigures,
                even stars,
which though God promised counted could not be,
in time we learned to spy them out,
and later, how to trace the infinite diagonals,
which painters ply as energy
that flows through arms and legs
to guide eyes pleasured home.
So when you smile that others matter not
to bold partakers sharing breast
of deep Athena's confidence,
yet hear confess of tangent doings
that deserve a place in stories

trying matters *no* and *yes*.

I've fewer owls to feather lettered night.
I drink, still thirsty, morns their skimmed-off milk.

Sun-freckled skin, yours,
I'd have honeyed spread,
unwrinkled shores for golden clime to taste!—
Instead, by hornèd moon,
your hairs uncurl with cries
throat-pulled from deep pale stores of time laid waste.

Your waves, strong manly bent,
head home towards me
on what's not matter—
    ethereal laws,
which go by other names, when convenient,
for none knows really what explains
    how pain or pleasure
    alters cause
    or fate removes.
Dark light misshapes the matter in my brain.

A shot is heard in distant space:
a duel for love is fought.
One man drops down,
his tall proud rival stands his ground,
though she won't style him now,
and probably would never have,
while the dead one she'd already tak'n,
though without love.
So why'd it matter them, to kill?

Whose rift?
What difference does it make
to one who hears
the shot far off,
for he cannot remember
if the woman he adored
once loved him dear—
or to what purpose—
married she was then—
and moreover, she died
before she could
of life make mess—
hers, his, and others, when.
So many reasons things that matter,
like love,
should not—
it's Chekhov
who's my master here—
you must recall his Sisters Three,
who would've died to get to Moscow,
home,
but making love before the way,
they found—too late—they had to stay.
He's always letting fire somewhere
a shot,
whose bullet carries passions
deeply fraught
toward breasts that feel the same.
Oh, doctor-taught,
let's exercise in friendship
all the difference it makes
to keep the sunny side up smart.

No stabbing turnings, then. No breaking heart.
No yoke of misery to tear apart.
    (*How gods at us have laughed.*)
No . . . oh wait, please, how could I have forgot,
from Chekhov, his negative craft:
    if cheer you take
    from matters *not*,
    then life, your only,
    lacks the means
    to make a plot—
    much tease,
    but no end—
    except the stop
    of memories.

Looking Back

So why'd you drag us, of all places, here?
If Egypt was your hole, why plains gone dry?
You like to sit at gate and catch the cries,
afraid to enter, marking faces dear.
You look for beauty worthy all the rest.
And now you hasten family God knows where,
and all you say is this, "Don't look back there!"
If you had only stayed for old man's test,
you might have gotten all the herds and slaves,
and we'd be looking at each other kind.
At least they kept to what they wanted blind.
How wonderful feels fire that bad behaves—
it takes by force the strangers newly lacked—
what guts—to know! For that—one last look back . . .

He makes faces she answers

He's stuffed with faces, works his head
with practiced hands—
some wonder wrought inside
must perplex out
—it's born!
Cute secrets smile in smooth text voice . . .
Look there:
your *said* beloved—
's come under the man-babe's morn.

To satisfy the day's new cravings,
I spy on screens for words
she leaves behind, of plot turns—
fear and sorrow kind—

Now really! Here now!
His-my-love-is-yours!
Present laughter take,
and all else becalm.

She words you—with *here's* and *now's*—
she words you ply time's surface balm.
Night-mined words make rough return:

confess me the force
who crushes your heart
that feeds your green eyes
with pulse mine to yearn.

Sharpened steal, your dreams!
Facts, like gun-start, wake!

We stand the faceless man,
the nameless occupier
    whose deft hands knead
    and staff lifts higher
                the sky,
    that loneliness stead
    less inside our friend's
    fair spirited mess.
Yet faces,
        friended ours,
                who friend to bed,
our thoughts imperil,
            eyes intern.
Still, friends in common hold all things.
        What?
So mated round, do heads each turn look up?
So gripped between, will hearts not reprehend?
Let's make compare: in speaking, cooking sup,
at doubles tennis, drinking, watching feats,
the Holy One in worship, fighting free,
these things partake most well in common,
        yes!
so why not make love better—
                best!—
                    by three?

Try her, he can—the sweetness of life—
since none can taste her long.
Yet pause:
        no wife or children's voice
to smother in pretended kiss,
there's stuff to fear, in ear his song.
The students slake him, all agree,

and *lover* does he claim his specialty,
whose course of music much he plays
in order (motion tossed) to find
behind irreverent borders
        women
ever to and fro across,
obeying no ruled mind
save dancing hearts
come hither faces,
parts moral, bowing—
of course, in time.

She asks me to reflect
her distant light his way,
belike the moon she reckons by—
    another picked god's creature, spelled:
    her altar, phasing bright, inscribes
    before the fixèd mark of stars—
amazing me thus far:
to bastardize—as if I could—our sky!

        Biology—
this only word she leaves behind,
        undeleted mine,
this underlying risk of life,
as brief as red, and masterful—
but listen . . . logic, kindly towing:

    Don't you know, dear friends,
    I place you top my list
    nearly of missed things?
    Oh, do not forget facts!

If she's the mind to sport for flings,

and wants us kept in view's collection,
while court she pays to body's pacts,
remain you may, who feel not racked,
so keep she far away from me—

to make believe
her days and nights
turn like the moon's
in monthly circuit,
that I may dream
the features of her face—
just like the moon's—
come round
to shine in pace
earth bound—
one mind, to trace.

In darkness lies far-sided face . . .

Obsessive watching! Tell me why I waste.
The skies bejewel emptiness apropos
the piercing holds her wand'ring eyes patrol.

Louis Petrich is a tutor at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland.

In Defense of the Literature Segment

Patrick Burley

When St. John's graduate students meet, there is a question that seems to be commonplace after the initial introductions are made: what segments are you going to take? St. John's does, of course, encourage graduate students to take all five segments—and many students do—however, it is not uncommon that other students only take four. Although options each semester are limited, the Literature segment is presented as an option each fall. During my time in the Graduate Institute at St. John's, I have heard mixed reviews regarding the Literature segment. Some students seem eager to pursue it, while others appear to be completely disconcerted by the prospect of reading Chaucer, a Shakespeare play, or English romantic poetry. Many students say that the Literature segment lacks the rigor that other segments provide and feel as if literature is mere child's play compared to an intense text on metaphysics. Other students claim that they have read many of the materials before and are not sure what else they could gain from revisiting them, especially if their focus is philosophy or politics. I focus on the Literature Tutorial, for the Literature Seminar is looked upon with less aversion as the Greek tragedies and epics are foundational for any student of the liberal arts.

I recall sitting in my undergraduate dorm room in late spring, determining if I wanted to begin my St. John's education with the Literature segment or the Mathematics and Natural Science segment. I had just finished studying English literature so, with a strong bias, I chose the former. I had experienced many of the texts for the Tutorial before, however I had yet to experience them so intimately with other individuals who possessed such a passion for education, a dedication to the liberal arts, and a drive for

truth. I was eager to take on literature within a St. John's environment, yet I was also nervous, as I was so used to reading scholarly articles concerning literary theories and criticisms that shaped my thoughts more than I wished to admit. However, I entered McDowell with a fresh mind—a mind ready to examine the assigned literary texts for what they meant specifically to me, and not concerned with what they meant to scholars or critics.

We laughed and wondered about Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, debated about King Lear's passions, and then we moved into lyric poetry. There was one poem that, I felt, successfully relayed an idea that encapsulated the nature of studying and experiencing literature. That poem was "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by John Keats. The poem follows the thoughts of Keats as he examines an ancient Grecian urn. In the last two lines, Keats writes, "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'" These two lines boldly describe the truth that accompanies witnessing beauty and our innate drive to understand the feelings such beauty elicits. When we witness beauty, we are engulfed with a surge of feelings—whether it be passionate love, sublimity, or darkness. These indescribable passions are, simply, truth. For Keats, truth is what you feel and, in the Literature segment, there is a litany of beautiful works that provokes such truth from within ourselves or from the text itself.

When you engage with a piece of literature, whether it be a play, a novel, or a poem, you are guided through the reality created by the writer and are called to discern the principles and truth of the characters and, subsequently, of one's self. We find truth in what we feel and our experiences call us to examine why we felt a certain way, or why we now possess vastly different emotions than the ones we had in the midst of an experience. This engagement brings one closer to the reality of one's own condition and emotions that hold truths, which cannot be described without the use of a narrative from a novelist or a profound metaphor from a poet.

The stories that are read in the Literature segment will arrest you and insist that you consider your own narrative and story. Doing so will allow you to examine how your narrative fits in the macrocosm of reality and how it is to be defined by yourself alone. For example, in reading the *Canterbury Tales*, one is called to examine the relationship between the tale and the teller of the tale. Doing so draws one to contemplate one's own narrative and perception of self, and how this perception of self is effectively or ineffectively portrayed to the external world as we wish it to be. Such an exercise is integral for understanding how you present yourself to others, whether that be how you act, speak, or treat others. The urn that Keats is describing and the variety of characters and their narratives in the *Canterbury Tales* reflect this idea and relate to the reader the way art or poetry, which has been immortalized, can remind us of our own mortality. This creates a paradoxical dilemma—for art reflects our uniform, perennial passions and truths, while also reminding us of our finite nature and how we are to use such truths in an effective fashion.

I have ventured to briskly examine Keats's poem and this major theme from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in order to express the illuminating doors literature can open to folks in the program who are considering skipping the segment—for literature provides just as much perplexity and wisdom as the other segments. Politics, math, science, and history are all very noble and essential, but literature provides vehicles for connection to our most intimate passions and truths. These connections bring us closer to a deeper understanding of our experience as beings with a faculty for emotion. Therefore, we should engage with the beauty found in literature, for there is truth to be sought in the passions that accompany beauty.

Mr. Burley (AGI'20) is a student in his second-semester at the Graduate Institute. He is a recent graduate of Warren Wilson College with a bachelor's degree in English. He currently works in the Greenfield Library and serves as Treasurer on the Graduate Council.

Brandon Wasicsko

Students at the Graduate Institute who elect to write a Master's Essay undergo an oral examination upon completion of their essay. Each examination begins with the student reading a précis of their work. Colloquy *asked those students who underwent their examinations in the spring semester of 2019 to submit a copy of their précis, and received the following three pieces.*

On Education: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit

Sean Foley

As Johnnies, our common experience is enmeshed in an educational institution. If you are anything like me, most of your life has centered around institutions that claim membership to that same category, but you never inquired seriously after what an education is or ought to be. I, for one, relied on intuitions and normative influences. During my time in the Graduate Institute, I began to feel uneasy about my lack of reflection, especially in light of my career as a teacher. Therefore, in my Master's Essay, I endeavored to form a clearer and more rigorous conception of what it was I had devoted my life to, and what it was I did at St. John's for four glorious summers. In what follows, I will sketch the arc of my essay, which is on record in the Greenfield Library.

I begin said essay by delineating two general models of education: the type offered by a research university, like the one I attended as an undergraduate, and the type Plato's Socrates seems to advocate. The former I call acquisition, the latter calling-into-question. At research universities, you acquire a body of knowledge. Socrates, on the other hand, often calls into question what his interlocutor posits as the truth. Upon examining these two models of education, I identified three ways in which they are fundamentally opposed: First, acquisition is positive, while calling-into-question is negative; second, acquisition is for the sake of society,

while calling-into-question is for the sake of the individual; and third, for acquisition truth is in an alien object, while for calling-into-question truth belongs to the thinking subject.

I then propose that Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* can show us how to reconcile these seemingly opposed models of education. Furthermore, I propose that this is not a one-way street, and reading the *Phenomenology* as a book that is *at its deepest level about education* can help us understand Hegel's project. The *Phenomenology* presents us with a *drama* of education; it *shows us* what an education looks like. It also presents us with a *theory* of education; the theory functions as the organizing principle behind the drama—giving it a form—but it also comes to the foreground as Hegel explains what we see in the drama.

Hegel's theory is that education is neither acquisition nor calling-into-question, but formation. This formation happens through our lived experience, which challenges our conception of the truth and therefore fundamentally changes our way of knowing the world. When our way of knowing is proved inadequate, we gain perspective on ourselves through reflection. Formation therefore entails self-relation, and, specifically, self-alienation—experiencing oneself as an other. Education is complete when life no longer leads to our self-alienation. This means the *telos* of education is to recognize in the world the full expression of our innermost selves.

One side of the problem is to understand what that innermost self *is*. By means of the drama and theory of education presented to us in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel intends to shed light on this side of the issue: he intends to lead us to know ourselves as what he calls Spirit. The *Phenomenology* is the description of the historical coming-to-be of Spirit, and is also intended to help *effect* the full actualization of Spirit by giving the reader theoretical insight into her own formative experience. The other side of the educational problem is that the world—which includes other

selves—must confirm our self-concept. Education therefore is a *cultural* activity, the completion of which requires a *cultural reorientation*.

Standing in the way of this ultimate end of education is what Hegel calls *edification*. Edification makes us feel more at home in our current, spiritually destitute self-conception and spiritually defunct world, but is a mere palliative to the feeling of alienation that exhorts us to identify with Spirit and engage in the reorientation of culture. Education, by contrast, is truly therapeutic, but requires great cognitive labor so that we can hold onto the lessons of experience. Not only that, but it requires sacrifice. Identifying oneself as Spirit means that one must, like Christ, knowingly relinquish one's current self so as to be reborn. Hegel makes this self-sacrifice more palatable by showing that one is not obliterated in the process, but purified. What is true in the lower self-concept is preserved in the higher. Any educational project that does not demonstrate this preservation will not prevail against edifiers. This is where history's first self-conscious and culture-wide educational project, the Enlightenment, went astray.

The showdown between faith and reason in the Enlightenment occurred because Enlightenment took umbrage with the mysterious and seemingly superstitious elements of religion. Enlightenment accounted for Faith in terms of its own profane paradigm, and in so doing was blind to what was true in Faith. Enlightenment did not seek to raise up or cultivate its pupils into maturity, but to destroy their faithfulness as if it were a disease. The success of Enlightenment's hostilities leads to the spiritual destitution that leaves us prone to edifiers. But the legitimate fruit of the Enlightenment's myopic and misguided educational project, Hegel tells us, is the Reign of Terror. Educators in the Enlightenment tradition might think of themselves as the purveyors of insight into the absolute truth, and set up a system of education that leads to the acquisition of that insight—which insight is, that truth is a matter of *method* rather than content. However, Enlightenment is really an unbridled calling-into-question that is hostile to life. It privileges the individual over the social situation in which she finds

herself, but simultaneously conceives of the individual in such an abstract way, that those who subscribe to its ideology become hostile to anything and everything actual and positive. This is why the revolution devoured its own children.

Hegel's characterization of Enlightenment advises both urgency and caution in our quest to reconcile acquisition and calling-into-question. The apparent reconciliation offered by Enlightenment—that is, calling-into-question elevated to the level of knowledge—is both unsatisfying and dangerous. And yet, this is the very substance of the knowledge tradition enshrined in departmental disciplines at research universities: the truth of research is ultimately grounded in its methodology. The heart of Hegelian education is, by contrast, its therapeutic effect—the subject's complete reconciliation to the world. An education that leaves us unsatisfied is hardly consummate.

I close the essay with reflections on what a non-Hegelian could learn about education from reading Hegel. In my understanding, this is especially pertinent because we cannot take part in the cultural project Hegel had in mind; even if we subscribe to the fundamentals of Hegel's System, we, as non-Germans, cannot execute his educational plan. I therefore focus my energies on discussing the way in which careful and principled study of Great Books can effect a radical transformation of the reader's way of knowing, thereby mirroring a fundamental feature of Hegelian education, and offering some pedagogical advantages of close reading and attention to particulars—which distinguishes the type of reading we do at St. John's from the type of reading Hegel espouses—given our cultural and technological situation. I believe this examination helps clarify and justify a central activity we all take up at the College. Yet, I leave off there, and another pressing question about St. John's remains untouched: what is the role of conversation in our education? I have some thoughts, but I will save them for a tête-à-tête.

Hope in Paradise Lost

Samuel Peregrin

In choosing my essay topic, I knew I wanted to try a text that I had no previous experience with and that I wanted something both poetic and of a certain scale, also I wanted the original to have been written in English. Suffice to say this led me to *Paradise Lost*. In my first reading of it, not knowing what I wanted to explore, I was struck by the comparison made between Eve and Pandora. And I was particularly taken by a part of the Pandora story that was left out by Milton, that hope was left stuck inside her jar of suffering. It is here that I must apologize to the committee for having thrust upon them the Hesiod reading,[1] but it felt dishonest to exclude the seed of my thoughts. From this point on I began to wonder what opinion *Paradise Lost* had concerning the nature of hope.

I never found it to be strictly or explicitly defined in the way other virtues or passions were, and began to doubt whether or not there was some concept working behind the many mentions of hope at all, or if it was nothing other than colloquial and semantic. I began to find that hope was as much defined by its opposites, auxiliary powers, and perversions as any of its own attributes, but perhaps this should not have been so surprising. From here I did find some ways of understanding hope as a virtue. Firstly, it became obvious that hope was connected to suffering wherever it was presented. That seems a part of how I would define it now: a comfort felt presently to alleviate a present pain, found by looking to the future. And yet, it has its restrictions.

So secondly, it must abide by proper reason lest it fall into vanity. This then leads to its two big determinants, faith and love. For, in order to be a hope

[1] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 58-128.

more than secular, and then purportedly fulfilling to a person, it must seek confirmation with the will of God. Thirdly then, we become witness to the negations of hope referenced in the poem; ambition and despair, these perversions of hope, abound. This then can tell us hope is not impatient, unbounded attempts to grasp power, nor is it a complete reservation to fate. Rather it is but a piece, one of passive fortitude, in the harmony of virtues needed to achieve a life of righteous obedience. But the fact that hope appears most often in its diminished state makes me wonder whether there is a great danger hope may yet pose. That when divorced from its associates, love and faith, it is empty; to keep hope within these boundaries is no small challenge. So perhaps this is why there is no exposition of hope for us in the poem, because it is simply too easy to fall into vain expectations. Although, a life without any reparation to hope would be one incapable of surmounting the daily sufferings cast about us.

I must thank Mr. Haflidson, my essay would not have come to fruition without his counsel and encouragement. Also, thank you to the committee members, and all those in attendance, for your time and interest in this difficult topic. I do hope we all gain from, or at least enjoy this discussion as it begins.

The Flaying of Marsyas

Maxwell Anthony

I would not like to have my précis published. Anyone who wants to know about my Master's Essay is welcome to review the copy entrusted to the Greenfield Library's care. However, I would like to use this opportunity to expand on a topic inadequately addressed in my essay—the contest of Marsyas and Apollo. In the *Euthydemus*, a passionate young man, Ctesippus, says that two sophist brothers, Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, are welcome to skin him, so long as they turn his hide into virtue, not a wineskin like Marsyas' was made into. Marsyas, a satyr, challenged the god Apollo to a musical contest. Whoever won could do whatever he liked to the loser. Marsyas played the aulos and Apollo played the lyre. Stories differ as to how the contest proceeded and was judged, but the consensus is that Apollo won and flayed Marsyas.

I have a general suspicion that something is important about the aulos, a double reed instrument, and the lyre, a harp with two arms united by a crossbar and chords, in respect of being images of duality. The music of the aulos differs from the music of the lyre in that the aulos is a wind instrument, so playing it prevents the player from speaking. Also, it can be tuned only insofar as it is well made, whereas each chord of the lyre might be tuned to precision. Playing the aulos leads to a certain wanton indulgence—the breathing associated with it recalls sexual panting. Something about the aulos is more passionate and something about the lyre is more rational. Calling the aulos the most "many stringed" (πολυχορδότατον) of instruments Socrates and Glaucon refuse it admission to their city.[1]

[1] Plato, *Republic*, 3.399d.

A general suspicion I have been entertaining is that the aulos connotes the principle of otherness—the wild indeterminate principle of multiplicity. I associate this principle with imprecise multiplicity, the sort of slurred and passionate windy music of the aulos—whereas I tend to associate the lyre with precision and exact multiplicity—the sort of otherness when one thing is a clear image of another. Given the constraints of my essay I did not get to explore this topic but am comfortable voicing my suspicion that Plato associates the aulos with the principle of otherness and the lyre with being; one might call the former the indeterminate dyad and the latter the eidetic two.

The aulos encourages dancing and passionate movements opposed to speaking; perhaps for this reason the flute players are sent away in the *Symposium*. Writing the essay, I was given to the view that such dancing and immoderation would be alien to the god Apollo. This god, I thought, would be possessed of such cold bright deliberation that he could flay a hubristic satyr like Marsyas with clinical charm. This opinion, and over reliance of well know artistic representations of the episode, tempted me to a static view of the flaying. Recently it occurred to me that the flaying itself would be a sort of dance. The point is not simply that Marsyas was punished but that the bound satyr would writhe and contort as the punishment was administered. Even the god Apollo would be unable to prevent himself from participating in this bloody spasm. To perform the punishment Apollo would have to embrace, if not, let's say, enwind, Marsyas' trashing body. Thinking about this "dance" in relation to the *Euthydemus*, I realized that the point of the story is not simply that a hubristic satyr was punished for challenging a god, but that even a god can be corrupted in the administration of justice. A shocking but unannounced dramatic detail of the *Euthydemus* is that Socrates is able to remember and relate what is said and happened although the narrated events occurred in an environment of public ridicule and indignation. Socrates, unlike his interlocutors, has amazing self-control that permits him to pay extreme attention to slight

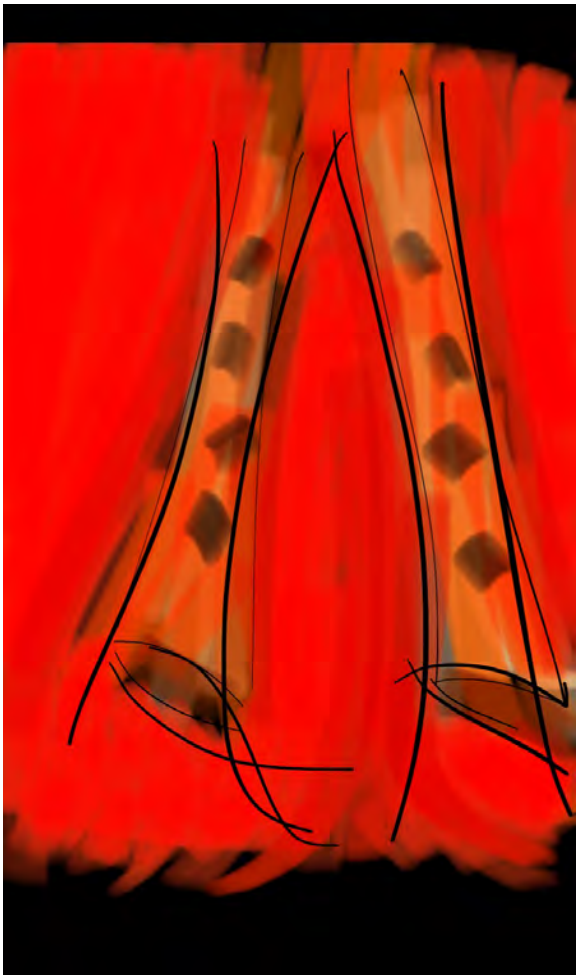
and seemingly insignificant details and motives of almost all who surround him, while understanding nuances of argument and formulating prudent responses. Socrates' moderation is more than godlike. In respect of the musical contest the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus pose, Socrates supplants Apollo.

The following poem and picture are intended to accompany Mr. Anthony's thoughts above:

The Bloody Aulos

Quiver body bound
taut skin folds;
blood whets blade and bark.
These bright hands
that twist the tuning pegs
pluck jumping flesh.

"Writhe, pant, wail,
Dance, satyr,
As you are flayed!"



Maxwell Anthony, *The Bloody Aulos*, 2018, digital art.

A Conversation with Jim Phillips

Kelly Custer

Kelly Custer: Probably a question all students in the Graduate Institute end up being asked at one point or another—as it seems appropriate to say of the Graduate Institute itself that it is the speakeasy of academia—is: how did you come to find out about the program? And along with that, what piqued your interest in it and how did you finally say, "Yes, that's for me?"

Jim Phillips: I graduated from the Naval Academy in 1975 with a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering. The books we read at St. John's are the books they told me I did not need to read to make a living. So, I never read them. But also, I've been a student of the Bible [for] the past fifty years and a teacher of it for the last thirty. As a teacher, I've tried to learn from other teachers and I discovered it seems like the teachers that understand [the Bible] best were teachers that had a good grasp of the classics. So roll the clock [back] ten years ago. My wife and I move to Annapolis to found the C.S. Lewis Institute and a couple of guys from St. John's knock on my front door when they saw the sign on it that reads "Aslan House"—Aslan from the Chronicles of Narnia. And they said, "Does this have anything to do with C.S. Lewis?" And I said, "It does."

And they said, "Can we have a study group? We study all these great books down the street, but we would like to be with other followers of Jesus to talk about the teachings of the authors of our books in light of the teachings of Jesus." I said, "That sounds great." Now I didn't have any knowledge of the classics, but I did have a lot of knowledge of scripture. So I said, "Okay. Maybe together we can do this.

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So for the last ten years I have been hosting young men, and my wife and another young lady host the women at a different time. We have, on average, twenty to thirty young people a week participating in those discussions. And the last ten years I have been surrounded by these young men with a passion for understanding the classics and understanding the questions that every author of the classics is trying to address. The questions like: how did I get here? Why am I here? There seems to be something broken in the world. There seems to be something broken in me. I understand Descartes as saying [that] there is an imperfection within me. Plato says there seems to be an instrument in me that needs to be reset. They are all wrestling with the same idea. And these young men would come into my home and read these things to me, and I would point to a spot in scripture where it says we have a fallen, rebellious nature and there is this thing within us that causes to do things we don't want to do. So we would have great discussions, but I longed to know what they knew. I longed to read what they were reading. For eight years of the last ten, I hungered to understand these classics, but I was also a full-time employee working in the IT industry.

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Two years ago I retired. The minute I retired I said to my wife, "I need to get a couple of things together that I would like to focus on because I'm not ready to fully retire." She said, "Oh I know what it is." I said, "What?"

She said, "You need to go to St. John's." And I just lit up. I said, "Yes! For ten years I have been wanting to do this." So, I just lit up and began two years ago. And the other night was so wonderful. I'm with these young men and one of them says, "Do you think Socrates deserved the persecution in Athens that he received from the culture, especially the leadership of the culture at that time?" I was able to engage in this discussion with text. And we started laughing. [Ten] years I've been with this group, now they come and go throughout the years, but I still have some young men helping me today that were in that group six, seven years ago, and we were just laughing that, finally, I was able to participate. That's what brought me to St. John's.

KC: That's really wonderful and hearing your path to St. John's, and a little of your background, it often appears that Christianity and, perhaps more specifically, many strands of American contemporary Christianity appear to have a great deal of skepticism toward any secular texts, including the classics. And I find what you just said very interesting because, if I am hearing what you said correctly, it's in fact a sense of understanding, an understanding of the classic works and authors of Western thought that becomes and perhaps enriches the dialogue around Christianity. And allows, to an extent, for a common language to be shared where two people, who might not have read the same texts, can interact with one another in a very meaningful way.

JP: To your point, there is a passage in scripture that says, "Don't be taken captive by hollow and deceptive philosophy that depends on the principles of the world and traditions of men rather than the teachings of Jesus." And a lot of people read that and throw all philosophy out. It doesn't say throw all philosophy out. It says examine it to see if it also aligns to the teachings of Jesus, and there are so many things where we see, beginning with Greek philosophers, them weighing thoughts that if you look, you will see thoughts that also Jesus himself taught about. So there's this great synergy in the thinking. And here's where the learning comes to play. The passage of scripture doesn't say to throw it out. Rather you examine the thoughts.

And I've been able to talk to a number of parents whose sons or daughters were coming to St. John's, and they were concerned that their children were going to be exposed to all this philosophical thinking [and] that all philosophy is bad. And it's just the opposite. I would always say: this is a wonderful place for young people to come and get grounded in the teachings that have shaped our civilization and culture, and they will discover that a lot of the things they have said and a lot of the things they have proposed are very much in line with the things Jesus taught. So, it's a wonderful place to begin to examine these things.

KC: As I hear you saying this, I am reminded of St. Paul in the first letter to the Corinthians saying: "If anyone among you thinks to be a wise man in this age, let him become foolish in order to become wise." I find that so interesting because most of the things we read at St. John's were very much considered folly in their own age, condemned as folly, or at least were not very popular. And certainly challenging of the going wisdom in their own time, which then really makes me think that St. Paul is not being dismissive of reason, but challenging [on behalf of] a perennial wisdom. We could probably agree that many of [the] philosophers we read greatly challenge the wisdom of the day, but do so, in many cases, by raising the same questions and posing similar thoughts to previous ages going back to early Greek philosophers, which in a way, seems to bind much of their thought to perennial questions that—when neglected—become the folly of an age.

JP: Yes. St. Paul was brilliant and very effective when speaking to the Greeks. He clearly knew Greek literature and he understood the Greek pantheon of gods. And he went and he sat with them, he started there, with their understanding of things, to start with things that had begun in Greece and show how they compare to the teachings of Jesus. He did amazing work in Greece.

KC: I know that you were a graduate of the Naval Academy and of your work with the C.S. Lewis Institute. Could you speak a little more to your background professionally?

JP: I was raised in Louisiana and Arkansas. I went to the Naval Academy right out of high school. I then went into the Marine Corps after graduating from the Academy and flew AV-8B Harriers. I was one of the first rookies to fly a Harrier. That means the first people they took directly from flight school to fly the Harrier. It was a brand-new airplane. It hovers. Instead of a conventional take-off and landing, it can hover like a helicopter. And the Marine Corps decided they needed to demonstrate that a rookie could fly the airplane or they didn't want it. So they took four of us right out of flight school into that program. It was a very dangerous time and I lost a number of friends in the four or five years I was flying Harriers, more than ten in that period of time, and this was peacetime. So, I lost a lot of friends. That also caused me to really take a look at the questions: who am I? And why am I here? And am I doing what I was created to do? So it really made me take a close look at my life.

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I left the Marine Corps after six years. Went to IBM for twenty years and a smaller company, which was like IBM, and worked there for almost twenty years. All in information technology and hiring software engineers to maintain large computer systems that the likes of AOL or FedEx use. So that's what I did all that time. But in the middle of all that I was an avid reader of books that really tried to answer the hard questions in life. Books that really tried to answer the questions of origin, meaning, morality, and hope. I call that a worldview. Everybody has a worldview and how you answer those questions defines it pretty well. I love sitting with people and exploring their worldview. It's fascinating. So that got me interested in trying to understand the philosophy that shaped Western Civilization because that shapes peoples' worldviews.

KC: At what point did you discover C.S. Lewis? Has he always been an author whose works you engaged with, or is there a particular time or work that enkindled a passion for all his writings?

JP: Other than *Screwtape Letters*, which I probably read in high school and couldn't appreciate at that time, it really wasn't until ten years ago, when I went to a one-week summer institute at Oxford. It was hosted by an organization that had a great partnership with the C.S. Lewis Institute, and it was there that I met the president of the C.S. Lewis Institute and discovered he lived in Washington D.C. We got to know each other. He said: let's have lunch when we get back. We did. He said there are a lot of people in Annapolis that would like to take advantage of some of the offerings of the Institute, but it's too far to commute to D.C.—would you start an Institute in Annapolis? And actually, it was one of the first cities besides D.C. to do this. Today there are about 14 to 15 cities that offer the C.S. Lewis programs. So over the last ten years I've tried to catch up with my readings of C.S. Lewis. And I've come to appreciate him greatly.

KC: One of my professors in undergrad was very attached to the C.S. Lewis Institute and I had the pleasure of taking a course in which we simply read works by Lewis. It was a great course and I had, and still have, great admiration for that professor.

JP: I see [that] you're reading *The Abolition of Man*. [Right] now I am in the Politics and Society Seminar, and we've spent a great deal of time talking about Aristotle and his questions and thoughts on ethics. And he talks about natural law—that there is an eternal law and natural law. Natural law—it doesn't need to be written down, we just all know these things, it's the ways in which we interact with things. Well, Lewis called that absolute morality: that we all have a sense of a right way to behave, we know a right way to behave, and if you were to look across cultures, all the cultures that have ever been, you will notice some commonalities like: no one appreciates a coward, no one thinks it's ever okay to abuse a child. And this

is one of my favorites: if you look at the different cultures throughout history, they might disagree as to whether you can have one wife, two wives, or more, but they all would say you can't have any woman you want. And what Lewis does: in the back of *The Abolition of Man* is an appendix and he lists things that he thinks are examples of absolute morality, and you could see Aristotle saying that's natural law.

KC: That's really interesting that you've directed us [to] *The Abolition of Man*, which has been a very significant book in my life and, throughout the years, a text I continue to revisit and certainly one of the books I give out the most as a gift. I brought *The Abolition of Man* to read a short passage as a preface to a question I have for you with respect to the program at St. John's and your familiarity with Lewis. The passage I wanted to direct us to is very similar in spirit to what you just mentioned, and this is where Lewis introduces the Tao and the Tao as being—whether we call it natural law or first principles of morality—what one always appeals to whenever one makes a challenge or claim about morality. I always find this passage striking where Lewis writes:

> *There never has been, and never will be, a radically new judgment of value in the history of the world. What purports to be new systems or (as they now call them) 'ideologies,' all consist of fragments from the* Tao *itself, arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation, yet still owing to the* Tao *and to it alone such validity as they possess.*[1]

That's just one of those passages that purely in style is profoundly and succinctly beautiful. In thinking about the passage and St. John's, I really have two questions for you. One, in many ways I do not think the texts we read purport to be new systems or ideologies in the way Lewis here describes: do you think they all in some way point to what Lewis has in mind with the Tao for their appeal? And two, has your experience in the

[1] C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (Macmillan Publishing Company, 1947), 56.

program at all resonated with the texts you've read pointing to something like the Tao? And to add a little to that, would you say that perhaps the only way we can truly understand these texts and put them in conversation with ourselves, and one another, is to presuppose and accept such objectivity, regardless of our ability to define it or even agree upon its name?

JP: Yes. Right now in the Politics and Society segment it's been all about what is the best form of commonwealth beginning with Plato's *Republic*. And right now I'm reading Hobbes' *Leviathan* where he advocates for a strong sovereign as the best form of commonwealth, and he talks about religion and all the various forms there can be and he says something very similar to what Lewis says in that passage, that when you take away things you come down to a common set of things or principles that seem to survive in all the variations. So, religions may have started in the same place and branched out, and there may be varieties of religion, some less or more true than others. But at the end of the day, if you bring them down by reduction to the common roots of each one of them, you find a lot of similarities. I think that's exactly what Lewis is saying.

KC: I find it so interesting that many of the texts within the St. John's curriculum presuppose something like the Tao from which to start, which seems paramount to even have traction in discourse. If you didn't, it would almost be as Aristotle discusses in Book IV of the *Metaphysics*, where if you can't agree at some point and are demanding a demonstration of something like the Tao, there's just no having a conversation. And I find that to be such a stark juxtaposition to our contemporary society. Particularly when you talk about ethics or morality, you tend to hear people wanting to say something like the truth is subjective, relative, and as long as what you do doesn't hurt anyone, it's okay. Or some other variation of a golden rule with the caveat that telling anyone else what they should or shouldn't do is at odds with the relativism lurking about. But yet, that always ends up in contradiction, as if there are no grounds for normative ethics, there are no

grounds to prescribe to anyone why they shouldn't harm other people. In the same vein, in what I would consider a secular society, there is a kind of crude scientism lingering with very positivistic tendencies that demands empirical demonstration of anything before discussing truth—

JP: Just stop right there: demonstrate that last statement empirically.

KC: Exactly.

KC: That's all to say that I think St. John's, as an institution, ends up presupposing something like the Tao and that's part of the reason that all these marvelous conversations you are able to have with folks—even if you radically disagree—can take place.

JP: I'm glad you brought that up because that is one of the most beautiful things about being at St. John's. We sit every Monday and Thursday evening together with twelve to fifteen peers. Around that table are different worldviews, different answers to the questions: how did I get here? Why am I here? What's wrong with the world? And how do I fix it? Many different worldviews. The beauty of St. John's is civil discussion. We are able, because we are centered and agree to talk within a text, and we agree to stay within the text, we are able to discuss what the author might be saying about the questions going on in our minds. And it is lovely.

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The world, our country, every talk show on TV every night, could learn from the civil discussion that's being exercised at St. John's College. I wish somebody could put lights over the campus and say, "Look. You want to return to civility—you hear that term often in our culture—come sit here and see how people so different from one another discuss these things." You just think about it. The next thing you know, after being in classes with people: you're sitting down having a beer with somebody you would never have the opportunity otherwise because of the disparity in

worldviews. And yet here you are sharing something beautiful and in common and you realize you arrived where you are because you are a rational creature and you have some rational presuppositions, and so have I. Though where we arrive may be different, we are rational creatures with rational presuppositions that are capable of arriving at some rational conclusions. Now we can have a discussion. Nobody needs to label anybody with anything derogatory. Let's have a rational discussion, because I want to understand the presuppositions you have to arrive where you are. That's where learning occurs.

KC: I couldn't agree more. And it reminds me, as a first-semester student and having "Notes on Dialogue" freshly on the mind and being struck by the observations Stringfellow Barr is making: Wow! What would he think now of our contemporary climate watching the news—or whatever we might call the unceasing barrage of polarizing media that has become so increasingly hard to escape—in which people swing at one another in disagreement only to go back to their respective corners without hearing a single thing the other has said? It seems that one of the things Barr was suggesting is that the model of conversation we engage in at St. John's, while not rendering definitive answers that remove the presence of the questions we start with, raises a middle ground in conversation that allows people to understand the people they are conversing with and the texts upon which the conversation is grounded.

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One question that I would really like to ask you is: have there been any texts you've read in the program that you had already read? And, if so, what was that experience like for you?

JP: I read Augustine before as he is an early father of the Church. But, Descartes said, there is this imperfection in me. Why would God make me with this imperfection? He could have made me perfect? Now I go back

to Augustine—and this actually happened in the same evening during the Philosophy and Theology segment—an hour later we're reading in Augustine's *Confessions*, and Augustine says something like this: without imperfection in the world we would never know a virtue. What? How do you become a reformer unless there is something to reform? How can you be brave unless there is something to stand bravely against? How do you forgive unless there is something to be forgiven? And all the sudden a saying that I have heard many times came alive because of the enlightenment of new reading and that was: we certainly don't live in the most perfect world, very few people would disagree with that, but we might live in the most perfect world to prepare us for the most perfect world. And here I see Augustine and Descartes agreeing, though they are hundreds of years apart, and wrestling with the same issues and coming up with similar conclusions.

KC: Yes. As someone currently in the Philosophy and Theology segment, and having just had the overlap of readings you brought up this past Thursday, those two readings together are fantastic, because in a very different way than Augustine, you see Descartes posing the question why should error be in him at all—and I think that's sometimes overlooked in the text. It is very important to Descartes' conclusion. It is very similar to Augustine claiming he would not know virtue if it weren't for imperfection: I see Descartes saying he would not know himself, what he truly is without error.

JP: Love it.

KC: Are there any texts in the program that you had not read, and were perhaps skeptical or indifferent about, but after encountering the text it became something that really made an impact on you?

JP: Most theists would have an aversion to reading Darwin and would discourage others from ever reading him. I read him for the first time at St.

John's. I had previously read a lot of quotes by him, but I never read him. I loved his style. I fell in love with a man who was a great thinker. I fell in love with a man who really drew conclusions from the presuppositions and evidence he had in front of him that were rational. Darwin stated that if there was ever the discovery of an organism [and] you could not explain its existence by a number of incremental, successive, progressions; he would need to rethink his whole project. Since he said that we've seen some discoveries that challenge his conclusions. And I believe if he were still alive, he would be one of the most vocal advocates for modifying his conclusions because I found him winsome and intellectually honest. Even though I disagreed with some of his conclusions, I was in love with the man for his pursuit of truth. So to answer your question, that's the beauty of something like St. John's: you can disagree with someone's conclusions, but you come to discover that they are rational beings and really trying very hard to get answers to the same questions you have, and are providing you some insight along the way—whether you end up agreeing with their conclusions or not.

KC: Is there any work or text that you did not encounter in the program that you wish you would have?

JP: That's like asking me if I would like a flavor of ice cream I have never tried, it is hard to desire what you have no familiarity with. All I know is that three or four months into the program, about where you are now, I was walking to class and the thought hit me: I am going to graduate in a year and a half. And my next thought was: darn. And I thought [this is] the first time I can remember that I was pursuing a goal and not counting the days until I achieved it, but rather enjoying the days of the journey. It's just been that kind of experience. So if there are other texts that would have enriched this, I wouldn't know. I am just so grateful for the ones I have encountered.

KC: I think you really hit the nail on the head in that it's such a different experience. No one I have talked to in the program is looking toward its end—only lamenting that it should end at all.

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I wanted to ask you a question given your background and your life. Given your commitments, I am very interested in your response. I'm currently reading Nietzsche's later works in preceptorial. We are reading *The Anti-Christ* right now and throughout that work there is an overarching theme that Nietzsche takes Christianity to be dishonest. It's also very nuanced in that he seems to have a certain appreciation for Christ, but very much wants to take away anything miraculous and separate Christ the man from divinity. And I guess my question is—Nietzsche seems to see the attractiveness of Christianity to the many as rooted in the fear that this life is it. And that Christianity is driven by denying this life in hopes of another life. As someone with your worldview and background, what would your response be to that?

JP: Nietzsche is another thinker that I find intellectually honest, let me just state that up front. In other words, honestly, the despair that one reads in Nietzsche is the despair one would expect if you truly believe that this life is all there is. So I find him intellectually honest. For that I respect him. But if I were sitting here with Nietzsche and he said to me: "You know, I think Christianity is something conjured up in order try to extend your life, [to] try to bring about immortality that doesn't exist"—I would ask him if it is possible that his atheism is something that he came up with in order to avoid or not face something that might exist. The question always needs to be asked both ways. Very similarly, I often get asked as a follower of Jesus, "Why, if God is a good God, is there so much pain and suffering in the world?" And after I spend some time on that, I turn the question around saying, "I'm not sure what your worldview is, but you need to answer the same question within your worldview."

Because one thing we can all agree to is that there is something broken here. Different people with different worldviews will call it different names: wrong desire, misplaced affection, brokenness. We all agree that something is wrong. Now we all need to answer the question: Why? And what hope do we have to remedy the brokenness we see? So, I really respect Nietzsche. He is true to his convictions and the demeanor of his writings demonstrates it. Quite frankly, my heart goes out to him and I would have loved to have spoken with him.

KC: Similar, in many respects, in addressing the brokenness in the world and the task of answering it, living within it—another thinker, one of few that Nietzsche extends praise and withholds scorn from, is Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky's characters all confront and stand at the threshold of what he calls the "crucible of doubt." That has been so important in my own life and struck me in many of the conversations I have been a part of in the Philosophy and Theology segment. It really seems you can only doubt something you take seriously, a presence that confronts you as potentially real enough to doubt. In other words, doubt is not at play for me with respect to the existence of unicorns, but it is very much at play when I am confronted by the existence of God or the life of Jesus. For you, as someone who has lived very much convicted of a worldview, is there a way in which coming to St. John's, reading authors that lay open questions of doubt—have those experiences made you question in a deeper way the reality of your beliefs?

JP: Yes, because all of the authors we read at St. John's ask really good questions and provide wonderful insights. You know doubt and faith are not exclusive. And faith is not, as many people think, believing something that may not be true. If that were so, then a strong faith would be believing something you are pretty sure is not true, while a perfect faith would be believing something you're absolutely sure is not true. Faith is not that. Faith is reason informed by evidence. You have evidence that something may be true, the distance between the evidence you have and the ultimate

truth you are trying to embrace is doubt. Reason examines the doubt and [the] evidence, and says: I think the evidence outweighs the doubt, and I am going to trust my reason and its conclusion to where the evidence points—that is faith.

KC: At this juncture within civilization, faith gets used as an immediate contrary to reason, contrary to evidence. A thinker that very much discusses faith is Kierkegaard. The leap of faith found in some of his pseudonymous works has gained a degree of infamy as divorcing faith and reason. But reading Kierkegaard proves a far different experience. Faith and reason are not treated as dichotomies within the leap of faith, or in many instances the leap into sin, but very much as embracing the limits and finitude of being human, living at the threshold of the crucible, the tensions of doubt and reason. Once we make the leap, grace is on the other side. Grace is very hard for us to understand, to see, to allow ourselves to experience. But part of that leap of faith is not an abandonment of reason, not an abandonment of doubt, but is very much trust. This strikes me as so profound because it is very difficult to speak of trust independent of reason, independent of there being evidence that there is something or someone that is trustworthy. Such ruminations on faith have been indispensable in my own life. Does that accord at all with your experience of faith?

JP: To me, faith is reason informed by evidence. And it is where that reason, informed by evidence, points. Every one of the authors we read exercises some measure of faith. None of them are absolutely certain of their conclusions. They all offer you the presuppositions and rationality of their conclusions. I am trying to think of who it was—Hume?—who appears so skeptical about everything and tears just about everything down, but then says something at the very end perhaps allowing room for something like divine revelation. What? Why didn't he insert this at the beginning of the work? I would have read this in an entirely different light. But no, he put that at the end because he wanted me to experience all of

the skepticism *before* he left room for divine revelation—and I just loved it. All of our authors—and all of us—exercise faith regarding the questions of why we are here and who we are. We have reasoned the projection of evidence and exercise faith to where it points.

KC: Yes. I couldn't agree more. Speaking of *pointing toward things*—as I know your time, lamentably, at St. John's is coming to an end and directing you to other things—I've caught wind that there might be something pointing you toward Oxford. Could you share what the next adventure in life is for you?

JP: Well, a year ago I was enjoying this program so much and so stimulated by the authors we discuss, and I said to my wife, "I can't help but to think this is pointing to something." And she immediately said, "Oxford." And, of course, she knew that I had Oxford in my heart and almost attended there right out of the Naval Academy. And when I say Oxford, I mean an Oxford type of education, which by the way, I think St. John's is. And that's in part why I came here: thinking I have an Oxford in my backyard. But anyway, my wife was really the one to say, "You should go." So I've really spent a lot of time thinking about this and received a lot of affirmation from friends and tutors. So, as I sit here right now, I have been accepted to Oxford for post-graduate work in theology starting in the fall.

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I will just tell you this. There is no way I would have had this type of opportunity in my life without St. John's bridging the gap between an engineer, and then a software engineer, and one who really wants to pursue theology. There's no way I could have bridged that gap without St. John's College. I'm truly grateful to St. John's for opening this door that I have always wanted to go through, and it looks like now I will have the opportunity.

KC: That's wonderful. In wrapping up, is there anything you feel compelled or would like to say about the Graduate Institute here at St. John's that you think people should know, whether they are prospective students or current students, or anyone else in the community?

JP: I have to praise the tutors. And I would like to list them, but I am sure I would forget one and that would be tragic, because every tutor I have had in these four semesters has been lovely, winsome, gifted, concerned about the classes having meaningful discussions, and concerned about me as an individual receiving from this short period of time the most I could possibly receive. And through the personal interviews, through the seminars, feedback on papers, through conversations in the hall or after class, they have been just so encouraging. I cannot say enough about the tutors I have enjoyed. I will just say this: literature was my hardest subject in high school and as an undergraduate. I left both of those experiences with a total lack of appreciation for literature. But through the Literature segment at St. John's, I love literature. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the great classics, the plays: I have got a whole new love and appreciation for literature. And I owe that to the tutors.

Moral Intuitions in Tolstoy's War and Peace

Joseph Hiles

Leo Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace* combines an intimate portrait of Russian life during the French invasion of Russia with a strikingly original philosophical analysis of history. Through this wartime struggle, many of Tolstoy's characters grow and learn how to live meaningful, moral lives. Yet how exactly one can live a moral life according to Tolstoy is never explicitly spelled out in the novel. Accordingly, this essay will be an attempt to better understand Tolstoy's moral philosophy. The essay will use three vignettes from the novel as lenses through which a better understanding of Tolstoy's moral philosophy can be seen. The scenes in question are: the moment when Nikolai Rostov strikes the French officer with his sword, Rastopchin's order to kill Vereshchagin for the abandonment of Moscow, and the execution of the Russian prisoners by the French. Through analyzing these scenes, the essay will explore Tolstoy's views about moral intuitions and their role in guiding moral actions. These intuitions, for Tolstoy, are heavily impacted by our proximity to the people our actions affect, and supersede the place of reason in evaluating the morality of an action.

Strong Moral Intuitions

In each of the three vignettes outlined above, the moral intuitions of the characters kick in either immediately as—or within seconds after—the action is committed, alerting them to the fact that they have violated some hard to define moral code. For example, despite years of wishing for glory in combat, at the very moment when Nikolai Rostov bravely chases down the French dragoon officer and strikes him with his sword, "all Rostov's animation suddenly vanished...some unpleasant feeling wrung his heart.

Something unclear, confused, something he was unable to explain to himself, had been revealed to him" (653-654).[1] What was this unpleasant, unclear feeling that was wringing Nikolai Rostov's heart? It is likely that he feels guilty for striking the officer, despite the fact that this is the very kind of action he would have hoped for earlier in the novel. He finally gets the thing he wanted—glory—and yet it makes him feel unpleasant. Indeed, further indication of Rostov's guilt comes after the moment of action, once he has had time to think it over. There Tolstoy writes that "Ostermann's flattering words and the promise of a reward should therefore have been a joyful surprise for Rostov; yet the same unpleasant, unclear feeling nauseated him morally" (654). It is significant that Rostov's feeling of guilt is just that, a *feeling*. From the first moment to the last, it is a feeling that wrings his heart, a feeling that he cannot understand, and a feeling of moral nausea. These feelings are not the result of a calculation or philosophical analysis of his actions, but instead spring from inside of him organically.

The language of *feeling* and moral guilt is mirrored after Rastopchin heartlessly orders the Russian peasant mob to attack Vereshchagin, blaming him for the fall of Moscow. In the aftermath of this event, Tolstoy writes that "fresh as that memory was, Rastopchin felt that it was now deeply, bloodily engraved in his heart. He felt clearly now that the bloody trace of that memory would never heal, but that, on the contrary, the longer he lived, the more cruelly and tormentingly that terrible memory would live in his heart" (893). Like Rostov, Rastopchin *feels* as a result of his actions; Tolstoy uses this word twice in these two sentences. Although the word guilt is never used explicitly, the fact that the memory would live "cruelly and tormentingly" inside of him is a clear signal that he feels guilt for what he did. Much like Rostov, this guilt comes not from a calculation of precise moral reasoning, but rather from a feeling deep inside of him.

[1] All parenthetical citations refer to page numbers in the following edition: Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. Richard Pevear & Larissa Volokhonsky (Vintage Books, 2011).

Lastly, in describing the execution scene where French soldiers are commanded to shoot Russian political prisoners, Tolstoy writes that Pierre looked upon the "pale, frightened faces of the Frenchmen, who again were doing something by the post, pushing each other with trembling hands" (966). The Frenchmen who were carrying out the execution, and not at all in harm's way, looked frightened, their hands trembling. What then was frightening them, causing their hands to tremble? This look of terror must be an unintentional response to what they are doing, a kind of involuntary disapprobation of their own actions. Further evidence of this comes when Pierre recognized that "on the faces of the French soldiers and officers, on all without exception, he read the same fear, horror, and struggle that were in his heart...'They're all suffering just as I am'" (966). The executioners appear to be suffering because they are being forced to carry out an order that feels unnatural and immoral to them. Finally, this feeling of moral failing is expressed most explicitly when Tolstoy writes that the executioners "all obviously knew without question that they were criminals, who had to quickly conceal the traces of their crime" (967). The perpetrators of the execution "knew without question" that they had done wrong. Where did this knowledge come from? There is no suggestion that they needed to think hard and reflect to come to this conclusion about their own moral failing. They knew their guilt from the moment of the crime, in a kind of intuitive and unambiguous way.

In all three of these cases, feelings of guilt and shame arise mere moments after the actions they follow. No mental reflection occurs to bring these emotions about. The most plausible explanation for these feelings is that Tolstoy gives these characters strong moral intuitions that instinctively recognize immorality and flare up—in the form of *feelings* of guilt—when those intuitions have been transgressed. One final piece of evidence corroborates this assertion: Tolstoy references the heart as the place of anguish and struggle in each of these three anecdotes. For Rostov, "some unpleasant feeling wrung his heart"; for Rastopchin, his memory of the

event was "now deeply, bloodily engraved in his heart"; and for the executioners, Pierre "read the same fear, horror, and struggle that were in his heart" (653, 893, 966). In literature and in life, the heart is considered to be the realm of *feeling*, while the head is considered to be the place of *thinking*. Almost no thinking occurs in the minds of these characters during their respective actions. Yet they still know "obviously...without question" that what they have done is wrong. This knowledge comes from the heart and does not require logical reasoning.

While the circumstances of these situations are quite different, the responses of the characters to their own transgressions and Tolstoy's descriptions of their resulting feelings are remarkably similar. These analogous responses suggest to the reader that Tolstoy is making a claim here not just about the characters in the story, but about *all* people, about how all humans would respond to striking someone with a sword or being forced to shoot a prisoner in cold blood. Further evidence that Tolstoy is making a universal claim is that these three situations involve characters of dramatically different social classes and upbringings. These feelings of moral failure, for Tolstoy, are not dependant on an education in the Classics of Western philosophy. They appear to be present both in educated upper class officials like Rastopchin and privates in the military like the French executioners. Now that the presence of strong, heartfelt moral intuitions in these characters has been identified, further investigation is necessary to show how they operate and what qualities they have.

Proximity

In *War and Peace*, the moral intuitions of the characters appear to be deeply affected by proximity to the ethically questionable act. Something changes when they are up close and personal, and can see the faces of the people they are hurting. For instance, in the episode with Nikolai Rostov, Tolstoy writes that "Rostov sought his enemy with his eyes, to see whom he had

vanquished" (653). At this moment Rostov does not yet feel guilt; he only wants to see who he has overcome. But something significant happens when he looks upon the poor soldier, who is "glancing up at Rostov from below with an expression of terror. His face, pale and mud-spattered, fair-haired, young, with a dimple on the chin and light blue eyes, was not at all for the battlefield, not an enemy's face, but a most simple, homelike face" (653-654). This line directly precedes the line about how an "unpleasant feeling wrung his heart"—consequently the reader can infer that observing these attributes of the officer is the proximate cause of Rostov's guilt. Rostov feels guilt once he sees that this person he has harmed is more like an innocent child than the menacing enemy he likely imagined.

The reader gets further confirmation of this through Rostov's thoughts a few days later, when he thinks: "'they're even more afraid than we are!' [...]'And what harm had he done, with his dimple and his light blue eyes? But how frightened he was! He thought I'd kill him'" (655). While again expressing surprise at the innocence of the officer with his "dimple and light blue eyes," Rostov further observes that his enemies are "even more afraid than we are!" In this moment Rostov realizes that this particular enemy and, by extension, the whole French army are equally or even more frightened than the Russian army is. This realization could be boiled down to a simple phrase: they are just like us. Whereas before he had evidently imagined the French to be terrifying and aggressive, unlike the young and disorganized Russian forces, the recognition that they were just as afraid as the Russians obliges Rostov to see all that they have in common with the enemy: their common humanity. It is in the observation of the enemy's face and his fear that these conclusions are reached.

It is noteworthy that, by this point in the narrative, Nikolai Rostov has been in the Russian military for years, and has presumably shot at enemies many times before this event. But given his surprise when he realizes that the French troops are just like the Russian ones, it is clear that this is a new revelation for him: this shows the role proximity plays in Rostov's moral

intuitions. Before he could clearly see the faces of the people he was fighting it was easier to dehumanize them and think of them as monsters. But his nearness to the dragoon officer precluded his ability to frame the situation in this way. If he had killed this officer, he could see that he would be killing a young, scared Frenchman who likely had no interest in fighting in the first place. This is not to say that Tolstoy believes it is somehow more ethically justifiable to kill people from far away with a gun or a cannon than it is to kill them up close with a saber. Proximity does not change our moral obligations. Rather, it clarifies them, cutting through our proclivity to redirect our attention to something less appalling. As a test of the morality of an action it is not enough to ask: will you feel guilt at having done something? This test is insufficient because it fails to take into account that we can trick our moral intuitions by looking away, or being far enough away in the first place that we cannot see the damage we have done. The real test of the morality of an action that Tolstoy seems to be advocating for would be the following: will you feel guilt at having done something while you stare into the eyes of the person you are doing that thing to? Henceforth, this will be called the proximity test of morality.

This test, or something that closely resembles it, actually occurs in the pages of *War and Peace*. Before the execution scene, Pierre is questioned by the French general Davout, "a man known for his cruelty" (963). Davout contends that Pierre is a Russian spy, an accusation that, if borne out, would almost certainly lead to Pierre's execution. Yet while Pierre is frantically attempting to exculpate himself, something remarkable happens:

> *Davout raised his eyes and looked fixedly at Pierre. For a few seconds they looked at each other, and that gaze saved Pierre. In that gaze, beyond all the conventions of war and courts, human relations were established between these two men. In that one moment, they both vaguely felt a countless number of things and realized that they were both children of the human race, that they were brothers* (964).

In this touching moment of human contact, the proximity test of morality is inadvertently thrust upon Davout. In attempting to evaluate Pierre's guilt, Davout is forced to look him in the eyes. He is forced to recognize who exactly he will be killing if he orders his execution: a brother, a child of the human race. This is something that they both "vaguely felt" rather than precisely reasoned. Without a doubt, Davout would have treated Pierre differently if they had not been in the same room, if a human connection had not been established. But now that Davout has stared into this man's eyes, he understands that he will feel guilt if he sentences him to death.

All of this is spelled out by Tolstoy in the next line, where he writes that:

> *At first glance, for Davout, who had only just raised his head from his list, where human deeds and life were known by numbers, Pierre was only a circumstance, and Davout could have shot him without taking a bad act on his conscience; but now he had seen him as a human being* (964).

When Pierre was "only a circumstance" and existed only on the pages of Davout's list, he was as removed from Davout as the enemy soldiers Rostov shot at earlier in the novel. But once Davout makes eye contact with Pierre, and Rostov looks at the young face of the dragoon officer, the certainty of a guilty conscience compels them to have compassion. Further, by pointing out that Davout is famous for his cruelty and then showing him soften once he is face to face with Pierre, Tolstoy is undoubtedly suggesting that this is the universal human reaction to the proximity test of morality and that these instincts are present in everyone, even the most brutal of generals. The means of clarifying the morality of an action which Tolstoy appears to advocate for—the proximity test—raises interesting questions about the efficacy of another test of morality that is more typically used to decide the ethical ramifications of an action. The next section of this essay will deal with the place of reason in Tolstoy's moral framework.

Reason

As was noted earlier in the essay, in each of the three chosen vignettes, the morality of an action was decided not by a calculation or the application of a philosophical system—rather, characters were overcome by a feeling of guilt after they acted wrongly. Nowhere in these scenes does Tolstoy show characters—at the point of action—thinking hard about their moral obligations, or attempting to weigh the pros and cons of various actions. In other words, the evidence from the story points to a view of morality that relies entirely on moral intuitions, discrediting the place of reason in morality. The reader can infer this assertion from Tolstoy's depictions of these scenes. If only the executioners had followed their intuitions, they would not have killed the prisoners. If only Davout had been face to face with all the people his orders harmed, he might not have been famous for his cruelty.

But the force of these inferences pales in comparison to the strength of the rebuke against reason that comes after Rastopchin commits his crime of ordering a peasant mob to vent their anger over the fall of Moscow by murdering a political prisoner. Tolstoy writes that in the hours after the crime, "Rastopchin calmed down physically and, as always happens, simultaneously with physical calm, his mind also devised causes for him to be morally calm" (891). Right off the bat the reader can tell by Tolstoy's word choice that Rastopchin is doing something dubious and problematic here. The word *devise* implies that he is inventing reasons to feel better that are not actually true. What are these causes to be calm that he devises?

> *The thought that calmed Rastopchin was not new. As long as the world has existed and people have been killing each other, no one man has ever committed a crime upon his own kind without calming himself with this same thought. This thought was* le bien publique*, the supposed good of other people* (891).

Rastopchin convinces himself that his actions were justified because they were done for the "supposed good of other people." In other words, he is using a rational consideration, something like a utilitarian calculation, to pacify himself and attenuate his guilt. By positioning himself as someone who is working for *the public good*, Rastopchin can absolve himself of responsibility by conceiving of his crime as an action where the *ends justify the means*. Continuing in this way of thinking, he even reflects: "'I didn't do it for myself, I had to act that way. La plèbe, le traître...le bien publique'" (893). He is instrumentalizing reason itself to feel better about what he did. Much like the list that Davout had, where "human deeds and life were known by numbers," the application of reason in this way is a means of creating mental distance from the criminal action, to get around the proximity test of morality. Tolstoy undoubtedly views reason used in this way to be quite sinister.

At this point, the reader might ask: clearly Tolstoy denounces the use of reason *after* a crime to justify it, but what about if reason is applied *before* the action has been carried out, as a way to evaluate the consequences of the act? Tolstoy responds to this question conclusively, putting the final nail in the coffin of morality by way of reason when he writes that: "for a man not gripped by passion, that good [the public good] is never known; but the man who commits the crime always knows for certain what that good consists in. And Rastopchin now knew it" (891). By saying that the public good is never known to man, except when he is in a fit of passion—in other words when he is not reasoning—Tolstoy is telling the reader that a truly rational system of morality is inaccessible. When man is abstractly reasoning he can never know what is in the interest of the public good. For Tolstoy, man does not have the capacity to arrive at moral truth through the medium of reason.

War

The primary implication of Tolstoy's far reaching moral analysis is that war, and especially modern war, is the worst of human evils because it takes away our only standard of discerning between right and wrong, and replaces it with the standard of obedience to authority. Almost by definition, every act of war goes against our moral intuitions. Regardless of how noble the cause we are fighting for, it will always be contrary to human nature to wound and kill our fellow man. At every turn, war systematically tricks and erodes these moral intuitions. For example, all of the long-range weapons that are used in modern combat eliminate the need to look the enemy in the eye as you attack them. The proximity test of morality never comes into play when the people you are shooting at are hundreds of feet away. At this distance, the strength of our moral intuitions is greatly reduced.

At the same time, repeated contact with death and violence desensitizes combatants to the horrifying acts they are carrying out. One particular moment in the execution scene perfectly illustrates this point. While Pierre is gazing upon the frightened French executioners, all but one of them rejoins their companies. One soldier is too paralyzed with horror to carry on as normal:

> *A young soldier with a deathly pale face, his shako pushed back, his musket lowered, went on standing across the pit in the place from which he had fired. He was reeling like a drunk man, taking a few steps forward, then back, to support his falling body. An old sergeant ran out from the ranks and, seizing the young soldier's arm, pulled him into the company* (968).

"Reeling like a drunk man," this young soldier has responded how any normal human being who is not accustomed to the violence of war would respond to being forced to execute people. The reader can infer by his

young age that this soldier is intended to represent a person uninitiated in the art of war. Yet while this young soldier is crippled by guilt and fear, the other soldiers attempt to rejoin their units as if nothing happened. The young Frenchman is saved from embarrassment and punishment by an old sergeant who runs out and pulls him back into the company. In this moment, instinctual human feelings like guilt and horror that arise out of our moral intuitions are either deliberately inhibited by the other soldiers so as to not appear weak, or they have been unwittingly attenuated over time through constant contact with violence. Either way, the process of being a soldier in war gradually degrades the effectiveness of our intuitions in clarifying and motivating ethical action. War perversely incentivizes soldiers to forget their intuitions and do as they are told.

In the pages of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy weaves together a compelling and complex moral system that relies on the moral intuitions that he evidently sees in all human beings. These intuitions can be invaluable tools for clarifying how we ought to act. But unfortunately they can be deceived and eroded, and, as a result, precautions must be taken to preserve their effectiveness. To address this concern, Tolstoy implicitly suggests a standard of moral evaluation that hinges upon proximity to the person one's actions will affect. In this proximity, where one must stare into the eyes of one's adversary—and see firsthand what will be lost if lethal action is taken—right and wrong become clear through our feelings. All we must do then is act according to our heart.

The Cliffs of Moher

Patricia Harden

What is it about the Cliffs of Moher?

Where carboniferous ridges
Of shale and flagstone rise
A steep seven hundred feet
Above the Atlantic roar

Where the rhythmic flight of birds blends
With the ebb and flow of the waves,
As seagulls drift and dive, and shorebirds skirt
The swirling sea foam bath

Where century after century,
Irish folk and foreigners
Wander, watch, and wonder
Awed by Time's imposing sculpture

Where musicians play and passersby
Throw a pence to a fiddler's case,
For sad sweet tunes resonating feather light
On the breeze of salt sea air

It is but this, my friend:

Where stone and sand and sea
Command each soul's repose—
A moment to reflect on one's immortality
Safe within the harbor of eternity.

Patricia Harden
Cliffs of Moher

Jaime Marquez

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