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Editor's Note

In the fall of 2006, Mount senior Kevin Coyle approached two Mount professors with an idea for an undergraduate journal of theology and philosophy. Soon, a number of other students had joined the conversation and had begun preparations and publicity. By the end of the school year, over forty submissions had been received.

After a rigorous blind selection process, eight essays were chosen for this inaugural volume. These eight essays span topics from Plato's theory of knowledge to ethical dilemmas in genetics to the impact of a New Testament text on modern politics. In the selection process, we aimed to achieve a balance of topics and topic areas, but our chief concern was quality: we wanted to publish the very best philosophy and theology essays written at the Mount in the recent past. The high quality of the submissions we received ensured that the eight essays chosen to appear in this volume are very strong indeed. We hope you will agree.

In soliciting submissions, we offered a prize for the best essay submitted. Elizabeth Kitchin's essay, *Returning Enlightenment to Iraq*, was selected to receive this prize, with the editorial board particularly commending her connection of philosophical discourse with current events.

I would like to thank the dozens of students who submitted many very fine essays for consideration, as well as the editorial staff and faculty advisors who made this publication possible. Thanks, too, goes to Su Lane, who designed our cover, and to Taylor Schlette, who identified and solicited her help. Finally, I would like to extend special gratitude to Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. David Rehm, Philosophy Department chair Dr. John Donovan, and Theology Department chair Rev. James Donohue for their steady encouragement and indispensable financial support.

In the words of Saint Augustine of Hippo, from which our journal takes its name: *Tolle, lege!*—take it and read it!

Rena Black
Editor-In-Chief
November 2007

Returning Enlightenment to Iraq

Elizabeth Kitchin

In his *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, Hegel lays out his view of how history develops. He argues that history is the growth of the World Spirit's insight into itself, as manifested by individuals through their increasing "awareness that *every* human is free by virtue of being human."¹ This growth unfolds according to a specific pattern, moving from the freedom of a single despot to the freedom of all.² In Iraq, the United States has tried to force the Iraqis to move from what appears to be one of the early stages of this history to the final stage in very little time. This seems contrary to Hegel's notion of how history progresses. However, Iraq may not in fact be at an early stage of development. In this paper, I will examine this question first by outlining in greater detail Hegel's theory of historical development, and then by determining where Iraq as it was before the 2003 invasion fits into Hegel's chronology of historical development. Finally, I will compare the Western democratic model with the Islamic democratic model, examining which one Hegel would find appropriate for the situation in Iraq.

Hegel's first stage, or epoch, of human development is despotism, which he associates with the ancient orient. In this epoch, only the ruler himself is "free," while the "individual personality has no rights and is suppressed."³ Even the ruler's freedom comes from

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¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History with an Appendix from the Philosophy of Right*, trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988), 21.

² *Ibid.*, 21.

³ *Ibid.*, 103.

“mere arbitrariness” rather than because he deserves it, as all humans truly do, according to Hegel.⁴ All others “remain merely incidental” in this society that revolves around the ruler, having their individuality and freedom “appropriated” for the good of the whole.⁵

In the second epoch, in which Hegel places the ancient Greeks, the people begin to be aware, in a limited way, of this freedom and of their own individuality.⁶ They discover “individual spirituality,” but they believe that some men are necessarily more important than others. They likewise do not experience their “personal individuality” as completely separate from the influences around them. The Greeks demonstrated this by falling “apart into a group of individual national spirits,” as each individual found his identity through the outside city rather than from his inward self.⁷ People in this stage of historical development also believe that only some should be free, accepting slavery without question and permitting freedom to remain a “matter of mere chance,” that is, of birth or luck.⁸

With regard to public life, the third epoch, which Hegel associates with the Roman world, is very similar to the second, giving importance to individuals through arbitrary means. However, the people of this stage develop a “*personal* self-consciousness” in their private life, with each person beginning to find her identity within herself rather than through external means. The conflict of these two aspects of society leads to a destabilization of society, with people becoming “private persons ... held together by nothing more than abstract self-will.”⁹ This causes the common interest to be “detached from that of individuals,” the community being held together only “by means of external power.”¹⁰ In the Roman world, this is exemplified by the rise of the deified emperors, who force the people to submit to their interpretation of the common interest without allowing anyone to give input or question their actions.¹¹ The conflict leads, in Rome, to the fall of its empire, and as a result, certain individuals begin to turn inward, finding a spiritual solution to the societal problem, as their “individual personality is purified and

⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁵ Ibid., 94.

⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁷ Ibid., 104.

⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁹ Ibid., 104–05.

¹⁰ Ibid., 96–97.

¹¹ Ibid., 104.

transfigured ... into [a] divine personality” which unifies the separate individuals, thereby reconciling the conflict.¹²

This inwardness leads to the final epoch of history, which “begins with the reconciliation [of the individual and the universal] that has occurred in Christianity.”¹³ This reconciliation is echoed in the State, which becomes equally important to the Church, while both are used as tools by the World Spirit to “realize its concepts, its truth [about freedom], in the world.”¹⁴ At this point, humans finally realize, in both their private and public lives, in their religious and their political lives, that freedom is not due to luck, skill, birth, nationality, or even virtue but is instead simply a part of being human.¹⁵

However, getting to this last epoch is a difficult struggle. Hegel argues that the only way to move from the second to the third epoch is through religion, since the State itself “has arisen from [religion] and continues to do so.”¹⁶ He uses as an example Christianity, which teaches the principles of “self-consciousness and freedom.”¹⁷ Specifically, a passage from Galatians reads, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”¹⁸ Hegel maintains that, if the members of a society accept this principle in their religious lives, this kind of spirituality will be widespread enough to gradually become “no longer foreign to the State,” creating a society based on the belief that every human is equal and free.¹⁹

In Iraq, however, Christianity is not the religion of choice. The overwhelming majority of Iraqis are Muslims, practicing a religion that has a potential for freedom that is equal to Christianity’s. The Islamic religion, according to its fundamental writings in the Quran and Hadith, believes in freedom for humanity. In the Quran, Surah 49:13 reads, “O Mankind! [Allah] created you from a single [pair] of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may come to know each other (not that you may despise each other).” This passage clearly indicates that Muslims are not supposed to differentiate between anyone due to their gender or

¹² *Ibid.*, 97.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁸ Galatians 3:28 (NIV).

¹⁹ *Philosophy of Right*, 22; cf. 98.

nationality but are rather supposed to consider everyone to be equally free. There are other passages, admittedly, that establish a few limited differences between Muslims and non-Muslims, and certain popular interpretations of Islam have exaggerated the importance of these passages. But Islam clearly has the potential to be a religion that can advance among its believers the realization of absolute equality for all human beings. This potential simply has to be recognized and applied among Muslims in order to form the basis for an advanced system of government, as I will discuss further.

At this point, it is important to recognize a potential conflict between the goal of the United States for Iraq and the goal of Hegel for the world. The Americans are attempting to achieve a specific form of government, namely democratic republicanism, as a way to ensure absolute freedom. Hegel felt that republicanism itself was a relatively free system, but that it was one that “cannot be instituted everywhere” because of the “moral condition” of many societies.²⁰ Does Iraq have a “moral condition” that would allow for the institution of republicanism? I would argue that it does. Hegel himself called the “Mohammedan principle,” the “enlightenment of the oriental world.”²¹ This enlightenment within Islam remains; Iraq has simply forgotten it.

The previous governmental form of Iraq under Saddam Hussein seemed to exemplify the despotism of Hegel’s first epoch, with freedom only for the ruler. However, this was not the natural stage of history for Iraq. Instead, it appears that this despotism primarily occurred due to the abandonment of the use of Islam as a guiding principle in the political system, although that is a topic that would require examination in greater depth and that hence goes beyond the scope of this essay. The American attempts to move Iraq into the final stage of history would thus seem to be natural according to Hegel’s developmental pattern of history. They already have the basis for such an epoch; they only need to rediscover it.

However, this causes a major limitation on the United States’ ability to change Iraq. The previous historical developments in Iraq have been based on Islam. Americans believe that their Western system of democracy, with its social contract and direct representation of the people, must be the best for Iraq, even though

²⁰ *Philosophy of Right*, 48.

²¹ Muhammed Abdul Mannan, *Islamic Economics: Theory and Practice* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 374–76.

it has no basis in Islam. Muslims, however, will protest that their Quran contains the foundations for a perfectly workable representative system of government, and that such a system was developed centuries before Western philosophers began to work out the basic principles of modern, Western-style democracy.

Indeed, the traditional Islamic system of government is remarkably similar to modern Western concepts, giving a key role to representatives of the people and giving the people themselves the responsibility to revolt if the representatives cease to follow their contract with Allah and the people. There is a significant difference between this concept and the Western concept, however. In an Islamic democracy, “sovereignty ... belongs to Almighty Allah,” rather than to the people.²² It is Allah who has instructed the people to conduct their affairs “by mutual Consultation,” giving each of their representatives a “limited sovereignty” that is dependent on his obedience to Allah and to the people.²³ The previous successful development of political systems in Iraq was based on such a connection between religion and politics, whereas the secular form of government preferred by the Americans has previously led to despotism there.

If all of this is true, it raises an important question: Why are most Muslim-dominated countries not democratic? Essentially, the answer is that those in power do not like giving up that power. Islam is a very pluralistic religion, one which is interpreted in a variety of ways by the scholars acting as leaders. But it is only a segment of Islam, led by those known as the modernists, that fully accepts this democratic view of Islamic teachings. These modernists examine the Quran and the Hadith through the light of history, looking at the historical reasoning behind many of the passages and re-evaluating them through the lens of the current historical and political situation. In their opinion, democracy is the correct political system for Muslims; they consider it to be “the most important political ideal in Islam” and a “duty for the Muslim community.”²⁴ Naturally, their re-evaluations of the Quran are seen as heretical by many fundamentalist scholars, but the fact remains that these modernists are a part of Islam, rather than being outsiders like the Americans. Their intense passion regarding the modernization of Islam may also

²² Quran, Surah 42:38, quoted in *Islamic Economics*, 374.

²³ *Ibid.*, 376.

²⁴ John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 3d edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 140.

add to their ability to effect a return to the forgotten Islamic conception of democracy and its consequent social ramifications to Iraq. If they succeed in their efforts, they will be acting as the “world-historical individuals” that Hegel argues are necessary for any great historical transition to occur.²⁵

In conclusion, I believe that the United States cannot, on its own, develop Iraq into a Western democracy, since it is an outside rather than an internal force. However, by tearing down the un-Islamic despotic regime in Iraq, it has created an opening for modernist Muslims to revive Iraq’s own stalled development and return the country to Islamic democracy. It is crucial to note, though, that these modernists seem to be the minority among current Iraqi political figures. Still, if Hegel’s concept of world history is correct, Iraq is ripe for a transition, since the return in the social and religious arena to Islam’s past developments should, by his definition, be echoed in the state.²⁶

²⁵ *Philosophy of Right*, 35.

²⁶ Some of the ideas about Islam presented in this paper are based on a helpful conversation with Dr. Trudy Conway, whom I hereby thank.

The Use of Romans 13 in Modern-Day Political Rhetoric

Julianne Launi

¹Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God. ²Therefore, whoever resists authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose it will bring judgment upon themselves. ³For rulers are not a cause of fear to good conduct, but to evil. Do you wish to have no fear of authority? Then do what is good and you will receive approval from it, ⁴for it is a servant of God for your good. But if you do evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword without purpose; it is the servant of God to inflict wrath on the evildoer. ⁵Therefore, it is necessary to be subject not only because of the wrath but also because of conscience. ⁶This is why you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷Pay to all their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, toll to whom toll is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

—Romans 13:1–7, NAB

The use of scripture for political gain has been one of the most common applications of scriptural rhetoric since the establishment of the Christian Church. In particular, the writings and teachings of St. Paul are some of the most commonly used scriptural references in political discussions. Unfortunately, many of these usages are not only stated without an understanding of the context and original intention of Paul, but many have been used to justify the application of immoral and often violent political decisions. Such is the case for Paul's letter to the Romans, whose theological concepts of righteousness and justification are often overlooked for a more superficial and uneducated interpretation. In

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particular, the first seven verses of chapter 13 have been utilized by governments looking to “justify their every move.”¹ Yet such a reading of the text not only detracts from Paul’s original purpose, it also presents very troublesome concerns for today’s political situation. What is to stop modern-day governments from inaccurate and unethical scriptural references and interpretations? Thus a further analysis of Romans 13:1–7 will be an important tool in learning the value and prudence in scriptural references within political rhetoric.

The practical purpose of Paul’s letter to the Romans was to simply gain support for his mission to Spain. Most scholars believe the letter was written anywhere from 55–58 CE, only a couple of years after Emperor Nero’s rise to power in 54 CE.² The community at Rome probably consisted of poor non-Latin citizens who had no significant legal position within Roman society. Furthermore, most scholars believe that this community (though in Rome during Paul’s writings) had just been expelled from the city during the reign of Claudius in the late 40s. Because of this, much of Paul’s letter was meant “simply to deflect the Roman Christians from the trajectory of anti-Jewish attitudes and ideology along which they were already traveling.”³ Thus though Nero’s later time in power would be characterized by excessive violence and corruption, particularly at the expense of Christians, his early years were seen as promising times of peace and stability. Finally, the theme of righteousness shapes the entire letter, including the seemingly isolated portion of Romans 13:1–7. Stemming from the Jewish tradition of righteousness in terms of God’s loyalty to the covenant with Israel, Paul’s “thesis” in chapter one is meant to discuss God’s faithfulness and justice through Jesus Christ. This is why the Roman Christian “will not find justice in the *evangelion* of Caesar, but rather in the *evangelion* of Jesus.”⁴ Though Chapter 13 is often seen as an isolated and “off topic” discussion, its purpose actually stems directly from Paul’s initial theme of God’s righteousness.

¹ N. T. Wright, “God’s Call to Obedience to the Authorities,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible, volume 10 – Acts-First Corinthians*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 716.

² T. L. Carter, “The Irony of Romans 13,” in *Novum Testamentum* 46 (2004): 210.

³ Ben Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 304.

⁴ Wright, “God’s Call,” 405.

Many scholars have deemed the discussion in Romans 13: 1–7 to be one of the only instances in the letter where Paul offers his opinion on an “isolated” topic.⁵ It is often deemed an “interpolation,” or later addition by Pauline followers wishing to solidify a Christian’s place in an often hostile Roman world. Yet this understanding is not supported by textual analysis, especially considering the passage itself is not lacking within any Greek manuscripts.⁶ Additionally, the section frames itself with the first and last verses. The command in verse 7 to “pay to all their dues,” is a specified command that illustrates the general claim in the first verse to “subject to the governing authorities.”⁷ Paul thus begins his discussion of submission to political leaders with a broad command, and ends with a climactic assertion of the necessity to pay taxes and respect to authority figures. Yet ultimately, a surface-reading of the text neglects to notice how this section plays an important role in the overall thesis of Paul’s writing.

The most significant element of how Romans 13 rests in the context of the rest of the letter is that it is bracketed by an “eschatological *inclusio*.” This *inclusio* involves how the Christian and the political state (though the term “state” is never used) is an important element of the Christian life. In fact, the surrounding sections offer these verses an interesting theological perspective. As one scholar notes, “the move from considering how one should respond to one’s enemies outside the Church (12:17–21) to how one should relate to the authorities (13:1–7) is a natural one.”⁸ Furthermore, the passage ultimately is meant to demonstrate how the new life in Christ (presented in Chapters 12 and the latter of 13) “must reveal itself in every sphere of Christian enterprise and endeavor.”⁹ Even Christian political involvement cannot escape from the importance and significance of love of Christ and love of neighbor. This connection is illustrated with the “owe” of verse 7 linking directly to the “owing nothing ... except to love” of verse 8. This link shows the readers that “what is owed to the government reminds Paul of something far more important than all Christians

⁵ *Ibid.*, 397.

⁶ Arnold Monera, “The Christian’s Relationship to the State According to the New Testament: Conformity or Non-Conformity?” in *Asia Journal of Theology* 19 (2005): 108.

⁷ Monera, “Christian’s Relationship,” 111.

⁸ Carter, “Irony,” 218.

⁹ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 430.

‘owe’ to others, that is, love.”¹⁰ The importance of this passage’s placement in the context of the entire letter is further illuminated through the use of rhetorical techniques.

Most biblical scholars throughout the Church’s history have read this passage as a positive portrayal of the Roman government during Paul’s time. Because of Claudius’ persecution of Jewish Christians the preceding decade, Nero’s early reign seemed to be a time of hope for those often targeted within the empire. Furthermore, the designation of authority “from God” stems from a long history of Jewish understanding of God as ordaining and even choosing political leaders.¹¹ Thus the first (and most common) literary interpretation of this passage is that it is simply a “straightforward injunction to submit to governing authorities”¹² Yet more recent scholars have approached this section of Romans within a different textual light. Rather than understanding the writing exactly as it appears, these more recent scholars have understood Paul’s language to be a policy of “blaming through apparent praise.”¹³ Because Paul, as a Jew, was more than aware of the persecution placed on his people by the Roman government, the ironic interpretation of the text states that Paul actually meant to discredit the surrounding authorities. Such a rhetorical device would only be recognizable by a community of “shared experience” with Paul, a community that knew too well the persecution on behalf of the Romans. This situation was not only commonly known during Paul’s lifetime, but through it Paul was able to “forge a close bond ... with those members of the audience who perceive the irony.”¹⁴ Therefore, there are two plausible interpretations to this particular Pauline text, each contributing significant theological concepts to his overall message.

The specific breakdown of each verse within this passage will be important to further understand the overall message Paul is attempting to convey to his audience. The passage as a whole addresses order, authority, civil obedience, payment of taxes or revenue, and honor for civil authorities.¹⁵ In terms of its

¹⁰ Eugene Maly, “The Christian Way to Love” in *Romans*, ed.. Wilfred Harrington and Donald Senior, volume 9 of *New Testament Message: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1979), 107.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹² Carter, “Irony,” 227.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 227.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁵ Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 663.

continuation from Chapter 12, it is necessary for Paul to address that despite Christians' justification of faith in Jesus Christ, rebellion and civil anarchy are never warranted. Therefore, each verse contributes to the general themes of peoples submitting to legitimized authority and the duty of responsible civil authorities to the people they govern.¹⁶ In verse one, Paul is literally referring to "every soul" or "every human being" when he commands his readers to "*hypotasso*," or to "be subject" or to "submit" to civil authorities, rather than "to obey."¹⁷ The term "*exousia*" is more commonly translated as "governing authorities" rather than "angelic powers," though some scholars have maintained this understanding. The term is a Greek interpretation of the Roman "magistratus."¹⁸ This general theme of authoritative submission will be the central concept for the rest of the passage.

The following three verses of Romans 13 are meant to explain what happens when people resist political authorities. In 13:2, Paul writes that any resistance to government will incur "judgment." This judgment will be exercised "eschatologically at least, by God Himself, if not sooner through the human authority set up."¹⁹ Thus any judgment by human authorities is only representative of a greater eschatological concept of judgment. Based on this understanding, the third verse proclaims that rulers are not meant to be a cause of "fear" to those who do good because good actions would never instill poor judgment. With this verse the attention is also shifted to the individual "you," demonstrating that it is up to individual responsibility to live according to the "good" within their community. Furthermore, the government's subsequent purpose is to "*agathon ergon*," or to reward those who choose this path of the "good."²⁰ As Joseph Fitzmyer astutely pointed out, "fear of civil authority comes only from opposition to it."²¹ This is why in 13:4, those who do wrong can expect "*orge*" or "*machaira*." This "power of the *machaira*," or the power to punish those who do evil, is the government's "right" because its ultimate purpose is to maintain order and stability. Finally, the use of the "sword" in this verse is simply meant to serve as a symbol for penal authority rather than an

¹⁶ Ibid., 665.

¹⁷ Witherington, *Paul's Letter*, 313.

¹⁸ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 666.

¹⁹ Ibid., 667.

²⁰ Monera, "Christian's Relationship," 108.

²¹ *Romans*, 668.

indication of proper use of violence. These verses thus illustrate important Pauline understandings while at the same time set up the final verses of this passage.

The closing verses of Romans 13:1–7 give readers very Pauline interpretations of the Christian role in the surrounding community, particularly with the understanding of “*syneidesis*” or “conscience.” This conscience represents a self-awareness and consent for each individual Christian.²² Thus it is not the modern idea of the “conscience” guiding moral decisions, but rather “Paul means that Christians conforming to state requirements are to do so *consciously* that in such involvements they encounter the will of God.”²³ Additionally in verse 6, the “you” returns to a plural form, again bracketing or linking the entire discussion back to verse 1. The “*leitourgoi*” mentioned in this verse during the time of Paul’s writing meant a person who performed public service for the state rather than a religious minister or the like.²⁴ The use of this term is important for Paul’s readers, because the term was meant to designate respect for those in positions of authority. This will all lead to the climactic verse 7, where Paul tells his readers to pay their taxes and give respect to civil leaders. This respect is the highest form of reference for Paul, who obviously believes the surrounding civil authorities to be worthy of such honor.²⁵ What makes this verse so unique, however, is its connection and continuity of “owing” someone something with the following verse 8, in which what matters the most is “owing” one another love. This connection will set the entire passage in a context, and thus illustrate Paul’s primary purpose for writing this section.

Despite the fact that many scholars would prefer to think of Romans 13:1–7 as an isolated and unrelated section within Romans, it is important to instead read this passage in light of other themes prevalent within Paul’s writing. In fact, the same pastoral concern that Paul demonstrates early within the letter is the same concern Paul maintains in this small section. Christians, though justified “in Christ,” do not represent an “eschatological elite,” but instead should humbly partake in the workings of their surrounding community.²⁶

²² Brendan Byrne, *Reckoning with Romans: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Gospel* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1986), 212.

²³ Byrne, *Reckoning*, 212 (emphasis added).

²⁴ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 669.

²⁵ Except, of course, in an ironic reading of the text.

²⁶ Carter, “Irony,” 213.

The righteousness mentioned in Chapter one is demonstrated only by means of an interaction with the world, an interaction necessary if Christians are to live well. Christians are not exempt from the workings of the world because such exemption would not only imply a sort of eschatological arrogance, but it could also set the group apart and subsequently lead to danger. It is essential that Paul has this pastoral concern for the community, especially considering they were already under the close watch of the Roman government. Finally, the framing of this passage demonstrates that regardless of who is in a position of authority, “political ethics cannot be separated from the ethics of love.”²⁷ Ultimately it is love that has the final say, and for anyone who is “justified in Christ” (as the rest of the letter illustrates), this should be all that matters. This analysis of Paul’s overall purpose will have important contributions to the discussion and application of this passage to today’s political situation.

There is no denying that this passage has been one of the most quoted and referenced pieces of scripture in regards to modern-day politics. The problem for me, however, is that unethical applications of this passage, primarily using violence, are becoming more and more prevalent. Leaders in the pro-death penalty movement more than often turn to this passage when they discuss the government’s right to use the “sword” as means of protection for the “common good.” Such an understanding however is significantly flawed, for despite Paul’s positive portrayal of civic government, the text “should not be seen as an absolute statement binding in all details for all times without exception.”²⁸ Some commentators I read even declared that a pro-death penalty stance was warranted based on this passage, for “it was part of the fixed order of things.”²⁹ Because of the more than often perverted understanding and application of this portion of Romans, this passage in many ways leaves me unsatisfied.

While Paul describes the importance of submitting to legitimate authorities, he never mentions what a Christian should do with illegitimate or corrupt leaders. On the surface, it seems Paul’s overly positive understanding of a less than positive governmental situation could confuse or even anger those he was writing to. I think this is why in my study of the text I have liked its ironic

²⁷ Monera, “Christian’s Relationship,” 112.

²⁸ Maly, “Christian Way,” 105.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

interpretation, for it puts power and understanding in the hands of the faithful Paul addressed, and if anything encouraged them to respond “with conscience” rather than “with the sword.” Ultimately, “the last thing a totalitarian regime wants is a population with a conscience: a conscience gets in the way of unquestioning obedience, conscience submits to authority of God rather than of the state.”³⁰ It is this understanding that could most benefit the use of the passage today, and thus prevent against any further misinterpretation or application of the scripture within the modern-day political situation.

³⁰ Carter, “Irony,” 213.

On Rawls's Flawed View of the Person in the "Original Position"

John Laracy

Contemporary philosopher John Rawls presents a liberal political conception in *Justice as Fairness* that, he supposes, all reasonable people should be able to affirm. He thinks that because it remains neutral to comprehensive moral and religious doctrines, his political conception is appropriate for a pluralistic society such as America today. In actuality, Rawls's neutrality is his downfall. The core of his argument is derived from the "original position," which attempts to be fair to all people by ignoring their race, sex, economic status, and religious or moral doctrine.¹ Although its aim is to be neutral, the original position actually presents a controversial view of human beings. This essay will argue that Rawls's original position erroneously views the human person as isolated from a community and abstracted from reality. Therefore, it creates a flawed political conception that focuses on the autonomy of individual citizens rather than the good of society.

Rawls' original position is a hypothetical setup, which establishes the most basic and fundamental aspects of his political conception. In order to develop a fair political conception within a pluralistic society, Rawls implements a device called "the veil of ignorance."² This veil of ignorance prevents the hypothetical parties

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¹ John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 15.

² *Ibid.*, 85.

in the original position from “knowing the social positions or the particular comprehensive doctrines of the persons they represent.”³ Additionally, the veil of ignorance blocks knowledge of race and sex, as well as any other accidental feature of any individual.⁴ Rawls maintains that the parties of the original position are “free and equal” and share two moral powers: a capacity for a sense of justice and a capacity for a conception of the good.⁵ He does not, however, indicate what conception of justice and the good one would have access to in the original position. Parties of the original position, then, are defined by blanket freedom and equality as well as the *ability* to choose their own good. From this hypothetical construct, Rawls derives his “two principles of justice,” which are the foundation of his political conception.⁶ Although the original position is only hypothetical, it develops a political conception based on a problematic view of the human person.

Some critics of Rawls link his view of the person in the original position to a Kantian view of the person. William Galston writes that “Kantian theories ask us to arrive at principles valid for all human beings,” and Rawls’s original position does exactly this.⁷ Both Kant and Rawls think of humans as free from their bodily attachments, particular traditions, and accidental qualities in order to develop principles that apply to every human. As a result, they focus on human abilities, not actual circumstances or beliefs. Michael J. Sandel’s essay “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self” argues that Rawls’s view of the person is akin to Kant’s view of the person as the “unencumbered self.” According to Sandel, for both Rawls and Kant, “what is most essential to personhood are not the ends we choose, but our capacity to choose them.”⁸ Clearly influenced by Kant, the original position fails to deal with real aspects of a human society by abstracting humans into merely rational agents.

Throughout *Justice as Fairness*, Rawls attempts to distance himself from Kant by claiming to be neutral to all comprehensive

³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 17–19.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷ William A. Galston, *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 127.

⁸ Michael J. Sandel, “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self,” in *Public Philosophy: Essays on Morality in Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 162.

doctrines. If he were to promote Kant's moral doctrine, his political conception would contradict a variety of other political doctrines, thus ending any possibility of stability within a pluralistic society. It seems, though, that Rawls merely takes a view of the person similar to Kant's metaphysical view and places it in the context of political philosophy. As Paul Fairfield writes, "that Kantian politics can be had without Kantian metaphysics is a premise central to Rawls."⁹ Although Rawls is dealing with political philosophy rather than metaphysics, his view of the person contains similar implications to that of Kant. While Kant would say that the rational ability to choose a good is prior to the actual good itself, Rawls might say that the "right is prior to the good" in the political sense.¹⁰ In other words, the political right to choose and ascertain a certain conception of the good is prior to the role of that good in politics. The role of Rawls' political conception, then, is primarily to ensure that citizens can choose their own good, not to ensure that society becomes good in any one sense.

Even if one ignores Rawls' connection to Kant, his view of the person remains entirely abstract. In fact, the original position is clearly unachievable and stands, at best, as a shaky and unstable foundation for a political conception. Fairfield writes that Rawls' method, "involves an almost Cartesian level of abstraction in order to make possible a distanced perspective of human affairs—a perspective of this world, but a world highly abstract . . ." ¹¹ Rawls's "Cartesian level of abstraction" in the original position prevents him from recognizing that language, tradition, and culture always precede rational choice for every individual. As many significant philosophers like Hans-George Gadamer and René Girard have argued, all people inherit a certain worldview that shapes their rational choices. For example, one cannot think or make rational choices without language. However, language cannot be learned without being raised in a real family, in a particular nation, during a particular time period. As famously argued by Gadamer, language shapes the way people think and grasp the world around them. Ironically, the parties of the original position cannot develop their thoughts without a particular inherited language. Moreover, a child accepts a particular view of the good from his or her parents, their tradition and culture. Before the

⁹ Paul Fairfield, *Moral Selfhood in the Liberal Tradition: The Politics of Individuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 99.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

child can make real decisions, he or she is guided by a certain view of the world. Pure rational ability, without the guidance of family, culture, and tradition, is meaningless and futile. Likewise, the original position is an amorphous, and therefore useless, heuristic mechanism.

Even if one takes the original position seriously and assumes that such an abstraction may be helpful, its view of the person nevertheless neglects the most significant human aspects: an ability to love selflessly, a natural penchant for compassion, and a moral sense of community. Some may scoff at the claim that such sentimental human qualities are defining qualities, but these relational aspects of humans separate them from other animals—even more so than rationality. If these qualities are neglected, the resulting view of the person is empty and insufficient. Sandel makes a similar point: “To imagine a person incapable of constitutive attachments is not to conceive an ideally free and rational agent, but to imagine a person wholly without character, without moral depth.”¹² The original position is void of genuine wisdom and real-world understanding. Without attachment to family and community, the parties of the original position lack the emotional ties of real humans. As a result, each is “at heart a rational egoist indifferent to the interests of other persons”¹³ In the original position, people are motivated by their own individual gains, not the gains of those they love or the good of the community they live in.

Due to Rawls’s abstract view of the person as a self-motivated moral agent, his resulting political conception focuses on securing individual choice. For instance, the first of his two principles of justice states: “Each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which is compatible with the scheme of liberties for all.”¹⁴ Clearly, liberty for all people is desirable and liberties should be included in any democratic political conception. The problem, though, lies in the top priority of individual liberties, without any accompanying principle on shared ends and the good of society. Rawls’s two principles are the very foundation of his political structure. And yet, they fail to convey the unity of society and people’s shared political purpose.

¹² “The Procedural Republic,” 167.

¹³ *Moral Selfhood*, 106.

¹⁴ *Justice as Fairness*, 42.

A possible argument is that Rawls's second principle of justice (the difference principle) accounts for a level of economic equality. Consequently, it may seem that the principles of justice, and therefore Rawls's political structure, are concerned with the good of the community. The second principle states:

Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle).¹⁵

The first condition requires equal opportunity and focuses on individuals, much like the first principle of justice. The second condition, however, allows for a particular “least-advantaged” group—i.e., the poor—to benefit from the wealth of others. This might seem like a community-based end, which hopes to eliminate poverty and suffering. For the difference principle to be such an end, however, “it must presuppose some prior moral tie among those whose assets it would deploy and whose efforts it would enlist in a common endeavor.”¹⁶ The original position does not presuppose such a tie; therefore, the difference principle “is simply a formula for using some as means to others’ ends.”¹⁷

Essentially, Rawls establishes the difference principle to provide disadvantaged people with a fair opportunity at developing and ascertaining their particular view of the good. The result of the difference principle proves that it does not promote communal goals. In America, for example, wealthy people would be taxed and poor people subsidized according to the difference principle, thus allowing poor people to choose their desired ends. This type of government action might be just in a sense, but it keeps the rich and poor alienated from each other. As is often the case, wealthy people complain about losing money that they “worked hard for.” Whereas, poor people receive handouts from an impersonal government, and in some cases—but not many—they may exploit the system by taking the handouts regardless of other financial opportunities. Apparently, the difference principle promotes the gain of some individuals, but provides no base for purpose-oriented political action. Without any real concern for the good of the community, the difference principle fails to redeem Rawls's political conception.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁶ “The Procedural Republic,” 166.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Based on the principles of justice, it appears that Rawls's political conception focuses entirely on ensuring the rights and equal opportunity for isolated citizens. William Galston's essay "Two Concepts of Liberalism" describes how such a political conception plays out in current politics. He argues that contemporary liberal thinkers, particularly Rawls, mistakenly emphasize individual *autonomy*, defined as "individual self-direction."¹⁸ According to Galston, this exaggerated emphasis on autonomy may threaten religious diversity within a democratic nation. Liberals like Rawls have inherited the "Enlightenment Project," which aims at "the experience of liberation through reason from externally imposed authority."¹⁹ Pushing for this type of liberation through politics threatens certain religious views and cultural practices:

The decision to throw state power behind the promotion of individual autonomy can weaken or undermine individuals and groups that do not and cannot organize their affairs in accordance with that principle without undermining the deepest sources of their identity.²⁰

Galston's argument here proves that Rawls's political conception would promote a certain comprehensive view within a pluralistic society—specifically the priority of individual autonomy. Galston's essay goes on to argue that democracy should uphold the diversity of religions and moral views rather than individual autonomy. Although superior to Rawls's view, Galston's view also neglects the necessary communal ends of a government. For him, diversity is most desirable in a democracy rather than any unified common good.

Michael J. Sandel's essay "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self" offers more insight into the flaws of Rawls's political conception than Galston's essay. Sandel's description of liberalism points to Rawls's fundamental mistake in the original position: "This liberalism says, in other words, that what makes the just society just is not the *telos* or purpose or at which it aims, but precisely its refusal to choose in advance among competing purposes and ends."²¹ Because it ignores concepts of the good and instead focuses on the rational ability of individuals to choose any good, the original position produces a society in which its citizens think "I am

¹⁸ William A. Galston, "Two Concepts of Liberalism," *Ethics* 105 (1995): 521.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 525.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 521.

²¹ "The Procedural Republic," 157.

free insofar as I am the bearer of rights, where rights are trumps.”²² The government’s sole purpose becomes to prevent society from interfering with the individual. As a result, citizens are politically alienated from the government and social community. This political conception encourages citizens to become isolated, and government intervention in the cases of injustice becomes more and more undesirable over time.

Rawls and his supporters would resolutely deny that the implementation of his political conception would have these undesired consequences. In light of the fact of reasonable pluralism, supporters of Rawls might argue that his liberal conception would be most effective because it promotes *fairness*. For instance, Daniel A. Dombrowski writes, “one’s own views along with those who are like-minded as well as those who are unlike-minded but reasonable should all be treated fairly.”²³ Dombrowski approves of the original position because its aim “is to generalize and carry a higher order of abstraction the normal effort of reasonable humans to be fair.”²⁴ In his view, the original position is a useful heuristic mechanism that thwarts the unfairness of a political conception based on one view of the good.

Dombrowski is right that fairness is important, but only to a certain degree. The problem with Rawls’s view is that fairness is the main political purpose—maybe even the only political purpose. The original position’s flawed view of the person eliminates all political purposes for mankind, with the exception of fairness. Unaware of their circumstances, the self-interested parties of the original position choose the principles of justice that are most fair for all people, so that they may have the best opportunity to seek their own ends. If fairness is the sole purpose of a political conception, though, it hinders the primary purpose of government: to prevent injustice. Focused on ensuring fairness alone, the government cannot properly distinguish between right and wrong actions of citizens, because there is no standard of goodness to which to appeal. In order for the government to maintain justice, a political conception needs clear principles that outline the shared ends or the good of society.

Abortion, for instance, is permitted in America because the constitution does not assert that all stages of human life are

²² *Ibid.*, 171.

²³ Daniel A. Dombrowski, *Rawls and Religion: The Case for Political Liberalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 159.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

inherently valuable and protected from a murderous death. If the constitution clearly asserted that one common end for all society was to protect human life, abortion would be easy to outlaw. However, Americans live in a society centered on fairness and individual rights. The American government and Rawls's political conception do not deny a woman the right to an abortion "because such a denial would not show a commitment to the rights of woman."²⁵ Additionally, human embryos are harvested so that people may seek cures for diseases, and the overwhelming spread of pornography is unhindered by law.

In my mind, these practices, which in America are currently becoming "rights," destroy human life, undermine the value of the family, and threaten the very fabric of American society. I propose that the structure of the American government—and ideally all governments—should be based on firm commitments to the value of human life and the family structure rather than Rawls's amorphous and inadequate original position. Because of their shared moral sense, empathy for each other, and inherently social nature, humans share a common end: benevolence and justice for all human life. To promote this end, the government should restrict injustices that threaten any form of human life (e.g., abortion and embryonic stem cell research) or disrupt the structure of the family centered on marriage (e.g., rampant, pervasive pornography).

Admittedly, my proposed political conception poses pragmatic problems within a secularized and pluralistic society like America. Nonetheless, I consider it to be the ideal conception because it promotes the good of society. Rawls's conception, on the other hand, makes room for injustice and alienates citizens from the political community. The original position's flawed view of the person denies communal values and ignores the good of society. Rawls's political conception may be pragmatically plausible; however, it is not the ideal. If Rawls only argued that his conception is pragmatically *optimal*, it would be more difficult to disagree with him. However, he explicitly argues that his conception is not merely pragmatic. My argument has demonstrated that Rawls's faulty original position creates an equally faulty political conception. At the very least, my argument demonstrates that by ignoring concepts of the good in the original position, Rawls fails to propose the ideal political conception for society.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

For the Good of the Community: The Ethics of Land Development and Community Growth

John Hart

Starting in the latter half of the 20th century, land development has grown into a major issue in the United States. A new language of terms, ranging from suburb and exurb to smart growth and sprawl, has been created to describe the various topics of land development. As development moves out from large urban centers and into the surrounding small communities: human lives, the economy, and the environment have all encountered numerous problems. These problems have created an ever-increasing conflict between differing ideologies in land development and community growth. The solution to this conflict lies in establishing a single goal that is the directing purpose for all development. Promoting the good of the established community should be this goal. The established members of the community, who hold the greatest stake in the welfare of their community, must have complete control over how local development is conducted. Consequential of this claim, developers are to be held accountable for, and must alleviate, all negative changes that their development brings to the community.

The current practice of land development has created a whole list of problems that descend on the small communities situated in the path of a growing suburbia. It starts with developers moving further out from urban centers to find cheap land on which

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to build more affordable houses. Urban residents follow the construction in the hopes of finding a better life in the more rural atmosphere. A real life example of this is the movement of thousands from the Washington D.C. suburbs into Frederick County, Maryland. From 1980 to 2000, Frederick County experienced a net migration of 34,018 from its urban neighbor to the south, Montgomery County.¹ During the same time period Frederick County had a net migration flow of -10,129 to its neighboring regions of Washington County, and the states of Pennsylvania and West Virginia.² This particular statistic is an example of the effect that increased development, and the influx of former urban populations, has on an area of small rural communities. The new development raises property values in the area, which combines with increasingly strict zoning laws designed to control the growth, and pushes out existing residents who can no longer afford to buy a house in their home community. Instead of integration of old and new populations, displacement often occurs. For example, I have witnessed such displacement in Emmitsburg, where it seems that a whole generation of community members in their forties has moved to just across the Pennsylvania line into the cheaper neighboring community of Carroll Valley.

The problems, however, do not end with displacement. An increase in the number of housing units and residents creates a larger tax base and increased revenue for local government. This increase in residents, however, also forces the local government to provide infrastructure and services in far greater quantities than they have ever supplied in the past. This can result in a trade off that is rather unfair to the community. In 1992 the city of Franklin, which is a suburb of Milwaukee, “found that a new single-family home pays less than \$5,000 in property taxes but costs the city more than \$10,000 to service.”³ Most of the new residents also still work in the urban areas from which they came. Data on the labor force commuting out of Frederick County in 2000 recorded that 22,867 county residents commuted to Montgomery County for work.⁴ Thus, while homeowners consume services in their local communities,

¹ Frederick County Division of Planning. *Frederick County, Maryland: Demographic and Development Data* (Frederick: Frederick County Division of Planning, 2004), 18.

² *Ibid.*

³ Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* (New York: North Point Press, 2001), 128.

⁴ *Frederick County*, 35.

their production and some of their spending money goes to support other localities.

These strong ties of work and consumption that remain between new residents and their old urban homes make it difficult for them to fully integrate into the community where they reside. These former urban residents originally moved out to smaller communities in search of a particular way of life. Increased development of a small community, however, often leads to a disappearance of the community's unique character and landscape that attracted people to move there in the first place. What occurs is the slow death of a traditional existing community, while the majority of its new members remain ignorant of and indifferent to what is being lost.

An analysis of these various problems reveals three competing main interests in development. The first interest consists of the developers who seek to make a profit from building new structures on undeveloped properties. This group largely includes professional developers and homebuilders. Established members of existing communities who wish to develop their properties for profit may also fall into this category. The second interest includes all other existing residents of an established community. The third interest is made up of the prospective community members who wish to move their homes or businesses further away from the large urban centers. Each interest has its own particular goal. Developers seek profit, locals seek the good for their community, and prospective community members seek a better community than the one they are leaving.

There is a fourth group, which really is not a separate interest in itself, but whose profession involves a balancing of the different interests in land development. This group is made up of professional community planners. A few planners work in the private sector, most often for development firms; however, the majority are employed by local governments. In this role their job is to promote the positive growth and management of the community whose government they work for. Even with this professed common goal, planners split and fall closer to the ideology of one interest or the other.

A real life example of this exists in the differing development dogmas held by Denis Superzynski, a certified planner for Frederick County, Maryland, and Richard Schmoyer, the head planner for Adams County, Pennsylvania. Even though both are

accredited by the American Institute of Certified Planners, are mutually beholden to the same official code of ethics, and work in neighboring counties, their philosophies on development are a world apart. Superzynski argues for smart growth, and plans for the preservation of natural landscape views with a cautious eye on future development.⁵ Schmoyer talks of the sacrifice of traditional agricultural lands, and announces the imminent construction of a sprawling “15,000 to 18,000 new housing units” without batting an eye.⁶

The key to understanding how these two could legitimately hold such different development ideologies lies in the first line of their shared code of professional ethics that states “We shall always be conscious of the rights of others.”⁷ While on the surface this statement seems rather straightforward and reasonable it leaves a very important question unanswered: What if there are conflicting rights amongst different groups? This simple statement of planning ethics also explains how the growing conflict in land development cannot be completely solved through current methods.

The United States has placed a heavy focus on the individualized rights related to life and property. These two areas of personal rights are intimately connected to land development. As a result, conflict over development has often been seen as a balancing of competing individuals’ rights that are considered ethically equal. If you allow the developer to build a large subdivision on his property, you negate the neighboring community member’s right to live a quiet rural lifestyle. If you enact strict zoning ordinances to limit residential growth in a small community, you negate the prospective resident from living where they want to live. The current method of using secular ethics and political theory cannot make a hierarchical ranking of the individual rights of the competitively conflicting interests in land development. This leaves an ethical dilemma in which there is no way to choose between the individual rights of the interests.

A moral-theological perspective, however, provides a solution to the dilemma. This perspective does not involve a simple weighing of one individual’s rights against another, but involves the

⁵ Denis Superzynski (planner for Frederick County, Maryland), personal interview, 22 February 2007.

⁶ Richard Schmoyer (head planner for Adams County, Pennsylvania), personal interview, 6 March 2007.

⁷ American Planning Association, “Ethical Principles in Planning,” <http://www.planning.org/ethics/ethics.html>, accessed 20 March 2007.

recognition of the rights of an additional entity: the community. The community is a higher entity than the individual because it is a collection of individuals who speak with the same voice and seek the same common good or purpose. In fact the community includes all three interests as members, sharing its benefits with and requiring certain responsibilities from them. Thus the general benefit of the community, and the resulting promotion of the common good of its members, should be the proper goal that all land development is to strive for.

This importance of the common good of a community is rooted in Christian theology and defined even further in Catholic social teaching. From the very beginning of the scriptures there is this understanding that all things are created by God. No one has created anything from thin air; everything we have comes from God's creation. God gives this creation to humanity as sustenance, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food."⁸ The two rules for humanity, which emerge from this understanding of creation, are that man is allowed to own private property yet he is also obliged to be a good steward of such resources because the ultimate ownership goes back to God the creator.

The Catholic Catechism goes on to further address the issue of private ownership and makes the statement that property can be acquired in order for one to "meet his basic needs and the needs of those in his charge."⁹ Pope John Paul II expands this idea in his *Centesimus annus* encyclical stating that man "also has the responsibility not to hinder others from having their own part of God's gift; indeed, he must cooperate with others so that together all can dominate the earth."¹⁰ All this supports a general view that humanity is allowed to privately own property and derive some benefit from it, but the general welfare of others in the community has a claim on how the resources of that property are utilized.

From this understanding of property ownership, developers are not to utilize their property in the sole pursuit of personal profits. All property is to be largely administered for the betterment of the community in which it is situated. This lack of opportunity for individuals to make large profits also has support from the scriptures

⁸ Genesis 1:29 (NIV).

⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 2402.

¹⁰ John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, para. 31.

of the New Testament. Throughout these books, Jesus frequently admonishes the rich and preaches a way of life free of spiritually encumbering material acquisitions. Besides the fact that giving excess resources up for the use of the common good in a community is a requirement laid out through the gift of creation, it is obvious that such actions are also good for the soul.

This concept of community, and its serving purpose of the communal good, does not morally outrank individual interests just because it properly respects the “universal destination of goods.”¹¹ It is also an inherently successful structure for handling all other aspects of human society. The Catholic Church has always clung to the concept of community as the base social structure of both heaven and earth, as well as the main structure through which God interacts with humanity. Jesus himself proclaims the importance of community when he says “For when two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”¹² The Christian theologian Gerhard Lohfink comments on Jesus’ earthly ministry and its focus on community, “It was not directed toward the isolated individual, for isolated individuals are simply not in a position to exemplify and to live the social dimension of the reign of God.”¹³ The essayist Wendell Berry adds to the argument for the importance of community by arguing that large change best comes from the local community and through the actions of the local residents who know that community so well.¹⁴ It is clear then that the concept of community can be used to great affect, in solving the problems of development.

Despite this argument, there remain various objecting opinions on development and community growth that must be addressed. The first common objection is “Development is inevitable. As populations grow, communities must grow as well.” This objection is often used by developers, and is raised in the face of government regulations used to slow or control growth. In a summary of their land use policy the National Association of Home Builders refers to such regulations as “oftentimes redundant and

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 2403.

¹² Matthew 18:20 (NIV).

¹³ Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 72.

¹⁴ Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 42.

inefficient.”¹⁵ Yes, development is inevitable; it can even be beneficial if designed with the good of the community in mind. The notion of development, and changing the face of the earth, goes all the way back to the narrative of Adam’s eviction from Eden and his subsequent tillage of the fields for food. This undeniable fact that growth will happen is the reason why the good of the existing community must take precedence over all other interests. This understanding of a common good is essential to accomplish sustainable growth that will successfully support the natural march of development.

The second objection is that “People have the right to move away from urban centers and enjoy a life in a smaller community.” If the Christian model of community is to be used then we must recognize that it is not an exclusive community. It seeks and welcomes new members and overall growth. In the Christian model, however, with acceptance comes responsibility to support the good of the existing community. Paul’s letters to the various Christian communities of the early Church include warnings against the presence of destructive community members. No community is expected to accept members who simply take from the common good and do nothing to promote it. Thus measures can be taken to prevent profit-minded developers and unconnected commuter residents from killing an existing community. Overall, the right of a person to live where they want should not negate the general welfare of those who are already members of small communities.

With the moral argument laid out, and the opposing objections answered, now comes the hard task of how to implement these thoughts in the real world. There already exists a myriad of zoning regulations, impact fees, and infrastructure payments that have all been created to control development. If real change is to occur in land development there needs to be an altering of the development philosophy from restrictions and conflicting ideologies, to inclusion and communal collaboration. The way to accomplish this alteration is through a three-pronged plan that preserves the common good of the small community.

The first prong requires existing community members to become actively involved in the planning process. These members

¹⁵ David Crowe, “Land Development Policy Summary Overview” in *National Association of Home Builders*, <http://www.nahb.org/generic.aspx?sectionID=199&genericContentID=9215>, accessed 19 April 2007.

need to decide what the signature elements of the community are, then accomplish the active preservation of these elements in order to retain the community as a particular entity while controlled growth occurs. The second prong requires developers to alleviate all burdens they place on the community through their development. This accounting for impact on the community should not be done through one-time penalties or fees, but through a continual comprehensive commitment to the betterment of the community. This way the developer can become a community member themselves by taking on the same responsibility to promote the common good of the community as all other members. The third prong involves reaching out to new residents in an effort to connect them to their new community. This would also involve a continual attempt to locate comparable employment opportunities in the local area in order to keep the new members both living and working in the community. Overall, these actions support a moral-theological understanding of land development that could actually achieve some secular harmony in the world of suburban growth. With the concept of community and its supportive interconnections amongst members placed on a pedestal, small municipalities will be able to have both peaceful and positive growth.

Genetic Embryonic Screening: The Practice and the Morality

Eric Sakowski

The completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003 ushered in a new age of genetics. The project, which identified the 25,000 genes found in humans, is already impacting the technological and medical communities, and will continue to foster new technologies as our understanding increases. Existing genetic technologies will also continue to advance. As scientific knowledge progresses, moral questions will inevitably arise regarding the application of that knowledge. Indeed they already are, and have been for some time. One such technology with moral ramifications is genetic embryonic screening. This technology has the ability to save lives, but the current and future applications of it point to an immoral abuse of power. Therefore, genetic embryonic screening must be viewed as a morally unacceptable practice based on its current and likely future applications.

Genetic embryonic screening is a technology that allows scientists to view many physical properties of a baby before it is born. This process involves looking at the number of chromosomes present. Under normal circumstances, humans contain 46 chromosomes, which are grouped into 23 pairs. During gamete formation (formation of eggs and sperm), one chromosome of each pair segregates to a different gamete, or sex cell. The result is gametes with half the number of chromosomes of somatic cells.

Upon fertilization, the 23 chromosomes of the egg and 23 chromosomes of the sperm combine to form 46 chromosomes, or

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23 pairs, once again. This does not always work perfectly in the body, though. Sometimes the chromosomes do not segregate correctly in gamete formation, resulting in embryos with either too many or too few chromosomes. The detrimental effects from an abnormal number of chromosomes are wide-ranging depending on the chromosomes involved. For larger chromosomes containing more genes, and therefore more genetic information, the result can be a miscarriage. Smaller chromosomes can result in a variety of different genetic diseases.¹ For example, an extra chromosome 21 results in Down syndrome. Other disorders include cystic fibrosis and Tay-Sach's disease. Out of an attempt to test for these chromosomal abnormalities emerged genetic embryonic screening.

Genetic embryonic screening began in the late 1980s as a means of helping parents who were carriers of inheritable genetic disorders. The technology takes several forms. Two of the more common are amniocentesis and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (hereafter PGD). Although the two methods are different, the results provide the same information.

Amniocentesis is a form of genetic screening that tests for genetic problems after the mother is at least 14 weeks into her pregnancy. In this procedure, a needle is inserted into the mother's stomach. The needle penetrates the mother's abdominal wall and into the amniotic sac, where some of the amniotic fluid is removed and analyzed.² As the mother is already pregnant, the options following the news of a genetic defect are limited. The mother can either choose to carry to term or abort. A more advanced procedure that provides more options is PGD.

PGD is a procedure used for parents who are using *in vitro* fertilization to become pregnant. During *in vitro* fertilization, eggs are removed from a woman's ovaries. Sperm is then added to the eggs and the zygotes (the egg-sperm combination) are incubated. After several days, several of the embryos is selected and implanted in the mother.

PGD is not an ordinary part of the *in vitro* fertilization procedure. However, it is recommended for parents who are carriers

¹ The Center for Advanced Reproductive Endocrinology, "Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis (Embryo Screening)," http://www.care-life.com/embryo_screening.htm, accessed 27 February 2007.

² "Screening for Genetic Disease," <http://users.rcn.com/jkimball.ma.ultranet/BiologyPages/P/PrenatalScreening.html>, accessed 27 February 2007.

of genetic disorders and for women who have experienced multiple miscarriages, especially women over 40 years of age. When PGD is chosen as a course of action, one of two methods for securing genetic material is followed. The first is a polar body biopsy. In a woman, the unfertilized egg is released along with two small cells known as polar bodies, which degenerate upon fertilization. The doctor surgically opens the membrane of the egg and removes one of the two polar bodies. The polar body can then be analyzed for its chromosomal makeup, which is the same as that of the egg.³

The second procedure is an embryo biopsy. During this process, the fertilized eggs are allowed to incubate for three days. At this point, the embryo has divided into approximately eight cells. One of these cells is removed to be analyzed. This procedure is presumed to not hurt the developing embryo because all of the cells are still undifferentiated, although long-term data confirming this is lacking. These types of cells, commonly known as stem cells, are capable of becoming every type of cell found in the body.⁴

The next step is the analysis of the polar body or the cell. Both are analyzed using Fluorescent In-Situ Hybridization (hereafter FISH). DNA markers, or probes, are fluorescently dyed and attached to the DNA of the cell. The probes are labeled with different colors, and each is designed to bind to a specific chromosome, such as chromosome 21. Using a fluorescent microscope, the number of chromosomes can be counted to look for additional or missing members.⁵

The two procedures mentioned for extracting chromosomal information are slightly different. Analysis of the polar body provides only information about the mother's chromosomal contribution since the polar body comes from an unfertilized egg. In contrast, the single embryo cell provides information about both the mother's and father's contribution. Once the information is obtained, a healthy embryo can be chosen for implantation. However, a healthy embryo is not a guaranteed result. The FISH analysis currently is limited to testing only 10 of the 23 pairs of chromosomes. This results in a failure of PGD to identify 10% of genetically-impaired embryos.⁶

³ "Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis."

⁴ Laura Johannes, "A Screening Test for High Risk Mothers," *Wall Street Journal*, eastern ed., 23 November 2004, D: 1, 10.

⁵ "Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis."

⁶ "Screening Test."

Despite its rate of failure, pre-implantation genetic diagnosis is becoming more popular as some insurance companies begin covering it. Analysis of the results of PGD shows that it reduces miscarriages “from 40.6% to 22.2% in women over 40 years.”⁷ In addition, as our knowledge increases, the applications of PGD continue to broaden. In 2000, Dr. John Wagner was the first to successfully engineer an embryo that was both healthy and a donor match for a sick sibling.⁸ Thus, PGD has the potential to be a means of healing for those already alive, and raises the possibility of PGD being capable of ‘creating’ the type of child parents may desire.

The increasing popularity of PGD raises ethical questions which must be evaluated in order to determine the impact genetic embryonic screening currently has and what the future may hold.

Although still quite limited by price and available technology, genetic embryonic screening is already impacting lives. Through this technology, couples have the ability to avoid raising a child that will suffer from genetic disease. The means to this end differ among procedures, since the primary option with amniocentesis is abortion while PGD allows the selection and implantation of a healthy embryo, but the end in either case is the same.

Closely related to this impact of the technology, genetic embryonic screening (particularly PGD) enables couples who cannot naturally conceive become pregnant. Often, infertile couples have genetic defects in one or both partners that cause the miscarriage of the embryo PGD allows for the selection of unaffected embryos.

In addition to these, PGD is already making an impact in two important, albeit limited, ways. The first is that PGD has successfully produced donor matches for sick children. When Dr. Wagner created a donor match through PGD that was healthy and unaffected by the donation, he forever impacted the treatment and relief of individuals who have been suffering. The second is that PGD has been used in limited circumstances to allow parents to determine what sex their child will be. In the future, the effects of PGD could become even greater. As knowledge and technology advance, other traits besides sex may be screened for, including hair color and eye color. In the most extreme case, traits such as

⁷ “Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis Significantly Reduces Pregnancy Loss,” *Fertility Weekly*, 27 Feb. 2006, 7.

⁸ Ben Harder, “Born to Heal,” *Science News* 165, no. 11 (13 March 2004), 168–69.

intelligence and athletic ability may be screened for as well, creating so-called “designer babies.” However, these possibilities most likely will not come to realization in the immediate future, and may never be realized at all. This is because multiple genes play a role in these traits (they are polygenic), and the environment also plays a critical role.

Nonetheless, PGD is growing in availability and practicality. The increasing use of this technology is changing, and will continue to change, some of society’s values. Genetic embryonic screening results in the propagation of inequality and control as positive ideals.

Choosing genetic embryonic screening implies that some lives are worth more than others; hence, children with genetic defects are not allowed to be implanted in PGD and are aborted in amniocentesis. “The goal of eliminating embryos and fetuses with genetic defects carries the unspoken implication that certain ‘inferior’ kinds of human beings—for example, those with Down syndrome—do not deserve to live.”⁹ In addition, this practice shows by example that those already living who have genetic impairments do not have the same inherent value as those who are healthy.

The inequality extends to the children being born through this technology. These children are products of their parents’ wishes, as all children should be. However, they are received based on conditional acceptance rather than the unconditional welcome received by a child of natural birth. Although they maybe loved the same way, the PGD child’s creation is inherently placed on a lower level by this procedure. The future may make this situation even worse. If children are “designed” by their parents to have certain traits, they may have higher expectations placed on them to fulfill their apparent abilities. These children could be judged, unfairly, more than others. Thus, they will receive unequal treatment.¹⁰

The second value promoted by genetic embryonic screening is control. The procedure provides parents with control over the child’s existence since unwanted embryos may be aborted or prevented from being implanted. It provides control over the child’s purpose or destiny if the child is produced as a donor match for a sibling. In the future, control over a child’s destiny may be further

⁹ The President’s Council on Bioethics, “Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness,” <http://www.bioethics.gov/reports/beyondtherapy/index.html>, accessed 19 March 2007.

¹⁰ Ibid.

influenced by hand-picked characteristics deemed admirable by the parents.

Therefore, genetic embryonic screening is already changing the lives of many. As knowledge and technology advance, this practice will increasingly affect, change, and introduce social values, namely inequality and control. Since this is the case, the moral quality of genetic embryonic screening must be examined so that future applications of this practice do not become regrettable.

Genetic embryonic screening is itself amoral, being a type of technology by nature. Once that technology is applied towards an end, however, it carries a moral weight. At this point its application becomes a human act insofar as it is “conscious, deliberate, free ... undertaken for a purpose, with an end in view.”¹¹ Fulfilling these requirements, the practice of genetic embryonic screening becomes one of moral significance.

Aristotle writes that every human act is oriented towards some end, with happiness being the ultimate end sought. It is possible, however, to seek what one perceives to be an avenue towards happiness that does not lead there. Thus a distinction must be made between real and apparent goods. Apparent goods are those goods (activities) which seem to lead to happiness but do not, while real goods do in fact lead to this ultimate end. To determine the moral quality of genetic embryonic screening, then, it must be determined whether this application is a real or apparent good, i.e. whether it leads to happiness.

Genetic embryonic screening has been treated as two procedures thus far (amniocentesis and PGD), and the moral nature of each should be considered. Amniocentesis is a procedure that provides the parents with two options: carry to term or abort. The end sought by this procedure is to ensure the health of the child, and to abort it if health is compromised. One of the ends of this practice is therefore the death of the child, an end that is both foreseeable and accepted as a possibility by those who participate in this practice.

The possibility of death as the end of amniocentesis causes this practice to go against the Natural Law, or “*Tao*,” as it is described by C. S. Lewis.¹² Specifically, it goes against the precept to avoid murder. It is true that there are certain actions in which the

¹¹ Ralph McInerny, *Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, revised ed. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 1.

¹² C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Harper, 1944).

end would be the death of another that could be considered morally acceptable. An example of this is self-defense. The difference between these types of examples and amniocentesis is that the former does not intend the death of another as the end sought, while the latter does. As such, amniocentesis must be considered an immoral practice since the end it seeks is the possible intended death of a child.

It should be noted at this point that it is possible to use amniocentesis without the intention of aborting the baby. In this circumstance, the practice is in line with the *Tao*. This is a case where parents want to know the condition of the child's health and have resolved to care for the child under any circumstance. Like the self-defense example, this action is has a different moral quality from the common mode of amniocentesis. Thus, amniocentesis has the capability of confining itself to the *Tao*, but its common practice is one that places it at odds with what is moral.

The moral judgment of PGD is not nearly so straightforward. One of the problems with providing a moral judgment for PGD is the debate over when life begins. If life begins at fertilization, as some maintain, then PGD must be considered immoral since the unused embryos are destroyed. This would constitute a form of murder. Others maintain that full human life does not begin until birth, and still others argue that it begins somewhere in between. If either of the last two viewpoints are held as correct, then PGD need not be considered a form of murder. This is an argument that may never be answered, thus making it difficult to analyze PGD. However, the moral quality of this practice may be explored in other aspects.

One consideration of PGD is the treatment of the patients. In this case, the patients include both the mother and the child. Most medical procedures take the well-being of the patient into account. If a procedure is too great a risk to the patient, then it is strongly dissuaded. PGD fails to accomplish this.¹³ Although the mother's well-being is considered, the well-being of the child is neglected. In its place is considered the wishes of the parents. This not only demonstrates a lack of consideration for the child, but also fosters the ideals of inequality and control. That the child's well-being is not considered to be the same worth as the mother's displays inequality, as opposed to a "first among equals" mentality.

¹³ "Beyond Therapy."

In addition, this practice sends the message that those individuals who do have some sort of disability have less dignity and worth than those who are healthy. This attitude is conveyed by the belief that it is acceptable for less-than-healthy or handicapped offspring to be discarded. The child has no say, which gives the parents complete control over its existence.

The control by the parents extends beyond the existence of the child. They obtain the status of “conditioners.” According to C.S. Lewis, conditioners “choose what kind of artificial *Tao* they will, for their own good reasons, produce.”¹⁴ Conditioners dictate the values of society by imposing what they deem useful onto members. Likewise, parents of PGD impose the values they deem useful and desirable onto unborn children. The current traits include only the child’s health and sex, but the list could continue to grow in the future.

PGD must be considered immoral based upon its current applications. The values of inequality and control that PGD fosters render it an act that seeks out apparent goods rather than real goods, and as such it is a morally detrimental practice. Although it has the power to help individuals, the technology is more commonly abused. In the end, it comes down to intention. Unfortunately for PGD, the tendency is to seek ends other than the well-being of the child.

As understanding increases, the applications of this procedure will also expand. This is problematic because of the values and character traits that genetic embryonic screening produces, especially since the practice has the potential to prove beneficial to so many people. There is still the possibility that genetic embryonic screening can tend to seek the well-being of the child in the future, but in order for this to occur, intentions of parents will have to change. This change is less likely to come from within, and more likely to be imposed by the government if it does come about. Until then, genetic embryonic screening must be viewed as a technology capable of good, but misused for immoral ends.

¹⁴ *The Abolition of Man*, 61–62.

Pascal's Wager: The Many-Gods Objection and the Irrelevancy of God

Joshua Allen

Pascal's wager is one of the most celebrated arguments ever written in defense of the belief in God. Pascal, a gifted mathematician, wrote his seminal philosophical work, *Pensées*, in an effort to compose "an apology for the Christian free-thinkers and skeptics of his time, as well as Catholics who did not live up to the precepts of Christ."¹ Pascal lived in a time infected with the radical skepticism of Descartes and his followers, and indeed, the very structure of his wager reflects the futility of the hyperbolic doubt that is employed in Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*.² Cartesian philosophers placed the entire burden of belief on reason; there was no room for faith in their rationalistic philosophy. Pascal's *Pensées* is a reaction to the imbalance of faith and reason that was present in apologetic Christianity. The wager is not an effort to prove the existence of God; rather, it is an argument designed to show that belief is rational and non-belief irrational. Pascal notes that it is custom, not argument, which induces belief in the individual: "[a]nyone

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¹ Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy, Volume IV: Modern Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 157.

² One can view the wager in a fascinating way. What if we applied the wager to the idea of "hyperbolic doubt"? The answer would be simple: if we doubt everything, we cannot function. To function, we must believe in something. Either we can believe something or we can believe nothing. If we believe nothing, our reward is nothing, since we cannot function. If we believe something, and that something is "good," then what have we lost, even if we are wrong? We have lived a happy life, and we have loved our life to the extent that we could. If it all turns out to be nothing, we have lost nothing eternally and gained something temporally. Thus, to function by hyperbolic doubt is irrational.

who grows accustomed to faith believes it ... and believes nothing else.”³ The wager seeks to open the strictly rational mind to the possibility of faith, but in itself, it is not designed to produce that faith. Though there are many who have objected to the wager, its general structure survives the objections. However, one may wonder whether the general structure that survives continues to have the apologetic force that Pascal intends.

Pascal begins the wager with a simple alternative based on the principle of non-contradiction: “[e]ither God is or he is not.”⁴ In the structure of the argument, these possibilities are regarded as exhaustive: there is no other option. One *must* choose between the existence and non-existence of God. There cannot be an agnostic position, because the choice of belief in God does not allow for neutrality: to remain neutral is to side with the atheistic position. Given that one must make a choice, Pascal states that the wagering agent has “two things to lose: the true and the good; and two things to stake: [his] reason and [his] will, [his] knowledge and [his] happiness.”⁵ Of the two positions, Pascal holds that “[r]eason cannot make you choose either” and that “reason cannot prove either wrong.”⁶ Since reason cannot be the selection criterion between the choices, it is the will that must be persuaded either to believe or not believe.

With these basic assumptions, Pascal forms what Jeff Jordan has described as four distinct wagers, each building on the previous ones, but each maintaining the basic structure of the first.⁷ The simplest structure of Pascal’s wager considers the choice between belief in God and disbelief in God (hereafter referred to as *belief* and \sim *belief*). The structure of the payoffs (P) for *belief* and \sim *belief* based on God existing (*exists*) and God not existing (\sim *exists*) are as follows:⁸

	<i>exist</i>	\sim <i>exist</i>
<i>belief</i>	P1	P3
\sim <i>belief</i>	P2	P4

The variables P1, P2, P3, P4 are the payoffs to the wagering agent under the various scenarios. In the first wager, Pascal assumes that $P1 \gg P2$ ⁹ and that $P3 \geq P4$, that is, that the payoff for belief is unlimited happiness if God exists and some finite amount if God does not exist, and that,

³ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (London: Penguin, 1995), 125.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁷ Jeff Jordan, “Pascal’s Wagers,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, XXVI (2002), 214.

⁸ This structure is adapted from Jordan.

⁹ The \gg is meant to indicate “much greater than.”

further, if God does not exist, then belief results in a payoff at least as good as disbelief ($P3 \geq P4$).¹⁰ The decision rule¹¹ in this form of the wager would be strategic dominance: upon inspection, the total value of the payoffs of the strategy *belief* dominates the payoffs of the strategy \sim *belief*:

$$(P1 + P3) > (P2 + P4)$$

Thus, the rational agent would always choose *belief*.

In the second form of the wager, the probability and payoff structure is modified through the introduction of probability. In this version, which is an adaptation of the first form of the wager, Pascal assumes that the probability assignments for *exist* and \sim *exist* are .5 each (a 50/50 chance). That is, Pascal assumes that it is equally likely that God exists and that he does not exist. Under this assumption, the payoff magnitudes are the same as in the first wager, but because of the added element of probability, the decision rule becomes *expected value*.¹² The expected value identity is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} .5(P1) + .5(P3) >>> .5(P2) + .5(P4) & \text{ because } P1 = \infty, \text{ and} \\ .5(\infty) = \infty, \text{ and} \\ \infty >>> \text{any finite value, so} \\ P(\textit{belief}) >>> P(\sim\textit{belief}) \end{aligned}$$

The introduction of probability in this case does little to change the outcome of the first form of the wager. Since the probabilities are equally distributed, one would not expect any changes in decision-making behavior. This form of the wager is not particularly interesting, except inasmuch as it allows for further probabilistic modifications.

The third form of the wager is the most popular and most recognized one. In this version, Pascal shows that for *any* probability greater than zero, $P(\textit{belief}) >>> P(\sim\textit{belief})$. In this case, P2, P3, and P4 are finite values, and $P1 = \infty$. This payoff structure reflects the infinite value of heaven for the believer. The probability of *exists* is some α such that $\alpha > 0$. The probability of \sim *exists* is $(1 - \alpha)$. So the decision rule for *belief* is:

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha(\infty) + (1 - \alpha)(P3) >>> \alpha(P2) + (1 - \alpha)(P4), & \text{ because} \\ \alpha(\infty) = \infty, \text{ and} \\ \infty >>> \text{any finite value, so} \end{aligned}$$

¹⁰ Ibid., 216.

¹¹ A decision rule is the method employed to choose between possibilities (a rule used to decide).

¹² Expected value is a decision rule which aggregates the probability of a decision multiplied by its value for a given strategy. One may then compare "expected values" to determine the best probability-weighted strategy.

$$P(\textit{belief}) \gg \gg P(\sim \textit{belief})$$

What Pascal shows in this form of the wager is that if there is any possibility, however miniscule, that God exists, it is contrary to reason to choose not to believe. No matter how miniscule the probability coefficient becomes in a given scenario, so long as it is greater than zero, when multiplied by ∞ the payoff will be infinite.

Pascal establishes through the wager that the man who does not believe is acting contrary to reason. Though he does not intend the wager as a proof of God's existence, it is useful as an apologetic tool. It has been argued that in the development of an apologetic, one should present arguments in their "most persuasive form, not in order to persuade people to embrace a conclusion repugnant to the mind, but in order to facilitate the working of the heart."¹³ Pascal claims that when presented with the logic of the wager, "if you are unable to believe, it is because of your passions, since reason impels you to believe and yet you cannot do so."¹⁴ Since the obstacle to the reasoning atheist is the will, Pascal recommends the practice of belief in order "to be cured of unbelief," much in the same way that Aristotle believes that one can build a virtue in the soul by practicing virtue.¹⁵ Pascal's apologetic method seeks to simplify the question of belief; it is for this end that the wager is designed. The wager intends to establish the reasonability of belief, and Pascal believes that it does so.

Many scholars have argued that Pascal's third form of the wager is susceptible to what has been labeled the "many-gods objection."¹⁶ This objection claims that the *exist* / *~exist* alternative is not exhaustive. There is a third possibility, they say: the non-standard deity. This non-standard deity can be assumed to have some probability of existing β , and its function in the objection is to provide a reward for disbelief in its competing deity (i.e., God). Thus, both belief in God and disbelief in God would carry an infinite reward. In this scenario, the wager deteriorates into hopeless contradiction. Pascal opens himself to such metaphysically ludicrous counterexamples as the non-standard deity because he is using a probabilistic mathematical method which does not entail a comprehensive metaphysic that would preclude the existence of equally powerful deities. Pascal believes that "if the object of proving God's existence is to convince agnostics and atheists, the abstract metaphysical proofs are no

¹³ *A History of Philosophy*, 166–67.

¹⁴ *Pensées*, 124.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁶ "Pascal's Wagers," 219.

use.”¹⁷ But, his avoidance of metaphysics makes the many-gods objection a serious and potentially fatal one.

Despite the challenge of the many-gods objection, Pascal himself offers a subtle solution to the problem, as is shown by Jordan.¹⁸ If we assume an existing non-standard deity with a probability β and the effect of making $P3 = \infty^*$, then the decision matrix would appear as follows:

	$exist(\alpha)$	$\sim exist(1 - \alpha)$
$belief$	$(\alpha)(\infty)$	$(1 - \alpha)P3$
$\sim belief$	$(\alpha)(\infty^*)(\beta)$	$(1 - \alpha)P4$

Pascal makes a crucial distinction in the wager that ensures $P3 > P4$ in all cases. He claims that even if there is no God, believing in him is a profitable endeavor: “what harm will come to you from choosing this course?”¹⁹ The life of belief will ensure that the believer “will gain *even in this life*,” apart from all considerations of eternal reward.²⁰ This claim is the wager’s most radical. If $P3 > P4$ at all times, then even the many-gods objection cannot overcome the wager. Consider the following limit identities:

$$\begin{aligned}
 P(belief) &= (\alpha)(\infty) + (1 - \alpha)P3, \text{ and} \\
 P(\sim belief) &= (\alpha)(\infty^*)(\beta) + (1 - \alpha)P4, \text{ so} \\
 \lim_{\alpha \rightarrow 0} [(\alpha)(\infty) + (1 - \alpha)(P3)] &= P3 \text{ and,} \\
 \lim_{\alpha \rightarrow 0} [(\alpha)(\infty^*)(\beta) + (1 - \alpha)(P4)] &= P4. \text{ Thus,} \\
 P3 &> P4,
 \end{aligned}$$

which implies that for $\alpha \in [0,1]$ *belief* is the superior choice.²¹

Pascal’s claim that the individual is better off believing in God whether or not he exists is absolutely pivotal in defending the wager against arguments that would suggest that one could believe in any number of

¹⁷ *A History of Philosophy*, 160.

¹⁸ “Pascal’s Wagers,” 220.

¹⁹ *Pensées*, 125.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, emphasis mine.

²¹ The “Lim” function is a mathematical tool that in this case shows that as the probability of God existing approaches zero ($\alpha \rightarrow 0$), the only terms that remain relevant are P3 and P4. Since P3 is always greater than P4, belief is always the superior strategy. There is some simplification in this model. One could assume that there is a matrix of probabilities between α and β that interact with one another. However, ultimately the non-standard deity is subject to the exact objection that it presents to the wager: what if there is a second non-standard deity who rewards disbelief in both of the previously considered deities? This exercise can continue, but if the series is to have an end, at some point the existence of the non-standard deity becomes a binary operator. As a result, the payoff structures for P2 can be presented with the entire series of non-standard possibilities captured in β .

deities. We see support for Pascal's thesis that belief is superior to non-belief even in this world in modern psychology: belief has been linked to greater happiness and satisfaction in life, as well as greater longevity.²² Essentially, Pascal's Wager in its strongest form argues that the differences in belief payoffs reduces to the value of the erroneous life.

Pascal's wager in its most rigorous form does seem to contain an answer to the modern many-gods objection. However, the answer to this objection might imply a claim that is counterproductive to the apologetic aim of the *Pensées*. In the case of equal payoffs for *belief* and *~belief*, we simply would ignore those equal payoffs and consider the case of God not existing (*~ exist*). Whether or not God exists, we would choose to believe in him. In other words, *logically, the existence of God is irrelevant to the actions we should choose in our own best interest*. Pascal shows that the existence of God is *practically* irrelevant: we make our decision based on the expectation of happiness in *this life*. But, without a radically Christian understanding of happiness, this psychological approach is doomed to fail in its apologetic function. It seems absurd to suggest that Pascal intended this conclusion, since reducing the actual existence of God to irrelevancy would not seem to be in accord with the apologetic aim of opening the heart of the atheist to the gift of faith. Rather, this approach, if pushed to its limits, contains the same cold and legalistic logic as do metaphysical proofs of God's existence.

To show that faith is not unreasonable is a worthy goal, but the process should not involve divorcing the act of belief from the existence of its object. Such a divorce of faith and ontology reflects the difficulties of modern philosophy. Pascal's solution echoes Hume's practical logic: regardless of our knowledge, we should act in a certain way. Making the existence of God irrelevant to ethics would certainly not have been the objective of the wager. Perhaps, then, the wager is not intended to be pushed to its logical limits. Perhaps the wager is best seen as a heuristic designed to point out the futility of compelling rational comprehension of God. In ratifying the incomprehensibility of belief in God, Pascal reinforces the requirement of faith and its relationship to reason, but the success of the wager rests on the fact that it also ratifies the incomprehensibility of disbelief in God. The basis of belief is the heart. This move approaches the ethical views of the stages of life in Kierkegaard's philosophy. While the heart must be assured that it believes something reasonable, a relationship with God involves more than cold,

²² "Pascal's Wagers," 221.

arid proofs. In fact, Kierkegaard argues that the attempt to prove God's existence is futile.

Pascal would not have embraced the epistemological pessimism of Kierkegaard's practical dialectic, but the solution to the many-gods objection points to a similar understanding of man's relationship with God. In Catholic theology, the relationship of man and God is a relationship of love which unites faith and reason in the unity of truth. In the final analysis, the wager partially accomplishes its goal: it arrests the cold, exclusive rationality of the skeptic and paves the way of faith, reinforcing that "the heart has reasons of which reason knows nothing."²³ Pascal aims to unite faith and reason by showing the comprehensibility of faith. When examined carefully, however, his system divorces faith and reason by making reasoned understandings of the existence of God separate from ethical action grounded in belief. From an apologetic standpoint, a more integrated approach would be desirable.

²³ *Pensées*, 127.

On the Aristotelian-Thomistic Theory of Knowledge and its Treatment of Plato's Theory of Recollection

John Laracy

Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas share a nearly identical theory of knowledge, one which diverges from that of their predecessor Plato. Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* and *De Anima* and Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* offer a theory of knowledge that challenges both Plato's theory of recollection and the skeptical view that knowledge is unobtainable. This essay will analyze excerpts from these three works in order to (a) demonstrate the differences and similarities between the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of knowledge and Plato's theory of knowledge and (b) assess the strength of the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory.

Plato's famous theory of recollection supposes that all knowledge is of ideal "forms" existing in a non-sensible realm, which humans can only grasp by recalling their knowledge from an existence before birth. Aquinas explicitly addresses this theory, thereby demonstrating its key differences and similarities with the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory. Aquinas agrees with Plato that knowledge is universal, immaterial, and unchanging; however, he denies the existence of innate, ideal knowledge in the soul. Plato, he thinks, errs in assuming that existing objects must be immaterial and unchanging simply because knowledge of these objects is immaterial and unchanging. On the contrary, he claims, "the intellect receives material and changeable species of material things in an immaterial and unchanging way."¹ For example, the species "mammal" consists of material and changeable creatures, but knowledge of this species is unchanging and universal—that is, it accounts for the qualities

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae in Human Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Paul K. Moser and Arnold vander Nat (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 97.

essential to all mammals that will ever exist. By denying this and insisting that only the immaterial forms are real and knowable, Plato completely diminishes the role of the senses and makes the material world unknowable. Even if “immaterial substances were known,” Aquinas writes, “we could not be able to know anything about the sensible things around us.”² Likewise, knowledge of the forms would eliminate the importance of knowledge of “change and matter”—i.e., the natural sciences.³ Here, Aquinas suggests that knowledge cannot ignore the material world in which all humans dwell. Having innate knowledge of the forms, in his mind, would merely confuse humans, who are sensible creatures, making their perceptions obsolete. The Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of knowledge, then, hopes to uphold Plato’s notion of knowledge as universal, immaterial, and unchanging, but correct his mistake of denying knowledge’s connection to sense-perception.

Although he does so more briefly than Aquinas, Aristotle also makes an explicit argument against Plato, one which leads into his own theory on how humans gain knowledge. Plato’s theory claims that knowledge is innate within the soul from the moment of birth, but Aristotle thinks this is impossible: “Now it is strange if we possess them [states of knowledge] from birth: for it means that we possess apprehensions more accurate than demonstration and fail to notice them.”⁴ In other words, it seems contradictory to say that one can have knowledge of perfect forms, but not be aware of it. Aristotle’s rejection of dormant, innate knowledge leads into his theory that humans have a capacity to gain knowledge previously absent from their minds. He explains that each individual, having an innate “capacity”⁵ to apprehend knowledge, is a potential knower from birth, but only becomes an actual knower when he or she can “realize his [or her] knowledge in actual knowing at will.”⁶ According to this view, one begins life with the ability to gain knowledge, but does not initially possess any knowledge. Moreover, a knower recalls

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 96.

⁴ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, in *Human Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Paul K. Moser and Arnold vander Nat (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 99b. (All references to Aristotle are given by the line number of the standard Greek edition.)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Aristotle, *De Anima*, in *Human Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Paul K. Moser and Arnold vander Nat (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 417a 20–25.

knowledge at will, so he or she must be aware of it from its inception. Plato's knower, on the other hand, possesses perfect knowledge from birth but remains unaware of much of this knowledge.

Aristotle and Aquinas explicitly reject the existence of innate formal knowledge in favor of the human capacity to know the material world. By assessing their explanation of this capacity and the process it entails, one can see the specific ways in which they drastically oppose Plato while retaining his view of knowledge as universal, immaterial, and unchanging. According to Aristotle, demonstrations or deductive arguments provide scientific knowledge, but such arguments demand foundational premises that derive from induction.⁷ As the “originative source of scientific knowledge,” induction or “rational intuition” is the most fundamental aspect of the capacity to know.⁸ In contrast to Plato's view that all knowledge derives exclusively from within the soul, the Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of induction—or “abstraction” as Aquinas calls it—supposes that apprehending knowledge begins with experiences of the external world as sense perception. Aristotle explains that all animals have the capacity to sense particular objects in the world, but only the human intellect can gain knowledge of universals through induction.⁹ For humans and some other animals, a sense perception persists in the mind after the initial sensation, eventually becoming what one might call a memory or lasting impression. Only in the human mind, however, are these particular sensations and memories “systemized” and grouped together into the “universal now stabilized in its entirety within the soul.”¹⁰ The result of induction is an unchangeable and immaterial universal inhering in the soul, and this intuited universal is a foundation for demonstrative knowledge and a piece of knowledge itself.¹¹

Aquinas presents a nearly identical process called “abstraction” as the means by which one abstracts or draws out the notion of a “species” from many particular sense perceptions with the same essential qualities. This mental capacity, which he calls the agent intellect, abstracts universal knowledge from sense data by

⁷ *Posterior Analytics*, 88a–b.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 88b.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 99b.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 99b–100a.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 88b.

considering “specific natures without individuating conditions.”¹² An example will illustrate how this process works. A child sees many dogs and develops memories of these dogs. After amassing many memories of particular dogs, the child will eventually be able to identify certain universal characteristics of all creatures called dog: four-leggedness, fur, sharp teeth, barking-ability, etc. The child’s agent intellect has abstracted the universal characteristics of all dogs from her particular experiences of individual dogs and now considers dog as a unique species of animal, even in the absence of particular dogs.

The Aristotelian-Thomistic notion of abstraction or induction, then, successfully improves upon Plato’s theory of recollection by showing that universal knowledge can be gained by beginning with the senses. The Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of knowledge, in my mind, is a definite improvement over the Platonic theory because it unifies the sensible and intellectual human abilities. By splitting the senses and the mind, Plato presents human experience as a dichotomy between two realms: the purely intellectual and the purely illusory. Knowledge is purely intellectual, and sense-perception is illusion. This disjointed account of human experience lacks coherence and fails to show how knowledge of the forms could be elicited by experience in the material world. Aristotle and Aquinas, on the other hand, acknowledge that human knowledge relies on both the senses and the mind in the unified process of abstraction. They also demonstrate that knowledge is immaterial in the mind, but not because it is knowledge of “another world” of forms.

Although an improvement from Plato’s theory, the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of knowledge still has its own challenges to overcome. For instance, what induces the final step of abstraction? Is it a conscious effort on the part of the individual, or is it passive? Aquinas does not make perfectly clear what makes the agent intellect abstract the universal from particular memories. He says that abstraction is a process of “combining and separating” in which the mind combines various individual apprehensions into a unified essence and then separates this essence from particular individuating conditions and other inessential characteristics.¹³ This description fails to demonstrate exactly how and why the agent

¹² *Summa Theologiae*, 103.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 107.

intellect is able to combine and separate. Does the mind do this separating and combining at the will of the individual, or is it a mechanical process? Perhaps he could argue that abstraction is a natural human ability, but even then the question of the intentionality and awareness of the individual would remain unresolved.

Another challenge to the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory is that sense-perceptions are often false and vary from person to person; therefore, different individuals may have different universal concepts in their minds. If abstraction begins with sense-perception, then faulty sense-perception may lead to faulty knowledge. Considering that sense-perceptions are often unreliable, how can knowledge be recognizable and distinguishable from falsity and illusion?

I find it difficult to discover any viable answer to these challenges. Nonetheless, I still think that the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of knowledge is the most reasonable one that I have encountered to date. Although the theory has its inadequacies, these inadequacies do not completely diminish its power. It is a theory of knowledge that is grounded in a trust of the senses and confidence that genuine knowledge can be discerned. I think that these realistic tendencies move in the right direction—away from doubt and confusion. While Aristotle and Aquinas do not offer a flawless theory of knowledge, it is certainly reasonable and worthy of considerable reflection. At the very least, it is an improvement over Plato's theory of recollection.

The Authenticity of Life

Timothy R. Woods

In his book *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger discusses his idea of “Dasein,” which is a German word that he uses to name the being that raises the Being question, that is, human beings. Each human being is a Dasein, and to fully understand the condition of Being we must understand our Dasein. The way to understand our Being, according to Heidegger, is by looking towards the end of life and truly grasping the reality that we are Beings destined to die (Beings-towards-death), which he calls living authentically. Living inauthentically, on the other hand, is not fully grasping the fact that we are all destined to die. Heidegger’s concepts of authentic and inauthentic life are displayed in Leo Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Ilych*. In this story, Ivan Ilych is a middle-aged Russian judge who leads an inauthentic life and is surrounded by people who live inauthentic lives. This story illustrates the importance of living authentically by showing the dangers of living inauthentically.

Heidegger’s concept of living authentically allows us to understand our Dasein, and it relates to the idea of totality. To understand anything, according to Heidegger, is to grasp the totality—to understand the whole of the thing. For us as humans to understand our Dasein, we must grasp the totality of our Dasein, which includes a birth and a death. This means that we have to understand that we are Beings that are destined to die. Individual humans do not live forever and have not existed forever; there is a starting point and an ending point in each human life. In this sense, once we are born we are thrown towards death; we are put into a cycle of existence that ultimately terminates for us when our lives end. To live authentically is to understand this condition and to live

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in anticipation of death. By understanding the fact that we die and by living in anticipation of death, we understand the totality of our Being, which discloses our Dasein to us. Heidegger states, “*Authentic Being-towards-death can not evade its own-most non-relational possibility, or cover up this possibility by thus fleeing from it.*”¹ Heidegger means that living authentically involves accepting the fact that we have a “non-relational possibility”—that is, that there is the possibility at any moment that our existence as Dasein can end. Understanding and living in anticipation of this possibility (that is, living authentically) allows us to grasp the totality of our Being, and since to grasp the totality of something means to understand it, by grasping the totality of our Being we enable ourselves to understand the meaning of Being and Dasein.

The inverse of living authentically is living inauthentically, and this type of living prevents us from understanding our Dasein and Being. Heidegger says, “Our everyday falling evasion *in the face of* death is an *inauthentic Being-towards-death.*”² What Heidegger means by this is that in our normal, everyday lives we avoid the fact that we are Beings-towards-death. We try to conceal this fact from ourselves and “tranquelize” ourselves from it, as Heidegger says.³ We think of death as applying to others, which we see all the time, but we do not think of death as applying to us when we live inauthentically. When one lives inauthentically one thinks, “One of these days one will die too, in the end; but right now it has nothing to do with us.”⁴ To think this is to ignore the fact that all human beings are Beings-towards-death, which means that death has a great deal to do with us because it happens to us all and means the termination of our existence as being-in-the-world. The reason that so many people live inauthentically is because they become lost in the tranquility of what Heidegger calls “the they.”⁵ “The they” is the large portion of human beings who do not concern themselves with death and view it as a phenomenon happening to other people but not to themselves. Living inauthentically hinders our understanding of Being because it prevents us from grasping the totality of our lives. When we live inauthentically, we do not accept the fact that there are boundaries to our lives. Accepting the fact that these boundaries exist and living in

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 304.

² *Ibid.*, 303.

³ *Ibid.*, 298.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 298.

anticipation of them is grasping the totality of our Being, which is understanding it, and inauthenticity does not do this.

In Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, the character Ivan Ilych lives an inauthentic life. Ivan Ilych is a judge living in Russia in the late nineteenth century, and he lives with his wife and two children. Ivan buries himself in his work in an attempt to avoid spending any time with his family. He despises his wife and finds enjoyment in his life almost only through playing cards with his colleagues. Things take a turn for the worse for Ivan when he falls off a ladder and injures one of his internal organs. Within a matter of weeks, Ivan's life deteriorates quickly, and it becomes obvious to everyone but him that he is going to die. Ivan lives inauthentically because he does not accept the fact that it is possible for him to die, and this is how he has viewed death for his entire life—he views it as a phenomenon that happens to other people but which cannot happen to him. Tolstoy describes the syllogism that applies to all humans as follows: "Caius is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal."⁶ Ivan is aware of this, but the syllogism, Tolstoy tells us, "seemed to him all his life correct only as regards Caius, but not at all as regards himself. In that case it was a question of Caius, a man, an abstract man, and it was perfectly true, but he was not Caius, and was not an abstract man."⁷ Ivan lived inauthentically his whole life, and he became lost in the tranquility of "the they."⁸ He did not understand the fact that he was a Being-towards-death as a Dasein, and thus did not understand his Being. When the time came for Ivan to die, he could not accept this and spent the last few months of his life in complete despair because he lived inauthentically.

There are other characters in *The Death of Ivan Ilych* who can be described as living authentic or inauthentic lives, according to Heidegger. Ivan's wife and daughter both live inauthentic lives and had little concern for his welfare. Ivan's wife despises him, and his daughter is mainly concerned with her relationship with a young man who is pursuing her. Neither Ivan's wife nor his daughter understand that they are Beings-towards-death, nor do they empathize with Ivan during his last days on earth. Ivan's "friends" and colleagues also live inauthentically. Among these colleagues is a man named Pyotr Ivanovich, who attends Ivan's funeral. The whole time that Pyotr is

⁶ Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (New York: Fine Creative Media, 2004), 121.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Being and Time*, 298.

attending the funeral, he is unconcerned with the fact that Ivan is dead; he is concerned only with whether or not he would be able to leave in time to meet up with his colleagues to play cards. Pyotr thinks that the funeral could “in no way . . . hinder us from shuffling and cutting a pack of cards [that] evening.”⁹ Pyotr views Ivan as just another person who has been unfortunate enough to die, and Pyotr does not think that there is any need for him to have a concern about death; it only happens to other people. Perhaps the only character in the story who lives authentically is the peasant Gerasim, who is a servant to Ivan’s family. Throughout Ivan’s struggle, Gerasim is the only person who can sympathize and relate to Ivan. He sympathizes with Ivan by doing anything he can to make Ivan’s final days easier—the main thing that Gerasim does is lift and hold Ivan’s legs because it decreases the amount of pain Ivan experiences. Gerasim does this for hours at a time, usually at night, when he could have been sleeping, and he has no qualms about doing this. The reason that he sympathizes with Ivan is because he lived authentically; he recognized that we are all Beings-towards-death, and if he could help make someone else’s life easier during their final days, he would. At one point Gerasim states, “[Death is] God’s will. We shall come to the same.”¹⁰ This quote demonstrates that Gerasim lived authentically because he lived in anticipation of death, whereas Ivan’s wife, daughter, and colleagues (such as Pyotr Ivanovich) all did not.

I think that Heidegger is right in his describing life as being lived authentically only when we view ourselves as Beings-towards-death and live in anticipation of our deaths. I also think that Tolstoy does a good job of illustrating the difficulty in living authentically. It is difficult to live authentically and to understand our Being. The first step in this process is to recognize the finiteness of our lives and the always-present possibility of death, which can be a difficult concept to accept. In this sense, to live authentically is to live in a depressing reality where we feel a constant level of anxiety. However, I still think it is important to live authentically because doing so ensures that we are mindful that there is an end to our lives, and I think this knowledge can change the way people live their lives. Knowing that there is an end to our lives and anticipating that end can prevent us from leading unhappy lives, unconcerned with the well-being of our

⁹ *Ivan Illych*, 90.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

state-of-mind. For example, knowing and anticipating his end may have prompted Ivan Ilych to make changes in his life or to live a radically different kind of life that would have affected his relationships, his vocation, etc. He might have tried to reconcile things with his wife or divorce her if necessary, and he may have been less concerned with ambition in the courts because after his death it would not have mattered what rank he was when he died—only how happy he was during his life. In this sense, then, authenticity is of the utmost importance to ensuring happiness.

In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger explains what he thinks living authentically and inauthentically mean. Leo Tolstoy's short story *The Death of Ivan Ilych* tells a story of a man who lived inauthentically and shows the effect it had on his life. This effect was extremely negative; Ivan spent the last few months of his life in incredible misery because of his inauthenticity. *The Death of Ivan Ilych* shows us the importance of living authentically and the dangers of living inauthentically.