

Symphony of Reason

PNW Philosophy Magazine

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Table of Contents

Foreword

Deepa Majumdar	1
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Autobiographies

PNW Student Contributors on Themselves	3
--	---

Essay

Kevin A. Kliver: The Oppressive Back of the Invisible Hand	7
--	---

Papers

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1. Joshua J. Niewiadomski: “How did this bizarre situation arise, how develop?”
St. Augustine on the Fragmentation and Convalescence of the Soul | 24 |
| 2. Christian Schubert: Pascal’s Wager | 30 |

Book Review

Joshua J. Niewiadomski: A Book Review of <i>Dark Night of the Soul</i> by St. John of the Cross	34
--	----

Experience

- | | |
|--|----|
| Guided Meditation on Plato’s <i>Allegory of the Cave</i> | 42 |
| 1. Kasey C. Cummins | |
| 2. Kaylee F. Hemphill | |
| 3. Daizha M. Hunter | |
| 4. Nicole E. Miller | |
| 5. Lucas J. Mulloy | |
| 6. Garrett A. Varner | |

Translation

Martina S. James: Meister Eckhart on Detachment	48
---	----

Philosophical Poetry

Kayla M. Vasilko: “Mourning Night”	51
------------------------------------	----

Foreword

Deepa Majumdar

Western philosophers have defined philosophy in myriad ways. For the ancients, philosophy was love of wisdom. The Stoics and Epicureans emphasized its moral aspect and the Neoplatonists its mystical essence. For Descartes, philosophy was “pursuit of wisdom”; for Locke, true knowledge of things; for Berkeley, “the study of wisdom and truth”; while for Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Schopenhauer, and others, philosophy was the general teaching of science.¹

But in the past few centuries, a more insidious change has crept into our conceptions of philosophy and the philosopher—altering these forever. No longer an emanation of our inner music, philosophy has become mere discursive thinking and therefore instrumental. Signifying the crisis of modernity, this undue utilitarianism is perhaps more serious than the anterior problem of the analytic-continental divide. Accustomed to privileging appearance over essence, modern man sees philosophy—not as a state of being, reflected in a corresponding way of life—but as a discursive shadow, audacious enough to usurp its source and essence—which is being. Accordingly, the philosopher is now a mere intellectual.

Adding to this, the heightened utilitarianism of the past half century or so has drowned altogether the question of being, transforming our conceptions of philosophy and the philosopher to something yet more insidious. Scorching the world with its searing cynicism, the utilitarian eye reifies philosophy, *qua* wisdom, to a “useless” set of “skills,” and the philosopher to a mere professional! In a world that dilutes knowledge to information—further exacerbating what Critchley refers to as the “gap” between knowledge and wisdom—thus giving rise to growing interest in the paranormal and the occult—philosophy becomes helpless before its prevailing *zeitgeist*.² Instead of redeeming our times, philosophy in its reified form, passively reflects the times.

Modernity replaces the sage with the intellectual, who, unlike the sage, does not necessarily draw his thinking from the highest echelons of his being. Where the sage overcomes his lower nature through exemplary powers of self-control, and speaks therefore from the fullness of his

¹ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol XII (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc., 1913), 26.

² Simon Critchley, *Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1-11.

being—the intellectual succumbs to the allure of thinking—oblivious of its roots in being. A glib tongue alone suffices for the modern intellectual, who is not called upon to synchronize thinking with being.

Yet, one might argue that inherently discursive as they are, *all* academic disciplines come with this risk of hypocrisy—that the culprit is discursiveness—not the nature of an academic field. Almost the only way to address this argument is to point to the uniquely inward nature of philosophy. To the extent that philosophy draws from interior truth—not exterior match between statement and fact—a gap between thinking and being is likely to have graver consequences for philosophy—than for the empirical sciences.

Notwithstanding this crisis in interior truth, it is through truth itself that western philosophy retains its roots in the philosophical practices of the ancient world. For, philosophy continues to be pursuit of truth—even if merely at the discursive level. As an expression of truth, philosophy continues to teach us how to reason. The philosopher therefore is she who reaches the subtlest notes in the symphony of reason—far above the utilitarian cacophony of instrumental rationality.

At this extraordinary historical moment—when our techno-mania threatens to render truth obsolete, paving the way for the immoral and therefore irrational cult of “post-truth”—it becomes all the more important to return to the contemplative aspects of philosophy, rooted in the highest rungs of reason. It becomes important as well to remember that in the fresh voices of our students, we may find greater harmony between thinking and being.

In this first issue of *Symphony of Reason* (Vol 1, Issue 1, Spring 2020), we present the works of eleven PNW students (ten current, one alumnus), arranged in six genres—essay, paper, book review, experience, translation, and poetry. Our student contributors are—Kacey C. Cummins, Kaylee F. Hemphill, Daizha M. Hunter, Martina S. James, Kevin A. Kliver, Nicole E. Miller, Lucas J. Mulloy, Joshua J. Niewiadomski, Christian A. Schubert, Garrett A. Varner, and Kayla M. Vasilko. They cover a historical range of western philosophers—from ancient (Plato) and medieval (St. John of the Cross, etc.) to more recent authors (Smith, Marx, etc.). They cover a range of philosophical topics—from economics to religion. We hope you will support and enjoy these authentic student voices!

We thank Beth Simac, Andrew M. Collins, Dr. Kathleen Tobin, and the Dept. of History & Philosophy for helping us produce this magazine.

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES:

PNW Student Contributors on Themselves

Kacey C. Cummins

I am a sophomore at Purdue University Northwest, and I am a double major in Business Finance and Accounting. Creative writing is one of my favorite hobbies and I intend to keep writing throughout my academic years and beyond. I aspire to be the head of a non-profit charity organization some day, or maybe even start my own. My favorite philosopher has to be Diogenes due to the fact that he strongly repelled standard social norms of his day. From his rivalry with Plato, to his ceramic habitat, and his “crazy”-like antics in the streets of his town, Diogenes opens my mind to a new, minimalist way of thinking.

Kaylee F. Hemphill

I am currently a sophomore. I am aspiring to be a pediatrician. I have grown to love Plato’s work. I feel that he gives such a deep yet understandable outlook on our life. His work can be applied to so many aspects of our society.

Daizha M. Hunter

Some of my favorite works include those of the philosophers Heraclitus and Plato. I especially enjoyed Plato’s work of the levels of love and beauty (*Symposium*), as it can be applied to society’s views today on the topic. However, Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave* really struck me because I could connect it to how the educational system seeks to pull people out of their ‘caves’ and enlighten them with knowledge.

I am currently a sophomore at PNW studying psychology. In the near future, my ultimate goal is to become a clinical child psychologist. Through this career, it will bring me great joy to inspire future generations and help others be their best possible selves.

Martina S. James

I am a senior majoring in Philosophy and Spanish and will finish my Undergraduate degree in the spring of 2020; in the summer of that year I am going to start the English Masters program. Translation is my passion, and being able to translate the works of great philosophers is especially enjoyable to me – because sometimes the process of translating reveals a lot about the author and his or her thought process and emotions at the time of composing the text in question. Translation can do that. It is not simply a mechanical switching of text from one language to another, but often a much deeper endeavor in which it is of great importance to relay the cultural and linguistic nuances just right. It is not always easy but illuminating and satisfying every time. It is not hard to mention Plotinus as one of my favorite philosophers; I also enjoy Hildegard von Bingen, Hannah Arendt, Leibniz, and, as a contemporary philosopher, Richard David Precht. There are many others, but this is a good list.

Kevin A. Kliver

I have received my BA in philosophy and my MA in English both from Purdue Calumet in Hammond, Indiana. I have just recently finished my certification from Purdue Northwest which qualifies me as an instructor of philosophy by having accumulated 18 credit-hours as a graduate student in philosophy while holding a Masters Degree in another academic discipline from the humanities. My future goal is to take the graduate-level credits I have recently earned and apply them to a PhD program in philosophy. Some of my favorite philosophers of the western tradition are Aristotle, Renee Descartes, Edmund Husserl, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Nicole E. Miller

I am a sophomore at Purdue University Northwest. I hope to one day write a book about my experiences and thoughts. I genuinely have a love for Plato. His ideas are all based on people getting to think more and question more. I strongly believe in feeding your mind with curiosity.

Lucas J. Mulloy

I am a freshman in my first semester. My aspirations are still uncertain at the moment. I really enjoyed Heraclitus, I thought his metaphors and cryptic statements were very beautiful and they inspired quite a bit of contemplation for me.

Joshua J. Niewiadomski

I am currently a junior majoring in philosophy and English Literature. The philosophers I find that I have the greatest familiarity with are Kierkegaard, Camus, Nietzsche, Plato, Schopenhauer, and, although not a philosopher in the technical sense, Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novels are deeply philosophical in nature and among my favorites. Perhaps this selection of philosophers that appealed to me in this first phase of my life are indicative of the movement of western thought as a whole, where God isn't felt as a certainty and yet we must continue to live and search for meaning and truth despite this. It is difficult for me to pinpoint in particular what I would like to do after graduation, but I can say this much: philosophy is not confined to four walls, it is a way of life, the true love of wisdom. My life is not structured around the pursuit of wealth or acclaim, but rather I gravitate to experiences that offer enrichment of spirit and intellect. Writing will remain a way for me to express a cultivated perspective on the world. While I can say I would like to have works of my own published one day when my thought has matured, it is one condition of this maturity, when I feel what I am saying is a conviction and not an empty vessel of heartless words, meaning nothing, signifying nothing.

Christian A. Schubert

I'm a Computer Science student in my second year, hoping to start off in the programming business and make a really neat game some day. I'm fascinated with the philosophies of Nietzsche and Machiavelli because I think they make very interesting and well-thought points, even though I disagree morally with their teachings. I also like the ideas of Determinism and

Stoicism in that they help me lead a happier life—Determinism helps me deal with regrets (though I do learn from them!) and Stoicism helps me to keep my wants in check. Later in my life I'd like to pursue a lot of different hobbies so I can keep myself engaged in everything I do.

Garrett A. Varner

I am currently a freshman working for my bachelor's degree at Purdue University Northwest with 'History' as my major. My future goals include graduating college and entering another institution of higher learning in order to become a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches of America. Philosophy to me is that which opens another entirely different method of thinking concerning a plethora of different topics. The cognitive skills involved in the study of philosophy are part of what draws me to it, and some of my favorite philosophical writers include Plato and Augustine. Plato tends to be more allegorical in some of his writings, whereas Augustine is very much concerned with how philosophy relates to some of his religious viewpoints. All in all, I believe the study of philosophy is a very intriguing and invaluable endeavor that all people can benefit from, especially whenever they possess an open mind.

Kayla M. Vasilko

I am a PNW junior Honors College student majoring in English writing and minoring in Spanish. I believe that kindness and positivity are directly correlated with success and promote them in the work that I do for S.H.I.N.E (students helping ignite needed esteem), the community, and my writing. I write to better understand the world, and have written 13 novels, 4,000 poems, and dozens of essays and short stories thus far. I hope to earn my degree in 2021 and reach a platform where I can continue to bring kindness to the community, share my writing, and make a positive difference in the world. Some of my favorite philosophers are Epictetus, Buddha, and Aristotle. I appreciate Aristotle's view of goodness as an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.

ESSAY

The Oppressive Back of the Invisible Hand

Kevin A. Kliver

One common requirement for all problem-solution persuasive reasoning is practicality. For if I devise some type of plan, theory, contract, or idea that ultimately brings about severe problems for the individual or society, it is typically believed that at the very least, some slight advancement ought to be made to improve the overall plan, and at maximum, a new plan, theory, contract, or idea should be put into place in order to altogether supplant the currently existing system. Highlighting a need for this minimum-maximum distinction in the context of Adam Smith's system of free markets is the primary purpose of this paper. Here, I intend to investigate the merits of Adam Smith's free enterprise system of business from his seminal work *The Wealth of Nations*. In the process, my essay will examine Smith's view that through the natural desire of people to "truck, barter and exchange one thing for another" the division of labor is naturally and necessarily brought into existence. The problem, however, is that when these ideas are incorporated into society as the norm and standard for its members, both positive—as well as negative—consequences result. For this project, I will identify some of the negative consequences resulting from Smith's natural progression from barter to the division of labor in society. Under a sense of scrutiny, these negative consequences turn out to be severe social and moral difficulties that need to be addressed—difficulties that should not be glossed over as mere secondary consequences of an inherently effective system. I will endeavor to prove that the natural and necessary aspects of Smith's approach bring about the natural and necessary results of alienation and class struggle that are elaborated upon in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' historic works *Das Kapital* and *The Communist Manifesto*. Additionally, game theory will also play a significant role in my analysis, given that Smith's economic system fosters the natural disposition of self-interest. My purpose here is to argue against Smith's ideal market given that it is a veritable prisoner's dilemma where the poor and underprivileged end up being the big losers of life in Smith's society.

I

Given that the need for subsistence is embedded in any version of the original state of nature, it only seems inherent for a social system to revolve around a methodology that provides a means

for that subsistence. At minimum, such a social system would afford safe channels for gathering human needs such as food and water and include some form of value exchange where one person—say, Individual A—exchanges something with someone else—say, Individual B—who finds that something valuable as a need. Moreover, Individual B has something that Individual A finds valuable as a need, and so they make an even value exchange. For Adam Smith, the social system that best brings about this mutual, value exchange is capitalism. In his ground-breaking opus on capitalistic theory, *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith writes:

The greater part of his occasional wants are supplied in the same manner as those of other people, by treaty, by barter, and by purchase. With the money which one man gives him he purchases food. The old cloaths which another bestows upon him he exchanges for old cloaths which suit him better, or for lodging, or for food, or for money, with which he can buy either food, cloaths, or lodging, as he occasions.¹

Consequently, the natural tendencies of human beings to exchange items of value in order to better fulfill their needs and wants is, for Smith, a necessary condition of any social system. Therefore, he maintains, society should perpetuate value exchange through a free market that realizes the demands of its members as well as the correlative production of supply needed to fulfill those demands.

The natural progression from treaty, barter, and purchase to the division of labor is, for Smith, a central advantage to productivity in a free market. For the best way to expand productivity is to insist upon specialization in the workshop. As Smith puts it, “As it is by treaty, by barter, and by purchase, that we obtain from one another the greater part of those mutual good offices which we stand in need of, so it is this same trucking disposition which originally gives occasion to the division of labour.”² Here, specialization in labor, manufacturing, and occupation is in the interest of advancing the market in terms of its wealth, capital, and overall worth. The primary idea is the more specialized laborers there are within respective fields, the greater productivity will result for society as a whole. This, in turn, provides additional and more effective products to satisfy society’s demand which consequently augments accumulated capital for the market. At this point, the process

¹ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations: An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Originally published in 1776, 6.

² Smith, 6.

repeats itself, which typically advances the market and its profit margin. On specialization in labor and occupation, Smith states:

And thus the certainty of being able to exchange all that surplus part of the produce of his own labour, which is over and above his own consumption, for such parts of the produce of other men's labour as he may have occasion for it, encourages every man to apply himself to a particular occupation, and to cultivate and bring to perfection whatever talent or genius he may possess for that particular species of business.³

Therefore, organizing society to meet the various needs of its members necessarily entails, for Smith, the division of labor, manufacturing, and occupation which he believes naturally stems from the human disposition to truck and barter. According to Smith, the connection between the human disposition to participate in value exchanges and the division of labor is a natural progression, not a deliberate one, something Smith refers to as the invisible hand. On this, Smith asserts one of his most recognized phrases in Book IV, Chapter II of *The Wealth of Nations*—"by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain; and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention."⁴

Although Adam Smith's notion of achieving the needs and wants of the public occurs only through a free market, the market, for Smith, should not in fact be completely free. According to Smith, some sense of governmental control is necessary for a free market system to exist successfully. More specifically, in "Of the Expences of the Sovereign" from *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith mentions three duties for which the government or sovereign would be responsible even in a free market system. Those duties are governmental expenses for defense, justice, and public works and institutions. I will now briefly cover these three duties of the government or sovereign in order to account for Adam Smith's free market system more fully. The first of Smith's expenses is that for defense. As Smith explains it, "The first duty of the sovereign, that of protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies, can be performed only by means of military force."⁵ In addition to the military, this duty also includes governmental control for defense and security within individual communities in terms of a rigorous

³ Smith, 7.

⁴ Smith, 122.

⁵ Smith, 189.

police force. Smith's second duty of government is the expense for justice. For Smith, "The second duty of the sovereign, that of protecting, as far as possible, every member of the society from the injustice or oppression of every other member of it, or the duty of establishing an exact administration of justice, requires, too, very different degrees of expence in the different periods of society."⁶ This duty and its varying degrees of expense consist of court fees for the legal and judicial process itself and an incorporation of different branches of government into society. This would include, for example, a separation between the executive and judicial branches of government similar to the American legal system of today. Adam Smith's third and final duty is that towards public works and public institutions. According to Smith, "The third and last duty of the sovereign or commonwealth, is that of erecting and maintaining those public institutions and those public works . . . which it therefore cannot be expected that any individual or small number of individuals should erect or maintain."⁷ Of these public works and institutions, Smith distinguishes between two types of establishments—those for the instruction and assistance of all people, and those for the education of the youth. For this final duty, Smith conflates the notion of public works with the notion of institutions for the instruction and assistance of all people. With that in mind, governmental control over public works involves the construction of durable roads, bridges, canals, and harbors in society and the manner in which those expenses are paid for through the issuing and use of taxes and tolls, for instance. On the other hand, public institutions placed in society for the education of the youth are, for Smith, traditional schools and universities, and their expenses paid for through fees, taxes, and tuition. Education-based public institutions are crucial in Smith's social system due to the fact that without them, laborers would be nothing short of specialized fools, ignorant of most everything other than the particular talent and order of business they have cultivated and been trained to perform. In an especially lively and detailed fashion, Smith makes this very point when stating:

In the progress of the division of labour, the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labour, that is, of the great body of people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations, frequently one or two. But the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects too are, perhaps, always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing

⁶ Smith, 194.

⁷ Smith, 197.

difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him, not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgement concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life . . . It corrupts even the activity of his body, and renders him incapable of exerting his strength with vigour and perseverance, in any other employment than that to which he has been bred. His dexterity at his own particular trade seems, in this manner, to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues. But in every improved and civilized society this is the state into which the labouring poor, that is, the great body of the people, must necessarily fall, unless the government takes some pains to prevent it.⁸

As we have seen, the government taking pains to prevent this extreme ignorance from becoming so widespread in society is what Smith refers to as the government constructing public institutions for the education of the youth. I will now move forward with the development of my ideas but will briefly return to the duties of government in the conclusion of this essay.

II.

The upcoming sections of this essay examine some of the difficulties with Adam Smith's economic system. I will begin, however, by exploring the fundamental idea of rational choice underlying Smith's writing on the natural disposition of human beings to exchange items of value. When individuals barter, they typically look to benefit their own welfare as much as possible while considering any potential and actual costs of the value exchange. If the benefits outweigh the costs for both parties in the value exchange, then most likely, the exchange will take place. My reader may, at this point, refer back to Individual A and Individual B from the previous section for a generic example of this. More formally, rational choice holds that individuals tend to reason in ways that look to maximize their expected benefits and minimize their expected costs. This description of human rationality is tantamount to the economic model of rationality which also assumes that people act to maximize their welfare, preferences, and benefits and minimize their pains, aversions, and costs. Moreover, rational choice theory is also remarkably similar to the fundamental idea behind psychological egoism which states that individuals have a natural, or psychological, disposition to maximize their personal welfare and reduce their particular pains. Economist Gary Becker in his article "The Economic Way of Looking at Behavior" puts it as,

⁸ Smith, 213.

“individuals maximize welfare *as they conceive it*, whether they be selfish, altruistic, loyal, or masochistic.”⁹ Becker’s analysis includes an application of rational choice to aspects of life other than one’s economical concerns—aspects such as crime and punishment as well as marriage and divorce. But for my purposes, I will only be focusing on Becker’s formal definitions of the economic approach to rational thinking and their theoretical implications. While examining Becker’s claim, one can see that sadism, for example, may be just as viable to one’s preferences as altruism. This is because what is viable to one’s preferences is, for rational choice, that which would benefit one’s personal welfare. So, after analyzing potential and actual costs, if it benefits the welfare of Individual A to harm Individual B, or for that matter to help Individual B, it would then be rational for Individual A to act in accordance with his or her own preferences, whether to harm or to help, respectively.

Rational choice relies heavily on the notion of self-interest as the basis for rational thinking, but how, exactly, is self-interest to be defined in the context of other people and given that for Becker, it remains an option for personal preferences in his economic way of viewing rationality? To elaborate, David Schmidtz distinguishes between self-regarding and other-regarding actions in his article “Reasons for Altruism.” There he states, “People are self-regarding insofar as they care about their own welfare. People are *purely* self-regarding if they care about no one’s welfare other than their own and recognize no constraints on how to treat others beyond those constraints imposed by circumstance: their limited time and income, legal restrictions, and so on.”¹⁰ On other-regarding actions, Schmidtz writes, “Insofar as one’s other-regard takes the form of caring about other people’s welfare, one exhibits *concern*. Insofar as it takes the form of adherence to constraints on what one may do to others, one exhibits its *respect*.”¹¹ From here, Schmidtz states that altruistic acts are those which are other-regarding, not *purely* self-regarding, allowing for *mere* self-regarding acts to be altruistic.¹² To further his point for altruism, Schmidtz views self-regarding actions for one’s survival and welfare not only as an end, but also as a means to a higher end, that higher end being not mere survival, but instead that which gives meaning to survival and makes living worthwhile.

⁹ Gary Becker, “The Economic Way Looking at Behavior,” in *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: An Anthology*, ed. Jonathan Anomaly (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 37.

¹⁰ David Schmidtz, “Reasons for Altruism,” in *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: An Anthology*, 44.

¹¹ Schmidtz, 44.

¹² Schmidtz, 44.

According to Schmitz:

Under circumstances that leave us time for reflection, we need to have a variety of ongoing concerns with respect to which our survival—our selves—can take on value as a means. When these further ends are in place, survival comes to be more than a biological given; an agent who has further ends not only happens to have the goal of survival but can give reasons why survival is important.¹³

For Schmitz, these further ends that give reasons for the importance of survival include altruistic, other-regarding actions. Consequently, rationality as a natural disposition to be self-regarding is at minimum more involved than being purely devoted to personal welfare, and at maximum dependent on other-regarding actions for accomplishing the fullest extent of one's self-regard.

My second and final point against rational choice theory, and therefore against the underlying mechanism driving individuals in Adam Smith's social system, will investigate the difficulty of being rational enough to know and act upon one's personal preferences and self-interest. Many have argued that individuals simply do not have enough information on hand to be able to sufficiently act in one's self-interest. But Michael Huemer in his essay "Why People Are Irrational about Politics" goes beyond this fairly basic point to assert that people can be purposefully irrational, especially about matters that entail a lot of effort with little value reimbursement. This is what Huemer purports in his Irrationality Theory, also known as his theories of Rational Ignorance and Rational Irrationality. For Huemer, "The theory of Rational Ignorance holds people often choose—rationally—to remain ignorant because the costs of collecting information are greater than the expected value of the information."¹⁴ A common example of this is voting. Many voters know very little about the candidate for whom they vote because of the cost of time and energy for collecting information about that candidate. Yet those same people still vote with conviction. More likely than not, this is due to the political party the candidate is representing, and not the candidate himself or herself. But what remains a matter of fact is, people vote in their elected officials through the process of Rational Ignorance. Additionally, Huemer distinguishes between Instrumental Rationality as synonymous with rational choice theory and Epistemic Rationality as synonymous with philosophical truth seeking through evidence and cogent reasoning. From this distinction, Huemer asserts his theory of Rational Irrationality in stating,

¹³ Schmitz, 47-48.

¹⁴ Michael Huemer, "Why People are Irrational About Politics," in *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: An Anthology*, 460.

“The theory of Rational Irrationality holds that it is often *instrumentally* rational to be *epistemically* irrational. In more colloquial . . . terms: people often think illogically because it is in their interests to do so.”¹⁵ Moreover, Huemer provides extensive examples of exactly how people can rationally choose to be irrational in the interest of their currently existing belief systems and other personal considerations. His examples include, but are not limited to, Biased Weighting of Evidence, Selective Attention and Energy, and Selection of Evidence Sources. Biased Weighting of Evidence is when individuals, “attribute *slightly more* weight to each piece of evidence that supports the view one likes than it really deserves, and *slightly less* weight to each piece of evidence that undermines it.”¹⁶ Selective Attention and Energy explains how, “Most of us spend more time thinking about supporting our beliefs than we spend thinking about arguments supporting alternative beliefs.”¹⁷ And finally, Selection of Evidence Sources claims that many people often times refer, respond, and listen to other people and sources who already hold the beliefs that they themselves hold.¹⁸ What this shows is a major problem for rational choice theory. Given that there are far too many impediments between what one *believes* is in his or her best-interest and what *is actually* in his or her best-interest, while also considering that many of these impediments are intentionally and rationally chosen, it seems implausible to ground a market and social system merely based on individual self-interest and personal welfare.

III.

In returning to Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* more directly, I shall now evaluate the division of labor and how the invisible hand guides all barter and exchange to the division of labor. My assessment will look closely at how the division of labor led by Smith’s invisible hand has an oppressive backside that perpetuates alienation and segregation, encourages participation in substantial prisoners’ dilemmas, and discourages collective action and fair play in society. To start, one primary backside of the invisible hand is the alienation of workers. This happens in a number of ways, and Karl Marx’s *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* identifies four ways in which the division of labor leaves workers estranged from themselves and their work. For Marx, laborers are estranged from the objects of their labor; they are estranged from the labor itself; they are

¹⁵ Huemer, 460.

¹⁶ Huemer, 463.

¹⁷ Huemer, 463.

¹⁸ Huemer, 463.

also estranged from their own individual selves, as well as estranged from other people. Starting with the objects of labor, Marx states that the division of labor is monotonous work that has little to no meaning for the worker and which ultimately reduces laborers to mere servants of the objects of their labor. As Marx puts it, “the worker becomes a servant to his object, first, in that he receives an *object of labor*, i.e., in that he receives *work*, and, secondly, in that he receives *means of subsistence*. This enables him to exist first as a *worker*; and second, as a *physical subject*. The height of this servitude is that it is only as a *worker* that he can maintain himself as a *physical subject* and that it is only as a *physical subject* that he is a worker.”¹⁹ Marx refers to his second form of labor-based alienation as workers being estranged from the labor itself. This is due to Marx’s claim that in the division of labor, work is viewed by the worker as forced labor. On this Marx writes:

First, the fact that labor is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home. His labor is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labor. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labor is shunned like the plague. External labor, labor in which man alienates himself, is a labor of self-sacrifice, of mortification.²⁰

Marx shifts from estrangement via the objects of labor and labor itself to estrangement via the self and other people for his last two means by which laborers are alienated from their work. Alienation from the self, or what Marx calls *species-being*, is, to me, the most serious form of estrangement because it is the alienation of the core of the individual, not merely some particular of their existence, say, the object of their labor. According to Marx:

It is just in his work upon the objective world, therefore, that man really proves himself to be a *species-being*. This production is his active *species-life*. Through this production, nature appears as *his work* and his reality. The object of labor is, therefore, the *objectification of man’s species-life*: for he duplicates himself not only, as in

¹⁹ Karl Marx, *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959; marxists.org, 2000), 29, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Economic-Philosophic-Manuscripts-1844.pdf>.

²⁰ Marx, 30.

consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created. In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labor tears from him his *species-life*, his real objectivity as a member of the species and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken from him. Similarly, in degrading spontaneous, free activity to a means, estranged labor makes man's species-life a means to his physical existence. The consciousness which man has of his species is thus transformed by estrangement in such a way that species[-life] becomes for him a means.²¹

The fourth and final way that the division of labor alienates workers is through the estrangement of human beings from other human beings. In a capitalistic society with divisions of labor and manufacturing, persons have strong tendencies to view other persons as mere laborers who are part of the workforce. This, for Marx, leads to individuals relating to one another primarily as workers instead of rational and autonomous human beings. As Marx sees it, "the proposition that man's species-nature is estranged from him means that one man is estranged from the other, as each of them is from man's essential nature . . . Hence within the relationship of estranged labor each man views the other in accordance with the standard and the relationship in which he finds himself as a worker."²² Ultimately, the invisible hand that guides the division of labor for Adam Smith also leads to an oppressive backside of that very same invisible hand: the alienation of laborers from their product, labor, species-being, and other people. As a summary of the problems with divisions of labor and manufacturing in society, Marx states in his seminal work *Das Kapital*:

The division of labour within the society brings into contact independent commodity-producers, who acknowledge no other authority but that of competition, of the coercion exerted by the pressure of their mutual interests. . .The same bourgeois mind which praises division of labour in the workshop, life-long annexation of the labourer to a partial operation, and his complete subjection to capital, as being an organisation of labour that increases its productiveness – that same bourgeois mind denounces with equal vigour every conscious attempt to socially control and regulate the process of production, as an inroad upon such sacred things as the rights of property, freedom and unrestricted play for the bent of the individual capitalist. It is very characteristic that the enthusiastic apologists of the factory system have nothing more damning to urge against a general organisation of the labour of society, than that it would turn all society into one immense factory.²³

²¹ Marx, 32.

²² Marx, 32.

²³ Karl Marx, *Capital* (Ware: Wordsworth, 2013), 248.

In addition to the alienation of laborers, another oppressive backside to Adam Smith's invisible hand deals with class struggle and segregation of members of capitalistic society. The point on class struggle shows an inherent flaw with any society that generates an upper and a lower class. In Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*, feudal systems based on the master-slave social dichotomy are worse in terms of class struggle than capitalistic social systems based on a rich-poor social dichotomy, or what Marx refers to as the bourgeoisie and the proletarians. Furthermore, capitalistic social systems are worse in terms of class struggle than are socialist and communist social systems, for Marx and Engels. On the general history of class struggles, Marx and Engels observe in the opening lines of *The Communist Manifesto*, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another . . . that each time ended, either in the revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."²⁴ For my specific purpose here, however, I ask my reader, how does capitalism give rise to its own kind of class struggle? The answer to this question will reveal more about the fundamental mechanism to the oppressive back of Smith's invisible hand.

To highlight the reasons for class struggle in a capitalistic system, Karl Marx investigates the notion of primitive accumulation toward the end of Volume I of *Das Kapital*. For Marx, primitive accumulation refers to the origin of capitalism, or more specifically, it refers to the origin of Adam Smith's model for capitalism: "primitive accumulation (previous accumulation of Adam Smith) preced[es] capitalistic accumulation; an accumulation not the result of the capitalistic mode of production, but its starting point."²⁵ Marx explains class struggle for the wealthy and impoverished in a capitalistic social system through the notion of primitive accumulation by showing how primitive accumulation runs parallel to what Marx calls "the original sin" of economics which is akin to the backside of Smith's invisible hand. According to Marx, "the history of economic original sin reveals . . . that [some] accumulated wealth, and [others] had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labour, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases

²⁴ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Lexington: Andronum, 2018), 5-6.

²⁵ Marx, *Capital*, 501.

constantly although they have long ceased to work.”²⁶ In the same passage, Marx makes the point that Adam was the creator of original sin, but Adam Smith was the creator of the original sin of economics, which from its inception has led from primitive accumulation to the accumulation of capital, or for Marx, from the theory of capitalistic-based class struggle to its practice in society.

Another point on the backside of the invisible hand is that in addition to causing alienation within the workforce as well as class struggle, the invisible hand also instigates and perpetuates class segregation. Given the points that have already been made in this essay, it is fairly easy to see that segregation is built into the kind of class struggle I have been discussing here. The way I see it, segregation is the final result of Adam Smith’s invisible hand in at least two ways. First, as barter and exchange is the driving force behind the division of labor, the division of labor then leads to the alienation of the worker. The alienation of the worker, especially in the sense that he or she is alienated from other people, then causes segregation of, for example, upper-level employees and lower-level employees. Secondly, segregation is also the final result of Smith’s invisible hand insofar as it separates individuals in a variety of ways due to their social status. On this, Thomas Schelling from his book *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*, writes:

People get separated along many lines and in many ways. There is segregation by sex, age, income, language, religion, color, personal taste, and the accident of historical location. Some segregation results from the practice of organizations. Some is deliberately organized. Some results from the interplay of individual choices that discriminate. Some of it results from specialized communication systems, like languages. And some segregation is a corollary of other modes of segregation: residence is correlated with job location and transport.²⁷

Through Schelling’s statement, one can distinguish between natural and unnatural conditions for segregation. Natural conditions for segregation fall under the headings of race, gender, and natural abilities or disabilities, for instance. On the other hand, unnatural conditions for segregation fall under the headings of income, employment, and social status, for example. My main point here is that Smith’s invisible hand and overall social system support the creating and maintaining of these different types of segregation by 1) perpetuating the existence of natural segregation such as race

²⁶ Marx, 501.

²⁷ Thomas Schelling, “Micromotives and Macrobehavior,” in *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: An Anthology*, 89.

and gender and 2) creating and maintaining the circumstances that bring unnatural segregation such as income and social status into existence.

IV.

Recalling that rational choice is at the foundation of Adam Smith's social system, it seems as though Smith has set up his ideal society to incline toward game theory. Capitalism generates the type of competition that leads people to act in self-interested ways in order to maximize their benefits while reducing their costs, often at the expense of other people. This ultimately causes members of society to look out primarily, if not exclusively, for themselves. Consequently, when individuals are part of a collective endeavor, if given the chance, they will simply act out of self-interest to get what they want while passing the toll onto others. However, if other people are thinking in similar ways, and they will be given that their society promotes instrumental rationality, then both individuals will be worse off at the end of the collective endeavor. This is the basis for game theory. The classic example of game theory known as the prisoners' dilemma is summarized by Simon Blackburn in his book *Ruling Passions: A Theory of Practical Reasoning* as:

[T]wo prisoners were supposed kept apart from each other. To each of them the prosecutor offers the same option: they can confess the crime, or not. If A confesses, and E confesses, then each suffer the penalty for their crime. If A confesses and E does not, then A goes free, and E suffers an extended sentence . . . If each refuses to confess, then all that can happen is that each suffers a reduced sentence, say on the lesser charge of wasting police time.²⁸

Since it is instrumentally rational to seek what is in one's individual interest, both prisoners will confess. For if prisoner A does not confess and prisoner E confesses, then prisoner A gets more jail time than if he would have confessed. However, if prisoner A confesses and prisoner E does not confess, then prisoner A goes free. So, either way it is in the interest of prisoner A to confess. Given that this will be the case for both prisoners, in the end, both prisoners will confess, but now both prisoners go to jail for the sentence of their original crime, and neither gets his or her sentence mitigated. What this shows is that in game theory, with rational choice as its origin and source, purely collective pursuits cannot exist when in conflict with individual pursuits. Moreover, in the context of cooperation, individual pursuits cannot truly come to fruition when they conflict with

²⁸ Simon Blackburn, "Game Theory and Rational Choice," in *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: An Anthology*, 87.

other persons' individual pursuits. Let us now turn to an example of game theory that is a bit more relevant to the discussion I have provided here. The example will consist of two firms competing for profit while potentially looking to care for the public. If competing firm A is *not* caring of the public, then competing firm B will *not* be caring of the public as well because doing so would add a cost to firm B that firm A does not have. If competing firm A *is* caring of the public, then competing firm B will *not* be caring of the public in order to make a profit over competing firm A due to firm A having a cost for being caring of the public that firm B does not have. Under game theory, the same would hold for competing firm A if the roles were reversed. Therefore, neither competing firm A nor competing firm B will be caring of the public. At this point it seems as though if the public wants to be cared for by their neighborhood businesses, their society should appeal to theories to live by other than rational choice and game theory.

The examples of prisoners' dilemmas I have already looked at suggest a common problem in the production of collective goods: the free-rider problem. The free-rider problem explains how rational persons in the instrumental sense will look to abandon their responsibilities, or free-ride, whenever possible, leaving their responsibilities to those who are still actively pursuing the collective good. Under game theory, the conclusion follows that everyone free-rides and the collective good in question does not get produced. However, in Jean Hampton's article "Free Rider Problems in the Production of Collective Goods" she argues, "many collective action problems are (or can be transformed to become) *coordination* rather than conflict dilemmas."²⁹ By looking at game theoretical dilemmas in the context of coordination instead of conflict, the rules of the game change drastically. Now, instead of doing what is purely in one's self-interest, other-regarding interests must be included in one's self-regard as a part of the coordination effort. For the free-rider problem, one primary reason for this is, simply, there is no free-ride without the ride. Typically, collective action entails coordination between persons for a common goal to be achieved. If that common goal is not achieved due to multiple free-riders, then there is no collective good, and if there is no collective good, then there is no free-ride.

²⁹ Jean Hampton, "Free Rider Problems in the Production of Collective Goods," in *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: An Anthology*, 241.

As Hampton explains through David Hume's example of the collective effort of draining the meadow:

Clearly each player would most prefer the outcome in which the other two players drain the meadow and she languishes at home, eventually enjoying the good produced at no cost to her. Next best is the situation where all of them share the work to be done, which is better than the situation where she and only one other player split the work between them . . . But this option is substantially better than the situation in which the meadow isn't drained [by any] of them.³⁰

This way of viewing prisoners' dilemmas and free-rider problems flips game theory on its head in the interest of coordination over conflict, and in the process, shifts the focus from rational choice to collective action. Given that societies are commonly defined as large groups replete with collective endeavors and goods, the coordination version of game theory as a social standard would influence society to be more cooperative and less competitive. It would also cultivate its members to gravitate toward virtues such as loyalty, dependability, and care as opposed to natural dispositions such as self-interest and cost-benefit analysis.

V.

As I have suggested, Adam Smith's social system, the division of labor, and the invisible hand that guides both have an oppressive backside that include alienation of the worker, class struggle between the haves and the have-nots, and segregation based off of social status. At the end of Section II of my essay, I discussed Smith's duties of the government in a capitalistic society. To conclude, I will now briefly elaborate on governmental compulsion in society given what has been discussed here. In addition to what Smith calls "the expenses of the sovereign" I believe government should have more control in enforcing standards of value similar to what we get from collective action and should regulate against purely self-regarding actions that take a great toll on others. Whether this be through changing the law and constitution away from specialization and particularity and toward cooperation and generality,³¹ taxes, or through small groups who advocate collective action as a social standard lobbying for government subsidies to aid their cause,³²

³⁰ Hampton, 245.

³¹ James Buchanan, "How can Constitutions be Designed so that Politicians who Seek to Serve the 'Public Interest' can Survive and Prosper?" in *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: An Anthology*, 452-456.

³² Mancur Olson, "The Logic of Collective Action," in *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: An Anthology*, 236-240.

something needs to be done if the general public wants to feel justified in believing that it is truly being taken care of by its overarching political system.

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PAPERS

“How did this bizarre situation arise, how develop?” St. Augustine on the Fragmentation and Convalescence of the Soul

Joshua J. Niewiadomski

From the beginning of Book VIII of St. Augustine’s philosophical and biographical classic, *The Confessions*, the various assertions proclaimed throughout the process of his conversion seem to suffer contradictions equally problematic to those contradictions of the will which he so desperately seeks to resolve. At times using the language of liberty and responsibility and at others denying consent, referring to the torn will here as a division and there as a duality, Augustine in his moral philosophy on good and evil examines the extent to which agency is a factor. This essay will parse the system of claims laid according to his spiritual anecdote, establishing precisely how, or even if, they cohere as a valid argument.

The opening two sentences already appear to resist one another. Constrained by his will alone and with nothing imposed by anyone else, Augustine yet reports that the enemy working through his will forges these constraints.¹ One vital question that must be resolved to understand St. Augustine, is, if significant steps in the process of willing are not of his authorship—as in the fundamental impulses that drive behavior, either of a carnal or spiritual nature that are never of his own design—how is his moral culpability to be effected? Augustine reverse engineers the performance of willing to offer implicit insight into this question. From a perverted will comes lust which when pandered to allows habit; habit unchecked becomes the compulsion that drives the servitude to the constraining will that commenced the process.² By this impression of infinite circularity within a progressively more restrictive and binding set of behaviors, a necessitarian or deterministic explanation is an appealing one. However, in the mode of pandering to lust and the perpetuation of habits that are left unchecked, we can already point to two joints where agency could have voluntarily intervened and refuted the impulse.

Neither is it the case that the emergent spiritual will to worship God disinterestedly was of Augustine’s authorship, but rather arrived unsolicited like an already budding flame inserted into

¹ F. E. Baird, ed., *Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*, 6th ed., vol II, *Philosophic Classics Series* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2011), 74.

² Baird, 74.

his soul—dependent only on his will’s affirmation to nourish it with oxygen to allow it to purge him of the darkness and purify his stained soul. This new will, though making its presence known, was still becoming and was not yet of sufficient strength to overthrow compulsion—so that old compulsion hardened into habit—thus beginning a war of the two wills—carnal and spiritual.³

In the presence of Alypius, Augustine comes to two separate, but related, realizations. First, in the epiphanic urgency of the remark that “The untaught are rising up and taking heaven by Storm, while we with all our dreary teachings are still groveling in this world of flesh and blood,” he is quite truly consistent with the theme of the title, confessing to himself the limits of the intellect, which by no means will guarantee his salvation but may even hinder it.⁴ Additionally, granting the intellect can be charmed into obedience by its possessor and not its possessor enthralled and bitten by the poisonous viper of the intellect, he realizes that pride and cowardice might still damn him and oppress his ascent to God, when he asks Alypius whether or not they are ashamed to follow the unlearned but not ashamed of lacking the requisite courage to follow those who are ascending.⁵

Seeking to resolve his sinful state in the garden (expectedly a symbolic location given his Christian faith), Augustine’s second recognition is the moral root of his madness which in no way did he aspire to obfuscate through naturalistic explanations. Knowing that he ought to enter a covenant with God but impotent to follow the righteous road, his passions, in the form of anger directed at the self for the damage he knew it was incurring, are further incited—not explained away as irrational, which first presumes that natural laws make you what you are.⁶ Therein lies a new question he must critically contend with if headway is to be made: How, and by what means, is the spiritual impulse to be sufficiently strengthened to a point where he is no longer impotent to do what he knows he ought to, thus dissolving the binding chains of ancient habit—so he may move with unity and conviction into the covenant with God which solicits him?

It is evidently a question concerning the will alone, and Augustine delineates a variety of actions where the willing is a necessary condition for carrying out the action—in that if one didn’t will it, one wouldn’t do it—but is not a sufficient condition to being able to do what is willed, such as willing that a paralyzed limb move.⁷ However, the willing / ability distinction cannot apply to

³ Baird, 74.

⁴ Baird, 75.

⁵ Baird, 75.

⁶ Baird, 75.

⁷ Baird, 75.

this matter of *willing that he will properly*, for “the willing is already the doing,” and the very same moment he willed aright, the command of this will would at once be executed, and so be both necessary and sufficient.⁸ Thus, it is wholly, and tantalizingly, within his abilities to do this deed of willing, but this knowledge is less of a salve to his madness and more of an idea that inflames it; what logically has the least impediments to its command being carried proves in practice to be exceedingly time consuming and of far greater difficulty than the mind ordering a physically unrestrained limb to move.

“How did this bizarre situation arise, how develop?” he inquires three separate times, probing the paradoxical condition of a mind that resists what it evidently wants, as it would not be willing it if it didn’t at the same time want it.⁹ The will orders that a volition should exist; for instance, one wills that one be courageous. But the will may then cancel the order of a moment ago, and talk back to its own authority, but from a seat of authority considering it is also an expression of the same will it contradicts. What explains the difference between (to use the aforementioned example) the will *to be* courageous and the will of someone who *is* courageous—when to act courageously is merely dependent upon the will to do so? What so obstinately stands between the command and its execution is nothing substantial, but the bitter divorce of the will. As Augustine explains, if the volition was ordered with the whole self, it would not have to command itself to be but once, since the command would be instantly executed and so would already have happened.¹⁰ But with the willing part of the mind burdened by its unwilling counterpart still yoked to carnal custom and habit and taking those things as its object of desire, it is said to be sick on account of its division into two wills, both partial, and its inability to “rise with its whole self on the wings of truth...”¹¹ In this characterization, there is lethargy and quasi-parasitical deprivations of power.

For Augustine, quick to divorce himself from all implications of Manicheist dualism, what he does not mean in saying ‘two wills’ are two distinct substances, one Good, the other Evil. To posit a different substance and nature underlying and driving every conflicting impulse leads to the absurd conclusion that if one person is conflicted over which of two evils to choose, the Manichean must either admit one of these impulses to be in actuality Good, or else they must posit additional

⁸ Baird, 75.

⁹ Baird, 75-76.

¹⁰ Baird, 76.

¹¹ Baird, 76.

natures, where now an individual would house two Good natures opposed by two Evil ones.¹² Still more, both Good and Evil impulses are innumerable and can occur simultaneously to the effect that “the mind is ... rent apart by the plethora of desirable objects...”¹³

Augustine instead understands this duality of will, not as the presence of an alien nature, but as a punishment undergone by his own nature and as the inherent human condition that one must contend with.¹⁴ Three times immediately beforehand he heaps responsibility upon himself, accepting the fragmentation he claims not to have consented to.¹⁵ He attributes the fragmentation of the will to the fallen and perverted condition transmitted throughout humankind since Original Sin—even though this is seemingly incompatible with the proclamation of personal accountability just beforehand. But considering, as was already established, that one may or may not pander to the lust stemming from the dark inheritance of a carnally-corrupted will, or may either leave hardening habits unchecked or check their development—the fragmented condition—which is a burdensome heirloom to be passed down to all subsequent generations—does not absolve them of the responsibility of rectifying that condition—a task for which we have all the tools and a graduated ability to accomplish self-control, in proportion with the soul’s maturity.

By now, the oft-invoked bondage of his own will had significantly thinned. But this is not to imply that the struggle itself to shed this burden had correspondingly eased.¹⁶ Through the severity of the Lord’s mercy, compelling him through fear and shame, self-blame and urgency indeed swell and inflame the nearer he gets to the goal of God, demanding it be done now, grasping it but again failing.¹⁷ It is an indication of his proximity to and nigh-arrival before the divine that the tides of war between the carnal and the spiritual begin to turn. Whereas the carnal hitherto easily predominated, there is now a sense of uncertainty in the cycle of grasping and then not grasping, implying that the fire of his spiritual will has grown somewhat more prosperous relative to before in comparison to the carnal. Still though, it is becoming but is not yet, and the will remains divorced with evil retaining its precarious advantage over the good.¹⁸

¹² Baird, 76.

¹³ Baird, 77.

¹⁴ Baird, 76.

¹⁵ Baird, 76.

¹⁶ Baird, 77.

¹⁷ Baird, 77.

¹⁸ Baird, 77.

Amidst this indecision, a new antagonist, Memory personified, is briefly featured, threatening his ascent. As Augustine puts it, “Plucking softly at my garment of flesh and murmuring in my ear,” the siren-song of the memory of old habit is a definite obstacle, but one that remains at his back insofar as his vision remains on God and is, by the right use of freedom, rendered into nothing.¹⁹

In its stead, a newly-prompted vision solicits him forth and imparts upon him the relevant wisdom which is to resolve the earlier question of how the spiritual will is to be imbued with enough potency to overcome the obstinately unwilling aspect of the carnal will. In a revelation of the figure of Contenance, she first attracts him up and away from those frivolous aims, and delivers to him the all-important message that this task cannot be achieved alone (although everything preceding this suggested only the willing was necessary, and entirely up to his willing it), but requires that he fully receive God with absolute trust. Once this happens, his ascension will have its needed support, therefore allowing that he won’t relapse and remain in the slender but unshakeable bondage of the will.²⁰ Prompted by this internal vision into the true crisis moment, his supplications take on the cathartic outpouring of absolute urgency confused with absolute frustration, demanding to know “Why must I go on saying, ‘Tomorrow... tomorrow’? Why not now? Why not put an end to my depravity this very hour?”²¹

It is perhaps not illusory to hear a change already present in this pinnacle of fury that so well summarizes the aforementioned bizarre situation of the human condition. The internally witnessed revelation of Contenance proves itself effective to the extent that it reveals Augustine to himself and breaks the spell of concealment that inhibits access to the true nature of himself. By bringing his secret wretchedness to the surface and to the light, and though not yet cleansed by the Light of the Lord, the prerequisite work has been accomplished and he is prepared for a full and embracing mystical union.

Seemingly by Divine Providence in response to his readiness, it is suggested through an unknown child’s voice that he “Pick it up and read.”²² Ambiguous as this appears, his readiness is reflected in his willingness to interpret the voice as a Divine injunction. Opening the book of the Apostle’s Letters, he reads: “Not in dissipation and drunkenness, nor in debauchery and lewdness,

¹⁹ Baird, 78.

²⁰ Baird, 78.

²¹ Baird, 78.

²² Baird, 79.

nor in arguing and jealousy; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh or the gratification of your desires.”²³ By the verse’s end, he is overcome with the light of certainty that persecutes and flushes the shadows of doubt, indicating conversion—the eradication of unwillingness and therefore the unification of a will from birth fragmented.

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²³ Baird, 79.

Pascal's Wager

Christian A. Schubert

Pascal's Wager is a logical argument for belief in God. The argument is made on the basis that in a gambling sense, the odds dictate that human beings are best off with a belief in God. This case is made by first explaining the four possibilities regarding belief in God and accordingly, the effects of God's existence. The first two possibilities include one's belief in a God. In one case, one believes in God and God is real, and in the other one believes in God and God is not real. In the case of belief and reality, one achieves infinite reward through salvation and heaven. In the case of belief and unreality, one is minorly inconvenienced, or perhaps even minorly (by comparison) rewarded. One would be minorly inconvenienced by a forced attendance of religious meetings as well as adherence to the set of rules imposed by religion, though one can benefit despite an unreality of God through the companionship of like-minded individuals and similar gains. The two alternative cases are those of disbelief in God. In the case of disbelief and reality, one receives infinite loss in the form of punishment in hell and / or the opportunity cost of reward in heaven. In the case of disbelief and unreality, a minor gain is made in the form of free time that would otherwise be allocated to religion-related proceedings. Facing these four possibilities, Pascal argued that it was most reasonable to pursue a belief in God, as one therefore has the potential to experience infinite gain or alternatively a minor loss / gain. As such, it is starkly superior to the alternative disbelief in God, accompanied by the potential infinite loss or minor gain it provides.

The argument Pascal presents is, according to my belief, logically sound only in certain circumstances. There are objections to be made, however, that undermine the argument in case of differing circumstances. Firstly, Pascal's wager relies firmly on the assumption that we would, in the case of God's existence, correctly understand the nature of God. In other words, the wager implies that God cares for and only for one's belief in him when evaluating who to reward and who to punish. This is an assumption made on no base, and there are numerous alternative possibilities in which case the wager fails. For example, one possibility is that God cares not for belief and instead for one's kindness exhibited through actions toward one another. Assuming

God's existence, one's performance of good deeds would therefore be the sole determiner of one's fate in God's hands. Performing good deeds would provide one with infinite reward whereas non-performance of good deeds would result in infinite punishment. An infinite number of possibilities truly exist wherein God would value and reward different qualities or actions and there's no basis for the assumption Pascal makes. Even if it happens to be correct that God values nothing other than belief in him, it's wildly statistically unlikely that one would happen to select the "correct" God. With the practically infinite variety of deities one could believe in, the precise combination of traits that one places one's belief in is highly improbable to be the God that exists, assuming one does.

One further circumstance posed by Pascal's wager is that of one's ability to force oneself to believe in God. The argument presented falters under the consideration that one may not be able to change one's belief or disbelief in God. This is to say, it's difficult at best or perhaps even impossible to change one's belief without receiving new evidence to consider. In this sense, because the wager does not present material evidence and more accurately provides only "advice" on whether to believe in God, it's unlikely that it could effectively prescribe a course of action. A perhaps valid counterargument could be made for the idea of "faking it until you make it." One could argue that by feigning belief long enough, it may be that one would eventually begin to truly believe in God. Anecdotally, I can't help but think that I would be unable to change my mind on the topic regardless of whether I feign it long enough, but that's no true evidence to dispel the claim.

Third, there is a flaw present that combines the other two. The wager supposes that a real God who values belief and nothing else would still value a false, forced belief, which is perhaps unrealistic to assume alongside the typical interpretation that God values honesty and sincerity. This is to say, it's unlikely that God would reward one who bases his belief solely on self-interest through an examination of the odds rather than only those who believe through faith, as it seems disingenuous to base a belief thusly.

To summarize, Pascal's wager poses the argument that one should believe in God because it is the best risk-reward ratio one is presented with. It, however, makes the assumptions that we know the nature of God (including that the God we have selected is the correct one), that it's possible to alter one's belief or disbelief in God without the reception of evidence for or against, and that the true God would accept a forced or feigned belief adopted solely for the reason that it

seems like a “safe bet.” Some could deem it possible to adopt a true belief through extended feigning, but it’s an uncertain argument at best. Ultimately, I personally feel that the argument is weakened to such a substantial degree by these flaws that it completely falls apart.

Book Review

A Book Review of St. John's *Dark Night of the Soul*

Joshua J. Niewiadomski

The modern reader might find *Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross to have a fleeting appeal for reasons not truly explicit in its tempting title. In that stark mention of darkness in reference to soul—in the lurid and desperate innuendo of the robust nothingness that constitutes darkness—the acute emptiness of unbelief partly characteristic of these times is disposed to imagine that the haunt of atheism is afoot, serving as St. John's somber embarkation point, and that the significant motion of his writing is one of restoring, or rekindling, a light painfully lost in the eclipse of God by a nigh-immovable body of doubt with its own kind of planetary pull on human consciousness.

Many readers will be surprised, then, to discover that from the opening page of *Dark Night of the Soul*, St. John of the Cross assumes an audience that has already distanced itself from atheism, disowning such bleak meditations upon the dim condition of a godless universe. Counterintuitively, it is into this first of two dark nights that souls are drawn forth by God when they have begun to meditate on the spiritual road for the purpose of eventually arriving at a divine union through contemplation.¹ But much remains to be said in the interim, for these nights prove quite long. Dawnless at times, they may seem caught amidst the throes of real becoming and rebirth—and encumbered with the soul's indispensable and manifold labors, commensurate, perhaps, with those mythical twelve labors of Hercules, undertaken, likewise, in a spirit of atonement for the sins of his heinous insanity.

In Chapter VIII of Book I, St. John delineates the overarching structure which offers a quick reference point for the prospective readers to situate themselves according to their souls' private level of development. The night, induced by contemplation, creates two kinds of darkness which correspond to the two parts of a person's nature—the sensual and the spiritual. The dark night of the senses purges the soul according to sense and is said to be relatively common given that it is the first night experienced by novice contemplatives not yet fluent in the science of meditation.² As it is St. John's intent to act as a benevolent narrator of the ascent of souls and discursive

¹ St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, trans., ed. E. Allison Peers (New York: Image Books, 1990), 24.

² *Dark Night of the Soul* (DNS), 47.

facilitator of the divine union as best as can be expected of a mere human being—the entirety of Book I is concerned with this first auspicious night of the senses. It is indeed to be regarded as such an auspice, for this dark night and deprivation enforce a spiritual exercise “...wherein the soul is strengthened and confirmed in the virtues, and made ready for the inestimable delights of the love of God.”³ The second night of the soul, extensively covered in Book II, is incomparably worse than the first. Experienced by very few, it climaxes with the ten steps of love toward the mystical union.⁴

Taking account of this asymmetry in both the number of those who will experience this first night as compared with the second, and the qualitative disparity of the two nights, it would be of benefit to many prospective readers, in terms of their spiritual progress, to loiter on the original eclipse and the early pitfalls suffered by the inexperienced converts to God. These imperfections St. John expounds in Chapters II-VIII, each corresponding to one of the seven deadly sins. These chapters are accessible and offer practical guidance to the inevitable clumsiness of premature spirituality.

In Chapter I, St. John begins to explain why this night must necessarily come to be—by employing the edifying metaphor of a mother who keeps her newborn warm by the heat of her bosom—carrying it, lavishing it with caresses, and nourishing it with sweet milk and soft foods. In time this maternal providence ceases. She puts bitter aloes on her breasts, and sets the child down, so it may be weaned and undertake more substantial occupations.⁵ Just so is the grace of God—at first providing sweetness and spiritual milk to newborn believers, until they’re sufficiently grown and not a moment longer. Amidst these first pleasurable days of being caressed and upheld in its newfound belief, the soul is delighted—“...penances are its pleasures; fasts its joys; and its consolations are to make use of the sacraments and to occupy itself in Divine things.”⁶ So much like the child, however, the believer is shortly thereafter deprived of its unearned sustenance; and like the child, the believer is not at first adroit in his spiritual movements. The blessed night purifies him of these imperfections.⁷

³ DNS, 24.

⁴ DNS, 48.

⁵ DNS, 25.

⁶ DNS, 25.

⁷ DNS, 26.

As mentioned above, Chapters II-VIII are instrumental in demonstrating how sin slyly manifests within early spiritual efforts in ways often difficult for the untrained eye to discern, and is rooted in an amateur's impatience and longing to be more advanced than his limited service to the Lord permits. To name but a few, the habit of pride—a covert pride, as St. John points out—still expresses itself in the vanity of performing notable works for praise alone, or in being fussy about one's choice of confessor—preferring those who are better conformed to one's spiritual malpractices, and avoiding those who would rightly disabuse one of obstructive habits.⁸ Avarice is seen in the predilection of some who are dissatisfied with God's solemn consolations, and instead gorge themselves on spiritual precepts—through the limitless reading of books on these matters—"spend[ing] their time on all these things rather than on works of mortification and the perfecting of the inward poverty of spirit which should be theirs."⁹ Still others are vexed by the introspective realization of their own imperfections and become impatient at not having surmounted to sainthood within their first day of aspiring. In this, St. John locates the sin of wrath, where elsewhere it might manifest itself as an undue irritation toward the sins of others instead of one's own.¹⁰ Once more, in Chapter VI, St. John analyzes spiritual gluttony which causes one to be lured by the sweetness of spiritual exercises and not the purity—leading them into an extremism whereby they "kill themselves with penances, and others weaken themselves with fasts, by performing more than their frailty can bear..."¹¹ These chapters (II-VIII), should be consulted early and often by new spiritual practitioners, as the wisdom of St. John is absolutely and surgically precise in its corrections.

To speak with greater specificity about the dark night of the senses, the love of self and its inclinations is undergoing an exchange for the love of God. The growth of spiritual strength has allowed the individual at this stage to refrain from creaturely desires and to endure the consequent aridity.¹² As St. John describes—"...God turns all this light of theirs into darkness," stranding them in a pleasureless state where spiritual things themselves become bitter to the sensible imagination.¹³ Naturally, this experience might suggest impropriety in one's spiritual proceedings, or a divine sanction of sorts. On the contrary, the darkness, aridity and bitterness are precisely what

⁸ DNS, 26-27.

⁹ DNS, 31.

¹⁰ DNS, 39.

¹¹ DNS, 40.

¹² DNS, 48.

¹³ DNS, 49.

are to be expected and hoped for according to St. John. The cause of aridity, he explains, is quite simple. The reason for the lack of sweetness following those first devotional moments is the “strangeness of the exchange”—since the palate has hitherto been accustomed to sensual pleasure now receives a foreign diet.¹⁴ The remainder of Book I expounds the various symptoms and benefits of this first sensory night.

The second night of the soul—this one spiritual—does not immediately follow the completion of the first. The soul may have to wait years before entering the second night designated for proficients.¹⁵ The introductory chapter of Book II begins with the spiritual proficient and the greater ease and freedom he begins to experience in exploring the things of God—while at the same time, St. John comments on the increasingly intense bouts of darkness that attend upon proficiency.¹⁶ It is noteworthy that in Chapter II, St. John establishes the relationship the second night has with the first. Although purgation was several times attributed as the primary effect of the first night, St. John here remarks that the purgation of the second night relative to the first is akin to the relationship between root and branch.¹⁷ The purgation of sense turns out to have been “only the entrance and beginning of contemplation leading to the purgation of the spirit, which, as we have likewise said, serves rather to accommodate sense to spirit than to unite spirit with God.”¹⁸ In analyzing St. John’s analogy, we gather that the preliminary clippings of the sense in the first night do not treat the deep stain made in the soul, and if these stains “...be not removed with the soap and strong lye of the purgation of this night, the spirit will be unable to come to the purity of Divine union.”¹⁹ Expunging this *hebetudo mentis* contracted through the constancy of sin becomes the unique project of the second night. St. John mentions one further imperfection to be refined in this state. In tandem with habitual imperfection, the actual imperfection of proficients makes them liable to accept “vain visions and false prophecies,” and to be often deluded by their imagination into believing that they behold God when they only behold the devil.²⁰ And in Chapter IX, St. John reiterates that the darkness, pains, and torments of the “infused contemplation”—or God’s

¹⁴ DNS 54.

¹⁵ DNS, 79.

¹⁶ DNS, 79.

¹⁷ DNS, 82.

¹⁸ DNS, 82.

¹⁹ DNS, 82.

²⁰ DNS, 83.

inflowing into the soul²¹—are for the purpose of an exalting enlightenment, a stretching forward, and eventually, the fruition of divine union.²²

Explaining in Chapter XVIII that secret wisdom is like a ladder for many reasons—that the loving knowledge of God enkindles the soul, elevating it step by step to the riches that are stored away in mystical union, while making it equally plausible that the soul descends a rung and falls away²³—St. John arrives at the two most advanced chapters in his spiritual endeavor. Though not the last chapters, Chapters XIX and XX respectively cover the first five and last five steps of this ladder to mystical union, which, despite being experienced by few, deserves elaboration for its ultimate significance to the soul’s odyssey reaching its completion. Frequently plagued by the dark tempests of the two nights, it is not until here that the soul arrives at its home.

It would be a mistake, quickly made apparent, to think that the first step of the ladder implies that anyone willing could pick up St. John’s instruction from this step. The degree of development required before step one can even be approached is astounding. Consider this—that at this step the soul is made sick with love, not unto death as it is said, but for God’s glory.²⁴ At this stage, consistent with the usual effects of sickness, the soul loses its tastes and desires of the past life and finds no pleasure, support or consolation in anything.²⁵ It should be noted that each step is a further purification, leaving the soul lighter so as to pursue the next step.

The second step causes a ceaseless pursuit of God based on this love. The soul is restless and anxious to the extent that the Beloved is sought in all things.²⁶ In all matters, whether eating, sleeping, or watching, the soul seeks the Beloved.²⁷

Step three imbues the soul with a relentless fervor, not for fear of disappointing God, which St. John recognizes as doubtless a blessing and effective means of spurring the soul to righteousness. But he asks: “Wherefore if fear, being the son of love, causes within him this eagerness to labour, what will be done by love itself?”²⁸ In answer to this question he says that this love is so great that it causes the soul to regard great works intended for the Beloved as small and

²¹ DNS, 89.

²² DNS, 108.

²³ DNS, 152-155.

²⁴ DNS, 155.

²⁵ DNS, 156.

²⁶ DNS, 156.

²⁷ DNS, 157.

²⁸ DNS, 157.

many works as few.²⁹ How different this is to the pride, spiritual gluttony and wrath denounced by St. John in Book I. Works are undertaken for the sake of the Beloved—not for praise. The affliction caused by the works not matching what the glory of God demands arises not from vanity but from genuine love and longing. A further effect is that the soul at this stage considers itself worse than all others. St. John confirms that the soul is far from vainglory and the condemnation of others.³⁰

The fourth step marks a great increase in spiritual strength, with the soul no longer seeking pleasure in God or praying for favors.³¹ The soul now clearly perceives that it has received plenty and that it desires to render Him a service according to its merits. It perceives as well that the failures lie not in His unwillingness to grant new favors, but in its neglect with respect to those granted.³²

Step five comes with an impatience—and one infinitely more intense than that which we spoke of earlier. Every delay in comprehending God becomes oppressive; love becomes need; and not seeing the Divine feels like death. This is a step of profound longing—a hunger suffered like dogs experience—signifying also that the exchange of self-love for the love of God has by now progressed far along.³³

Chapter XX picks up with the sixth step, where the soul, “touches Him again and again,” and in such a way that it is not deceived by its hopes.³⁴ Earlier it was mentioned that deluded visions were a particular imperfection of proficients that needed to be purged. Now this purgation has happened. Loving charity has been greatly enlarged at this point, resulting in swift flight.³⁵

At step seven, the soul grows bold, a favor granted by God.³⁶ Hitherto, boldness was not lawful—only humility—because of the risk that it might fall from higher steps. However, the daring and power bestowed by God is necessary to ascend to step eight.³⁷

²⁹ DNS, 157.

³⁰ DNS, 158.

³¹ DNS, 158.

³² DNS, 159.

³³ DNS, 160.

³⁴ DNS, 160.

³⁵ DNS, 160.

³⁶ DNS, 161.

³⁷ DNS, 161.

During the eighth step, the soul, by this boldness and power, manages to take the Beloved captive, holding Him without letting him go. But the union is not continuous.³⁸ If the hold was steadfast and permanent, it would be glory itself. However, this hold is frequently lost.³⁹

The ninth step features a now perfect soul burning with sweetness, which is an effect of the union. Beyond this the Divine is ineffable. St. John concedes that words must fail to do justice to the experience.⁴⁰

The tenth and ultimate step does not belong to this life and causes the soul “to become wholly assimilated to God, by reason of the clear and immediate vision of God which it then possesses.”⁴¹ This step is a going forth from the flesh, and the vision is the cause of “the perfect likeness of the soul to God”—not in its capacities, of course, but in the sense that all that it is becomes like God.⁴²

St. John’s *Dark Night of the Soul* is an invaluable spiritual tool no matter your level of maturity. One fine feature of its layout is that you can quickly find a chapter corresponding to your spiritual level and allow it to guide you, moving forward or back a chapter as needed. Be not afraid of this darkness, for it is certain to bring with it the promise of enlightenment if we move amongst it correctly.

Bibliography

St. John of the Cross. *Dark Night of the Soul*. Translated and edited by E. Allison Peers. New York: Image Books, 1990.

³⁸ DNS, 161.

³⁹ DNS, 162.

⁴⁰ DNS, 162.

⁴¹ DNS, 162.

⁴² DNS, 163.

EXPERIENCE

GUIDED MEDITATION

**Students imagine themselves as the released
prisoner in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave***

Experiencing Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*

Kasey C. Cummins

For as long as I can remember, I have been inside this dark and damp enclosure. However, I am not alone. I am accompanied by my fellow prisoners who have no sense of reality, just as me. We are forced to sit on a ledge day in and day out, chained up like animals. The only sense of relief (if you must call it that) we have is when we hear voices echoing and see shadows on the wall in front of us. These remind us that we are not alone. The shadows we see seem to be illuminated by a great bright light. Perhaps this is the sun? Or something similar? I do not know. For I cannot see anything that is above and behind me. All I know is what is in front of me. The shadowy figures consist of what we believe to be people, plants, animals, and much more. My fellow prisoners and I like to give these objects names in order to identify what we are seeing.

Today is a miracle! I have been freed from my captivity. My guide has unshackled me and compelled me to look toward the light. As soon as I turn around, I come across an array of 3-D props. My guide demands that I name these objects as I know them. Could these be the actual forms of the shadow figures I saw so frequently? I am in shock at the actual shapes and dimensions of these fabricated objects that I now know were manipulated by a group of puppeteers. Some of these objects are not even what we assumed them to be. For my whole life all I knew were the shadows which I thought were real, but are actually twice removed from reality. My prior sense of reality is destroyed. My perception that the shadows were reality turns out to be just an illusion, and I am finally seeing the truer world.

My guide is now dragging me up a steep, painful path toward what seems like a bright light. The whole way up my head is full of ideas about what could be waiting for me after this challenging hike. As we get to the top of our ascent, my guide instructs me to step into the light. I am painfully blinded by what my guide calls the sun. This must be the actual sun I have been hoping for. However, I am not sure if the pain is worth it. This newfound light is disorienting. Behind me my whole life has been nothing but a man made picture show fueled by the light of a fire. My guide explains to me that everything beyond the cave is the true reality of this world. As I absorb this fact, I now see the true, beautiful reality for myself. I grin as my soul gets lighter and my heart fills with good grace. As the sun sets, I bathe in the beauty of

the moon and the stars. For I never knew about such things. The creatures that roam around are way more beautiful and complex than I could have ever imagined before. I want to stay up here. I want this to be my new reality. It is full of light and knowledge and the realization that life is so much more than we are forced to see. While not always just, life is full of beauty and goodness. I have never had the chance to come to this conclusion before my release. In the cave, I was always angry and spiteful. Now, I am learning to appreciate all the good life has to give. However, as much as I don't want to go back, I must share this enlightenment with my fellow prisoners. I am sure they would be just as awestruck.

As I begin my descent back inside the cave, I realize this will not be as easy as I thought. While trying to go back to the bane of my existence, I am faced with an even steeper, rigorous descent. Each step is a gamble, and each successful stride is one step closer to sharing this newfound enlightenment with my fellow prisoners. I know they will want to come. I hope they will, at least.

At last, I arrive at my former fellow prisoners' location, excited to share the beauty and the good the real world holds. As I am speaking, I realize that the shadows on the wall are less clear than they have ever been. Shadows are nothing compared to what I have seen. I have seen the truth. And the truth has set me free from my former state of mind. I am now enlightened with vast knowledge, and I must share my experience. However, as I begin describing my adventure, their faces grow angrier and angrier. They think that my journey has left me disoriented and stupid. They have no proof, so I understand. I must try to free them. As I am doing so they are violently resisting, thinking that I am out to hurt them. They very forcefully push me away and refuse me forever. I guess they were not ready to accept an idea so foreign.

Kaylee F. Hemphill

Since I can remember I have been here. In this dark, cold cave. All day long I sit and stare at the wall watching shadows play before me. There are a few of us down here. I wonder if anyone knows about us. The other people and I play guessing games with each other, it has become quite the competition trying to guess what picture will play next. That was my life until someone new came down. I call him my guide. He removed the shackles from my neck and ankles and forced me to stand for the first time since I was a child. I was petrified. Where was I going? Who is this man? Why only me? Why is no one else being unshackled?

The guide forced me to walk up a steep hill to see something that I could not believe. There at the top of the cave was a group of men using fire and props to cast shadows upon the wall. This whole time we were being deceived! Our entire life that we have spent down in this cave has been a lie! What was once my reality, is not any more.

Why is this happening?

The guide walked me to the men that have been playing tricks on our minds, he forced me to name the objects that surrounded them.

Fire. Stick. Man.

Then before I could name anything else, I was being pushed out of the cave. I tried to fight back, I did not want to leave. The cave was my home, I was scared and feared what was to come.

As we stepped outside, I was in awe. There was a pond where I saw the reflections of all that surrounded it.

Trees. Bushes. Plants. Animals.

Then I saw it.

The Divine, The Good, the sun.

Suddenly I knew the cave was not an action of hate. The puppeteers were not being deceitful. It was an act of The Good. The Almighty. I was being shown the meaning to all that has occurred. While this was terrifying, it was eye opening.

Daizha M. Hunter

When the guide first approached me, I thought maybe I was dreaming. I was locked up for so long that I didn't even realize there was so much greater out there. As a freed prisoner, the guide forced me to name the things of reality I never even knew existed. I wanted to go back to my imprisonment so badly because I was afraid of the unknown. This was all new to me and I was way out of my comfort zone. At first, I was angry at the guide, but then he showed me things outside the cave, such as the stars and the heavens. That's when I realized all he was trying to do was help me gain a greater sense of wisdom. Then I was shown the Sun or the Good. It was to my knowledge that he was the author, the creator of everything I saw and everything I experienced. He is the author of everything good. However, that's when I started to question him. How could being locked up my entire life unaware of all the good things he

created possibly be good? How could he allow the puppeteers to deceive me and my fellow prisoners for our entire lives? Though I gained much knowledge of his existence and everything he created, I am unaware of what purpose it served for me to be sheltered in a cave for my entire life.

Nicole E. Miller

From the moment I enter the world I am in the control of others. The images I see are all shadows of artificial objects - yet everyone is content. Everyone in my position is happy with being manipulated into thinking this is the reality. From seeing the Good I am now awake and out of the shadows. The Good is what cripples us at first causing us to see shadows on the cave wall to make us ascend to see the true beauty in the sun. The sun is the Good; it is the key to being rational and aware. If my former fellow prisoners were to hear me speaking of this Good, they would not believe it to be true. Their reality is still stuck in those shadows. They know only as much as the puppeteers allow them to see. If they see what I saw, their reality may change because they can witness the Good as well. The sun wants us to see shadows at first so we can truly appreciate the Good.

Lucas J. Mulloy

The cave to me feels like a metaphor for a trap. Just as it is difficult and terrifying to escape from a cave, it is the same to escape from the world of sight into the intellectual world. To have been shackled in the world of sight for so long makes the intellectual world blinding. Even with a guide, the cave is difficult to escape. Until the guide appeared, it is likely most of the prisoners would not have longed to ascend to the intellectual world. They would have been trapped in the world of sight for so long that it would have begun to seem like the highest reality. To then have that stripped away and first be blinded by a fire (representing the real-world sun) and then the sun (representing the Good) would likely feel like a crisis of some sort. Not necessarily a religious crisis, but an intellectual one. A prisoner forced to view, accept, and contemplate a reality he had never even conceived of may feel that his whole world is collapsing, even if all that is happening is his world is rebuilding into a more beautiful and enlightened life in the intellectual world. Upon his ascent from the world of sight, he would contemplate further and rise of the ladder of Knowledge.

Garrett A. Varner

Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* clearly demonstrates the ascent from the world of ignorance to the world of intelligence. If I were chained and bound to look one way at the world and received all my information by means of someone else, then I would be the object of the worst kind of ignorance. Although the ascent into greater and deeper expressions of reality may be difficult to the untrained eye, the knowledge itself would become so much more rewarding, especially viewed upon the backdrop of what great ignorance I had been in prior to being exposed to such knowledge. Now, being outside of the cave, I understand the source and root of all things that I once believed to be reality. I can think on my own. Freely, and in a very imaginative way, I can formulate my own ideas, develop my own thought processes, and contemplate that which is truly good and what is not subject to change. My chief attitude during all of this is thankfulness. I am thankful that there is such a One as "the Good," and that gives me the greatest freedom versus any temporal sense of freedom that can be obtained by merely sensual pleasures. I am at rest.

TRANSLATION

Meister Eckhart on Detachment

Translation and Commentary by Martina S. James

Original Text

Die Lehrer loben die Liebe in hohem Maße, wie es Sankt Paulus tut, der sagt: 'Welches Tun auch immer ich betreiben mag, habe ich die Liebe nicht, so bin ich nichts' (vgl. 1 Kor. 13,1 f.). Ich hingegen lobe die Abgeschiedenheit vor aller Liebe. Zum ersten deshalb, weil das Beste, das an der Liebe ist, dies ist, daß sie mich zwingt, daß ich Gott liebe, wohingegen die Abgeschiedenheit Gott zwingt, daß er mich liebe. Nun ist es um vieles vorzüglicher, daß ich Gott zu mir zwingen, als daß ich mich zu Gott zwingen. Und das liegt daran, weil Gott sich eindringlicher zu mir fügen und besser mit mir vereinigen kann, als ich mich mit Gott vereinigen könnte. Daß Abgeschiedenheit (aber) Gott zu mir zwingen, das beweise ich damit, daß ein jegliches Ding gern an seiner naturgemäßen eigenen Stätte ist. Gottes naturgemäße eigene Stätte ist nun Einheit und Lauterkeit: das aber kommt von Abgeschiedenheit. Deshalb muß Gott notwendig sich selbst einem abgeschiedenen Herzen geben. Zum zweiten lobe ich die Abgeschiedenheit vor der Liebe, weil die Liebe mich dazu zwingt, daß ich alle Dinge um Gottes willen ertrage, während Abgeschiedenheit mich dazu bringt, daß ich für nichts empfänglich bin als für Gott. Nun ist es viel wertvoller, für nichts empfänglich zu sein denn für Gott, als alle Dinge zu ertragen um Gottes willen. Denn im Leiden hat der Mensch (noch) ein gewisses Hinsehen auf die Kreatur, von der dem Menschen das Leiden kommt, wohingegen Abgeschiedenheit gänzlich losgelöst ist von aller Kreatur. Daß aber Abgeschiedenheit für nichts empfänglich ist als für Gott das beweise ich wie folgt: Was immer aufgenommen werden soll, das muß in etwas hinein aufgenommen werden. Nun ist die Abgeschiedenheit dem Nichts so nahe, daß nichts so fein ist, daß es sich in der Abgeschiedenheit halten könnte, als Gott allein. Nur der ist so einfaltig und so feinfügig, daß er sich in dem abgeschiedenen Herzen wohl halten kann. Daher ist Abgeschiedenheit für nichts empfänglich als für Gott.

Translation

The teachers praise love to a great extent, as does St. Paul who says, "Whatever action I take, have I not love, I am nothing" (Cor.13:1). I, however, praise detachment above all love. First, at best

love forces me to love God, whereas detachment compels God to love me. Now it is by far more noble to constrain God to me than it is to constrain myself to God. This is because God can fuse himself more firmly to me and unite with me than I could ever unite with God; and that detachment constrains God to me I prove thus: everything wants to be in its own natural place. Now God's natural place is in unity and purity, and that comes from detachment. Therefore, God must give himself to a detached heart. Secondly, I put detachment before love, because love forces me to suffer all things for God's sake, whereas detachment leads me to be receptive of nothing but God. Now it is much more valuable to be receptive of nothing but God than it is to suffer all things for God's sake, because in suffering man still has some regard to the creature that causes his suffering, whereas detachment is free of all creatures; and that detachment is receptive of nothing but God, I can prove as follows. Whatever is to be received, must be received into something. Since detachment is so near nothingness, not a thing is so subtle that it could maintain itself within detachment, except for God alone. Only He is so subtle and simple that He can remain in a detached heart. Therefore, detachment is receptive of nothing but God.

Comment

Meister Eckhart was ahead of his time in his thinking and teaching. He taught the uneducated people, which was a revolutionary thing to do back then, and his perception was very much focused on the individual. He did not want to regard the institutions of religion as the last instance. Perhaps it had not eluded him that a lot of people in it often use it to pursue their own agenda, and he may have gained more understanding of this during his own trial. He was condemned by a pope for his thoughts. Today, seven centuries later, a pope shares his views and voices them.

In Meister Eckhart's original writings, he uses the German word "Abgeschiedenheit," which translates to seclusion in English. Seclusion is simply the inner process of detachment. But the term seclusion is not easily or directly accessible to most of us. So, his words are better understood if we use the term detachment. The German word for detachment is "Loslösung." Detachment or Loslösung means not to be overly attached to worldly things, which does not mean that one must become a completely different person that has to lose all his or her bodily, spiritual and aesthetic needs. It does not mean that one must give up all these things, but instead it means to internalize all without letting those things alone dominate or dictate one's actions and thoughts.



PHILOSOPHICAL POETRY

Mourning Night

Kayla M. Vasilko

The world accepts death
too quickly. As day turns to night,
you see a glimpse of the moon
halfway through. It rises
slowly and shows
itself so that we may get used to its presence and be ready
for when night really falls.
In nature, illness is like the moon
starting to reveal
itself midday, but in society, illness is nightfall[en].

For, when life veers into severe illness, we predict death
straightaway. Our minds jump
right to the dark sky of night when we still
have the late afternoon sun, evening sunset
and early night's first stars
in between. No, we can't stop the moon
from rising in the end.
We are all dying.

But, if all we focus on is the impending end
to our time here, then we miss
the beauty and the peace
that comes with the completion
of a day. The same can be said about death
itself. Night
is certainly not expeditious. The night sky
is visible for hours on end.
So why upon death,
do we turn right to the new day?
When the end is upon us, we skip
death in its form of dy[ing],
nod to it briefly as death itself, and grasp
fully on to its past tense: **dead**.

We skip through the tenses like we do the cycle
of day's end.
We jump so quickly, our minds get confused.
Even after we have lost
someone, we find
ourselves saying that they "love"
something. When we should be saying that they "lov[ed]".

How do we stop
this pattern?
How do we stop
focusing on tomorrow,
and start
to live freely in today,
while taking the time
to write our days in the tense that we are meant to live in?

How do we savor morning's
first light without
mourning
the days we have left behind?
Will we mark the sunset
as set
in stone,
or as the time we have left
to decide how to catch the stars
before they start falling?