

# *LIVE* UNDERGRADUATE *IDEAS* PRIMARY TEXTS JOURNAL

APRIL 2020

*“The head which exists in harmony and service to the body had become the purely consumptive belly, demanding the rest of the body labor to preserve it.*

Andy Brandt, pg. 19

*“We are over reliant on our consumption to make us happy.”*

Erica Beebe, pg. 47

LIVE IDEAS: UNDERGRADUATE PRIMARY TEXTS JOURNAL

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# EDITOR’S NOTE

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the April edition of Live Ideas! Not only is this my last edition as editor of the journal, but it also contains the winners of the inaugural Live Ideas essay contest.

The essay contest attracted a diverse group of authors and essay topics. The pieces grapple with ideas ranging from pig farming to the “virtuous city” to economic growth to justice to education. This is exactly the vision I had for Live Ideas when I became editor: to craft a journal that could and would discuss a range of issues and topics, with the commonality of good writing, interesting analysis, and primary texts.

I’m so proud to have worked on this journal, and I can’t wait to see where it goes in the future.

Please enjoy this edition of the journal.

Excelsior!  
Olivia Rogers  
Editor-in-chief

## Contest Winners

1st Place: Lindsey Bergner, “Farrow to Finish” — page 2

2nd Place: Andy Brandt, “The City, the Man” — page 16

3rd Place: Erica Beebe, “Redefining Growth” — page 46



# FARROW TO FINISH

Lindsey Bergner  
junior | secondary education

Journey through the different stages in the life of pigs, starting from the birth of piglets to their harrowing end at the slaughterhouse. “Farrow to Finish” delves into the ethical dilemma of large-scale hog farming by describing the startling differences between pigs raised lovingly on my small farm to those raised in factory farm-like conditions.

When I was nine years old, I visited a factory farm to pick out a pet pig. A month before, I had sold my first pigs at our local county fair in Pratt, Kansas. I was devastated to see them go. I definitely did not understand that pigs were sent to the butcher; Mom told me they went to Minnesota to live peaceful lives on a wide-open farm with nicer weather, and I believed her. I missed my pigs so much, and I think Mom felt bad for lying, so she came up with a solution: we’d visit a hog farm and I’d pick out any “pet” piglet I wanted as a birthday gift. This was no potbelly pig – it was still a normal-sized hog that would exponentially grow – but it didn’t matter to me. I couldn’t wait to pick out my new piglet.

On my birthday, my Mom and I drove to a nearby factory farm to get my pig. When we arrived, we followed the owner into the long, metal barn. I was taken aback by the pungent smell and couldn’t believe how many pigs were in front of me: it was a mass of pink bodies. From corner to corner, small pigs were crammed into pens so full that the floor beneath them was barely visible. The barn wasn’t exactly the postcard-perfect image of the Minnesota farm that I thought my pigs went to. It wasn’t even as nice as my own set-up at home. I cleared my throat, comforted in knowing that one would be mine to keep.

I scoured the pens for over twenty minutes until I settled on a piglet that looked strikingly different from the others. She was still a pale pink, but she had a streak of red-orange on her back and about ten black spots across her side and face.

“That one,” I proclaimed. I looked up to Mom. “Her name is Marcy.”

And so, my journey with Marcy began. She came home and got to celebrate my birthday inside our house – but only after my mom gave her a good scrub in the bathtub. We put a pink bow around her neck, and I presented my new pet to my family with shouts of excitement.

Of course, Marcy couldn’t stay in the house, so that weekend my mom built a pen beneath our playhouse, right in the view of our front window. I went and visited Marcy every

day, taking her on walks until she outgrew her sparkly harness and leash. Eventually, she barely fit in the pen and constantly escaped, so my mom just let Marcy roam around the farm like a dog – a 200-pound “dog.”

Marcy would sleep either in a stall in the barn or on a dog bed on our front porch (although she soon outgrew that, too.) As she grew bigger and bigger, my mom worried about my safety when I visited her alone. Dad would watch me to make sure I was okay, shaking his head in astonishment at my relationship with Marcy. She weighed over four times as much as me, but she was as gentle as a kitten. I pet Marcy on the belly, and she always oinked and flopped over. Then, for fun, I’d lay on top of her, resting my head against her neck with my feet reaching to her back legs, stretching all the way across her side. My dad simply laughed and watched us in amazement.

As my tenth birthday approached, Marcy weighed over 700 pounds. My mom’s apprehension grew, and she told me to never go near her without an adult present. I didn’t listen. Marcy and I had a deep bond, and she never showed any aggression towards me.

The other farm animals were a different story.

Mom was trimming a horse’s mane one day, and I sat on the fence watching. Marcy waddled towards us, then grunted loudly. The horse spooked, rearing up in fear, and Mom was thrown to the ground. I jumped off the fence to make sure she was okay, but with all the commotion, Marcy went into attack-mode and bit the horse’s leg, drawing blood.

Mom stood up and grabbed the horse’s reins, trying to calm the bleeding animal down. Marcy ran towards me, and my mom turned to me.

“Lindsey Katherine, get back on the fence and stay away from her!”

Tears trickled down my cheeks. “She didn’t mean to hurt anyone. She’s just scared.”

Marcy came right up to me, and I gently pet her on the head. She softly oinked and





*Lindsey and Marcy.*

nuzzled my hand, but it did nothing to calm my mom's fears.

That incident was the turning point for my mom. She was too worried for the safety of the animals and especially for me. The next day, she told me the truth about where pigs go, and it was not Minnesota. She said Marcy was getting too aggressive and would have to go to the butcher that weekend. No matter how much I cried and pleaded, Mom wouldn't budge in her decision.

Dad was tasked with taking her to the butcher because my mom couldn't bring herself to do it. To this day, Dad will say that was one of the hardest things he had ever done. He drove Marcy the two miles from our farm to the slaughterhouse. The workers waited outside with big boards to get her loaded off the trailer.

"Hey, Kirby," Dad greeted, nodding at the butcher. He opened the trailer door, then looked at Kirby and the other men, shaking his head.

"You won't need those boards," Dad said. "Watch this." He turned to Marcy, let out a loud

whistle, and called, "Come here, Marcy!"

Marcy stood up and rushed right out of the trailer, letting out pleased oinks all the way. The men just looked at Dad, dumbfounded.

"Is that a pig or a dog?" one man joked.

"She was kind of a farm pet," he said softly. "She's a good pig...take care of her."

The men looked at my dad oddly, but Kirby cleared his throat and nodded. "We will."

To this day, I have not eaten any of the pigs I've raised, and I've raised nearly 100. I still can't fully wrap my mind around eating my own pets – my friends, of sorts – but even the thought of all of those pigs growing up in the indoor factory farms makes my heartbeat quicken and my hands clammy. While I give my pigs a warm barn and access to an open-air dirt pen, most pigs live in confined, indoor facilities where they never get to venture outside and barely have enough room to move. In the United States alone, over 100 million pigs are raised per year, and out of those, 97% of them are raised on factory farms. Four companies – Tyson,

Smithfield Foods, JBS USA, and Excel Fresh meat – have monopolized the industry. These four companies control two-thirds of the pigs raised in the United States.

I deeply care about my pigs because I know it's my mission as a farmer to give the animals the best life I can offer. I have full control over how my animals are raised, but most factory farm owners do not. Over two-thirds of hog farmers raise their swine on contract to large companies that control all aspects of production: they own the pigs, determine the buildings and structure, and deliver the food. Without individual control, less care is given to the majority of pigs as they become more like products than living beings.

As a small-town, small-scale hog farmer, I've raised my own pigs since I was seven and have had numerous opportunities to learn about swine production. The most enticing experience was in my senior year of high school when I visited Kansas State's Swine Teaching and Research Center on a class tour.

When the students and I arrived at Kansas State's facility, a young researcher explained the biosecurity measures in place before we were allowed to enter the pig barn. We stood in the "dirty" area, where she first instructed us to take off our shoes and swing over to the "clean" side. Then, the girls went into the girl's locker room, where each of us had to take off our clothes and shower. We had to wash our hair and body before moving to the uncontaminated side. Outside of the shower, I pulled on poorly fitting undergarments and tight blue overalls, along with fresh socks and rubber boots. Only after this was I allowed to open the door to enter the pig barn, and then we began to travel through each of the buildings on the tour, each one representing a different stage of life in the growth of pigs. As a farrow-to-finish operation, the facility raises pigs from birth to butcher, and so I traveled through each stage of a pig's life.

### **Stage 0: Gestation Period (3 months, 3 weeks, 3 days)**

A female pig, called a gilt before breeding, is often bred around seven to eight months of age. When a sow is bred, she is pregnant for three months, three weeks, three days – almost exact every time.

When I visited the gestation barn of Kansas State's Swine Research Center, the room was full of about fifty sows, each in individual crates. The room was enclosed all around, dimly lit by lightbulbs, with rows of crates for every sow, each with small slats in the floor where their waste dropped through. There were fans, humming softly. I heard a low growl in the left corner, where bear-like pink beasts paced in large, jail-bar stalls. The researcher explained that they were teaser boars paraded down the alleyway to "excite" the sows so that the workers could then use a prod to Artificially Inseminate (AI) the hogs.

As we moved along to the crates where the sows were lined up, I studied them. The gestation crate itself only allowed for standing and lying down – it wasn't even big enough to turn around in. Gestation crates are one of the most controversial devices in industrial swine farming; they were banned in Denmark and the European Union, which was followed by ten states in America, but none of those were in the top five for pig production. (Kansas is 10th in pig production and has also refrained from banning the crates.) The crates are not comfortable for the sows, but they do have positive aspects for the farmers, such as allowing for individual observation of each sow to make sure they're healthy and are eating properly.

As I continued to look at the row of sows in the crates, I let out a breath in thinking of my own sows at home, running around in their wide-open pens. It still hurts me to think of these pigs raised without a constant, consoling touch in these jail-cell crates.

On my own farm, we put our sow Sissy in with our boar Jethro in mid-September, so



that we would have piglets ready for local 4-H members to show in the county fair the following summer. Our five sows had an outdoor pen they shared, with a nice barn stall connected to it that all five could comfortably fit in.

Once Sissy neared her birthing time in early January, we moved her to a pen all to herself with fresh straw. She had a large area of indoor shelter so that she could nest in the straw and choose where to have her piglets. My mom and I watched her and let her build a nest of straw for her babies, knowing she'd have piglets that night.

After a few hours, Sissy rolled to her side and began breathing heavily. My mom and I sat beside her, waiting until we saw the first piglet hoof pop out.

"It's time," my mom said with a smile.

#### Stage 1: Farrowing (Weeks 0 to 4)

Once the three months, three weeks, and three days are up, the sows are ready to farrow, or birth their piglets. The farrowing stage is when the piglets are born, usually around 10-15 piglets per litter. Around one to two piglets die in every litter.

In KSU's Swine Research Center, my favorite barn was the farrowing barn. The research-

er handed out latex gloves that we all had to wear while handling piglets. I hated the rubber feel of the gloves and wished I could pet the soft, peach-fuzz coat of the newborn piglets so they could feel my warm touch, too. Still, I followed instructions and put on the gloves. There were rows and rows of sows in slightly bigger farrowing crates, which are very similar to the gestation crates except for the area added to the side of the sows to make room for the piglets. Bars blocked the piglets from getting far into the side with their mother but allowed them enough room to suck milk from the sow's teats. Since there were numerous three-hundred or four-hundred-pound sows with ten or more two-pound piglets apiece, it was inevitable that the sows would squish one or two, so the crate was useful and practical for protecting the piglets.

In the barn, some of the other workers were giving the pigs an iron shot because piglets inside can't receive iron naturally from rooting in the dirt like outdoor pigs. The workers were also docking their tails, clipping their needle teeth, and castrating the male piglets. The piglets screamed bloody murder as their tails were chopped off and their teeth were shaved down with the tools, but this was a necessity in factory farm conditions. The piglets had no stimulation,



so when they got bored, they chewed on each other's tails or fought with their sharp needle teeth, which can lead to infection and disease. Cutting down the teeth also prevented the piglets from chewing on their mother's teats and making her so sensitive that she wouldn't feed them. Castrating the males was important too so that there wasn't breeding within the pig population, and so that the meat didn't have what is called "boar taint," which causes the meat to taste foul for consumers.

we wiped off the birthing layer with a towel and set the piglet beside the sow's teats. Once the last one popped out, I immediately picked him out as my favorite, and as the biggest of the litter. I gently wiped off his red-orange body and white head, then showed him to my mom.

"Look how big he is!" I exclaimed.

She laughed. "Let's call him Hobbs, like the Rock in Hobbs and Shaw."

I rolled my eyes. "Of course."



The researcher allowed us to pick up any piglets we wanted, so I grabbed a spotted piglet that reminded me of Marcy and held it in my arms. The piglet immediately stopped squealing as I nuzzled behind its ears and spoke calmly. I bounced it in my hands like a baby, remembering when I was a child holding Marcy.

Back at my farm, we left Sissy in her large barn stall without using a farrowing crate. Sissy created her own nest of straw for birthing, and my mom and I watched her in shifts throughout the night. Once she started to have piglets, we let Sissy deliver without pulling them out. As they came,

Sissy had a total of 14 piglets, and all lived. She was able to stand and move freely around her pen. We were nervous when Sissy walked around with her tiny babies; she even laid on Hobbs one day as she plopped down to feed the piglets and couldn't hear him screaming. I heard only a little muffled wail, so I pulled on Sissy's back to get her to stand, and then grabbed Hobbs out from under her. The big guy was strong enough that he was okay.

After a week, we castrated Hobbs and the other the male piglets, which was a painful process, but the incision closed within the next



day. We pay close attention to avoid infection. We didn't administer any antibiotics, dock their tails, shave down their needle teeth, or give iron shots because the piglets had dirt to get enough iron and straw to keep them entertained.

The piglets were also very energetic after the first week, so they ran around the pen, playing with each other. Sissy sometimes ran around the pen with them.

"Look at them go," my mom exclaimed.

I thought of the sows that could barely move and the piglets that had enough space to walk a few feet. I was sad for a moment, until Hobbs ran across my mom's lap so fast that he hit the wall and bounced back. I stopped thinking about the factory piglets and laughed.

**Stage 2: Nursery Stage (Weeks 4 to 8)**

In the nursery stage, the piglets are weaned from the sow at 3 to 5 weeks of age and moved into a different pen, where they are given shots and are allowed to grow until moved to the growth and finishing barn.

At Kansas State's Swine Research Center, the nursery barn featured the "group housing" idea, where multiple pigs are kept in a single pen. This was much different than the former gestation and farrowing stalls, but the pens were still small, with only enough room to walk around but no space to run.

As I wandered around, I again found a black-spotted month-old pig that looked like Marcy. It was like her image was following me everywhere. This would have been the life Marcy lived if I had not raised her myself, and the image of her always makes me think of the countless cramped pigs in factory farms. I picked up the Marcy-look-alike, who squealed relentlessly. I whispered an apology in the pig's ear before setting her back down.

On my farm, it was very hard to wean Sissy's young piglets. Weaning was never fun, but we always kept the sow close, so the pigs were not completely cut off from their mother. The piglets become even more active in this stage, and we

left Sis's piglets in the same open pen where they were born so that they could run around and dig in the dirt. My mom and I giggled as they ran, even faster than before, so that sometimes the piglets were just a streak of color in the corner of our eyes. In this stage of life, we prepared to sell the pigs to 4-H members. We let each 4-H-er pick out their own piglet, but Hobbs was reserved for us. By this time in his life, I could pet and hug him, but I could no longer pick him up as he grew heavier. Thirteen piglets went to local families, but we kept Hobbs for our project in the county fair. It was our goal to get Hobbs juiced up like the real-life Rock through an all-you-can-eat buffet of grain. We didn't care that the fair's weight goal was 280 pounds - we wanted Hobbs to grow as big as possible.

**Stage 3: Growth Stage (Weeks 8 to 24)**

In the growth stage, sometimes paired with the finishing stage, pigs are fed a steady diet to help them gain the most pounds by eating the least amount of feed possible. Feed efficiency is key for more profit, towards the goal of each pig reaching the 260 to 280 butcher weight.

Continuing on the KSU tour that day, we went to the "finishing barn," where pigs were kept until they grew to the butchering age of about six months. This barn had pens that were proportionately bigger because the pigs were larger. It still employed the group housing system of about ten or twenty hogs together. Each pen had an automatic water and feed system that we all watched robotically move and release feed during the feeding time. We were allowed to get into the pens with these pigs, and I ventured around the barn until I spotted another pig that looked like my Marcy, even more so than the others, with the black spots and orangish glow. I hopped into the pen and moved straight through the crowd, towards the Marcy look-alike. I let her nibble my shoes and root on my pant-leg like the other piglets, but every time I reached out to touch her, she jumped back. She had nowhere to run, but she wasn't going to let me pet her.

At my own farm, Hobbs grew steadily. Whenever I came into the pen, he would run up to me with happy grunts and root on my boots. Sometimes, I secretly brought marshmallows with me and fed him the sugary treats. Hobbs loved when I rubbed his belly, and no matter how big he got, he always flopped over. He would let out a long breath as I scratched him and close his eyes. I knew he trusted me. That's what a loving touch can do.

**Stage 4: Finishing Stage (Week 24)**

The finishing stage can be the last weeks in the life of the pig, but more specifically, it highlights the last week in the life of a pig and includes the slaughtering process.

After raising pigs for the last thirteen years, my heart still skips a beat when I think of the slaughterhouse. I've never seen a pig butchered, but I've been to a meat science session at Kansas State University where they described the process. If it's done properly, it's ethical enough; if it's done incorrectly, it's downright sinful. There are still too many mistakes made in the butchering process and too many reprehensible slaughterhouses in countries across the world. In the United States, there have been multiple investigations into numerous slaughterhouses on reported animal abuse. Workers have claimed they have returned to the horror of Chicago's meatpacking industry described in Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*. While that may seem drastic, there are numerous instances of inhumane animal deaths. Through reading numerous reports, I found that pigs in the United States are butchered through being electrocuted, being shot with a captive bolt pistol, or being knocked unconscious through the use of a CO2 chamber. All are common practices. After the initial knocking out, the pigs are hoisted onto a hook where they hang upside down. The pig's jugular veins are cut to drain the blood, and then they are put in a scalding bath to get the hair off the carcass before being sliced apart. If done right, the pigs should be unconscious before

being killed and should be dead before being put in the scalding bath.

I imagine the Marcy look-alikes, who are long dead by now. I imagine each one growing up and then going to the butcher center where they are electrocuted, sliced open, and dissected. I pray that they were unconscious from the moment the bolt of electrocution struck them. I pray for my own pet Marcy, that Kirby the butcher kept his word and killed her immediately and humanely.

When Hobbs reached slaughter-weight in July, we brought him to the county fair. He was seven months old, and he weighed in at 405 pounds - a county record. I loved the big guy, and I could get right in his face and hold his chin in my hands. He still flopped over if I rubbed his belly, and he closed his eyes trustfully.

When I sold him, my church bought him in the auction to eat at our annual church picnic that next week. At first, I was pretty mortified at the thought of celebrating our church with the meat of one of my favorite pigs, my friend. A pig whose chin I held in my hands, whose belly I rubbed. But I dealt with it, knowing I would not be eating dinner that night.

At the picnic, everyone lined up for the big pans of Hobbs pulled pork; I just nibbled on some creamed corn and assorted veggies. Numerous people in my church family loved the meat.

"This is the finest meat I've ever tasted," one said.

"You raised a good'un, Lindsey," another exclaimed.

My dad turned to me with a smile. "Isn't this great? That's what love can do, that's why Hobbs tastes so dang good."

"Wow, Dad, that's pretty morbid," I scoffed.

He squeezed my shoulder. "Hey, you gave Hobbs a good life, the best life. He wasn't the biggest pig at the fair for nothing - you loved him, and he grew more because of it. Where else would you want him to go? What better way to appreciate his life than sharing him with all our



friends?”

As I thought more and more, I realized: what is a better fate than knowing that Hobbs went to good friends and not to a random supermarket? He was a homegrown hog – raised lovingly and eaten locally. Hobbs lived as good of a life as I could give him. For a pig nowadays, that’s a good fate. ~

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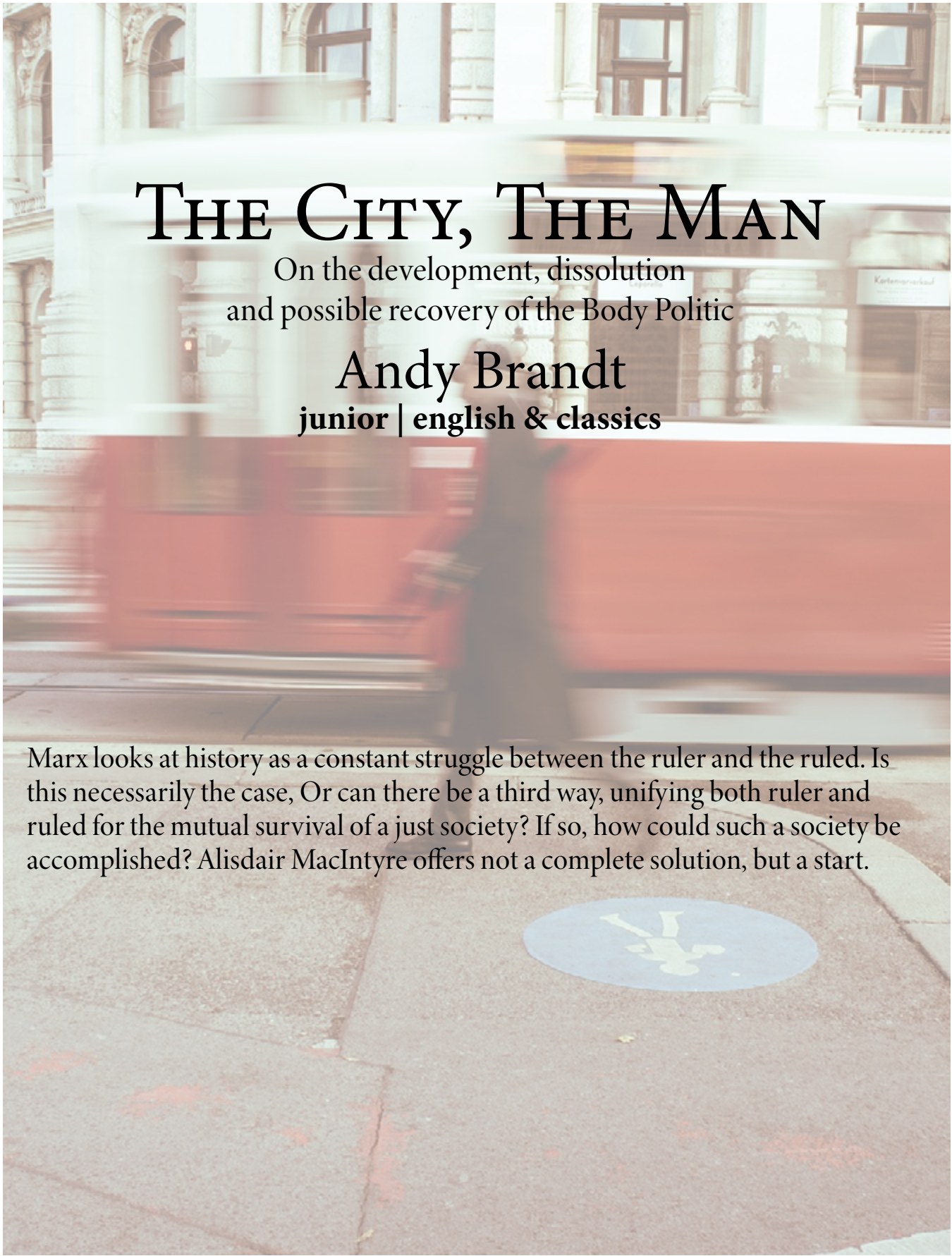
# FATHOM

Kelsey Hoines  
graduated | fine art

This 7-foot painting allows the viewer to feel as if they are the figure floating above the dark ocean fissure that cracks the colorful coral shelf. The imagery explores the darker themes of coming of age, as this marks the place I grew up near and to which I will never be able to return.







Marx looks at history as a constant struggle between the ruler and the ruled. Is this necessarily the case, Or can there be a third way, unifying both ruler and ruled for the mutual survival of a just society? If so, how could such a society be accomplished? Alisdair MacIntyre offers not a complete solution, but a start.

Some questions are timeless. History is largely shaped by the simple fact of where certain individuals or societies land on specific questions. Some of the most important of these are the place of the individual in society, and whether a truly just society can exist. Through the ages, this discussion has seen a wide variety of answers, but many revolve around the question of what justice is, and whether a society pursues justice in a different manner than an individual does. Some of history’s great minds have argued that there is at least enough similarity between the two for the individual to provide a good starting point to understand the manner in which a society could be just. In this essay I intend to examine the development, conflict, dissolution, and possible revival of this framework for exploring the idea of a just society.

### On the City, Person, and Body

In The Republic, Socrates (Or Plato through Socrates or some combination of the two) attempts to instruct a group of young aristocrats on how to become personally just. In the process, however, he ends up describing to them his ideal of a just society, one in which the just person could live and thrive. His prescription is intentionally simple: a few families living in a commune-type society, each person fulfilling one role and producing one good for each of his neighbors. There is no mention of internal money in Socrates’ proposal (though there are some resources for trade,) nor is there any variety of luxury. His ideal society is essentially egalitarian, simple, and non-expansive. In this just society each gives his production to his neighbors and there is no true ownership over any good. Each must live in harmony with the other or all will suffer for it. In his view, Socrates has built a just, if unexciting, city.

There is a complication, however, brought into the image he has constructed by a few simple words of one of his students. Glaucon, in book II, Section 372 C, addresses his concerns with

Socrates’ city by saying that he “seem[s] to make these men feast without relishes” (Republic, 49). This is a pivotal moment in the dialogue. Glaucon here speaks for those who would be discontent in the society initially described by Socrates, those who see their lifestyle becoming extinct in a world where each man works to support and fulfill the needs of the entire community. More bluntly, Glaucon looks at the just society and sees no place for himself as a young aristocrat who owns slaves and does not work. Socrates, as he pivots into the new city being constructed, comments on this change, saying that he is now not only trying to build a just city, but a luxurious one as well.

*“Glaucon looks at the just society and sees no place for himself as a young aristocrat who owns slaves and does not work.”*

This point is worth a moment more to consider. Glaucon (and the other students), were initially asking how to be a just person. Socrates responded to this by building a balanced and just city, one in which a balanced and just man could live. The aristocratic young men listened to this and didn’t hear a way for them to continue in their lives of comfort and privilege, so they ask him to change the city. From this single request come all the more obvious injustices in the rest of the dialogue: slavery, a military fed by a state-run education program which looks quite a bit like modern re-education programs, gender discrimination, etc., all of which are intrinsically necessary to support the wealthy class insisted on by Glaucon et al. It’s perhaps an oversimplification, but this read of The Republic makes an effective case incriminating the wealthy and powerful for societal injustices perpetrated in their interests.

Abu Nasr Al-Farabi further develops these ideas in his works, especially Political Regime, Summary of Plato’s Laws, and On the



Perfect State. In the first two, he describes several kinds of cities “contrary to the virtuous city”. Among these are the ignorant, necessary, depraved, vile, timocratic, dominant, and democratic cities. Each of these are “immoral” in their own way, but there are a few common denominators. To summarize, whether it be money, power, pleasure, honor, or something else, each of these immoral cities puts some good over the good of the citizens.

***“[Al-Farabi] sees an inherent connection, that civic justice cannot be separated from that of individuals.”***

Another crucial point is brought by Al-Farabi almost as an afterthought. He describes each city not by its functions as a unit, but by the actions of its citizens (i.e. “the vile city is one in which [the citizens] assist one another in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure... not to seek what constitutes the body or is useful to the body in some way, but only to be pleased by it” (Political Regime, P. 96)). Al-Farabi is making a very Platonic, and indeed, Aristotelean point, and one similar to the question Socrates hoped to answer in The Republic. Namely, Al-Farabi is interested in the interplay between personal virtue and the justice or injustice of the state. He sees an inherent connection, that civic justice cannot be separated from that of individuals. More to our point, and connecting with Socrates, he points to societal immorality as a result of a set culture, which we see in Glaucon’s questioning. Glaucon and those like him directly benefit from the immoral cities as described by Al-Farabi, and they are the ones with the power to preserve or disrupt them.

Al-Farabi brings another crucial idea to the table in his On the Perfect State. Here, he once again compares the perfect or just city to the perfect or just individual, but this time, rather than making a spiritual assessment, the compar-

ison is biological. He draws an analogy between the harmonious state and the properly functioning body (Chapter 15, Paragraph 4). The body, he says, operates like a city in that the entire corpus operates under the control of the “ruling organ”, which rules for the preservation of the entire body. In this way, the body resembles Socrates’ ideal city, with each organ using its faculties for the good of the whole. The only way a city can function, then, is if the ruler and ruled are in harmony, each working for the good of the other and relying on the other for their own preservation. If one begins to unjustly dominate the other or look for its own good over and against the other, the entire system will fall apart and cease to function. The rest of this chapter is primarily concerned with what kind of “heart” this political body should have, and we arrive at a philosopher king much like that of Socrates.

Armed with this cross-cultural approach to the ideal city, we can now progress to a more modern era in which, at least according to some, the philosophies against which Socrates and Al-Farabi spoke have been systematized and accepted. This is certainly the viewpoint which Thomas More ascribes to his narrator, Captain Hythloday, in his Utopia. Hythloday is a Gulliver figure, who has traveled all over the world, eventually finding in the Americas an island, pointedly named “Utopia”, where he discovers a society entirely foreign to his European mindset.

With Hythloday serving as his interlocutor (and providing plausible deniability to More for the views expressed in the book), More describes the society of Utopia in ways that are extremely reminiscent of Socrates and Al-Farabi. The Utopians, while they are a nation-state and not an individual city, live much like the city described in The Republic, albeit that city halfway through the “corruption” of Glaucon’s indulgence. There is no sense of individual property or monetary exchange within the cities. Rather, they regard gold and silver as essentially worthless, rejecting the “idiotic concept of ‘scarcity value’”. Instead, they hold as valuable the things that are

useful, which “kind Mother Nature deliberately placed... right under our noses” (More, 86). He continues by expounding their view that it is ridiculous that “a totally useless substance like gold should now, all over the world, be considered far more important than human beings, who gave it such value as it has” (More 89).

Here he has incriminated both the cause and effect of a specific type of society: one which places money over the human being, in part if not totally because money is harder to come by than the human being. He also takes issue with what will be a familiar argument to anyone discussing such issues in the western world, especially after the greater popularization of these ideas after Marx. Namely: More expresses concern that a system devoid of private property or profit will result in massive shortages, because “In the absence of a profit motive, everyone would become lazy, and rely on everyone else to do the work for him.” Hythloday essentially handwaves this argument, saying that More “can’t imagine what it would be like” (More, 67).

Why does More assign himself with such a lack of imagination? It seems as the book develops that it is due to the European context in which he lives. His views on work, class, and the human person are completely shaped by the views which Hythloday will go on to criticize as he describes the Utopians. One would be well-served, then, to investigate that context and how it develops in relation to the ideas expressed in Utopia.

### **On the Dissolution of the Body Politic**

What, we are then led to ask, was the state of More’s Europe as he wrote Utopia? From a purely historical perspective, it was a time of flux. Utopia was published in 1516, the year before the Protestant Reformation began in Wittenberg. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a full description of the sociopolitical history that contributed to the upheaval in Europe in the following centuries as much as the theological

innovations of Luther et al., but suffice to say that this was a Europe developed in the thought of Machiavelli and others, who postulated an ideal prince far different from that of The Republic and Al-Farabi. While it was recognized that the head existed in relation to the rest of the body, it took on a new position. The head or heart no longer existed to quicken and motivate the body, but only to receive the labor of the body. In other words, the head which exists in harmony and service to the body had become the purely consumptive belly, demanding the rest of the body labor to preserve it.

We see this abundantly in Utopia, especially in Hythloday’s assessment of England. In

***“The head which exists in harmony and service to the body had become the purely consumptive belly, demanding the rest of the body labor to preserve it.”***

one especially effective example, he talks about the use of land by England’s upper class for the purpose of sheep-farming and wool production, saying “In those parts of the kingdom where... the most expensive wool is produced, [the upper class]... are no longer content to leave lazy, comfortable lives, which do no good to society, they must actively do it harm...demolishing whole towns, except for the churches of course, which they use for sheepfolds.” He goes on to describe how the inhabitants of the land are driven away, prevented from gaining anything from the sale of the land, and eventually driven to steal in order to eat, and then “very properly hanged” (More, 47). “In other words, you create thieves, and then punish them for stealing” (49).

More (or, rather, Hythloday) continues his attack on the consumptive, predatory ruling class toward the end of the book, saying that when looking at European society he “can’t... see it as anything but a conspiracy of the rich to advance their own interests under the pretext of or-

ganizing society. They think up all sorts of tricks and dodges, first for keeping safe their ill-gotten gains, and then for exploiting the poor by buying their labour[sic] as cheaply as possible. Once the rich have decided that these tricks and dodges shall be officially recognized by society- which includes the poor as well as the rich- they acquire the force of law. Thus an unscrupulous minority is led by its insatiable greed to monopolize what would have been enough to supply the needs of the whole population.” (More, 130, emphasis mine)

More wrote at the end of the Feudal era of England, and some time before the advent of formal capitalism as we now know it, but he gives an indictment of the means-justifying profit motive which would not be out of place in the writings of any modern Marxist thinker. He concludes the narrative with his own doubts, including the concern that the Utopian way of life would abolish the aristocracy and its trappings, “which are generally supposed to be the real glories of any nation” (More, 132). Again, this could be an example of More providing himself with plausible deniability, but there’s an alternative reading here that Sir Thomas, himself a landed member of the nobility and one of the King’s advisors, is portraying himself as a self-preserving aristocrat. He’s arguing in the place of the nobility that they are “the real glory” of their respective nations. In other words, while these ideas of the Utopians are appealing, there is no way that they will be accomplished because of people like More, who hold all the power for change but will never change a system which actively serves to benefit them. (Also of note, More’s Utopians are a colonizing force; he seems to be perfectly amenable with some societal-level Glauconishness).

As time progresses into the colonial period, there are many examples of writers who speak against the increasingly consumptive head. None, perhaps, are more infamous for their satirical approach to the matter than Jonathan Swift, the Irish Anglican clergyman who most famously authored Gulliver’s Travels. As an Irishman

under the rule of England, he was better able than most to see the results of abuse by the ruling nation or class, but as an Anglican minister, he was also granted more access to the mindset of the rulers than most of his compatriots. Few writers have ever been able to get away with being as cutting as Swift, especially in his essays A Short View on the State of Ireland and A Modest Proposal.

In A Short View he takes issue with certain attempts by the English to diagnose the

***“[Swift] is making an appeal from the body to the head, begging for a return to the way things could or should be, according to the ideals of earlier thinkers.”***

“problem” with Ireland. He lays out a number of things necessary for the success of any particular nation, mostly relating to the economy, and shows how on a few of these things Ireland comes up short, in a satirizing voice throughout. Suddenly, the essay takes a turn. He says his “Heart is too heavy to continue this Irony longer” and begins to outline the real problem, that the English benefit from the free labor of the Irish. He even coins a Latin slogan to drill this into the minds of his English readership: “Nos-tra Miseria Magnus Es, ‘You are great because of (or, perhaps more forcefully, ‘by means of’) our misery” (Swift, 500-501). The essay ends on a chilling note, with him saying “One Thing I know, when the Hen is starved to Death, there will be no more Golden eggs” (Swift, 502, His emphasis). Swift sees his nation and his people as being squeezed to death by the greedy nobility as described by More. He is making an appeal from the body to the head, begging for a return to the way things could or should be, according to the ideals of earlier thinkers.

In perhaps his most infamous essay, A Modest Proposal, the reader sees how far this appeal has gotten Swift. The essay is subtitled

“FOR preventing the Children of poor People in Ireland from being a Burden to their Parents or Country; and for making them beneficial to the Publick [sic]”, and advocates for eating the children of Ireland’s poor. He ascribes many benefits to such a practice and outlines the rules by which children shall be eaten and by whom. For example, he says that this food will be “very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the Parents, seem to have the best Title to the Children” (Swift, 505).

He also points out that due to the Catholic majority and the monetary suppression of Catholics under English rule, this course of action “will have one other Collateral Advantage, by lessening the number of Papists among us” (Swift, 505). He adds that this will be a strictly internal trade in food, since “the Flesh [is] of too tender a Consistence to admit a long continuance in salt; although, perhaps, I could name a Country which would gladly eat up our whole Nation without it[exportation]” (Swift, 509). Implied throughout the essay is that this is England’s ruling class’ fault. He plays up the horror of eating children to relieve starvation by being purely logical and practical, admitting no alternative solution, but never mentioning the most obvious: that this is exactly the situation in which the “head” of the body should begin making decisions in favor of its wounded organ. Instead, he assures his readers that England will suffer no economic harm from this solution, making it a win-win.

The 18th century, in which these essays were written, would see the monarchist colonial world turn upside down. Other “organs” of the different imperial bodies would successfully revolt in North America, France, and other places. This “revolutionary era” would be the concerned to a large degree with the replacing of the various heads, either by democratic or other means. The influence of the Catholic Church was greatly diminished in many parts of Europe, and so the opportunity for new, just, societal and cultural “bodies” was present. Unfortunately, this oppor-

tunity didn’t seem to take, as Engels and Marx wrote once again against the abusive “head” more than a hundred years after Swift’s essays. This time, however, they were not merely analyzing or complaining against the abuses of the rich and powerful, they were prescribing an alternative.

## On the Reintegrated Body

Marx’s ideal, as laid out in The Communist Manifesto, calls for the radical restructuring of society. (I am aware that the Manifesto is far from the best explanation of Marx’s thought, but as he viewed it as an adequate summary for publishing and mass distribution, I too will treat it as such). Most readily, he provides his “10 principles” involving such practices as the abolition of property, free education for all children, and the centralization of all industry into the state (Marx, 96). Now, whether one is favorable to these ideas or not, one must understand again the context of his beliefs.

The Marxist view of history is, stated simply, that all conflict is class conflict, and that every stage in history has resulted from and led to the oppression of a lower class by a ruling class. As he saw it at the time of his writing, the ruling class was the rich and powerful who monopolized industries, and the oppressed class was the “proletariat” laboring class, who worked as wage-slaves for the bourgeoisie. Due to this view, however, he was able to look back on history and identify all powerful institutions as complicit in the oppression of the lower class or “body”.

What solution are we given by Marx then? How does he plan to restore the body to a just state of affairs? His answer is simple; remove the head. Marx looks at history and charges the various heads for the injustice he sees; rulers, religion, and leaders of industry all take portions of the blame. Rulers and leaders of industry are obvious, they are those who directly benefit from the oppression of the poor, but the Church is just as important. He viewed religion not only as “the opiate of the masses”, but also as the means



by which rulers could establish control over their people. Thus, all three must go in order to create a just society. He envisions a world ruled centrally by the working class for its own good, a complete refutation, rather than a restoration of the idea of the Body Politic. Yes, he wants to centralize into a government, but Marx is clearly not visualizing a Venezuela-style version of communism where the government makes its leaders rich and starves the poor. There are to be no rich or poor in the world he wants to create, and so no heads or bodies.

***“There are to be no rich or poor in the world [Marx] wants to create, and so no heads or bodies.”***

Must this be the case, though? Has the time come to wash our hands of millennia of philosophy, government, and theories of just rule? I think not, and I am joined in this by a variety of modern thinkers who take Marx seriously while refusing to accept his full text as gospel. One of the more prominent among these is Alasdair MacIntyre, the Scottish Aristotelian philosopher. His *After Virtue* is a wide-ranging philosophical text that touches on everything from Emotivism to Jane Austen, but allows application to the ideas discussed thus far in this essay.

For MacIntyre, as with Socrates and Al-Farabi, what is just for the individual will be just for society, and so he sets out to define virtue, in an Aristotelean sense. His alignment with Aristotle (and belief in a supernatural as well as a natural Telos of man) lead him to an example of a child learning to play chess. He posits a little who is being bribed with candy to learn the game, with the promise of more candy on the occasion of a win. This child, seeing no good in actually learning the game, will naturally try to cheat in order to more effectively get the candy. Eventually, however, we hope that the child will find that the goods of chess (he lists analytic skills, strategic thinking, and competitive intensity) are

worth pursuing and trying to excel in whatever way that chess demands. Furthermore, she will find that by cheating she was not only harming her opponent but depriving herself of these goods. This idea, he says, can be applied equally to any adult, simply replace candy with money, power, or prestige (MacIntyre, 188). What this means for the political (and economic) body is not that it is necessarily wrong to have a “head” but merely that those who become “heads” often do so in pursuit of a good other than virtue — namely, power and money.

He further develops his idea of virtue when discussing the modern view of the self, and how it is “liquidated into a set of demarcated areas of role-playing allowing no scope for the exercise of dispositions which could genuinely be accounted virtues in any sense Aristotelean” (MacIntyre, 205). Essentially, he is arguing that we as moderns have divided ourselves into pieces (work-self, school-self, home-self, civic-self) which prevents us from exercising any virtue of justice throughout. This is because as someone believing in a supernatural and overriding truth he doesn’t believe that justice essentially changes from case to case, indeed, as his reading of Jane Austen shows, the truly just and virtuous person treats every situation with equal attention and desire for the good (MacIntyre, 242).

What does this mean, however, for a discussion of the Body Politic? I argue that MacIntyre is undertaking a project similar to that of Socrates in *The Republic*, seeking to fix the Polis by fixing the individual. If Plato and Al-Farabi attempt to show us anything, it is that virtue works out from the individual into the society, not vice versa. More began to describe a society that would impose virtue on its inhabitants, and Swift showed the results of a failure by the ruling class to act with virtue. Marx, on the other hand, works mostly in historical generalities, seemingly washing his hands of the individual and the concept of a political body. MacIntyre, while he takes seriously the work of Marx, begins with the individual rather than an indictment of a general

ruling class.

He understands that virtue is individual before it is societal, and that any virtuous society must work by individual means. Additionally, he seems to argue later on that Justice as a virtue is almost unattainable in the modern climate, certainly by political means, as he sketches a disagreement between philosophies “A” and “B” which has no possible mediator. By this he shows that “modern politics cannot be a matter of genuine moral consensus...Modern politics is Civil

***“Virtue works out from the individual into the society, not vice versa.”***

War carried on by other means.” This he blames on a lack of “first moral principles” or agreed goods (MacIntyre, 253). Again, the first step in achieving a just society is achieving a group of just persons. Any method starting elsewhere will only lead to failure.

With that said, is a truly just society achievable? There are many under MacIntyre’s (at least partial) influence, both serious thinkers (Charles Taylor, Wendell Berry to an extent, James Smith, Elizabeth Breunig), and some less so, who would say yes, it is possible. I would tend to agree, so long as we begin on the same foot as suggested by MacIntyre, focused on individual virtue, living toward communitarian goods, and recognizing ourselves to be part of a body. ~

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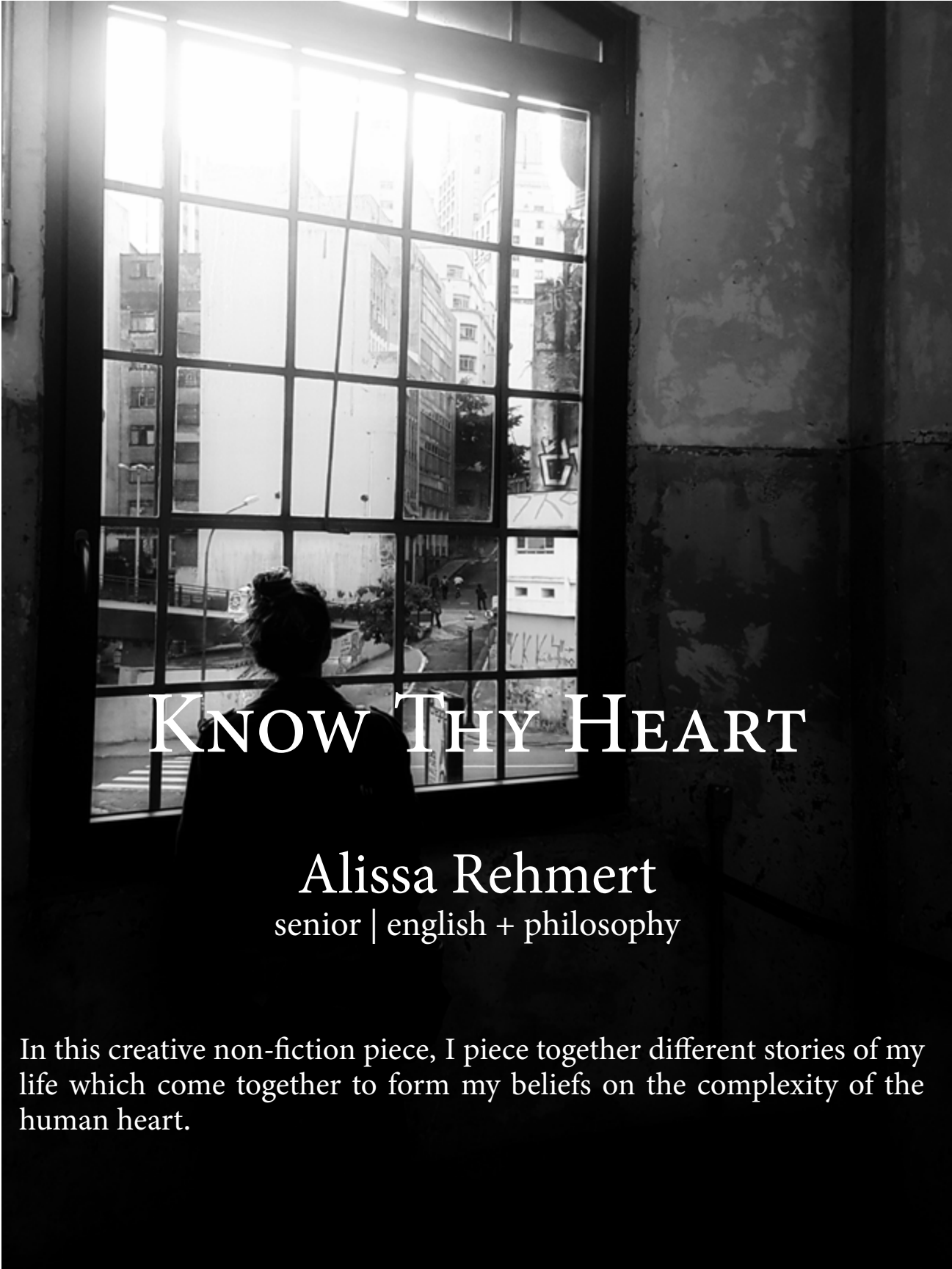
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# KNOW THY HEART

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senior | english + philosophy

In this creative non-fiction piece, I piece together different stories of my life which come together to form my beliefs on the complexity of the human heart.

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“As in water face reflects face,  
so the heart of man reflects the man.”  
Proverbs 27:19  
~~~~~

“Thump thump....thump thump...”  
It was almost as if I could see the disembodied heart pulsating from within mom’s throat.  
“Louder, louder, louder!”  
I slowly inched closer to my mother’s side, finding comfort in her touch. She continued.  
“Yes! Yes, I killed him!”  
My eyes filled my entire face, making me look like a frightened owlet sporting pink pajamas.  
She gives a small smile and recites,  
“Pull up the boards and you shall see! I killed him. But why does his heart not stop beating?!  
Why does it not stop!?”  
She pulled my blanket up to my chin and bent over to kiss my forehead,  
“Goodnight, Sunshine. I love you.”  
“Love you too, mom.”  
Though I knew mom’s unconventional bedtime stories were fiction, I couldn’t help but feel Poe  
struck some greater truth.  
My own heart slowed as my eyelids bowed to gravity and my world became dark.

~~~~~

When I was a child, I would watch my VHS copy of Tim Burton’s Beetlejuice on repeat.  
I’d whisper, “Beetlejuice. Beetlejuice. Beetlejuice,” hoping to summon the pin-striped poltergeist.  
Sadly, he never came.  
Instead I’d wake up in the middle of the night, pillows soaked in sweat, howling about Witch  
Doctors and Snake Men hiding in my closet.  
“Why does it not stop? Why does it not stop?”  
Mom would come, eyebrows furrowed in worry, and gather me up in her arms.  
“It’s okay, Sunshine. There is no such thing as monsters.”  
With her words in mind, I finally settle back to sleep.  
The next day, I would come crawling back, adorned in Pocahontas footie-pajamas, to my box  
T.V like a drug addict, looking for my next fix.  
What exactly did a four-year-old hope to find in a movie so dark?



~~~

Years later, I'd find myself scouring the wooden library shelves at school in search for books on the French Revolution, the American Civil War, and World War II. My favorites were the historical fiction diaries written with little nerds like me in mind. I hurried through the meat of the story so I could get to the back of the book where the real fun began. Here there were images, not of colorful cartoons characters, but of black and white images documenting the bloody aftermath of war. While most other kids either exclusively rifled through or ignored them all together, I would spend hours absorbing every detail the photographs. There was something about our macabre history that I felt tethered to. Is this where I came from?

~~~

When I first moved to Manhattan, my husband and I searched for a home church. After almost six months of sleuthing, we finally found somewhere suitable. Our new pastor's wife, Jennie, quickly welcomed us in as if we were numbers six and seven of her slew of children.

"Do you wanna get some coffee sometime?" The tall blonde asked. She had a genuine smile which permanently etched itself into the skin around her mouth.

"Sure!" I replied, longing for some female companionship in this new city.

A week later, we were sitting in Radina's sipping syrupy coffee and talking about our favorite works of literature. I had recently finished A Tale of Two Cities and couldn't stop myself from blabbing about it.

"I love how Dickens highlights the dark side of the human heart."

Jennie's smiling face twitched ever so slightly,

"I don't like to dwell in the dark," she retorted.

At the time, the woman sitting across from me reminded me of Lucy Manette: a beautiful blonde, so kind, sweet, and pure.

In short, one of the least interesting characters featured in Dickens' book.

"I get it — it's only natural to be scared of the dark."

But doesn't a backdrop of darkness only make the light shine brighter?

~~~

Mom decided we needed to find a new church when I was twelve years old. After several months of searching, we landed at a church that looked like a metal barn. It even had a rodeo arena next door to it.

The sign outside the gravel parking lot read,

"Hurting people welcome here."

We figured we, plus half the population, qualified, so we walked right in the double glass doors.

We were greeted by a man covered in tattoos and a genuine smile. I had never met someone so illustrated. His neck, hands, arms, and legs were all ornate pieces. I don't remember his name.

Not long after, we met the pastor of the country church, Tony. He was a plump teddy bear with an outgoing spirit. His skin was clear of any distinguishable markings.

"Welcome to Freedom Christian Center!" his voice rattled the doors.

Pastor Tony soon told us of the church's more remarkable program, the "Dream Center". This was a program which took in drug addicts, the homeless, and other outcasts for a year of rehabilitation. They would help people get back on their feet. Volunteers of the church would help them get clean, teach them life skills, and offer Bible classes. Many were ordered here by courts in the surrounding area.

My mom was sold on the church and so we stayed and I grew up among the forgotten people of society. Here I quickly learned to never assume you know what is on the inside of a person based on what you see on the outside.

I soon found out the nice man at the door was an accessory to a murder.

~~~

The genre of true crime soon became my sole medium of interest. The stories I watched, read, and heard both thrilled and grieved me.

I like to think that while I was developing my own unique fingerprints in my mother's womb, some of her curiosity for crime leaked right into me.

My father, on the other hand, isn't the type to indulge in these sorts of things. He's more interested in Hunting Bigfoot or Alaskan Bush People. Whenever he was gone though, my mom and I would hurriedly snatch the remote and switch to the Investigation Discovery Channel. Here we would immerse ourselves in the world of crime. We'd sit together in the living room and watch two or three or twelve episodes of Deadly Women and Wives with Knives. My father would come home from work, plop down on his special chair, and let out a nervous laugh of concern.

"I guess I better sleep with one eye open," he'd remark.

~~~

While my mom, my brother, and I met and befriended drug dealers and murderers gone good, there was a new family settling in across town, a single mother and her severely disabled daughter. At the time, I didn't know these people, but I did know several families who were similarly on the down



and out. A majority of my church body was.

My family was an exception. My parents were still together, weren't on drugs, and made a decent paycheck.

The Blanchard's misfortune was an exception as well. The duo did everything right, the world just seemed to be after them. When the daughter, Gypsy, was younger, her father abandoned the family and got remarried. Gypsy was afflicted with several diseases which left the young girl unable to walk, eat solid food, or mentally function as other girls her age. To top it all off, the Blanchard's were forced to come to Aurora after Hurricane Katrina destroyed everything they owned, including Gypsy's medical records.

But, like many at my church, the family ran into some good luck as well.

Several foundations, churches, and associations reached out to help the Blanchards. It is likely my very own church, a church which strived to be community centered, offered a helping hand.

The Oley Foundation, a group which strives to educate people on tube feeding, presented the "Child of the Year Award" to young Gypsy right after their arrival. I imagine her gaping grin shining like silver coins from underneath her pink bucket hat. Her mother was undoubtedly standing by Gypsy's wheelchair with a smile to match.

Not long after moving to rural Missouri, Habitat for Humanity gifted Gypsy and her mother a new home less than an hour away in Springfield, Missouri.

Meanwhile, my family made trips to Aurora three or four times a week for Church services or Community Outreaches. I soon learned from a sweet new girl in the Dream Center that eating a lot of bananas helps people get off meth. It has something to do with the potassium.

~~~

The more I watched true crime, the warmer my chest burned. I could feel duty tug on my heart, pushing me to sear the names of those who died into my memory like a lover's initials carved deep into a tree.

Remember those baby boys who Gacy the clown strangled with his homemade tourniquet (1). Remember those passionate young couples whose love was cut short by the likes of Zodiac, by Phantom (2). Remember the hundreds of sex-workers; those thousands of children from dysfunctional homes, murdered and raped just because they would easily "fly under the radar." Susan Elaine Rancourt. Stacy Moskowitz. Opal Mills (3). Girls who were just trying to get home.

"I see you." I thought.

"I long to know you in any way other than this."

Their hearts beat within us.

*Thump thump...thump thump...*

~~~

Just a couple days before I was headed off to College of the Ozarks' pearly gates, I sat in my parent's living room, scrolling through my Facebook. Everything seemed normal.

Political post, political post, cat meme, baby picture, murder, cat meme.

Wait? Murder?

I don't remember how I ended up on Gypsy's and her mother's joint page, but I will never forget how I almost threw up right on my parent's couch when I read,

"That bitch is dead!"

I scrolled through the comments, trying to make sense of the uncharacteristic violent post. Gypsy's friends and family were commenting, some thought it was a joke, but most were deeply concerned, hoping their account just got hacked.

But then I scrolled down and saw a comment from Gypsy/Dee.

"I fucken SLASHED THAT FAT PIG AND RAPED HER SWEET INNOCENT DAUGHTER... HER SCREAM WAS SOOOO FUCKEN LOUD LOL." (4)

I can't fully explain the emotions I felt as I read this. It was similar to when you stand on the edge of a cliff with no guard rail.

I read on to see that the police had been called. I didn't know Gypsy personally, but I dropped everything to pray for her safety.

A couple days later, Gypsy Rose and Dee with both found. Dee was stabbed to death in her bed and Gypsy was found with a young man named Nicholas Godejohn.

Turns out she was walking, too.

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Secrets, like most things hidden, will someday surface.

This became even more evident to be after months of keeping up with Gypsy's wild case that was a little too close to home. It turns out Gypsy and her mother were nothing more than con-artists, ripping money and kindness from anybody willing to give it.

But of course, it wasn't that simple.

Dee Blanchard kept Gypsy sick: forcing her to stay in a wheelchair even though she could walk, forcing her to pretend she had the mental state of a seven-year-old, forcing her to participate in cons. Dee lied to her, manipulating Gypsy's paperwork and telling her she was several years younger than her real birth certificate indicated she really was. She told her daughter she was sicker than she felt and kept her from contacting anybody who could help her.

Gypsy was a regular Munchausen by proxy victim.



But one day Gypsy decided she had enough and had her secret boyfriend sneak into her house and stab her mother. Gypsy sat in her bathroom and covered her ears until her mother’s screams subsided and Nicholas came back bloody.

She couldn’t get the screams out of her ears.

*Why does it not stop? Why does it not stop?*

~~~

Questions, like bullets, whiz through my mind.

“How could people be so cruel?”

“What were these people thinking?”

Gypsy was my age. Her mother was around the age of my mother. At one point, she lived not fifteen minutes away from my sacred home, my church body. I too had a boyfriend I kept secret from my mom.

I couldn’t help but as the most daunting question in my mind.

“Am I capable of this?”

What if I were brought up in a different family? What if I knew nothing but crime, not just because of my personal decisions, but because of the circumstances I was born into?

I know one thing for sure: criminals do the crimes, not their situations.

But they certainly don’t help, now do they?

Maybe a shade of darkness lurks inside everyone, a hungry black hole just one unforeseen circumstance, one choice away.

*Thump thump....thump thump...*

~~~

Perhaps I look at those like Gypsy and Nicholas, those good-for-nothing monsters, and see myself just behind the whites of their dull eyes.

Perhaps I see my reflection, a little girl in a different situation just searching for something to fill me and make me okay. A primal hunger to be worthwhile claws its way into my throat and I push it deep, deep, down.

Why does it not stop? Why does it not stop?

Till I wake up one day on a sheetless mattress behind metal bars unable to feel anything they say I am supposed to. No regret. No pain. No nothing.

Or maybe I see another face within me. An even uglier reflection. Perhaps it’s the me who wants every other person to bow down and recognize my unique potential. The me who puts all others thoughts and feelings second to her own. The me who wants what she wants and will do anything to get it.

Perhaps this is why I am torn as I watch people walk their final steps to get the needle and, all the while, the crowds cheer.

Perhaps I can hear my own heart.

*Thump thump...thump thump*

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(1) John Wayne Gacy (the Killer Clown) murdered and sodomized at least thirty-three boys and young men between 1972 and 1978.

(2) “The Phantom Killer” is thought to be involved with attacking four couples in Texarkana, TX in 1946.

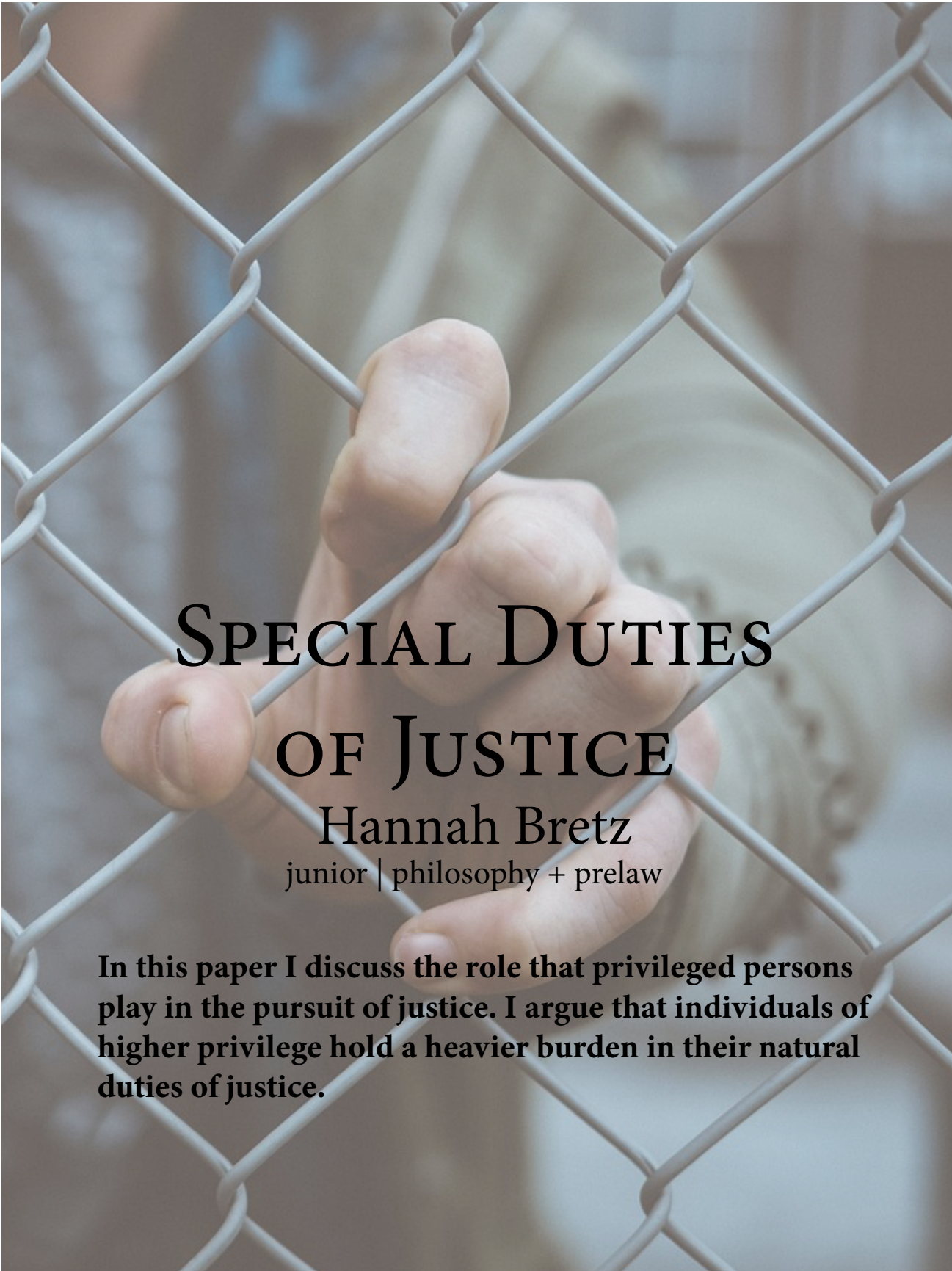
(3) Susan Elaine Rancourt was murdered by Ted Bundy on April 17, 1974 at the age of 18.

Stacy Moskowitz was murdered by David Richard Berkowitz (Son of Sam) on August 1, 1977 at the age of 20.

Opal Mills was murdered by Gary Leon Ridgway (The Green River Killer) on August 12, 1982 at the age of 16.

(4) Dee Gyp Blanchard Facebook page, June 15, 2015.





SPECIAL DUTIES  
OF JUSTICE  
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**In this paper I discuss the role that privileged persons play in the pursuit of justice. I argue that individuals of higher privilege hold a heavier burden in their natural duties of justice.**

In a world growing more and more divided, questions of justice and equality have become increasingly prevalent. In the United States, we have seen a dramatic rise in political, social and racial tension. Cases of injustice in areas such as race, sex, and class are evident. With this heightened awareness of injustice has come a new wave of questions regarding the American society. Social and economic inequality exist in the United States and are undeniable in areas such as workplace discrimination, income gaps, poverty levels, racial disparities, religious discrimination, hate crimes, etc. Through numerous human and civil rights movements, America has improved in terms of fairness and equality. However, with these advantages, inequality still runs rampant.

Debates on justice and mankind’s role to strive toward equality have been present since the birth of philosophy and political thought. There are several effective conceptions of justice, including principles found in Rawlsian and egalitarianism philosophy.

Rawlsian philosophy draws on the presence of inequality and promotes an idea of mankind’s “natural duty” to strive toward a just society. John Rawls argues that every individual holds a natural duty to “help another when he is in need or jeopardy”, to “comply with and do our share in just institutions when they exist and apply to us”, and to “assist in the establishment of just arrangements when they do not exist” (Rawls).

In addition to Rawls’ theory of natural duties, I argue that higher levels of privilege yields to greater special duties in relation to challenging and correcting injustice and social inequality. My proposal is constructed on the conjunction of duties of justice depicted by Rawls and luck egalitarianism, with an emphasis on reparative duties. I will discuss the foundations of justice and how injustice prevails in our nation today. Then I will explain my argument pertaining to mankind’s natural duty to promote justice regardless of socioeconomic standing.

Human rights have come a long way in the United States, but the scales of justice require

continuous leveling. Inequality is so foundational that it may be overlooked or swept under the rug. However, we see inequality every day. Social inequality refers to relational processes in society that have the effect of limiting or harming a group’s social status, social class, and social circle (Key Topics).

*“Higher levels of privilege yields to greater special duties in relation to challenging and correcting injustice and social inequality.”*

On the other hand, economic inequality refers to the unequal distribution of income and opportunity between different demographics in society (Science Daily). Social and economic inequality are apparent across all demographics, including race, sex, and class.

Examples of injustice in the United States include continual hate crimes against marginalized groups, occupational sex discrimination, racial disparities in education, the unachievable cost of healthcare and education for low-income peoples, police brutality amongst people of color, legal rulings in favor of the privileged, and homelessness.

Regardless of our level of awareness or personal experiences, inequality is active in the United States. In order to understand the disparities of injustice, one must first understand that justice is intersectional. Intersectionality is “the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism). Combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups” (Webster).

An example of this would be a black woman. A black woman will experience discrimination for being of color and a woman. If the same woman were to also be transgender and impoverished, she would not only face discrimination for her gender and color, but also for her sexual identity and economic class. Inequality



is heightened for individuals who are marginalized in areas more than one, however, this does not mean that individuals who face only certain forms of discrimination are illegitimate. Inequality is unjust regardless of the demographic being affected, and the existence of inequality demands action from everyone.

In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls explores different ideas of justice, morality, and equality.

Here, Rawls argues that fairness and equality are necessary in a just society. This conclusion is reached through a thought experiment, which he terms as the ‘Original Position’. The Original Position aims to move from abstract conceptions of citizens and society to determine principles of social justice.

*“By eliminating all barriers between different demographics, Rawls’ Original Position demands that justice be fair and equal to all.”*

Rawls introduces the ‘Veil of Ignorance’—a veil that deprives parties of all facts irrelevant to their choosing of the principles of justice. The Veil of Ignorance gains its significance by ensuring the impartiality of the parties by depriving them of information regarding their personal characteristics and social and historical circumstances.

Rawls uses this as a tool to help illustrate what terms of cooperation free and equal citizens would agree to, claiming that the Veil of Ignorance is the most effective way in determining the fundamental characteristics of justice.

Parties aim at determining principles that will advance their interests by establishing conditions of justice that will enable them to achieve their fundamental interests. Rawls contends that there are two principles of justice in which all parties would agree upon: fairness and equality. This is because no party would reasonably agree to principles of justice that would put them at disadvantage if they were the “worst-off” person

in society. By eliminating all barriers between different demographics, Rawls’ Original Position demands that justice be fair and equal to all.

There are various theories on what response is required of individuals in cases of injustice. In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls argues that mankind possesses several ‘natural duties’. These directly govern individual, institutional and structural conduct for all.

Among these natural duties are our duties of justice, which “require us to support and comply with just institutions that exist and apply to us... and to further just arrangements not yet established” (Rawls). Rawls argues that we have a duty to correct and end injustice. Similar principles exist in other schools of thought, such as egalitarianism.

Luck egalitarianism argues that the quality of one’s life depends either on brute luck, (luck that you were born with), or option luck, (luck that you chose). Luck egalitarianism approaches injustice by making judgments on who is or is not worthy of compensation based on the social capitol of their life. Here, individuals who are at greater disadvantage warrant compensation for their struggles, while individuals who are deemed as “better-off” do not.

Other arguments have been made in favor of reparative justice, which “aims at repairing harm done to victims as a result of human rights violations committed against them” (Muddell & Hawkins). Different forms of disadvantage are still valid, but the help one receives should be in correspondence to the level of disadvantage they possess.

To achieve a society that is just, we need a combination of Rawls’ argument for ‘natural duties’, luck egalitarianism principles, and reparative duties. Also, while everyone has natural duties, individuals of higher privilege who are at greater advantage hold a greater responsibility in their duties of justice.

I define ‘privilege’ as parties who do not experience disadvantage due to some form of inequality or benefit from unearned advantages. Being privileged does not mean that life will be

absent of hardships, rather, that these hardships were not founded on the basis of injustice. When a person or group is discriminated against, disadvantage is given power.

Disadvantage is an unavoidable result of discrimination. The duty that I am arguing for is a type of special duty that applies to all people, with the weight of its implications being heavier for people who are more privileged socioeconomically. With this special duty, individuals possess duties that are roughly equal with their socioeconomic standing.

If a person faces discrimination, they should not hold as great a responsibility in their duties of correcting injustice. If an individual faces discrimination for their race and sex, they should not have to hold as many duties to repair this inequality as someone who is not discriminated for their race and sex. The more disadvantage an individual comes to face as a result of unjust conditions, the less special duty they hold to correct these.

To be clear, this special duty does not intrude on the natural duties’ mankind is bound to. My argument is that there is an added duty for individuals who are more privileged than others. So, if someone is disadvantaged in certain areas but not in others, I argue that they have a special

duty to correct the injustice in areas in which they are not disadvantaged (see fig. 1).

As shown in the figure, the special duties required for each individual correspond to the privileges that they possess. Therefore, if someone is disadvantaged for their race, religion and sex, but not for their economic status or sexual identity/orientation, the focus of their special duties should be in terms of class and the LGBT+ community.

The implications produced by this special duty are heaviest for privileged persons. Notice that special duties apply to everyone, including those who experience great amounts of inequality (see person D in Fig. 1). While a person may be disadvantaged for various reasons, their special duty continues to call for justice for those who may be at greater disadvantage.

Several aspects of this special duty appear to be problematic, such as disagreements on morality, questions regarding the extent to which these duties apply, and possible cases of white-saviorism or other forms of heroism applied to undeserving groups.

Many might argue that making sacrifices for the benefit of others is not necessary in the pursuit of justice. It is difficult to convince someone that making sacrifices for the benefit of

(Figure One)

\*bolded terms represent areas of privilege

| PERSON | RACE         | SEX         | LGBT+                      | CLASS              | RELIGION         | <b>SPECIAL DUTIES</b>                     |
|--------|--------------|-------------|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| A      | <b>white</b> | female      | lesbian                    | lower class        | <b>Christian</b> | race and religion                         |
| B      | black        | female      | bisexual, transgender      | <b>upper class</b> | Buddhist         | class                                     |
| C      | <b>white</b> | <b>male</b> | <b>straight, cisgender</b> | <b>upper class</b> | Jewish           | class, LGBT+, race, sex                   |
| D      | Japanese     | female      | non-binary                 | lower class        | Hinduist         | areas in which individual is “better off” |

others is a moral necessity.

With this said, it is hard to argue that a person who believes something to be wrong, has the ability to correct it, and fails to do so, is of high moral standing. Another issue in regard to morality is the possibility of ignorance to injustice. It seems plausible that a person who is unaware of injustice is exempt from their duties, or at least has an excuse for not “doing their part” in the promotion of justice. For people who are genuinely unaware of injustice, I think their special duty should apply to the areas in their life in which they are aware.

However, ignorance alone is not enough to dismiss special duties. Willful ignorance is not a satisfactory reason for not fulfilling duties of justice. Using one’s privilege to be willfully ignorant is not a legitimate argument against either natural or special duties. Willful ignorance should not be considered a legitimate form of ignorance because it requires that 1.) you know that you are being ignorant and 2.) that your ignorance is a choice. Choosing to be ignorant of injustice is equivalent to ignoring special duties.

Another problem that warrants speculation is the severity of actions that these duties of justice require. It does not seem reasonable to expect everyone to make every possible sacrifice for the betterment of other people. The severity of action depends on how dedicated one may be in honoring their special duties. Special duties require action from all in the correction of injustice, but that does not necessarily mean that one’s duty must be dramatic.

If an average person believes that their special duty would be best achieved through the empowerment of marginalized groups, their duty would be to do so. On the other hand, if one believes that their special duty requires them to sell their house and donate all their possessions, their duty would also be to do so. Special duties require that all people do something. This “something” depends on the person and does not necessarily require wholehearted dedication to the pursuit of justice. The actions required in our special duties should reflect the same intensity as

one’s dedication.

The ‘white savior’ complex refers to white culture that attempts to ‘rescue’ people of color while simultaneously promoting themselves as people of high moral standing. Duties of justice are often referred to as burdens because the requirements imposed are often difficult and/or

*“Ignorance alone is not enough to dismiss special duties.”*

unpleasant to enact. The purpose of special duties is to promote justice, which does not require the proclamation of one’s good deeds. Also, specifically regarding white saviorism, it is irrational to reward oneself for challenging racial inequality when much of the prejudice exists due to white culture and predominantly white western society. This does not mean that helping people of other demographics or nationalities is wrong, it just means that fulfilling duties of restoration are a requirement and fulfilling a requirement does not warrant praise. While white-saviorism refers to white culture, the concept applies across demographics. There are limitless ways to help others without falling into some form of savior complex, and not flattering oneself for fulfilling required duties is foundational.

Fighting for justice in an unjust world can be difficult and overwhelming. Some people may feel that acting upon their special duties are impossible because of their location, age or access to resources. These circumstances, however, do not disable us from pursuing justice. Special duties can be achieved by anyone, regardless of whatever circumstances may be. People can pursue justice by volunteering, donating to a good cause, tearing down barriers, and raising awareness for injustices. No act is too small, and something as simple as a conversation can have the potential of growing and becoming something that will make a noticeable difference. The first step in correcting the injustice within our world can start anywhere—in our homes, neighborhoods, communities—and even within ourselves. ~

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Have you ever been claustrophobic? Have you ever felt so tightly wound up, like a Yo-Yo before it is thrown? Have you ever felt as though you couldn't breathe? Couldn't speak? That nobody could understand you? Have you felt uncomfortable? Scared? Frustrated? Like you were speaking and nothing was coming out? This is how I feel about labels.

My disdain for labels is not to get confused with the reluctance to accept people who choose to stray from the norm, as if I believe there is only one right way to be. My hatred for labels stems from the idea that everyone and everything must have a label, or the world will likely implode. This, I do not agree with.

I do not appreciate identification because I think too often it places us into dark, cramped, tiny little boxes with no air holes to breathe. I hate answering questions such as, "What's your political party?" or "What are your pronouns?" or "What is your sexual orientation?". These questions suffocate me.

If I tell someone I am a Democrat, they assume I support the legalization of marijuana. This is because their box labeled DEMOCRAT contains so many ideas of what they believe comes along with being a Democrat, like participating in recreational marijuana. If I say my pronouns are she, her, hers, someone begins to associate me with all things feminine. If I tell someone I am straight, I am never allowed to date or even kiss a girl so long as they know me. Even if I know that we may agree on the fact that the fires purging the vast green hills and expansive vineyards of Northern California stems from human error, just as the lack of recycling contributes to copious amounts of pollution and death to animals that inhabit Earth's most beautiful biomes, I still do not want people to assume that I have never once opened a single-use plastic straw and drank my McDonald's sprite in harmony.

It is my belief that, too often, we crave answers to everything. This addiction to answers is the reason some people argue that religion trumps science. We, as humans, love to know. We love explanations about certain behaviors and specific questions that appear in the world we so desperately want to control. A lack of answers equals a lack of control, something that we cannot allow to happen. However, when we do receive answers, we file them deep in our brains into a little box filled to the brim with stereotypes. We then become obsessed with connecting the answers we receive. It is this connecting of answers that drives me crazy.

For instance, why is that person driving so poorly? Oh, she is a woman, now I understand. This question we ask ourselves every day when we experience the road is ephemeral amongst the ever-changing society we live in, so why are we so hung up on the answer?

I desire for a world where I am Natalie, broken down into itty bitty pieces. No boxes. Someone who supports women's rights, but maybe not the legalization of recreational marijuana. Someone who is of female sex, but enjoys watching baseball while doing her makeup. Someone who is in love with a man right now, but in love with him, not who he is on the outside. Someone who might be able to love a woman some day because, who knows?

When I tell people I do not like to identify these pieces of myself, they immediately ask, “Oh, are you moderate? Pansexual? Non-binary?”. This infuriates me even further because, although those are vague terms, they are still identifiers. They still come with their own stereotypes and, though the boxes are much larger, there is still no way to breathe.

I want people to ask me what I like to do for fun, what is my favorite thing to watch on T.V., what parts of the 4th wave of feminism do I most agree with, why am I in love with Mateo?

When people look at me, I think there are a lot of assumptions. I am a woman, whose skin is white, is from California, and who is dating a boy. This is a very basic description, but somehow this is enough for a stranger to know me. I have a vagina, I am rich, I love smoking pot, I love the ocean (which I do not), I go to the beach every day, I love men, I cannot wait to be married, etc. I am already so many things before somebody speaks to me.

However, it is difficult in this day and age to tell somebody that I am dating Mateo, but not only because he is male, but I also do not call myself bisexual, or pansexual. I cannot be honest with my vagueness because people crave specific identifiers.

There are also those people who are very accepting and may not care that you are gay or female or Republican, but they need to know whether you are or are not. I cannot just be Natalie with Natalie qualities doing what Natalie likes to do because that would be unpredictable. They would have to get to know me first.

For example, if I go to a tanning bed it means I am fake and want to look better. However, if you knew more about me you would know that I go to a tanning bed because my skin is very sensitive to the cold and my mental health is extremely affected by a lack of sun as I am from the sunniest place in California. You also might not assume I love the beach if you knew that once, when I was ten, I almost drowned in the ocean. Don't you feel at ease about my decisions now that you know me a little better?

Even so, why does it matter why I go to a tanning bed or why I do not like the ocean? Why can't I just go or not go and not be questioned as to why? If I am not hurting anybody, why can I not just live life how Natalie wants to?

I do believe there are some signs we need. For instance, place names and street signs. I think those labels help us throughout life. Knowing somebody is a teacher, reminds us to give them respect. So maybe it isn't labels I hate, but the way in which people use them. ~





# I WAS THERE

Maria Apel  
sophomore | psychology

This essay examines Tom Wayman's poem "Did I Miss Anything?" (reproduced here, along with the essay).

## Did I Miss Anything?

Tom Wayman

Nothing. When we realized you weren't here  
we sat with our hands folded on our desks  
in silence, for the full two hours

Everything. I gave an exam worth  
40 percent of the grade for this term  
and assigned some reading due today  
on which I'm about to hand out a quiz  
worth 50 percent

Nothing. None of the content of this course  
has value or meaning  
Take as many days off as you like:  
any activities we undertake as a class  
I assure you will not matter either to you or me  
and are without purpose

Everything. A few minutes after we began last time  
a shaft of light suddenly descended and an angel  
or other heavenly being appeared  
and revealed to us what each woman or man must do  
to attain divine wisdom in this life and  
the hereafter  
This is the last time the class will meet  
before we disperse to bring the good news to all people on earth.

Nothing. When you are not present  
how could something significant occur?

Everything. Contained in this classroom  
is a microcosm of human experience  
assembled for you to query and examine and ponder  
This is not the only place such an opportunity has been gathered

but it was one place

And you weren't here

It's a daunting thought to consider who I would be if I had chosen differently in my life: prioritized differently, carried myself differently, asked different questions. What is consistent in my choices, though, is a desire to satisfy my insatiable curiosity. I yearn to know more, to feel more, and to be more. I am aware that growing and attaining the "more" commences with collaboration and education which both, conveniently for me, occur inside the sacred walls of a school, a place I much desire to be. However, many students are not like me, and, as reflected in Tom Wayman's poem "Did I Miss Anything?", many are cavalier about missing class. The speaker of Wayman's poem employs sarcasm to answer an apathetic question, but what lies underneath the irony is an instructor who desperately wants his learners to set ablaze their extinguished curiosity and seize the opportunities they are given. I've found meaning in the time I've spent in the classroom, and so I resonate with the speaker's view of education.

As long as I can remember, school has been an inviting place, an arena for discovery and relationship-building. Perhaps I can attribute my eagerness to learn to my kindergarten teacher: Bunny Brockelman. Upon the commencement of kindergarten, I was terrified to leave home and enter the realm of the unknown. To get me through the day, I kept a crumpled picture of my family tucked away in my back pocket, and, periodically, I would escape to the bathroom to look at that picture and embrace it (hence the crumples.) As the year unfolded, Ms. Brockelman—with her kind eyes, warm hugs, and engaging pedagogy—began to make me feel as though I

belonged there. A few embers from Ms. Brockelman's fire for teaching and exploration escaped and found potential with me.

Throughout the years, my experiences at school have only fueled the fire. In first grade, Mrs. Shields opened the door to new worlds that are born with a title and conclude with "The End." Mrs. Ash, who taught 7th-grade science in a reptile-dominated classroom, wasn't afraid to share unconventional beliefs and implement unusual pedagogic methods that widened my horizons. Passionate about psychology and horses, Mrs. Axelsson gave us the reigns and showed us what psychology is about—rather than telling us. Mrs. Dippel, albeit an English teacher, challenged her students to engage in profound discussions over life's most thought-provoking questions and unremittingly encouraged us to "embrace ambiguity." These teachers, like me, chose to be there because they found value and purpose in bringing knowledge to unforged minds. They dared to stand in front of the directionless and facilitate the conjuring of dreams: the kind you have with your eyes open. Unfortunately, the instructor in Wayman's poem becomes disheartened by a student whose dreams remain nebulous. The student didn't show up, and the lack of concern that he or she exhibits concerns the speaker.

As crucial as it is to have passionate teachers, the attendance and level of engagement from fellow classmates is also a determinant in each individual's success. In a classroom, individuals have unique perspectives and unprecedented ideas to offer the group. Learning isn't about regurgitating information; it's about establishing relationships with your contemporaries,

engaging in conversation, and understanding and analyzing diverse input. Ironically, Wayman writes, "When you are not present/ how could something significant occur?" (Wayman 23-24.) It's true, the absent student is unable to reap the insight of his classmates or offer his own perspective, but that doesn't mean that reception of information or meaningful discussion doesn't ensue. The reality is that class and all its implications occurs in spite of one student's absence, and although it wasn't "the only place" arranged for a student "to query and examine and ponder," "it was one place" and the student declined that opportunity (27-29.)

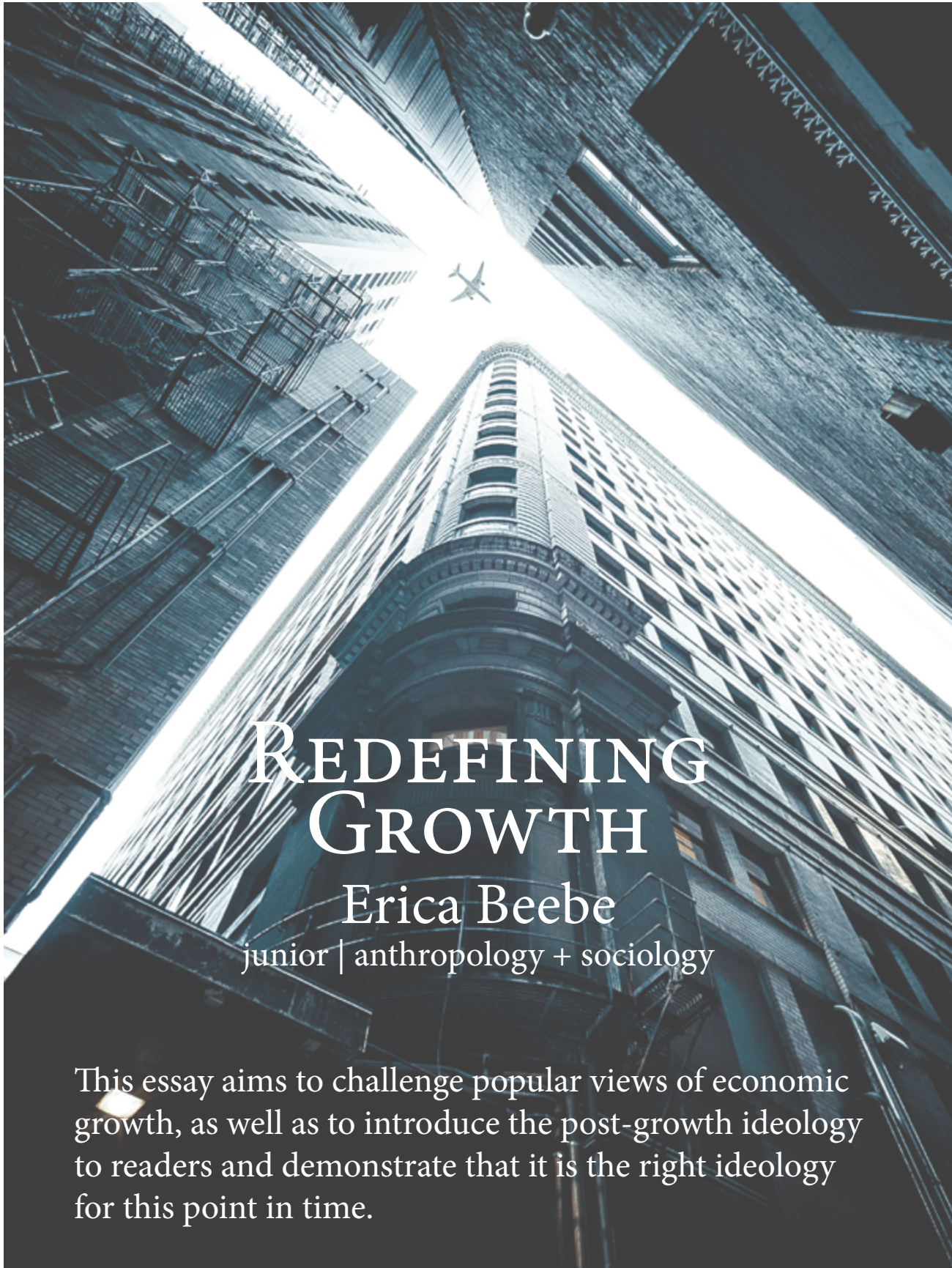
The question, did I miss anything?, is answered ironically, in the contents of the poem, to emphasize the ridiculous nature of the inquiry. Of course the student missed something; whether that be "an exam worth / 40 percent" (4-5), "a quiz / worth 50 percent" (7-8) or the appearance of "an angel ... [who] revealed ... what each woman or man must do / (18) to attain divine wisdom in this life" (19), the student missed an opportunity to engage in the classroom experience. The use of the two extremes "everything" and "nothing" reflect not only the sarcastic tone of the poem, but also the impossibility of providing an exact account of what transpired on the day that the student missed. The speaker resorts to a nonsensical and exaggerated account because he or she cannot verbalize the continuous shifts that occur in learning, which further affirms the importance of being present. Showing up to class has great power beyond the apparent benefits of factual knowledge.

As I continue my education after spending

thirteen years in compulsory school, my feet aren't sore and my legs aren't heavy after years of marching myself to class. On the contrary, I feel invigorated by the transient yet impactful experiences that I've encountered with all the students who chose to be present. The feeling equates that of a climber who has conquered one mountain but aspires to accomplish greater heights. The ultimate goal: Mount Everest. Perhaps the speaker's humorous approach in Wayman's poem is demeaning to the student who may have simply formulated a misguided question; however, in fairness, the question does reflect a student who has lukewarm aspirations. I, on the other hand, am on fire for combating ignorance with knowledge. I want to be engaged in classroom discussions, experience diverse perspectives, and share my scholarship so that others may grow, too. The reason my fire burns so brightly and so incessantly is because I was there. ~

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# REDEFINING GROWTH

Erica Beebe  
junior | anthropology + sociology

This essay aims to challenge popular views of economic growth, as well as to introduce the post-growth ideology to readers and demonstrate that it is the right ideology for this point in time.

One thing that has been central to our identity as Americans in the years since July 4th, 1776 is growth, which we see as synonymous with development, efficiency, and happiness. This value has pushed our country to dominate the globe, and when that wasn't enough, space. This value is not associated with political affiliation nor class. I believe that it is core to what being American is all about. After all, this society was shaped by economists. The current meaning of "development" arose in the 1940s, when it was used to refer to industrialized nations replicating their own refined characteristics in underdeveloped areas, characteristics such as agricultural technification, urbanization, industrialization, and the adoption of modern values (DALisa 29). We have developed our nation and others around the value of limitless, unrestrained growth, and while this ideology has stayed the same over the years, our environment has changed.

Now, especially, the "post-growth" mindset must be introduced to the demographic of one of the largest target markets for fashion, technology, and other throw-away products: college students. I propose that we are consuming at a much faster rate than our environment can keep up with, and we are over reliant on our consumption to make us happy. We know that our actions directly impact climate change, yet we continue to pollute because we aren't talking about an ideological change. Us Americans view growth largely in terms of gross national product (GNP). With a value system centered around economic growth, it is easy to see why we can't fix the climate change issue.

Our infatuation with economic growth began during the Industrial Revolution. The developing United States adopted the mindset of Adam Smith, the "Father of Economics," when he said, "It is not the actual greatness of national wealth, but its continual increase" (McKibben 6). After decades of increased global industrialization, production, and consumption our environment is showing signs of wear. Environmental scientists around the globe now agree that our actions in the years since the Industrial Revolution are a direct contributor to global climate

*"We are over reliant on our  
consumption to make us happy."*

change (Bell 14). It is worth acknowledging that at the time of the Industrial Revolution we were either not aware or did not care that the resources we pulled from the earth were finite, or that the combustion of such resources would produce such drastic consequences for the environment. Therefore, when our founding fathers encouraged the correlation of growth with economic prosperity, they were not aware or did not care that our prosperity would eventually reach its environmental limit, and in the process place all of us in danger.

Knowing what we know now it is entirely irresponsible to continue to correlate prosperity with continual economic growth. There are limited amounts of natural resources we can pull from the earth, yet we continue to do so at alarming rates. In addition, these natural resources are



depleting much quicker than previously thought, and we are now clamoring to find renewable alternatives that can supply enough energy to power an entire global economy. As environmentalist Bill McKibben puts it, “Each new year brings us closer to the bottom of the bucket. The major oil companies report that they can’t find enough new wells most years to offset the depletion of their old ones... The most credible predict not a sharp peak but a bumpy ride for the next decade followed by an inexorable decline in supply” (McKibben 16). Our consumption addiction cannot serve us forever. It is time we move into Ecological Economics, a new economic model that focuses on fortifying communities and “maintaining the resilience of ecological and socioeconomic systems by conserving and

*“While our consumption increases, satisfaction is constantly fleeting, causing a further increase in consumption.”*

investing in natural, social and human assets” (Gund).

According to the thousands of advertisements we see everyday, more choice is supposed to make us happier. Yet in the midst of all of this choice, we have become confused about what we want and who we are entirely. We buy things to become a part of an invisible community; one that is sold to us by ads, logos, and packaging. We rely on material goods to reflect our personalities, adapting the mindset: “You can tell who I really am by how I spend” (McKibben 30). We consume to show our class status and to make

our lives easier, yet the opposite occurs. The constant race to “the next big thing” keeps us on the never-ending cycle of what sociologists call the “treadmill of consumption” (McKibben 74.)

While our consumption increases, satisfaction is constantly fleeting, causing a further increase in consumption. We buy new clothes even though our closets overflow, and we don’t stop to think that if the overcrowded closets aren’t already giving us satisfaction, maybe more of the same thing won’t either. All along, we ignore the energy and resources needed to power the treadmill. While the global affluent middle class grows we simultaneously speed up the global rate of consumption, as the amount you consume is directly linked to your income (Bell 83). Additionally, it is scientifically proven that making more money will not consistently bring you more happiness (McKibben 41). At some point, we are trying to buy what no one can sell: a sense of belonging and community in our lives.

In the years since our inception, we have developed into a nation of individualists. I say we have “developed” to this point because we have not always had the self-centered mindset we have now.

Although our Founders were classic liberals, they were also aware of the necessity of virtue and strong social institutions. Even our great grandparents living in the Midwest still lived in a largely communitarian society.

Last semester, I worked with a professor at K-State to collect interviews from residents of the Midwest who lived during the 1940s-50s in order to document the rapid evolution of foodways in the United States. Carroll Hackbart, a 77-year-old man born in South Dakota, tells

of his childhood when most of their food came from subsistence farming, “Most farmers grew a little bit of everything because you needed that to survive. You’d help others throughout the year but the harvest was the ‘thrashers run’ as they called it. You’d get together with 10 or 12 farmers, one of them would have a thrashing machine, and they’d all have to help.” While growing up, most of our grandparents and great-grandparents grew the food they put on the table. In the process, they strengthened their communities by relying on each other. “My neighbor bought a combine, my dad bought a swather, my dad bought the baler and my neighbor bought a silage cutter. They shared that way. Instead of having to buy a whole line of machinery that sat idly most of the time, you just worked together... If you had something you needed help with, you got help. Neighbors helped neighbors, especially if someone was sick, or got laid up.” In comparison to the individualistic country we live in today, in this kind of community you have a sense of security not because of the things you buy, but because of the relationships you have.

We aren’t changing our consumption habits because we aren’t talking about an ideological change. Our most difficult problem as a nation right now is not to fix climate change, it is to redefine the idea of growth we have been indoctrinated with so that an individual’s success is not reliant on their annual income but on the amount of relationships and the sense of belonging they have in their lives. We need to reexamine how we describe prosperity so it is not solely focused on material wealth.

Environmentalist Bill McKibben coined

the term “Deep Economy” to explain, “instead of simply one more set of smokestack filters or one more set of smokestack laws, we need ‘deep ecology’ that asks more profound questions about the choices people make in their daily lives.” (McKibben 2). “Growth” as a purely capitalistic mindset no longer serves the good of our country nor our environment. Post-growth, or the process of promoting the resiliency of commu-

*Post-growth: the process of promoting the resiliency of communities by helping them live within their means*

nities by helping them live within their means, is a mindset suited for the obstacles we face today. We have every reason to believe that the state of the climate can only worsen from here unless we redefine growth. According to the Global Footprint Network, if every country lived like the U.S. we would need 5 earths to support us (Global). The Post-Growth movement, also commonly referred to as degrowth or post-development, “is a rejection of the illusion of growth and a call to re-politicize the public debate colonized by the idiom of economism.” (DALisa) It is time to ask yourself how long your money will help you escape environmental danger.

“Development” has allowed us to buy things cheaper, and therefore buy more, but in the process promote environmental degradation. When we buy, we do not see the resources that go into producing the product and therefore do not appreciate it for more than its surface value. Advertisements tell us we must buy to become a



part of the invisible community, yet satisfaction remains ambiguous. Instead of this negative feedback loop, I propose that we focus our energy on building our own communities rather than investing in our throw-away culture. On a larger scale, I propose that we dispose of the concept of an “individual” altogether, as there is no such thing as a fully autonomous being. The belief that you are your own person and are not influenced by or a part of the society you live in negatively affects yourself (we’ve seen the rates of anxiety and depression steadily rise through the years) and your community.

Imagine the difficulties in trying to build a community with a group full of individualists. In order to restart our community, and I mean a community where we are engaged with the hypocrisies of our daily lives and aware of what we are really consuming, we need to bring post-growth into popular discourse. If the Libertarians argue that each person has the right to make their own choices, so long as they don’t harm another person, then I ask at what point will they see the decimation of our environment as a result of each of our individual choices and understand that we are harming other people. The problems outlined above are ones that we must continue thinking about and talking about as to not absent-mindedly dig our heels deeper into the depths of globalization, as our economy is set up to do.

It is time to both acknowledge and take responsibility for the consequences your consumption habits have on our environment. It is time to question if your views of happiness differ from those sold to you by advertisements. ~

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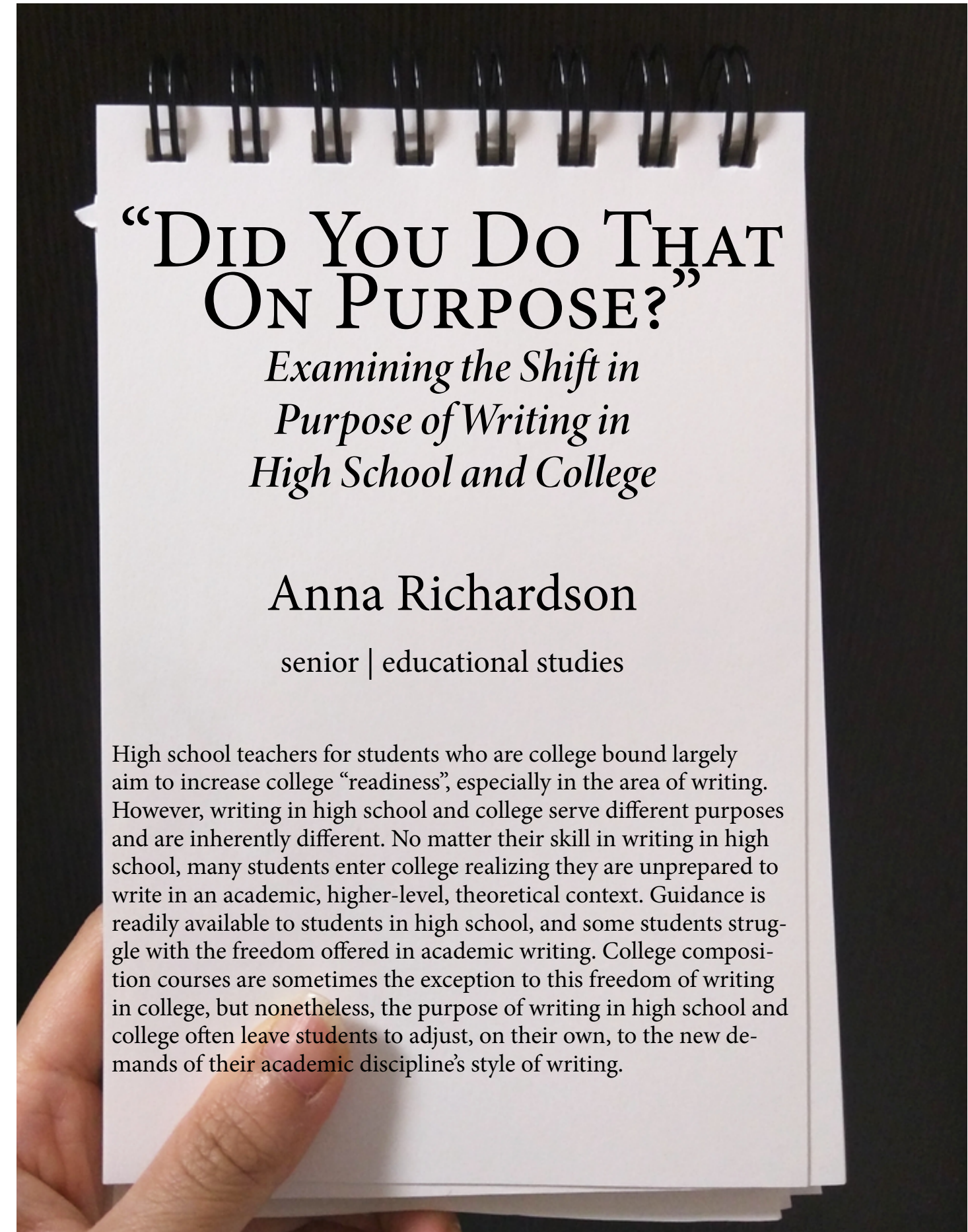
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Students beginning college often experience changes and shifts in every aspect of their lives. Disregarding social transitions, imminent academic shifts can be a source of anxiety for incoming freshman. Janet Alsup argues that because the shift between high school and college is so jarring, a “seamless” transition to college is an unattainable goal; the best teachers can do is strive towards college “readiness” (130). College readiness will allow students to best navigate the gap between high school academic work and college academic work. This prepares students to be active contributors to academic discussions, whether that be as a student, graduate student, or professionals. More specifically, writing in college shifts to prepare students to best communicate their ideas and findings in order to contribute to these conversations. Therefore, writing shifts from being “standardized and quantifiable” in high school to “theoretical” in college, in order to best prepare students to be active contributors in their field (Fanetti 77-78). So much of college and academic success is built around the ability to contribute to academic discussions, that this becomes a primary motive for writing. Students must be able shift from “thinking like a student” toward thinking as a member of a discourse community” (Crank 60). While there are many differences between writing in high school and writing in college, the shift in theoretical purpose is the driving force for all other areas of disconnect.

Differences between writing in high school and writing in college come from a plethora of reasons. Areas of disconnect include state standards, teacher training, amount/type of writing assigned, etc. However, all of these areas of disconnect can be traced back to the shift in purpose. Why is writing assigned in high schools? Why is writing assigned in college courses? One study found that the four most common writing activities in high school classrooms were “writing short answer responses to homework, responding to material read, completing worksheets, and summarizing material read” (Kiuvara et al. 151).

These require “little analysis, interpretation, or actual writing” (Kiuvara et al. 151). Because none of these assignments require advanced composition strategies, writing in high school classrooms exclusively prepares students to write in summaries and communicate existing ideas. These trends are not intended to claim that high school

*“As the purpose of writing in college changes, the skills necessary for writing change as well.”*

students are never published in order to contribute to a discipline specific conversation; it is just unusual. Usually, students in high school practice skills that require much more basic levels of composition and analysis.

However, as the purpose of writing in college changes, the skills necessary for writing change as well. As Keith Hjørshøj points out, “college courses... are not a direct continuation of high school courses” (3). While the skills mentioned above are still necessary and are still practiced in college, they are not the sole purpose behind writing assigned. In the 2004 book *Critical Passages: Teaching the Transition to College Composition*, as quoted by Crank, college students are expected to “pose rigorous questions and speculate about multiple possible answers, analyze several texts at once, sustain complicated trains of thought...” (Crank 3). General English composition courses work to develop students’ ability to write “arguments, comparisons, critical analyses, or reflective essays”, or even promote writing in specific disciplines (Hjørshøj 26). These analytical, composition and discipline-based writing focuses prepare students to be able to write effectively as graduate students, employees, industry leaders, and other participants in the real world. Understanding a few key areas of disconnect helps to better understand



why writing changes.

Thus far, I have implied that writing in high school and college are generalizable. However, this is not accurate. As proposed in “The Fantasy of the ‘Seamless Transition’”, “high school writing” and “college writing” are inappropriate terms, unable to include the many variations and differences in writing instruction across the country. (Alsup and Bernard-Donals 117).

Because of the number of students not attending college and the variety of skills needed attending different colleges, preparing students for “college writing” cannot be high school teachers’ primary goal. The diversity of a high school classroom means that teachers cannot focus on teaching students how to write articles for academic journals without ignoring the needs of students with different post-secondary plans.

If writing was generalizable, if “writing

*“The rules in college are different, or better yet, the rules change daily.”*

remained consistent both between high school and college and throughout the college curriculum”, there would be no need for college composition courses (Hjortshoj 80). But the fact of the matter is, there is nothing constant about writing in real contexts. Students must quickly realize that the rules they have internalized will no longer serve them. The rules in college are different, or better yet, “the rules change daily” (Fanetti et al. 78). A level of autonomy is necessary for students to effectively set their own rules. This exhibits the change in purpose: students must write in order to practice and master these skills independently.

Writing for standards that do exist are a demonstration of purpose. Writing in high school is often taught and written for state or pre-college program standards. The driving

purpose here is the need to satisfy someone else’s criteria and enjoyment. Once students are able to break away from these motivations and constraints of writing, they will be able to enter an academic conversation and write to satisfy their own ambitions. Constraints and standards still exist in higher level academic writing, but they exist in the form of field norms. Students still must consider these field norms when choosing writing conventions, but they have more freedom to determine and deliver the content.

However, there are exceptions to this timeline. While some students will find stylistic freedom as soon as they begin college, other students may be met with even more structure. Many Graduate Teaching Assistants struggle to teach a required composition course that has a curriculum and textbook that “teaches a standard form of correctness and composition that forces students into a narrow conception of writing” (Cline 186). Therefore, this freedom to deliver content may come after the required composition courses for some students. The key here is that even among the rigidity of these rubrics, students are practicing using authority in their writing (Crank 58). Once students enter more field specific courses, “guidelines rarely include explanations of the particular ways you should write papers” and they may use their freedom to make stylistic choices and express their authority (Hjortshoj 8).

Upon entering college, students are asked to write with a sense of authority, which will include freedom from rubrics at some point. In fact, focusing on content is a skill many students learn in higher education. One study found that “in general, teachers tended to describe academic writing in terms of the content”, while “students describe academic writing in terms of format, mechanical control of language, and purposes for writing” (Wolsey et al. 718). The purpose of writing in high school is seen here, as secondary teachers attempt to prepare students with an understanding of conventions that can be used as they begin to enter discourse commu-

nities. By doing this, students may have learned these concepts so well, that they may be “leery of the advanced strategies” (Holb et al 29). Rules and formulations are easy to follow, and students can easily determine if they accomplish the goal of the assignment. Academic writing can be scary, and with no right answer it is difficult for the student to know if she is accomplishing her goals.

It is also important to note that this gap is systematic and perhaps partly unintentional. A National Survey conducted Joanne Addison and Sharon James McGee asked a variety of college and secondary instructors a variety of questions. When both groups were asked to rank the most important purposes of writing, both agreed on four out of five purposes: “Developing logical arguments and supporting them with valid experience’, ‘writing argumentative or persuasive essay’, ‘writing expository prose’, and ‘analyzing an issue or problem’” (Addison and McGee 155). Instructors here are saying they agree on these, but it is unlikely that their actions are compatible. For example, it is simply impractical that a high school student’s analysis be intended to achieve the level of a college student.

As seen here, high school and college writing classes often use the same terms and phrases with very different meanings. Perhaps the largest area of disconnect is over the term “argument”. Students are first able to see the shift in purpose of writing when they arrive in their first-year writing course and hear a “steady refrain that everything is indeed an ‘argument’” (Neely 160). The definition change alone is enough to exhibit the change in the purpose of writing.

Because this definition change can be drastic, it is important to examine each of the different connotations of “argument”. Virginia Crank argues that perhaps the better term here might be “analysis”, but analysis is only discussed in secondary education “in connection with the analysis of imaginative or creative literature” (57). Argument here, in a high school classroom, is simply a summary someone else’s claims. This

implies to students that their authentic claims are irrelevant; the only value their writing can hold is dependent on others.

Researchers Ron Lunsford, John Kiser, and Deborah Coxwell-Teague summarize the problem, when quoted by Crank, claiming high

*“Instructors no longer want to read a summary of someone else’s thoughts, but rather want to read original student ideas.”*

school “students may be asked to write about argumentative topics by examining the arguments on both sides of that argument or by proposing a compromise for competing sides of an argument (57). However, they are not asked to stake a position on a controversial topic and then defend that position for an audience that takes the opposing viewpoint” (Crank 57). The freedom and independence of writing are lacking. The purpose here is to please the audience and simply repeat existing ideas. This phenomenon is in part due to standards, but it implicitly limits student creativity and ownership in writing.

This version of argument is the foundation of how students have learned how to write for the past four years, but students must quickly learn a new definition. An academic argument “requires writers or speakers to justify their claims, it is both a product and a process, and it combines elements of truth seeking and persuasion” (Ramage et al. 2). Students are able to express themselves through an argument that is “a logical, well-thought-out presentation of ideas that makes a claim about an issue and supports that claim with evidence” (McWhorter 568).

Instructors no longer want to read a summary of someone else’s thoughts, but rather want to read original student ideas. By practicing arguing their original ideas in college courses, they are better prepared to advocate for their ideas as a member of a discourse community. Here is an

example of a shift of focus from conventions to content. The purpose of writing is no longer to demonstrate their ability to propose a compromise, but rather find the confidence and voice to promote themselves for any number of reasons.

However, the time it takes to adjust to this freedom and responsibility varies among students. In first-year writing courses, students sometimes confuse “reading critically” with “reading suspiciously”, implying that, “despite what they really believe, we [instructors] want argument for argument’s sake” (Sumner 61). It may take time for students to understand and internalize this new meaning of “argument” and they may overcorrect. Thus, it is the goal of many first-year courses to help them break their previous bad habits and then guide them to understanding the new definition, and therefore writing’s new purpose. Most importantly, students must learn the independence to make argumentative decisions independently.

In order to independently form an argument, students must first consider their audience. If writing is done for a reader, the reader becomes the main motivator. Writers must ask themselves what choices they can make in order to best appeal to their audience. Arguments specifically are “intended to influence readers’ thinking, [and should] begin by anticipating your reader’s views” (McWhorter 607). While writing arguments in college, students must understand “the nature and history of the discipline... [and understand] how knowledge is made within that discourse community” (Crank 58). This kind of starting point and audience awareness will provide students with the context needed to determine an acceptable tone, style, format, etc. for the paper. The key here is that it is the writer’s responsibility to understand and respond to audience needs as the reader changes.

While examining the role the audience plays in writing, it is important to investigate who the reader is in high school and college. The change in reader between high school and college exhibits the change in purpose. Many

times, teachers are the sole readers of writing in high school. Other times, high school students may participate in pre-college programs, such as Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate. Essays written for these programs are written for “Faculty Consultants” whose grading is “strictly governed by a predetermined rubric” (Miller 3). Even if the reader enjoys the writing and appreciates the student’s choices, if the

*“Writing is social, and more specifically, genre conventions are always social.”*

standardized requirements are not met, they will not receive credit (Miller 6). Miller also argues that because of the rigidity of a rubric, students are not receiving necessary practice on arguing a claim to an intended audience (Miller 6). Therefore, sometimes when teachers “teach to the test” or when students write from the rubric, they are teaching students to write to an audience, but with little context.

Even though teachers may also be the primary reader in college, they are not the only reader. Students may write articles, applications, theses or dissertations or a wide variety of writing for a variety of publishers, committees, colleagues, etc. The shift in purpose of writing from high school to college prepares students to write to this wide variety of readers.

Because writers may be facing a wide variety of readers, a level of audience awareness is necessary when determining paper formats and genres. Writing is social, and more specifically, “genre conventions are always social” (Crank 54). Students must be aware of their audience and be able to quickly internalize that genres “are more about the social actions texts are used to accomplish than the forms they take” (Woodard and Kline 210). The purpose of writing is no longer

to demonstrate effectiveness of using a formulated genre, but rather to communicate content. In order to effectively communicate content, a social understanding of audience’s expectations is necessary. Audience expectations are determined by discourse norms. Because genres and formats create meaning, they must be chosen with a specific audience in mind.

However, high school students may not come to college with an adequate understanding of essay formats. Professors often bemoan the five-paragraph essay, and “wish students hadn’t learned so well in high school that an essay is “five paragraphs and a thesis statement can appear only as the first or last sentence in the first of those five paragraphs (Fanetti et al. 79). The five-paragraph essay may have been intended to be a basic, sensible structure, with students being taught to modify it as necessary (Nichols 908). Whether this format has accomplished this goal or not, it is important to note that most high school students will come to college with the five-paragraph essay in their tool belt, and varying degrees of experience or comfort levels of modifying it to fit a specific purpose.

Because the purpose of writing changes, students often must learn to move from following formulated guidelines for each essay to being able to determine which format best fits the assignment purpose. Crank argues that as students begin to understand the new purpose of writing, as they begin to write in “new discipline-specific discourse communities, college teachers should develop in students (and in themselves) the habit of considering form/genre as entirely dependent on the rhetorical situation” (56). Genres and formats create meaning and students must learn to use this to their advantage. The five-paragraph essay will no longer be able to communicate the complex ideas of writing in higher academia. Therefore, this driving force for writing is responsible for yet another change in writing.

Even though this transition can be frightening, it is interesting to analyze how students feel after recovering from the initial shock. After

adjusting to this new purpose of writing, learning the new “rules” (or lack thereof), and practicing these new skills, students may begin to enjoy writing more than they have in the past. Adding context and ownership back into the writing equation is directly related to how much students enjoy writing. For example, 41% of college students enjoy writing assignments, while only 28% of high school students report the same (Addison and McGee 167). Freedom and independence are directly correlated to growth.

Overall, because writing in high school and college serve different purposes, they are practiced differently. While writing in high school is intended to teach students to summarize and other “basics” of writing, its practices often take away student freedom and ability to make original claims. Writing in college prepares students to write as professionals, contributing to a larger discourse discussion, and create knowledge through communicating ideas. Because of this new purpose, students must adjust to new writing practices in areas such as argument, audience, and format. Even though students may drift farther and farther from their first-year composition requirement, students in all disciplines must carry these lessons with them in order to be able to clearly communicate their original ideas and find their purpose as writers. ~



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