LETTER FROM THE EDITORS, Tziporah Kasachkoff & Eugene Kelly

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John J. McDermott
“Landfalls – Yes, Footholds – ?
On Becoming a University Citizen”

Richard White
“Teaching World Philosophy”

BOOK REVIEWS

Anthony Kenny: A New History of Western Philosophy
Reviewed by Eugene Kelly

Gertrude Ezorsky: Freedom in the Workplace?
Reviewed by Andrew Wengraf

ADDRESSES OF
AUTHORS
The first, “Landfalls – Yes, Footholds – ? On Becoming a University Citizen,” is by John J. McDermott of Texas A&M University. The paper is in the form of a greeting to newly appointed members of the Texas A&M faculty. Dr. McDermott, who was for many years professor at Queens College of the City University of New York, offers sage advice, which we will not attempt to anticipate here, not only to new members of the profession, but to anyone meditating upon how to enhance the life of scholarship, teaching, and service to an institution of higher learning. The author warns his listeners of jealousy, of the idols of the academic marketplaces, and of failing to serve the larger world the university inhabits. He concludes with stories, some amusing, some sad, about a few of his former students and their “outcomes” in life. Additionally, Professor McDermott offers us a poem that he wrote this past year that, in part, contrasts the aims of education with the expectations of the college administrators.

The second paper, “Teaching World Philosophy,” is by Richard White of Creighton University. Professor White describes and justifies a course intended for students not majoring in philosophy that incorporates material from major traditions of thought outside the Western world and brings such thought into dialogue with some of the canonical texts of Western philosophy. Professor White’s reading list for this course is long, but his essay provides some strategies for integrating these disparate materials in ways that are engaging and coherent. The question of whether one can compare, say, the Upanishadic writings with the ancient works of the Greeks and Chinese, or whether the traditions of Africans and Native Americans can aid insight into the perennial questions of Western thought may not be answered entirely by Professor White’s essay. Yet his enthusiasm for his material is infectious, and his attempt to lead his students to a life of reflection upon the platform of diverse great books from the entire human family seems a worthy enterprise.

The papers are followed by reviews of two very different new works intended for classroom study and reference. Anthony Kenny’s A New History of Western Philosophy is reviewed by Eugene Kelly, and Gertrude Ezorsky’s Freedom in the Workplace? is reviewed by Andrew Wengraf.

As always, we encourage our readers to write for our publication. We welcome papers that respond to, comment on, or take issue with any of the material that appears within our pages. We welcome papers that reflect on some aspect of teaching philosophy or offer a new technique for teaching the process or content of philosophy.

This issue of the Newsletter will not contain a Books Received section. Some of the books listed in our last edition are still open for review. You can find the list at the APA Website at http://www.apaonline.org/APAOnline/Publications/Newsletters/APAOnline/Publications/Newsletters/APA_Newsletters.aspx. We encourage readers to suggest themselves as reviewers of books and other materials that they have found especially good for classroom use. When writing a review of material for our Newsletter, please remember that our publication is devoted to matters of pedagogy and not to theoretical discussions of philosophical issues.

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 footnotes/endnotes of the paper. The title of the paper should appear on the top of the paper itself.
- Both electronic and paper copies of papers are acceptable. In the case of paper copies, we would appreciate receiving four copies for our review purposes.
- Authors should adhere to the production guidelines that are available from the APA and that are available from the APA’s website.
- In the case of electronic copies, in writing your paper to disk, please do not use your word processor’s footnote or endnote function; all notes should be added manually at the end of the paper.

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ARTICLES

Landfalls – Yes, Footholds – ?
On Becoming a University Citizen
John J. McDermott
Texas A&M University

Preamble:
I have it as an honor, a privilege, and a pleasure to speak with and for you at the commencement of your appointment to the faculty at Texas A&M University. On behalf of the office of the Dean of Faculties, I welcome you to this fabled, congenitally insecure, and potentially stellar university. I assure you that we need your help in teaching, research, and service, which for me, are equivalent, one to the other, as desideratum for a member of this faculty.

I trust and assume that you know Texas A&M to be a public land-grant university whose central modus vivendi and modus operandi is that of service; to our students, the local community, the state of Texas, the nation, and the planet at-large. We are not here to curry esteem, rankings, or rewards. They will come epiphenomenally, as it were, if we do what we have been called to do and do it well. Chasing the tail of a tiger is never salutary, never.

My second assumption is that being here, today, is an indication that you have made a landmark. My task is to encourage you to use this arrival to the foothold. In my parlance, a landmark denotes stasis, a standing in place, whereby personal growth is illusory. It is for some faculty possible and even actual, alas, that of service; to our students, the local community, the state of Texas, the nation, and the planet at-large. We are not here to curry esteem, rankings, or rewards. They will come epiphenomenally, as it were, if we do what we have been called to do and do it well. Chasing the tail of a tiger is never salutary, never.

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To the contrary, a foothold is trampolinic, featuring a root, a foot, a lathe, and then a flight, a sortie, a reach, an experiment, and, above all, a vision. Landfalls do not generate personal growth. Footholds can, for they are restless and characterized by both building and journeying. Footholds press into the future. They plan, they try, they execute, and they fail and succeed. All the while footholds are live creatures seeking the novel in the name of discovery, amelioration, and, dare I say it, knowledge for its own sake. Venture capitalism and intellectual property reigns: the number of publications, grants, the most indirect cost, the most wall-plaques, and the most extra-mural notoriety.

I caution that although there are few who set out to "make it" and do, most who "make it" do so without ever having that as the intention. Allied here, as well, are the often nefarious side-effects of "making it." The message here is simple, be careful.

The selection of this epigraph has as its intention to initiate a conversation with myself and with you and yourself. If this conversation is to be authentic and not merely self-announcing chatter, then it must address the question as to "just what am I up to?" This head-text may alienate some of my audience who have on their mind a successful career, or even renown. I caution that although there are few who set out to "make it" and do, most who "make it" do so without ever having that as the intention. Allied here, as well, are the often nefarious side-effects of "making it." The message here is simple, be careful.

Now the reason why I open this self-search with the above jeremiad is that increasingly, the American university, and notably, Texas A&M, has structured itself to feed this vertical, pyramidal, and hierarchical approach to evaluation and assessment. Watch out here for the foreboding use of the term "outcomes" as a replacement for journeys, process, trekking, trying, and trudging, to say nothing of the obviating of mishap, setback, and failure, the richest of all pedagogical experiences. Contrast my understanding of the first conversation I have with myself as a fledgling university professor, with that of the achievement model. I ask myself how is it with this extraordinary venture, this entering into an enveloping of my new life, I find an institutional strait-jacket, wherein the intention. Allied here, as well, are the often nefarious side-effects of "making it." The message here is simple, be careful.

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is responsible for this extraordinary event signaling multiple accomplishments? The answer is clear, the line faculty and staff. It is they, that is, of today, it is we, you who are the sustaining and repeating architects of this remarkable event. One which happens three times every calendar year in this university. We and the staff have processed many thousands of schedules and grades, and have assigned hundreds of laboratories and classrooms. It is we the faculty and staff who teach, counsel, and worry for and about our students. The faculty is the guardian and the arbiter of the academic program. Do not let anyone tell you different. And they will, for we live at a time when dumping on the professoriate is a parlor game, played by persons who have never taught a class or conducted a laboratory. It is the contemporary fashion to say that we are lazy, work only a few hours a week, tend to be self-indulgent, and collectively arrogant. And, the unkindest cut of all is that we are whiners. Now, for sure, there are some among us who are appropriately so charged but in my very long experience in the university, they are a very small cadre of our faculty. And, I can say that this is distinctly true of Texas A&M, which tries to follow the old adage given to me as a child by my father, “work saves.” If we are integral within ourselves, our work is unto itself sufficient for our well-being. Awards are extra and welcome, but we cannot allow them to constitute the worthiness of our work. Still more, by far, we cannot allow our work to be suillied by those outside our province who know not of which they speak.

Continuing this conversation with myself, I come upon a cropper, namely, a self-destructive tendency among faculty, that is, the indulgence of competition as a main strand in the life of the academy. More than fifty years ago, when I was a very young professor at Queens College, now the City University of New York, I underwent a personal experience that was initially frightening and then, subsequently relieving and healing to this day. In the 1950s, that cluster of colleges would not have been called a “Research University” in present-day nomenclature. Rather, the competition, and that was the right word unfortunately, was for student approbation as found in the student faculty grapevine and the size of one’s elective courses. As this competition and its accompanying murmuring, along with informal rankings, became more palpable, I distinctly remember the stealthy appearance of a threat to my person, namely, the slow but sure arrival of jealousy, the most treacherous, destructive, and insidious of all the vices. Jealousy is the fall-out from competition and jealousy is the besetting sin of the university. To be jealous is to pay more attention to what others cannot do or do not do. It is to wish failure in others and it is to self-deceivingly inflate ourselves. In short, it is a sickness that corrodes us, our academic setting, and, in turn, leaks out to our students, foreclosing their own judgments as to whose work is pedagogically meritorious in their lives. I turned away from that threat and ever since I have tried to rejoice in the accomplishments of my colleagues as if they were my own. Indeed, these accomplishments do belong to all of us, for it is only in a thriving academic community, involving all the layers of responsibility, such that any one of us can occasionally come to the fore.

Admittedly, this communitarian spirit is long out-of-date in higher education. Seemingly built in to our institutional evaluation grid is one jealousy trigger after another. Early tenure, early promotion, the dispensation of schedules, the assignment of graduate students, mega-sections, and, most of all, the existence of only a merit raise which is decided by a quantitative grid that omits qualities more subtle, more selfless, and, yes, more directed at service than those achievements which fulfill expectations decided a priori and often not germane to the mission of this university. Let us press here the constant increase in the deprecation of service as one of the three requisites for purpose of faculty evaluation by the university. Of recent occurrence is the bowdlerization of the very word service, a long standing and praiseworthy term signifying the offer of help as given to others above the call of routine. Instead of service, we are told to use the term “engagement,” one that is atrociously vague and has no residue of helping, either in its etymology or in its jargonic use. The odor here is that engagement will enhance the reputation of the university, but to help, is to be of service, and does not have as its intention to enhance a reputation. Such enhancement, if it occurs, is a welcome fall-out, but if it help so that my reputation is enhanced, then I am guilty of spiritual fraud.

Now is neither the time nor occasion to detonate this issue, but if I were to do so, a primary focus would be in our treatment of retired faculty. You may say that such an issue is not your concern. Yet, it is of moment to you, for it is they who built and bequeath this fine university to you so that you may pursue your work. And, face up to it, someday soon, you, too, will be a retiree.

In response to the afore-mentioned question, “What am I up to,” I offer that this should be nothing less than building my person as we move apace within our familial and institutional matrix. We can continue by asking ourselves still another question: Does it make a difference that I am here and not there?—Yale, UCLA, Michigan, Arizona, Swarthmore, Hendrix, or Rice. Yes, and how, indubitably. The task here is not to make comparisons, for they are rife with self-deception, illusions, and an attitude which paralyzes the possibility of growth here, at Texas A&M. If you are a permanent landfaller with an eye, a hope of being somewhere else, then you are neither there nor here. You become what the philosopher Josiah Royce calls “the detached individual,” disconnected and counter-valent to your personal needs and to the needs of this university. You will find yourself in a state of serial gripping and not helping. You will become a caricature of the type of faculty so loathed by the wider community and consequently in the way of those here who are trying to make something of ourselves and of this university.

The philosopher Immanuel Kant, who is the taproot for modern physics, once offered us a quartet of questions: What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope? and What may I know?—Yale, UCLA, Michigan, Arizona, Swarthmore, Hendrix, or Rice. Yes, and how, indubitably. The task here is not to make comparisons, for they are rife with self-deception, illusions, and an attitude which paralyzes the possibility of growth here, at Texas A&M. If you are a permanent landfaller with an eye, a hope of being somewhere else, then you are neither there nor here. You become what the philosopher Josiah Royce calls “the detached individual,” disconnected and counter-valent to your personal needs and to the needs of this university. You will find yourself in a state of serial gripping and not helping. You will become a caricature of the type of faculty so loathed by the wider community and consequently in the way of those here who are trying to make something of ourselves and of this university.
purveyors of negativity. They have an agenda and it is not helpful. Do not make that agenda your own. And never, never, think of Texas A&M as a lesser place. We have some departments and programs as fine as can be found anywhere. And we have single faculty who, if they desired, could be anywhere. It is true that we do not have as many of those pockets of excellence as do more prestigious institutions, but that is why we enlisted the new faculty now present. You, here today, will widen and deepen these areas of excellence.

In your second year, find your way onto a committee, preferably one that is college or university wide. Keep your eye on the benefit package. Learn the language of administrative rhetoric. Learn the difficulties of administration. Do not carp. Be of assistance. Be critical only if you have a strategy for amelioration. Get to know the personnel of the Dean of Faculties office. Attend events outside of your interests, your work, and your predilections. Do not overdo anything, but saying yes occasionally, ironically, will enrich rather than curtail your work. Push yourself to widen your horizon. Act as if you are a university faculty member.

The final admonition offered by me is the most telling, that is, to teach, with verve, care, concern, affection, understanding, compassion, and intellectual integrity. Nothing less should be acceptable to you. Paradoxically, unless you are Einstein or Jonas Salk, the creative upshot of your teaching will last far longer than that of your research. There is no way to schedule the "outcome," yet fruition does happen, mysteriously, tychastically, and definitely. I tell you two stories.

First, some fifty years ago, I was teaching a class at Queens College, CUNY. In the back row, against the wall was a male student. He was a lay-out, a cut-up, a burgeoning sixties counter-culture guy. Living on coffee, smoking weed, he wrote incendiary articles for the student newspaper. He never spoke to me and, at that time, I did not know him. One day, I was talking to him frequently and every time we meet he tells me that while he had become a premier intellectual historian. I see him frequently and every time we meet he tells me that while teaching film at Stanford, he never crosses the threshold of a classroom without echoing to himself—this is serious!

The second story is of and by a student who, wheelchair bound, heard a presentation I gave forty-five years ago. The upshot was, that by my remarks, I suggested that she seek a life as a Montessori Directress. She did so although I did not know it at that time, and did not hear from her in the ensuing forty-five years. Two years ago someone sent me an alumni journal from a Mid-Western university. My listener was featured on the cover, still in her wheelchair, surrounded by children, in a "Montessori prepared environment." She had become extraordinarily accomplished within the world of Montessori both locally and nationally. The featured interview with her in the magazine told of our original meeting and how decisive it was for her life. I sought her out by telephone and we talked, as if there were no intervening forty-five years. I offer that one could call this an "outcome."

Less cheering, and more lugubrious, but outcomes nonetheless are the many letters I have received from my former students now in the penitentiary. They, too, are a form of deep pedagogical continuity. I have hundreds more of these stories. So much for prescribed outcomes.

On this issue, try T.S. Eliot from "East Coker" of *The Four Quartets*, one of the great poems of the English language.

"But perhaps neither gain nor loss

For us, there is only the trying.

The rest is not our business."

As you come here to be with us, you are of and about "your" personal stream of experience, with its careening and surprising rivulets of setback and celebration, the budding and the cutting, the amputation and the suturing. For you, this *dramatis personae* is vast and overarching. Nonetheless, to come here to Texas A&M University can, I repeat, can be a rich deposit and a powerful laser in the building of your person. You can be here, merely, as a button in a box, as if housed in a limp rag, one job among others. Or, you can be here as in an abode, in and through which your personal and intellectual life flourishes. As they say in the Kingdom of Tonga, I tell you, straight away, that this has nothing to do with being happy here. It has everything to do with being alive here.

I welcome you!!!

ASSESSMENT: AS OUTCOME --
AS INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

ONLY THE END COUNTS

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Regret to announce that our shared Philosophical Journey has been subtly absorbed by its final destination. If there is no OUTCOME then our journey has been a Mirage. Tough luck!

John J. McDermott
May 16, 2011

Shakespeare anyone?
Teaching World Philosophy

Richard White
Creighton University

We live in a global society, and for some time now, schools and universities have recognized the importance of addressing different aspects of human diversity. At my own university in the Midwest, there is a growing number of international students, and study-abroad programs abound. Increasingly, graduates in education, business, nursing, and other fields need to deal with people from other cultures who think about the world in different ways than they do. All of these make it important to have classes in World Philosophy where philosophy from a variety of different cultures can be discussed.

In addition to such pragmatic considerations, however, I think it would be true to say that students are often profoundly interested in the philosophical wisdom of India, China, and other non-Western traditions. This is because they are most interested in “meaning of life” kinds of questions which contemporary Western philosophy sometimes ignores as too subjective or emotional. In Buddhist philosophy, Confucianism, and Indian philosophy, to name but some, there remains a strong sense of philosophy as a guide to life; and we should also keep in mind that this was the original impulse behind the work of Socrates, the Stoics, Epicureans, and other early schools of Western philosophy. “World Philosophy” is an introductory course on the different global philosophical traditions, along the lines of World Literature and World Religions. In this class, students are able to focus on spiritual and existential themes while they also gain some understanding of the philosophical background of different world cultures.

A class in World Philosophy is not simply a class in non-Western philosophy, since Western philosophy is itself one of several strands that make up the philosophy of the world. It is instructive to look at the life and teachings of Socrates in comparison with those of the Buddha and Confucius; to examine both Western and non-Western approaches to nature, virtue, or violence; and to become aware that other world philosophical traditions are actually older and more extensive than Western philosophy itself. It is also important to consider the meaning of philosophy from a variety of different cultural perspectives. In my own case, I have often taught a class on Multiculturalism, which requires students to think about how we should look at different cultural traditions and to what extent a “fusion of horizons” is possible and even desirable. This is where I am coming from, and it certainly influences the way that I approach World Philosophy.

But how does one qualify to be an instructor of World Philosophy? Most philosophy teachers have not had an extensive training in non-Western philosophy, and those who are specialists in Indian philosophy or Chinese philosophy probably don’t know much about African philosophy or Islamic philosophy.1 Over the past three years, I have developed a class in World Philosophy, which I regard as a significant contribution to the university and to my own development as a teacher. I am not a specialist in non-Western philosophy, but I know enough to teach a class on World Philosophy, and it is my belief that with preparation most philosophy instructors can become qualified to teach this course at a basic undergraduate level. More advanced courses in Chinese, Indian, or African philosophy—taught by specialists—would offer a way of developing ideas that are introduced in this course. The whole point of teaching a class in World Philosophy is not so that your students can become experts in the history of world philosophical ideas. Rather, the goal is to engage students with significant ideas on themes such as suffering, virtue, death, and ultimate reality, so that they gain some appreciation for global philosophical traditions. By its very nature, World Philosophy is bound to be a survey class. It can be taught as a series of discrete modules addressing Indian, Chinese, and Western philosophy, without making any invidious comparisons between the different traditions. Inevitably, students themselves will make connections between the different perspectives; and we may want to help them to think things through by dwelling on the comparative strengths and weaknesses of Stoicism, Buddhism, and Daoism, etc. as significant ways of thinking about nature, fate, suffering, and the purpose of human life.

In the discussion that follows, I begin with a series of guiding questions concerning World Philosophy. I then describe the course as I teach it, following its trajectory from one week to the next. Finally, I offer some concluding reflections on teaching World Philosophy. I do not make any definitive claims about how to teach this class, but offer some advice and suggestions which may encourage those who are thinking about these ideas. Others may have very different ideas about teaching World Philosophy. There will certainly be disagreements on how much material can be covered in the course of a semester and whether this class should embrace or resist comparative thinking about different philosophical traditions. This essay is intended primarily to promote discussion about this field of inquiry. The only thing that I would insist upon is that World Philosophy is an important course which should be taught more often, because our students benefit from it—based on the evidence of course assessment and teaching evaluations—and because they appreciate its interest for their lives.2 Certainly, I have not taught another philosophy class that has been so appealing to philosophy majors and non-majors alike.

The first thing to settle is what exactly should be included in a World Philosophy class. My own impulse is to include several different philosophical traditions, but at the same time I recognize that it would be a mistake to overwhelm students with too much information. Some specialists may be wary of teaching such wide-ranging material over the course of a single semester. And perhaps there is no way that anyone could give a completely balanced and accurate account of such a variety of philosophical points of view. In spite of all of the aforementioned issues, however, my own experience is that this course does not have to be either superficial or overwhelming. My own preference is to cover a number of different world philosophical traditions that allow students to acquire a basic wide-ranging knowledge of World Philosophy.

My classes meet once or twice a week for a total of two and a half hours, and the semester is fifteen weeks long. I spend one or two weeks on each of the following: Indian philosophy, Buddhist philosophy, Chinese philosophy, Japanese philosophy, Western philosophy, Jewish philosophy, Islamic philosophy, African philosophy, and Native American philosophy. Of course, some of these categories—“Indian philosophy” or “Islamic philosophy,” for example—are much too broad, and suggest a more unified tradition than actually exists. Another issue is that in some of these traditions there is no clear distinction between philosophy and other forms of literature. For example, I begin the discussion of Jewish philosophy with The Book of Job, one of the earliest works of the Old Testament. The Book of Job is often taken to be primarily a religious text, but at the same time it gives rise to a philosophical discussion of the problem of suffering and theodicy. Likewise, Black Elk Speaks is the autobiography of a Lakota medicine man; it is not an academic work of philosophy but it provides an important outlook on the world that has spiritual wisdom and depth, and
for this reason it may be included as a primary text in a class on World Philosophy.

The next question is how to organize the discussion of different world philosophies. One approach is to look at different themes over the course of the semester. These could include nature, the self, death, wisdom, and virtue. The class would look at different extracts on these themes, and in this way comparisons and contrasts could be made. For example, the Buddhist view of the self in the “Questions of King Milinda,” could be read in opposition to the doctrine of the self in the Upanishads or as similar to David Hume’s account of the self as a bundle of impressions. The problem with this approach for the student is that it doesn’t encourage her to see the “big picture,” that is, an account of each different world philosophical tradition as a basic standpoint on the world. For this reason, I chose a (largely) chronological approach. I begin with Indian philosophy, which, as far as we know, is the earliest philosophical tradition, and I end with contemporary Western humanism. In order to grasp the most important features of each philosophical tradition, I use short primary texts, rather than anthologies containing extracts which may have no supporting context.

Which texts should be used? In each case, I try to find one or, at most, two primary texts that epitomize each tradition. Often, it is obvious which texts should be used: for Confucianism, the Analects; for Indian philosophy, the Upanishads and maybe the Bhagavad-Gita; for Daoism, the Daodeching. The goal is to find a good edition of each of these texts, one that does not use old-fashioned language, and is easy enough to read; I also prefer editions that are not encumbered by too many editorial comments and notes. This is not always easy: for example, there are literally dozens of English translations of the Daodeching that are still in print. Some research is required to find the best translation, or at least a good translation that won’t alienate students with a quaint or archaic rendering of this ancient Chinese classic. I am fully aware that each of the different traditions of world philosophy contains real diversity: there is a radical materialist strain in ancient Indian philosophy (the Carvaka school), and Chinese philosophy includes much more than Daoism and Confucianism. Perhaps one principle of selection is that the texts chosen must be among the most influential, with a preference for those that are still revered by thinkers in those traditions. But there is no precise science of text selection; we face the same challenges when we assign texts in ancient or medieval philosophy, analytic philosophy, or existentialism.

The final guiding question is: How should these texts be taught? Probably, the main issue for students, even those who are philosophy majors, is how to read these texts, since the materials are often quite different from anything they have ever read before. As teachers, we should, of course, say something about the cultural context from which these books emerge. We should identify the most important philosophical ideas while paying attention to matters of form and style as well as content. Thus, in the case of Confucius’s Analects, the fragmentary style is off-putting and may even suggest the absence of sustained philosophical reflection. So it is important to pay attention to the conditions of this work’s production: like Plato’s dialogues, it was compiled by students after the Master’s death. But though the text is corrupted, it is still possible to trace important ideas, including jen (or humanity), and li (which signifies ritual and reverence), ideas that are more than useful in helping us to understand Chinese culture (as well as the meaning of our own lives).

I will now describe the World Philosophy class as I teach it, from the first to the last week of classes. At this point, I have taught World Philosophy three times, and in each case I had twenty-six students fairly evenly divided between philosophy majors and non-majors. Students will have taken a Critical and Historical Introduction to Philosophy course as a prerequisite. “World Philosophy” is a course that satisfies a “Global Studies” requirement and for this reason alone it is a popular course. I ask students to write a one-page reaction paper (not a summary) for each major reading, and this promotes discussion at the beginning of class. I also have them write a mid-term paper on some comparative theme and a longer final paper on a topic they choose, so long, of course, as it is appropriate to “World Philosophy.”

In Week One I introduce the course to the students and I suggest that philosophy is a vehicle of self-definition since each culture uses philosophy as a way of understanding itself (while some philosophy also represents a critical response to the culture). I emphasize the need to be open-minded and not to assume that modern Western philosophy is the only model of philosophy that exists. In this I have been much influenced by the work of Pierre Hadot, who argues that ancient Western philosophy was all about living your life in the right way. For Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and Epicureans, philosophy was not about solving conceptual puzzles, but about knowing how to live. Later, with a few exceptions, Western philosophers came to put the emphasis on rigorous argument and critical reflection, but other world philosophical traditions have kept the sense that philosophy is more practical than theoretical. Though much of contemporary Western philosophy is highly technical and only read by other professionals, we should not assume that this technical material is the only available paradigm for philosophy. Otherwise, we will be closed off from the wisdom contained in many non-Western philosophical texts.

Week Two and Week Three cover Indian philosophy from the Upanishads to Gandhi. Obviously, there is a lot of background information that students need in order to get the most out of these texts: information about such ideas as karma, samsara, dharma, moksha, dukkha, and avidya must be explained since these help to organize the basic framework of Indian thought. After that, we don’t read all of the Upanishads but pay particular attention to the Chandogya Upanishad and the Katha Upanishad. The Upanishads may be considered the first philosophical texts insofar as they go beyond the religious ritual of the Vedas and use reason to try to apprehend the world as a whole. In the Chandogya Upanishad there is the blissful declaration, “tat tvam asi,” which means that the self is ultimately a part of the supreme reality, or Brahman, that underlies everything. This is the first metaphysics that attempts to understand what lies behind the claim that the world is unified. Likewise, in the Katha Upanishad there is another discussion between the teacher and the student on the meaning of death. After this, we discuss the Bhagavad-Gita and pay particular attention to the guiding idea of “acting without regard to the fruit of one’s actions.” Is this just to do the right thing and live in the right way without thinking about success or failure? And is this guiding idea to be criticized as an example of what Sartre has called “bad faith”? It is interesting that Gandhi was profoundly influenced by the Bhagavad-Gita, which he interpreted as a model of non-violence. As students quickly recognize, this makes a literal reading of the Gita profoundly problematic, and we are left to think about the true meaning of Arjuna’s dilemma at the beginning of this work: to fight or not to fight? And how exactly is Gandhi’s doctrine of non-violence (ahimsa) related to the Indian philosophical tradition?

Week Four and Week Five cover ancient and contemporary Buddhist philosophy. Once again, the instructor needs to
provide some background information on the life of the Buddha, the revelation of the problem of suffering, and the journey that he takes toward enlightenment. I have found the early legends and stories of the Buddha very useful in this context, especially "The Legend of the Buddha Shakyamuni," that Conze includes in his collection, *Buddhist Scriptures*. In this kind of class it is helpful to dwell on the lives of exemplary individuals, such as Socrates, Confucius, and Buddha, whose lives testify to the philosophy that they teach. Contemporary Buddhist philosophers include Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama, and the Buddhist nun Pema Chodron, all of whom emphasize social engagement. In this way, through more popular texts, Buddhist philosophy continues its long tradition of speaking to concerned individuals who are looking for answers to spiritual questions. The Dalai Lama’s works are especially good, and I have had very meaningful discussions with students on different chapters of his book, *Ethics for the New Millennium*. For example, many students are interested in the theme of compassion. In the West, some philosophers have often derided pity, and compassion is not always recognized as a virtue: The Stoics are scornful of pity because, they claim, it undermines our self-resolve and makes us dependent on others. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche condemns pity as a form of weakness, and even Kant thinks that compassion is suspect because it is frequently used as a foundation for judging the moral worth of an action. Aristotle (in the *Rhetoric*) says that there are proper limits to compassion. This uneasiness with compassion is reflected in some everyday attitudes, and it is both refreshing—and challenging—to consider the Buddhist viewpoint, which looks at universal and unconditional compassion as the supreme emotion and the fundamental virtue.

In Week Six and Week Seven, we look at Chinese philosophy. First, we read the *Analects*, which describes Confucius’s moral perspective. As we noted, the *Analects* is a difficult work, and there may be something to be said for limiting discussion to the first nine books, which are considered to be the original part of the text. Confucius places a huge emphasis on tradition, memory, and mourning, and his discussion of Chinese virtues such as *jen* (humaneness), *li* (propriety), and *chung* (loyalty) are at odds with typical Western perspectives on society and the role of the individual. If there is a discussion of Mencius and later Confucian views on human nature will show that Confucianism has an enduring history. Reading the *Daodechning* also presents some problems for the contemporary Western reader. The *Daodechning* is a kind of philosophical poetry that offers profound wisdom in condensed, fragmentary form. The idea of the Dao is one that stands out is the problem of suffering. Jews consider themselves to be the chosen people, but from the start they have been persecuted, and we discuss what appears to be an obvious tension between these two aspects. *The Book of Job* could be viewed as raising the problem of theodicy and the need to justify whatever happens. We go on to look at some interviews given by the twentieth-century Jewish thinker, Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas writes in the shadow of the Holocaust, the most recent example of massive (Jewish) suffering, and in this context his goal is to describe the “infinite” responsibility that each of us bears for the other. Levinas can be a difficult philosopher to teach because his writing style is extremely complex. But his post-Holocaust perspective has been very influential on contemporary ethical debates and on the discussion of contemporary Judaism. The section on Islamic philosophy is more problematic because the most important Islamic philosophers—al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and others in the Arabic falsafah tradition—are difficult to understand, and exposition of their writings presupposes detailed knowledge of other philosophers, especially Aristotle. However, one text that I have used successfully is Al-Ghazali’s “Deliverance from Error” (published as *Al-Ghazali’s Path to Sufism*.) This is a remarkable work, written from an autobiographical perspective that is similarly strange to that of Descartes’ *Meditations* (written some 500 years later). In his book, Al-Ghazali asks, “What, if anything, can we know...
with complete certainty? How does one ever know that one is not dreaming now?” He describes his reasons for becoming a Sufi mystic. Students are interested in Sufism, and enjoy the reciting of Rumi’s poetry (as well as YouTube clips of whirling dervishes).

Week Thirteen is on African Philosophy and Week Fourteen is on Native American Philosophy. Here again, consideration of non-Western materials forces us to raise the question “What is philosophy anyway?” Many commentators seem to agree that one of the biggest questions in contemporary African philosophy is whether there is such a thing as African philosophy. In this section of the course students read extracts from Senghor and Fanon, radical anti-colonialist writers of the mid-twentieth century. They also look at Henry Odera Oruku’s work on the traditional sage philosophers of tribal communities. This material suggests the respect in which philosophy itself might be an inherently Western notion. If we think that philosophy requires distance (and even alienation) from the world, then African philosophy (Senghor might argue) is actually a contradiction in terms. The same could also be said about Native American philosophy. For this class, I chose the classic text, Black Elk Speaks, even though, as many students have pointed out, it is not “really” a work of philosophy. Nonetheless, in this text there is an elaboration of a paradigm way of being in the world and acting toward nature, a paradigm that can be philosophically articulated and defended.

In the final week of the semester, we turn our attention to modern Western humanism as one of the defining perspectives of contemporary life and contemporary Western philosophy. Both Nietzsche and Sartre understood something of the reality of modern Western life. Nietzsche, in the first part of Thus Spoke Zarathustra and in the proclamation of the death of God, describes the death of the sacred that characterizes our time. He also describes “the last man,” or the enlightenment ideal of progress, which seems paltry when compared to the “overman.” In Existentialism is a Humanism Sartre accurately describes the popular idea, which many of our students subscribe to, that we are absolutely free to choose ourselves. By ending the course with a focus on Western philosophy, I do not want to give the impression that Western philosophy somehow represents the culmination of world philosophy, a view of which I am quite critical. But this discussion will return students to their own situation of living in a contemporary Western society.

World Philosophy can be an exhilarating class to teach if only because the subject-matter is so important and speaks to students at a very deep level. Many reasons will be offered why such a survey class is “impossible” or inappropriate, but having taught this class a few times, I sincerely believe that the benefits of such a class outweigh all of the drawbacks. Frankly, this is the kind of deep and wide-ranging class that I wish I had been able to take as an undergraduate. By way of a conclusion, I will offer some final observations that may be useful for anyone who is thinking about teaching the course.

First, it is important to maintain a balance between the idea that all of these world philosophies are completely different from one another, and the sense that there is one perennial philosophy from which all of these philosophies derive. To emphasize difference is to make these philosophies into exotic species that are basically irrelevant for contemporary westerners. To emphasize their ultimate similarity makes it much harder to learn from them, for if the message is in each case the same, then why should we bother studying all of them? Presumably, the truth lies somewhere in the middle: most world philosophies are occupied with the same basic themes that concern all of us—death, virtue, God, the self, etc.—but in each case, different aspects are emphasized, and different solutions are proposed. Moreover, the “style” of each world philosophy is different in the sense that some rely on sustained argument, some use philosophical poetry or stories, and some are more “oral” in nature.

Next, it is important to be critical when this is called for. We should not only present ideas from different world philosophies, we should also be prepared to evaluate them. At the same time, it is crucial to maintain the principle of charity. Just because Confucius does not offer detailed arguments to support his claims about virtue, it does not mean that his arguments are irrelevant or mistaken. This would be to judge all world philosophies in terms of the paradigm of contemporary Western philosophy, which emphasizes critical thinking as the dominant philosophical virtue. It would also be to forget that world philosophies are not collections of arguments but wisdom traditions that can still speak to human beings in different parts of the world. Philosophy is not only critical thinking; it is also a creative, imaginative project that grasps the connections between things, and the nature of the “big picture.”

Finally, it is important to avoid ranking the different world philosophies. For this way of thinking entails that we could have nothing to learn from other world philosophies if we decide that our own tradition is the best one. Teaching World Philosophy has convinced me that it is always better to remain open to the possibility of learning by remaining self-critical about our own ideas of knowledge, and the “true nature” of philosophy. Even though we do live in a global village (that is, in a multicultural, multiracial society), my own research suggests that World Philosophy is not a class that is taught with any frequency. This is quite surprising, and I hope that instructors will be more willing to teach World Philosophy in the future.

Endnotes


2. In 2010, when I last taught this class, students rated their interest in this course with 75 percent saying that their interest in the subject area had increased either “more” or “much more” over the course of the semester. In a section of the traditional Introduction to Philosophy class that I taught at the same time, the figure was only 50 percent. The scores are typical for other sections of World Philosophy that I have taught, and suggest that this class has an inherent appeal to students.

A New History of Western Philosophy


Reviewed by Eugene Kelly
New York Institute of Technology

This edition in a single volume of Kenny’s remarkable history is a delight to read. The terms scholarly, thoughtful, original, fascinating, and amusing rarely cover a history of philosophy as they do here. Among the comprehensive English-language histories of philosophy produced in the last century, Bertrand Russell’s History of Western Philosophy (1945) might be called amusing and thoughtful, but hardly scholarly. Frederick Copleston’s nine-volume A History of Philosophy (1946-1975) is scholarly, thoughtful, and original, but hardly fascinating or amusing. Efforts like these, just because they are written by a single person—as opposed to the Routledge Histories or the Cambridge Histories, the latter written by an “international team of specialists,” according to a blurb—have the advantage (or disadvantage) of expressing their authors’ unique views on the nature of individuals, problems, and the entire span of Western philosophical history. This is especially true here.

For Kenny does not hesitate to add, almost as asides, assessments of the achievements of Plato (“There is a hole in the center of the epistemology of the Republic”), Aristotle (The concept of a “natural place” is “irredeemably anachronistic”), or Wittgenstein (“The philosophy of mind expressed in the Tractatus is jejune and incredible”). He believes he has discovered the sources of the logical errors endemic in philosophy that have cast long shadows across the entire tradition, and he coolly ventures suggestions for their rectification. He writes, for example, of two forms of an epistemological fallacy, the “classical” and “Hellenistic.” The former is the assertion, “Whatever is knowledge must be true.” This may be interpreted as (1) “Necessarily, if p is known, p is true,” and (2) “If p is known p is necessarily true.” (1) seems unproblematic, he notes, but (2) is uncertain. But Plato and Aristotle, Kenny believes, held that (1) and (2) were indistinguishable, and from the confidence derived from (1) they asserted that only what is necessary can be known. From that error flow such extravagances as Plato’s theory of immutable Ideas, and the “impossible ideal of Aristotelian science” (142). Similarly, he identifies the “fatal” Cartesian mistake in Fregé and others of assuming a dichotomy between the world of material objects and the world of mind: “There are not two worlds, but a single one to which there belong not just inert physical objects but also conscious rational animals” (876). Further, the Stoics sowed the seeds of the future confusions that surround the

Ontological Argument by imagining that the existent and the non-existent were two sides of a single supreme ontological genus, namely, “something.” The most “fashionable offspring [of this doctrine] is the distinction between worlds that are actual and worlds that are possible” (182). If possibility is part of one’s ontology, he notes later, then existence should be a quality that distinguishes entities that are real from those that are merely possible.

This is all very lucid. But whatever the great importance of lucidity to philosophers, great style is always welcome also, and Kenny’s broad but muscular prose makes use of the full potentialities of the English language. His sentences make visible to the mind of the reader the content and color of the ideas of great thinkers and the dynamics of their interrelation with the thoughts of their predecessors and descendants. Here he speaks of Giordano Bruno’s world-view:

His work is further enlivened by judicious quotations from a wide variety of Western poets, from the philosopher-poet Parmenides through Lucretius and Wordsworth to such contemporaries as W.H. Auden (on the death of Freud).

The book’s structure is somewhat conventional. Each of its four books was published separately, and each has its own bibliography. There is a time-line at the end. Two or three chapters at the beginning of each Book are assigned the task of giving readers an overview of the period in question: ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary. Then chapters are dedicated to the branches of philosophy that were most developed and most significant for an understanding of the achievements of the period. For example, Books 1, 2, and 4 contain separate chapters on logic, while Book 3, the modern period, has no chapter on the topic, since logic was not extensively developed in that epoch. Similarly, Book 4 lacks a chapter on physics, as at that time thought about the physical cosmos had passed from the philosophers to the scientists.

This division into “overview” chapters and “discipline” chapters allows the reader to reencounter, on a more abstract and detailed plane, the authors and theories that he or she had first met in the overview. Plato’s theory of ideas, as presented in the overview chapter, is a model of simple clarity that sets for six theses about the nature of the ideas, then considers their consistency with each other. The theory is shown to inform modern discussions of predicates, classes, paradigms, and concrete universals (44-50). In the chapter on metaphysics we reencounter the six theses in an attempt to understand not only Plato’s intellectual itinerary, but the fate of Western philosophy.

Each Book ends with a chapter on God. Kenny, who was ordained as a Catholic priest, but who now considers himself an agnostic, is quite open to arguments in support of religious belief. The following observation is remarkable, though it offers no explanation of its own for the phenomenon in question:

At a time when philosophers and scientists were happy to accept that the universe has existed forever, there was no question of looking for a cause of its origin, only of looking for an explanation of its nature. But when it is proposed that the universe began at a point of time

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measurably distant in the past, then it seems perverse simply to shrug one’s shoulders and decline to seek any explanation. (986)

The book ends (without any sign of exhaustion from Kenny) with an insight that warns us to keep philosophical thought always open.

Bertrand Russell, in his History of Western Philosophy, maintained that there were instances where philosophy had reached definitive answers to central questions. He gave as one example the ontological argument. … [He writes], “I think it may be said quite definitively that as a result of analysis of the concept ‘existence’ modern logic has proved this argument invalid” (p. 752). [Alvin] Plantinga’s restatement of the argument, using logical techniques more modern than any available to Russell, serves as a salutary warning of the danger that awaits any historian of logic who declares a philosophical issue definitively closed. (996)

The author intends his book to be useful to upper-level undergraduate students, but he has also “written in a manner clear and light hearted enough for the book to be enjoyed by those who read it not for curricular purposes, but for their own information and entertainment” (xvii). And, one may well add, for their own enlightenment. Many professional philosophers may be assisted by Kenny in seeing the history of philosophy as a whole and in returning to the sources of the problems that occupy them in their writing.

**Freedom in the Workplace?**


Reviewed by Andrew Wengraf
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This book offers an account of the concepts of freedom and force, and supports it with a volley of useful cases that come from contexts and conditions of employment. The subject falls within the conventional topic of freedom and coercion, but Ezorsky alters and expands the way that topic has been treated. I shall start with a discussion of Ezorsky’s case method and of what I might call her style. I link both her method and her style to points of merit and general interest for classroom use. Then what I might call her style. I link both her method and her style to points of merit and general interest for classroom use. Then that this has to involve some evasion of the way the worker is situated. If my experience is any guide, the case will invite us to situate ourselves within the cases, and in lesser-evil cases we have to consider the subject in the case. A remote tally of all interests may fail if there are good interests and bad interests to distinguish, and realistic cases are very useful here. Ezorsky never blurs the difference between asking whether the worker in any particular case is significantly unfree, and otherwise asking whether any such loss of freedom is wrongful. These are distinct questions. But that doesn’t remove moral analysis from her project, because intricate moral issues arise from her material. Ezorsky denies that cases that limit a worker’s freedom are necessarily wrongful, but many of the cases she highlights suggest that interference with freedom in the workplace is prima facie wrongful in those instances, and that the actual operation of systemic, institutional, and interpersonal employment practices may be at odds with morality. Ezorsky’s main argument is thereby also a critique of the actual free market, yet it tends to preserve a morality we find familiar, which further sharpens the polemical dimension.

Those who know Ezorsky’s work will expect her economy of stroke. Her main account is dispatched in about sixty pages. The prose is terse, some may say plain, and although the arguments show no sign of ornament, they have an elegance that derives from their clarity and brevity. I pay more attention to Ezorsky’s style and method than is common or fashionable, because they bear on the appeal of her book to teachers and students. Ezorsky dislikes filler and makes her arguments without any lavish elaborative persuasion that may otherwise detract from the independent response to the cases that such a book should foster. To teach with this book is therefore to debate the cases, and the cases serve to engage the moral sense and elicit considered judgments. Although Ezorsky seeks to advance the state of debate with new argument, her discussion throughout nevertheless reads like a mercifully brief set of private tutorials that encourage questions and show the way applied ethics gets done. Ordinarily, Ezorsky’s stage of analysis would start where strictly introductory instruction leaves off, but she often dovetails the two. Old-timers may recall William Frankena, to cite a past master of this same skill. Ezorsky favors short chapters and titled sub-heads that invite the reader to think through her argument incrementally. The sub-headings make it easier to track back. She writes with cues to recall examples and reminders of what came earlier. Her first-person idiom suits the case method, and the format suits philosophy, which has to give the reader guidance to follow the line of argument. There are five chapters, two of which are devoted to objections to what she has said, with no obvious omissions from the literature.

Let us look at one representative case that introduces Ezorsky’s analysis. An ailing worker would leave her exhausting job but for the health insurance she needs for her diabetic children. Reason dictates that she stay at her job as the lesser evil, and she is reasonable. She cannot get better jobs in the actual job market, else she would. And she cannot otherwise adequately finance care for her kids. She’s informed on those counts. Ezorsky thinks that the worker “surely believes that she is unfree to leave her position” and Ezorsky agrees with her. The worker isn’t just tempted to stay in her job. The case works best with an immediate foil. Many philosophers and economists regard the worker as quite simply free, and Ezorsky suggests that this has to involve some evasion of the way the worker is situated. If my experience is any guide, the case will invite some initial evasion. A frequent feature of such evasion is an effort to alter the conditions of the case. A change in the case...
may change the response. Perhaps this employee’s particular employer can make the work less onerous, in which case the worker would not necessarily wish to leave her job. But that alters the case in question. Ezorsky asserts that “what workers themselves believe about their own freedom or unfreedom may not be the whole truth of the matter, but it is often closer to the truth than the views held by many theorists.” Again, the worker in this case is ex hypothesi rational, as effective lesser-evil cases seem to require. Realistic as it may be, the case is a hypothetical thought experiment, and a hypothetical case isn’t a state of affairs subject to change. The worker in this case is not a martyr who wouldn’t wish to have things any other way, any more than the sacrificial person on the track in a trolley-loop case is really there to accomplish suicide in relief of a terminal painful disease. Those new details might change our responses. The case doesn’t call for “the whole of the matter,” salutary as that may be. Those who counsel that the worker has to adjust her attitudes, look at her situation more favorably, find her inner resources, free her mind, and so forth, may be right, so that may be apt and fair comment. But it is beside the point of the case, which is that the bind is systemic and circumstantial. These adaptations may be advisable, but they will not alter the condition that she feels forced to stay in her job to secure the insurance coverage.

One has to start with the rational worker and stick to the terms of the case. Those terms assure that the worker is reasonable and that her operative choice is between a lesser and a greater evil and that the job market is what she takes it to be. Still, we may come this far and still resist the case by way of a direct challenge to what the worker herself believes. She takes herself to be unfree, but Ezorsky also has it that she is doing what she wants to do. The worker regards herself as better off, relative to the greater evil of joblessness in her circumstance. Inasmuch as the worker does what she “wants” to do, she may be said to act freely, or so it may seem. This particular line of resistance rests upon a conceptual relation between “doing what one wants” and “acting freely.” Gerald Dworkin identifies a puzzle of sorts within this connection, and suggests a solution that entails what motivates the worker to want to stay employed is one thing, whereas whether she thinks she is acting freely given the duress she experiences is something different. Dworkin’s solution is applied narrowly to coercion, but the case in question here is not narrowly coercive. Ezorsky’s solution is new and different, and is applicable to cases such as this. She distinguishes two uses of “want.” “When a friend asks you for a loan, you are not forced to comply.” But you may “want in the strong sense” to lend him the money. The worker is forced to stay in her onerous job because reason dictates that the alternatives are much worse. She is reasonable, and therefore “wants in the weak sense” to yield to the force. That she is reasonable is not inconsistent with whether she thinks she is significantly unfree. Again, whatever the whole truth, the case cannot be readily brushed aside on the ground that the worker in the case has inconsistent beliefs or attitudes or cannot think herself subject to systemic force. Whatever the best way to characterize and comprehend the case, the claim that the employee is simply and clearly free in such circumstances seems to leave something out of account.

As for some views held by actual theorists, two examples from Ezorsky’s discussion may suffice. Narveson has it that nobody is preventing such an employee from getting another job. At most, nobody prevents her from looking for one. A salient given in the case stipulates that she cannot get one. Narveson evades the case. One can still argue, of course, that this case is not realistic. Milton Friedman takes exactly this line, and suggests that the free market ipso facto offers all workers a significant choice of other, better employment. Again, the terms of the case are fixed so that this woman knows otherwise. Real markets are not quite so benign as ideal ones. Friedman resists the particular intuition that the woman is unfree, but relies on an insight that the wider free-market assures her freedom. But, once again, the case stipulates that if she could get a less onerous job with comparable medical insurance, she would. The example is meant to show that perhaps it is the influential Friedman who is unrealistic, and he is a real foil, not a straw man. Ezorsky offers a welter of different cases to work with, none of which is beyond dispute, but they offer critics and objectors examples to oppose, and they are not detached from actual conditions.

In general, defenders of the free market argue to reduce the range of acts that we may judge to be unfree. And there is certainly room for judgment here. Some have it that coercion denies freedom, but that otherwise workers are free. There are many variants of the way to interpret the concepts, and there are many notably first-rate philosophers, not mere fools, who have faltered on the matter of worker’s rights and employee freedom. Ezorsky examines a continuum that includes coercion but locates it within a broader and more perspicuous spectrum that introduces the concept of strong social forcing. Forms of strong social forcing fall into a complex, diversified category that includes lesser-evil dilemmas and other intricate sets of hard choices between alternatives and offers one can hardly refuse. Philosophers differ on what they take to interfere with freedom along or within this general spectrum.

What distinguishes Ezorsky is that she rejects the assumption that workers in these examples are “either just free or just unfree” as an outcome of any case, even coercion cases. The stark “free or unfree” dichotomy invites error whatever one judges any case to entail. We are better seen as both “free and unfree,” and the distinction to consider instead is that between the trivial and the significant, given the context and the consequences. On Ezorsky’s account, whether you are coerced outright or subject to any strong social forcing, you are both free and unfree. That captures the truth that nothing physically prevents the worker in need of health insurance for her children from either leaving or staying in her onerous job: one can say, if trivially, that she is free to stay in it, or indeed to leave, but she is also, meaningfully, not free. One cannot assign much weight to her freedom to either stay or leave, because she is also forced to stay. That is what makes the worker herself likely to assign much more significance to the way she is not free and unlikely to treat it as trivial.

Some may object that this still leaves matters vague and that this fact will vex instruction. Ezorsky agrees that there are lesser evil choices that do not pose a choice between suitably significant hardships to constitute effective force, and there are cases that fall in the space between clearly trivial and plainly significant outcomes. Freedom in the workplace is thus truly context-related, but some might say that Ezorsky employs a method that smacks of a suspect moral-sense approach and otherwise advocates no applicable candidate rule that categorically draws a bright line between the polar adjectives. One might ask here whether any such candidate rule could be endorsed as anything but a revisable presumption. Those who expect otherwise may be disappointed. Ezorsky’s aim is to argue first that many circumstances leave workers free only insofar as one can trivialize alternatives that they are forced to confront, and that the interest here rests with her cases. Most readers will appreciate the obstacle to leaving the job in this given case. Ezorsky’s analysis relies on what she calls the “obstacle view,” carefully and lucidly introduced, and attributed to McCullum. The details of that view, and much else, cannot be crowded into this review, except to note the insight with
which she brings it to yield. Those already familiar with the topic of coercion will welcome her discussion of physical restraint, her characterization of what Daniels misleadingly calls “quasi-coercion,” and her other sharp and instructive commentary throughout of the views of G.A. Cohen, Daniels, Gerald Dworkin, Harry Frankfurt, Nozick, Wertheimer, and other leading writers within the topic. She also includes both informative appendices and thorough notes and citations with valuable commentary for exploration of the relevant philosophical and empirical literature, an index, and a full bibliography.

Finally, Ezorsky’s emphasis suggests an approach to coverage that teachers might well investigate. In particular, the sections “Some Moral Issues of Proposal Forcing” and “Forced to Commit a Moral Offense” are conducive to classroom discussion and introduce issues that ought to receive more attention in the test and application of moral principles. Moral rules are meant to be prima facie acceptable and pro tanto applicable. A principled person sticks to her principles; that is, she follows them as far as they go. But it only takes a finite amount of ingenuity to invoke a “force of circumstance” that has the context and consequences where it might be more reasonable just to acknowledge a necessary moral violation or lapse, as such, and cease veneration of the principle. When Nozick asks whether it isn’t irrational to refuse to commit a moral offense in order to prevent other, more extensive offenses of the same kind, he attaches a footnote that implicitly asks also whether one can reasonably avoid grievous situations with acknowledgement, perhaps, that this avoidance either violates a moral imperative or entails a restructure of the way it applies. Hart alludes to the same issue in a discussion of innocent-man cases. But Nozick backs off any answer, He speaks of the notion that morality contains revisable presumptions as “an idea he wants largely to avoid” (vide, ASU, p. 30). But that idea ought to be part of any full theory. Moral theory is taught as if agents are metaphysically free, but this appears to neglect how much they operate within situations of duress, or in response to avowed obligations they cannot satisfy, where morality is nevertheless not really suspended.

In a defense of her friend Hannah Arendt on the issue of Jewish “cooperation” with the Third Reich, Mary McCarthy, a precise and gifted wordsmith, asserts that a loaded gun to one’s head is not a reason to commit a grave moral offense but at most a temptation. That indicates what happens when moral theory ignores reason and duress. I won’t drift further. I only mean to suggest that Ezorsky’s emphasis is suggestive.

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We welcome readers to the Spring 2012 edition of the APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy.

We have selected papers by two authors for this edition. The first, “Landfalls – Yes, Footholds – ? On Becoming a University Citizen,” is by John J. McDermott of Texas A&M University. The paper is in the form of a greeting to newly appointed members of the Texas A&M faculty. Dr. McDermott, who was for many years professor at Queens College of the City University of New York, offers sage advice, which we will not attempt to anticipate here, not only to new members of the profession, but to anyone meditating upon how to enhance the life of scholarship, teaching, and service to an institution of higher learning. The author warns his listeners of jealousy, of the idols of the academic marketplaces, and of failing to serve the larger world the university inhabits. He concludes with stories, some amusing, some sad, about a few of his former students and their “outcomes” in life. Additionally, Professor McDermott offers us a poem that he wrote this past year that, in part, contrasts the aims of education with the expectations of the college administrators.

The second paper, “Teaching World Philosophy,” is by Richard White of Creighton University. Professor White describes and justifies a course intended for students not majoring in philosophy that incorporates material from major traditions of thought outside the Western world and brings such thought into dialogue with some of the canonical texts of Western philosophy. Professor White’s reading list for this course is long, but his essay provides some strategies for integrating these disparate materials in ways that are engaging and coherent. The question of whether one can compare, say, the Upanishadic writings with the ancient works of the Greeks and Chinese, or whether the traditions of Africans and Native Americans can aid insight into the perennial questions of Western thought may not be answered entirely by Professor White’s essay. Yet his enthusiasm for his material is infectious, and his attempt to lead his students to a life of reflection upon the platform of diverse great books from the entire human family seems a worthy enterprise.

The papers are followed by reviews of two very different new works intended for classroom study and reference. Anthony Kenny’s A New History of Western Philosophy is reviewed by Eugene Kelly, and Gertrude Ezorsky’s Freedom in the Workplace? is reviewed by Andrew Wengraf.

As always, we encourage our readers to write for our publication. We welcome papers that respond to, comment on, or take issue with any of the material that appears within our pages. We welcome papers that reflect on some aspect of teaching philosophy or offer a new technique for teaching the process or content of philosophy.

This issue of the Newsletter will not contain a Books Received section. Some of the books listed in our last edition are still open for review. You can find the list at the APA Website at http://www.apaonline.org/APAOnline/Publications/Newsletters/APAOnline/Publications/Newsletters/APA_Newsletters.aspx.

We encourage readers to suggest themselves as reviewers of books and other materials that they have found especially good for classroom use. When writing a review of material for our Newsletter, please remember that our publication is devoted to matters of pedagogy and not to theoretical discussions of philosophical issues.

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 footnotes/endnotes of the paper. The title of the paper should appear on the top of the paper itself.
• Both electronic and paper copies of papers are acceptable. In the case of paper copies, we would appreciate receiving four copies for our review purposes.
• Authors should adhere to the production guidelines that are available from the APA and that are available from the APA's website.
• In the case of electronic copies, in writing your paper to disk, please do not use your word processor's footnote or endnote function; all notes should be added manually at the end of the paper.

Contributions should be sent to:
Tziporah Kasachkoff, PhD Program in Philosophy, The City University of New York Graduate School and University Center, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

Or:
Eugene Kelly, Department of Social Science, New York Institute of Technology, Old Westbury, NY 11568.

All articles submitted to the Newsletter are blind-reviewed by the members of the editorial committee. They are: Tziporah Kasachkoff, The Graduate Center, The City University of New York, co-editor (tkasachkoff@yahoo.com).
Landfalls – Yes, Footholds – ?
On Becoming a University Citizen

John J. McDermott
Texas A&M University

Preamble:
I have it as an honor, a privilege, and a pleasure to speak with and for you at the commencement of your appointment to the faculty at Texas A&M University. On behalf of the office of the Dean of Faculties, I welcome you to this fabled, congenitally insecure, and potentially stellar university. I assure you that we need your help in teaching, research, and service, which for me, are equivalent, one to the other, as desideratum for a member of this faculty.

I trust and assume that you know Texas A&M to be a public land-grant university whose central modus vivendi and modus operandi is that of service; to our students, the local community, the state of Texas, the nation, and the planet at-large. We are not here to curry esteem, rankings, or rewards. They will come epiphenomenally, as it were, if we do what we have been called to do and do it well. Chasing the tail of a tiger is never salutary, never.

My second assumption is that being here, today, is an indication that you have made a landfall. My task is to encourage you to turn this arrival into a foothold. In my parlance, a landfall denotes stasis, a standing in place, whereby personal growth is illusory. It is for some faculty possible and even actual, alas, to remain as a landfall for decades, in place, oblivious to the rushing institutional currents that swirl around us, wash over us, and in a rotating fashion threaten us, enhance us, and, one hopes, give us confidence to participate in the making of this university.

To the contrary, a foothold is trampoline, featuring a root, a foot, a lathe, and then a flight, a sortie, a reach, an experiment, and, above all, a vision. Landfalls do not generate personal growth. Footholds can, for they are restless and characterized by both building and journeying. Footholds press into the future. They plan, they try, they execute, and they fail and succeed. All the while footholds are live creatures seeking the novel in the name of discovery, amelioration, and, dare I say it, knowledge for its own sake. Venture capitalism and intellectual property reigns: the number of publications, grants, the most indirect cost, the mostWall-plaques, and the most extra-mural notoriety. Yet, if our university is not healthy, even the most prepossessing of departments, areas, and programs, in time, will decay. You arrive here at a time when the faculty, too long somnolent, have begun to realize, quite simply, that we are in this struggle for the autonomy of the university, as a tightly knit faculty community or not at all. We shall see. And this is why we need your help.

My final assumption is dolorous but hurtfully true. As we begin our work here, with the pressing of time we shall have some success and, as they say, become better known, acquire a reputation, albeit in a pond no bigger than a ripple. As time continues to pass, the trajectory will turn back on us and we shall be forgotten, that is, obsoleted. Seventy-five years from now, the new faculty will gather in this room for a similar address. Of us, all that will be left is a stratified, a lonely footnote, and if we have been sufficiently obstreperous, an anecdote, a vignette. After delivering his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Albert Camus was confronted by a woman who said, “Monsieur Camus, if you do not give us but one chance in ten-thousand, why do you write?” Camus answered, “Precisely Madame.” And so, faced with this looming, irreversible obsolescence of my person and my work, why am I here speaking with you? Precisely!

“...I search out myself.”
- Heraclitus

The selection of this epigraph has as its intention to initiate a conversation with myself and with you and yourself. If this conversation is to be authentic and not merely self-announcing chatter, then it must address the question as to “just what am I up to?” This head-text may alienate some of my audience who have on their mind a successful career, or even renown. I caution that although there are few who set out to “make it” and do, most who “make it” do so without ever having that as the intention. Allied here, as well, are the often nefarious side-effects of “making it.” The message here is simple, be careful.

Now the reason why I open this self-search with the above jeremiad is that increasingly, the American university, and notably, Texas A&M, has structured itself to feed this vertical, pyramidal, and hierarchical approach to evaluation and assessment. Watch out here for the foreboding use of the term “outcomes” as a replacement for journeys, process, trekking, trying, and trudging, to say nothing of the obviating of mishap, setback, and failure, the richest of all pedagogical experiences. Contrast my understanding of the first conversation I have with myself as a fledgling university professor, with that of the achievement model. I ask myself how is it with this extraordinary venture, this entering into an enveloping of my person, or, may I say it, this vocare, this calling, to search, to teach, to share, to be of service. Over against this rich departure into my new life, I find an institutional strait-jacket, wherein the expectations squash the joy of the doing and the further we go, the longer we last, the fewer become anointed. Quantity reigns: the number of publications, grants, the most indirect cost, the mostWall-plaques, and the most extra-mural notoriety. Yet, when I am attending graduation and I look out at that vast sea of students, I ask myself how did this happen? Who
is responsible for this extraordinary event signaling multiple accomplishments? The answer is clear, the line faculty and staff. It is they, that is, as of today, it is we, you who are the sustaining and repeating architects of this remarkable event. One which happens three times every calendar year in this university. We and the staff have processed many thousands of schedules and grades, and have assigned hundreds of laboratories and classrooms. It is we the faculty and staff who teach, counsel, and worry for and about our students. The faculty is the guardian and the arbiter of the academic program. Do not let anyone tell you different. And they will, for we live at a time when dumping on the professoriate is a parlor game, played by persons who have never taught a class or conducted a laboratory. It is the contemporary fashion to say that we are lazy, work only a few hours a week, tend to be self-indulgent, and collectively arrogant. And, the unkindest cut of all is that we are whiners. Now, for sure, there are some among us who are appropriately so charged but in my very long experience in the university, they are a very small cadre of our faculty. And, I can say that this is distinctively true of Texas A&M, which tries to follow the old adage given to me as a child by my father, “work saves.” If we are integral within ourselves, our work is unto itself sufficient for our well-being. Awards are extra and welcome, but we cannot allow them to constitute the worthiness of our work. Still more, by far, we cannot allow our work to be sullied by those outside our province who know not of which they speak.

Continuing this conversation with myself, I come upon a cropper, namely, a self-destructive tendency among faculty, that is, the indulgence of competition as a main strand in the life of the academy. More than fifty years ago, when I was a very young professor at Queens College, now the City University of New York, I underwent a personal experience that was initially frightening and then, subsequently relieving and healing to this day. In the 1950s, that cluster of colleges would not have been called a “Research University” in present-day nomenclature. Rather, the competition, and that was the right word unfortunately, was for student approbation as found in the student faculty grapevine and the size of one’s elective courses. As this competition and its accompanying murmuring, along with informal rankings, became more palpable, I distinctly remember the stealthy appearance of a threat to my person, namely, the slow but sure arrival of jealousy, the most treacherous, destructive, and insidious of all the vices. Jealousy is the fall-out from competition and jealousy is the besetting sin of the university. To be jealous is to pay more attention to what others cannot do or do not do. It is to wish failure in others and it is to self-deceivingly inflate ourselves. In short, it is a sickness that corrodes us, our academic setting, and, in turn, leaks out to our students, foreclosing their own judgments as to whose work is pedagogically meritorious in their lives. I turned away from that threat and ever since I have tried to rejoice in the accomplishments of my colleagues as if they were my own. Indeed, these accomplishments do belong to all of us, for it is only in a thriving academic community, involving all the layers of responsibility, such that any one of us can occasionally come to the fore.

Admittedly, this communitarian spirit is long out-of-date in higher education. Seemingly built into our institutional evaluation grid is one jealousy trigger after another. Early tenure, early promotion, the dispensation of schedules, the assignment of graduate students, mega-sections, and, most of all, the existence of only a merit raise which is decided by a quantitative grid that omits qualities more subtle, more selfless, and, yes, more directed at service than those achievements which fulfill expectations decided a priori and often not germane to the mission of this university. Let us press here the constant increase in the deprecation of service as one of the three requisites for purpose of faculty evaluation by the university. Of recent occurrence is the bowdlerization of the very word service, a long standing and praiseworthy term signifying the offer of help as given to others above the call of routine. Instead of service, we are told to use the term “engagement,” one that is atrociously vague and has no residue of helping, either in its etymology or in its jargonic use. The odor here is that engagement will enhance the reputation of the university, but to help, is to be of service, and does not have as its intention to enhance a reputation. Such enhancement, if it occurs, is a welcome fall-out, but if I help so that my reputation is enhanced, then I am guilty of spiritual fraud.

Now is neither the time nor occasion to detonate this issue, but if I were to do so, a primary focus would be in our treatment of retired faculty. You may say that such an issue is not your concern. Yet, it is of moment to you, for it is they who built and bequeath this fine university to you so that you may pursue your work. And, face up to it, someday soon, you, too, will be a retiree.

In response to the afore-mentioned question, “What am I up to,” I offer that this should be nothing less than building my person as we move apace within our familial and institutional matrix. We can continue by asking ourselves still another question: Does it make a difference that I am here and not there?—Yale, UCLA, Michigan, Arizona, Swarthmore, Hendrix, or Rice. Yes, and how, indubitably. The task here is not to make comparisons, for they are rife with self-deception, illusions, and an attitude which paralyses the possibility of growth here, at Texas A&M. If you are a permanent landfaller with an eye, a hope of being somewhere else, then you are neither there nor here. You become what the philosopher Josiah Royce calls “the detached individual,” disconnected and counter-valent to your personal needs and to the needs of this university. You will find yourself in a state of serial griping and not helping. You will become a caricature of the type of faculty so loathed by the wider community and consequently in the way of those here who are trying to make something of ourselves and of this university.

The philosopher Immanuel Kant, who is the taproot for modern physics, once offered us a quartet of questions: What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope? and What is man(woman)? (Logik, 1800). Herein, I lift out but one query, namely, What ought I to do? First, I can do some research of the kind that will not show up on your end-of-year evaluation. This research is too important to be so tested. Learn the history of this university, which is pockmarked by turmoil, splendid in response to adversity, and laced with characters of character. Walk the campus and make friends with the buildings and the scape. The buildings are macho but inside you will find frequent eruptions of Victorian elegance and a Texas aesthetic, for example, the marvelous branding stairwell in Kleberg, a masterpiece of assemblage. Access yourself to the weather patterns, the enchanting skylines, and experience the space, always the space. On the occasion of an ice storm, come to campus in the middle of the night and thrill to the glistening dance of the eternally leaved trees, our precious live oaks. Study the history of Bryan-College Station, Brazos County, and of Texas, the latter, a vaunted and wild, deeply human history, featuring at every turn the presence of hard scrabble. Travel the state of Texas. This activity will take you five years. Visit our neighbors, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Mexico. When you set out to do this, do not forget the famous couplet, “the sun has ris and the sun has set, and you ain’t out of Texas yet.” Find a university-wide mentor, one who is wise and wily. It should be someone outside your department and your college. They exist. Avoid, I repeat, avoid all cynics, and...
purveyors of negativity. They have an agenda and it is not helpful. Do not make that agenda your own. And never, never, think of Texas A&M as a lesser place. We have some departments and programs as fine as can be found anywhere. And we have single faculty who, if they desired, could be anywhere. It is true that we do not have as many of those pockets of excellence as do more prestigious institutions, but that is why we enlisted the new faculty now present. You, here today, will widen and deepen these areas of excellence.

In your second year, find your way onto a committee, preferably one that is college or university wide. Keep your eye on the benefit package. Learn the language of administrative rhetoric. Learn the difficulties of administration. Do not carp. Be of assistance. Be critical only if you have a strategy for amelioration. Get to know the personnel of the Dean of Faculties office. Attend events outside of your interests, your work, and your predilections. Do not overdo anything, but saying yes occasionally, ironically, will enrich rather than curtail your work. Push yourself to widen your horizon. Act as if you are a faculty member of the arts and sciences, all of them. You are a university faculty member.

The final admonition offered by me is the most telling, that is, to teach, with verve, care, concern, affection, understanding, compassion, and intellectual integrity. Nothing less should be acceptable to you. Paradoxically, unless you are Einstein or Jonas Salk, the creative upshot of your teaching will last far longer than that of your research. There is no way to schedule the “outcome,” yet fruition does happen, mysteriously, tychastically, and definitely. I tell you two stories.

First, some fifty years ago, I was teaching a class at Queens College, CUNY. In the back row, against the wall was a male student. He was a lay-out, a cut-up, a burgeoning sixties counter-culture guy. Living on coffee, smoking weed, he wrote incendiary articles for the student newspaper. He never spoke to me and, at that time, I did not know him. One day, I was teaching the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, Book II. Aurelius was in bivouac at the edge of the Danube awaiting battle with the Marcomanni. Pedagogically, I conjured the following scene as leading to the blistering advice of Marcus Aurelius. As befitting the Emperor, he had a regal tent and a Centurion present at his side. The story: “the candle flickers. A mouse scurries along the floor. Aurelius speaks—(bellows?) ‘Centurion, see the mouse, see yourself, see me. No difference, Centurion.’ The Centurion responds, ‘No Sire—you are the Emperor.’ ‘No Centurion—Of human life the time is a point, and the substance is in a flux, and the perception dull, and the composition of the whole body subject to putrefaction, and the soul a whirl, and fortune hard to divine, and fate a thing devoid of judgment. And to say all in a word, everything which belongs to the body is a stream, and what belongs to the soul is a dream and vapour, and life is a warfare, and a stranger’s sojourn, and after-fame is oblivion’” (II, 17). My student crushed his back against the wall and uttered to himself and to a few student neighbors, “My God, this guy McDermott is serious. This is serious.” He disappeared, never having spoken to me. Thirty years later he dedicated a book in my honor. He had become a premier intellectual historian. I see him frequently and every time we meet he tells me that while teaching film at Stanford, he never crosses the threshold of a classroom without echoing to himself—this is serious!

The second story is of and by a student who, wheelchair bound, heard a presentation I gave forty-five years ago. The upshot was, that by my remarks, I suggested that she seek a life as a Montessori Directress. She did so although I did not know it at that time, and did not hear from her in the ensuing forty-five years. Two years ago someone sent me an alumni journal from a Mid-Western university. My listener was featured on the cover, still in her wheelchair, surrounded by children, in a “Montessori prepared environment.” She had become extraordinarily accomplished within the world of Montessori both locally and nationally. The featured interview with her in the magazine told of our original meeting and how decisive it was for her life. I sought her out by telephone and we talked, as if there were no intervening forty-five years. I offer that one could call this an “outcome.”

Less cheering, and more lugubrious, but outcoming nonetheless are the many letters I have received from my former students now in the penitentiary. They, too, are a form of deep pedagogical continuity. I have hundreds more of these stories. So much for prescribed outcomes.

On this issue, try T.S. Eliot from “East Coker” of The Four Quartets, one of the great poems of the English language.

“But perhaps neither gain
 nor loss
 For us, there is only the trying.
 The rest is not our business.”

As you come here to be with us, you are of and about “your” personal stream of experience, with its careening and surprising rivulets of setback and celebration, the budding and the cutting, the amputation and the suturing. For you, this dramatis personae is vast and overarching. Nonetheless, to come here to Texas A&M University can, I repeat, can be a rich deposit and a powerful laser in the building of your person. You can be here, merely, as a button in a box, as if housed in a limp rag, one job among others. Or, you can be here as in an abode, in and through which your personal and intellectual life flourishes. As they say in the Kingdom of Tonga, I tell you, straight away, that this has nothing to do with being happy here. It has everything to do with being alive here.

I welcome you!!!

ASSESSMENT: AS OUTCOME --

AS INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

ONLY THE END COUNTS

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Regret to announce
that our shared
Philosophical Journey
has been subtly absorbed
by its final destination
If there is no
OUTCOME
then our journey
has been a
Mirage.

Tough luck!

John J. McDermott
May 16, 2011

Shakespeare anyone?
We live in a global society, and for some time now, schools and universities have recognized the importance of addressing different aspects of human diversity. At my own university in the Midwest, there is a growing number of international students, and study-abroad programs abound. Increasingly, graduates in education, business, nursing, and other fields need to deal with people from other cultures who think about the world in different ways than they do. All of these make it important to have classes in World Philosophy where philosophy from a variety of different cultures can be discussed.

In addition to such pragmatic considerations, however, I think it would be true to say that students are often profoundly interested in the philosophical wisdom of India, China, and other non-Western traditions. This is because they are most interested in “meaning of life” kinds of questions which contemporary Western philosophy sometimes ignores as too subjective or sentimental. In Buddhist philosophy, Confucianism, and Indian philosophy, to name but some, there remains a strong sense of philosophy as a guide to life; and we should also keep in mind that this was the original impulse behind the work of Socrates, the Stoics, Epicureans, and other early schools of Western philosophy. “World Philosophy” is an introductory course on the different global philosophical traditions, along the lines of World Literature and World Religions. In this class, students are able to focus on spiritual and existential themes while they also gain some understanding of the philosophical background of different world cultures.

A class in World Philosophy is not simply a class in non-Western philosophy, since Western philosophy is itself one of several strands that make up the philosophy of the world. It is instructive to look at the life and teachings of Socrates in comparison with those of the Buddha and Confucius; to examine both Western and non-Western approaches to nature, virtue, or violence; and to become aware that other world philosophical traditions are actually older and more extensive than Western philosophy itself. It is also important to consider the meaning of philosophy from a variety of different cultural perspectives. In my own case, I have often taught a class on Multiculturalism, which requires students to think about how we should look at different cultural traditions and to what extent a “fusion of horizons” is possible and even desirable. This is where I am coming from, and it certainly influences the way that I approach World Philosophy.

But how does one qualify to be an instructor of World Philosophy? Most philosophy teachers have not had an extensive training in non-Western philosophy, and those who are specialists in Indian philosophy or Chinese philosophy probably don’t know much about African philosophy or Islamic philosophy. Over the past three years, I have developed a class in World Philosophy, which I regard as a significant contribution to the university and to my own development as a teacher. I am not a specialist in non-Western philosophy, but I know enough to teach a class on World Philosophy, and it is my belief that with preparation most philosophy instructors can become qualified to teach this course at a basic undergraduate level. More advanced courses in Chinese, Indian, or Africana philosophy—taught by specialists—would offer a way of developing ideas that are introduced in this course. The whole point of teaching a class in World Philosophy is not so that your students can become experts in the history of world philosophical ideas. Rather, the goal is to engage students with significant ideas on themes such as suffering, virtue, death, and ultimate reality, so that they gain some appreciation for global philosophical traditions. By its very nature, World Philosophy is bound to be a survey class. It can be taught as a series of discrete modules addressing Indian, Chinese, and Western Philosophy, without making any invidious comparisons between the different traditions. Inevitably, students themselves will make connections between the different perspectives; and we may want to help them to think things through by dwelling on the comparative strengths and weaknesses of Stoicism, Buddhism, and Daoism, etc. as significant ways of thinking about nature, fate, suffering, and the purpose of human life.

In the discussion that follows, I begin with a series of guiding questions concerning World Philosophy. I then describe the course as I teach it, following its trajectory from one week to the next. Finally, I offer some concluding reflections on teaching World Philosophy. I do not make any definitive claims about how to teach this class, but offer some advice and suggestions which may encourage those who are thinking about these ideas. Others may have very different ideas about teaching World Philosophy. There will certainly be disagreements on how much material can be covered in the course of a semester and whether this class should embrace or resist comparative thinking about different philosophical traditions. This essay is intended primarily to promote discussion about this field of inquiry. The only thing that I would insist upon is that World Philosophy is an important course which should be taught more often, because our students benefit from it—based on the evidence of course assessment and teaching evaluations—and because they appreciate its interest for their lives. Certainly, I have not taught another philosophy class that has been so appealing to philosophy majors and non-majors alike.

The first thing to settle is what exactly should be included in a World Philosophy class. My own impulse is to include several different philosophical traditions, but at the same time I recognize that it would be a mistake to overwhelm students with too much information. Some specialists may be wary of teaching such wide-ranging material over the course of a single semester. And perhaps there is no way that anyone could give a completely balanced and accurate account of such a variety of philosophical points of view. In spite of all of the aforementioned issues, however, my own experience is that this course does not have to be either superficial or overwhelming. My own preference is to cover a number of different world philosophical traditions that allow students to acquire a basic wide-ranging knowledge of World Philosophy.

My classes meet once or twice a week for a total of two and a half hours, and the semester is fifteen weeks long. I spend one or two weeks on each of the following: Indian philosophy, Buddhist philosophy, Chinese philosophy, Japanese philosophy, Western philosophy, Jewish philosophy, Islamic philosophy, African philosophy, and Native American philosophy. Of course, some of these categories—“Indian philosophy” or “Islamic philosophy,” for example—are much too broad, and suggest a more unified tradition than actually exists. Another issue is that in some of these traditions there is no clear distinction between philosophy and other forms of literature. For example, I begin the discussion of Jewish philosophy with The Book of Job, one of the earliest works of the Old Testament. The Book of Job is often taken to be primarily a religious text, but at the same time it gives rise to a philosophical discussion of the problem of suffering and theology. Likewise, Black Elk Speaks is the autobiography of a Lakota medicine man; it is not an academic work of philosophy but it provides an important outlook on the world that has spiritual wisdom and depth, and
for this reason it may be included as a primary text in a class on World Philosophy.

The next question is how to organize the discussion of different world philosophies. One approach is to look at different themes over the course of the semester. These could include nature, the self, death, wisdom, and virtue. The class would look at different extracts on these themes, and in this way comparisons and contrasts could be made. For example, the Buddhist view of the self in the “Questions of King Milinda,” could be read in opposition to the doctrine of the self in the *Upanishads* or as similar to David Hume’s account of the self as a bundle of impressions. The problem with this approach for the student is that it doesn’t encourage her to see the “big picture,” that is, an account of each different world philosophical tradition as a basic standpoint on the world. For this reason, I chose a (largely) chronological approach. I begin with Indian philosophy, which, as far as we know, is the earliest philosophical tradition, and I end with contemporary Western humanism. In order to grasp the most important features of each philosophical tradition, I use short primary texts, rather than anthologies containing extracts which may have no supporting context.

Which texts should be used? In each case, I try to find one or, at most, two primary texts that epitomize each tradition. Often, it is obvious which texts should be used: for Confucianism, the *Analects*; for Indian philosophy, the *Upanishads* and maybe the *Bhagavad-Gita*; for Daoism, the *Daodeching*. The goal is to find a good edition of each of these texts, one that does not use old-fashioned language, and is easy enough to read; I also prefer editions that are not encumbered by too many editorial comments and notes. This is not always easy: for example, there are literally dozens of English translations of the *Daodeching* that are still in print. Some research is required to find the best translation, or at least a good translation that won’t alienate students with a quaint or archaic rendering of this ancient Chinese classic. I am fully aware that each of the different traditions of world philosophy contains real diversity: there is a radical materialist strain in ancient Indian philosophy (the Carvaka school), and Chinese philosophy includes much more than Daoism and Confucianism. Perhaps one principle of selection is that the texts chosen must be among the most influential, with a preference for those that are still revered by thinkers in those traditions. But there is no precise science of text selection; we face the same challenges when we assign texts in ancient or medieval philosophy, analytic philosophy, or existentialism.

The final guiding question is: How should these texts be taught? Probably, the main issue for students, even those who are philosophy majors, is how to read these texts, since the materials are often quite different from anything they have ever read before. As teachers, we should, of course, say something about the cultural context from which these books emerge. We should identify the most important philosophical ideas while paying attention to matters of form and style as well as content. Thus, in the case of Confucius’s *Analects*, the fragmentary style is off-putting and may even suggest the absence of sustained philosophical reflection. So it is important to pay attention to the conditions of this work’s production: like Plato’s dialogues, it was compiled by students after the Master’s death. But though the text is corrupted, it is still possible to trace important ideas, including *jen* (or humanity), and *li* (which signifies ritual and reverence), ideas that are more than useful in helping us to understand Chinese culture (as well as the meaning of our own lives).

I will now describe the World Philosophy class as I teach it, from the first to the last week of classes. At this point, I have taught World Philosophy three times, and in each case I had twenty-six students fairly evenly divided between philosophy majors and non-majors. Students will have taken a Critical and Historical Introduction to Philosophy course as a prerequisite. “World Philosophy” is a course that satisfies a “Global Studies” requirement and for this reason alone it is a popular course. I ask students to write a one-page reaction paper (not a summary) for each major reading, and this promotes discussion at the beginning of class. I also have them write a mid-term paper on some comparative theme and a longer final paper on a topic they choose, so long, of course, as it is appropriate to “World Philosophy.”

In Week One I introduce the course to the students and I suggest that philosophy is a vehicle of self-definition since each culture uses philosophy as a way of understanding itself (while some philosophy also represents a critical response to the culture). I emphasize the need to be open-minded and not to assume that modern Western philosophy is the only model of philosophy that exists. In this I have been much influenced by the work of Pierre Hadot, who argues that ancient Western philosophy was all about living your life in the right way. For Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and Epicureans, philosophy was not about solving conceptual puzzles, but about knowing how to live. Later, with a few exceptions, Western philosophers came to put the emphasis on rigorous argument and critical reflection, but other world philosophical traditions have kept the sense that philosophy is more practical than theoretical. Though much of contemporary Western philosophy is highly technical and only read by other professionals, we should not assume that this technical material is the only available paradigm for philosophy. Otherwise, we will be closed off from the wisdom contained in many non-Western philosophical texts.

Week Two and Week Three cover Indian philosophy from the *Upanishads* to Gandhi. Obviously, there is a lot of background information that students need in order to get the most out of these texts: information about such ideas as *karma*, *samsara*, *dharma*, *moksha*, *duhkha*, and *avidya* must be explained since these help to organize the basic framework of Indian thought. After that, we don’t read all of the *Upanishads* but pay particular attention to the *Chandogya Upanishad* and the *Katha Upanishad*. The *Upanishads* may be considered the first philosophical texts insofar as they go beyond the religious ritual of the Vedas and use reason to try to apprehend the world as a whole. In the *Chandogya Upanishad* there is the blissful declaration, “tat tvam asi,” which means that the self is ultimately a part of the supreme reality, or Brahman, that underlies everything. This is the first metaphysics that attempts to understand what lies behind the claim that the world is unified. Likewise, in the *Katha Upanishad* there is another discussion between the teacher and the student on the meaning of death. After this, we discuss the *Bhagavad-Gita* and pay particular attention to the guiding idea of “acting without regard to the fruit of one’s actions.” Is this just to do the right thing and live in the right way without thinking about success or failure? And is this guiding idea to be criticized as an example of what Sartre has called “bad faith?” It is interesting that Gandhi was profoundly influenced by the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which he interpreted as a model of non-violence. As students quickly recognize, this makes a literal reading of the *Gita* profoundly problematic, and we are left to think about the true meaning of Arjuna’s dilemma at the beginning of this work: to fight or not to fight? And how exactly is Gandhi’s doctrine of non-violence (*ahimsa*) related to the Indian philosophical tradition?

Week Four and Week Five cover ancient and contemporary Buddhist philosophy. Once again, the instructor needs to
provide some background information on the life of the Buddha, the revelation of the problem of suffering, and the journey that he takes toward enlightenment. I have found the early legends and stories of the Buddha very useful in this context, especially "The Legend of the Buddha Shakyamuni," that Conze includes in his collection, *Buddhist Scriptures*. In this kind of class it is helpful to dwell on the lives of exemplary individuals, such as Socrates, Confucius, and Buddha, whose lives testify to the philosophy that they teach. Contemporary Buddhist philosophers include Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama, and the Buddhist nun Pema Chodron, all of whom emphasize social engagement. In this way, through more popular texts, Buddhist philosophy continues its long tradition of speaking to concerned individuals who are looking for answers to spiritual questions. The Dalai Lama's works are especially good, and I have had very meaningful discussions with students on different chapters of his book, *Ethics for the New Millennium.* For example, many students are interested in the theme of compassion. In the West, some philosophers have often derided pity, and compassion is not always recognized as a virtue: The Stoics are scornful of pity because, they claim, it undermines our self-resolve and makes us dependent on others. In *The Antichrist,* Nietzsche condemns pity as a form of weakness, and even Kant thinks that compassion is suspect because it is frequently used as a foundation for judging the moral worth of an action. Aristotle (in the *Rhetoric*) says that there are proper limits to compassion. This uneasiness with compassion is reflected in some everyday attitudes, and it is both refreshing—and challenging—to consider the Buddhist viewpoint, which looks at universal and unconditional compassion as the supreme emotion and the fundamental virtue.

In Week Six and Week Seven, we look at Chinese philosophy. First, we read the *Analects,* which describes Confucius's moral perspective. As we noted, the *Analects* is a difficult work, and there may be something to be said for limiting discussion to the first nine books, which are considered to be the original part of the text. Confucius places a huge emphasis on tradition, memory, and mourning, and his discussion of Chinese virtues such as *jen,* *li,* and *chung* (loyalty) are at odds with typical Western perspectives on society and the role of the individual. If there is time, a discussion of Mencius and later Confucian views on human nature will show that Confucianism has an enduring history. Reading the *Daodechung* also presents some problems for the contemporary Western reader. The *Daodechung* is a kind of philosophical poetry that offers profound wisdom in condensed, fragmentary form. The idea of the Dao is one that is not always recognized as a virtue: The Stoics are scornful of pity because, they claim, it undermines our self-resolve and makes us dependent on others. In *The Antichrist,* Nietzsche condemns pity as a form of weakness, and even Kant thinks that compassion is suspect because it is frequently used as a foundation for judging the moral worth of an action. Aristotle (in the *Rhetoric*) says that there are proper limits to compassion. This uneasiness with compassion is reflected in some everyday attitudes, and it is both refreshing—and challenging—to consider the Buddhist viewpoint, which looks at universal and unconditional compassion as the supreme emotion and the fundamental virtue.

In Week Eight, we return to Buddhism to look specifically at Japanese philosophy. For this section of the course, I focus on Zen Buddhism. We discuss Dogen and Hakuin, and students read the classic anthology by Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones.* Perhaps here more than anywhere else it might be important not to begin by providing an overall context or a surrounding framework that would limit the "shock-value" and the spontaneity of this kind of thinking. The stories collected in *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* are often wild and surprising, and students are bound to ask in what sense this is philosophy. The whole point of many of the Zen koans is to undermine the received ideas of philosophy, including the usual conceptual oppositions that we use to organize our experience and our ordinary ways of looking at things. But is it possible to recover our pre-conceptual experience of reality? Once again, it is important to look at contemporary Japanese thinking: the essay by Nishitani on *ikebana,* the Japanese art of flower arranging, considers some of the real differences between contemporary Japanese and Western philosophical ideas.

In Weeks Nine and Ten, we reconsider Western philosophy, first Socrates, and then the Stoics and early Christian philosophers, in the context of *world* philosophy. And so we return to the tradition of philosophy that teachers and students of philosophy are probably most familiar with. But by beginning the semester with other world philosophical traditions, we have unsettled the accepted view of Socrates and others through a sort of "defamiliarization." After reading the *Upanishads,* Socrates appears in the various dialogues as a kind of guru figure who challenges each of his students to achieve wisdom by provoking them to self-examination and the questioning of received ideas. My focus is on the *Apology* as the classic justification of the life of philosophy. After the *Apology* we read Epictetus's *Handbook* and some excerpts from Marcus Aurelius. Students are interested in a philosophy that can appeal to both slaves and emperors, and they tend to have views of Stoicism that are either strongly in favor or adamantly opposed to it. At this point, it may be useful to consider some of the relevant affinities between Stoicism and Buddhism (on, for example, the problem of suffering), or between Stoicism and Daoism (on the idea of nature). These are the kinds of comparisons that make for excellent term papers. Finally, since some would say that with St. Augustine and other early Christian philosophers Christianity begins to appropriate Western philosophy as the "handmaiden of theology," we return at this point to the more general question concerning the relationship between philosophy and religion.

The next two weeks are concerned with Jewish philosophy and Islamic philosophy, respectively. Jewish philosophy has many different aspects, but one theme that stands out is the problem of suffering. Jews consider themselves to be the chosen people, but from the start they have been persecuted, and we discuss what appears to be an obvious tension between these two aspects. The *Book of Job* could be viewed as raising the problem of theodicy and the need to justify whatever happens. We go on to look at some interviews given by the twentieth-century Jewish thinker, Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas writes in the shadow of the Holocaust, the most recent example of massive (Jewish) suffering, and in this context his goal is to describe the "infinite" responsibility that each of us bears for the other. Levinas can be a difficult philosopher to teach because his writing style is extremely complex. But his post-Holocaust perspective has been very influential on contemporary ethical debates and on the discussion of contemporary Judaism. The section on Islamic philosophy is more problematic because the most important Islamic philosophers—al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and others in the Arabic falsafah tradition—are difficult to understand, and exposition of their writings presupposes detailed knowledge of other philosophers, especially Aristotle. However, one text that I have used successfully is Al-Ghazali's "Deliverance from Error" (published as *Al-Ghazzali's Path to Sufism.* This is a remarkable work, written from an autobiographical perspective that is strangely similar to that of Descartes' *Meditations* (written some 500 years later). In his book, Al-Ghazali asks, "What, if anything, can we know
with complete certainty? How does one ever know that one is not dreaming now?” He describes his reasons for becoming a Sufi mystic. Students are interested in Sufism, and enjoy the reciting of Rumi’s poetry (as well as YouTube clips of whirling dervishes).

Week Thirteen is on African Philosophy and Week Fourteen is on Native American Philosophy. Here again, consideration of non-Western materials forces us to raise the question “What is philosophy anyway?” Many commentators seem to agree that one of the biggest questions in contemporary African philosophy is whether there is such a thing as African philosophy. In this section of the course students read extracts from Senghor and Fanon, radical anti-colonialist writers of the mid-twentieth century. They also look at Henry Odera Oruka’s work on the traditional sage philosophers of tribal communities. This material suggests the respect in which philosophy itself might be an inherently Western notion. If we think that philosophy requires distance (and even alienation) from the world, then African philosophy (Senghor might argue) is actually a contradiction in terms. The same could also be said about Native American philosophy. For this class, I chose the classic text, Black Elk Speaks, even though, as many students have pointed out, it is not “really” a work of philosophy. Nonetheless, in this text there is an elaboration of a paradigm way of being in the world and acting toward nature, a paradigm that can be philosophically articulated and defended.

In the final week of the semester, we turn our attention to modern Western humanism as one of the defining perspectives of contemporary life and contemporary Western philosophy. Both Nietzsche and Sartre understood something of the reality of modern Western life. Nietzsche, in the first part of Thus Spoke Zarathustra and in the proclamation of the death of God, describes the death of the sacred that characterizes our time. He also describes “the last man,” or the enlightenment ideal of progress, which seems paltry when compared to the “overman.” In Existentialism is a Humanism Sartre accurately describes the popular idea, which many of our students subscribe to, that we are absolutely free to choose ourselves. By ending the course with a focus on Western philosophy, I do not want to give the impression that Western philosophy somehow represents the culmination of world philosophy, a view of which I am quite critical. But this discussion will return students to their own situation of living in a contemporary Western society.

World Philosophy can be an exhilarating class to teach if only because the subject-matter is so important and speaks to students at a very deep level. Many reasons will be offered why such a survey class is “impossible” or inappropriate, but having taught this class a few times, I sincerely believe that the benefits of such a class outweigh all of the drawbacks. Frankly, this is the kind of deep and wide-ranging class that I wish I had been able to take as an undergraduate. By way of a conclusion, I will offer some final observations that may be useful for anyone who is thinking about teaching the course.

First, it is important to maintain a balance between the idea that all of these world philosophies are completely different from one another, and the sense that there is one perennial philosophy from which all of these philosophies derive. To emphasize difference is to make these philosophies into exotic species that are basically irrelevant for contemporary westerners. To emphasize their ultimate similarity makes it much harder to learn from them, for if the message is in each case the same, then why should we bother studying all of them? Presumably, the truth lies somewhere in the middle: most world philosophies are occupied with the same basic themes that concern all of us—death, virtue, God, the self, etc.—but in each case, different aspects are emphasized, and different solutions are proposed. Moreover, the “style” of each world philosophy is different in the sense that some rely on sustained argument, some use philosophical poetry or stories, and some are more “oracular” in nature.

Next, it is important to be critical when this is called for. We should not only present ideas from different world philosophies, we should also be prepared to evaluate them. At the same time, it is crucial to maintain the principle of charity. Just because Confucius does not offer detailed arguments to support his claims about virtue, it does not mean that his arguments are irrelevant or mistaken. This would be to judge all world philosophies in terms of the paradigm of contemporary Western philosophy, which emphasizes critical thinking as the dominant philosophical virtue. It would also be to forget that world philosophies are not collections of arguments but wisdom traditions that can still speak to human beings in different parts of the world. Philosophy is not only critical thinking; it is also a creative, imaginative project that grasps the connections between things, and the nature of the “big picture.”

Finally, it is important to avoid ranking the different world philosophies. For this way of thinking entails that we could have nothing to learn from other world philosophies if we decide that our own tradition is the best one. Teaching World Philosophy has convinced me that it is always better to remain open to the possibility of learning by remaining self-critical about our own ideas of knowledge, and the “true nature” of philosophy. Even though we do live in a global village (that is, in a multicultural, multiracial society), my own research suggests that World Philosophy is not a class that is taught with any frequency. This is quite surprising, and I hope that instructors will be more willing to teach World Philosophy in the future.

Endnotes


2. In 2010, when I last taught this class, students rated their interest in this course with 75 percent saying that their interest in the subject area had increased either “more” or “much more” over the course of the semester. In a section of the traditional Introduction to Philosophy class that I taught at the same time, the figure was only 50 percent. The scores are typical for other sections of World Philosophy that I have taught, and suggest that this class has an inherent appeal to students.

William of Ockham, who famously championed clarity and the distinction between the real and the possible, declared that we must assume possible worlds in our reasoning. This is a fascinating assertion of the ontological argument for the existence of the universe, which has been debated by philosophers for centuries. The existence of possible worlds is a central concept in modal logic, a branch of logic that deals with the notions of necessity and possibility. 

The inclusion of possible worlds in our understanding of reality opens up a range of possibilities for the development of new theories and the advancement of our knowledge. However, the concept of possible worlds also raises questions about the limits of human understanding and the nature of reality. It is a topic that continues to be discussed and debated by philosophers and scientists alike.

In conclusion, the book "Possible Worlds: A Guide for the Perplexed" by Nick Zangwill is a thought-provoking exploration of the concept of possible worlds. The author provides a clear and concise overview of the topic, while also delving into the intricate details and complexities of the subject. This book is highly recommended for those interested in understanding the concept of possible worlds and its implications for our understanding of reality.
measurably distant in the past, then it seems perverse simply to shrug one’s shoulders and decline to seek any explanation. (986)

The book ends (without any sign of exhaustion from Kenny) with an insight that warns us to keep philosophical thought always open.

Bertrand Russell, in his History of Western Philosophy, maintained that there were instances where philosophy had reached definitive answers to central questions. He gave as one example the ontological argument. ... [He writes], “I think it may be said quite definitively that as a result of analysis of the concept ‘existence’ modern logic has proved this argument invalid” (p. 752). [Alvin] Plantinga’s restatement of the argument, using logical techniques more modern than any available to Russell, serves as a salutary warning of the danger that awaits any historian of logic who declares a philosophical issue definitively closed. (996)

The author intends his book to be useful to upper-level undergraduate students, but he has also “written in a manner clear and light hearted enough for the book to be enjoyed by those who read it for curricular purposes, but for their own information and entertainment” (xvii). And, one may well add, for their own enlightenment. Many professional philosophers may be assisted by Kenny in seeing the history of philosophy as a whole and in returning to the sources of the problems that occupy them in their writing.

**Freedom in the Workplace?**


Reviewed by Andrew Wengraf
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This book offers an account of the concepts of freedom and force, and supports it with a volley of useful cases that come from contexts and conditions of employment. The subject falls within the conventional topic of freedom and coercion, but Ezorsky alters and expands the way that topic has been treated. I shall start with a discussion of Ezorsky’s case method and of what I might call her style. I link both her method and her style to points of merit and general interest for classroom use. Then I examine a representative case from her discussion to explore its utility and counsel instructors against its dismissive evasion. I leave Ezorsky’s particular notion of freedom for last.

Ezorsky’s cases are meant to reveal that freedom in any American workplace (and any lack thereof) is a complex function of conditions of employment, hence of labor markets, and thus of the entire free-market economy and its ethos, an ethos reflected in the legal doctrine of employment at will. That doctrine allows an employee of a private firm to be fired for any reason, or for no reason, the exceptions being discharge for reasons that involve arbitrary discrimination by race, gender, minority identity, disability, whistle-blowing, or for efforts to organize a union. I take Ezorsky to suggest as well that such protections against the core doctrine are provided by laws that may at least sometimes be “toothless laws” in actual practice, but it is the more general ethos of the labor market that the doctrine exemplifies which affects real freedom in employment. Ezorsky’s cases are realistic if not outright actual, and this real-world connection will appeal to students. If one chooses, one can treat some of the cases as a tacit polemic that offers a glimpse into the kingdom of miserable jobs in America. But Ezorsky is better read as the analytic philosopher she is.

Case method in moral analysis calls for us to situate ourselves within the cases, and in lesser-evil cases we have to consider the subject in the case. A remote tally of all interests may fail if there are good interests and bad interests to distinguish, and realistic cases are very useful here. Ezorsky never blurs the difference between asking whether the worker in any particular case is significantly unhappy, and otherwise asking whether any such loss of freedom is wrongful. These are distinct questions. But that doesn’t remove moral analysis from her project, because intricate moral issues arise from her material. Ezorsky denies that cases that limit a worker’s freedom are necessarily wrongful, but many of the cases she highlights suggest that interference with freedom in the workplace is prima facie wrongful in those instances, and that the actual operation of systemic, institutional, and interpersonal employment practices may be at odds with morality. Ezorsky’s main argument is thereby also a critique of the actual free market, yet it tends to preserve a morality we find familiar, which further sharpens the polemical dimension.

Those who know Ezorsky’s work will expect her economy of stroke. Her main account is dispatched in about sixty pages. The prose is terse, some may say plain, and although the arguments show no sign of ornament, they have an elegance that derives from their clarity and brevity. I pay more attention to Ezorsky’s style and method than is common or fashionable, because they bear on the appeal of her book to teachers and students. Ezorsky dislikes filler and makes her arguments without any lavish elaborative persuasion that may otherwise detract from the independent response to the cases that such a book should foster. To teach with this book is therefore to debate the cases, and the cases serve to engage the moral sense and elicit considered judgments. Although Ezorsky seeks to advance the state of debate with new argument, her discussion throughout nevertheless reads like a mercifully brief set of private tutorials that encourage questions and show the way applied ethics gets done. Ordinarily, Ezorsky’s stage of analysis would start where strictly introductory instruction leaves off, but she often dovetails the two. Old-timers may recall William Frankena, to cite a past master of this same skill. Ezorsky favors short chapters and titled sub-heads that invite the reader to think through her argument incrementally. The sub-headings make it easier to track back. She writes with cues to recall examples and reminders of what came earlier. Her first-person idiom suits the case method, and the format suits philosophy, which has to give the reader guidance to follow the line of argument. There are five chapters, two of which are devoted to objections to what she has said, with no obvious omissions from the literature.

Let us look at one representative case that introduces Ezorsky’s analysis. An ailing worker would leave her exhausting job but for the health insurance she needs for her diabetic children. Reason dictates that she stay at her job as the lesser evil, and she is reasonable. She cannot get better jobs in the actual job market, else she would. And she cannot otherwise adequately finance care for her kids. She’s informed on those counts. Ezorsky thinks that the worker “surely believes that she is unfree to leave her position” and Ezorsky agrees with her. The worker isn’t just tempted to stay in her job. The case works best with an immediate foil. Many philosophers and economists regard the worker as quite simply free, and Ezorsky suggests that this has to involve some evasion of the way the worker is situated. If my experience is any guide, the case will invite some initial evasion. A frequent feature of such evasion is an effort to alter the conditions of the case. A change in the case
may change the response. Perhaps this employee’s particular employer can make the work less onerous, in which case the worker would not necessarily wish to leave her job. But that alters the case in question. Ezorsky asserts that “what workers themselves believe about their own freedom or unfreedom may not be the whole truth of the matter, but it is often closer to the truth than the views held by many theorists.” Again, the worker in this case is ex hypothesi rational, as effective lesser-evil cases seem to require. Realistic as it may be, the case is a hypothetical thought experiment, and a hypothetical case isn’t a state of affairs subject to change. The worker in this case is not a martyr who wouldn’t wish to have things any other way, any more than the sacrificial person on the track in a trolley-loop case is really there to accomplish suicide in relief of a terminal painful disease. Those new details might change our responses. The case doesn’t call for “the whole of the matter,” salutary as that may be. Those who counsel that the worker has to adjust her attitudes, look at her situation more favorably, find her inner resources, free her mind, and so forth, may be right, so that may be apt and fair comment. But it is beside the point of the case, which is that the bind is systemic and circumstantial. These adaptations may be advisable, but they will not alter the condition that she feels forced to stay in her job to secure the insurance coverage.

One has to start with the rational worker and stick to the terms of the case. Those terms assure that the worker is reasonable and that her operative choice is between a lesser and a greater evil and that the job market is what she takes it to be. Still, we may come this far and still resist the case by way of a direct challenge to what the worker herself believes. She takes herself to be unfree, but Ezorsky also has it that she is doing what she wants to do. The worker regards herself as better off, relative to the greater evil of joblessness in her circumstance. Inasmuch as the worker does what she “wants” to do, she may be said to act freely, or so it may seem. This particular line of resistance rests upon a conceptual relation between “doing what one wants” and “acting freely.” Gerald Dworkin identifies a puzzle of sorts within this connection, and suggests a solution that entails that what motivates the worker to want to stay employed is one thing, whereas whether she thinks she is acting freely given the duress she experiences is something different. Dworkin’s solution is applied narrowly to coercion, but the case in question here is not narrowly coercive. Ezorsky’s solution is new and different, and is applicable to cases such as this. She distinguishes two uses of “want.” “When a friend asks you for a loan, you are not forced to comply.” But you may “want in the strong sense” to lend him the money. The worker is forced to stay in her onerous job because reason dictates that the alternatives are much worse. She is reasonable, and therefore “wants in the weak sense” to yield to the force. That she is reasonable is not inconsistent with whether she thinks she is significantly unfree. Again, whatever the whole truth, the case cannot be readily brushed aside on the ground that the worker in the case has inconsistent beliefs or attitudes or cannot think herself subject to systemic force. Whatever the best way to characterize and comprehend the case, the claim that the employee is simply and clearly free in such circumstances seems to leave something out of account.

As for some views held by actual theorists, two examples from Ezorsky’s discussion may suffice. Narveson has it that nobody is preventing such an employee from getting another job. At most, nobody prevents her from looking for one. A salient given in the case stipulates that she cannot get one. Narveson evades the case. One can still argue, of course, that this case is not realistic. Milton Friedman takes exactly this line, and suggests that the free market ipso facto offers all workers a significant choice of other, better employment. Again, the terms of the case are fixed so that this woman knows otherwise. Real markets are not quite so benign as ideal ones. Friedman resists the particular intuition that the woman is unfree, but relies on an insight that the wider free-market assures her freedom. But, once again, the case stipulates that if she could get a less onerous job with comparable medical insurance, she would. The example is meant to show that perhaps it is the influential Friedman who is unrealistic, and he is a real foil, not a straw man. Ezorsky offers a welter of different cases to work with, none of which is beyond dispute, but they offer critics and objectors examples to oppose, and they are not detached from actual conditions.

In general, defenders of the free market argue to reduce the range of acts that we may judge to be unfree. And there is certainly room for judgment here. Some have it that coercion denies freedom, but that otherwise workers are free. There are many variant ways of the way to interpret the concepts, and there are many notably first-rate philosophers, not mere foils, who have faltered on the matter of worker’s rights and employee freedom. Ezorsky examines a continuum that includes coercion but locates it within a broader and more perspicuous spectrum that introduces the concept of strong social forcing. Forms of strong social forcing fall into a complex, diversified category that includes lesser-evil dilemmas and other intricate sets of hard choices between alternatives and offers one can hardly refuse. Philosophers differ on what they take to interfere with freedom along or within this general spectrum.

What distinguishes Ezorsky is that she rejects the assumption that workers in these examples are “either just free or just unfree” as an outcome of any case, even coercion cases. The stark “free or unfree” dichotomy invites error whatever one judges any case to entail. We are better seen as both “free and unfree,” and the distinction to consider instead is that between the trivial and the significant, given the context and the consequences. On Ezorsky’s account, whether you are coerced outright or subject to any strong social forcing, you are both free and unfree. That captures the truth that nothing physically prevents the worker in need of health insurance for her children from either leaving or staying in her onerous job: one can say, if trivially, that she is free to stay in it, or indeed to leave, but she is also, meaningfully, not free. One cannot assign much weight to her freedom to either stay or leave, because she is also forced to stay. That is what makes the worker herself likely to assign much more significance to the way she is not free and unlikely to treat it as trivial.

Some may object that this still leaves matters vague and that this fact will vex instruction. Ezorsky agrees that there are lesser evil choices that do not pose a choice between suitably significant hardships to constitute effective force, and there are cases that fall in the space between clearly trivial and plainly significant outcomes. Freedom in the workplace is thus truly context-related, but some might say that Ezorsky employs a method that smacks of a suspect moral-sense approach and otherwise advocates no applicable candidate rule that categorically draws a bright line between the polar adjectives. One might ask here whether any such candidate rule could be endorsed as anything but a revisable presumption. Those who expect otherwise may be disappointed. Ezorsky’s aim is to argue first that many circumstances leave workers free only insofar as one can trivialize alternatives that they are forced to confront, and that the interest here rests with her cases. Most readers will appreciate the obstacle to leaving the job in this given case. Ezorsky’s analysis relies on what she calls the “obstacle view,” carefully and lucidly introduced, and attributed to McCallum. The details of that view, and much else, cannot be crowded into this review, except to note the insight with
which she brings it to yield. Those already familiar with the topic of coercion will welcome her discussion of physical restraint, her characterization of what Daniels misleadingly calls “quasi-coercion,” and her other sharp and instructive commentary throughout of the views of G.A. Cohen, Daniels, Gerald Dworkin, Harry Frankfurt, Nozick, Wertheimer, and other leading writers within the topic. She also includes both informative appendices and thorough notes and citations with valuable commentary for exploration of the relevant philosophical and empirical literature, an index, and a full bibliography.

Finally, Ezorsky’s emphasis suggests an approach to coverage that teachers might well investigate. In particular, the sections “Some Moral Issues of Proposal Forcing” and “Forced to Commit a Moral Offense” are conducive to classroom discussion and introduce issues that ought to receive more attention in the test and application of moral principles. Moral rules are meant to be *prima facie* acceptable and *pro tanto* applicable. A principled person sticks to her principles; that is, she follows them as far as they go. But it only takes a finite amount of ingenuity to invoke a “force of circumstance” that has the context and consequences where it might be more reasonable just to acknowledge a necessary moral violation or lapse, as such, and cease veneration of the principle. When Nozick asks whether it isn’t irrational to refuse to commit a moral offense in order to prevent other, more extensive offenses of the same kind, he attaches a footnote that implicitly asks also whether one can reasonably avoid grievous situations with acknowledgement, perhaps, that this avoidance either violates a moral imperative or entails a restructure of the way it applies. Hart alludes to the same issue in a discussion of innocent-man cases. But Nozick backs off any answer, He speaks of the notion that morality contains revisable presumptions as “an idea he wants largely to avoid” (*vide*, ASU, p. 30). But that idea ought to be part of any full theory. Moral theory is taught as if agents are metaphysically free, but this appears to neglect how much they operate within situations of duress, or in response to avowed obligations they cannot satisfy, where morality is nevertheless not really suspended.

In a defense of her friend Hannah Arendt on the issue of Jewish “cooperation” with the Third Reich, Mary McCarthy, a precise and gifted wordsmith, asserts that a loaded gun to one’s head is not a reason to commit a grave moral offense but *at most a temptation*. That indicates what happens when moral theory ignores reason and duress. I won’t drift further. I only mean to suggest that Ezorsky’s emphasis is suggestive.

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