

# Symphony of Reason

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# Autobiographies

## Six PNW authors introduce themselves...

### **Martina S. James**

*I graduated in May 2020 with a BA in both Philosophy and Spanish. Currently I am in the Transition to Teaching program here at PNW, hoping to become a certified foreign language teacher before pursuing a Master's degree. Translation is one passion of mine, and being able to translate 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. Plotinus is one of my favorite philosophers and the philosophy of religion is of special interest to me. In addition, I am also invested in the study of the philosophy of politics, ethics, and aesthetics. I enjoy the readings of Catherine of Siena, Hildegard von Bingen, Meister Eckhart, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Leibniz, and, contemporary philosopher Precht. There are many others, but this is a good list.*

### **Shandan L. Johnson**

*I am currently a senior majoring in Biological Sciences with a concentration in Biotechnology. Some of my favorite philosophers are Aristotle and Lau-Tzu. I liked the fact that Aristotle stood for knowledge being built from the study of things that occur in the world, and that he believed that some knowledge should be known universally. I also enjoy the teachings from Lau-Tzu and how he taught the awareness of self through meditation and that in order for peace to exist there must be a balance between body, senses, and desires. In a similar, yet different way from these philosophers, I want to leave a positive mark on society, but in the field of Biotechnology. I hope to discover a way to impact the field of 3D-Biofabrication and Tissue Regeneration.*

### **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.*

### **Kathleen M. Nielsen**

*I am a junior and an English (literature) major with two minors: Psychology and Creative Writing as a Career. I have only begun the study of philosophy, but I can say without hesitation, my favorite philosopher is Aristotle. Everything I know about him so far reflects everything I have been interested in since I can remember – long before I discovered him. He seems to be a perfect fit regarding the contours of my outlook on life. The subject of metaphysics intrigues me the most. I'm almost afraid to study him in depth because I don't want to find out something about him I disagree with. From Aristotle:*

- *“At his best, man is the noblest of all animals; separated from law and justice he is the worst.”*
- *“What it lies in our power to do, it lies in our power not to do.”*
- *“The energy of the mind is the essence of life.”*

### **Faith C. Taylor**

*I am a sophomore and I am a second year English Teaching major. I hope to one day be a high school English teacher, and later on hope to enroll in a Master's program. I cook and bake for my family and friends. My favorite modern philosopher is Alison Jaggar, because of her modern outlook on philosophy and feminism. Jaggar likes to highlight the differences between the genders, while trying to break an overly sexist system. Another one of my favorite philosophers is René Descartes because he explains in some of his works that it is okay to question who you are and what you believe. Descartes overall uses his work to humble himself and it gives one the opportunity to do the same. Overall, Descartes' urging, to believe in nothing but the truth, is quite admirable, especially in the modern world that has the media taint what is true, with some allowing for those falsehoods that are portrayed to cloud their minds.*

### **Kayla M. Vasilko**

*I am a PNW senior Honors College student majoring in English writing and minoring in Spanish and Creative Writing as a Profession. 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, 4,500 poems, and dozens of essays and short stories thus far. I hope to earn my degree this Spring 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 ergon (work) of a human being, which, he argues, "consists in activity of the rational part of the soul in accordance with virtue."*

[See <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>]

# FOREWORD

# Foreword

## On Freedom!

**Deepa Majumdar, with Kathleen Nielsen and Kayla Vasilko**



*“The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road. For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The true test of our devotion to freedom is just beginning.”*

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**Nelson Mandela**

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A primordial longing in all sentient beings, freedom comes at many levels. At a cosmic level, not only human persons, but animals as well crave freedom – expressing it in myriad ways in the wilderness. It is because freedom is so essential to the human soul that incarceration was conceived as fit punishment for crime. It is because freedom is so essential to the souls of animals that keeping them in captivity is cruel. But what does it mean to be free? How do we distinguish the different levels of freedom? What is the highest level of freedom?

To define freedom, we must first distinguish it from what it is not. Although *virtuous*, freedom is not a direct moral virtue. Nevertheless, we may use Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book II) to understand freedom. Aristotle uses the arithmetic mean to conceptualize moral virtue as a qualitative average, flanked by two associated vices – one, a qualitative excess, and the other, a qualitative deficit. Instead of opposing each moral virtue by one matching vice, he opposes each by two vices. For Aristotle, therefore, courage is a moral virtue, with rashness, its excess vice, and cowardice, its deficit vice. Applying Aristotle, we may say that freedom is a qualitative average,

with licentiousness, its matching excess vice, and incarceration, its matching deficit vice. But besides licentiousness and incarceration, freedom has a third antithesis – namely, necessity. I am not sure where Aristotle would place necessity in reference to freedom. Neither a virtue, nor a vice, necessity is an existential feature that can be wholly anterior to the moral sphere. Thus, nature unleashes myriad forms of necessity that serve as limiting adjuncts on amoral forms of freedom in the natural world.

Invoking Aristotle, we therefore know what freedom is *not*. Because it is flanked by two vices, there are at least two things that freedom is not. That it is not captivity is obvious. But we can also be sure that freedom is not licentiousness. We must depart from Aristotle, however, to understand licentiousness more fully. For, Aristotle separates good from evil, never comingling virtues and vices, nor converting a moral virtue to its associated vices. To understand the relationship between freedom and licentiousness, however, we must allow such conversion. For, freedom, when immoral, *becomes* licentiousness (its excess vice). When prompted by selfish desires, freedom degenerates to licentiousness. Ego-based, desire-driven, and therefore impulsive, licentiousness is the false freedom to do anything one pleases. Born of the passions, licentiousness unleashes an unruly will upon the world, wreaking havoc wherever it goes. Licentiousness therefore incarcerates the soul, imprisoning it in dungeons of desires.

In the words of PNW student, Kathleen Nielsen, immoral forms of freedom (licentiousness) jeopardize the freedom of others. We must therefore be *free* of those who are licentious:

*Seditionists like to use "FREEDOM!" as their battle cry, but they are already free...  
They are free to travel,  
Free to carry their guns and bombs,  
Free to refuse wearing masks, so free to spread disease,  
Free to harass and threaten fellow Americans,  
Free to desecrate our Nation's Capital,  
They are so free, they do not even hide their identities while committing crimes because  
they know it is unlikely they will ever be arrested, let alone prosecuted and thrown in  
jail.  
They are not worried about losing their freedom.  
What they abhor is the idea that people who don't look like they do or believe what  
they believe can also be free.  
Is it too much to ask to be free of them?  
Free from their harassment and hatred?  
Free to live our lives in Peace?*

*Free from fear of what they will do next?  
Is Freedom the absence of fear?  
If we weren't afraid of them, we could live freely.  
If they weren't afraid of us, they might let us live. ~ Kathleen Nielsen*

Having determined what freedom is not, we may reflect on what freedom *is*. Inasmuch as the virtues free, while the vices incarcerate, and insofar as freedom results from sincere *praxis* of the moral virtues – we may conclude that inner freedom is *inherently* virtuous. Inasmuch as unreasonable fear arises from selfishness, freedom *qua* virtuousness is *absence of fear*, as Kathleen Nielsen says. The more virtuous we are, the freer we become, with freedom a prime indicator of our state of virtue. Conversely, the more we lapse into vices the more we lose inner freedom.

Besides the distinction between freedom and licentiousness, that between inner and outer freedom matters too. Where inner freedom comes from self-control and sublimation of the passions, outer civic freedom has to be safeguarded by proper rules, laws, and a constitution. Moreover, where free speech is concerned, inner and outer are related. The greater our inner purity, the more we purify the external world, thus facilitating free speech. Conversely, the greater the external purity, the freer our speech – or, the more freely we can express inner purity through truthful speech. External moral purity allows Truth, which is the source of freedom, to manifest itself through truthful speech. In a noxious, power-laden, cloak-and-dagger atmosphere – full of intrigue, vengeance, and enmity – we become fearful and tactical. Suffocating candor, we silence ourselves beneath a lexical flood of artificial, insincere speech that is neither free, nor freeing. Mincing words and masking violence with smiles, we speak in innuendoes that signify the death knell of free speech.

Of all forms of liberty, that which is *soteriological* is the highest freedom that descends from the altar of Truth, to engender lower forms. For, the originary origin of freedom is the Truth that resides within us. Far higher than civic freedom, and prompted by salvific yearnings, this highest liberty, which arises from utmost self-purification, impacts the inner *and* outer. Although the acme of inner freedom, yet, soteriological freedom churns that which is outer – namely, the Great Spirit of History – leaving long lasting imprints on mankind.

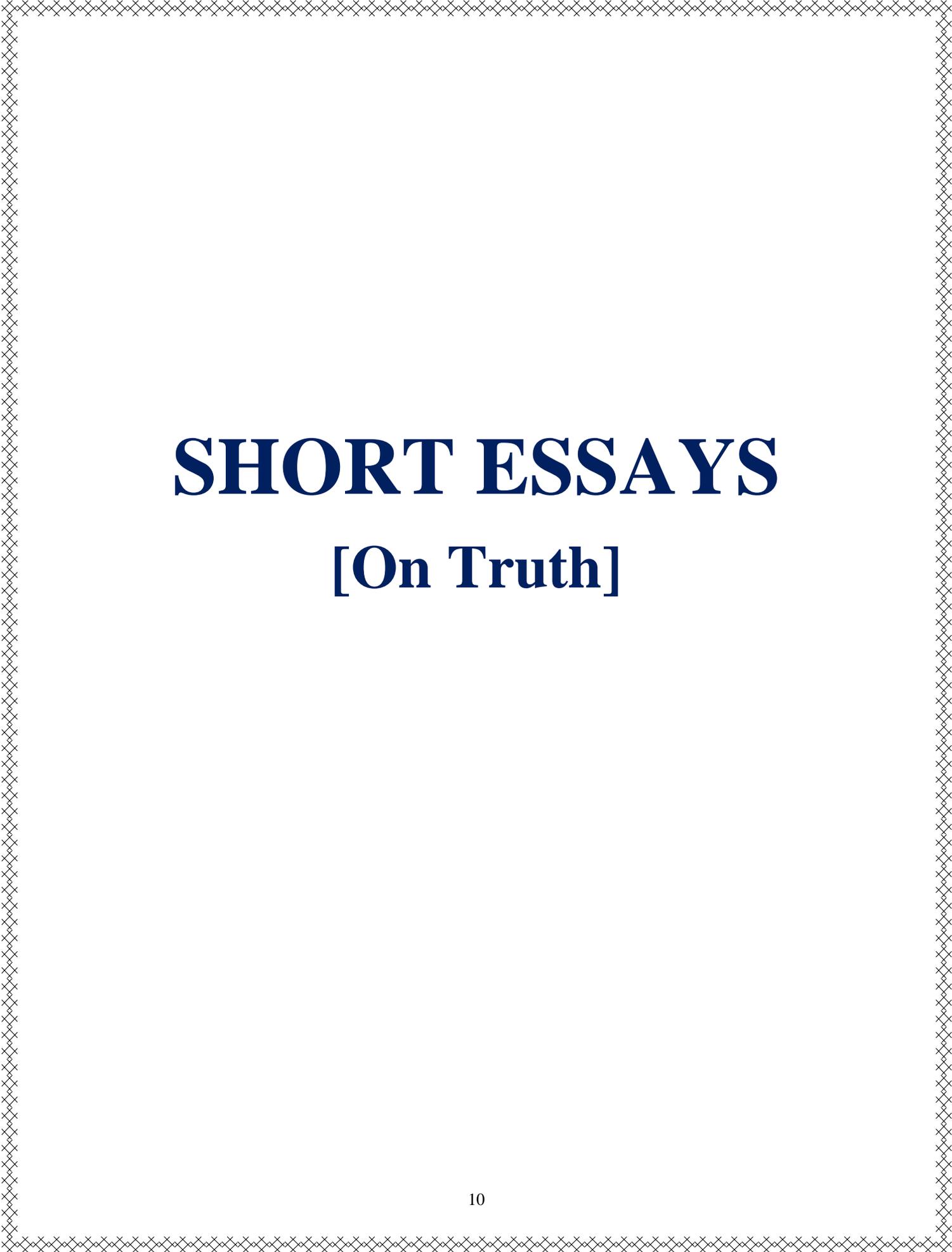
Thus, in the words of PNW student, Kayla Vasilko, higher freedom – to be distinguished from mere freedom of choice – comes from universal truth within man:

*Freedom in a general sense is facing no force from any direction when molding one's beliefs of where to place one's heart, how to expand one's education, where to invest one's hard-earned funds, who to follow, how to lead, when to ask, and what color to paint one's home. Freedom is having access to knowledge from all sides, from every angle, so that one can choose for oneself. This means that one should not be forced to believe any one ideal, but have the freedom to use the knowledge around to choose what one believes in. But with this freedom of choice, one must accept the consequences of one's freedoms.*

*A higher idea of freedom is being able to mold all ideals with materials and tools from one's own mind, supplied by the universal truth inside of it. Freedom is having the comfort to feel nothing – not fear, sadness, horror, outrage – towards one's government except the expectation of security. To hold the understanding that one's government will keep working to facilitate opportunities for all of its citizens to prosper. To have the freedom to devote no more time to speaking of it, than to explain to one's children its role in protecting their state, so that they may have the freedom to craft their states of mind with the freedom of their will. ~ Kayla Vasilko*

Of all modes of free speech, the freest are philosophical musings. As expressions of contained contemplation, they serve as the greatest indicators of inner freedom. In Issue 1 of this second volume of *Symphony of Reason*, we offer philosophical musings from seven PNW student authors and alumni – Martina S. James, Shandon L. Johnson, Kevin A. Kliver, Kathleen M. Nielsen, Faith C. Taylor, Garrett A. Varner, and Kayla M. Vasilko. Organized in four genres (essay, experience, translation, and poetry), this issue includes two short essays (on truth), one long essay (on historiography, hermeneutics, and transcendental idealism), five philosophical experiences (on Epictetus, Plato, and Descartes), one translation (of a poem by Hildegard of Bingen), and two philosophical poems.

We are grateful to our student authors and to you, our readers. We hope you enjoy the soulful voices of our precocious authors!



# **SHORT ESSAYS**

## **[On Truth]**

# Why Truth Matters

**Kathleen Nielsen**

Truth matters because it affects our behavior and determines the direction of our path. To address the elephant in the room, this will not be an article about politics. However, I would be remiss if I didn't mention some items from the political arena.

We are all living through an extraordinary situation, where millions of people have been convinced that the 2020 Presidential Election was won by the loser of the election, not the duly elected winner, Joe Biden. The person who convinced these people of that is the one who lost the election – Donald Trump. Millions of people are taking the word of a man who has lied or given misleading statements 22,247 times while in office (1,316 days) by August's count of this year. "As President Trump entered the final stretch of the election season, he began making more than 50 false or misleading claims a day. It's only gotten worse — so much so that the Fact Checker team cannot keep up" (Kessler, Rizzo, & Kelly, 2020). Think about that for a minute.

It is beyond the scope of this article to go into detail about all of the schemes Donald Trump has set into motion in an effort to fool or intimidate others into perpetuating his lies. Instead, let's examine the effects of believing what is not true. A woman was interviewed about her stance that Donald Trump is the true winner of the Presidential election, and when asked what could make her change her mind, her response was, "Only if Donald Trump announced that Joe Biden is the winner." Such is the control this man has over the minds of his devotees. Republicans who are not so enamored with Mr. Trump still voted for him because they always vote Republican, regardless of who is on the ticket. They too, reject truth and willingly support someone who lies and creates a false reality. These voters include members of Congress and other elected officials. By hook or crook, they want to stay in power. But I digress...

What happens when people are lied to and don't know it? When people have to interact with someone they don't know is lying to them, they end up making decisions about their own conduct that is based on the lies they were told. This takes them on a different route than if they had been told the truth. Sometimes this can lead to devastating results. It can mean the difference between staying married or getting divorced; relocating to a city thousands of miles away; or ending a

friendship. Lies can even cause someone to commit suicide or homicide. All because they were told a lie and reacted to it. They made their plans based on it. What happens when people are lied to and don't know it? They are denied the ability to deal with reality. This is why truth matters. We all deserve to know the truth because that is what reality is based on. Being grounded in reality allows a person to make the best possible decisions about what they should or should not do regarding any situation. When you tell someone the truth, you are honoring them. When you lie to them, you are disrespecting them, and perhaps causing irreparable harm.

What if someone doesn't want to know the truth? The woman who was interviewed about her support for Trump was offered to be shown proof of what is true, but she roundly swatted it away. She insisted whatever information that was out there countering her beliefs was a hoax. Full stop. Is this why they say "ignorance is bliss?" Can it be that she is happiest while living inside a delusion? For her and others like her, truth does not matter – it doesn't even exist. It's like an episode from the *Twilight Zone*, where people live in an alternate reality; whereby sheer will, powered by their desire, makes the facade stay in place.

Truth matters when delusions collide with reality. Someone, reacting to a lie, who lives inside that delusion, may decide he needs to kill a perceived enemy. Maybe someone told him it's the thing to do. There are people from that world who have said they would die for this President and/or kill at his behest. Believe them. When any of them kill others (and some already have done mass shootings), this is when the two worlds meet and have a common reality – when they can agree that someone is dead. Truth briefly emerges for the deluded. If they are caught, reality or truth takes over and persists, while they kick and scream. Truth not only matters, it is vital. We must all do what we can to coax the deluded back to reality. It is incomprehensible why the one man who had the power to change the minds and behavior of millions of people with the wave of his hand did not do what was right. It is up to us to restore reality and get the truth out whenever possible.

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# The Truth you hold in your Heart

**Kayla Vasilko**



*For, in this world, there are three types of truth.*

*The truth that is easy.*

*The truth that is real.*

*And the truth that you hold in your heart.*

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**Kayla Vasilko**

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Kant argues that “the opposite of truth is falsehood: when it is held for truth, it is called error.” Plainly, clearly, he states this, yet the concept of what truth means gets muddled and stretched just as easily as truth itself into a lie. For the sake of an array of preservation, the world attempts to mislead us, and it does not matter how loud we scream the name of the real truth inside our hearts, so long as *they* keep repeating the lie again and again. So long as they *tell* us what is true. Sometimes it is for no other reason than that this is the easiest thing to say. It is a pivotal moment when they are able to chisel away the truth on the surface, taint the truth of the written word, and finally, erase the truth we kept saved in our hearts for so long. At that point, their words no longer seem like lies though. They seem like reality. They seem like truth in new form. This leaves us asking, what is truth, after all?

Society often masks or morphs the truth to maintain a false reality. To remain in control. To elicit a desired reaction. This aligns with the logic of the overall objective of communication. Aristotle maintains that the aim of purposeful speech is persuasion. Using his writings, researchers have gleaned his views to suggest that *Rhetoric*, is, “the philosopher’s attempt to better humanity by equipping us with the tools to guide our fellow man away from ignorance, away from prejudice, and toward the light of understanding” (Bryan, 2019).

Furthermore, it is said rhetoric is a means of defense, of protection, and of necessity. It is imperative for a physician to persuade her patients to employ proper health habits. A political scientist must embody strong rhetoric to persuade those in power to enact just laws. Just as we need to be physically strong and fit to be able to defend ourselves from physical attack, our minds must be adept at rhetoric to protect against negative discourse aimed towards our reputation (Bryan, 2019).

This ideal ties into the concept of Utilitarian Ethics, where the consequences of engaging in truth or falsehood are estimated, and maximizing the benefits of a situation is key in making the decision (“Kant and the Right to Lie,” 2019). Protection of self and others is once again favored with this approach. Benjamin Constant stated (*italics added*):

“The moral principle that telling the truth is a duty, if taken as absolute and isolated, would make any society impossible [...]. Telling the truth is a duty. What is a duty? The idea of duty is inseparable from rights: a duty which, in a being, is the rights of another. Where there are no rights, there is no homework. Telling the truth is a duty towards those who are entitled to the truth. *But no man has a right to the truth that harms others.*” (“Kant and the Right to Lie,” 2019).

But what of rights? Does a speaker truly have a right to the falsehood of portraying pleasing semblances to the listener for the sake of nothing more than the maintenance of his name? If so, this would go further to suggest there is a single standard rule of beauty, of what are proper habits of health, of what is a just law. One universal opinion. For everything. If, as Kant wrote: “The beautiful is that which pleases universally, without a concept,” (“Kant and the Right to Lie,” 2019), universal beauty would be nothing less than factual reality; there would be no variation, contemplation, or conceptualization involved. This would override arguably the joy of realizing something beautiful for the first time, and making the decision for yourself, in your heart.

Returning to Kant's vivid statement of everything aside from truth as error, these beliefs align. Yet, some philosophers theorize that values are relative to the individual; the truth of a claim depends on the perception. Protagoras said that "humans are the measure of all things." Sophists and relativists, regard that to measure something, is to assign a value to it. The assignment depends on the human observer, and truth, goodness, beauty, and even existence are all considered measurable (Dorbolo, 2002).

So, *is* there such a thing as **pure** falsehood, or, more importantly, genuine, unquestionable truth? **Leibniz** wrote, “**Reality** cannot be found except in **One single source**, because of

the **interconnection of all things** with one another” (“Famous Philosophers on Truth, Reality, and Wisdom”). Like the measure of goodness and beauty, there are so many different thoughts about truth. Many say that there is some truth to every lie. These theories suggest that lies are in fact truth, only from new angles. What then, is truth?

Many philosophers doubt whether *true* facts can be given. They point out that facts are “strange entities.” We often wish to consider them as arrangements of things in the world. However, arrangements or structures have spatial locations, but facts do not, as observed by Ludwig Wittgenstein. Thus, as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* illustrates, “The Eiffel Tower can be moved from Paris to Rome, but the fact that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris cannot be moved anywhere” (“Truth,” 2020). Furthermore, the very idea of what the facts are in a given case is nothing apart from people’s sincere beliefs about the case, which means the beliefs *those people* consider to be true. In other words, there is no enterprise of forming a theory about some matter first, and then in a new process stepping outside the theory to assess whether it corresponds with the facts. There are processes of verifying beliefs, but the processes consist of bringing up other perceptions and assessing the original in light of them. Thus, in all of society, there is one rule that guides people in what to believe and not to believe. It is not the world, nor the facts of the world, but instead how people *interpret* the world and conceptualize the facts (“Truth,” 2020). Such interpretations become more skewed when people in power seek to influence them.

If truth is – so opaque, that it looks different depending on how you squint, so soft, that loud voices might muffle it, or so embossable, that it can take any form – guard your mind, protect your heart, and never cede the strength to keep whispering what you know to be true.



*For, in this world, there are three types of truth.*

*The truth that is easy.*

*The truth that is real.*

*And the truth that you hold in your heart.*

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**Kayla Vasilko**

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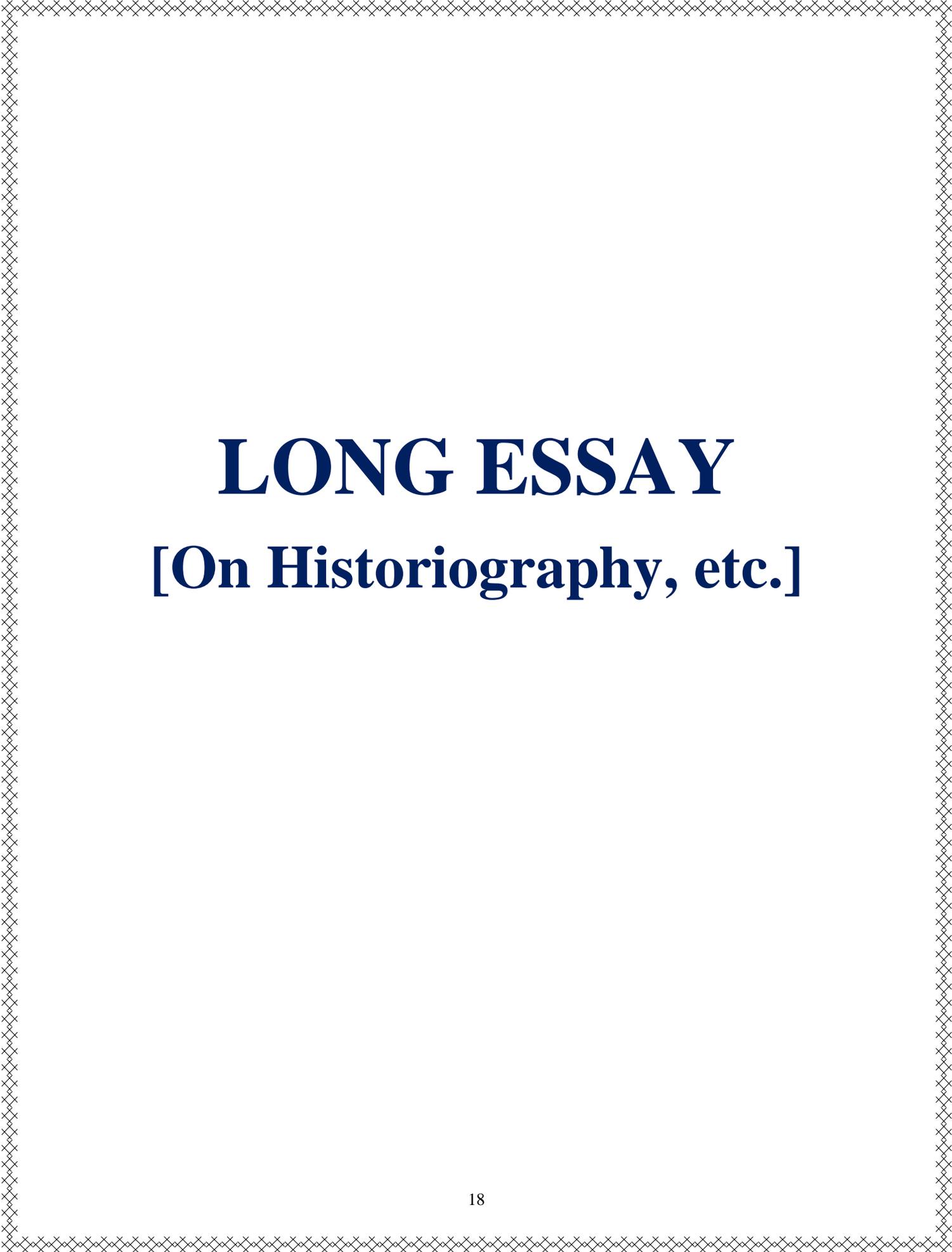
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# **LONG ESSAY**

## **[On Historiography, etc.]**

# Historiography, Hermeneutics, and Transcendental Idealism

**Kevin Kliver**

When providing an account of the events from the distant past, questions about the legitimacy of history fundamentally become epistemological concerns. One distinguishing characteristic of the knowledge of history, in particular, is that it is the knowledge of someone or something that no longer exists. Historical truths are not the same as practical, everyday truths because there is often times very little tangible proof to rely on when questioning the truth value of epistemological claims grounded in a reality that has long expired. For these reasons, historiographical questions highlight the necessity for not just accuracy and objectivity when accounting for knowledge about the past – something which is paramount to the validity of all epistemological assertions – but questions regarding the philosophy of history also highlight the nature and disposition of the subjects drawing conclusions about said history. For example, why are historians concerned with the names and events that typically led to or perpetuated major cultural and social changes during a time, as opposed to, say, the average amount of yawning from any given historical figure? More specifically, why are there no historically important books on the number of minutes (approximately) dedicated to the art movement known as Impressionism and how those total minutes (approximately) directly influenced Edgar Degas, yet there are a number of historically important books on the life, times, and influences of the Impressionist painter, Degas, without the need to provide any sort of minute by minute basis? In my estimation, the answers to these questions lie in the fundamental nature of rational human beings, and all historians are rational human beings. Consequently, when it comes to understanding and interpreting the distant past, one must identify both objective and subjective requirements that are simultaneously at work: a standard of accuracy of the factual evidence as well as the fundamental ways in which we learn and process information. With these ideas in mind, I will be arguing that any cogent historiography must involve an analysis of an objective-subjective dynamic that includes: (a) the objective aspects of accuracy and evidence when reporting the past, (b) the unavoidability of selection and emphasis in all historical writing, (c) the transcendental idealism that characterizes how the human mind

examines evidence for epistemological accuracy and categorizes events as historically significant, and (d) the hermeneutic methodology of moving from particular historical events and texts to an entire narrative about the history of mankind.

## I

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Objectivity is crucial for the truth value of epistemological claims, and in history, it is equally important when determining the facts of a bygone reality. To begin, objectivity in history should, much like the natural sciences, provide accurate, reliable, and credible evidence to support our claims about the past. This evidence could come in the form of archeological remains, carbon-dating, intersubjectivity, or any combination of these and other types of historical proofs. Moreover, when discussing historical objectivity as it pertains to accuracy, David Detmer writes in his book, titled *Zinnophobia* – on the critics and historiography of the famous historian Howard Zinn – “Accordingly, the first sense of ‘objectivity,’ and, I would argue, the primary one, is objectivity-as-accuracy. Objectivity, in this sense, is most likely to be achieved when one’s conclusions are based on precise measurements, careful observations, and rigorously appraisals of relevant evidence—in short, on a maximally attentive and responsive engagement with the object being investigated.”<sup>1</sup> As Detmer points out, objectivity in the sense of accuracy is, as I would also argue, the central component of a fact-based historiography, and additionally, a similar kind of rigor should be employed when recording and communicating conclusions about the past.<sup>2</sup>

As I have already alluded, objectivity – defined as accuracy and precision in logic, plus evidence – is something that historians and scientists have in common. Like science, causal methodologies are utilized by historians who look to accurately document the history of persons and their cultures. They are the overarching practices used to discover the past through the means of causal laws and explanations. Accordingly, in their article “Explanation in Historiography,” Graham and Cynthia Macdonald explain how causal-historical methodologies act as the underlying foundation to what they refer to as “macro-historical explanations.”<sup>3</sup> For the Macdonalds, a “macro-historical explanation ...” resembles a pattern of explanation that some philosophers of science and scientists would find familiar, explanation via the subsumption of

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<sup>1</sup> David Detmer, *Zinnophobia* (Hampshire: Zero Books, 2017), 115-116.

<sup>2</sup> Detmer, 116.

<sup>3</sup> Graham Macdonald and Cynthia Macdonald, “Explanation in Historiography,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 132.

particular events under causal laws.<sup>4</sup> To clarify, in their article Graham and Cynthia Macdonald include a discussion on covering laws. A covering law, as stated by “Explanation in Historiography,” is:

An explanation [which] is legitimate *qua* explanation if and only if it provides the means to deductively derive a description of the event being explained (the explanandum) from a statement of a law and a description of some initial conditions, *or* if the law-statement and description of initial conditions makes the explanation highly probable. This account clearly makes the presence of a law essential to all scientific explanation and has been dubbed the ‘nomological’ or ‘covering law’ model of explanation.<sup>5</sup>

So, a covering law is (a) the basis for all valid and sound historical explanations, or historical reasoning by deduction, and (b) the basis for all cogent and strong historical explanations, or historical reasoning by induction. Although it can be argued that one set of causal methodology for all historical accounts is highly improbable, a plurality of macro-historical explanations from multiple disciplines and contexts, on the other hand, is invaluable. In developing this point while formulating connections between macro-historical explanations and a covering law, Graham and Cynthia Macdonald state, “though the causal laws doing the work in the above explanation cannot be formulated with the precision, nor tested with the rigour, of those found in physics and chemistry it would be niggardly to refuse them explanatory status on that account. They are *ceteris paribus* laws, familiar enough from other contexts such as biology, ecology, economics, and so on.”<sup>6</sup> Given that these other academic disciplines and their causal laws and macro-descriptions are relevant to cover laws and macro-historical explanations, cover laws and macro-historical explanations require a methodological pluralism to account for the cross-disciplinary nature of causal laws and macro-descriptions in general. With that in mind, Paul Newall writes in his essay “Historiographic Objectivity,” “the requirement that historians apply a sense of integrity to the evidence they are faced with tells us little about whether or not there is a single correct way to do so. Indeed, that a plurality of methods is possible given the same empirical base is perhaps a

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<sup>4</sup> Macdonald and Macdonald, 132.

<sup>5</sup> Macdonald and Macdonald, 132.

<sup>6</sup> Macdonald and Macdonald, 132.

strength of historiography just as it is in science.”<sup>7</sup> Newall finishes his point against methodological monism in historiography through this vivid and well written simile: “The requirement that any single approach be adopted is tantamount to a methodological strait-jacket.”<sup>8</sup>

## II

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Given the uniqueness and clarity with which Howard Zinn conveys the topic of selective, historical writing, I will begin this section with a Zinn quote. Very early on in Howard Zinn’s 729-page magnum-opus *A People’s History*, Zinn writes in great detail and style:

Thus, in that inevitable taking of sides which comes from selection and emphasis in history, I prefer to try to tell the story of the discovery of America from the viewpoint of the Arawaks, of the Constitution from the standpoint of the slaves, of Andrew Jackson as seen by the Cherokees, of the Civil War as seen by the New York Irish, of the Mexican war as seen by the deserting soldiers of Scott’s army, of the rise of industrialism as seen by the young women in the Lowell textile mills, of the Spanish-American war as seen by the Cubans, the conquest of the Philippines as seen by black soldiers on Luzon, the Gilded Age as seen by southern farmers, the First World War as seen by socialists, the Second World War as seen by pacifists, the New Deal as seen by blacks in Harlem, the postwar American empire as seen by peons in Latin America. And so on, to the limited extent that any one person, however he or she strains, can ‘see’ history from the standpoint of others.<sup>9</sup>

This type of selective, historical writing may very well lead some to believe that history, or at least Zinn’s account of it, is nothing more than a subjective explanation of something that may or may not have happened in the past. But I, along with Zinn, would argue that a certain amount of selection and emphasis in history is inevitable in establishing an accurate account of the past. In Paul Newall’s article, “Historiographic Objectivity,” Newall puts the point this way:

If theory is an unavoidable part of inquiry then the identification of objectivity with neutrality must be given up. The charge that historians are biased thus becomes not a criticism but what makes historiography possible in the first place. Unless historians bring their preconceptions to bear on their material, they would be unable

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Newall, “Historiographic Objectivity,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 176.

<sup>8</sup> Newall, 176.

<sup>9</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing, 2005), 10.

to learn anything from it and would be limited to the Sisyphean task of providing an inventory of what they had found while knowing that it would be meaningless without the addition of an interpretive dimension that could not be neutral.<sup>10</sup>

This analysis on historical objectivity through an unneutral bias may seem contradictory at first glance, but the central idea here is, as Howard Zinn also mentions, that strictly impartial objectivity without some sense of bias is impossible; therefore, selection and emphasis in historical writing is, as Zinn put it, inevitable. In capturing Howard Zinn's philosophy on selection and emphasis in historical writing, David Detmer states in *Zinnophobia*, "Accordingly, it would appear obvious that historians should (1) give careful thought to the issue of selection, (2) be self-aware about their selection criteria, (3) make the criteria clear to the reader, and (4) be answerable to criticism, not only for making factual or logical errors, but also for making poor choices as to what they, include, exclude, emphasize, and downplay."<sup>11</sup> At minimum, then, having bias when reporting anything, from history and journalism to the chronology of one's day, is not merely a matter of pure subjectivism; instead, Zinn provides sound rules that seek to avoid the immoral variety of selection and emphasis in historical and all other professional writing.

At this point in the discussion, there is a lot to consider, and I can identify at least two primary concerns coming from Zinn's historiography: an argument against neutrality and an argument for ethical considerations in historical writing. First off, the argument for neutrality states that, "To be 'objective' in this sense one must refrain from taking sides on controversial issues; avoid ideological or political commitments; devote oneself to the discovery and presentation of facts, leaving value judgments about those facts to others; and, in general, behave as a neutral, impartial, disinterested, evenhanded judge, not as advocate or propagandist."<sup>12</sup> This kind of argument contains a common standard for professional writing and the recording of facts in fields such as history, political science, and journalism that is, as I will argue, an impossibility. In history specifically, "It is impossible to discuss everything that happened in the past, or even in some finite portion of it, and it would be a very poor narrative that assigned equal emphasis to every topic it

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Newall, "Historiographic Objectivity," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and historiography*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 175.

<sup>11</sup> David Detmer, *Zinnophobia* (Hampshire: Zero Books, 2017), 103-104.

<sup>12</sup> Detmer, 116.

did discuss. So historians must be selective and must make choices.”<sup>13</sup> To elaborate on the inevitability of selection and making choices, David Detmer summarizes Howard Zinn’s analogy that a person cannot be neutral on a moving train. Detmer states that what Zinn means by this is, “society is already moving in some direction rather than in others, with certain values being favored at the expense of others. In such a situation, the decision to refrain from taking sides does not constitute genuine neutrality, but rather acquiescence in the status quo.”<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, this shows the irony behind the idea that in order for historians to be objective and ethical in their professional pursuits, they must be completely neutral when recording facts about the past; however, being that this kind of neutrality is at best undesirable and at worst impossible for reasons provided above, it seems as though this particular standard of objectivity brings about unethical results, including historians blindly following the status quo while being neutral even when the status quo is in need of serious moral change and progress.

I will now return to the notion of ethical considerations given the selective nature of documenting history. As aforementioned, the selective nature of documenting history is not a mere subjectivism, allowing historians to pick and choose whatever they fancy in the interest of constructing *their* histories. On the contrary, I have already provided Howard Zinn’s four part criteria on responsible selection and emphasis when chronicling the past. Moreover, Detmer provides a convincing interpretation of Zinn’s position on responsible selection through what Detmer sees as, “four different, but connected, arguments in support of [Zinn’s] principles [of selection]. I will call these the moral argument, the “counterweight” argument, the causality argument, and the consequentialist argument.”<sup>15</sup> In the interest of the purpose of this essay, I will be focusing on only the first of these four arguments: the moral argument. Most importantly, within this argument are Detmer’s two distinctions between, (a) universal values and parochial values, and (b) ultimate values and instrumental values. As Detmer puts it:

The moral argument can be developed in several ways... One] way is to develop the distinction between universal values and more parochial ones. It is immoral to celebrate the enrichment of one particular culture (a parochial value) when the enrichment is brought about through genocidal campaigns, or through the enslavement of others—actions that violate universal moral principles. Yet another

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<sup>13</sup> Detmer, 117.

<sup>14</sup> Detmer, 118.

<sup>15</sup> Detmer, 109.

way is to employ the distinction between ultimate values and instrumental values. The justification for particular U.S. policies, laws, and actions is instrumental – they are not ends in themselves, but rather are justified only to the extent that they promote more basic values, such as life, liberty, and happiness.<sup>16</sup>

As I see it, Detmer’s point is very much a moral one and runs in conjunction with responsible selection. For, any selection or emphasis that focuses only on the interests of an individual nation (a parochial value) above and beyond the fundamental moral principles of that nation (a universal value) would be considered guilty of irresponsible selection; in addition, any selection and emphasis that focuses only on the laws and policies of an individual nation (an instrumental value) above and beyond the basic moral values attached to those laws and policies (an ultimate value) would be considered equally guilty of irresponsible selection. Ultimately, ethical considerations and moral principles seem to be necessary conditions for responsible selection that are integral to the historiographies of both Zinn and Detmer, and one can’t help but sense an element of moral objectivism through both Kant and Rawls in Detmer’s emphasis on universal and ultimate values.

As I have already alluded, selection and emphasis in historical research and writing is something that history and narration have in common. Like novelists, historians must decide what is significant to the historiographical narrative and what is not. Unlike novelists, however, historians have a primary responsibility to objectivity through facts, evidence, and causal laws that are crucial to their discipline, something I expounded on in detail above. But in addition to this type of objectivity, historians also have the inevitable tasks of selection and emphasis when writing about the past, and this runs parallel to the novelist. I will now return to Graham and Cynthia Macdonald and their article “Explanation in Historiography” where they explain how in addition to macro-historical explanations and their covering laws, there is also the idea in historiography of, “singular causal explanation in the explanation of micro-historical events, particularly the actions of historical agents.”<sup>17</sup> For the Macdonalds, micro-historical events are explained through individual causal relations of particular historical events and persons and are very similar to narrative-based explanations insofar as:

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<sup>16</sup> Detmer, 109.

<sup>17</sup> Graham Macdonald and Cynthia Macdonald, “Explanation in Historiography,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 136.

Historiographic explanation of particular events has sometimes been categorized as *narrative* explanation. Such explanations are said to set events in a context and to place them within a series of events which can be seen to have a connecting thread. It is the connecting thread that supplies the explanatory illumination: it is because of the relevance of the connection that one sees the explained event as being the plausible (or even inevitable) outcome of what has gone before. The event has been made sense of, and so rendering unsurprising, when such a narrative account is provided.”<sup>18</sup>

To add to these comparisons between history and narrative, Peter Kosso’s article “Philosophy of Historiography” mentions how, “Historical events are explained simply in virtue of fitting into a narrative. They are explained when they are situated in their context.”<sup>19</sup> Kosso also relates the idea of a narrative-based historiography to the view that distinct events fill in the larger whole of history. This is evident from Kosso’s writing when he states, “A more sophisticated view of narrative starts by regarding the individual components of the story as the pieces of evidence used to construct the larger description of what happened in the past. Then we can acknowledge that the evidence, the building materials of the narrative, are indeed influenced by the historian.”<sup>20</sup> In continuing the topic of the historian’s influence on the writing of history, Kosso explains, “There is ... a story to tell, but the pieces are neither self-selecting nor self-organizing. The narrator has an active part in preparing and presenting the narrative, and the reader deserves to know what guides the process.”<sup>21</sup> Consequently, as one can well see, selection and emphasis in historiographical writing highlights the narrative aspect of historiography in a way that helps to explain micro-historical events, elucidates the part-whole dynamic of recorded history, and reveals the necessary influence of the historian as the narrator of a bygone reality.

### III

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The next logical move for this paper is to show how selection and emphasis, which are central to a narrative-based historiography, stem from our natural capacities as rational human beings to organize and categorize the world in which we live in order to formulate a better understanding of it. This idea can be summarized through Immanuel Kant’s famous theory known as transcendental

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<sup>18</sup> Macdonald and Macdonald, 136.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Kosso, “Philosophy of Historiography,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 24.

<sup>20</sup> Kosso, 21.

<sup>21</sup> Kosso, 21.

idealism. Briefly, transcendental idealism is the idea that the human mind is comprised in such a way that, to make sense of the world and its contents, human beings underscore any structure and order found in it. We then impose the property of order onto objects of experience in uniquely humanistic ways. For transcendental idealism, it is not the case that order is not already here in some capacity and human minds exclusively impose such order onto the world; on the contrary, the human mind is naturally responsive to and highlights what order there is, then attempts to further understand the world by imposing the property of order onto all objects of experience. More specifically, order here includes, but is not limited to, concepts such as creating forms from particulars, cause-and-effect associations, and the structuring of space and time.

To put this discussion on transcendental idealism in context with the focus of this essay, let's look at another historiographical distinction: that between "subjects of change" and historical epochs. In F. R. Ankersmit's essay "Narrative and Interpretation," Ankersmit discusses Arthur Danto's idea of "subjects of change" from his narrativist philosophy on historiography. Here, Ankersmit writes that subjects of change are corporeal human beings who directly or indirectly changed history in some significant way, and his primary example is Napoleon.<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of this section of my essay, what is most interesting about the notion of subjects of change is actually what is missing from this concept. Ankersmit explains this point on behalf of Hans Michael Baumgartner when he writes:

Needless to say, this is how we intuitively tend to look at the issue: first there is say Napoleon, the subject of change existing in the past itself, and next, we can give an account of his complex path through space and time. And the latter is impossible without the former. But, as Baumgartner insists, in the case of historical phenomena such as "the Middle Ages" there simply *is* no subject of change that is given to us prior to the historiographic narratives. These phenomena lead their lives exclusively, so to speak, in historiographic narratives.<sup>23</sup>

Ankersmit also remarks on the ideas of unity and continuity and how they are only attributable to subjects of change, not to historical epochs such as the Middle Ages. On this, he writes that historical periods and, say, artistic movements such as the Hellenistic Period and French

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<sup>22</sup> F. R. Ankersmit, "Narrative and Interpretation," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 204.

<sup>23</sup> Ankersmit, 204-205.

Impressionism do not come readymade with unity and continuity in space and time, but instead, they create their own unity and continuity through a historiographical narrative. To elaborate, Ankersmit states:

The unity or continuity of persons or individuals such as Caesar or Napoleon is warranted by notions such as “person” or “individual,” hence, by sortal concepts... denoting categories of objects always possessing unity and continuity through time simple because of the meaning of these concepts. And this is essentially different with notions such as “the Middle Ages,” “The French Revolution” or “the Renaissance.” For such typically historiographic notions do not *presuppose* unity and continuity, as is the case with the notion of “person” or “individual,” but *create* them.”<sup>24</sup>

In wrapping this back around to Kant’s transcendental idealism, historical epochs such as Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Modern Era are not anything we find in the actual, real world of objects and sense experience. Instead, these are instances of historians and historiographers putting together the history of the world through narrative-based explanations and titles that help rational human beings better understand the past through a sense of unity and continuity that has been crafted by the mental capacities of order and structure which are natural aspects of the mind that historiographers inevitably use when designating our historical eras and movements. One final point to enhance these ideas on the transcendental nature of narrative-based historiography comes once again from F. R. Ankersmit’s detailed description of both Baumgartner and Danto’s narrativist approaches. On this final point, Ankersmit elegantly writes:

Baumgartner considered the unity and continuity of narrative as the transcendentalist conditions of historical meaning and the transcendentalist standard for measuring the historian’s success in making sense of the past. Unity and continuity are the product of narrative synthesis and do not mirror the features of an object existing in the past itself. This, then, is meaning we should give to Danto’s claim that narrative can explain *as narrative* and that we may discern in narrative explanation what differentiates historiography from the sciences.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ankersmit, 204.

<sup>25</sup> Ankersmit, 205.

Hermeneutics is generally known as the method of interpreting first individual texts, and then the entire socio-historical world. With that in mind, the role of language becomes essential when assessing individual texts for how well they fill in the gaps of our grand historiographical narrative. Similarly, the hermeneutic circle as defined in “Philosophy of Historiography” by Peter Kosso reveals that:

Individual events and actions are understood by being situated in the larger context. But the larger context is understood by being built of individual events. It is a hermeneutic circle, and perhaps the only way to understand other people. Understanding humans may be a fundamentally different process than understanding the mindless objects studied in natural science. Historiography may be fundamentally distinct from science.<sup>26</sup>

To bring these ideas back full circle to the different ways, both macro-historically and micro-historically, of interpreting and explaining the past, Rudolf A. Makkreel’s article “Hermeneutics,” offers a summary of August Wilhelm Boeckh’s four types of interpretation. But I will be focusing only on the first two given they are most relevant to my topic:

Boeckh distinguishes four kinds of interpretation, the first two of which are based on the objective conditions of what is communicated and the second two on their subjective conditions. While (1) grammatical interpretation proceeds from the literal meaning of the understanding of objective texts, (2) historical interpretation proceeds from the meaning of words in reference to the material relations and context of the text...<sup>27</sup>

Makkreel continues by stating, “Historical interpretation outranks grammatical interpretation because the meaning of a text is not exhausted by the words themselves, but lies in ideas referring to actual conditions.”<sup>28</sup> The actual conditions the author refers to are the conditions of one’s socio-

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<sup>26</sup> Peter Kosso, “Philosophy of Historiography” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 24.

<sup>27</sup> Rudolf A. Makkreel, “Hermeneutics” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 531.

<sup>28</sup> Makkreel, 531.

historical world that play a major role in the interpretation of individual texts. Having said that, these conditions exist as part and parcel of our social-historical world as do the individual texts and readers of those texts. And the conditions of the socio-historical world that constitute our historical interpretations are highly influential to both the grammatical text and its reader. Therefore, in relating back to a previous point from this paper, the idea is, there's a sense of selection and emphasis when it comes to historical interpretation that overlies a purely grammatical interpretation of individual texts. This occurs through our worldviews which accompany all thought and action, including the reading of individual texts, and were developed through historical interpretations which are the result of selection and emphasis of socio-historical objects of experience. Inevitably, this is due to the transcendental nature of the mind discovering and imposing order and structure onto the world, and pulling from that structure, an internal arrangement and rearrangement of individual world views created and cultivated through selection and emphasis which ultimately constructs our overarching belief systems. To me, this is what it means to mentally shift from the natural capacities of the mind during early adolescence, to developing those capacities into a mature worldview, with adjoining standards of right and wrong, well into adulthood. To elaborate even further, Boeckh once again quotes from Makkeel to develop this point when he writes, "the people to whom [the writer] is addressing himself will not only understand his words grammatically, but will in connection with them think of more than they actually say, because their content stands in real connection with historically given circumstances and thus reminds every thinking person of these relations."<sup>29</sup> Consequently, not only is selection and emphasis in historical writing inevitable, as was accounted for by both Zinn and Detmer, but equally inevitable is the transcendental nature of the human mind which categorizes objects of experience. This leads to a hermeneutic circle of, for example, taking with us to the readings of individual texts prior knowledge of the world that we have already learned, know and believe, and learning from those individual texts through that prior knowledge. From there, what human beings have learned from individual texts is taken back into the world of objects of experience for a more complete viewpoint on the entirety of our socio-historical reality and past, continuing the cycle of learning more about ourselves, other people, and the world in which we live.

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<sup>29</sup> Makkreel, 532.

In the end, the characteristics of historiography run parallel to both science and narration given that historiographical pursuits contain, like science, causal laws for macro-historical descriptions, and like narrative writing, are matters of selection and emphasis. However, unlike narrative writing, *responsible* selection and emphasis require historiographical criteria that are grounded in objective reality and moral principles. Furthermore, the very process of selection and emphasis underscores the transcendental idealism of all historians as they find and impose order in and on the history of the world. And finally, the hermeneutic circle which moves from the individual historical text to a better understanding of our entire story about the past, and back from our entire story about the past to a better understanding of the individual historical text also shows the manner in which historians comprehend the past, learn from it, write on it, and carry that comprehension, learning, and writing forward to the readers of world history.

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# **STUDENT VOICES**

**[On Epictetus, Plato, Descartes]**

# Guided Meditation: *Experiencing Epictetus*

Garrett Varner, Shandan Johnson



“On a voyage when your boat has anchored, if you want to get fresh water you may pick up a small shellfish and a vegetable by the way, but you must keep your mind fixed on the boat and look around frequently in case the captain calls. If he calls you must let all those other things go so that you will not be tied up and thrown on the ship like livestock. That is how it is in life too: if you are given a wife and a child instead of a vegetable and a small shellfish, that will not hinder you; but if the captain calls, let all those things go and run to the boat without turning back; and if you are old, do not even go very far from the boat, so that when the call comes you are not left behind.”

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## Epictetus, *The Encheiridion* (Passage 7)

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**Garrett Varner**

*I am a passenger on board this ship which will inevitably journey to and arrive at its destination. However, there are certain things that I need to sustain basic life in that ship. Freshwater is a necessity, but things like shellfish and vegetables are additional goodies that serve a sense of temporal satisfaction. Then the captain calls. I exercise the most self-control and maturity whenever I freely and willingly forsake all (letting go) in order to live “in accord with nature”. As I grow old and have now become slower than I had once been in my youth, I have let go of temporal and earthly necessities that were used to bring me joy and have drastically shortened the distance between myself and the ship. The essence of a life lived in wisdom is too short not to heed the voice of the captain.*

**Shandan Johnson**

*Being on the ship, I see the wonders of the ocean and all that is surrounding me. I see the fish with their vast colors, and the turtles as they swim on their way through the water. The ship pauses near the shore, and so I heed the moment to explore my surroundings. The cold water comes up to my ankles and gives off a relaxing feeling. As I drift through the shallow*

*water, I notice some beautiful shells. I want to keep them by my side forever to remind me of this moment. One shell, I fell in love with both the color and the shape. The outer coating was smooth and soft to the touch with no jagged edges. It truly is the most magnificent thing I had ever seen. I put the shell up to my ear, and I can hear the tranquil sounds. I keep listening and almost forget where I am for, I could stay here forever.*

*But then in the distance, I hear the captain call. For I was not ready to leave the new treasure I had just discovered. I wanted to stay where I was and bask in the comforting sunlight, listening to the sounds of nature. I wanted to call this my new home. A feeling of missing out fills my entire being. Deep down, I knew a life on the shore was not for me. I have travelled all this way not to stay stagnant in the one area, yet to continue my journey. Acknowledging this, I put the shell back into the water. I smile as a small crab scurries into it and claims it as its home. I know in my heart that the shell will be in good company and can be cherished with a purpose by another, not just used as a souvenir. I say goodbye to all the creature and all the items I had seen on my temporary stop. I am thankful to the memories that were created when I paused by the shore. I hope to see the shell again in the future, but for now it was my time to go.*



“Remember, you must behave as you do at a banquet. Something is passed around and comes to you: reach out your hand politely and take some. It goes by: do not hold it back. It has not arrived yet: do not stretch your desire out toward it, but wait until it comes to you. In the same way toward your children, in the same way toward your wife, in the same way toward public office, in the same way toward wealth, and you will be fit to share a banquet with the gods. But if when things are set in front of you, you do not take them but despise them, then you will not only share a banquet with the gods but also be a ruler along with them. For by acting in this way Diogenes and Heraclitus and people like them were deservedly gods and were deservedly called gods.”

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### **Epictetus, *The Encheiridion* (Passage 15)**

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### **Garrett Varner**

*It is a very futile exercise of the mind to hope for and anticipate those things which are being passed around the table as if the things in themselves were in my control. I only have control over the way in which I receive those things of life which come to me. Patience is not so much the key to obtaining earthly possessions as much as it is the means by which we rightly receive all things in life that come to us, even those things which include our experiences. The ability to desire and let go in the service of something better is very joyous indeed.”*

## Student Voice on Plato and Descartes



*Plato's Allegory of the Cave sheds light on those who are stuck in their own imagination and are ignorant of what is all around them. Plato sets the story in a cave, which is inhabited with prisoners who know nothing more than the shadows and echoed voices of the puppeteers. The prisoners' reality is what is known as the world of images. Until that changes for one of the prisoners. A guide takes one of the prisoners up the path to the opening of the cave, and then leads him outside. For once, the world is more than shadows and echoes; it is trees, grass, a stream of water, and the sun. The newly visible world is a shock to the prisoner, and it is a lot to take in. For he was forced to believe a deranged view of the world, from when he was a child to just before he was released. The guide ensures the prisoner that he is ready, and in the experience, he forces the prisoner to see the Good, which is true reality. The prisoner feels a sense of pity for the ones that are still captive, but he seems to be grateful to understand the reason for being. The prisoner now can view life for more than just shadows of inanimate objects that he once knew, and he is able to reason for himself. He is in control of his wisdom, and of the puppeteers, for he is now aided in a lesson to not take freedom of thought and wisdom for granted.*

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### Faith Taylor on Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*

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*Throughout the semester I have found that I have enjoyed a majority of the readings, but I found that I really enjoyed Descartes work, *First Meditation*. I enjoyed that Descartes was unbiased in his work, he looked at both sides of whether or not everything around us is just made up, and if the creator God is really just deceiving us. I also like that Descartes says that although his and other people's beliefs or opinions may be right or wrong, you need to put that past you, and aim for knowledge only of the truth. To me this is huge, because nowadays you see people that will never admit that they are wrong just to protect their own egos and what not. I do not understand why people cannot accept being wrong. I feel that if you are presented correct or corrected knowledge, that's what you should resonate with solely, so you can correctly educate yourself and others, to protect from things like fake news or post truth. Descartes also describes how hard it is to even turn against your own opinions and beliefs, and I wonder if he explains this to further encourage others to seek truth no matter how hard it may be. Descartes is admirable because his own ego and livelihood are less important than false knowledge. Furthermore, I believe the malicious demon in modern day are those who gossip and are insincere and spread lies and fake news. Those people intentionally cause people to stray from the truth, but as Descartes paints the picture, the malicious demon cannot affect your already-known knowledge of truth. Truth is supreme for Descartes, as it should be with the modern world to end things like fake news and petty gossip.*

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### **Faith Taylor on Descartes' *First Meditation***

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# **TRANSLATION**

**["Die Seele," by Hildegard von Bingen]**



## Die Seele

*Die Seele ist wie ein Wind,  
der über die Kräuter weht,  
wie der Tau,  
der über die Wiesen träufelt,  
wie die Regenluft,  
die wachsen macht.*

*Desgleichen ströme der Mensch  
Wohlfollen aus auf alle,  
die da Sehnsucht tragen.*

*Ein Wind sei er,  
der den Elenden hilft,  
ein Tau,  
der die Verlassenen tröstet.*

*Er sei wie die Regenluft,  
die die Ermatteten aufrichtet  
und sie mit Liebe erfüllt  
wie Hungernde.*

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**Hildegard von Bingen  
(1098-1179)**

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## The Soul

*The soul is like a soft wind,  
that is blowing gently over herbaceous  
plants,  
like the dew  
that is pouring over the meadows,  
like the rain filled air,  
that makes things grow.*

*By the same token, let man cascade  
with goodwill all those  
who bear longing*

*May he be the wind  
that helps the needy,  
the dew  
that comforts the abandoned.*

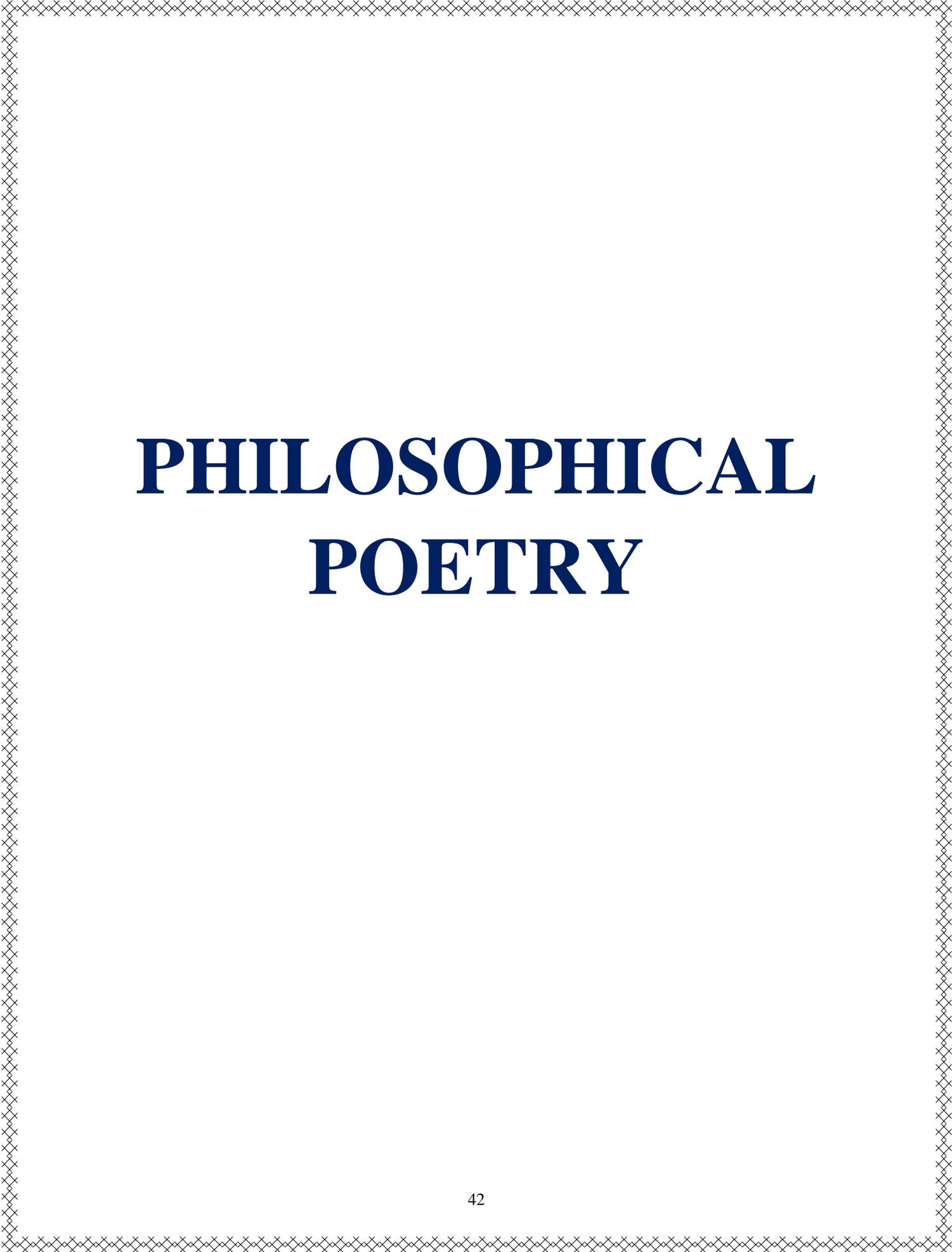
*May he be the rain filled air  
that raises up the weary  
and sates them with love  
like the hungry.*

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**Martina James**

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# **PHILOSOPHICAL POETRY**



## *Habit Forming*

*Virtues are acts  
that must be performed  
with great frequency  
to form  
a pattern of joy.  
Hands must give  
often.  
Lips must smile  
more than once.  
Minds must think and care  
in perpetuity,  
to make happiness habitual.  
Good virtue  
is a constant  
choice.  
Morality must be repeatedly  
tested.  
Will must be continuously  
stretched,  
so acquired goodness  
can grow  
and content  
can last.*

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**Kayla Vasilko**

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## *Goodness doesn't mean Kindness Anymore*

Good means powerful,  
persuasive, unreal.  
It is not what you are,  
But *how you* feel.  
Good means victory,  
unerring titles,  
always being right.  
It is not a label of morality,  
of darkness or light.  
Good is a test of adequacy,  
a necessary deception.  
It means cutting in line,  
owning tilted perception.  
Good means possessing the ability to get  
ahead.  
To take care of yourself,  
deviate from where you're led.  
Good means lavish conditions,  
cheating to “survive.”  
Quality of acts stops mattering,  
as long as you are comfortably alive. Good  
is always good  
until for *us* it becomes bad.  
It is no longer purposeful kindness  
to keep the world from being sad  
Now, good means personal triumph,  
at any cost.  
Regardless of what is *really* good,  
or the virtues that are lost.

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**Kayla Vasilko**

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