



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

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Welcome to the Fall 2003 edition of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy*. We are pleased to present three papers of interest to teachers of philosophy, and several reviews of books that can be used in the philosophy classroom.

The first paper, "A Graduate Seminar on Teaching Philosophy," by Martin Benjamin, presents the history, objectives, content, syllabus, and required readings of a seminar he initiated at Michigan State University for graduate students in philosophy who are preparing for a teaching career in philosophy. Benjamin includes in his presentation a full syllabus for the fifteen-week course, and the abbreviated version he employed in seminars sponsored by the American Association of Philosophy Teachers and the American Philosophical Association at the AAPT's biennial Summer Workshop/Conference on Teaching. Benjamin concludes his paper with some thoughtful reflections on his experiences as director of these seminars.

The second paper, "Teaching 'Inference to the Best Philosophical Explanation,'" by David Martens, offers what the author calls a "script" for an exercise intended as a component of a course in epistemology. The instructor and students enact an analysis of propositional knowledge whose further purpose is the teaching of the process of inference to the best explanation (IBE). Noting that IBE is central to the concept of justification in science, the author argues that the systematic teaching of IBE to upper level undergraduates and to graduate students provides students with useful skills in philosophical analysis as well as reinforcing central concepts of epistemology. The paper contains example cases in each of the five "acts" of the script, to which is added a prologue and epilogue, and two of the handouts the author distributes to his students during the various phases of the exercise. Individual "scenes" in each act describe points made by the instructor about the example under analysis and issues about them that the students and the instructor ponder together. The article is a unique example of a rigorous attempt to describe a complex classroom procedure.

The third and final paper, "Ethics in Film," by Edward Halper, describes one element of a course developed by the author for teaching foundational concepts in ethics. Believing that some films provide students with "moral examples" for discussion and analysis, Professor Halper describes one such film at length, and discusses the kinds of moral analyses the scenario and its characters may inspire. The film is Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. This complex film, with its plot, sub-plots, and

frequently morally-conflicted personages, offers moral dilemmas that provoke the student to formulate criteria that are morally pertinent to them, and eventually to appreciate the value of moral theories that attempt to justify the criteria. The article concludes with some remarks on practical questions regarding the use of films in ethics courses.

We encourage our readers to suggest themselves as reviewers of books and other material that they think may be especially good for classroom use. Please remember again that our publication is devoted to pedagogy and not to theoretical discussions of philosophical issues, and this purpose should also be borne in mind when reviewing material for our publication.

As always, we encourage our readers to write for our publication. We welcome papers that respond, comment on or take issue with any of the material that appears within our pages.

The following guidelines for submissions should be followed:

- The author's name, the title of the paper and full mailing address should appear on a separate sheet of paper. Nothing that identifies the author or his or her institution should appear within the body or within the endnotes of the paper. The title of the paper should appear on the top of the paper itself.
 - Four complete copies of the paper should be sent.
 - Authors should adhere to the production guidelines that are available from the APA and that are published in the present edition of the *APA Newsletters*. The most important features of those guidelines are the following:
 - Adhere to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.
 - Use as little formatting as possible. Details like page numbers, headers, footers, and columns will be added later. Use tabs instead of multiple spaces for indenting. Use *italics* instead of underlining. Use an "em dash" (—) instead of a double hyphen (—).
 - Use endnotes instead of footnotes. Examples of proper endnote style:
John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 90.
See Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are they? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" *Noûs*, 34 (2000): 31-55.
 - If a bibliography is included, please use the following format:
Warnke, Georgia. *Legitimate Differences: Interpretation in the Abortion Controversy and other Public Debates*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
Austin J. L. "A Plea for Excuses." In *Philosophical Papers* (2nd ed.), edited by J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock. 176-77. New York: Oxford, 1970.
- All material submitted to the *Newsletter* should be available on a Windows-readable computer disk, but don't send the disk with the submitted paper. The editors
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will request the disk when the paper is ready to be published. In writing your paper to disk, please do not use your wordprocessor's footnote or endnote function; all notes should be added manually at the end of the paper.

- All articles submitted to the *Newsletter* are blind-reviewed by the members of the editorial committee. They are:
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ARTICLES

A Graduate Seminar on Teaching Philosophy

Martin Benjamin

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I first began teaching a course on how to teach philosophy as a result of a visit from a number of graduate students who, in 1986, expressed an interest in learning more about teaching. As we spoke I recalled a passage from Kenneth E. Eble's *The Craft of Teaching*:

Teaching as a subject, among graduate students who have teaching responsibilities, meets most of the general specifications for a good seminar—a place for exchanging information, for examining research critically, for discussing experiences in teaching, and for fostering continuing study. Students will have common experiences and interests and can examine in common the knowledge useful to the topic at hand. The professor cannot so easily slip into the role of expert and become the lecturer, nor need many of the topics useful to teaching be put off until the students have prepared seminar papers. The very conduct of the seminar—how students learn in this setting—is in itself part of the substance of the course. In addition, the faculty needs this kind of exposure. The teaching seminars are not the property of the 'teaching' specialist; rather they are the common enterprise of faculty and students in a relationship as colleagues. Seminars in teaching should be a routine part of graduate study for all students planning to teach. They should carry credit and be as demanding as any graduate work.¹

Eble's sentiments had always made intuitive sense to me. So together with the head of the graduate student association, I proposed a 3-credit graduate seminar on teaching to our department chair. With the commitment of a number of graduate students to enroll in such a seminar if offered, the chair listed it for the next academic year. The seminar ran for ten weeks (at

the time, the University was on the quarter system). I offered the seminar again six years later and as a compressed, non-credit, version four years after that. When the Department revised the graduate program a year or so later, it added two new required seminars, one of which was a 3-credit seminar on teaching, offered in the spring of even-numbered years for all students in the Ph.D. program.² (The other required seminar was a 3-credit 'proseminar' to be offered every year to orient entering students to graduate study.)

The teaching seminar has four principal objectives:

1. To enable participants to develop a better understanding of teaching in general and the special nature and problems of teaching philosophy;
2. To enable participants to develop their identities as philosophy teachers (effective teaching, I believe, is highly personalized);
3. To acquaint participants with some of the rich literature on teaching and teaching philosophy; and
4. (As with any graduate seminar) to enable participants to learn more about philosophy and to improve their skills in philosophical understanding and professional writing.

The description of the course on teaching philosophy that is now required of all Ph.D. students in our department follows.

Content of Seminar

The seminar begins with a general overview of college teaching and, for legitimacy as well as inspiration, a discussion of John Ladd's account of Kant as a teacher.³ Most people do not know that Kant received tenure for his fine teaching rather than for his publications. Ladd emphasizes that "for Kant philosophy and teaching were intimately bound up with each other as they were for Socrates," and that "Kant's teaching was based on a carefully considered theory of what philosophy is good for as well as a theory of how philosophy fits into higher education." I stress that one's teaching should be based on a carefully considered conception of philosophy. Hence, participants are urged, in shaping their identities as philosophy teachers, to reflect on their conception of philosophy and on their understanding, in the context of the college curriculum, of its aims and nature. Thus, a good part of the philosophical substance of my seminar consists of metaphysics-philosophy.⁴

The Syllabus for the Seminar on Teaching

The seminar meets twice weekly for 15 weeks. Each meeting is identified below by a separate heading. Individual reading selections and articles are noted below.

Texts:

- (1) Kenneth Eble, *The Craft of Teaching: A Guide to Mastering the Professor's Art*, 2nd ed., (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1988).
- (2) Tziporah Kasachkoff, ed., *In the Socratic Tradition: Essays on Teaching Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).
- (3) Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, 3rd ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2001).
- (4) Course Pack ('CP': selection of articles noted below)

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week 1

Introduction

Teaching and Teaching Philosophy: An Overview

John Ladd, "Kant as a Teacher," *Teaching Philosophy* 5, No. 1 (1982): 1-9.

Tziporah Kasachkoff, "Introduction," *In the Socratic Tradition*: xv-xxiii.

Martin Benjamin, "A Seminar on Teaching Philosophy," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 259-68.

Eble, *The Craft of Teaching*: 1-41.

Week 2:

The Classroom: Getting Off on the Right Foot

Eble: 45-67.

Jeffrey Wolcowitz, "The First Day of Class," in Margaret Morganroth Gullette, ed., *The Art and Craft of Teaching* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982): 10-24.

Lecturing; Conducting Discussions; Leading Seminars; Advising Students

Eble: 68-122.

Week 3:

Assigning Texts, Giving Tests, Determining Grades, and other Important Stuff

Eble: 125-94.

Robert Paul Wolff, "A Discourse on Grading," in *The Ideal of the University* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969): 58-68.

Learning to Teach

Eble: 197-226

Week 4:

Philosophy Teaching and the Nature of Philosophy

Patrick McKee, "Philosophy and Wisdom," *Teaching Philosophy* 13, No. 4 (1990): 325-30.

Kai Nielsen, "Philosophy and the Search for Wisdom," *Teaching Philosophy* 16, No. 1 (1993): 5-20.

Joel Marks, "Teaching Philosophy, Being a Philosopher," *Teaching Philosophy* 16, No. 2 (1993): 99-104.

Konstantin Kolenda, "Rethinking the Teaching of Philosophy," *Teaching Philosophy* 15, No. 2 (1992): 121-32.

Sidney Gendin, "Am I Wicked?" *Teaching Philosophy* 18, No. 2 (1995): 167-68.

Dôna Warren, "Those Who Can, Do: A Response to Gendin," *Teaching Philosophy* 19, No. 3 (1996): 275-9.

Varieties of The Introductory Course in Philosophy (I)

Steven M. Cahn, "Teaching Introductory Philosophy," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 3-5.

Douglas P. Lackey, "The Historical vs. The Problems Approach to the Introduction to Philosophy," *Metaphilosophy* 5, No. 2 (1974): 169-72.

Martin Benjamin, "Syllabus, Paper Assignments, Final for PHL 200H" (handout).

Newton Garver, "Introducing Philosophy," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 7-20.

V. Alan White and Jo A. Chern, "Teaching Introductory Philosophy—A Restricted Topical Approach," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 21-8.

Week 5:

Varieties of The Introductory Course in Philosophy (II)

William B. Irvine, "Teaching Without Books," *Teaching Philosophy* 16, No. 1 (1993): 35-46.

Jeremiah Patrick Conway, "Presupposing Self-Reflection," *Teaching Philosophy* 22, No. 1 (1999): 41-52.

Julie Eflin, "Improving Student Papers in Introduction to Philosophy Courses," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 47-53.

Jane Freimiller, "The One Page Philosopher: Short Writing Assignments for Introductory Classes," *Teaching Philosophy* 20, No. 3 (1997): 269-76.

Jeffrey K. McDonough, "Rough Drafts without Tears: A Guide to a Manageable Procedure for Improving Student Writing," *Teaching Philosophy* 23, No. 2 (2000): 127-37.

Helping Our Students Improve

Steven M. Cahn, "How to Improve Your Teaching," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 31-5.

Jonathan E. Adler, "Reading and Interpretation: A Heuristic for Improving Students' Comprehension of Philosophy Texts," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 37-46.

Dôna Warren, "How Many Angels can Dance on the Head of a Pin?: The Many Kinds of Questions in Philosophy," *Teaching Philosophy*, 21, No. 3 (1998): 257-73.

Anne-Marie Bowery and Michael Beaty, "The Use of Reading Questions As a Pedagogical Tool: Fostering an Interrogative, Narrative Approach to Philosophy," *Teaching Philosophy* 22, No. 1 (1999): 17-40.

Week 6:

Debate and Discussion

James E. Roper and Timothy W. Sommers, "Debate as a Tool in Teaching Business Ethics," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 91-103.

Janice Moulton, "Dualism in Philosophy," *Teaching Philosophy* 3, No. 4 (1980): 419-33.

Susan Peterson, "Are You Teaching Philosophy or Playing the Dozens?" *Teaching Philosophy* 3, No. 4 (1980): 435-42.

Charles Taliaferro and Thomas Chance, "Philosophers, Red Tooth and Claw," *Teaching Philosophy* 18, No. 1 (1995): 15-30.

Neil Thomason, "Philosophy Discussions With Less B.S.," *Teaching Philosophy* 18, No. 1 (1995): 15-30.

Dealing with Student Relativism

Steven Satris, "Student Relativism," *Teaching Philosophy* 9, No. 3 (1986): 193-205.

Roger Paden, "The Student Relativist as a Philosopher," *Teaching Philosophy* 10, No. 2 (1987): 97-101.

Richard W. Momeyer, "Teaching Ethics to Student Relativists," *Teaching Philosophy* 18, No. 4 (1995): 301-11.

Week 7:

Teaching Ethics

James B. Gould, "Drunk Driving in Introductory Ethics," *Teaching Philosophy* 21, No. 4 (1998): 339-60.

Deborah R. Barnbaum, "Teaching Empathy in Medical Ethics: The Use of Lottery Assignments," *Teaching Philosophy* 24, No. 1 (2001): 63-75.

Heather J. Gert, "Two Ways to Teach Premedical Students the Ethical Value of Discussion and Information Gathering," *Teaching Philosophy* 24, No. 3 (2001): 233-40.

James D. Shumaker, "Moral Reasoning and Story Telling," *Teaching Philosophy* 23, No. 1 (2000): 15-21.

Joan C. Callahan, "From the Applied to the Practical: Teaching Ethics for Use," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 57-69.

John Kleinig, "Teaching Police Ethics as Professional Ethics," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 71-80.

Marshall Missner, "A Social Dilemma Game for an Ethics Class," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 81-9.

The Ethics of Teaching: Advocacy or Neutrality?

Michael Goldman, "On Moral Relativism, Advocacy, and Teaching Normative Ethics," *Teaching Philosophy* 4, No. 1 (1981): 1-11.

Linda Bomstad, "Advocating Procedural Neutrality," *Teaching Philosophy*, 18, No. 3 (1995): 197-210.

Mike W. Martin, "Advocating Values: Professionalism in Teaching Ethics," *Teaching Philosophy*, 20, No. 1 (March 1997): 19-34.

Week 8:

Teaching Logic and Critical Thinking

Robert Ennis, "Critical Thinking: A Streamlined Conception," *Teaching Philosophy* 14, No. 1 (1991): 5-24.

Kathleen Dean Moore, "Using Pseudoscience in a Critical Thinking Class," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 145-52.

Theodore A. Gracyk, "A Critical Thinking Portfolio," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 153-9.

Rory J. Conces, "A Participatory Approach to Teaching Critical Reasoning," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 161-5.

Kerry Walters, "The Case of the Slain President," *Teaching Philosophy* 20, No. 1 (1997): 35-47.

Robert Ennis, "Is Critical Thinking Culturally Biased?," *Teaching Philosophy* 21, No. 1 (1998): 15-33.

Teaching History of Philosophy (I)

John McDermott, "The Teaching of Philosophy-Historically," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 169-80.

Michael Goldman, "Dead White Guys," *Teaching Philosophy* 14, No. 2 (1991): 155-64.

Norman Freund, "If It's Tuesday, This Must be Bentham," *Teaching Philosophy* 16, No. 4 (1993): 315-25.

Jonathan Bennett, "Translating Locke, Berkeley, and Hume into English," *Teaching Philosophy*, 17, No. 3 (1994): 262-69.

Week 9:

History of Philosophy (II)

Anne Marie Bowery, "Drawing Shadows on the Wall: Teaching Plato's Allegory of the Cave," *Teaching Philosophy* 24, No. 2 (2001): 121-33.

Mark O. Gilbertson, "A Meeting-of-Minds Discussion as a Final Exam in History of Philosophy," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 181-84.

Merold Westphal, "A User-Friendly Copernican Revolution," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 187-91.

James P. Cadello, "Charting Kant," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 193-96.

John McCumber, "On Teaching Hegel: Problems and Possibilities," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 197-207.

Merold Westphal, "Hegel and Family Values," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 209-13.

Richard Hogan, "Teaching Nietzsche," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 215-23.

Aesthetics, Philosophy of Religion, and Other Areas of Philosophy

Ronald Moore, "The Case Method Approach to the Teaching of Aesthetics," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 107-18.

Louis Pojman, "Teaching Philosophy of Religion," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 121-32.

Michael Martin, "Three Courses in Philosophy of Religion," *In the Socratic Tradition*: 133-42.

Week 10:

Issues of Race, Gender, Culture, and Diversity

Martin Benjamin, "Diversity and Pluralism in the Curriculum," *Teaching Philosophy* 14, No. 2 (1991): 123-6.

Lawrence Blum, "Philosophy and the Values of a Multicultural Community," *Teaching Philosophy* 14, No. 2 (1991): 127-34.

Valerie E. Broin, "Integrating Critical Analysis: Philosophy with a Multicultural and Gender Focus," *Teaching Philosophy*, 16, No. 4 (1993): 301-14.

Charles Mills, "Non-Cartesian Sums: Philosophy and the African-American Experience," *Teaching Philosophy*, 17, No. 3 (1994): 223-43.

Kayley Vernallis, "Pearls of Wisdom: An Exercise in Promoting Multicultural Understanding and Philosophical Engagement," *Teaching Philosophy*, 23, No. 1 (2000): 43-51.

Evaluation

Kenneth R. Howe, "An Evaluation Primer for Philosophy Teachers," *Teaching Philosophy*, 11, No. 4 (1988): 315-28.

Kenneth R. Howe, "Evaluating Philosophy Teaching: Assessing Student Mastery of Philosophical Objectives in Nursing Ethics," *Teaching Philosophy* 5, No. 1 (1982): 11-22.

Week 11:

Service Learning

Patrick Fitzgerald, "Service-Learning and the Socially Responsible Ethics Class," *Teaching Philosophy* 20, No. 3 (1997): 251-67.

Stephen L. Esquith, "War, Political Violence, and Service Learning," *Teaching Philosophy* 23, No. 3 (2000): 241-54.

Teachers-Student Relationships: May They Include Friendship and Love?

Peter J. Markie, "Professors, Students, and Friendship," in Steven M. Cahn, ed., *Morality, Responsibility, and the University: Studies in Academic Ethics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 134-49.

Rodger Jackson and Peter L. Hagen, "The Ethics of Faculty-Student Friendships," *Teaching Philosophy* 24, No. 1 (2001): 1-18.

Rosemary Putnam Tong, "Consensual Sex: Close Encounters of a Dangerous Kind," *Teaching Philosophy* 22, No. 2 (1999): 123-33.

Week 12:

Syllabi and Sample Assignments for Introductory and Specialized Courses Prepared by Participants in the Seminar (I)

Syllabi and Sample Assignments for Introductory and Specialized Courses Prepared by Participants in the Seminar (II)

Weeks 13-15:

Work-in-Progress: Discussion of Students' Abstracts/Outlines and Drafts of Term Papers

Written Requirements for the Seminar

1. *Short Papers*: Seminar Participants will review two books as if they had been invited to do so by the book review editor of *Teaching Philosophy*. The instructor will provide the guidelines that the journal distributes to book reviewers. All participants will first review the most recent edition of Anthony Weston's (very short) *A Rulebook for Arguments*. This review is due during the sixth week of class. The second review may be on a comparatively recent book of the seminar participant's choosing (possibly from a list of books awaiting review by *Teaching Philosophy*). This review is due in class seven weeks after the first review.

2. *Term Paper*: A term paper in the form of a possible article for *Teaching Philosophy* will be due on the first day of exam week. The paper may be entirely free-standing or it may continue a dialogue or develop a theme that has already been initiated in the pages of this journal. Participants are strongly encouraged to peruse past volumes of the journal in the library to get the feel of nearly 25 years of dialogical publication in the area. Seminar

participants are encouraged to meet with the instructor to explore possible topics and the structure of the paper.

Thirteen copies of a one-page Prospectus for the term papers should be submitted four weeks before the term paper is due. The prospectus should include: (a) a clear, brief statement of the problem or issue to be addressed; (b) an indication of how the author proposes to address the problem or issue; and (c) a preliminary bibliography.

Copies of each participant's prospectus will be distributed to the other seminar participants; the instructor will make comments on each student's prospectus and return it to its author in class four days after it is due.

3. *Sample Syllabi*: Seminar participants will prepare syllabi and sample assignments for both an introductory course in philosophy and a more advanced course related to the participant's area of specialization or special interest in philosophy. These syllabi will be due in class in week 11 and will provide the focus of discussion for week 12. We will discuss each participant's syllabi.

4. *Reflections Papers*: Eight very short papers (no more than one double-spaced page) will be due in class once a week beginning with week 7. In these papers students will respond to two different questions:

- (1) What, to your mind, is the most interesting or important unanswered question (namely, a question that is important, but to which there is, at this point, no clear or obvious answer) raised in or by the class meeting prior to the day the paper is due, and why?
- (2) What, to your mind, is the most interesting or important point raised in or by the reading assigned for the day the paper is due and why?

These papers are due at the beginning of class. They will be read, evaluated, and returned at the following class meeting. Late papers will be accepted only in very unusual circumstances and only if cleared with the instructor in advance. Late papers not arranged in advance will receive a grade of 0.0. To do well on these papers, students must answer the question being asked.

Students in the first half of the alphabet will submit their Reflections papers on Tuesdays for the first five weeks in which they are due and on Thursdays after this. Students in the second half of the alphabet will submit Reflections papers on Thursdays for the first five weeks in which they are due and on Tuesdays after this.

Since each student will have ten opportunities to write the eight papers, there will be no make-ups except in cases of extended serious illness or family emergency. Students may, if they wish, write up to ten reflections papers, in which case only the best eight will be considered for purposes of the final grade.

Final Grades

The first book review will count 10 percent, the second 24 percent, for a total of 34 percent of the final grade. The Reflection papers count 2 percent each, for a total of 16 percent; and the term paper counts 50 percent. Improvement in written work and informed, thoughtful, and fairly regular participation in seminar meetings will also be considered in determining the final grade.

Commentary on the Requirements of the Course

In evaluating the two short papers which take the form of book reviews for *Teaching Philosophy*, and the term paper, which is written as an article for *Teaching Philosophy*, I stress professional standards and writing for publication. I encourage students to read and re-read Bennett and Gorovitz's "Improving Academic Writing"⁵ and I identify, and deduct for, writing that does not come up to professional standards. A seminar on teaching is a

good place to do this because the subject matter is, as a rule, not as technical and difficult for students to master as it is in other seminars. In other seminars students may need to spend so much time understanding the material and finding something useful to say about it that they may have little or no time to bring their writing up to professional standards. A seminar on teaching, however, provides a good opportunity for this sort of development. And, in fact, a number of book reviews written for this seminar have found their way into print in the pages of *Teaching Philosophy* or *AAPT* (American Association of Philosophy Teachers) *News*.

I have found it useful to invite (where possible) members of my department—logicians, historians of philosophy, and those with experience in using debate in the classroom and in service-learning—to join us when the class is discussing matters in which they have expertise. This is a useful practice, for not only are we joined by faculty who know more about the subject matter than I do, but it also shows that such seminars are not, as Eble puts it, "the property of the teaching specialist; rather they are the common enterprise of faculty and students in a relationship of colleagues."

The last three weeks of the seminar are a work-in-progress seminar where each participant presents an abstract, or outline, or part or all of a draft of his or her term paper, and receives constructive comments on the work from other seminar participants. Not only does each participant receive help with his or her own paper, but he or she also learns from what the others are doing. I try to remain silent during these in-class discussions, but take notes and send authors comments via email later that night. The work-in-progress part of the seminar has great educational value and contributes to better, more polished and professional final papers.

Finally, the Reflections papers, which I use in every course I teach, from introductory courses to graduate seminars, provide practice in finding good, unanswered philosophical questions. Getting the hang of identifying important, unanswered questions is part of being a good philosopher, but it's also vital to good teaching. One of the most important things we do as teachers is writing good paper assignments and exam questions—questions that exercise the student's capacity for independent philosophical reflection, extending their vision and deepening their thought. The Reflections papers give seminar participants practice in finding good questions; and they assure that at each meeting of the seminar at least half of the participants have done the reading carefully and reflected on it.

Though not included in the syllabus, our discussions are often enriched by the students' own past or current experiences as teachers or teaching assistants. Since the seminar is restricted to those in the Ph.D. program, nearly all participants will have had extensive experience in the classroom. Discussions of their past frustrations as teachers or their daily experiences as teachers are an important component of the seminar.

Seminar on Teaching Philosophy: A Short Version

In 1990 at the initiative of Arnold Wilson, then editor of *Teaching Philosophy*, the Matchette Foundation funded a shortened version of my seminar as part of the Biennial Summer Workshop/Conference on Teaching sponsored by the American Association of Philosophy Teachers (AAPT) (held that year at Indiana University). The seminar met for three hours on each of four consecutive days. Participants were advanced graduate students in philosophy from a variety of universities to whom the readings were distributed in advance. (Subsequent versions of this more intensive seminar have been repeated, under joint sponsorship of AAPT and the American Philosophical Association (APA) at various universities since then.

The schedule and readings that follow are from the AAPT/ APA seminar conducted in the summer of 2002.

Day 1: Philosophy and Philosophy Teaching: An Overview

John Ladd, "Kant as a Teacher," *Teaching Philosophy*, 5, No. 1 (1982): 1-9.

Dôna Warren, "How Many Angels can Dance on the Head of a Pin?: The Many Kinds of Questions in Philosophy," *Teaching Philosophy*, 21, No. 3 (1998): 257-73.

Linda Bomstad, "Advocating Procedural Neutrality," *Teaching Philosophy*, 18, No. 3 (1995): 197-210.

Mike W. Martin, "Advocating Values: Professionalism in Teaching Ethics," *Teaching Philosophy*, 20, No. 1 (March 1997): 19-34.

Day 2: The First Day of Class; Texts; Tests; Grades; and Other

Important Stuff

Jeffrey Wolcowitz, "The First Day of Class," in Margaret Morganroth Gullette, *The Art and Craft of Teaching* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982): 10-24.

Robert Paul Wolff, "A Discourse on Grading," in Wolff, *The Ideal of the University* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969): 58-68.

Kenneth R. Howe, "An Evaluation Primer for Philosophy Teachers," *Teaching Philosophy*, 11, No. 4 (1988): 315-28.

Richard W. Momeyer, "Teaching Ethics to Student Relativists," *Teaching Philosophy*, 18, No. 4 (1995): 301-11.

Day 3: The Introductory Course: Methods; Perspectives; Problems

Stephen M. Cahn, "Teaching Introductory Philosophy," *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy*, (Fall 1986): 10-11.

Douglas P. Lackey, "The Historical vs. The Problems Approach to Introduction to Philosophy," *Metaphilosophy*, 5, No. 2 (1974): 169-72.

V. Alan White, "A Single-Topic Introductory Philosophy: An Update," *Teaching Philosophy*, 19, No. 2 (1996): 137-44.

William B. Irvine, "Teaching Without Books," *Teaching Philosophy*, 16, No. 1 (1993): 35-46.

Jonathan Bennett, "On Translating Locke, Berkeley, and Hume into English," *Teaching Philosophy*, 17, No. 3 (1994): 262-69.

Anne-Marie Bowery and Michael Beaty, "The Use of Reading Questions As a Pedagogical Tool: Fostering an Interrogative, Narrative Approach to Philosophy," *Teaching Philosophy* 22, No. 1 (March 1999): 17-40.

Martin Benjamin, Syllabus, Paper Assignments, and Final Exam for Introduction to Philosophy (handout).

Day 4: Diversifying the Classroom

Rosalind Ekman Ladd, "Teaching Philosophy to Jane and Dick," *AAPT News*, 13, No. 3 (1990): 5-7.

Valerie E. Broin, "Integrating Critical Analysis: Philosophy with a Multicultural and Gender Focus," *Teaching Philosophy*, 16, No. 4 (1993): 301-314.

Charles W. Mills, "Non-Cartesian Sums: Philosophy and the African-American Experience," *Teaching Philosophy*, 17, No. 3 (1994): 223-43.

John Immerwahr and Michael Burke, "Race and the Modern Philosophy Course," *Teaching Philosophy*, 16, No. 1 (1993): 21-34.

Endnotes

1. Kenneth E. Eble, *The Craft of Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977): 192.

2. When I offered this required 3-credit semester-long seminar on teaching for the first time in spring 2000, eight students enrolled. When the course was repeated two years later, it had an enrollment of 13 students.

3. **EDITOR'S NOTE:** The seriousness with which Kant took himself as a teacher may be found in his account of how he planned his courses in logic, metaphysics, ethics and geography for the winter semester of academic year 1765-1766. This account is published in his *Nachricht von der Hinrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbenjahre von 1765-1766* (*Gesammelte Schriften* II, 05ff, Berlin Academy Edition). This brief essay—7-8 pages—was called to my attention by Professor Bert P. Helm. It appeared in English translation, by Eugene Kelly, under the title *Immanuel Kant: Information Concerning the Organization of His Lectures for the Winter Semester of 1765-1766* in the *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy* 89, No. 1 (fall 1989): 24-8.

4. John Ladd, "Kant as a Teacher," *Teaching Philosophy* 5, No.1 (January 1982): 1.

5. Jonathan Bennett and Samuel Gorovitz, "Improving Academic Writing," *Teaching Philosophy* 20 (June 1997): 105-20.

Teaching 'Inference to the Best Philosophical Explanation'

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I. Explanationism

Inference to the best explanation (IBE) is a common form of argument in science and is commonly taught by means of scientific examples in Critical Reasoning courses. However, IBE is also common in philosophy and rightly should be taught to philosophy students by means of philosophical examples. My purpose in this paper is to describe a method for teaching graduate and upper-level undergraduate philosophy students how to recognize, construct, and evaluate inferences to the best philosophical explanation. I will describe the method in application in an epistemology course but the method is easily adaptable for other sorts of philosophy courses.

The reader should not doubt that IBE is common in philosophical theory and practice. For one thing, IBE is part of a common but controversial sort of philosophical theory about justification. As some philosophers describe it, explanationism is "The epistemological view that epistemic justification [in the 'property' sense] *should* be understood in terms of" IBE, where IBE is "the selection (and justification [in the 'process' sense]) of an hypothesis on the basis of its offering an optimal explanation of the relevant data."¹ Described this way, explanationism is a substantive theory about the role of IBE in the property or concept of justification. But IBE is also part of a widespread justificational practice in philosophy. Even a casual survey of recent literature shows that very many philosophers routinely offer IBEs in support of their favored philosophical positions on all sorts of issues inside and outside of epistemology.² This practice conforms to what I will call methodological explanationism, the view that it is both *permissible* and *good* to select and justify (in the 'process' sense) philosophical positions by IBE.³

Because explanationism is so common in philosophical theory and practice, it is legitimate and perhaps desirable to teach IBE, the heart of explanationism, to committed philosophy students generally and to do so in a rigorous way. In this paper I will describe a method for teaching IBE that has four pedagogically desirable characteristics. First, the method introduces students to IBE earlier rather than later in the course, so they can gain proficiency and confidence by practice throughout the course. Second, the method provides students

with an explicit IBE argument-form to use in identifying and constructing IBEs, and drills students in the use of the argument-form. Third, the method provides students with explicit criteria for evaluating an IBE as to truth-of-premises and as to strength-of-inference, and drills students in the use of the criteria. Fourth, the method initially provides students with IBE examples that are simplified (to aid comprehension) but specifically philosophical (to motivate attentiveness and application), and subsequently reinforces students' comprehension regularly with examples from course-related readings.

The method is appropriate for graduate or upper-level undergraduate philosophy students.⁴ Students need to have some acquaintance with and ability to recognize and employ the following concepts: necessary/sufficient conditions, deductive/nondeductive arguments, validity/strength vs. soundness of arguments, necessary vs. contingent propositions, logically necessary/sufficient conditions vs. contingently necessary/sufficient conditions.⁵

II. IBE and the analysis of propositional knowledge

Plato, in the *Theaetetus*, set the curriculum by which the analysis of propositional knowledge still tends to be taught in epistemology courses. In this traditional curriculum, the instructor first introduces Theaetetus's hypothesis that knowledge is merely true belief, without suggesting why the hypothesis might be thought to be plausible. Then the instructor uses a quick Socratic refutation of that hypothesis as a convenient entry to extended discussions of more plausible analyses of knowledge. Now, I agree that an initial discussion of Theaetetus's hypothesis is a good way to introduce students to the analysis of knowledge. However, I suggest that epistemology instructors can extend this initial discussion a little and exploit it to teach students the elements of explanationist method before continuing on to discuss more plausible analyses of knowledge.

As an exercise to accomplish this pedagogical purpose, the instructor and students can speculatively construct a train of explanationist thought by which Theaetetus might have arrived at and supported his hypothesis that knowledge is merely true belief. Since the purpose of the exercise is not exegetical, the speculated reasoning need have no more contact with Plato's text than that the conclusion of the reasoning is identical with Theaetetus's hypothesis; and since the purpose is not actually to defend Theaetetus's hypothesis, the reasoning need not be ultimately acceptable or even initially plausible.⁶ The purpose of the exercise is pedagogical, so the reasoning and its construction should be simple, systematic, and clear in ways that exhibit and highlight basic concepts and procedures.

What follows below is a script for the exercise.⁷ In the script, the speculated reasoning is constructed in a 'play' consisting of a prologue followed by five acts and an epilogue. Each of the five acts involves one IBE, and the conclusion of the final IBE is identical with Theaetetus's hypothesis.

I will observe a number of conventions in the script. For one thing, my language will be prescriptive, as if I were giving stage directions. Putting things this way will help me to be clear about the intended conduct of the exercise, which has some structural complexity. I recommend that the reader imagine herself and her students acting out the 'play' expressively, perhaps with improvised deviations from my script. Furthermore, I will use a repetitive six-scene structure in each of the five acts of the 'play', corresponding to the six repetitive tasks of specifying data, specifying competitor hypotheses, constructing an IBE, evaluating an IBE as to truth-of-premises, evaluating an IBE as to strength-of-inference, and considering how to act on an evaluation of an IBE. The instructor's use of a clear repetitive structure when teaching IBE will help students learn to recognize and respect the necessity of completing

'groundwork' tasks before commencing groundwork-dependent tasks. Finally, I will use a small number of formal symbols, as follows: The letters "P", "C", "E", "H", and "B" will represent propositions that are, respectively, premises, conclusions, data (or evidence), hypotheses, and background beliefs. These formal symbols will serve expository efficiency here and, more importantly, their use when teaching IBE will help students learn to recognize and respect the different functional roles played in IBEs by premises, conclusions, data, hypotheses, and background beliefs.

The script for the exercise now begins.

Prologue

At the class preceding the class at which the exercise is to take place, the instructor prepares students for the exercise by distributing two handouts and briefly reviewing the handouts with students.⁸

The first handout (titled "Inference to the Best Explanation"; see Appendix A to this paper) describes the form of an IBE and provides both a glossary of terms and criteria for evaluating an IBE. Reviewing the handout with students, the instructor emphasizes three points. First, the instructor draws students' attention to the essential three-premise structure of the IBE form: Premise one (P1) presents the data to be explained; premise two (P2) presents the competitor hypotheses proposed to explain the data; and premise three (P3) claims that one of the competitor hypotheses (the target hypothesis, whose correctness is affirmed in the IBE's conclusion, C) is the best proposed explanation of the data. A purported IBE that does not have all three premises is malformed.⁹ The instructor also draws students' attention to the essential nondeductive character of an IBE and cautions students that, with an IBE as with any argument, truth-of-premises and strength-of-inference are two distinct evaluative factors that must be assessed independently of each other. Finally, the instructor emphasizes that IBE is a form of *argument*, not a *theory* of explanation and not a method for the *discovery* of hypotheses. IBE is compatible with a wide range of theories of explanation, which might differ widely in their respective accounts of theoretical virtues, that is, characteristics that make a hypothesis a better explanation.¹⁰ And IBE does not require that competitor hypotheses be discovered by any particular method.

The second handout (titled "Data and Hypotheses for IBE Exercise") begins with these instructions to students.

Using only the data (E1, E2, and E3) and the potential competitor hypotheses (H1 through H9) listed below, construct two inferences to the best explanation (IBEs). First, construct the strongest IBE you can to support the first hypothesis (H1). Second, construct the strongest IBE you can to support the fourth hypothesis (H4). In constructing your IBEs, you may choose to use all or only some of the data and all or only some of the potential competitor hypotheses listed below. In evaluating the IBEs you construct, you may use the auxiliary hypothesis (HA) and the background beliefs (B1, B2, and B3) listed below. Be prepared to discuss your IBEs next class!

The second handout then gives all the elements to be used in the exercise: three fictional but possible cases, three pieces of data, three background beliefs, one potential auxiliary hypothesis, and nine potential competitor hypotheses. (Since the contents of the second handout are all presented explicitly below in the script, I will not reproduce the second handout again in the appendices to this paper.¹¹)

Act One

Scene One. At the following class, the instructor begins the exercise by introducing two pieces of data, that is, propositions

already believed to be true, but for which an explanation is sought.¹² The instructor introduces the data by describing two fictional but possible cases, asking students for their intuitions about the cases, and posing why-questions about the cases.¹³

First case: Adam, who did not finish school, regularly buys and drinks moonshine whisky. Adam has never heard of wood alcohol and so has no beliefs about it. In particular, Adam does not have a belief that wood alcohol in moonshine whisky is poisonous, and he does not have a belief that it is nonpoisonous. It is true, though, that wood alcohol is poisonous.

The instructor has students vote “yes” or “no” on the question of whether, given the case as described and taking the word “ignorant” in its ordinary sense, they would say that Adam is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol in moonshine whisky.¹⁴ (The case is simple and uncontroversial, so the vote should be a unanimous “yes”.¹⁵)

First datum (E1):¹⁶ In the circumstances of the first case, Adam is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.¹⁷

The instructor poses the why-question, “Why is Adam ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol, in the circumstances of the first case?” The question expresses a desire for an explanation.¹⁸

Second case: Beth, a physician, has heard of wood alcohol, but she does not believe that it is nonpoisonous. Beth believes that wood alcohol in moonshine whisky is poisonous. And it is true that wood alcohol is poisonous.

The instructor has students vote “yes” or “no” on the question of whether, given the case as described and taking the word “ignorant” in its ordinary sense, they would say that Beth is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol in moonshine whisky. (The case is simple and uncontroversial, so the vote should be a unanimous “no”.¹⁹)

Second datum (E2):²⁰ In the circumstances of the second case, Beth is not ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

The instructor poses the why-question, “Why is Beth not ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol, in the circumstances of the second case?” The question expresses a desire for an explanation.

Scene Two. The instructor introduces two competing hypotheses to explain the data and to offer answers to the why-questions.²¹

First hypothesis (H1): True belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

Second hypothesis (H2): Neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

If the first hypothesis is correct, then a correct answer to the why-questions about Adam and Beth is to say, “Because true belief is logically necessary for knowledge.” If the second hypothesis is correct, then a correct answer is to say, “Because neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge.”²²

Scene Three. The instructor and students together construct their first IBE from elements already provided. This IBE is an argument to support the first hypothesis (as the IBE’s target hypothesis) on the grounds that it is the best explanation for the data about Adam and Beth. The task of constructing the first IBE is mechanical, since students already have the form of an IBE on the first handout. The IBE looks like this.

First IBE:²³

(P1) These data are to be explained:²⁴

(E1) In the circumstances of the first case, Adam is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(E2) In the circumstances of the second case, Beth is not ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(P2) These competitor hypotheses are proposed to explain the data (E1 and E2):²⁵

(H1) True belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

(H2) Neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

(P3) With respect to the data (E1 and E2), the first hypothesis (H1) has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than any alternative competitor hypothesis (H2) has.²⁶

(C) So (probably), the first hypothesis (H1) is correct; that is, true belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

Scene Four. The instructor and students together evaluate the first IBE as to truth-of-premises.

There should be no question that the first two premises are true, since the data and the hypotheses were largely stipulated by the instructor.²⁷ Premise three is also true, though students likely will need help to see that it is true. The instructor focuses on explanatory power as the overridingly important theoretical virtue in this instance²⁸ and reasons as follows. The hypothesis that true belief is logically necessary for knowledge (H1) has some, limited explanatory power with respect to the data about Adam’s ignorance (E1) and Beth’s non-ignorance (E2). On the other hand, the alternative hypothesis that neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge (H2) has no explanatory power at all with respect to the data. So, other things being equal, the target hypothesis (H1) has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than any alternative competitor hypothesis (H2) has with respect to the data.²⁹ That is, premise three is true.

The instructor helps students to see that the first hypothesis has some, limited explanatory power with respect to the data and that the second hypothesis has none at all. In this regard, the instructor emphasizes two points. First, an important component of the explanatory power of a hypothesis with respect to certain data is the extent to which those data are inferable from that hypothesis, perhaps with the assistance of background beliefs and auxiliary hypotheses.³⁰ Second, in the present instance, the data (E1 and E2) are inferable to a greater extent from the first hypothesis (H1) than from the second hypothesis (H2).

In making the points just mentioned, the instructor uses the handouts as aids. On the second handout are the following background beliefs and auxiliary hypothesis.

First background belief (B1):³¹ In the circumstances of the first case, Adam does not have a belief that wood alcohol is nonpoisonous and he does not have a belief that it is poisonous, but it is true that wood alcohol is poisonous.

Second background belief (B2): In the circumstances of the second case, Beth does not believe that wood alcohol is nonpoisonous, but instead believes that it is poisonous; and it is true that wood alcohol is poisonous.

Auxiliary hypothesis (HA): To be ignorant of a truth is to lack knowledge of it, that is, not to know of it whether it is true or not.

The instructor points out that these two background beliefs (B1 and B2) reflect the stipulated descriptions of the first and second cases and that this auxiliary hypothesis (HA) reflects standard dictionary definitions of the word “ignorance”. From these facts it should be clear to students that the background beliefs and the auxiliary hypothesis are all plausible, and that they do not derive their plausibility from the competing hypotheses (H1 and H2) in the IBE.

As an additional aid, the instructor now distributes a third handout (titled “Inferring Data from Hypotheses”; see Appendix B to this paper), which shows how the individual data used in the exercise are or are not inferable, as the case may be, from the various hypotheses used in the exercise. The instructor

shows students that Adam's ignorance (E1) is inferable from the hypothesis that true belief is logically necessary for knowledge (H1), with the assistance of the background belief about how things are with truth and belief in Adam's circumstances in the first case (B1) and the auxiliary hypothesis about the nature of ignorance (HA). The instructor also shows students that, even with the assistance of the background beliefs and the auxiliary hypothesis, Beth's non-ignorance (E2) is not inferable from the first hypothesis and none of the data are inferable from the second hypothesis (H2). In other words, the second hypothesis (H2, that neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge) is an irrelevant hypothesis while the first hypothesis (H1, that true belief is logically necessary for knowledge) is a relevant hypothesis that has some, limited explanatory power with respect to the data about Adam's ignorance (E1) and Beth's non-ignorance (E2). So, the target hypothesis has greater explanatory power than any alternative competitor hypothesis has with respect to the data. So, other things being equal, the target hypothesis (H1) has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than any alternative competitor hypothesis (H2) has with respect to the data (E1 and E2). That is, premise three is true.

Scene five. The instructor and students together evaluate the first IBE as to strength-of-inference.

Notwithstanding the truth of the premises, the inference from the premises to the conclusion of the IBE clearly is too weak for the argument to be acceptable. The instructor helps students to see the weakness of the inference by pointing out the following factors. For one thing, even though the target hypothesis has more explanatory power than its sole competitor has with respect to the data, the target hypothesis does not account for all or even most of the data and so is not a very powerful explanation of the data. Furthermore, the argument mentions only a limited number and variety of data. Finally, the target hypothesis faces only one alternative competitor hypothesis in the argument, so the competition is not very vigorous.

Scene six. The instructor and students wonder together whether a more acceptable IBE might be constructed, to support the hypothesis that true belief is logically necessary for knowledge (H1), by increasing the vigor of the competition faced by the target hypothesis. Act two pursues this suggestion.

Act Two

Scene One. The data in act two are the same as those in act one.

Scene Two. The competitor hypotheses in act two are those in act one, plus a third competitor hypothesis that the instructor now introduces.³²

Third hypothesis (H3): Belief is logically necessary for knowledge, but truth is not.

If the third hypothesis is correct, then a correct answer to the why-questions about Adam and Beth is to say, "Because belief is logically necessary for knowledge, but truth is not."

Scene Three. The instructor and students together construct, from elements already provided, a second IBE to support the first hypothesis. The IBE looks like this.

Second IBE:

(P1) These data are to be explained:

(E1) In the circumstances of the first case, Adam is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(E2) In the circumstances of the second case, Beth is not ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(P2) These competitor hypotheses are proposed to explain the data (E1 and E2):

(H1) True belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

(H2) Neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

(H3) Belief is logically necessary for knowledge, but truth is not.

(P3) With respect to the data (E1 and E2), the first hypothesis (H1) has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than any alternative competitor hypothesis (H2 or H3) has.

(C) So (probably), the first hypothesis (H1) is correct; that is, true belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

Scene Four. The instructor and students together evaluate the second IBE as to truth-of-premises.

There should be no question that the first two premises are true, since the data and the hypotheses were largely stipulated by the instructor. However, premise three is false, though students likely will need help to see that it is false. The instructor focuses on explanatory power and simplicity as the two most important theoretical virtues in this instance and reasons as follows. The hypothesis that true belief is logically necessary for knowledge (H1) and the hypothesis that belief is logically necessary for knowledge but truth is not (H3) have the same significant but limited degree of explanatory power with respect to the data about Adam's ignorance (E1) and Beth's non-ignorance (E2). (The alternative hypothesis that neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge, H2, has no explanatory power at all with respect to the data.) However, the third hypothesis (H3) is simpler than the first hypothesis (H1). So, other things being equal, there is an alternative competitor hypothesis (H3) that has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than the target hypothesis (H1) has with respect to the data (E1 and E2). So, premise three is false.

The instructor helps students to see that the first and the third hypotheses have the same limited explanatory power with respect to the data, and that the second hypothesis has none at all. Referring again to the third handout, the instructor points out that the explanatory powers of the hypothesis that true belief is logically necessary for knowledge (H1) and of the hypothesis that neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge (H2) have not changed since the first IBE. The instructor shows students that Adam's ignorance (E1) is inferable from the hypothesis that belief is logically necessary for knowledge but truth is not (H3), with the assistance of the background belief about how things are with truth and belief in Adam's circumstances in the first case (B1) and the auxiliary hypothesis about the nature of ignorance (HA). The instructor also shows students that Beth's non-ignorance (E2) is not inferable from the third hypothesis, even with the assistance of the background beliefs and the auxiliary hypothesis. In other words, the second hypothesis (H2, that neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge) is an irrelevant hypothesis while the first hypothesis (H1, that true belief is logically necessary for knowledge) and the third hypothesis (H3, that belief is logically necessary for knowledge but truth is not) are relevant hypotheses each having the same limited explanatory power with respect to the data about Adam's ignorance (E1) and Beth's non-ignorance (E2).

The instructor also helps students to see that the third hypothesis has the competitive advantage that it is simpler than the first hypothesis, in the following sense. Both hypotheses 'postulate entities', that is, each imputes one or more distinguishable logically necessary conditions to knowledge. But the third hypothesis imputes only one logically necessary condition (belief) to knowledge, while the first hypothesis imputes two (truth, belief). So, the third hypothesis 'postulates entities' more parsimoniously than the first hypothesis does.³³ (Another way of putting the point is to say that the first

hypothesis requires knowledge to be logically more complex than the third hypothesis requires knowledge to be.)

Since there is an alternative competitor hypothesis (H3) that has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than the target hypothesis (H1) has with respect to the data (E1 and E2), premise three is false. Since there is a false premise, the argument is not acceptable.

Scene five. The instructor and students together evaluate the second IBE as to strength-of-inference, first noncomparatively and then comparatively.

Compounding the injury caused by the falsehood of premise three, the inference from the premises to the conclusion of the IBE clearly is too weak for the argument to be acceptable. The instructor helps students to see the weakness of the inference by pointing out the following factors. For one thing, even though the target hypothesis has more explanatory power than either of its competitors has with respect to the data, the target hypothesis does not account for all or even most of the data and so is not a very powerful explanation of the data. Furthermore, the argument mentions only a limited number and variety of data. Finally, the target hypothesis faces only two alternative competitor hypotheses in the argument, so the competition is not very vigorous, though it is more vigorous than the competition in the first IBE.

The instructor shows students that the inference in the second IBE is stronger than the inference in the first IBE. The instructor points out that, while the data are the same in the two IBEs and the explanatory power of each target hypothesis with respect to its data is the same, the vigor of the competition in the second IBE is greater than the vigor of the competition in the first IBE.

Scene six. The instructor and the students wonder together whether the hypothesis that true belief is logically necessary for knowledge (H1) ought to be abandoned in favor of the hypothesis that belief is logically necessary for knowledge but truth is not (H3). Act three pursues this suggestion.

Act Three

Scene One. The data in act three are the same as those in act two.

Scene Two. The competitor hypotheses in act three are the same as those in act two.

Scene Three. The instructor and students together construct a third IBE from elements already provided. The third IBE differs from the second IBE only in that the first and the third hypotheses have exchanged places in the third premise and in the conclusion. That is, the target hypothesis supported by the third IBE is the third hypothesis. The IBE looks like this.

Third IBE:

(P1) These data are to be explained:

(E1) In the circumstances of the first case, Adam is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(E2) In the circumstances of the second case, Beth is not ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(P2) These competitor hypotheses are proposed to explain the data:

(H1) True belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

(H2) Neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

(H3) Belief is logically necessary for knowledge, but truth is not.

(P3) With respect to the data (E1 and E2), the third hypothesis (H3) has theoretical virtues to a higher

degree overall than any alternative competitor hypothesis (H1 or H2) has.

(C) So (probably), the third hypothesis (H3) is correct; that is, belief is logically necessary for knowledge, but truth is not.

Scene Four. The instructor and students together evaluate the third IBE as to truth-of-premises.

There should be no question that all three premises are true. Premises one and two are true, since the data and the hypotheses were largely stipulated by the instructor. Premise three is also true, for reasons already described (in scene four of act two). That is, the first hypothesis has explanatory power to the same significant but limited degree as the third hypothesis, and each has more explanatory power than the second hypothesis has with respect to the data. However, the third hypothesis is simpler than the first hypothesis. So, the target hypothesis (H3, that belief is logically necessary for knowledge but truth is not) has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than any alternative competitor hypothesis (H1 and H2) has with respect to the data about Adam's ignorance (E1) and Beth's non-ignorance (E2).

Scene five. The instructor and students together evaluate the third IBE as to strength-of-inference, first noncomparatively and then comparatively.

Notwithstanding the truth of the premises, the inference from the premises to the conclusion of the IBE is too weak for the argument to be acceptable. The instructor helps students to see the weakness of the inference by pointing out the following factors. For one thing, even though the target hypothesis has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than either of its competitors has with respect to the data, the target hypothesis does not account for all or even most of the data and so is not a very powerful explanation of the data. Furthermore, the argument mentions only a limited number and variety of data. Finally, the competition to which the argument subjects the target hypothesis is not very vigorous, though it is more vigorous than the competition in the first IBE.

The instructor shows students that the inference in the third IBE has essentially the same strength as the inference in the second IBE. The instructor points out that the data are the same in the two IBEs, the explanatory power of each target hypothesis with respect to its data is the same, and the vigor of the competitions in the two IBEs is the same.³⁴

The instructor shows students that the inference in the third IBE is stronger than the inference in the first IBE. The instructor points out that, while the data are the same in the two IBEs and the explanatory power of each target hypothesis with respect to its data is the same, the vigor of the competition in the third IBE is greater than the vigor of the competition in the first IBE.

Scene six. The instructor and students together wonder how an advocate of the hypothesis that true belief is logically necessary for knowledge (H1) might proceed in the face of the third IBE. The instructor suggests that one might well look for additional data, specifically to justify the greater complexity of that hypothesis in comparison with the alternative hypothesis that belief is logically necessary for knowledge but truth is not (H3). Act four pursues this suggestion.

Act Four

Scene One. The data in act four include those in act three, plus a third datum that the instructor now introduces. The instructor introduces the third datum by describing a third fictional but possible case, asking students for their intuitions about the case, and posing a why-question about the case.³⁵

Third case: Chris, who did not finish school, makes and sells moonshine whisky. Chris has heard of wood alcohol, but she

does not believe that it is poisonous. She honestly believes that wood alcohol in moonshine whisky is nonpoisonous. What Chris believes is not true, for wood alcohol is poisonous.

The instructor has students vote “yes” or “no” on the question of whether, given the case as described and taking the word “ignorant” in its ordinary sense, they would say that Chris is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol in the circumstances of the third case. The case is simple and uncontroversial, so the vote should be a unanimous “yes”.³⁶

Third datum (E3):³⁷ In the circumstances of the third case, Chris is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

The instructor poses the why-question, “Why is Chris ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol, in the circumstances of the third case?” The question expresses a desire for an explanation.

Scene Two. The competitor hypotheses in act four are the same as those in act three.

Scene Three. The instructor and students together construct a fourth IBE from elements already provided. The target hypothesis supported by the fourth IBE is the first hypothesis. The IBE looks like this.

Fourth IBE:

(P1) These data are to be explained:

(E1) In the circumstances of the first case, Adam is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(E2) In the circumstances of the second case, Beth is not ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(E3) In the circumstances of the third case, Chris is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(P2) These competitor hypotheses are proposed to explain the data (E1, E2, and E3):

(H1) True belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

(H2) Neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

(H3) Belief is logically necessary for knowledge, but truth is not.

(P3) With respect to the data (E1, E2, and E3), the first hypothesis (H1) has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than any alternative competitor hypothesis (H2 or H3) has.

(C) So (probably), the first hypothesis (H1) is correct; that is, true belief is logically necessary for knowledge.

Scene Four. The instructor and students together evaluate the fourth IBE as to truth-of-premises.

There should be no question that the first two premises are true, since the data and the hypotheses were largely stipulated by the instructor. Premise three is also true, though students likely will need help to see that it is true. The instructor focuses on explanatory power and simplicity as the two most important theoretical virtues in this instance and reasons as follows. With respect to the data about Adam’s ignorance (E1), Beth’s non-ignorance (E2), and Chris’s ignorance (E3), the hypothesis that true belief is logically necessary for knowledge (H1) has greater explanatory power than the alternative hypothesis that belief is logically necessary for knowledge but truth is not (H3). (The alternative hypothesis that neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge, H2, has no explanatory power at all with respect to the data.) It is true that the third hypothesis (H3) is simpler than the first hypothesis (H1). However, explanatory power trumps simplicity in this instance. So, other things being equal, the target hypothesis (H1) has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than any

alternative competitor hypothesis (H2 or H3) has with respect to the data (E1, E2, and E3). So, premise three is true.

The instructor helps students to see that the first hypothesis has greater explanatory power than either the second or the third hypothesis has with respect to the data. The instructor uses the handouts as aids. On the second handout is the following background belief.

Third background belief (B3): In the circumstances of the third case, Chris does not believe that wood alcohol is poisonous; rather, she believes that it is nonpoisonous; but wood alcohol is poisonous.

The instructor points out that this background belief (B3) reflects the stipulated description of the third case. From this fact it should be clear to students that this background belief, like the two other background beliefs (B1 and B2) and the auxiliary hypothesis (HA) introduced previously (in scene four of act one), is plausible and does not derive its plausibility from the competing hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) in the IBE. Referring again to the third handout, the instructor shows students that, with the assistance of the three background beliefs and the auxiliary hypothesis, more of the data are inferable from the third hypothesis than are inferable from either the second or the third hypothesis.³⁸

The instructor helps students to see that the greater explanatory power of the first hypothesis trumps the greater simplicity of the third hypothesis. Both hypotheses ‘postulate entities’, that is, each imputes one or more distinguishable logically necessary conditions to knowledge. But the third hypothesis imputes only one logically necessary condition (belief) to knowledge, while the first hypothesis imputes two (truth, belief). So, the third hypothesis ‘postulates entities’ more parsimoniously than the first hypothesis does. Nevertheless, by imputing more logically necessary conditions to knowledge than the third hypothesis imputes, the first hypothesis is able to explain more of the data than the third hypothesis can explain. So, the greater complexity of the first hypothesis is reasonable. So, other things being equal, the target hypothesis (H1) has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than any alternative competitor hypothesis (H2 or H3) has with respect to the data (E1, E2, and E3). So, premise three is true.

Scene five. The instructor and students together evaluate the fourth IBE as to strength-of-inference, first noncomparatively and then comparatively.

Notwithstanding the truth of the premises, the inference from the premises to the conclusion of the IBE is too weak for the argument to be acceptable. The instructor helps students to see the weakness of the inference by pointing out the following factors. For one thing, even though the target hypothesis has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than either of its competitors has with respect to the data, the target hypothesis does not account for all the data³⁹ and so is not an optimally powerful explanation of the data. Furthermore, the argument mentions only a limited number and variety of data, though it does mention more data than the first and third IBEs. Finally, the competition to which the argument subjects the target hypothesis is not very vigorous, though it is more vigorous than the competition in the first IBE.

The instructor shows students that the inference in the fourth IBE is stronger than the inference in the third IBE. The instructor points out that the data in the fourth IBE are more numerous and more varied than the data in the third IBE, and the target hypothesis (H1) in the fourth IBE explains its data (E1, E2, and E3) to a greater extent than the target hypothesis (H3) in the third IBE explains its data (E1 and E2).

Scene six. The instructor and students wonder together how an advocate of the first hypothesis might try to strengthen

the case made for that hypothesis by the fourth IBE. Noting that it is problematic for the first hypothesis that the second datum (E2, Beth's non-ignorance) remains unexplained, the instructor suggests two approaches that might be tried by an advocate of the first hypothesis. One approach is to try to strengthen the fourth IBE by discarding the second datum from the first premise, on the ad hoc hypothesis that intuitions about the second case are faulty. However, the ad hoc hypothesis diminishes the simplicity of the first hypothesis with no compensating increase in genuine explanatory power.⁴⁰ So, the first approach does not succeed in strengthening the fourth IBE. Another approach is to add complexity to the first hypothesis in some other, non-ad-hoc way, to generate sufficient additional genuine explanatory power to account for the second datum. Act five pursues the latter approach.

Act Five

Scene One. The data in act five are the same as those in act four.

Scene Two. The competitor hypotheses in act five are six new hypotheses that the instructor now introduces.⁴¹

Fourth hypothesis (H4): True belief is logically necessary and sufficient for knowledge.

Fifth hypothesis (H5): True belief is logically necessary but not sufficient for knowledge.

Sixth hypothesis (H6): Neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge, but belief is logically sufficient.

Seventh hypothesis (H7): Neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge, and belief is not logically sufficient.

Eighth hypothesis (H8): Belief is logically necessary and sufficient for knowledge, but truth is not logically necessary.

Ninth hypothesis (H9): Belief is logically necessary but not sufficient for knowledge, and truth is not logically necessary.

If the fifth hypothesis is correct, then a correct answer to the why-questions about Adam, Beth, and Chris is to say, "Because true belief is logically necessary and sufficient for knowledge." And so on, with the necessary changes, for the fifth through ninth hypotheses.

The instructor notes that the old hypotheses are embedded in the new hypotheses, in the following sense. H1 (that true belief is logically necessary for knowledge) is deducible from H4 and also from H5. H2 (that neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge) is deducible from H6 and also from H7. H3 (that belief is logically necessary for knowledge, but truth is not) is deducible from H8 and also from H9.

Scene Three. The instructor and students together construct a fifth IBE from elements already provided. The target hypothesis supported by the fifth IBE is the fourth hypothesis. The result looks like this.

Fifth IBE:

(P1) These data are to be explained:

(E1) In the circumstances of the first case, Adam is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(E2) In the circumstances of the second case, Beth is not ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(E3) In the circumstances of the third case, Chris is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.

(P2) These competitor hypotheses are proposed to explain the data (E1, E2, and E3):

(H4) True belief is logically necessary and sufficient for knowledge.

(H5) True belief is logically necessary but not sufficient for knowledge.

(H6) Neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge, but belief is logically sufficient.

(H7) Neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge, and belief is not logically sufficient.

(H8) Belief is logically necessary and sufficient for knowledge, but truth is not logically necessary.

(H9) Belief is logically necessary but not sufficient for knowledge, and truth is not logically necessary.

(P3) With respect to the data (E1, E2, and E3), the fourth hypothesis (H4) has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than any alternative competitor hypothesis (H5 through H9) has.

(C) So (probably), the fourth hypothesis (H4) is correct; that is, true belief is logically necessary and sufficient for knowledge.

Scene Four. The instructor and students together evaluate the fifth IBE as to truth-of-premises.

There should be no question that the first two premises are true, since the data and the hypotheses were largely stipulated by the instructor. Premise three is also true, though students likely will need help to see that it is true. The instructor focuses on explanatory power as the overridingly important theoretical virtue in this instance and reasons as follows. Only the hypothesis that true belief is logically necessary and sufficient for knowledge (H4) has optimal explanatory power with respect to the data about Adam's ignorance (E1), Beth's non-ignorance (E2), and Chris's ignorance (E3), since it is only from that competitor hypothesis that all the data are inferable. So, other things being equal, the target hypothesis (H4) has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than any alternative competitor hypothesis (H5 through H9) has with respect to the data (E1, E2, and E3). That is, premise three is true.

The instructor helps students to see that only the fourth hypothesis has optimal explanatory power with respect to the data. Referring again to the third handout, the instructor shows students how the data are or are not inferable from the various competitor hypotheses. With the assistance of the three background beliefs (B1, B2, and B2) and the auxiliary hypothesis (HA) introduced previously, all of the data are inferable from the fourth hypothesis, and some but not all of the data are inferable from each of the other competitor hypotheses except the seventh hypothesis, which is irrelevant.⁴²

The instructor points out that the sixth and eighth hypotheses are each incompatible with the datum of Chris's ignorance (E3).⁴³ In other words, the third case, which generates the intuitions reported in that datum, is a counterexample to the sixth hypothesis and to the eighth hypothesis.

Scene five. The instructor and students together evaluate the fifth IBE as to strength-of-inference, first noncomparatively and then comparatively; and then they reassess the fourth IBE.

Notwithstanding the truth of the premises, the inference from the premises to the conclusion of the fifth IBE is too weak for the argument to be acceptable. The instructor helps students to see the weakness of the inference by pointing out the following factors. For one thing, the argument mentions only a limited number and variety of data, though it does mention more data than the first and third IBEs. Furthermore, the competition to which the argument subjects the target hypothesis is not very vigorous, though it is more vigorous than the competition in the first, third, and fourth IBEs.

The instructor shows students that the inference in the fifth IBE is stronger than the inference in the fourth IBE, as the latter was previously assessed (in scene five of act four). For one thing, the target hypothesis (H4) in the fifth IBE explains its data (E1, E2, and E3) to a greater extent than the target hypothesis (H1) in the fourth IBE explains its data (E1, E2, and E3).

Furthermore, the vigor of the competition in the fifth IBE is greater than the vigor of the competition in the fourth IBE.

The instructor points out that, since the first hypothesis (H1) is deducible from the target hypothesis (H4) of the fifth IBE, that IBE supports the first hypothesis by supporting its target hypothesis. Since the inference in the fifth IBE is stronger than the inference in the fourth IBE (as previously assessed) while the premises in both IBEs are all true, it appears that the first hypothesis is supported more strongly by the fifth IBE than by the fourth IBE.

The instructor shows students that the fifth IBE requires a reassessment of the fourth IBE. This is because the fifth IBE exhibits a theoretical virtue of the first hypothesis that was not taken into account when the fourth IBE was previously assessed. That virtue is coherence.⁴⁵ The fifth IBE shows that the first hypothesis (H1), to a higher degree than any of its competitors (H2 and H3) in the fourth IBE, coheres with the best more-inclusive explanatory hypothesis.⁴⁶ The fourth IBE must now be reassessed, both as to truth-of-premises and as to strength-of-inference. By exhibiting a theoretical virtue of the first hypothesis that was not taken into account when the fourth IBE was previously assessed, the fifth IBE gives additional support for the truth of premise three of the fourth IBE. But the fifth IBE also increases the strength of the inference in the fourth IBE, in two ways. First, since the competitor hypotheses from the fourth IBE are multiply embedded in the competitor hypotheses in the fifth IBE, the vigor of the competition in the fourth IBE is indirectly increased by the competition in the fifth IBE. Moreover, since the more-inclusive hypothesis (H4) in which the first hypothesis is embedded is an optimal explanation of the data (E1, E2, and E3) in the fourth IBE, the explanatory power of the first hypothesis with respect to that data is indirectly increased.

Scene six. The instructor and students now conclude the exercise.

Epilogue

In the exercise just concluded, students practiced identifying and constructing IBEs using an explicit IBE argument-form. Students also practiced evaluating IBEs using explicit criteria for evaluating an IBE as to truth-of-premises and (both noncomparatively and comparatively) as to strength-of-inference. All the IBEs were relatively simple and basic concepts and procedures were exhibited clearly and highlighted. All the IBEs were specifically philosophical and relevant to the content of the epistemology course.

The conclusion of the final IBE was Theaetetus's hypothesis that knowledge is merely true opinion. So, at the end of the exercise, students are ready to rejoin the traditional curriculum in their studies of the development of the analysis of knowledge. From Socrates' rejection of Theaetetus's hypothesis, through Gettier's rejection of the "justified true belief" analysis, to the growing contemporary proliferation of analyses and repudiations of analysis, the instructor and students will find many opportunities to recognize, construct, and evaluate IBEs in their epistemology course.⁴⁷ The instructor will regularly use these opportunities to reinforce students' comprehension of the concepts and procedures learned in the exercise.

This is the end of the script for the exercise.

III. Conclusion

The reader will rightly think that much more could be said about IBE and about explanation. In particular, meta-epistemological issues (about the nature of explanation and of inference to the best explanation, and about the justification of inference to the best explanation and of explanationism) are legitimate and probably obligatory additional topics in an epistemology course emphasizing explanationist methods. However, such issues are

beyond the scope of this paper and it has not been my purpose here to defend any views about such issues or about how to teach them. My only purpose in this paper has been to describe, with reference to four pedagogical desiderata, a method for teaching graduate and upper-level undergraduate philosophy students how to recognize, construct, and evaluate inferences to the best philosophical explanation.*

Endnotes

1. P.K. Moser, D.H. Mulder, and J.D. Trout, *The Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 189 (emphasis added) and p. 187. For general discussions of IBE and discussions and expressions of explanationism in philosophy, see the text and references provided by R. Fumerton, "Inference to the Best Explanation", in J. Dancy and E. Sosa, eds., *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 207–209; W.G. Lycan, "Explanationism", in T. Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 263; W.G. Lycan, "Explanation and Epistemology", in P.K. Moser, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 408–433; and J. Vogel, "Inference to the Best Explanation", in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online* <http://www.rep.routledge.com/philosophy/cgi-bin/article.cgi?it=P025> (accessed 31 Dec 2002).

2. For suggestive evidence of the prevalence of this justificational practice, search *The Philosopher's Index* online for the phrase "best explanation".

3. Methodological explanationism is logically much weaker than substantive explanationism. Methodological explanationism is the result of grafting a characteristically pragmatist style onto a much older way of doing philosophy. "The sort of way in which analysing must proceed is the aporetic, groping method often illustrated in Aristotle's writings, collecting suggestions, considering objections to them, calling up all relevant observations, and finally making a judgement." (R. Robinson, *Definition* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958], p. 175)

4. For ideas about teaching IBE in Critical Reasoning courses and Introduction to Philosophy courses, see J. Eflin, "Teaching 'Inference to the Best Explanation'", *Teaching Philosophy*, vol. 17 (1994), pp. 151–160; and E. Sober, *Core Questions in Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001).

5. In this paper, I use the expressions "logically necessary/sufficient condition" quite broadly, as follows. "Its being the case that q is a logically necessary condition for its being the case that p " means "it is logically necessary that if p then q ", where the modal operator "it is logically necessary that" expresses whatever sort of necessity one thinks is involved in philosophical hypotheses (for example, conceptual, metaphysical, and so on). "Its being the case that q is a contingently necessary condition for its being the case that p " then means simply "if p then q ", without the modal operator. ("Materially necessary" might be substituted for "contingently necessary", though neither phrase is ideal.) "Logically sufficient condition" and "contingently sufficient condition" are to be understood analogously.

6. For an actual defense of Theaetetus's hypothesis, see C. Sartwell, "Why Knowledge Is Merely True Belief", *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 89 (1992), pp. 167–180.

7. For dramatic effect, the script can be imagined to have the following relation to Plato's text. As Plato relates the story, Socrates prompts Theaetetus, saying, "And now, my friend, please to begin again at this point; and having wiped out of your memory all that has preceded, see if you have arrived at any clearer view, and once more say what is knowledge." (*Theaetetus* 187b, trans. B. Jowett, in P.K. Moser and A. vander Nat, eds., *Human Knowledge*, 3rd ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], p. 48.) No doubt there is a pause now, as Theaetetus collects his thoughts. Then Theaetetus replies, "I cannot say, Socrates, that all opinion is knowledge, because there may be a false opinion; but I will venture to assert that knowledge is true opinion". The instructor and students can be imagined to play the roles of intra-Theaetetean homunculi who collectively act out a more complex train of thought that Theaetetus (so it is speculated) traverses silently in the pause between Socrates' prompt and Theaetetus's reply.

8. As an alternative to distributing the handouts in class, the instructor can post the handouts as downloadable files on the course web site.

9. Omitting the premise (P2) presenting competitor hypotheses proposed to explain the data, some authors present the IBE form more or less as follows: (P1) The following data are to be explained: E1, etc.; (P3) HT explains E1, etc.; (C) so (probably) HT is correct. This purported IBE is malformed and fallacious. It commits what Sober calls the “Only Game In Town Fallacy”. See Sober, *Core Questions in Philosophy*, pp. 33–34 and 574.
10. In general, IBE is compatible with any theory of explanation that permits comparative assessments of the explanatory virtues of different hypotheses with respect to the same data. For a survey of theories of explanation in the natural sciences, see J. Woodward, “Explanation”, in P. Machamer and M. Silberstein, eds., *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 37–54. IBE is also compatible with theories of explanation in the social sciences and the humanities.
11. Except for the five IBEs constructed in the exercise, the second handout contains every exhibit in acts one through five that has a run-in and bold-faced heading ending with a colon, for example, “**First case:**”, “**Second datum (E2):**”, “**Third hypothesis (H3):**”, and so on.
12. Note that each of the two cases can be varied in many inessential ways, so each of the two data represents a large class of data of the same sort. Moreover, the exercise does not presuppose any particular philosophical account of intuitive judgments like the data used in the exercise. For discussions of the nature of intuition, see M.R. DePaul and W. Ramsey, eds., *Rethinking Intuition* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).
13. Students already have the cases and the data on the second handout.
14. It is important that students consider their intuitions to the case as described, however incomplete that description is. That is, students are not to speculate about aspects of Adam and his situation that are not already described in the case. The intuitions reported by philosophical data do not float freely, but are anchored to specific propositions, such as the description of a specific possible case.
15. If any students do vote “no”, the instructor should summarily disqualify all “no” votes and declare (with tongue clearly in cheek and with clear actual respect for students and their opinions) that anyone who voted “no” either did not understand the question or was being perverse. Discussion of this action should be deferred until scene four of act one, where discussion of the action will be more effective. See note 27, below.
16. On the second handout, this datum is given as follows: “The first datum (E1) is whatever your answer is to the question ‘In the circumstances of the first case, is Adam ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol?’ (‘yes, he is’, or ‘no, he is not’).”
17. The words “In the circumstances of the first case...” are essential to the datum and should not be omitted. The datum is that students have a specific intuition about the case as described. That is, students have an intuition about Adam in the circumstances of the first case, not an intuition about Adam simpliciter.
18. “Explanations are answers to the question ‘why?’” (E. Nagel, *The Structure of Science* [New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961], p. 15) See also S. Bromberger, “Why-Questions”, in R.G. Colodny, ed., *Mind and Cosmos* (Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966), pp. 86–111. The question now posed by the instructor is rhetorical rather than genuine because the instructor and the students are not now actually investigating the nature of ignorance but only going through the motions of a methodological exercise. For the purpose of the exercise, the question should be noted but deferred until the next scene (scene two) of act one.
19. If the vote is not unanimous, the instructor follows note 15, above, with the necessary changes.
20. On the second handout, this datum is given as follows: “The second datum (E2) is whatever your answer is to the question ‘In the circumstances of the second case, is Beth ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol?’ (‘yes, she is’, or ‘no, she is not’).”
21. Students already have the hypotheses, on the second handout.
22. Note that neither H1 nor H2 has the form of a nomological law, neither hypothesis is a scientific hypothesis, and neither hypothesis offers a scientific explanation of the data. H1 and H2 are philosophical hypotheses that give philosophical explanations of the data.
23. Since students have all the data and hypotheses in front of them on the second handout, the instructor can exploit the formal symbols for the sake of efficient construction of the IBE on a blackboard or on an overhead transparency. For example, the first premise can be written efficiently as “(P1) The following data are to be explained: E1, E2.”
24. The words “These data are to be explained...” should not be omitted, for they make explicit the role of P1 in the IBE form. Making the respective roles of the premises explicit each time an IBE is constructed will help students learn to recognize and respect those different roles.
25. The words “These competitor hypotheses are proposed to explain the data...” should not be omitted, for two reasons. First, they make explicit the role of P2 in the IBE form and, as already mentioned, a pedagogical purpose is served by making this role explicit each time an IBE is constructed. Furthermore, if those words are omitted from P2, then the premise mistakenly asserts the truth of every competitor hypothesis. So, the argument is unsound on account of a false premise. Finally, if those words are omitted from P2, then the premise asserts no relation between the competitor hypotheses and the data. So, the argument is malformed and is unsound on account of its conclusion not following from its premises.
26. Explicit reference to alternative hypotheses should not be omitted from P3, for two reasons. First, that reference makes explicit the role of P3 in the IBE form. See the previous note. Furthermore, if explicit reference to alternative hypotheses is omitted from P3, then the IBE is in danger of being malformed. See note 9, above.
27. If students do challenge the first premise on the grounds that their votes about Adam’s and Beth’s ignorance were not unanimous, the instructor should take the opportunity to briefly introduce the concept of an ad hoc hypothesis. The instructor’s earlier declaration (that anyone who voted contrary to the instructor’s expectations either did not understand the question or was being perverse) functions now as an ad hoc hypothesis to protect the target hypothesis. If the data are redescribed to reflect less-than-unanimous votes about Adam’s and Beth’s ignorance, then, without the ad hoc hypothesis, the explanatory power of the target hypothesis with respect to the total data set is reduced. The ad hoc hypothesis protects the target hypothesis by shrinking the total data set to include only those data for which the target hypothesis can account. The instructor should explain that ad hoc hypotheses weaken an IBE, since they increase the complexity (see note 33, below) of the target hypothesis without increasing its explanatory power. The instructor should emphasize that, were they now actually investigating the nature of ignorance, students would be intellectually obligated to strenuously resist any ad hoc hypothesis (regardless of the authority of the person proposing the ad hoc hypothesis) that serves to discount students’ own intuitions. The instructor should nevertheless continue, with all due respect and only for the purposes of the exercise, to maintain the ad hoc hypothesis in this instance.
28. “When a theory explains more than does its competitor, especially if the added explananda are taken from a distinct range of phenomena, we speak of greater explanatory power; other things being equal, we prefer a hypothesis of greater power.” (W.G. Lycan, “Explanation and Epistemology”, p. 415. Original emphasis.)
29. The words “other things being equal” indicate that the assessment here of the degree to which this hypothesis has theoretical virtues is conditional on explanatory power being the overridingly important theoretical virtue in this instance.
30. “[A]n explanation...implies what we want explained.” (W.V. Quine and J.S. Ullian, *The Web of Belief* [New York: Random House, 1970], p. 75) All the inferential relationships discussed in the exercise as bearing on the explanatory power of hypotheses are deductive relationships. However, it would be a mistake to suppose from this that a deductivist conception of explanation is assumed by the exercise. The exercise does require students to work through deductive relationships among bits of data and individual hypotheses. But that is only because the exercise is elementary and simplified, and deductive relationships among propositions are easier for students to understand and rigorously evaluate than other sorts of inferential relationships. For the instructor to introduce notions of explanatory power resting on nondeductive inferential relationships among data and hypotheses would only muddy the waters at this stage. Nevertheless, deduction is only one form of inference and the exercise leaves it completely open

which other sorts of inference might also be relevant to the explanatory power of a hypothesis. Moreover, inferability of data from a hypothesis perhaps is only one factor contributing to the explanatory power of a hypothesis. In sum, the exercise assumes no particular theory of what explanatory power really is. It is worth noting in this regard that, since the exercise does not assume a deductivist conception of explanation, all the more strongly it does not assume a deductive-nomological model of explanation. Once again, IBE is a form of argument, not a theory of explanation.

31. The words “In the circumstances of the first case...” are essential to the background belief and should not be omitted. The belief is about Adam in the circumstances of the first case, not a belief about Adam simpliciter.

32. Students already have the hypothesis, on the second handout.

33. I do not mean to suggest that either hypothesis quantifies over logically necessary conditions, but only to acknowledge and exploit the ambiguity of the phrase “postulate entities” in the Ockamist maxim, “Do not postulate entities unnecessarily.” There are many apparently distinct ways in which one hypothesis can be more or less simple than another hypothesis. (See W.G. Lycan, “Explanation and Epistemology”, p. 415.) Of these, one way is by quantifying over fewer (or fewer sorts of) objects, another way is by imputing fewer logically necessary conditions to a concept, and a third way is by not being conjoined to any logically independent proposition (such as an ad hoc hypothesis).

34. It is not relevant here that the target hypothesis in the third IBE (H3) is simpler than the target hypothesis in the second IBE (H1), since H3 and H1 do not compete in their respective roles as target hypotheses of different IBEs. H3 and H1 do compete in their roles as alternative competitor hypotheses mentioned in the third premise of the second IBE, and they similarly compete in the third IBE. H3’s greater simplicity gives it an advantage over H1 in both competitions. That advantage ensures the falsehood of the third premise in the second IBE and the truth of the third premise in the third IBE. With an IBE, as with any argument, truth-of-premises and strength-of-inference are two distinct factors that must be assessed independently of each other.

35. Students already have the case and the datum, on the second handout.

36. If the vote is not unanimous, the instructor follows note 15, above, with the necessary changes.

37. On the second handout, this datum is given as follows: “The third datum (E3) is whatever your answer is to the question ‘In the circumstances of the third case, is Chris ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol?’ (‘yes, she is’, or ‘no, she is not’).”

38. The third handout (see Appendix B) shows that, with the assistance of B1 and HA, E1 is inferable from H1 and that, with the assistance of B3 and HA, E3 is inferable from H1. E1 is also inferable from H3, with the assistance of B1 and Ha. But, even with the assistance of the background beliefs and the auxiliary hypothesis, E3 is not inferable from H3. As well, no data are inferable from H2, and E2 is not inferable from any competitor hypothesis.

39. Beth’s non-ignorance (E2) remains unexplained. This is shown on the third handout. See Appendix B.

40. See notes 27 and 33, above.

41. Students already have the hypotheses, on the second handout.

42. This is shown on the third handout. See Appendix B.

43. The third handout (see Appendix B) shows that, with the assistance of B3 and HA, the falsehood of H6 and of H8 is deducible from E3. Each of the other four competitor hypotheses in the fifth IBE is compatible with all the data, though H7 is irrelevant.

44. For discussion of the theoretical virtue of coherence, and further references, see W. G. Lycan, “Explanation and Epistemology”, p. 431. See also the discussion of unificationist models of explanation, and further references, in J. Woodward, “Explanation”, pp. 47–49.

45. To see this, the reader should note that the hypothesis in which H1 is embedded (H4) prevails against its (H4’s) explanatory competitors (H5 through H9) in the fifth IBE. On the other hand, none of the hypotheses in which H1’s competitors (H2 and H3) in the fourth IBE are embedded (H5 through H9) prevails against its (H5’s through H9’s, as the case may be) competitors in the fifth IBE.

46. For references to and discussion of the literature on the analysis of knowledge, see J. Dancy and E. Sosa, eds., *A Companion to*

Epistemology (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1994); P.K. Moser, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); P.K. Moser, D.H. Mulder, and J.D. Trout, *The Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); P.K. Moser and A. vander Nat, eds., *Human Knowledge, 3rd ed.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); A. Plantinga, *Warrant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); J.L. Pollock and J. Cruz, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); and R. Shope, *The Analysis of Knowing* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

Appendix A: Handout on ‘Inference to the Best Explanation’ (First Handout)

Form of an Inference to the Best Explanation (IBE)¹

(P1) These data are to be explained: E1, etc.

(P2) These competitor hypotheses are proposed to explain the data: H1, etc.

(P3) With respect to the data, HT has theoretical virtues to a higher degree overall than any alternative competitor hypothesis has; that is, HT is the best proposed explanation of the data.

(C) So (probably), HT is correct.²

Note: The word “probably” does not here imply numerical probability. Rather, “probably” qualifies the conclusion indicator “so” in a way that indicates a nondeductive argument.

Glossary of Terms³

Ad hoc hypothesis: An auxiliary hypothesis that is “introduced specifically for the purpose of saving some favored theory from apparent disconfirmation” and that “lacks any independent motivation or justification”.⁴

Auxiliary hypothesis: A hypothesis that is not a competitor hypothesis or part of the target hypothesis, but that is assumed in order to help the target hypothesis explain the data. An auxiliary hypothesis may be a background belief.

Background belief: A proposition already believed to be true, and for which no explanation is sought.

Competitor hypotheses: Two or more hypotheses (H1, etc.) that are mutually incompatible and that are proposed as alternative explanations of the same data.

Counterexample to a hypothesis: A possible particular case that generates data incompatible with the hypothesis.

Data: One or more propositions (E1, etc.) already believed to be true, but for which an explanation is sought.

Hypothesis (theory): A proposition or set of propositions proposed with the intention of giving a satisfactory explanation of some data.

Relevant hypothesis: A hypothesis from which at least some of the data are inferable.

Target hypothesis: The hypothesis (HT) mentioned in the conclusion of an IBE. The target hypothesis must be among the competitor hypotheses (H1, etc.) mentioned in the second premise of the IBE.

Theoretical virtues: Characteristics that make a hypothesis that has those characteristics a better explanation of the data than a hypothesis that does not have those characteristics. Theories of explanation might differ widely in their respective accounts of theoretical virtues. Nevertheless, theoretical virtues are typically thought to include explanatory power (including deductive or nondeductive inferability of the data from the hypothesis, and other factors), simplicity (including absence of ad hoc hypotheses, and other factors), and coherence (including internal consistency, consistency with background beliefs, embeddability in a more inclusive theory, and other factors),

and other characteristics. Each theoretical virtue is a matter of degree.

Evaluating an IBE

With an IBE, as with any argument, truth-of-premises and strength-of-inference are two distinct criteria that must be assessed independently of each other. Be especially careful not to conflate the question of the truth of P3 with the question of the strength of the inference from the premises to the conclusion.

Truth-of-premises criterion: (P1) Data mentioned must be as described. Consider, for example, whether ordinary usage has been misdescribed, or the deliverances of common sense or science misreported. (P2) Competitor hypotheses mentioned must be as described. Consider, for example, whether the hypotheses presented as competitors are actually all intended to explain the same data. (P3) Target hypothesis must actually possess theoretical virtues to a greater overall degree than competitors. Consider exactly which theoretical virtues are involved and how.

Strength-of-inference criterion: IBEs are nondeductive arguments, so strength-of-inference is always a matter of degree. In a given case, the argument is acceptable only if the inference is strong enough to make the conclusion more reasonable than not, given the premises. Factors to consider include the number and variety of data, the vigor of the competition, how well the target hypothesis explains the data, and the extent to which the target hypothesis explains the data better than the competition.

Appendix B: Handout on ‘Inferring Data from Hypotheses’ (Third Handout)

Table 1: Inferring Data from H1 through H3

Are the data below inferable from the hypotheses on the left?

	E1	E2	E3
H1	Yes, via B1 and HA.	No.	Yes, via B3 and HA.
H2	No.	No.	No.
H3	Yes, via B1 and HA.	No.	No.

Example of a Datum Inferred from a Hypothesis

- (H1) True belief is logically necessary for knowledge.
- (HA) To be ignorant of a truth is to lack knowledge of it, that is, not to know¹ of it whether it is true or not.
- (B1) In the circumstances of the first case, Adam does not have a belief that wood alcohol is nonpoisonous and he does not have a belief that it is poisonous; but it is true that wood alcohol is poisonous.
- (C1) So, in the circumstances of the first case, Adam lacks knowledge of the truth that wood alcohol is poisonous. (From H1 and B1.)
- (E1) So, in the circumstances of the first case, Adam is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol. (From C1 and HA.)

Table 2: Inferring Data from H4 through H9

Are the data below inferable from the hypotheses on the left?

	E1	E2	E3
H4	Yes, via B1 and HA.	Yes, via B2 and HA.	Yes, via B3 and HA.
H5	Yes, via B1 and HA.	No.	Yes, via B3 and HA.
H6	No.	Yes, via B2 and HA.	No.
H7	No.	No.	No.
H8	Yes, via B1 and HA.	Yes, via B2 and HA.	No.
H9	Yes, via B1 and HA.	No.	No.

Example of a Hypothesis Undermined by a Datum

- (E3) In the circumstances of the third case, Chris is ignorant of the poisonousness of wood alcohol.
- (B3) In the circumstances of the third case, Chris does not believe that wood alcohol is poisonous; rather, she believes that it is nonpoisonous; but wood alcohol is poisonous.
- (HA) To be ignorant of a truth is to lack knowledge of it, that is, not to know of it whether it is true or not.
- (H6) Neither truth nor belief is logically necessary for knowledge, but belief is logically sufficient. (Assumed for reductio ad absurdum.)
- (C1) So, in the circumstances of the third case, Chris knows that wood alcohol is nonpoisonous. (From B3 and H6.)
- (C2) So, in the circumstances of the third case, Chris does not know that wood alcohol is nonpoisonous. (From E3 and HA.)
- (C3) So, H6 is false. (From H6, C1, and C2, by reductio ad absurdum.)

Endnotes

* I am grateful to Jody Graham, Tziporah Kasachkoff, Eric Marcus, Francis Remedios, and Michael Watkins for assistance.

1. Simpler and more complex forms for an IBE are given in the literature. Some simpler forms are defective and should be avoided. See notes 9, 25, and 26, above. Moreover, simpler forms (such as “these data are true, so probably this theory is true”) can make it too easy for students to overlook factors that must be taken into account in an adequate evaluation of the argument. On the other hand, more complex forms may assume premature commitment to some particular philosophical account, for example, of explanation or of theoretical virtues. This handout and the exercise described in the paper are intended to help students develop the habit of automatically asking questions that must be asked. “What are the data? What are the competing hypotheses? Which is the target hypothesis? Is there an explicit claim of comparative superiority for the target hypothesis?” The form given here for an IBE is not too simple or too complex for this purpose, but just right.

2. I use “correct” here rather than “true” so as not to prejudge controversial issues about the precise status of the conclusion of an IBE.

3. There are controversies about the precise accounts of all the terms listed below. The purpose of the definitions in this glossary is to help students learn to use the argument-form, not to advocate any particular theory of explanation.

4. P.K. Moser, D.H. Mulder, and J.D. Trout, *The Theory of Knowledge*, p. 180.

Ethics in Film

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Aristotle observed that the young make a poor audience for lectures on ethics because they are inexperienced in the actions of life and because, motivated by passions, they are unable to act on what they learn (*N.E.* I.3.1095a2-6). These days, ethical action often is not among the explicit aims of ethics courses. We are more interested in provoking our students to reflect on the grounds for ethical evaluations and on their application. Yet, even in this more limited goal, we are often hampered by our students' inexperience. It is not merely that many students have had to make few of their own hard moral decisions, but that even the moral decisions that they have made are often, in their minds, issues of taste or preference, issues that are not conceptually different from choosing a brand of clothes to buy, even if their consequences be more far reaching. Many of my students seem to have trouble grasping what is at issue in moral decisions and are, consequently, at a loss to see what work moral theories could possibly do.

Obviously, we cannot give students real experience in making moral decisions. The aim of this paper is to recommend feature films as a kind of vicarious substitute. Any number of different films would do in this role, but the one that I discuss here is Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. I begin by introducing the notion of "moral example" as a situation that calls for moral action, and I explain that characters in films often face such situations. Then, I say something about why this particular film could serve as a moral example, and I propose a brief interpretation of it. My third section considers how to use this film to provoke discussion of some standard readings in ethics courses, and I conclude with some practical remarks on using films in class.

I

By "moral example" I mean a set of circumstances that presents someone with a problem to which he needs to respond and to which he could (and should) respond with a moral action. I shall speak about the decision a person makes in response to a moral example as a "moral decision," not in the sense that it must be properly moral, but insofar as it belongs to the moral sphere. A moral example is a situation to which different moral theories could be applied, and the application of each theory should imply a moral decision. Of course, distinct theories need not imply distinct decisions. One of my stalwart moral examples is a situation in which someone finds a wallet containing a large sum of money and the name and address of the owner. There are a range of responses open to the finder, including ignoring the wallet; but he needs to decide on one of them. Most students will immediately say that the finder should return the wallet and its contents, but by varying the circumstances—for example, the finder is in dire poverty but a talented research scientist with a cure for cancer, the owner is extremely wealthy and known for miserliness; the owner is known to the finder, but not to the police, as a terrorist planning an attack; or, alternatively, the wallet contains explosives and the owner is deranged—I can get students to consider when it may be appropriate to return the wallet and when not. They come to recognize that there are criteria that are morally pertinent to the example and, eventually, to see that a full-fledged moral theory would be valuable. Used in this way, the moral example leads to the formulation of moral theory. Conversely, when there are strong intuitions about the right course of action, the moral example could be used as a touchstone against which to test moral theory.

My example is usually successful, but it is thin and bland. It does not evoke much interest, perhaps because it does not really cause any serious doubts about what is right or one's ability to determine what is right under a given set of circumstances. Consequently, it does not provoke reflection on ethics nor does it convince the skeptical that moral reflection will provide them with anything more than their gut feelings would.

My contention is that many feature films provide richer and better moral examples that can be used more effectively than mine. Before I explain why, let me distinguish what I have in mind from another way of using films. A number of my friends and colleagues have begun to show films to their classes, but they usually use them to illustrate a particular moral theory. I think that Rick's giving up Ilsa at the end of *Casablanca* is a wonderful example of someone who acts from Kantian moral principles, and the film makes us feel keenly his inner conflict between duty and inclination. (Even the often told story about the picture's not having an ending when filming began supports the Kantian notion that what is morally right is universally recognizable, inasmuch as the story's ending is so clearly aesthetically and morally right.) *Casablanca* might be a good film to show in conjunction with Kant, especially for students who have trouble seeing the appeal Kant thinks morality has. However, precisely the film's power as an illustration of Kantian ethics makes it a poor choice to use in the way I have in mind here. In contrast with *Casablanca*, a good moral example is more ambiguous. In a good moral example, what constitutes morally correct behavior is less clear and different alternatives suggest themselves. A good moral example is a situation in which some action is necessary, but where it is debatable which action is right. Students should see it as a puzzle. Ideally, it will provoke them to reflect not only on whether individual actions are right but also on other actions that might have been better, and, ultimately, on the criteria that one ought to use to decide on moral action.

Often the circumstances portrayed in a film constitute a moral example for the film's characters. The viewer participates vicariously in the characters' actions, and a good film makes the viewer care about the characters and their fates. Students who care about characters are more likely to reflect on their options and to ask whether their choices were right or good. In this way, the film becomes a moral example for the viewer as well. We care most about characters who are not one-dimensional, and it is multi-faceted personalities that provide us the best view of the way that actions affect lives. Because they can engage the students, films are much more successful as moral examples than my pale constructions. Another advantage is that a film's time frame will ordinarily, for aesthetic reasons, be long enough to show at least some effects of its principal action. Understanding an action's effect is often important for understanding an action. This is not only true for consequentialists; a deontologist may insist that only intentions are morally pertinent, but those intentions are often hidden from the agent and become clear in time. Even a virtue ethicist, like Aristotle, thinks that the appropriate unit for moral evaluation is a lifetime. I think that many students do not see how important time is because they are used to evaluating acts by how they feel at the moment and they lack the experience to predict accurately how they will feel later. The value of a moral example is not that it proves a substantive point about ethics, but that it serves as a kind of material on which to apply ethical theories and, thereby, to see the theory in action, as it were.

II

One excellent moral example is the Woody Allen film, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*.¹ Its central event is Judah Rosenthal's

arranging the murder of a mistress who threatens to destroy his family and career. The film does not condone the act, and Rosenthal is bothered by it, but he overcomes his qualms convinced, in the end, that he has made the right decision. The title *Crimes and Misdemeanors* is intended to recall Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and the two cover the same ground. In both, the protagonist commits murder and then feels remorse. Whereas Raskolnikov is racked with guilt after committing his crime and inflicts punishment upon himself, Rosenthal suffers only a bit from his conscience before he reconciles himself to the unfortunate experience. Raskolnikov has committed a crime, Rosenthal merely a misdemeanor. Raskolnikov will have a religious redemption, and he experiences a sense of relief when he is finally sentenced. Rosenthal has moved on with his life, neither redeemed nor damned; he remains a highly successful and respected ophthalmologist. Raskolnikov is clearly fictional, but Rosenthal seems disturbingly close to real life. The philosophical issue here is whether Rosenthal's act of murder was not indeed justifiable and if not, why not? Of course, everyone will say that murder is never justified, and this film depends for its aesthetic effect on exactly this reaction. I suggest that Allen has designed the film to make a case for murder or, at least, a case against some reasons people often have for condemning murder. He intends the film to be disturbingly realistic. It is just this feature that makes it a good ethical example. To use it effectively in the classroom, it is best to understand the film, particularly how it tries to disable some ordinary objections to murder. It is extraordinarily well-constructed.

First a brief plot summary. Growing upset at his unwillingness to divorce his wife and his increasing remoteness, Dolores, Rosenthal's volatile girlfriend, attempts to make his infidelity known to his wife and also threatens to reveal his financial indiscretions. Rosenthal realizes that she will likely destroy his marriage and his career as well as alienate him from his children. Desperate, he asks his shady brother Jack to arrange for a hit-man to murder her. Rosenthal is hardly a cold-blooded murderer: he is distressed, he even tries to stop the murder, and afterwards he is too distracted to concentrate on his job. However, several months of vacation help him to get over it, and he returns to his family and his profession a happy man. He views his indirect act of murder as unfortunate but necessary.

Allen skillfully interweaves Rosenthal's story with at least three sub-plots that serve as foils. One prominent plot line follows Clifford Stern, a truly honest and decent film maker, played by Allen himself, who fails painfully in career, marriage, and love because of these traits.

Cliff is, in turn, set off by his brother-in-law Lester, also a film maker, but extremely successful and much loved, even though or, rather, just because he is both shallow and unscrupulous. Even Cliff's love interest, Halley, also a film producer, ends up with Lester, attracted by his success and potential to help her career, though she recognizes fully his shallowness. The only person Cliff is able to relate to is his young niece, Jenny; like her, he remains an idealistic child in an unscrupulous world. The closing scenes of the movie include a conversation in which Rosenthal suggests to Cliff that he do a film based upon what the audience knows to be Rosenthal's own story, but Cliff rejects the plot as insufficiently tragic: it is too real for the world of art that he inhabits. In a sub-sub-plot, Cliff takes Jenny to movies, and we are treated to brief clips from other films. These clips are carefully aligned with similar events in the main plot lines, but they represent idealized "Hollywood" treatments of such events—treatments in which the good are rewarded and the bad punished. Allen is contrasting the world of art where crime and immorality are

always punished with "reality," represented here by the events unfolding in the main plot as well as in Cliff's own life.

A second, less prominent plot line follows a Rabbi who is being treated by Rosenthal for progressive, incurable blindness. The two are old friends, and Rosenthal confides in the Rabbi, but he cannot follow the Rabbi's advice to reveal his infidelity to his wife and ask her forgiveness. The film opens with Rosenthal giving a speech at a charity banquet explaining that he became an ophthalmologist because his father had told him that God sees all things. The Rabbi's blindness is clearly meant to symbolize God's blindness to Rosenthal's crime. There will be no divine retribution here. In a powerful scene, Rosenthal revisits a Passover Seder from his youth at which his Aunt May, arguing with his father, asserts that there is no God and no right and wrong, only winners and losers, and it is the winners who write history. Rosenthal's father declares that he would hang on to his faith even if her words were true. So, too, the Rabbi retains his own faith only by his blindness to what happens in the world around him.

The third plot line is sketched in only a few scenes. Allen's character has filmed Louis Levy, a philosophy professor who has responded to a life of adversity with a philosophy of rationality and self-affirmation, and a film clip shows him explaining that man's construction of a deity failed to produce an entirely loving God. The professor's unexplained suicide—his note says only "I've gone out the window"—not only dashes Allen's hopes for a film, it also seems to negate Levy's entire philosophy. As Halley puts it, "no matter how elaborate a philosophical system you work out, in the end it's got to be incomplete." The rationality and optimism of his philosophy cannot possibly be true if he himself has succumbed to irrational action. On the other hand, the content of Levy's philosophy is just the lack of success of what he takes to be human intellectual constructions: we could not construct a fully loving God, we construct our human relationships with contradictory goals; and, in a voice over at the very end of the film, we usually fail to create a universe that has room for human happiness in it, though most people continue in the hope of future success. Levy insists that we are the sum of our choices, but if our choices are all contradictory constructions, they could never be successful. On reflection, it seems that his suicide is not incompatible with his philosophy, but an expression of our inevitable inability to think consistently and, therefore, to choose consistently. Whatever we are to make of him, it is clear that his philosophy and, by extension, *all* philosophy can provide neither salvation nor justice.

Taken together these three sub-plots serve to delineate and justify Rosenthal's action. We cannot help thinking that it is wrong, but the sub-plots serve to reject, in a literary way, the reasons we might give. Murder violates the ten commandments, but God, symbolized here by the Rabbi, is blind; He will not, indeed, cannot punish those who break his commandments. If religion fails to justify moral judgments, we look to philosophy. But the apparent fact that philosophers themselves are unable to live consistently serves here to represent the inadequacy of all our intellectual constructions. These philosophical constructions merely reflect our own innermost desire for a world of love, reason, and happiness. Their applicability to the real world is limited; and, anyway, they are inconsistent with themselves. Clearly, then, we should not rely on any philosophical justifications of moral judgments. In art, crime is punished, and Cliff suggests to Rosenthal that someone who commits such a crime ought to assume responsibility for his action; but Rosenthal scoffs that a "happy ending" is for a "Hollywood movie" not "reality"—thereby, ironically leaving the audience of this Hollywood movie without a happy ending. As I noted, clips from old films interspersed through this film show

the dichotomy between what happens on stage and in real life. Evidently, art is too removed from life, even from the lives of its creators, to have any real moral impact. In the end, we are left with Rosenthal and Cliff—the unscrupulous, but successful realist vs. the idealistic failure. For all of his apparent integrity, by the film's end Cliff has proven unable to make the socially conscious film he would like nor even the pot boiler Lester arranges for him; his wife will leave him; and he will not contribute anything of value to others. Moreover, he has failed to fulfill his legitimate obligations to Lester and flirted with Halley when he should have been working on saving his marriage. In contrast, *because* of his unscrupulous act, Rosenthal will continue to practice medicine and, presumably, to make significant charitable contributions, and he will be able to care for his family and provide his daughter with a beautiful wedding. He is loved by all.

It is clear that Allen the film producer wants us to conclude that, under the circumstances, Rosenthal has done what is right. That Allen himself plays the character who most forcefully espouses the opposite view heightens the surprise of this conclusion and the overall effectiveness of the film. The film is meant to be disturbing, and it is. What troubles the most is not merely that the bad succeed and the good fail, but that bad and unscrupulous actions enable people to do good things, such as, making loans, giving personal gifts, and giving to charity, and that people receive credit for the good they do without suffering significant consequences for the bad.

Allen's film is supposed to be descriptive of the real world in contrast with the idealized world of religion, philosophy, and artists of the Cliff Stern variety. He means to cut off philosophical explanation of Rosenthal's act. The film's "real world" notion—articulated by Aunt May—that actions are "good" if they are successful resonates with many students. But at the same time, the effectiveness of the film depends upon the audience's presumption that Rosenthal has indeed done something wrong. In fact, nearly all students do feel that Rosenthal has done something deeply wrong. It is precisely because the film brings out our conflicting values in a situation that clearly calls for action that it serves well as a moral example.

III

Classroom discussions of *Crimes and Misdemeanors* can usefully begin with the question "is Rosenthal's murdering his mistress morally right and if not, why not?" and proceed to show students how hard it is to articulate why this murder is wrong. Of course, many students will say that they just "feel" that murder is wrong. Moving students from expressions of feeling to the active consideration of ideas and arguments is, in my experience, the most difficult part of teaching a course on ethics. Their reflecting on the film could help them with this move. Like the students, Rosenthal feels that it is wrong to harm his mistress. But he also feels strongly that it is important to preserve his family and career. How does one decide between conflicting feelings? The difficulty of deciding is heightened when, as here, all the options are repugnant. Rosenthal acts, it seems, from the stronger feeling; he chooses what he feels is least wrong. If he has, nonetheless, done something wrong, it is clear that he cannot rely on feelings to guide moral judgment—nor can we. If a feeling that something is wrong does not suffice to tell us the degree to which it is wrong or even, sometimes, that it is wrong, we need some other criteria. What, then, is it that makes Rosenthal's act wrong? What moral criteria justify our judgment that it is wrong? Is the morality of Rosenthal's act linked to whether he suffers or prospers because of it? Thinking about these questions, students can come to see the need for ethical theorizing. And the more the professor can get them to reflect on moral criteria on their own, the more they are likely to

appreciate the theorizing they find in the course readings. Thus, the first use of the film could be to motivate ethical theories.

A second and independent use of the film is as a subject to which to apply ethical theories. Let me now consider how several ethical theories that are likely to be studied in lower level ethics courses might be applied to this film. By applying them and, especially, by reflecting on the difficulties that emerge, students can come to appreciate the theories more deeply and, in some cases, to raise and to consider for themselves the kinds of critical questions about an ethical theory that are explored in the literature. Bear in mind that the goal is for students to come to a better understanding of each theory and its adequacy as an ethical theory, rather than a better appreciation of the film—even if the latter is likely, as well.

The most obvious ethical theory to apply to this film is utilitarianism. At first glance, the film looks to portray the sort of situation that philosophers have raised as a counter example to utilitarianism. Dolores is portrayed as an unhappy person who is unlikely ever to become happy, even under the best of circumstances. Her brightest moments seem to have been in Rosenthal's arms, and without him, her life would hardly be bearable. On the other hand, Rosenthal appears to have, apart from this indiscretion, a happy family life, good friends, and a successful career. As an ophthalmologist and a generous benefactor, he increases happiness in the lives of others. Unchecked, Dolores would destroy the happiness of Rosenthal and his family, and diminish the happiness of the many that he benefits. Apparently, the greatest good for the greatest number results from Dolores' death. This remains true even if we factor in the temporary unhappiness Rosenthal experiences from arranging it. From a utilitarian perspective, Rosenthal seems to be obligated to have Dolores killed. Cliff, on the other hand, produces no happiness for anyone, including himself, despite his declarations of good intentions. Rosenthal's action is, then, moral, and it is Cliff who does nothing moral. The issue is whether these are legitimate consequences of utilitarianism or part of a *reductio* argument against it.

Many students will reject the notion that Dolores will never be happy and insist that she could get over Rosenthal and, perhaps with a bit of counseling, go on to lead a happy life. That alters the calculation of greatest happiness significantly. The difficulty of determining Dolores' future prospects illustrates nicely how tenuous it can be to apply utilitarian theory. And decisions about the relevance and weight of other factors, such as the relative happiness each produces in others, she as a flight attendant, Rosenthal as a doctor, makes the calculation still more problematic. When used as a moral example, the film makes it clear how difficult it is to apply the happiness principle and how small factors could change the overall outcome.

Kant might seem better able to justify the intuition that Rosenthal's act is immoral, for Rosenthal treats his mistress as a mere means to his own gratification, not as an end in herself. However, the film can also be a vehicle to introduce a well-known difficulty in Kant's ethics. According to Kant, an act is moral if its maxim can be universalized. Rosenthal's maxim is not "anyone who gets in my way ought to be eliminated"—that cannot be consistently universalized because it entails that each person deny the legitimacy of the ends and wills of all others while his own will relies upon and presupposes wills of others—but a more benign and problematic maxim like "a person should preserve and protect his family, livelihood, reputation" or, perhaps, "in extreme circumstances when my livelihood, family, and reputation are all at risk, I should act to protect them in order to continue to be able to do good." Whether either of these maxims can be universalized is less clear. Hence, the film can motivate discussion of what can and cannot be universalized, a topic central to Kant's project.

Nonetheless, the film does not really challenge Kant's ethics. The film's distinction between the real world where bad deeds are rewarded and an ideal world where bad deeds are punished is Kantian. That crime seems not to be punished in what the film calls "the real world" and Kant calls "experience" is merely a sign of the dichotomy between it and the moral world where, Kant tells us, we must posit reward and punishment, even without evidence (*Critique of Practical Reason*). Indeed, the film assumes that viewers will be convinced that Rosenthal's actions are immoral and *ought* to be punished, for only if we hold these beliefs will we be disturbed that Rosenthal is not punished but rewarded.

Crimes and Misdemeanors could also serve as a case to which to apply David Hume's moral criteria. Hume presents his readers with different sets of circumstances and asks them to examine their own moral feelings about them. By varying the circumstances, he argues that there are two relevant criteria of morality, agreeableness and utility, each taken in respect of self and others, and that acts that meet both in respect of others are moral. *Crimes and Misdemeanors* is a set of circumstances, and we can ask ourselves how we feel about Rosenthal's action. It is clearly disagreeable, but whether it is useful is less clear, as we have seen. It may be useful not just to Rosenthal but also to his family, his patients, and the hospital that continues to be the recipient of his largess, and even, perhaps, to Dolores, who, relieved of her perpetual misery, was better off dead. That, at least, is the way that Allen would have us see it. Those who do not see any utility in Rosenthal's act will say it is flat out immoral, whereas those who do will say that, as disagreeable but useful, it is mixed. This latter assessment is consonant with the film's suggestion, implicit in its title, that the act is a misdemeanor. It is interesting, first, that a murder could be judged as a relatively light crime, and second, that there would be this kind of disagreement in the use of what Hume regards as a faculty that belongs to us by nature. Hume might ascribe it to a general failure to train this faculty to analyze the circumstances properly, but the issue seems not so much recognizing the elements of the situation, but knowing how much value to assign them; and this is likely to remain a matter of dispute. Also, how could someone like Rosenthal use Hume's moral theory to *decide* on a course of action if none of his options is both beneficial and agreeable to others? How can one choose between the moral value of acting in a way that is disagreeable but beneficial to others (Rosenthal) and in a way that is agreeable but not beneficial (Cliff)? In short, the film raises the sort of questions that readers of Hume's ethics ought to raise.

Two interlocutors in Plato's *Gorgias*, Polus and Callicles, assert that the strong make the laws and, thereby, decide what is right and wrong.² Their view is expressed by Aunt May in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* in a powerful scene at a Seder table where she declares that what is right is not "handed down in stone" but determined after the fact by the victors, and that a person who can commit a crime undetected without being bothered by conscience is "home free." Of course, Rosenthal is bothered by conscience; he has done what is best under the circumstances, but he hardly thinks it admirable. Like Polus, he thinks that injustice is beneficial but not admirable—Callicles claims injustice is *both* beneficial and admirable—and that it is better to do injustice (to Dolores) than to suffer it (from her). Socrates argues against both notions, and he argues that it is better to be punished for injustice than to remain unpunished. Rosenthal's apparent happiness after arranging his mistress' murder, in effect, challenges Socrates' claim that injustice is not beneficial without addressing his arguments. The strength of the challenge hinges on Rosenthal's credibility as a character. At the film's end, when Rosenthal suggests to Cliff that he do a film about someone who has done what he has, Cliff responds with skepticism that such a person could live with his crime on

his conscience. The film cleverly, and ironically, suggests that real people, unlike the characters in Hollywood films, *do* live like Rosenthal. Yet, it is also raising important questions for Plato's philosophy: Is a person who commits a crime really made worse by it? Is he worse because he feels guilty or, perhaps, as Socrates suggests about Archelaus (470d-472d), worse to the extent that he grows insensitive to his own abasement?

Rosenthal's character also raises important question for Aristotle's ethics. Aristotle understands virtues and vices to be settled character states that dispose a person to certain types of actions. Rosenthal is decent, generous, and trustworthy. His affair with Dolores does not fit his happy family life, and his arranging her murder hardly fits with his character. By the same token, the self-centered, pretentious film producer, Lester, who has no qualms about using his position to entice women, tries, in his way, to help the hapless Cliff and generously pays for his niece's wedding. Aristotle might say that Rosenthal and Lester are both immoderate and vain. Yet the mixture of virtues and vices that each has is contrary to Aristotle's claim that a person with one virtue will have them all. This shows either how surprising that claim really is or how unlikely Lester and Rosenthal are as real characters. Perhaps Allen's point is that people faced with extraordinary circumstances will act uncharacteristically or that real people are not all good or all bad, nor even of one consistent virtue. Of course, Aristotle's virtuous person would never have found himself in Rosenthal's situation; what, then, are we to make of Aristotle's advice to act as a virtuous person would judge best under the circumstances? Is Aristotle's emphasis on the importance of character (or virtue) for happiness undermined by Cliff, a person with a good character who is, nonetheless, ineffectual and unhappy? In short, the film suggests questions that could help students think about Aristotle's ethics.

The philosophical tradition that is perhaps most readily discussed in conjunction with *Crimes and Misdemeanors* is existentialism.³ In a voice-over at the very end of the film, the philosopher, Louis Levy, insists that each person is the sum of his choices; and the film means to contrast Rosenthal's set of choices with those of the Rabbi and Cliff. The Rabbi has authentically embraced God: his physical blindness figuratively expresses his conscious choice to be blind to the world. Cliff has authentically chosen to pursue documentary film, even at the extremely high cost of his marriage and career opportunities. Only Rosenthal has acted inauthentically: we know him not to be the devoted husband and father and the generous benefactor he apparently takes himself to be. And here the paradox is that the authentic characters seem to get no benefit from their authenticity, whereas the inauthentic character thrives on his inauthenticity. If we are just the sum of our choices, then why not choose as Rosenthal does? The existentialist's answer emphasizes Rosenthal's internal conflict. But Allen's point here is that while Rosenthal has mild regrets, he is not torn by conflict. It is rather the authentic character Cliff who suffers internal conflict—in the form of self-doubts. Although the plot suggests a number of existentialist themes, the film would seem ultimately to call into question the value of authenticity. That, of course, makes it a good example to discuss in conjunction with existentialist ethics.

Finally, some recent philosophers have proposed that rather than focusing on theories, it is more fruitful to look for features of circumstances that are morally salient; they think that morality is the ability to identify such features and act appropriately. A film like *Crimes and Misdemeanors* that is rich in detail and contrasting characters provides a good set of circumstances to work with. Is it morally relevant that Dolores is a miserable person unlikely to be happy under any circumstances? Is it

morally relevant that Rosenthal's wife would not be able to handle revelations of his infidelity?

It might be objected that answering such questions is more of an exercise in film criticism than ethical reflection. Indeed, any use of a film to discuss ethics runs the risk of turning into an exercise in criticism. But it does not have to, and in my experience, discussion is not likely to take that direction. On the contrary, my students tend to dismiss claims about an author's intentions if they do not think them independently true. To a degree that surprises me, they are disposed to think about the events of the film as real. Hence, they are willing to reflect on the film's details, and one can get them to consider which may or may not be morally relevant. So interpreting the film becomes, for them, an act of looking for morally salient features. Understanding Allen's intention is important for leading a discussion because it helps one to direct the student's attention to details that play a role, but it is best left to the students to discover or invent a role for the details. In the end, one wants them to think about ethics rather than the aesthetics of the film. By vividly presenting a concrete set of circumstances, a film like *Crimes and Misdemeanors* provokes questions about right and wrong that students in any ethics class should ask.

IV

As for the more practical side of using films as ethical examples, I screen the film in the evening because there is not enough time to see it all in one class period and because I do not want to give up precious class time. The extra evening meeting can be more relaxed than usual, and it often generates an *esprit de corps* as students get to know each other better and appreciate the professor's efforts. Indeed, this alone might well justify showing a film. I sometimes ask the students to write a page or two on the film or on how the film relates to the particular philosopher we are discussing when it is shown—this assignment counts for a very small percentage of their grade, no more than 2½%. Sometimes I ask the students on the final to consider whether the philosophers read would judge Rosenthal immoral and why. So the film plays a relatively small part in the course. It, and sometimes other films, provide a common stock of examples, a sort of shared experience from which to draw, when reflecting on the problems of ethics. They make ethical theories alive and urgent.

It is a short step from applying ethical theories to characters in films to applying them in one's own life. For many students it comes as something of a revelation that what they do in the classroom *could* connect with their lives. For them and even for students who already recognize this possibility, seeing and discussing a film could be a path to making philosophy meaningful.

Endnotes

1. This is perhaps Allen's most discussed film. It is the subject of eight of the eleven essays in *Film and Philosophy's* recent *Special Issue on Woody Allen*, guest editor Sander Lee, special edition (2000). There are also substantial discussions in: S. H. Lee, *Woody Allen's Angst: Philosophical Commentaries on His Serious Films* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co.), Mary P. Nichols, *Reconstructing Woody: Art, Love and Life in the Films of Woody Allen* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), and Sam B. Girgus, *The Films of Woody Allen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
2. Gary Colwell, "Plato, Woody Allen, and Justice," *Teaching Philosophy*, 14 (1991): 399-407, has discussed using the film to illustrate the *Republic*.
3. See also, Thomas J. Regan, "Sartre, Woody Allen, and Authenticity," *Teaching Philosophy*, 14 (1991): 409-19.

BOOK REVIEWS

Richard A. Posner, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Harvard, 2002) Cloth, 410 pages, Price \$29.95.

Peter Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (Yale, 2002) Cloth, 240 pages, Price \$21.95.

Reviewed by Julian Friedland

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The Intellectual's New Clothes

Before examining the specific contents of these books, we need to acknowledge the elephant in the room. Those familiar with the authors who penned them, and of their respective areas of specialization, might already have surmised that these new titles, to their credit are perfect examples of books written by public intellectuals *as* public intellectuals. That is to say, imminent scholars writing on academic subjects falling outside their own realms of expertise. It is thus unlikely that such prestigious university presses as Harvard and Yale would have published these two works if it were not for the celebrity of their authors. Crystallizing this deepest of ironies is the fact that the one released by Harvard offers "the first systematic analysis of the contemporary American public intellectual" (inside sleeve). Thus we have a book by a public intellectual writing *as* a public intellectual *about* public intellectuals! This strangely absurd phenomenon immediately raises at least four questions of paramount sociopolitical importance:

1. Are public-intellectual works, published by reputable academic presses, adequately peer-reviewed by appropriate specialists before being accepted for publication?
2. If not, how can the integrity of academic publications be preserved in a competitive economic environment in which public intellectuals draw the lion's share of readers?
3. What societal consequences might this conflict of interest potentially engender?
4. Are there any realistic means of holding dilettantish public intellectuals and those who publish them accountable for flagrantly disseminating misinformation?

Posner, of course, raises such concerns in his book, though obviously not about the book itself. But the delicious irony of reading it alongside Singer's is that, together, they offer a wealth of inroads for contextual analysis based on pertinent contemporary examples—indeed their very own contents, which can make for riveting classroom discussion. In what follows, I will mention but a few.

Last fall, I used Singer's *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* as the main textbook for the latter half of my Freshman-level class on "Philosophy and Society" at the University of Colorado at Boulder. The core of the book is from Singer's Dwight H. Terry Lectures, given at Yale in 2000. But the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 reinforced Singer's conviction of the importance of discussing the ethical dimension of globalization and provide the book with added focus and relevance, especially as the connections are made explicit here and there throughout the text.

Essentially, this new book expands Singer's past treatments of the question of the degree of ethical responsibility people of relatively affluent nations might arguably have toward those living in dire poverty elsewhere in the world. This is clearly a subject upon which Singer has already authoritatively written as a philosophical expert in the field. However, what makes this latest effort a truly public-intellectual work (perhaps Singer's first) is that he spends most of his time discussing various subjects outside his own area of expertise, namely, environmental science, politics, economics, and law—fields in which until now, he has worked precious little. Ironically, this academic flaw may in the end turn out to be a pedagogical virtue. For his characteristically effortless prose and gift for making important and difficult ideas accessible to non-specialists is rendered all the more effective by the exclusion of details that, though surely important, may often have compromised the readability of the text. But predictably, his sweeping criticisms of international policy do at times smack of intellectual naiveté. And at other times, it will likely be evident to many a genuine expert that his analysis could have been more trenchant if supported by a more thorough background in the relevant fields. For example, one glaring omission lies in his lengthy investigation of the overall impact of globalization on wealth distribution. He finally concludes that the answer to the question of whether globalization ultimately promotes or reduces economic inequality is, as of yet, undetermined (pp. 89-90). Most likely, he says "it has helped some to escape poverty and thrown others deeper into it." But this seems entirely to neglect the distinction between free-market globalization, which is clearly the example at hand, and globalization in a more regulated form. If we treat the U.S. as a microcosm of the former, there is plenty of evidence available to answer the question. For example, fresh U.S. census reports from 2001 clearly show a continuing rise in inequality of aggregate family income over the last thirty years, concentrating wealth exclusively in the top fifth, particularly in the top five percent of the population (<http://www.census.gov>).

I should also point out that these data were apparently ignored by another public intellectual, the staunchly conservative Gregg Easterbrook, in his highly misleading review of Singer's book for the *Washington Monthly* (November 2002). There he claims, without providing evidence, that statistics on rising U.S. inequality of income are the result of first-generation immigrants, and that if these are taken out, the numbers show decreasing inequality. But this is clearly false, since the above census data show that *every* segment of the population excluding only the richest fifth, has seen its share drop. But what is much worse, Easterbrook's review launched a blatant lie, reappearing in conservative columns around the world such as in one by Miranda Devine of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (November 21, 2002). Their take is that Singer actually argues that free-market globalization is undoubtedly good for the world's poor! It will thus have been obvious to anyone having actually read the book that Easterbrook et al. had not. Nevertheless, I do not suspect the status of any of these public intellectuals has, as a result, suffered even in the slightest.

Singer's *One World* is divided into six chapters, the first of which presents a rather brief but effective introductory argument for seeing globalization through the ethical lens. The last chapter is actually a concise 5-page conclusion on the importance of acquiring this perspective in order to secure long-term stability and equality across the globe. The four other chapters are much more thorough, each covering one specific aspect of global concern, namely, the atmosphere, the economy, the law, and the notion of community. The chapter on community is by far the most ethically penetrating, and is clearly where we see Singer at his philosophical best. It contains probably his most persuasive critique of Rawls to date—whose

contractarian approach he seems to take as possibly the greatest intellectual obstacle to achieving an appropriate ethical world view.

The chapter on the atmosphere mainly consists of an interesting and informative defense of the Kyoto Protocol. In it, Singer rightly takes Bjorn Lomborg to task for the highly suspect economic arguments made in his notorious book, *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (Cambridge, 2001). Lomborg argues that environmental preservation is often a waste of money since we could safely invest most of it elsewhere instead and get a much higher return, say, in 100 years than the value of the natural land preserved by that same initial investment. Lomborg claims that this is due to inflation, which will make it only worth \$14.50 today to save land worth \$100 in 40 years' time. Clearly, this will seem entirely ridiculous to anyone not already under the crippling grip of dogmatic free-market ideology. Of course, it should be acknowledged that Lomborg, a Danish economist who has appeared in the popular magazine *The Economist*, has himself offered us, with the help of Cambridge University Press, another perfect example of a public-intellectual work, by writing outside his own area of expertise. But unlike Singer's book, which strives to provide a balanced assessment of the facts, Lomborg's has been exposed in countless reviews by environmental scientists as retaining barely a shred of academic integrity. Indeed, it seems to be the prevailing opinion among experts that *The Skeptical Environmentalist* was never actually peer-reviewed. Nonetheless, and I dare say as a result, it is a bestseller. One consolation is that earlier this year, the Danish government deemed the book scientifically misleading—suspecting Lomborg did not adequately understand the field. Cambridge University Press was not available for comment.

Singer's book also raises little-known, but very important ethical implications of globalization as dictated by the World Trade Organization (WTO). For example, the "product/process distinction" makes it difficult for countries to ban imports of products based on the mere *process* of production such as child labor, pollution, and animal abuse, instead of on the quality of the *product* itself. He also emphasizes the positive impact large-scale protests have had on reforming WTO agreements. Also valuable are discussions of international legal policy such as the question of when humanitarian intervention is justified, and the function of the International Criminal Court. On the latter, Singer points out that the U.S. has consistently sought to exempt its own soldiers and government officials from international prosecution. The U.S. even voted, along with Libya and China, against using the International Criminal Court to try people accused of genocide and crimes against humanity. Yet the U.S. recently went so far as to demand the right to try alleged terrorist foreigners in its own military courts. Singer thus ultimately calls the U.S. "the world's rogue superpower"—an expression we're likely to hear more often in the wake of this year's invasion of Iraq.

On the whole, Singer does an exemplary job of presenting a strong utilitarian position on central ethical concerns of globalization (it should be noted that the text does assume basic working knowledge of utilitarianism, which should therefore be provided through other material and/or lecture if used as a course book). In so doing, he provides a wealth of analysis and insightful suggestions on global political reform. His overarching thesis on this is that nothing short of a genuinely democratic global government can offer the Earth's present and future populations any hope of attaining an equitable, secure, and sustainable world. He even offers some convincing and original ideas for realistically achieving this goal even with the continuing presence of repressive authoritarian regimes. Despite its obvious shortcomings as a public-intellectual vulgarization, *One World's* fresh ethical analyses of crucial global

issues should make it required reading for most any intellectual today.

Posner's *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* however, is decidedly less successful. Besides calling attention to the important and potentially nefarious social phenomenon of the public intellectual, it is little more than a self-indulgent and seemingly exhaustive (and exhausting) rant on the author's every pet-peeve. As an illustrious judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, Posner is surely an authority on matters of legal interpretation. However, in the last few years, he has taken to penning books for a popular audience. And although until now, these have generally been entirely devoted to legal theory, they have often been criticized as espousing a rather pronounced libertarian bias—perhaps Posner has found himself a niche in the vast American market for self-satisfied conservatism. His bias is again all too evident here in entirely one-sided negative assessments of tenure as breeding aloofness and complacency. One of course cannot refrain from speculating, while reading such passages, on how this criticism might well apply to federal court judges. Conspicuously absent is any criticism of capitalism as being arguably much more responsible for the decline of public-intellectual discourse. Regrettably, the text is replete with long-winded digressions, sometimes filling entire chapters, betraying extreme political bias, if not profound incompetence on the subject matter under discussion.

However, parts do subsist, once sifted of their extravagant generalizations, over-simplifications, and *ad hominem*s that provide some measure of authoritative analysis. And here, Posner's pungent style shines to the fullest. The chapter on the socially arch-conservative "Jeremiah school" of political theory, for example, seems on-target when criticizing Robert Bork's interpretations of U.S. law. But unfortunately, as is the case with every single chapter without exception, it inevitably digresses here and there into cheaply divisive characterizations of the views of public intellectuals toward which Posner feels animosity. The book does offer penetrating observations, complete with lists, graphs, and tables, of the massive sociopolitical problem the public intellectual phenomenon poses, emphasizing a lack of accountability across the world of publishing. But it is profoundly frustrating—even maddening, to see Posner obviously personify this very problem in his own pompous and highly ideological writing.

One sin, however, that he is surely not guilty of, is the common public-intellectual weakness for prophesy. But he devotes entirely too much space (the forty page chapter "Prediction and Influence" was not even enough for him) lamenting the fact that one's public-intellectual standing is not compromised by the inaccuracy of one's predictions. Posner places entirely too much importance on this rather trivial issue. For the ability to accurately predict the future is usually not the best general measure of the value of one's intellect. The fact that most public intellectuals engage in prediction now and then does not automatically discredit their thinking on other more apposite matters. Perhaps it would if most of their attention were given to prophesizing. But this is far from being the case. So when Posner persists in cataloguing *ad nauseam* every false prediction each one of his public-intellectual pariahs made, it quickly becomes evident that this is so much more than a red herring—it is a palatial refuge of curmudgeonliness.

Somehow, Posner feels qualified to comment on a vast array of academic disciplines from literary to evolutionary theory to ethics, on which he clearly has only the most superficial, one might even say popular, understanding. One characteristic example is his likening of Singer's brand of utilitarianism to that of the Nazis who "liked to blur the line between the human and animal kingdoms, as when they described the Jews as vermin"

(p. 159). Posner is right to point his finger at public intellectuals, but if so, he is himself surely one of the most dangerous. His book would nevertheless suit one course, and I could hardly think of another text more fitting or more timely for it. Indeed, provided it appears in paperback, it would be absolutely perfect for an upper-division undergraduate course in critical thinking, in which it was itself the main object of analysis. And given the fact that such courses have now been added to most required college curricula, it may in the end help attenuate the problem it seeks to expose.

Alex Orenstein, W. V. Quine. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002. Pp. 209 + ix. ISBN 0-691-09605-8 (cloth), \$55.00. ISBN 0-691-090606-6 (paper), \$17.95.

Reviewed by David B. Martens
Auburn University, Auburn, AL

The cover blurb suggests that Alex Orenstein's aim in *W. V. Quine* is to provide an "introduction to Quine's philosophical ideas [for] philosophers, students, and generalists." Orenstein succeeds admirably in this aim. His book is well suited to be used, together with appropriate primary and secondary source readings, as an assigned or a supplementary text in a course on 20th century analytic philosophy, or as a preparatory resource for a teacher of such a course.

In his preface to an earlier book, of which *W. V. Quine* is a welcome revision and expansion, Orenstein said that "in addition to clarifying Quine's position, [the book] provides a vantage point for viewing contemporary philosophy" (*Willard Van Orman Quine* [1977], p. 9). The same can be said now of the present book. Chapter 1 provides a thematic overview and a biographical sketch. Subsequent chapters then each give both sympathetic explanations of, and critical responses to, a judicious selection of Quine's views on specific topics in metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and philosophy of language. Critical discussions are helpfully separated from expository material, under subheadings that begin with the words "Challenging Quine." Throughout, Quine's views are placed in appropriate historical and contemporary contexts.

The contents of the remaining chapters are as follows. Chapter 2 explains "the Frege-Russell-Quine tradition of explicating existentials in terms of quantification" (p. 34). The challenge to Quine in this chapter is the alternative Kant-Lesniewski-Lejewski tradition of explicating existentials in terms of the copula. Chapter 3 explains Quine's ontology of physical objects and sets, and his acceptance of that ontology on the ground that quantification over those sorts of entities is indispensable for a scientific world view. Challenges to Quine include Field's, Sober's, Maddy's, and van Fraassen's various doubts about the legitimacy of inference to the best explanation as a form of philosophical argument. Chapter 4 explains Quine's "Duhemian-Holistic empiricism," which denies that we have any *a priori* knowledge at all (p. 79). Challenges to Quine come from Rey, Bonjour, and Field, each of whom argues that we do have some *a priori* knowledge. Chapter 5 explains Quine's view that "logic is first order predicate logic and quantifiers are limited to its singular terms" (p. 114). Challenges to Quine come from some logicians – such as Boolos, Mates, Church, Prior, and Orenstein himself – who urge that "logic should also include quantifiers for other parts of speech such as predicates and sentences" (p. 114). Chapter 6 explains Quine's rejection of the analytic-synthetic distinction and what Orenstein has called Quine's "conjecture" of the indeterminacy of translation (p.

197, n. 29). Challenges to Quine come from defenders of the analytic-synthetic distinction, including Katz, and Grice and Strawson. Chapter 7 explains Quine's scepticism about modal notions and his extensional treatment of propositional attitude contexts. Challenges to Quine come from Hintikka, Kripke, and other proponents of "possible worlds semantics and the new theory of reference," and from Orenstein himself, who advocates a Lesniewskian approach to propositional attitude contexts (p. 159). Finally, Chapter 8 explains Quine's naturalization of epistemology. Challenges here come from some epistemologists – such as Kim – who wonder whether "Quinians [can] find a place for normativity," and from others – including Grayling, Lehrer, and Bonjour – who question whether naturalized epistemology can find a place for "concepts such as those of evidence and justification" (p. 187).

Orenstein's writing throughout gives evidence that he is not only an eminent Quine scholar, but also a conscientious and skilled teacher. The style is clear and undistracting. Formal symbols and technical terms are used only when necessary and appropriate, and are defined and explained clearly when they are introduced. Illustrative examples are used effectively, as are quotations from Quine's writings. Chapters are well organized, with descriptive subheadings. Even undergraduates who have not had a course in formal logic should, with due diligence and a teacher's assistance, find the book a manageable challenge. Even philosophers who have some familiarity with Quine can benefit from Orenstein's perspective on Quine's views and on contemporary philosophy.

The book has both an index and a bibliography. The index is serviceable but spare. Most of the principal names and subjects mentioned or discussed in the body of the book are indexed. The bibliography is useful, though not comprehensive. For a list of all works cited in the text, the reader must refer as well to the endnotes. The bibliography itself lists only some essential primary and secondary sources on Quine. These will be more than sufficient to get students started on term papers. For course preparation purposes, however, teachers will want to follow Orenstein's suggestion to refer to the more complete bibliographies to be found in Hahn and Schilpp (eds.), *The Philosophy of W. V. Quine* (1986, 1998), and elsewhere. The contents of Orenstein's bibliography are well organized under four section headings. "Works by Quine" lists Quine's books and those of Quine's further papers referred to in Orenstein's book. "Further reading" lists a select few relevant monographs and anthologies by philosophers other than Quine. "Five Quine Scholars" lists books and articles on Quine by Burton Dreben, Gilbert Harman, Roger Gibson, Dagfinn Føllesdal, and Daniel Isaacson. Finally, "Alex Orenstein" lists Orenstein's own considerable contributions to Quine scholarship.

Steven M. Cahn, *Puzzles & Perplexities*
(Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002) 125
pages + index and bibliography of Cahn's works.
\$22.95 (paper).

Reviewed by Alan H. Goldman
College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA

The unusual virtue of this book of short essays is its combination of real clarity of style with often densely packed arguments that are not watered down for bland consumption. All the essays are accessible to beginning undergraduates, and many will introduce them to the major positions and arguments on fundamental topics in philosophy. Reflecting Cahn's philosophical diversity, these topics include freedom and

determinism, the existence of God, moral theory and applied ethics, aesthetics, and education. In each he combines surveys of the standard arguments, succinctly stated, with original material, sometimes commentary, on other philosophers and sometimes in the form of fictional examples. The relatively short length of the book and of the essays in it probably makes it insufficient as a sole text for an introductory course, but it is perfectly suited to be an auxiliary text. The essays are easy reading without being easy-going, and they will stimulate without exhausting students' interests.

In the first two sections on freedom and God, the opening essay states the major arguments for and against the opposing positions and ends by taking one side or declaring a draw, while the subsequent shorter essays add clever twists and further defenses of the favored positions by implication. The first essay in the book concisely maps the territory and arguments of the hard and soft determinist and the libertarian, beginning and ending with a brief description of the Darrow's argument in the Leopold-Loeb case. I might have emphasized the physical basis for determinism more than Cahn does, but the essay is a model for trenchant introductions to the topic. The following essays argue that random choices need not be accidental or irresponsible, and that even an omniscient being might not know the future. These theses leave open the door for free will, despite Cahn's apparently leaning toward incompatibilism.

The opening essay in the section on God surveys the major arguments for theism and recognizes the opposing force of the argument from evil. The next two essays show that this argument is no easier to answer than is an argument from goodness against the existence of a perfectly malevolent creator. If goodness exists to disprove the existence of the omnipotent evil demon, then the same should be said of evil in relation to God. If this is not the worst of all possible worlds, it seems equally not to be the best. A paper on Job then raises the issue of the moral ambiguity of God as portrayed in the Bible. God's wager on Job seems no more morally acceptable than demands for worship and threats of eternal damnation elsewhere in the Scriptures. The section closes with an argument that God's existence in itself has no implications for the way we should lead our lives, and then with an examination of the possibility of religion without God. Cahn argues that many rituals, moral precepts, and even prayers make equally good sense without a supernatural basis. My only qualm with this claim is that, taking prayer here as equivalent to meditation, I'm not sure why any of these taken separately or together would amount to religion without reference to God. But that may be merely a verbal matter.

The next section combines essays on moral theory, applied ethics, and aesthetics. Its first essay dismisses the major candidates for a supreme moral principle. I am equally skeptical as Cahn here, but he may be a bit too quick in some of these arguments. His counterexample to the categorical imperative, involving a false promise to repay food for one's starving family, seems not to be genuine, if we build all the relevant reasons for the action into the maxim. Cahn can perhaps be excused for what I'm claiming is a misapplication of the principle, since Kant several times appears to make the same mistake in applying his principle. At the end of the essay, Cahn briefly raises the question of "Why be moral?" and endorses an argument from self-interest, despite referring in the previous section to the countless successful villains in our world. Such empirical evidence makes it harder to maintain the argument's premises than he acknowledges.

More successful in my view is his dismissal of the major arguments for preferential appointments in the following essays on affirmative action. These include a clever paper on a fictional college that first discriminates against, and then in favor of,

overweight applicants, and an essay which questions why administrators are not honest about their preferential hiring policies if they really believe them to be required by justice. Is it likely that justice should be cloaked in secrecy and deception of applicants? A good question. The middle essay of this section is Cahn's divestiture puzzle: how can I be required to sell stocks in morally objectionable corporations when this abets another to the immoral action of buying them? He answers several replies that have appeared in the literature to his original presentation of the problem. I will spare the reader my solution. Then there are two essays in aesthetics. The first appealingly raises the issue of forgery through a fictional example of a hoax regarding a missing Brahms symphony. The last, barely more than one page on the dead wife of King Lear, virtually absent from the play, illustrates without philosophical commentary how to fill out the fictional world of a text (an issue that David Lewis, among others, addressed).

The final section on philosophy of education might be considered by some philosophers (but probably not by readers of this newsletter) to be somewhat peripheral for an introductory text. It is far less dense with arguments than the earlier sections of the book, containing a tribute to Dewey and criticism of some other authors in the field. It closes not with philosophical issues, but with some very good practical advice on teaching, especially introductory courses, and on making intelligent hiring decisions in universities. These last essays will obviously be of more interest to professors and administrators than to students.

Not only Cahn's lucidity, but his philosophical passion and honesty shine through these essays. He is both scrupulously fair to opposing positions and straightforward in advocating his own, whether popular or not. The book will engage students and scholars alike. I found it a pleasure to read.

ANNOUNCEMENT

A TEACHING SEMINAR FOR ADVANCED GRADUATE STUDENTS IN PHILOSOPHY

Co-Sponsored by The American Philosophical Association and The American Association of Philosophy Teachers during the 15th Biennial Workshop Conference on Teaching Philosophy August 4-8, 2004 University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio

The Teaching Seminar for Advanced Graduate Students will be presented by Dr. Martin Benjamin (Michigan State University), who has conducted successful teaching seminars for graduate students at Michigan State University and at AAPT Conferences in 1990, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2002. The Seminar sessions will include the following themes: organization of an introductory course, teaching ethics and the ethics of teaching, diversity in the classroom, textbook selection, exam preparations, paper assignments, and grading methods. It is assumed that participants will attend all of the Seminar sessions, which will be held each morning, August 5-8. Participants are also encouraged to attend the regular AAPT Workshop and Conference sessions in the afternoon and evening. Advanced graduate students and students who will be receiving the Ph.D. in June are eligible to apply for the Teaching Seminar. Preference will be given, first, to applicants who will be teaching their own courses during the 2004-2005 academic year; second, to those who will be teaching discussion sections during 2004-2005; and third, to those who will be grading for courses they are not teaching during 2004-2005. Participants will also be chosen with some concern for achieving a balance among fields of interest. Maximum number of participants: 20. Accepted applicants will be notified in June and will receive a reading list at that time. The American Philosophical Association will be offering travel grants of up to \$300 each for 10 participants. Recipients of APA travel grants must be members of the APA. The application form can be obtained from the APA website at <http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/opportunities/conferences/> — look under August 2004 for the link. For more information, contact Kathy Dettwyler, at kathyd@udel.edu. **APPLICATION DEADLINE: May 1, 2004 (postmark)**

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