



LOGOS

THE ARDINGLY COLLEGE JOURNAL OF DIVINITY AND PHILOSOPHY

Volume 2 Commemoration 2011





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The cover image depicts the Pruden Crucifix, commissioned and installed in the College Chapel in Eastertide 2011, the gift of Anton Pruden OA.

En arche en ho Logos...

“In the beginning was the Word...”
John 1: 1

The Greek word *Logos* is difficult to translate. It is usually rendered as ‘word’ or ‘speech’ but can mean ‘concept’, ‘discourse’ or ‘reason’. It finds its way into modern English in words such as Biology and Theology - meaning literally, ‘speech about life’, and, ‘speech about God’.

To the ancient philosophers the *Logos* was the principle of reason that underpinned the universe. They believed that the human mind was endowed with a fragment of this universal reason, and were therefore able to understand the universal *Logos*. Jewish thinkers at the time of Christ used the same word to describe the creative power of God.

Saint John continues this tradition. He speaks of Christ as the Word at the beginning of the Fourth Gospel. He refers to the Jewish tradition that God ‘spoke’ the universe into being. He identifies this Word with Christ.

This journal contains a number of reflections by students on questions of Divinity and Philosophy. Some of the students write from a position of faith, others from a position of scepticism. What all of the contributions have in common is that, as with the philosophical and biblical *logoi*, they are acts of creation. They show Ardingly students at their most erudite, most rational and most creative.

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Editorial

Education is about more than learning facts and figures, although the knowledge of the past remains an indispensable guide to navigating the present and, indeed, shaping the future. Education's main concern is the formation of young people – and those not-so-young – intellectually, spiritually, and morally. Divinity and Philosophy can perhaps claim a key role in such formation. At Ardingly we do not so much educate the students in Divinity and Philosophy as to help them to become theologians and philosophers. All people are confronted and puzzled by the great ultimate questions of life and existence and each, in turn, attempts to answer them: to find, as Kierkegaard wrote, a 'truth that is true for me'. The study of Divinity and Philosophy is about better equipping our students for such an endeavour: training more than teaching. It is rare to find two philosophers who agree on everything and rarer still to find two theologians who agree on anything. Such should be true in our classrooms. What must also be true is that our young people are learning to discern their own opinion: to know what they believe, why they believe it, and how to communicate it clearly and charitably.

As a Woodard school, much of our discourse takes its starting point from a Christian approach to these questions. Students are encouraged to reflect for themselves whether these answers do indeed hold up in light of their own encounters with the great questions. There is also the opportunity to look at other, quite different approaches. Such plurality should always be at the basis of sound education. The aim always remains, however, the formation of the student's own intellect. Not for nothing have Divinity and Philosophy been called 'the original critical thinking subjects'.

Of course, students must also be prepared for the academic rigour of public exams. Divinity and Philosophy have seen rapid growth in the last decade at GCSE, Sixth Form, and university levels. In a Western world that is increasingly irreligious, perhaps this reflects the universal reality of the search for truth. Our students have much to say – they may simply need guidance on what questions to ask. In this second volume of *Logos*, we again present some of the exemplary work produced by students in the Department throughout the past year. Once more, I am indebted to the incredibly hard work of the Student Editors, without whom – literally – this journal would not have been possible. Finally, I would like to thank the staff of the Department and all those boys and girls taught within it, whether published herein or not, for ensuring with their questions that I never become too complacent in my own answers.

F.Q.I.

Adam Kendry
Head of Divinity and Philosophy
Ardingly College

Either/Or: Existentialism and Christianity

LUCY SHEEHAN (WG)

Upper Sixth A-Level Divinity Student

Existentialism has its attraction in that it focuses entirely on the plight of the human, in the uniqueness and isolation of life, in the terrifying absence of reason, and most importantly, the 'dizziness of freedom' as Soren Kierkegaard, arguably the father of Existentialism, once put it.

The term evidently comes from 'existence' and in a sense, is a submission to the utter absurdity of life. What then is absurdity? Within Existentialism it is the notion that the world is meaningless beyond the meaning one gives it. We as individuals are responsible for injecting as much passion and sincerity as we see fit, but after that, we are quite alone with no moral compass to guide us. Existentialism essentially asks, 'what is it like to be me?' rather than 'what should it be like to be me?' and thus any ethical system we might favour is, in effect, forcing us into a box. It is no surprise then that Existentialism wholeheartedly rejects pure, objective logic as 'detached' in favour of a more sensory approach to which the human can relate according to his or her experiences. Nietzsche in particular, although a critic of the Romantics, called himself the 'immoralist', disregarding Kantianism and deeming the Utilitarians of his day 'blockheads' for attempting to order the chaos of life.

There are several other working themes within Existentialism that require definition and aside from absurdity, Existential angst is a crucial, if somewhat unfortunate side effect from what Kierkegaard regarded as the 'dizziness of freedom' in his Concept of Anxiety. Stemming from the notion that we are terrifyingly in control of everything, and absolutely free, Kierkegaard uses the example of standing on a cliff edge – not only are we afraid of falling, but also that we may throw ourselves off. It is, if you will, a terrible exhilaration and a realisation of expanse to which our freedom extends, 'condemned' as Jean-Paul Sartre said, 'to be free'.

Finally, it could perhaps be said that authenticity originates from the crucial theme of individuality. One should act not according to an ethical theory, or as our genes dictate, nor search too hard for the way in which to act but to simply act as ourselves. Indeed, when making a decision one should let one's true values essentially 'shine through' rather than attempting to apply an ethical formula. To behave inauthentically is the denial of freedom – for instance, were we to aspire to be a celebrity, we might conform to characteristic traits such as wearing sunglasses and expensive clothes. In such a case we should be acting according to an image and thus inauthentically.

Indeed, given the considerable influence Kierkegaard had on Existentialism, it is curious then that the term is mainly synonymous with atheists, such as Sartre and Nietzsche. Sartre, writing particularly in *Nausea* considered Existentialism to be an attempt to 'draw all possible conclusions from the fact that there is no God', hence his regard for man as a 'useless passion'. Sartre once said 'existence precedes essence' – what Sartre seems to mean is yes, the Existentialist is responsible for giving his life meaning, because since there is no God, there is no human nature to guide us. Indeed, Kierkegaard's 'dizziness of freedom' is paralleled in *Nausea* with the main character's desire for a justification in the world which God, were he to exist, would provide. It is this lack of justification that causes his 'nausea'. The difference, however, is that despite Kierkegaard being a Christian, he still does not consider the existence of God a 'comfort'.

One might say that this rather haphazard approach to life does not correlate whatsoever with the seemingly deontological ethics of Christianity – that is to say, rigid and absolutist. Similarly the Christian use of Reason, Conscience, Tradition and Scripture seem incompatible with the Existentialist idea of our true values 'shining

through' during decision making. However this is not necessarily the case when we attempt to understand Christian Ethics.

Firstly, Kierkegaard never tries to attack social norms, just preserve authenticity, and if we are Christian, we are still acting in accordance with ourselves. Secondly, under scrutiny, Christian Ethics are not necessarily as rigid as we might first believe. The initial perception of Christian ethics is seemingly deontological – from the Ten Commandments for example come absolute orders such as 'you shall not kill', and when we consider a young child, this makes sense. It would be foolish to attempt to teach a child Consequentialist Ethics as he would not understand – 'do not run into the road, unless however the traffic is slowing down and....'. To simplify things, however, we teach deontological ethics, hence 'never ever run into the road'. The same perhaps could be said of the Bible. The aforementioned order is from the Old Testament and it must be said, a far more authoritarian God and his people are in a sense 'younger'. By the time of the New Testament a seemingly absolutist attitude has given way to moral relativism.

Moral relativism is compatible with Existentialism in that there are no objective truths, rather that morality is dependent on external factors, that is to say morality is in fact subjective, hence 'who likes this jam?' is a subjective issue – it varies. To use a biblical example of relativism - 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment...' (Matthew 22:36-40) illustrates the loss of emphasis on absolutist ethics and a focus on simply loving. It is here we also find a certain similarity between Christianity and Situation Ethics, developed initially by Joseph Fletcher. Despite its sheer vagueness and lack of substance as an 'ethical system' it is to an extent rooted

in late Existentialism by Christian scholars such as Paul Tillich, simply denying the Bible as a code to which all mankind must adhere, rather as guidelines such as our previous example of love in the Christian context of agape. Indeed, if Existentialism focuses primarily on the individual experience of the human and thus varies, is this not essentially subjectivism?

Despite never using the phrase 'Existentialism', Existentialists are all crucially influenced by the aforementioned theologian Soren Kierkegaard. Born in Denmark, Kierkegaard was a prolific writer and though neither he, nor Nietzsche ever branded 'Existentialism', both were well ahead of their time in terms of thought. Brought up in a severely strict Lutheran household, Kierkegaard's life was somewhat unfortunate and he certainly suffered from Existential angst throughout life. It was perhaps after years of a somewhat hedonistic lifestyle around Copenhagen that he discovered his need to live meaningfully as a Christian.



Kierkegaard's views on Christianity were that, due to the absurdity of life and the many paradoxes and contradictions within the Bible (he gives the example in his *Philosophical Fragments* as Jesus being 100% God and 100% Man), one could not rely on it, as mentioned, as a code, nor attempt to decipher it with pure logic. Instead, Kierkegaard said one has to make a leap of faith. What is meant here is that, like a true Existentialist, one must disregard all reason and rely on faith alone. But is this so different to the experience of most Christians?

When one decides the time is ripe to be baptised and confirmed, one is never really doing it on a logical, rational level. Indeed we might reference, for instance St Thomas Aquinas' Cosmological Argument and conclude that yes, there is reason to believe in God. But essentially, when has faith ever been rational? It would be like attempting to describe a poem by Keats as 607 words, with a number of well placed metaphors, or a piece of art as a layering of colour pigments including zinc oxide and cadmium on a 40 by 60 piece

Lucy has been offered a place at King's College, London to read Theology.

of hardboard. Kierkegaard said, 'Faith is the highest passion in a human being' and indeed how cold and meaningless life would be as a purely mathematical formula, devoid of all passion, uncertainty, anxiety and awe - indeed 'what would life be, but despair?'

Thus, despite the many preconceptions surrounding both Christianity as ethically rigid and Existentialism as typically atheistic, the very nature of Existentialism as a submission to the sheer chaos of life and the will to live passionately is more than compatible with Christianity which, in its purest form, transcends all bounds of logic as a true leap of faith.

Time and Time Again: A Dispute on the Nature of God

ROSIE GIBBENS (WG) Upper Sixth A-Level Divinity Student

It is early in the morning and two builders are sitting in a cafe, tired from bricklaying. They are eating bacon sandwiches and debating over the timeless and everlasting views of an eternal God:

Steve Whilst bricklaying I have come to the conclusion that an eternal God must be timeless. He clearly observes and exists in all points of time simultaneously but does not experience time itself as He created it. I believe St Augustine of Hippo explained this theory as seeing time extended infinitely in both directions, rolled up into a ball which can be seen by God from outside time. Or, to put it another way, Boethius uses the analogy of time as like a road and God on a mountain seeing all time at once. He also gave the most famous definition of my opinion, that God has '*the whole, simultaneous and complete possession of eternal life all at once*'.

Alan Oh really? I've always assumed the opposite: that God must be within time but everlasting. This is the view held by most modern philosophers of religion; that God has always existed and always will exist, but is within time – which exists externally to Him. This is clearly the most justified response in this debate. The timeless view of God is clearly flawed; even Boethius's analogy doesn't really work: the man on the hill would experience time in the same way as the people walking, it is impossible to comprehend something existing outside time. In fact it doesn't even seem philosophically coherent: for something to exist at all, it must be in time.

Steve I agree that the analogy is flawed, but that is because we, as humans, can never really understand the true nature of God. As Brian Davies says, the timeless god '*Must be coherent although it is unimaginable*'. Our human language and understanding is limited

and therefore we must except that God can exist without being in time (even though we can't fully grasp this concept).

Alan Well surely that response is simply avoiding the criticism. It seems dogmatic.

Steve On the contrary my friend, it's dogmatic to assume that human understanding and rationality is the highest intellectual authority.

Alan It's still implausible to suggest that God is timeless: it is religiously objectionable. It doesn't fit with the biblical accounts of a God who experiences the joy and suffering of His people. Nor can the concept that 'God is Love' make sense with a timeless God because this would suggest that God cannot change and therefore can't interact with his creation or have the relationship so key to Christian faith. A timeless God seems to automatically necessitate an Aristotelian concept of God as an unchanging, unknowing thing, removed completely from the world. This objection is similar to that of process theologians such as A.N Whitehead and Shubert Ogden.



Steve To counter this argument I will refer to Herbert McCabe who responded to this criticism by justly suggesting in *The Involvement of God* (1986), that *'It is not the nature of God to be involved in the suffering of the world as spectator, sympathizer or victim, but it is God's nature to be involved in the suffering of the world'*. In other words, God is always intimately involved in human emotions, all the time in an unchanging perfect state. He is therefore, constantly suffering and loving for example. He is even more intimately involved through being timeless. In fact, if God is inside time, He has scope for change and therefore the possibility of becoming imperfect. If God experiences time He cannot be omniscient as time would exist as a separate entity that existed before him. He would therefore not be omnipotent as He wouldn't have created time.

Alan But, to refer to an earlier point, nothing can exist outside time – God did not create time because time is not something that can be created, it is necessary for anything to exist (including God). Besides, surely a timeless view of God means he must lack omniscience as God would not know what it's like to experience time.

Steve Let me respond by referring back to St Augustine's mountain analogy: the man on the mountain is not on the road himself, but can see the different points at which all others walking on the road can be located. Therefore, God would timelessly know (for example), that it is 4 o'clock at 4 o'clock for us. So you see, He can know time without being part of it.

Alan I most fervently disagree; This analogy does not defeat my objection. There would still be something God wouldn't know. Though He may know that for us it is 4 o'clock he cannot know at 4 o'clock that it is 4 o'clock. His concept of time would be completely different and just as we cannot understand what it is to be timeless. God cannot fully understand what it means to be in time.

Rosie has applied to read Philosophy at Cambridge.

Steve Again, you are referring to God's knowing in human terms; God can transcend human logic and know what time is without experiencing it.

Alan But God is bound by human logic because it is God's logic – He created it.

Steve Wait... surely if God knows all of time, yet is inside time, then our lives are completely predetermined as God knows our future. A timeless view of God sidesteps this problem as God does not 'see into the future' but experiences all time simultaneously.

Alan But surely the same difficulties arise with a timeless God as He would still know what the future was for us even if to him it occurs at once. Anyway, whether or not you agree with that, I think that what God sees (in both situations) can still be a result of free will – God simply knows the future which was brought about by free will, He is still omniscient.

Steve I disagree. God must be timeless for free will to exist. To quote Peter Vardy in summarizing Boethius' explanation of this point, *'God does indeed know what we will timelessly do in the future, but His knowledge is not causal. God timelessly sees our future free actions, but what He sees is the result of our freedom – God does not cause us to act in any particular way'*. To be in time, is to be involved in human future.

Alan Well indeed it is a fascinating debate but I believe we must agree to disagree my friend. That was a riveting conversation and a delicious bacon sandwich, but I believe it is time to get back to work.

Casting the 'Net: Ardingly Divinity and Philosophy on the Web

I remember once at a previous school we will were asked as a department to carry out an audit of our Information and Communication Technology (ICT) usage. Jokingly we sent back the form saying that, rather than new interactive whiteboards and the like, we were in favour of a return to traditional inkpots and quills! The Director of Studies was not entire amused but our facetiousness hid a semi-serious point. ICT is a tool, not an end in itself and as a traditional academic subject in a traditional academic school, those tried-and-tested core skills of essay writing and note-taking are vital and must not be lost. However, the key to the successful teaching and learning in our subject lies in embracing the best of the new, whilst preserving the finest of the old.

At Ardingly, we remained committed to the development of those traditional skills and abilities amongst our students. In the past year, however, we have made leaps and bounds in embracing the internet age that is second-nature to our charges, and created not one, but two departmental websites.

The first is Blogos, an online version of this very journal. Blogos is updated throughout the year with exemplary student work which will make its way into these pages. Do not worry though, as the print version contains the 'complete and uncut' editions along with much extra material. Blogos also contains links to the softcopies of this and the previous edition of Logos. It can be found at ardinglyblogos.blogspot.com



The second website is designed to act as a 'one-stop-shop' for students (and their parents) interested in the current world of Divinity and Philosophy. Located at ardinglydp.blogspot.com, and updated regularly, the site draws together every newspaper article, podcast, or television programme that is relevant to students of Divinity, Philosophy, or Theory of Knowledge. The site also contains information on courses taught by the Department, recommended reading and viewing, and a page on Higher Education opportunities within the two disciplines.

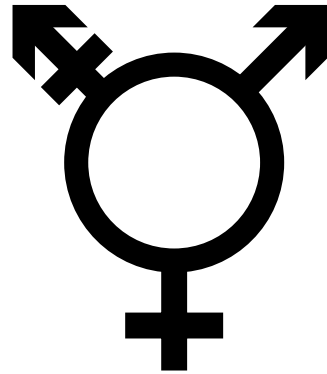
Mr Kendry

The Gender Agenda: Social Constructs and the Envisioning of the Divine

ROBERT KEY (WB) Upper Sixth IB Philosophy Student

In 2009 Caster Semenya won the Women's 800 metres event in the Berlin World Championships. However due to her masculine appearance questions were raised as to what her gender was and she had to undergo a 'gender test' to prove her sex. The terms sex and gender are here used synonymously yet this is the reason so much controversy ensued. After a while the 'gender test' undoubtedly proved she was a woman as she returned to competition so it was established she was female. However the fact that her sex is such does not mean her gender is the same. Semenya might have the necessary organs and chromosomes to be called a woman but society can still label her masculine. Gender is different from sex as it draws upon the socially constructed preconceptions about what a man or woman should be like. Our society dictates that women should not be muscular, have short hair or have deep voices. Women should make themselves look good at all occasions possible and should be prepared to stay at home to look after the children. Although times have changed slightly there are still massive difference between the perception of the roles of different genders in society.

The fact that gender is a social construct is exceptionally apparent in today's globalised society in particular as we see how the roles of gender differ in different parts of the world. There is an obviously different view of what it means to be female in parts of the Middle East opposed to what it means in our western culture. In our western society we generally assume that women are equal to men thus they should be allowed the same access to education and health and they should be treated in the knowledge that they have equal rights. The social construct of the female gender in this society is the closest it has ever been to being a reflection of the female sex. This is because in terms of sex, males and females are equal; they are complimentary to each other and they are both needed equally to reproduce. The



role of the woman in Saudi Arabia, however, is far from equal to the role of the man. The construct of gender there is that men are far more superior and dominant over women. Women have a strict role which is to be inferior to their opposite sex. This is because the role of the female gender is looked at completely differently than it is in the West. Although they are biologically the same sex as other females in the west the social construct of what it means to be a woman is different, meaning that the role of their gender is changed and they therefore do not have the same rights. This theory of socialisation deems that what makes a man a man and a woman a woman depends solely on the social beliefs in the culture at the time.

It is important to note that this is not just a cultural issue of our society today. The views on the roles of gender have changed incredibly in the past few decades. Although now many men still feel awkward being the 'housewife' in the relationship and are defiant in that they must be the ones to provide the income the conceptions of what the man and woman must do have changed dramatically. It is becoming more and more common for women to choose to have successful careers instead of having families and this shows how the social construct of femininity has changed. It is a radical change as it has always been the way that men lead and provide in the public sector (for instance in business and politics) whilst women look after the

private sector (homes and families). It has been this way primarily because of the basic knowledge that women bear children, men beget them not but also because scientifically it was not known that we inherit fifty percent of our genes from our mother as well as our father. It was not believed that women could compete intellectually with men and it was only when women were given liberties that it was realised that the intellectual capacities were the same. Plato believed that to be fully human you had to be a man as women did not have the same reasoning qualities as men. From this it seems easy to see how the social constructs of gender in the past have affected our conceptions of the divine. God is known as the 'Father' and we refer to God as He. However, followers of the Christian faith are well aware and always have been aware that the divine is sexless and is not actually one gender or the other. Christianity was formed at a time when the roles of men were very different to the roles of women and thus the conception that men had a higher standing than women in society was accepted as normal. I think that due to the fact that men had this higher standing than women at the time when Christianity came about, it was thought by many that the divine needed to be referred to as masculine as if they referred to him as the Mother then God would not be thought as omnipotent and they would be dwarfing his greatness. Therefore, they chose to look at God as the Father as it fitted in with their conception of what it meant to be a father of the time: a father always knowing, always powerful and controlling but also always loving of his children. The bible makes the claim that the relationship between the divine and humankind is much more like the relationship between the father and son than the mother and daughter. This is once again, purely because of the social construct of what it meant to be a man and son at the time Christianity became a prominent religion. Fathers were the 'bread-winners', they would love their children and mould them into sons worthy of

their inheritance as they would be their continuation. In the same way this was the case, Christians believed that God made humankind in God's own image. Therefore the social construct of the age that men were dominant over women led to the conception that God is the Father. In today's society the father is no longer always the primary parent. In many families it is the mother who looks after the children and moulds them to be the ones to bear the inheritance. The social construct on the roles of genders have changed drastically and perhaps the conception of God must change also, "Our Mother, who art in heaven...?"

The social construct of gender has affected the way we conceive the divine, but it appears to me that the argument raises issues over the validity of the bible and the Christian faith altogether. The reason today's Christians refer to God as the Father is solely because of the way it was done in the past. It has become a part of the religious doctrine to do so and if Christianity came about today there would undoubtedly be uproar from the new equally minded socially constructed feminine gender. However, if Christianity is as holy, correct and equal as it is believed to be by millions then surely they would have noticed that calling God the Father was to not only undermine what God is, but to undermine all that Jesus has ever preached about the equality of humankind as from the very beginning of Christianity women are given second standing to men. If God is sexless how can the Roman Catholic Church have ever preached the inequality of the sexes by only ordaining men as priests? The Bible is written in a way that does not seek to ensure the rights of men and women are equal which suggests to me that not only has the interpretation of the Christian faith been greatly affected by the social constructs of genders but doubt has been cast into my mind over whether or not such subjectivity in the bible can lead to an essentially objective religious truth.

Rob has applied to read Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at Oxford.

A School With a View: Ardingly and the Christian Ethos

FLORENCE BELL (WG) Upper Sixth IB Philosophy Student

We have all heard of Ardingly being described as ‘the school with a view’. This view is, however, not only one focused on the physical beauty of the Sussex countryside that surrounds us. Instead, this phrase could just as easily be used to describe the vision that Ardingly ascribes to as part of its Christian foundation. This vision is one that extends beyond the four walls of the Chapel and into all other aspects of our school life, both academic and extracurricular.

I speak from a Christian viewpoint. As a member of the Catholic wing of the Church of England from since before I joined the College, I have been able to see for myself from more than one perspective the development of our Christian characteristics. These characteristics are not just those that are founded on the traditional teachings of the church. Whilst the Christian teachings of love and of duty to each other are of course crucial to the pastoral side, they are not our only focus as a Christian community. What is just as vital, both in terms of our mental and our moral development is the questioning and analysis of our faith, that takes place throughout the school in a number of ways.

This questioning takes place both inside and outside the curriculum. Within the Divinity and Philosophy department, the younger students in Shell to Fifth are educated in Learning For Life and Divinity lessons about the faith that they share in as members of the school community. On a broader scale, the Christian Union and especially the Divinity and Philosophy Reading Group, open to all members of the school community outside the academic curriculum provides

a forum where matters of faith are open to debate and reasoned argument. It is, after all, necessary to look at Christianity from three viewpoints.

The first is that of understanding the nature of our faith. It involves the unpacking and understanding of what it means to be a Christian, both in our day-to-day actions, and throughout our entire lives. Added to this, in order to understand what it means to be a Christian, it is necessary to analyse the traditions, to question them, so that we can gain a greater knowledge. Thus the exploration and questioning of the faith provides a vital basis which we as individuals can build upon: faith combined with reason.



The third reason is perhaps, for me, the most crucial. It is the enactment of our faith, through the celebration of the Eucharist day by day and especially the College Mass on Wednesday, which all school members attend. It is no coincidence that the Chapel is at the centre of the school, both physically and metaphysically. As a sacristan, every time I see someone at Ardingly approach Father David at communion either to receive the sacrament or to receive his blessing, it makes me realise exactly what it is to be part of the Woodard Communion of schools. To be a Christian at Ardingly joins you together with the others celebrating the Mass and makes you feel part of something truly special.

It is, after all, part of the intention of the Woodard Corporation to follow the Anglo-Catholic tradition that Nathaniel Woodard intended. Within his lifetime he managed to found eleven schools, with, as he termed it “*sound principle and sound knowledge, firmly grounded in the Christian Faith*”. As part of the corporation, Ardingly is therefore constantly working towards promoting Woodard’s educational principles. The constant interaction of the students with the Christian ethos contained within school life is therefore part of the overall aspiration of the College towards his wishes. It is as much for this reason as for any other that Ardingly can truly be referred to as the “jewel in Nathaniel Woodard’s crown”.

God's Own People: Thanksgiving for the Academical Year

GEOFFREY ROWELL+
Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe

"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Peter 2.9)

Schools and colleges are very human institutions. Like each one of us, like every human being, they have a natural rhythm of life with endings and beginnings, times for leaving and times for joining. When I was a College chaplain in Oxford there was always a moment with a certain frisson when I came to speak to the new intake of freshers at the beginning of the academic year – at that point I knew none of them, and yet I knew that some I would come to know very well, some I would keep in touch with many years after, some I would scarcely get to know at all. And of course what was true for me was true for all those gathered, coming from many different places, even countries, who would build friendships some of which would last for the rest of their lives. And at the other end of the academic year there would be farewells, sometimes with feasting, sometimes with sadness, and all kinds of rites of passage, of moving on. One classic and rather sentimental Victorian school story, *Eric, or Little by Little*, by Frederick Farrer, the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral, tells at the end how Eric, the hero of the book, goes back to his old school, Roslyn:

I visited Roslyn a short time ago, and walked hours along the sands picturing in my memory the pleasant faces, and recalling the joyous tones of the many whom I had known and loved. Other boys were playing by the sea-side, others were strangers to me and I to them, and as I marked how wave after wave rolled the shore with its murmur and its foam, each sweeping farther than the other, and effacing the traces of the last, I saw an emblem of the passing generations.....

Nathaniel Woodard, founder of Ardingly, as of so many other schools, knew the power of communities to shape people, to give a deep sense of belonging, to teach and to educate, not simply in imparting information and useful knowledge that may serve business, and government and country, though that has its place. True education is about imparting wisdom, a wisdom that shapes our human life together, with virtues and values and a concern for others. Woodard shared his vision with others of the Oxford Movement of Catholic revival in the Church of England, not least John Henry Newman, whom Pope Benedict is to beatify – declare 'blessed', a saint of God - on his visit to England in September. Newman wrote one of the great books about education, *The Idea of a University*. Professor Owen Chadwick summarises what Newman wrote in this way:

To educate is not to make learned. The ideal product is not a walking encyclopaedia, not a professor of the chosen subject. It is a wise person. The ideal activity is to engender *a habit of mind... which lasts through life*, of which the attributes are *freedom, equitableness of mind, calmness, moderation and wisdom...* The highest aim of education is wisdom; and in his deeper mind Newman knew that wisdom depends not only on knowledge and experience, but upon a stability of judgement which is inseparable from moral being.

School communities need to be shaped by such a vision. And you cannot be shaped by such a vision unless you have a deep understanding of what it is to be human. The Christian answer to that question is that

we human beings are made in the image of God, and what that image is seen in Jesus Christ. Many years ago when I took a decidedly agnostic student out for a pub lunch, he asked me to give him one good reason for believing in God. I replied with one word – 'You'. He was more than a little startled and asked me to explain. I said 'because you are made in the image of God, because that is the deepest truth about you, to meet you is to be pointed to God, and the God to whom we are pointed is the God who is love – communion, relatedness – in his very being, the wonderful dance of self-giving love that we name as God the Holy Trinity. When we discover that God in the undergrowth, at the heart of our lives, we are touched by what we might call the web or internet of the Holy Spirit, and prayer and worship could be described as one of the ways in which we surf that greatest internet of all.

St Peter, in the words with which I began, tells the Christian community to whom he is writing that they are *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people* – because they are those caught into the internet of the Holy Spirit. Underlying the life of this school is this Chapel and its worship which is at its heart. This is where we come to give thanks, as we do today, and we do it in this Mass, which is sometimes called the Eucharist, a word which means simply 'thank you' – as you still say in Greece "*eucharisto*" when the waiter brings food to your table, or someone has given you directions to the Parthenon. This is the deepest thanks that we can give to the God who made us, who is the wisdom underlying all knowledge, who is the truth we find both in physics and in poetry, in maths and in music; who is the beauty that we know in glory of a Sussex summer, or in the face of a friend. The poet W.H.Auden has a marvellous phrase – he tells us to 'practice the scales of rejoicing.'

We are to be thankful people. The wonderful prayer of thanksgiving in the Prayer Book asks that 'our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth Thy praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to Thy service.' 'Unfeignedly thankful' – deeply, truly thankful, from our hearts, not something merely formal. When we are really thankful for something we know how wonderful it is; when we are given a totally unexpected and wonderful gift, when we are surprised by joy, then our hearts can overflow with thankfulness. And when we come to receive in this Eucharist the wonderful gift of God's own life of love, and grace, and strength, in these simple things – bread and wine – doing what Jesus told us to do – the priest invites us at the beginning of the great prayer of consecration, as I shall invite you in a moment: *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God*. Into those thanks today come all that Ardingly is, all that Ardingly has given to each of you here today, all that Ardingly will give in the years ahead, and all of that is caught up into our thankfulness to the God who made us for himself so that our hearts are restless until they rest in him. His love comes down to the lowest part of our need, and it will never let you down and it will never let you go.



When our hearts are touched by that love, we see the world in a new light, the light of Christ himself, who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Edwin Muir in his poem, *The Transfiguration*, recalling that moment when the disciples saw Jesus in the dazzling light of glory, tries to share a little of that experience, of awe and wonder and thankfulness, an experience of our life and the world transformed.

*So from the ground we felt that virtue branch
Through all our veins till we were whole, our wrists
As fresh and pure as water from a well,
Our hands made new to handle holy things,
The source of all our seeing rinsed and cleansed.....
Was it a vision?
Or did we see that day the unseeable
One glory of the everlasting world
Perpetually at work.*

The poet even sees the dark things transformed.

*The refuse heaps
Were grained with that fine dust that made the world:
For he had said, 'To the pure all things are pure.
And when we went into the town, he with us,
The lurkers under doorways, murderers,
With rags tied round their feet for silence, came
Out of themselves to us and were with us,
And those who hide within the labyrinth
Of their own loneliness and greatness came,
And those entangled in their own devices,
The silent and the garrulous liars, all
Stepped out of their dungeons and were free.*

The one who calls out of darkness into his marvellous light calls us into a world redeemed, transfigured and transformed, a world of freedom, a world of eternal life, a world of the glory of God, of which here and now we have a foretaste as the God of love feeds us with the bread of heaven, his life given to us, the life of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give him thanks and praise.*

Homily preached at Commemoration Day 2010 and reproduced with kind permission.

Knowers' Ark

Ardingly is relatively unique in that it offers its Sixth Form students the opportunity either to study A Levels or to follow the International Baccalaureate (IB). Part of the core provision for the IB diploma is for students to take a mandatory course in the Theory of Knowledge (TOK). TOK requires students to reflect on the question 'How do I know?'. It challenges them to analyze both the ways in which they gain knowledge through perception, emotion, reason and language and asks them to critically consider the different areas of knowledge and the strengths and weaknesses of each.

This allows the students the opportunity to think in a far more incisive and critical way about the possibility and nature of truth and as such gives them the chance to explore the relativity contained within any knowledge based on their experiences of the world. This topic is therefore one that draws on individualistic interpretations of the world and of reality and thus the students are able to explore and challenge their own personal opinions.

For some students, this allows them an exceptional opportunity to consider the curious nature of education, where so much is taken for granted, based on what has been shown through the empirical sciences. As such, this is an incredible area for growth, something that is considered to be an essential part of the study of a student of the Baccalaureate. They are forced to consider the nature of reality, through consulting the ways in which we claim to know and through linking the ways in which we claim we can know things: through History, Ethics, Mathematics, the Arts and so much more.

As part of their assessment for TOK, students must complete a 1,500 word essay, selected from a choice of ten titles, which explores and analyzes a knowledge issue. Two of the very best are included here.

Mr Kendry

Model Answers: In What Ways May Models Help or Hinder the Search for Knowledge?

FLORENCE BELL (WG)
Upper Sixth IB Philosophy Student

When considering this question, it is important to understand what is meant by the term 'model'. Within art, several meanings are implied, such as a sitter for an artist or a mannequin for clothing. In ethics, a model indicates a set of specific rules by which society should be ruled; however, for scientists it would tend to be considered as a theoretical model, based on the physical, or relating to equations designed to better illustrate a specific truth or idea that already exists. As a result most ethical models are founded on the conception of truth in a way that aims for an ultimate form of truth, whilst most scientific models, dependent as they are on empirical evidence, are satisfied to some extent with coherent truths, and as such the models used reflect this.

This idea of truth fitting in with what is already known is reflected particularly in Biology, wherein the model can allow for representation of concepts on a more practical scale. For example, it would be very difficult for me to have any idea how the plasma membrane within the cell structure works: ways of knowing such as perception are useless due to the magnification that would be required. Therefore, models founded on logical conclusions drawn from watching certain interactions within the cell are the only way in which we can understand the composition of the cells. Furthermore, the advance in various technologies has meant that the models have become easier to manipulate, thus allowing for practical applications to rise from them. Examples of this include the conception of the 'Big Bang' theory. Although numerous potential models have coexisted with our current conception of the start of the universe, such as the idea that the universe has always existed, in a constant cycle of flux, this has been mostly discounted, since the empirical evidence does not support it to the same extent. Science therefore uses systematic comparative studies that often contradict one another in

order to evaluate the data collected and provide a model that best suits the evidence. Thus through forming a foundation from which to build on, they perform necessary intermediary roles, from which they are best able to assist in the search for knowledge.

However, there is a problem with many scientific models in that they can only predict the future based on the evidence gathered in the past. As such, as Freeman Dyson argued, 'They are full of fudge factors so the models more or less agree with the observed data'. This comment was made about global warming models, where on occasions fresh data has not coincided with the predictions of the model. This is partially due to the way that models can be manipulated to produce certain desired results, rather than the less palatable truths. This can be to do with a specific political agenda, which hinders the search for truth and knowledge. At the same time, some models are directly contradictory to the customs and faiths of the people using them. One example of this would be the teaching of evolutionary models within schools. In certain areas in America there has been a lot of controversy over this: for fundamentalist Christians, their religion and culture preclude them from accepting scientific evolutionary patterns, and thus the models they are taught are those based around creationism. Personally, as a Christian, I would argue that Darwin's model when combined with the traditional image of God is the most practical and indeed helpful way to understand the world. On the other hand, it is arguable that individual perspectives, in combination with emotion and faith as ways of knowing, are just as helpful as logical models in gaining knowledge.

In the same way, some people would argue that models for ethical theories are varying in their usefulness

dependent upon the cultures of those following them. Many cultures would argue about the definition of 'good and bad', 'right and wrong'. These concepts tend to be founded around the customs, precepts and principles of people; when considering the application of models towards specific contexts, the perceptions of these people must be taken into account in the way they influence their interpretations and understanding. The context of a moral decision is also relevant in other ways. For instance, within many healthcare issues such as euthanasia it is crucial to consider the circumstances – as individuals it is required of us to interpret the models in a way that allows for the best consequences. As such, the models are only as good as the users in the way they assist the search for knowledge. In this way, there is often a difficulty in the practical application of the theories: the models in theory may strive towards an ultimate truth but are difficult to implicate practically, thus the knowledge we attain from them can prove to be very limited.

This is not to say that models of ethical theories are entirely useless in the search for knowledge: evidently, the fact that so many models coincide on many issues indicates a level to which there is a reality of right and wrong. Many of our laws, regardless of specific cultures are founded on these particular concepts – the illegality of murder, or of incest for example. Normative ethics is founded on this particular idea of there being ways in which we should and shouldn't behave: for example I would consider rape never to be acceptable, as would most individuals and the very universalisability of this particular precept indicates the level to which a model prohibiting such behaviour tends towards truth. Evidently the primary reason for the existence of the models in these cases is to advise people and sanction them if they behave in an unsatisfactory

way. These are certain principles that should be upheld irrespective to some extent of personal beliefs. Otherwise anything could potentially be considered acceptable, to the detriment of anyone knowing or differentiating between what is right and wrong, in the broader sense. For this reason, models do need to be carefully assessed, both subjectively and objectively, through observation and introspection, through logic and emotion, to evaluate the extent to which they can ultimately be applied, in order to enhance a sense of moral understanding and knowledge.

This necessity for personal interpretation of models is relevant in art as well. Clearly artists use models in numerous ways, to interpret the world around them, and to allow themselves to understand in more depth the ways in which the physical world is constructed. The use of models in terms of seeing the interplay between light and shadow on objects, or of putting things more easily into perspective, allows the artist the opportunity to explore the different levels of understanding they are able to achieve. One such example is that of Fred Eerdeken, a sculptor who uses this to great effect in his sculptures. On viewing his work, such as *Neo Deo I* can see clearly the ways in which the specific model used enhances the ability of the audience to comprehend the way in which the art-piece is constructed. This demonstrates the importance of physical models within art, as a means by which the audience is better able to search for knowledge.

It is fair to say, however, that the use of models in art tends to detract to some extent from true knowledge of what is being depicted in many cases. For instance, in the past, models that have been chosen have been those that appear most flawless, that best represent an ideal form of nature. Charles-Nicolas Cochin argued 'The

purpose of art is nothing more than the most truthful imitation of nature and the perfection of that art [should be] the imitation of the most select nature'. As such, it is probably fair to say that these models did not necessarily lead to true knowledge of how things actually are, merely how they can be in 'perfect' cases, chosen by fallible humans. Instead, the knowledge attained is what happens to be the 'fashion' of that time: I nowadays would consider a slim, delicate model, of small proportions to be the best model, a massive contrast to the Rubenesque ideals of the past. Added to this, it is true that much of the art we carry out is influenced massively by the work of others. There is a dependency on using the same form of models method of depicting them which in turn depletes the range of sources from which we can draw our conclusions, thus hampering the extent to which ways of knowing such as perception and emotion can be drawn upon.

Obviously there is an extent to which this is true in all areas of knowledge: a fixed model inhibits any opportunity for personal interaction, something that is crucial in order to truly know something. Models therefore can hinder the search for knowledge through their rigidity, and their failure to take into account other potential contributory factors in the situation. However, within the three areas of knowledge explored, it is fair to say that there is a level to which the models are open to interpretation and to modification as necessary. This means that the foundation which they form is free to be built on as necessary. It is fair to say therefore that although some models can appear to obscure personal ways of knowing such as perception, emotion and even faith and culture, when combined with these, models are incredibly useful in the search for ultimate knowledge.



'Doubt is the key to knowledge' (Persian Proverb). To what extent is this true in two areas of knowledge?

OLIVIA BELL (T)
Upper Sixth IB Philosophy Student

I define doubt as the state of being unsure about something; not being able to clearly know a truth. Truth can be approached in three ways – correspondent, coherent, and pragmatic. If we are to use the perspective of a correspondent approach to truth, then doubt would not be a key to knowledge, because this results in absolute truths. However, if we were to use the approaches of pragmatic or coherent truths, these take into account the fact that truth is subjective, and therefore doubt is a key part in trying to find a truth that works in the circumstances, or practically fits. Doubt is not only useful here, it is necessary, so that through doubting and questioning ideas we can come to construct what we believe to be true in these approaches. Using the two areas of knowledge of Art and Mathematics, I will see how doubt affects truth and therefore the ability to know something with absolute certainty, resulting in knowledge.

The proverb states 'doubt is the key to all knowledge'. This bold claim is not one I think is justified. Doubt can certainly be helpful, as it is through questioning our beliefs and what we hold as true today that we can see problems and ways of improving theories. As above, in respect to coherent and pragmatic truth approaches, it is invaluable, but though it can open doors, it can also lock them. If we are to doubt everything we know then we will be without any belief, trust or truth, and on a pragmatic level, we would not be able to live in a world where we doubted everything; we would live in a state of anxiety, confusion and ultimately insanity.

Alongside doubt on a level of importance I would put trust, which I believe to be fundamental for knowledge. This is because it is only by trusting that we can come to believe in something as true. One way to prove something is true, for example, is through your senses, so we should trust in them to a level. Of course, these could be wrong;

for example, optical illusions can trick our eyes to thinking that something is there, or different to what it actually is, but trust is vital if we are to live in sanity.

Although this proverb is from Persia (modern day Iran), interestingly a Western philosopher, Descartes, in the seventeenth century, took doubt to a further level, writing in his *Meditations* that there were only two things he could know were true using a correspondent approach – that we can doubt, and we therefore exist (*cogito ergo sum*), and said 'the slightest suspicion of a doubt will be enough to make me reject any one of my beliefs'. This view of doubting is not practical in simple mathematics, but is more useful in Art.

Mathematics is regarded as one of the most certain ways of knowing out of all areas of knowledge. With basic maths, we can reach a certainty that even support from evidence in Science cannot give us. The use of deductive reasoning in Mathematics is one of the clearest set examples of *a priori*, and certain knowing. In more complex areas of maths, however, it becomes clear that actually there are some aspects that we are never going to know for certain they are correct, true, or why they exist; for example, when looking at imaginary numbers, which cannot be proved, at least not correspondently. In these instances, doubt is not very useful. If we were to doubt everything in maths, we could never speak logically about numbers or arithmetic, geometry or algebra, and these are things that we need in every-day life.

Therefore, basic mathematics is based around axioms. The mathematician Gödel realised that there are some mathematical true statements that cannot be proved or disproved. Some areas in a theory must be taken as true, because if these were doubted one would find other areas that cannot be proven, and then others; this is called

his incompleteness theorem. It is the faith and belief that these statements are simply true because they are true that ultimately allows mathematicians to say that they know things for certain – i.e. that because $A=B$, and $B=C$, A must surely also equal C . If one was to doubt this, then the study of mathematics would be impossible. We must therefore accept these axioms as correspondent truths, and doubt is here in the area of maths not a key to knowledge, but a hinder.

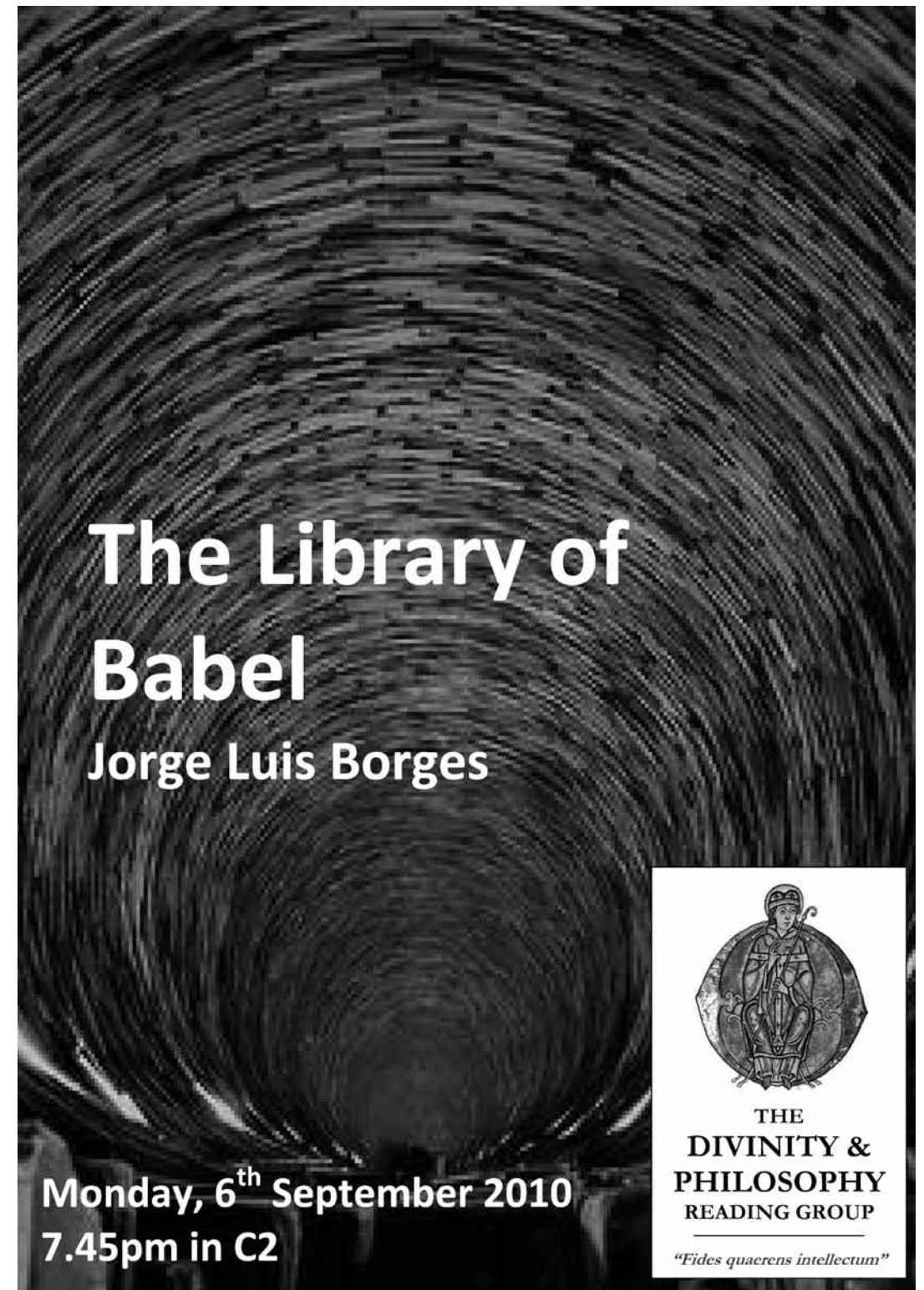
There are places, however, for example in quantum mathematics, where new theories are being constantly devised, so doubt is necessary to disprove or prove a new theory. Because the particles being measured are so infinitesimally small, and only one thing can be measured at a time – for example, speed cannot be measured at the same time as position – it is vital to doubt rather than accept what could be incorrect. Because new theories are built upon (and therefore relying on) old theories, knowing something for certain is vital, so doubting is imperative.

An area where doubt is also useful is in art. Art is widely known to be a subjective way of knowing, because of the two areas it mostly relies on – emotion and perception. In pieces of art, people define their own truths. For example, different people looking at Picasso's painting of the 'Weeping Woman' can perceive the figure in different ways. I myself see a woman who is very distressed, but other interpretations include the idea of her being worried, or terrified. Most people would agree that this is a distressing picture – but every person will react differently when confronted with it. The same is true of many forms of art, including music – for example, when I listen to the Adagietto from Mahler's Symphony No. 5 in C sharp Minor, I feel it is almost an exhalation after the storm of the third and fourth movements, whereas on playing it to my parents they both thought that it was a lullaby. It is by doubting what we are hearing or seeing that we can try to unpick artwork to understand it, and therefore to gain knowledge. There is, however, a slight difference between interpretation and doubt. Simply by looking at a painting and building your own opinion of it is just not enough – by doubting how you interpret it, maybe we come closer to a form of truth that the art is trying to tell us. We need to doubt what we see and perceive, and the thoughts that spring to mind on a personal level, and critique it in a purely objective way, and only then can we start to cut out some of the subjectivity. By doubting, we can maybe see different things that our first opinions may have clouded.

Of course, there is some crossover. Some of Escher's later artwork, for example, is a mixture of art and maths. Mathematically speaking, the works are symmetrical in places and use angles and perspective to effect. Therefore as mathematical works, if we are to take the axioms as fundamental truths, as a mathematical piece it cannot be doubted. However, as works of art they are actually different to how we they first appeared – for example, 'Relativity', a lithograph created in 1953, is at first glance two staircases leading upwards, but after doubting what you are seeing you realise it is not realistic at all, meaning that doubt is helpful in treating it as a work of art.

Overall, I believe that the Persian Proverb is true in some circumstances. In the case of maths, this is similar to Alvin Plantinga's belief system called 'properly basic beliefs', beliefs that you must have if you are to practically live. It is important to have some indubitable truths in maths (the axioms) to build up upon, or no knowledge is possible. Therefore we must reject Descartes' view of doubting everything as well, if we are to know maths with any form of absolute certainty. In art however, doubting can be helpful to decrease the level of subjectivity and to try to work out some of the original meaning behind the painting. It is difficult in abstract art to understand what the artist is trying to say, so doubting and questioning what we are seeing before us can help us make sense of the work of art.


Perhaps the best median for our life is taking some note of the Persian proverb, but also remembering that if we doubt everything, there is nothing certain for us to pragmatically hang on to, and if we disregard some of the other keys to knowledge – such as truth – then we are also missing out on doorways opening to further knowledge.



The Library of Babel

Jorge Luis Borges

Monday, 6th September 2010
7.45pm in C2



THE
DIVINITY &
PHILOSOPHY
READING GROUP

"Fides quaerens intellectum"

Labyrinthine Layers: Jorge Luis Borges' 'Library of Babel'

OLIVIA HOMEWOOD (T)
Lower Sixth IB Philosophy Student

This short story is presented to members of the Divinity and Philosophy Reading Group each year as an introductory text. A reflection on it appeared in the last edition of Logos. In this volume, Olivia Homewood, approaches from a quite difficult angle. As with the story itself, infinite interpretations are possible....

Jorge Luis Borges's masterpiece is a clear example of the way in which real life situations can be inverted by the philosophical mind. It explores 'thought games' which may not be specifically focused around the situation, but draw from it invaluable inspiration and insight. In this particular case, Borges draws on his own experiences from working in a library (Borges would later be appointed Director of the National Library in Argentina). From this, he is able to form a narrative based around the concept of eternity. He does this through exploring the idea of an infinite library, where each book contains any combination of letters, and *The orthographical symbols are twenty-five in number.*

The ultimate aim of the librarians is to attempt to discover the book that is the index to every other book in the library – the possessor of such knowledge would therefore be able to take ultimate control over the workings of the library. Borges also mentions that 'Thousands of the greedy abandoned their sweet native hexagons and rushed up the stairways, urged on by the vain intention of finding their Vindication'. The idea in this is that anyone who found the book that told the story of their life would therefore have true control over their destiny. However, there is a problem with this: if all possible books exist, due to all combinations of letters, it could well be the case that there are several 'Vindications' of the life of an individual, all but one of which would in reality be false. It would then be down to the individual to discover as to whether the book they held was a true reflection of their life, or just one of multiple different outcomes.

Clearly the symbolism within the library structure is rife. There is a direct correlation to concepts of the world; existentialism is an obvious parallel, where the concept that the number of librarians have succumbed to depression and angst, in their fruitless task, 'suicides, more and more frequent with the years' have destroyed them. Similarly, the task of searching for a book which may not actually even exist amongst an infinite amount of others could be likened to the fruitless search for meaning in life. Not only this, but many of the books in the library can be seen to represent the possibility of multiple universes. In this way, a book where the letters are in the correct order can be seen to be representative of this world, where the physical laws of the universe have come about by random, just happening to be the place where everything makes sense. As such, it makes us question our beliefs of the world as being perfectly designed, and throws the notion of a 'creator God' into strong contention.

The desire for power, most specifically power through knowledge, is shown constantly throughout the story. The 'man of the book' would be held in such high esteem that it is no wonder that they are each seeking desperately to find it, or some clue as to where it may lie. The difficulty is, the closer they come to knowledge, the more they find they are thwarted in their task – after all, it is impossible to be able to read an infinite number of books, and more so to discover whether each tale told is a truth or a lie.

In Secula Seculorum: Religion and Its Place in Politics

ROBERT KEY (WB)
Upper Sixth IB Philosophy Student

It was a day of typical English weather with the sun making a feeble attempt at breaking through the dark clouds but to no avail, allowing the day to be won by a depressing drizzle and icy wind. Two men were sitting idly by the river. It might appear from afar that they were exchanging pleasantries or perhaps lamenting their misfortune of organising a meeting on a day so foul. Yet this was not the case. Indeed Hassan and Isaac had hardly noticed the weather. Their coats were soaked through by now and the grass had become quite damp around them but neither thought to suggest parting ways. This was their first meeting since finding each other on a philosophy discussion blog on the internet. They had spent the last hour discussing the problem of evil and were soon to move on to the place of religion in politics.

'Well whether or not religion can defend itself from the major issue of natural and moral evil the evidence for me is still inconclusive. Hassan this leads me to only one conclusion.'

'I'm afraid I don't follow, Isaac.'

'It appears to me that religion should have no place in politics whatsoever.'

'Isaac, it saddens me to hear such a conclusion. What has made you arrive here?'

'Rationally I'm afraid it does not make sense for religion to be an influence in politics. Why should we bear in mind the opinions of those believing in God who are so heavily led by the teachings in the Bible? It seems to me that it would be irrational to let political decisions be affected by teachings that we presume correct solely because of beliefs. Surely politics is not about subjective beliefs about deities and instead

should be left to democratic socially and economically-minded thinking?'

'Isaac, I understand your point here and I sympathise to a degree. It could appear that religion should be separate to politics because enforcing laws on people who do not hold similar religious views is unfair on them but I ask you this; could enforcing conservative policies on socialist party members be a similar enforcement of forcing your ideas on other people?'

'Of course, Hassan, a logically well thought out point, but I do not think it is credible as politics is about deciding what is best for society. It is necessary that a political party vote is taken as a country must work as a whole, not as individual parts. Religion on the other hand can still work in a personal way as well as impersonally. If we were to take a vote on what religion the UK should be then we would end up persecuting those of religious minority. If we are to ensure there is no discrimination as to who may be a political leader then we cannot allow religion to be influential as it would mean those of different religions trying to govern under with different beliefs. This is why Catholicism has become more and more marginalised in the UK in recent years as we expand towards a multi-cultural society we cannot be influenced by religion as it would mean discrimination against others.'

'And of those countries that are so influenced by politics at the moment?'

'Well it seems obvious does it not? These countries can plead as much as they want that they are tolerant and accepting of other religions but in the end someone of another religion would not be allowed to live by their religious beliefs if the policies of that country are shaped by another religion. Take the USA for instance,

how can they expect to remove their image of 'anti-Islam' if they are a country that is heavily influenced by Christianity. A Muslim would find it impossible to not be suppressed living in a society that is governed with great Christian influence.'

'Isaac, I'm afraid I can't agree with you here. It should be possible for a Christian to lead a public life whilst holding on to their Christian values. For many people religion is not merely a part of their life, it is their path of life. It would be wrong to separate their religious beliefs from their daily lives. They should be allowed to express their views to society if we are truly a democratic state and then society can decide if their policies are what they want in place to govern them.'

'And with regards to morality, Hassan? I will only touch upon the problems of living by Natural Law in our society today. Society demands the right to have the choice of abortion yet how could a Catholic Prime Minister, allowed to bring his Christian views into politics, stand for this and allow society to have what they want? Christian ethics demands the sanctity of all life but studies have shown that the USA legalising abortion on the 22nd of January 1973 led to a sharp decrease in the crime rate. Society demands the right to have choice in this matter, something which using Natural Law would not allow.'

'Ah yes, Isaac, but maybe the sanctity of life is more important than decreasing the crime rate? What if our society is not moral and they indeed should be following Christian ethics because Christian ethics is right? A Christian man believes himself to be correct in these matters of ethics. Therefore he should not be marginalised for his beliefs. He should be allowed to put forward his beliefs about ethics and he should not be condemned for being in full support of what he says. It is wrong to shun religious views merely because some believe they are unsuitable.'

'Ah but suppose Christian ethics is actually wrong? Suppose Sharia Law is correct? Muslims' concept of Sharia Law, built up by the Qu'ran, means that they have a totally different view of ethics and morality. Moreover, Hassan, they are obliged to follow Sharia Law in their religion. For many it is the only path they may take. It is the correct way to constitute life.'

There are many parts of Sharia Law that we deem inexcusably unacceptable. Much of the Western World abhors what they perceive as Islam's concept of morality yet you would see it allowed to continue as their religion is the main foundation of their politics.'

'If it is their religious belief that that is how life should be lived then I feel they should be given the chance to live their lives that way.'

'And in the UK? You encourage and would allow some people to support an inferior view of women when our society aims to achieve complete equality. It can even be seen in Catholicism that men and women are not treated equally. Again, how can political ideas be influenced by those believing that only men can be ordained as bishops? It would be wrong. Allowing some to live in our country under different laws due to religion would be unacceptable, Isaac. I cannot help feel that religion must be removed from politics to ensure the avoidance of cultural bias about beliefs. In our globalised society we are moving slowly towards treating everyone with equality. But how can this be achieved if we are to let our religious views influence our decisions in politics? Should we perhaps consider attempting another crusade to regain our holy lands? It would be a religious political movement, much like the previous crusades that have not worked in our past. Yet the reason they would not work today is that they would destroy any ties we hold between nations. This is the reason why Jihadi-Salafists cannot be reasoned with as it is their political belief that they own any land they have previously conquered. A religiously motivated belief that ensures that in our society we cannot be at peace. I believe that only when religion is put aside from politics can we succeed in creating a peaceful and fair world.'

Hassan knew that this discussion would not end and would merely turn into debate and then to argument. He saw the wisdom in Isaac's words yet he could not help feel that what he proposed was too unrealistic. Still, what can one do but hope for the best? Yet, whether or not this 'best' was a society without religious influence bore heavily on Hassan's mind as the day dwindled towards a winter's early evening.'

The Whys and The Wherefores: What Does It Mean To Be A Thinker?

JAMIE LARGE
Teacher of Divinity and Philosophy

What are we doing when we think? Well, looked at from a neurological perspective thinking is brain activity, electrical impulses which somehow result in our self-awareness. Yet this is problematic. How does matter become self aware? One might argue that thinking is an emergent property of the biochemical and physical processes of the brain, but can brain chemistry explain the subjective, individual experience of tasting chocolate, or of meeting someone we love at the arrivals hall of an airport? It might explain the underlying process, but does it explain the experience? The reductionist perspective that thinking is nothing but electrical activity in the brain, in my view, misses the bigger picture. Indeed the argument that everything, including thinking, is simply physical matter is a metaphysical claim, not a claim that can be verified with reference to matter alone. We could say that Picasso's 'Guernica' is simply oil paint on a canvas, but does this adequately describe this masterpiece in its entirety? Paint on a canvas is just a description of the matter of which it is composed, but, as Aristotle and Aquinas pointed out, we also need to take account of something's form and purpose in order to fully understand it. This is a point missed by many materialists. We live our lives on many levels: on one level we are biological organisms and on another we are individuals attempting to construct meaning, we are emotional and, I would argue, spiritual beings who interact with the world as if we were free and as if it matters what decisions we make. Ultimately all education and all morality is founded upon this idea.

So what more can we say about being a thinker? Well, I would suggest that whilst thinking may partly be a process of inputting information to the brain, it is fundamentally more than that. To be a thinker means to do more than simply absorb information, it is to critically reflect on it, to compare it with other ideas and to analyse it. A thinker is someone who wrestles

with conventionally held knowledge in order to reach a deeper meaning. All academic disciplines aim to do this. In fact this is what children do instinctively. It is only as we grow up that some of us forget how to think deeply. I remember a professor of mine at university starting his first lecture to us with the phrase, 'All I want you to do is be like three-year-olds'. I was annoyed by this at the time, but now I realise there is much wisdom in what he said. Young children are hardwired to ask the question 'why'? Of course the complexity of understanding of young children is less than that of adults, but the point is important. I hear people say things like, 'I couldn't do philosophy, it's too deep, too abstract, too heavy, too unclear... Rubbish! Find the child within. In this way the boundary between 'teacher' and 'learner' is broken down, since we are all thinkers.

Now I ask myself, paradoxically, is it ever right to let go of thinking? Sometimes I sense students' heads are hurting with all the thinking going on, and mine too! On one level I am glad of this hurt. Just as the stretching of our minds takes effort, even pain, so will it lead to greater understanding. I liken this to the grit in an oyster which will turn to a pearl. However, whilst thinking is clearly vital, I would suggest that we have all, at one time or another, struggled with a problem to which we cannot find an answer, perhaps wrestling with this into the night. Sometimes the answers to these problems come to us when we are no longer trying to think, perhaps at times when we are simply 'being', maybe as we walk down the street. Perhaps answers come to us when we take time to slow down, to stop, even to pray or meditate. So I think that ultimately what it means to be an effective thinker is to manage the creative tension between struggling and letting go of thought.

This article first appeared in the 2011 edition of the Ardingly Annals.

Clubs and Societies

The Department is lucky in that, through the enthusiasm of the students, we are able to run, not one, but two societies, one for the Middle School and another for the Sixth Form. Write-ups of some of the various meetings of these clubs form the basis for many of the articles in this journal.

The Divinity and Philosophy Reading Group

The Divinity and Philosophy Reading Group continued into its second year, welcoming ten new regular members from the Lower Sixth. The society meets on Mondays fortnightly and discusses key texts in Divinity and Philosophy that the students have read beforehand. An attempt is made to ensure that the content of these texts does not overlap with their studies and that students are pushed beyond the requirements of examination courses, in preparation for university life. Restricted to the Sixth Form, the Reading Group continues to grow and has quickly become a fixed feature of school life.

Mr Kendry



Sophos

Sophos, the Middle School Philosophy discussion club, has continued to meet fortnightly this year over tea and biscuits. Discussions are led by students themselves on a topic of their own choosing before being opened up to general discussion. Such discussions can sometimes become quite heated and particularly vocal members are invited to give the next talk.



Climbing Up The Walls: On Existentialism - Collage by Lucy Sheehan (WG)

Testing Times: Kierkegaard's 'Speech In Praise of Abraham'

RACHEL HOWARD (T)
Lower Sixth IB Philosophy Student

Kierkegaard compares the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac to the process of a mother weaning her child, metaphorically indicating the process of becoming detached from something to which one is strongly devoted or has familiarized itself with. The text is in fact the beginning of Kierkegaard's discussion of the nature of faith which he approaches through Abraham's test of faith.

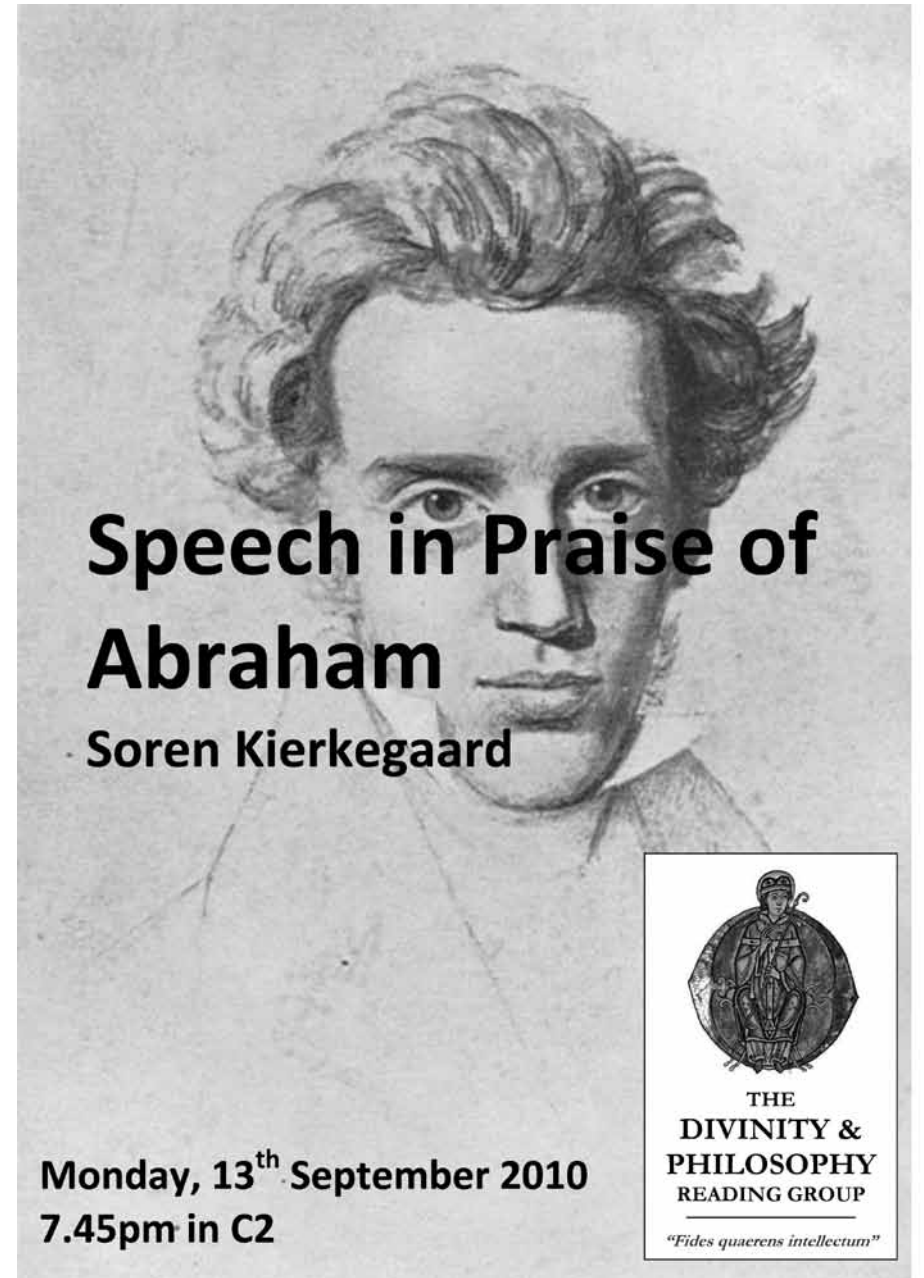
Kierkegaard separates this chapter into four short retellings of the story, slightly varying the interpretation and presentation each time. The first story of Abraham's test of faith illustrates the moment when Abraham is told he must kill his own son Isaac, and chooses to act as a mother would when weaning her child. Acting in this way Kierkegaard says that 'the mother blackens her breast, for it would be shame were the breast to look pleasing when the child is not to have it'. This demonstrates how Abraham is attempting to make Isaac think that he is an idolater- a follower of God's commands. In this way he is trying to spare Isaac from the emotionally painful process of separation, as the object of his desire is no longer so desirable. The problem that this creates is that Abraham has tarnished his own image by concealing the motivation for his actions behind those of a madman. Translating this to the idea of faith, Abraham is not acting in a way that will demonstrate his true willingness to sacrifice his own son, and thus he fails God's test.

The second interpretation of Abraham and Isaac's story brings about a conflict within Abraham himself. Upon reaching the top of the Mountain of Moriah, Abraham questions why his God would demand such a violent sacrifice from him. This brings to light another of Kierkegaard's problems with faith; are demonstrations of true faith merely comparable to acts of blind obedience?

The weaning analogy that accompanies this passage illustrates this in the way that a mother will physically cover her body from her child, therefore denying the child access to her breast.

In the third retelling of Abraham's story, Abraham attempts to plead with God. He tries to get God to understand that he cannot demonstrate his faith by willingly sacrificing something which he holds most dear. However, which action do we then define as Abraham's sin; his willingness to sacrifice his own son or his disobedience of God's will? The weaning passage here illustrates the loss a mother feels after she weans her child. Their relationship as mother and child will continue to grow and develop in new ways, but they will never again share this unique bond. The effectiveness of this version lies in the way that it contrasts the feelings of love and care that a parent holds for their child and the level of faith required to approach this test of devotion to God.

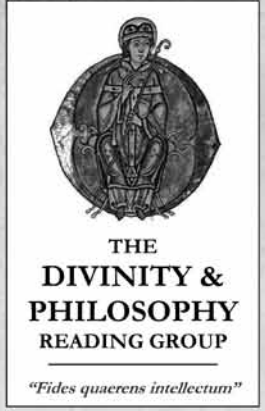
The fourth and final variation of Abraham's story is perhaps the hardest to interpret owing to its ambiguity. This account is an attempt to understand Abraham's actions. As Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son at the top of Mount Moriah, Isaac saw his father's hand shake in anguish at the act he was about to commit, which in turn leads to Isaac losing his faith. To continue the parallel story of the mother, if we imagine God is the mother weaning Isaac from Abraham then this provides us with a clearer comprehension of the situation. This would imply that Isaac loses his faith in his father rather than his faith in God, which meets much more effectively with the objective of achieving a better relationship with God. God has freed Isaac from reliance on Abraham, in the same way that the physical weaning of a child enables it to turn to solid food rather than to rely on its mother.



Speech in Praise of Abraham

Soren Kierkegaard

Monday, 13th September 2010
7.45pm in C2



THE
DIVINITY &
PHILOSOPHY
READING GROUP
"Fides quaerens intellectum"

Although initial confusion stems from the inclusion of Attunement in *Fear and Trembling*, in particular the weaning analogies, they, once fully understood, offer a more relatable way of understanding that God is represented as the mother, Isaac is the child and Abraham is the mother's physical self. They can also be seen to ultimately serve as a reminder to the audience that the peril of Abraham as a man of faith and of the mother weaning her child is nothing compared to

the true agony of Abraham as a father being asked to sacrifice his own son.

Conclusively we can see that all four variations of Abraham's one test of faith enable us to understand Kierkegaard's position on the issue of faith; by understanding and communicating the many possible forms of faith, it necessarily becomes something less than true faith.

The Future's Bright, The Future's Indeterminate: Thoughts on Determinism

SERENA HARDWICK (N)
Fifth Form GCSE Divinity Student

I am free to choose a topic to write about for *Logos*, and I can give good reasons why I should write about Determinism. My reasons shape my choices, but am I free to choose which reasons to give weight to? Am I free to be the kind of being who takes some reasons more seriously than others? Perhaps I've been shaped by a combination of nature and nurture, to value clarity and rigour above obfuscation. Perhaps my apparent freedom to choose is merely illusory.

Determinism is the view that every event, including human cognition, behaviour, decision, and action, is causally determined by an unbroken chain of prior occurrences and consequently means that you are powerless to change your destiny. Casual Determinism depicts that the world is governed by (or is under the control of) Determinism and by chains of events, as a matter of natural law. Fatalism however, is the thought that your choices, deliberations and your actions won't make any real difference to our lives or the world around us. This is not implied by Determinism, which supposes that there may be causal factors which account for, explain and necessitate our actual choices and deliberations. The distinction between Determinism and Fatalism is a crucial one.

In exploring Fatalism, a common analogy is used; imagine that someone was to jump off the Golden Gate Bridge and as they begin to free fall towards San Francisco Bay, they start thinking to themselves, 'now is this really a good idea?' Well, at that stage in the proceedings it's too late for a change of heart- nothing can make a difference to their predicament. Whether or not this analogical understanding is truly representative of the central themes of Fatalism is questionable, in that it fails to recognise the emphasis of our forward looking practical attitude on the world. However, there's another element to fatalistic concern; its emphasis on

what is influencing us rather than to what extent we can influence the world. We worry that the world is uncontrollably forcing our formation as human beings, our deliberations, our choices and our actions. In other words, every action we take is one that's fixed by the world. This is where the overlap between Fatalism and Determinism appears the greatest. So, now imagine you're standing on the edge of the Golden Gate Bridge, and you decide to jump. It seems like your own choice but some people think that you can explain that choice in terms of things that have happened to you in the past – a mechanism of cause and effect.

Although we may not realise it, examples of Determinism surround us in our everyday lives. We can often locate the event which caused us to have a good or bad day and look at the consequences of what occurred. Whether it was an enjoyable or unpleasant experience, we can look at the very beginning and understand our behaviour, actions and comprehend why our thoughts were thought. We can even see why we have 'made' certain decisions – if we can really make these decisions at all. At the end of the day, we can look at the first cause and observe how events unfolded. Looking at the events that unfolded, we realise we could not have changed our destiny that day because of the first cause. If the first cause changes then so do the events, the effects may be similar but never the exact same as with the original first cause; every cause has effects and these causes occur from previous causes. Every cause is predetermined and the larger the cause, the larger its effects. The cause and affect argument is an example of the Cosmological Argument. The Cosmological Argument argues that there must be something that caused the very first cause and consequently the beginning of the universe.

Determinism (particularly in the West) is often associated with Newtonian Physics, which depicts the

physical matter of the universe as operating according to a set of fixed, knowable laws. To quote Charles Darwin, 'Everything in nature is the result of fixed laws.' A product of Newtonian physics is his "billiard ball" hypothesis, which argues that once the initial conditions of the universe were established, the history of the universe followed inevitably. If it were actually possible to have complete knowledge of physical matter and all of the laws governing that matter at any one time, then it would be theoretically possible to compute the time and place of every event that will ever occur (Laplace's Demon). In this way, the basic particles of the universe operate in much the same as the rolling balls on a billiard table, moving and striking each other in predictable ways to produce predictable results.

Logical Determinism or *Determinateness* is the notion that all propositions, whether about the past, present, or future, are either true or false. Note that one can support Causal Determinism without necessarily supporting Logical Determinism and vice versa (depending on one's views on the nature of time, but also randomness). The problem of free will is especially salient with Logical Determinism: how can choices be free, given that propositions about the future already have a truth value in the present (i.e. it is already determined as either true or false)? This is referred to as the problem of future contingents. In this case we have no choice but to choose the inevitable, already our free will is slowly shrinking. It just seems that we have the ability to choose. Many do not like this but what they must remember is that even if they have no power in their choices, their lives remain the same.

Determinism doesn't just affect our ability to make choices, but affects our behaviour too. This conjures a major problem; if we cannot control our actions and how we feel,

then crimes we commit should not be punishable because we didn't actually have a choice in committing that crime. A society needs laws and rules and incentives for people not to commit crimes (for example, prison sentences). However, even if we could prove that there is no free will, society would continue pretending we do because we need laws and rules to function in what we call a fair and just society. Furthermore, if committing a crime is our destiny, which we cannot control, then this raises serious questions about the morality and goodness of God. If Determinism is correct then God is not an ethical or all loving Deus.

A lot of people vehemently dislike the idea of not being in control of their actions, they feel powerless. With so much disorder, trying to find any means of control may seem an impossible task, perhaps explaining the lack of true Determinists in our world. In the end however, regardless of whether we are in control of our decisions or not, it is unlikely it could make a lasting difference to your outlook on life. To function as human beings in a society and not descend into anarchy, nothing in society or life could change. So, do you think you have free will? Can you freely make decisions? Or is your answer to either of those questions out of your control.



Seizing the Day: Seneca's 'On the Shortness of Life'

KATHRYN WELSH (T)
Lower Sixth IB Philosophy Student

To exclaim that life's too short is to throw caution to the wind, expel worry and doubt and, most importantly, avoid doing something you'd really rather not. There never seems to be enough time to accomplish everything we'd like and once we realise just how fleeting our time on Earth is, it is often too late in our lives and we are faced with the daunting nature of mortality. Like most commodities and entities the human race is reliant on, time is in short supply.

Lucius Seneca argues however, that our time on Earth is not by any means short, we just don't make correct use of it and so it races past us. The problem we face is not a lack of time, but our widespread squandering and misuse of it. By wasting time dwelling on the material and seeking luxuries, we destroy the potential in this precious treasure. 'So it is—the life we receive is not short, but we make it so, nor do we have any lack of it, but are wasteful of it'.

An organised, ambitious, efficient person is often deemed as someone who uses their time wisely in our society. If we work hard and employ our time to achieve our goals and ambitions, the rewards will be plentiful and, surely, then we cannot regret the use of our time. As students, we are often told to 'use our time wisely' and work efficiently if we want to get good exam results, to go to a good university, to make lots of money and, in theory, be very happy.

Obviously, the substance of human happiness is far more complex than this, but if this potential can be harnessed, most would view this as a life which has made very good use of its time.

Yet this is exactly the life Seneca accuses of flitting away time, as we only work for materialistic rewards and ignore subtle experiences which could greatly increase our happiness. A specific problem he picks up on is that the life we lead while we are younger wastes time in its search for material reward while the time we spend in retirement is often the time when we work most towards maximising our own happiness and thus properly utilising time.

What is the point in saving up our enjoyment of time until such a late point in our lives? As a society we tend to limit and categorise specific periods when we are allowed to relax and have fun, for example, Gap Years. This attitude, however, could be what's standing between us and a more content existence.

Consequently, we have to change the attitude towards time that we have across our entire lives and ensure that every second is put to good use, not wasted, and invested in moments which make our lives truly worth living.

On the Shortness of Life

Lucius Annaeus Seneca



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"Fides quaerens intellectum"

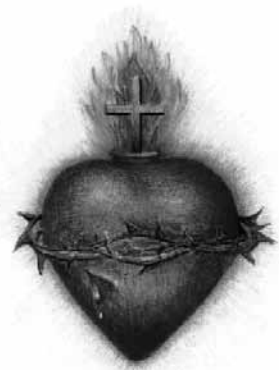
Monday, 22nd November 2010
7.45pm in C2

Beati Mundo Corde: Reflection on the School's Motto

THOMAS GIBBENS (H)
Remove GCSE Divinity Student

Beati Mundo Corde - blessed are the pure in heart. Some people will interpret this expression in many ways: such as in a religious sense, or just a nice phrase to think about. However, to me this is not a religious saying telling us think about our sins, but a way of life that we all should strive to achieve. To me this doesn't mean that we should all endeavour to be a person who is perfect and sinless, but a person who has no regrets. 'Pure in heart' to me means that we should have a clear view of life without events making us become one sided in our view, or to develop prejudices but to see the world as a place in which we can do anything.

Secondly, *Beati Mundo Corde* means to me that we should live our lives not only as being people with no regrets, but also people who will be open to anyone. I believe this because 'pure in heart' means to me that a person should not have any hates or aversions, but will be confident and act as safe haven for other people; a person to be given responsibilities and trust by others. To me 'pure in heart' is also a way in which we should strive to be a person who is honest, just, and who will be able to tackle any situation appropriately.



Prize Essays

Continuing a tradition begun last academic year, this year students were invited to enter a Prize Essay competition run by the Department. Once again, the competition was open to all students within the College and entrants had a choice of two titles, one more explicitly theological, the other more explicitly philosophical. The standard of submissions remained exemplary. This year winners were Jenny Elwin, who won the Divinity Prize and Sebastian Spence, who was awarded the Philosophy Prize.

Does It Matter Whether Jesus Existed?: The Second Ardingly Divinity Prize Essay

JENNY ELWIN (T)
Lower Sixth A-Level Divinity Student

Christianity: a faith followed by millions, a religion that has an acceptance of the historical existence of a man named Jesus at its roots. Whilst there is debate as to whom Jesus was (the son of God, a great Prophet or a deluded but essentially 'good' man) and more to the point whether he existed, the question remains, does this matter?

Truth is important, it matters, if we were unable to presuppose truthfulness from others, how would our society function? Trivial actions such as inquiring for directions would be made impossible if one could no longer expect real directions to be given. Therefore truth is fundamental to our society and we should strive for it. The question as to whether or not Jesus existed is a matter which could reveal a figure from the past to be either truth or fiction and is therefore important.

Similarly, 'truth' is important from an academic point of view, Therefore Jesus' historicity matters in the same way that establishing any truth from the past matters. If the present is built upon the past and the past is untrue then surely today is also a lie. If Jesus' existence is one such untruth from the past then uncovering it

would have an impact on today. Therefore, whether or not he existed 'matters'.

On the other hand, regardless of whether or not the past we believe to have happened was real, life still goes on. Thus it could be argued that practically speaking, Jesus' existence is inconsequential because a lack of certainty as to his existence does not stop the world from existing or have any other such cataclysmic effect. Just as if William the Conqueror was proved not to have existed it would have no effect at all to many people. If it was discovered that Jesus never existed, it might cause individuals to question their own life and beliefs but they themselves would not cease to exist.

For many people whether or not Jesus existed is simply a question that is irrelevant to their lives. A question they do not even engage with. They can exist quite contentedly without having an interest in this man named Jesus, and what he had to say. He plays no part in their lives. Therefore in the same way it might not matter to someone whether William the Conqueror existed, it doesn't matter to them whether Jesus existed. This conclusion can be illustrated further by looking

at the celebration of Christmas. Whilst the celebration traditionally has the birth of Christ at its centre, it is celebrated world-wide by many, who do not accept its religious foundation. The 'Christmas story' is seen as a pleasant tale, a tradition, or not given any recognition at all. Therefore one can presume that if the existence of Jesus were to be disproved, many would continue to celebrate 'Christmas' in the same way as before. Their lives and behaviour would remain unaffected by such a revelation as it would not matter to them.

Whilst this is the case for many Atheists and agnostics, that is not to say this is typical of everyone of a similar leaning. Jesus' existence undeniably matters greatly to many convinced atheists (Richard Dawkins for instance) in the sense that they either strongly believe Jesus didn't exist, or that he wasn't who he said he was. If for example such a person was endeavouring to prove the non-existence of God or the lack of truth and validity of Christianity, the existence of Jesus would be an important issue to explore.

An obvious group of people who would argue that Jesus' existence matters is Christians. Without Jesus' existence, Christianity would be an empty faith, based upon a lie. Many would have led their lives, following teachings they believed to be true. To find them otherwise would question everything they believe. Jesus existence is paramount for followers of Christianity.

Despite this, from a philosophical perspective, if Christianity is regarded as an example of a coherent moral teaching, the existence of the teacher is not essential. Therefore Christianity has value as a moral code, and it doesn't matter whether Jesus existed. In the same way that one might believe in the ideals of communism without believing Karl Marx existed, one might as a philosopher, follow the teachings of Jesus without believing in him. Non Christians might share this view, appreciating the good done by Christians as a result of their belief in Jesus despite not believing themselves that he existed.

Even so, for millions of Christians it is essential, theologically speaking, that Jesus existed. Christians believe that Jesus' existence is essential for forgiveness and entry to heaven. At the heart of Christianity is a religion anchored on historical events. And therefore Jesus' life, death and resurrection are essential to it. If Jesus didn't exist the core theological truth at the heart of Christianity would be untrue.

Christianity is not the only religion that acknowledges Jesus' existence. Islam and Judaism also do this. The main issue for Jews and Muslims, however, is not whether Jesus existed, but if He was the son of God. If we were to hold the existence of Jesus as synonymous with the fact that Jesus was the Messiah then whether Jesus existed could have huge ramifications for the Jewish religion and the answer to the question would have huge importance. Whilst Jesus' existence 'matters' to followers of both faiths, on balance it is not essential for most practitioners.

It clearly does not matter to everyone whether Jesus existed. But I would argue that truth matters, it has intrinsic value. Moreover Jesus' historicity has value from an historians perspective and is vital for followers of Christianity. Whilst Jesus' existence might not concern the majority on a day to day basis, from a theological perspective, whether or not Jesus existed should matter to everyone due to the theological implications and possibilities that would entail from such a discovery. As the answer to the question 'did Jesus exist' would have an impact on the lives of not only religious believers, but a much wider group of people, Jesus' existence therefore matters enormously.

Why Is It Wrong To Eat Babies? The Second Ardingly Philosophy Prize Essay

SEBASTIAN SPENCE (M) Lower Sixth A-Level Divinity Student

An old Spanish proverb reads: 'the belly rules the mind'. Whether the belly demands babies or not it is yet to be seen.

Certain animals such as fish and birds, are known to eat their young - reasons for doing so were unknown until recently. Scientists say that birds may eat their young because of the nutritional benefits, either to satisfy the original parent or perhaps (in the case of the bird) to regurgitate the semi-digested remains and feed it to the other children. This essay is not about animals and the ethics behind certain species consuming their offspring. Rather, the point at issue is the motive behind an action. What happens as a consequence of that action must be taken into consideration when deciding the ethics of the action in question.

There are two approaches to this issue: a consequentialist approach or a deontological approach. As the name would suggest, consequentialists are concerned with the outcome of a certain action. For them, the outcome determines the morality of an action itself. Most famously Utilitarianism - a form of consequentialism - assumes that the choice, which provides the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people with the least amount of suffering, is the one that can be ethically justified. To return to our analogy, if a female bird were to eat one of its fifteen chicks, to be able to feed the remaining fourteen, would that ethically justify the action? On the other side of the ethical spectrum, a deontologist would take the opposite approach to that of a consequentialist. Deontologists, such as Immanuel Kant, argued that the intention behind an action determines the ethical justification of it. Any choice based on the expected outcome is wrong, as people should do things without the promise of something happening. Again, going

back to the bird analogy, the bird eating its young is only justified if it is deemed right to do so and not to satisfy a certain need by the outcome of the situation. The bird would thus not be justified in eating the chick merely either to satisfy its own or its young's hunger.

What assumptions can one make about humans acting in the same way as the imaginary bird? I have yet to read about this situation happening to humans, apart from those who resort to cannibalism in desperate situations. It may, arguably, not be wrong to eat a baby, if five other people can live from eating the child's flesh. One of those people may have a cure for cancer memorized and the only way to develop it would be to survive being stranded on a desert island for one more day. Jonathan Swift wrote about the same ideas in the early 18th century. His essay *A Modest Proposal* suggests that the Irish could ease their economic problems by selling their babies to the rich as food. He even goes on to explain various preparation methods for eating, describing babies as: *a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled*. Just as it has been shown in this essay, does the logic behind eating babies justify the action in some cases?

Is it wrong to eat babies? I tried asking people and the answers were not convincing: 'it just is', 'it's inhumane' and 'what's wrong with you?!' No one managed to give me a concrete answer. I'd be better swayed if someone told me they don't taste very good or could, if not prepared properly, cause a minor illness. Without leaning towards an 'eatbabies-atarian', one may genuinely inquire why society has deemed it wrong to eat other human beings.

In early human years, tribes had people with different skills within the tribe perform different tasks necessary for the benefit of the group - people who gathered food, people who made clothing, built fires, shelter, etc. If someone in the tribe killed someone else, it had a ripple effect that negatively affected everyone in the

tribe. As a result, this murderer became an outcast. In the present day society has evolved to believe murder as wrong, basically for utilitarian reasons. It is to the betterment of the people around us if we all remain alive to the best of our ability. And the role children serve is vital. They are the future, and without them the chances of survival of the human race is very slim. Thus, from the point of view of keeping the human race going, we could say that it is wrong to kill and eat babies in a general sense.

Yet, there is a further bridge which has to be crossed. I mentioned in the final sentence of the last paragraph that it is wrong to kill and eat babies in a general sense because it prevents the survival of our species. However, as true as it may be, does this condemn eating baby flesh if the baby is already dead? Logically we established that killing a baby is for most of the time the wrong thing to do but, if we return to our desert island analogy, supposing the baby was already dead and the woman with the cure for cancer was still alive, would it still be wrong for her to eat if she had not been responsible for its death? That it is the true question of this essay, and I'm sure Johnathan Swift would agree with me in saying that the action of eating a baby would be more morally justified if the baby was already dead because it no longer serves its purpose of continuing the human race. The expected shock from any person when such a sickening topic comes up is due to the combination of two very powerful taboos: murder and cannibalism. In trying to answer whether it is wrong to eat babies, we need to establish which of the taboos is the more powerful of the two. Is it more wrong to eat babies or to kill them, or to kill them and eat them as opposed to just eating them?

This being said, we have yet to really nail down what makes an individual action of a person eating a baby morally wrong. I asked my friend and he responded very calmly by referring to Jesus and saying, 'we are all

God's children, and only God has the right to give and take away life'. Thus, another perspective arises from Christianity. Religion on the whole speaks out against murder and probably even more so when it comes to the young. Therefore, it is safe to assume that any Christian would always say that it is wrong to kill and eat babies. Let us focus on the events of the 22nd July in Norway. Anders Brevik, a Norwegian bred terrorist acting on behalf of the Christian church viciously attacked and killed dozens of people with a sniper gun. Amongst those people were children and even babies. Admittedly, he didn't eat them but he still saw fit to kill innocent children despite being an extreme Christian.

As to people who are not Christian or do not believe in any religion, we must ask whether any action can ever be 100 % wrong, 100% of the time, regardless of the situation. As we have seen, sometimes killing someone (even a baby) can be morally justified and even sometimes to eat one as well. So, is it possible to say categorically that it is wrong to eat babies? We can only relativise: most of the time it is wrong to eat babies. They are a vital part of the survival of the human race and they will grow up to contribute to society. Religious folk will argue that murder is wrong, and that by extension eating babies is wrong. Their ideals presumably have a sound source. The question whether it is wrong to eat babies is impossible to answer from just one point of view, which is of course the case with any moral issue.

In conclusion, one needs to ask whether what individuals hold to be more important when confronted with a moral dilemma, such as whether it is wrong to eat babies - logic, faith or culture? Which trumps the other two? Which should one take into account when making decisions? It may be unsatisfactory, but it would seem that only a position of moral relativism is intellectually sustainable.

Tea with Thomas: A Short Play on Ethics

JOSHUA WILLIAMS (R)
Lower Sixth A-Level Divinity Student

[Setting: Four philosophers are seated in a living room]

Thomas Aquinas Hello, Gentleman; lovely to see you all. I am certainly pleased you all made the effort to come this afternoon. I was hoping we could discuss some things.

Immanuel Kant It's a pleasure to be here, Tom, I'm overflowing with questions today!

Joseph Fletcher I agree. An excellent opportunity for some philosophical debate and banter, eh Jeremy? Oh, I'm thrilled! Really, truly thrilled. Eeek! *(He giggles)*

Jeremy Bentham Yes, well... enough of this. Let's press-on...

Fletcher As one iron said to the other!

Bentham Quite! Thank you for that input, Joseph. Excellent. *(He lights his pipe)*

Aquinas I have been pondering life, gentlemen, and I think I have a very interesting idea. I can't help but feel there is a pre-ordained way we ought to behave. If we follow it, we will be rewarded, if not, we will be punished. Rather like our Buddhist friends and 'Karma' as they so call it. Just like our old friend Aristotle, I feel that humans have a purpose in life. *(He smiles, looking around the room and reclines slightly in his chair)* Thoughts, gentlemen?

Fletcher Well first I would jus-

Bentham Shut up, Fletcher. Go and fetch some tea and biscuits.

(Fletcher takes the order and leaves)



Kant Yes I would agree, Thomas. Morality is not contingent, it is intrinsic. What do you mean by 'purpose'? Do you mean a duty?

Aquinas In a sense, But the main point is that we must flourish. The term is 'Eudaemonia' I believe. And it is our purpose or duty, yes.

Fletcher *(Calling from off stage...)*
The development of the whole person within society!

(There is a long and awkward pause. The sound of an item of crockery smashing is heard.)

Aquinas I believe there are four laws. Eternal Law, Divine Law, Natural Law and Human Law. Let's chat about natural law. By that I mean moral laws known through God built into human nature. Now are we all believers?

Kant *(After a pause of thoughtful hesitation)* Yes. What about you Jeremy?

Bentham I don't think God needs to come into it really... But for the purposes of this, if it's going to make you happy, then alright.

Aquinas I have come up with five precepts. Here... *(He shows them a notebook with the precepts scrawled down)* We must now accept that the right and wrongs we assume from these don't make something right, rather they need to be applied to different situations.

Kant I like this, I also believe that we can discern right and wrong through universal maxims. Thomas, I am curious, what about the Secondary Precepts? They don't take account of consequences.

Aquinas Immanuel, neither do your categorical imperatives!

Bentham Alas, you are both wrong. You can simply neglect the consequences that a moral decision brings about. You can't be so deontological. What is the most important thing to you, Immanuel?

Kant Hmm. I suppose I would have to say music and nature.

Bentham *(Clicking his fingers)* That's because they make you happy.

Aquinas Yes, but happiness is subjective. I see God as the most important thing in my life, but this isn't because God makes me happy. It's not about me, Jeremy, it's about intrinsic moral laws.

Kant Hah! Good one, Thomas. *(He reclines arrogantly in his chair, lighting his pipe he deliberately lets smoke billow into Bentham's face)* Oh?...whoops.

[It is highly inappropriate]

Aquinas Immanuel, please...

Bentham Ah, but does your service to God feel selfless? *(Aquinas nods)* And does the fact that you have chosen to live this dedicated life, does that not satisfy you? If it doesn't, surely your dedication is futile?

Aquinas I see your point. Yes, well I suppose it must make me happy to give myself to God, but not in the form of happiness we immediately consider. But still, what does happiness have to do with it?

Bentham We should act morally in order to maximise happiness for the greatest number of people.

Aquinas My friend, Natural Law-

Bentham Ignores happiness!

Aquinas No! Far from it. Natural Law means we have a purpose. Our purpose is to do good. We are rewarded by happiness. A by-product... Gentlemen, at the heart of all morality we must aim to do good. Goodness brings happiness. But we must consider the process behind reaching goodness, which Utilitarianism fails to do. Natural Law and these five precepts try and provide a basis of morality that shows us how to reach goodness.

Kant Good will is the only good without limitation. An example might help, Thomas.

Aquinas Of course. Fletcher?

[Fletcher walks in with a tray of various cups of tea and biscuits]

Fletcher Yes.

Aquinas Before I continue with an example, have you any questions?

Fletcher I'm afraid that, from what I heard, you seem to be ignoring *agape*. As a Christian you must surely agree that *agape* is fundamental to morality?

Aquinas I do indeed. I also agree that happiness is important. And so is duty. Natural Law theory results in all these things. By following the five precepts: to live, to reproduce, to teach, to live in an ordered society and to worship God, we have the tools to apply ethics and determine what is the right thing to do. Fletcher, to answer your question perhaps more directly, *agape* is the essence of the precept 'to worship God'. Goodness is love. Goodness is happiness. And, Immanuel, Goodness is our duty, our purpose! *(Bentham's eyes twinkle. He has an idea.)*

Bentham Okay. One man sits on a trap door. On a neighbouring trap door sit six men. You have control over two levers; one will kill the one man, the other will kill the six. Which do you pull?

Aquinas A fine question. *(He sits forward and sips his tea. An aura of expectation descends upon the room and the four philosophers.)* The first precept reads 'to live'. Therefore, our secondary precepts are: 'to save life' and 'do not kill'. So we face a dilemma with the latter. 'Do not kill' but we must 'save life'. What about the next precept, 'to reproduce'? The six men will, if saved, be able to produce more combined offspring than the one man- unless he is like that rotter Tolstoy -so on that basis, the six men should be saved. The third precept is 'to educate'. Hmm. Six men will be able to attend educational establishments and perhaps teach more people. Moreover, they will then be able to contribute to an 'ordered society' more because of their education. If one man is saved, the immediate families of the six men will be devastated. Those six men will be able to experience and generate happiness and *Agape* in the lives around them if they survive, whereas one man might not be able to generate as much. I agree that I have just spoken entirely about consequence and am making assumptions, however, I am speaking logically. Of course one man might have the ability of six. But we must be rational and logical to a greater extent. The act of killing can never be right, but in this situation it is moral and good.

(Meanwhile, Fletcher has wandered to the window, lost in thought.)

Fletcher I see now. Natural Law facilitates love and happiness. Apologies, Thomas, I thought you were entirely neglecting *agape*...

Aquinas Well as arguably the greatest Christian philosopher to have lived, I somehow doubt that... *(under his breath)* imbecile. Jeremy, what do you think?

Bentham *(visibly trying to look unimpressed and unchanged)* What? Oh...yes...well.

Aquinas *Agape*. Happiness. These are things morality should achieve. Natural Law provides a path to reaching these things in light of God. Now I don't mean to be rude, but your theories fail to take into account the other factors that morality is comprised of. Mine is much more holistic.

Fletcher Now, hold on Thomas. I may be the youngest theologian and philosopher here but I certainly refuse to be bullied. Situation ethics is ext-

Bentham Shut up.

Fletcher *(wounded and tearful)* No.

Kant You two have been like a married couple this afternoon. I am tired of it. Let's agree to disagree. Eh?

Aquinas Well, Immanuel I can't help but feel that we have polarised our respective theories far too much. We all fundamentally share similar beliefs, but somewhere along the line I think we forgot to recognise this.

(There is a long pause, and the men contemplate Aquinas' assertion serenely)

Aquinas, Bentham & Kant
Fletcher? Who invited you?

[The four men are seated looking puzzled at Fletcher, but content. A typical afternoon tea party]

Lies, Damned Lies, and the Bible: Myth and Meaning in the Story of Creation

ADAM KENDRY
Head of Divinity and Philosophy

Always begin at the beginning. For many of our students who study Divinity, that beginning is Genesis 1: the story of Creation.

Except, that isn't technically true, or at least not the whole truth. Genesis 1 is only *one* of the stories of Creation we find in the Bible. There are two alone in the Book of Genesis. They exist quite happily one after the other, broadly occupying the first two chapters respectively, wholly contradicting one another. Amazingly, very few people notice this. They are not merely slight variations on a theme: they are point for point at variance. In the first and far more famous creation myth (I should justify my use of the word shortly) the heavens and the earth are created over six days by God's spoken command. The earth begins as a formless void, envisaged as a boundless ocean. In turn, light, the vault, the seas and earth, vegetation, and the stars and the sun and the moon are created. Without wanting to spoil the surprise, in tomorrow's reading, God creates sea creatures and birds and animals and finally people. He then takes a day off. Everyone is familiar with this story and even its logical problems are well known: how are days reckoned if the sun isn't created until Day 4? What is the source of the light in Day 1? And so on.

In my experience, Christians today are very uncomfortable with much of the Bible, and this story in particular. They know their faith asserts that this story is 'true' but they are unsure if this obligates them to rejecting the claims of modern science regarding the Big Bang theory or Darwinian evolution. Some attempt to rationalise the Genesis 1 myth as the 'best scientific explanation' of the world available at the time it was written. Others gently consign the text to the list of those that aren't really important or relevant any more.

These lists have a habit of growing. In fact, Genesis 1 is totally – indeed centrally – relevant for Christians today. It should hold no fear at all for anyone. There is a quite easy, quite orthodox way of avoided the opposing dangers of Creationism on the one hand and of totally rejecting the authority of the Bible on the other. It is to remember this simple idea: the stories are true but didn't actually happen.

This seemingly-paradoxical statement will make more sense if we now turn to the second Creation myth (I've not forgotten the need to justify the word – it's coming). This story is less well-known. Here the earth begins as a wasteland – an un-irrigated desert. God causes underground waters to spring up and water the land. A garden grows and God fashions from the dust a man to act as the gardener. He then creates a host of other creatures but none are found to be a suitable companion for the man (best not to ask). So man is placed into a slumber during which God creates a woman from his ribs. The first parents are given an instruction not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the rest is history, or theology at least.

You see, I find it frankly incredible that the editors of the Bible did not notice the inconsistencies in these stories. Of course they did – they are obvious from a cursory glance. They knew they were dealing with two Creation stories and, rather than choose one and lose another, they decided to keep both. This is an important clue. Biblical scholars tell us that these two stories came from different periods in Jewish history. The first is actually the latter one, from the sixth or fifth century before Christ. The second dates from some five hundred years earlier. At the time of the final re-editing of the Old Testament, in approximately, the fifth century BC both were beloved stories of much

antiquity. If we look at what is going on in Jewish history at their times of composition, we can probe further into their meaning and the reasons for their being written.

To take the stories in chronological order, we have firstly a story of the planting of a garden. Do not be fooled into thinking of a small square of grass, a patio, and a vegetable patch. Gardens in the ancient world were planted by kings. They were massive public works: grand statements of opulence. Only a rich and powerful ruler could have such a garden. Not for nothing was one of the seven ancient wonders of the world a garden. And in Genesis 2 we see the greatest of kings – the Jewish God – plant a garden in the desert. He irrigates the dry dust and creates the world, envisages as a lush and vibrant Eden. Forget your geraniums, the claim that God is the gardener par excellence is meant to invoke wonder and awe. And what is man's role within this creation? To be the gardener. To serve and tend. To cooperate with God. This is a true story, whatever anyone says, I just do not believe that it actually happened, anymore than tortoises and hares organise sporting events – but slow and steady does win the race.

The later story, that we encounter first, has a different background. In 587 BC the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and carried most of the upper and middle classes off into Exile for a century. During this time, the Jewish exiles were forced to reconsider much of their theology in light of the terrible calamities that had befallen them. Robbed of political power and surrounded by pagan gods, they



sought a new understanding of God, themselves, and history. The great festival of Babylonian polytheism was celebrated at New Year when their creation epic – the Enuma Elish – was read aloud over seven days. This described a war in heaven in which Marduk defeated the sea-monster, Tiamat – a personification of the sea itself. From her carcass the world was created and mankind created as the gods' servants. In response, the Jews tell their story of creation. Here their God – the only God – creates not through conflict but through mere word. The sea is not His enemy, but a thing to be commanded. Mankind are made in His image: given honour not servitude. And He does it in six days, not seven. I love the cheek and defiance of this story. I can see why it begins the whole Bible. Because it is true that the One God created all things by His command, without opposition. You don't need to be a Biblical literalist to believe that. In fact, if you are, you're probably missing the point.

I promised to talk about myth and I think I have done. A myth is a story with a truth. A truth that didn't actually happen but is no less true for that. Truth has more than one level. Consider asking someone to raise their hand if they know the answer to the question 'what is the capital of France?'. When they do, we can ask 'why did you raise your hand?'. They will probably answer because they knew the answer. But there is another explanation: a physical one involving nerve impulses, musculature, and skeletons. The biological answer is no more true than the teleological one: they are both true, just on different levels. The world was created in a Big Bang. God created the world. There is no conflict between different levels of truth.

Myths use signs and symbols – a mythological grammar, if you like. Time and time again throughout the Bible we encounter the Sea as shorthand for something powerful: something that only God could control. God makes the world by pushing back the sea. He parts it again to lead the Chosen People to the Promised Land. He stops the Jordan so that Joshua can lead his army through it. He stills the storm so that the disciples can glimpse Christ's divinity and ask 'who is this that even the wind and sea obey him?'. He walks on the water. And, at the end of time, there will be no more sea, no more chaos, no opposition to God.

PETER GREEN Head Master

The former Downing Street spin-doctor, Alistair Campbell's statement, 'We don't do God' summarised the reluctance of politicians – in that case, Tony Blair's – to enter the religious arena. And now, with the introduction of the clumsy (to say the least) EBacc tables, where Religious Education is not included in the new humanities list, only Geography and History, this would suggest that the current Coalition Government doesn't do God either. It is a position that, quite frankly, I cannot understand because schools such as Ardingly, which are steeped in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England, do God in education.

I would like to put forward the case for the continuing relevance of Religious Studies and Philosophy, in our schools and, more crucially, how we can communicate that relevance to our students, our colleagues, and also to our parents and governors. We want our boys and girls to be able to reflect on – not necessarily give answers to – the following three questions. Firstly, why is there something instead of nothing? Secondly, what do I want and why do I want it? And, thirdly, how do I make sense of my life?

The evidence is there that our young people are looking to engage in this type of debate. The number of students taking GCSE RS over the last fifteen years has increased from 113,000 to just under half a million. We at Ardingly call the study of Religious Education 'Divinity', and from this we believe that our pupils learn to respect themselves and understand their own identity and, more importantly, develop a respect and tolerance of others as well. The study of 'Divinity' is not just through curricular provision, but it is also through the co-curricular provision: Headmaster's assemblies, Divinity and Philosophy reading groups, Sophos, our junior discussion group, and even our Theory of Knowledge lessons and extended projects. It is the original critical thinking, which involves textual study, philosophy, philosophical thinking, ethics, social understanding, and the skills of analysis and reasoning, which make it one of the most valuable qualifications in the school curriculum.

In this next section, I have pillaged much from an address to the Waterloo Place Group by my Head of Divinity & Philosophy. I would like to recount a true story about when he was staffing the Department during the College Open Morning. He explained that his encounters with prospective parents ranged from the very interested to

those merely window-shopping. He also said that he had the good fortune to meet a couple of sets of parents who exhibited nothing less than hostility upon seeing which department they had happened upon. One father stood out in particular because it gave him the opportunity to set out the case for the defence. The parent asked him what was the point of studying RS (Divinity) and made it clear that his son would not be doing so. My Head of Department tactfully pointed out that it was a compulsory subject in the Shell (Y9) year at Ardingly. The parent indicated that he had the right to withdraw his child. Again, I hope with great tact, my HoD pointed out that that only held true in maintained schools, that his son would attend the weekly College Eucharist, and that Ardingly was an explicitly Christian foundation.

Attempting to get a dialogue going, my Head of Department asked the parent why he felt Divinity was an irrelevance. The parent's response was that it wasn't true. Oh dear: he had picked a fight with the wrong person. Never pick an argument with a philosopher, since he remarked that neither was Newtonian Physics, and that he presumably wanted his son to learn about the laws of motion. Physics, as we know, has been humbled by the oddities of the quantum state, whereas Biology still operates in a Newtonian universe. Perhaps this is why the likes of Richard Dawkins is so strident in his secular and atheist views. The fact that biologists can map the genome, and even invent pills that restore your sexual prowess and cure your baldness, does not necessarily mean that his or her mechanical viewpoint is correct either. Belief in truth claims are not a necessary prerequisite for studying academic subjects.

Without the study of Divinity, we cannot understand the intellectual world we live in, for the study of the West is, in the main, the study of Christendom, and the common heritage of Abraham found within the three major monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Europe has been shaped and re-shaped by the rises and falls of Christianity and other faiths, the fracturing of her traditions and the great debates over her doctrines. Wars were fought, yes, but great cathedrals were built, sublime art created, inspirational music written and performed; lives were, and continue to be, transformed. The overwhelming majority of people who have ever lived believe in a transcendent reality, and this belief guided their lives, as it still does a vast, and increasing, number of people today. Even the term 'post Christian', often used in connection with our society, defines itself over and against the epoch of Christianity and other faiths. That Britain is no longer a Christian society – and this may be true, for better or for

worse – it is a child of Christianity. To be ignorant of the Western, Christian tradition is to be ignorant of where we have come from and, therefore, who we are. If we fail to educate a child in this tradition – and, make no mistake, failing it is – we are saying that we do not want our children to know Augustine of Hippo, Augustine of Canterbury, Boetius, Abelard, Aquinas, Luther, to name a few. We are saying that Aristotelianism in the Middle Ages, and the ascent of Neo-Platonism in the Patristic period, have nothing of interest or importance to offer our boys and girls.

We are cutting away the first twenty centuries of our era, proclaiming 'nothing to see here'. Without the study of Divinity, we are saying that we want our children to go to the National Gallery, but not to understand what they see; to listen to Mozart, but not to understand what they hear; to read Milton and Shakespeare and Golding, but not to grasp the full meaning of what they are reading. Far from liberating them from the evils of indoctrination, we will condemn them to a world that is not joined up, and does not make sense. Ultimately, Divinity is about God as a concept, and in the common heritage of Abraham, religions are a reality. It is an oft-quoted remark these days, when someone says they do not believe in God, a Christian or another believer will reply, 'Tell me about this god you do not believe in because I probably don't believe in him either.'

We make a conscious statement that it is God, and not religion, that is the object of our study, because if we just study the rituals of most of the world's faiths, then we are only engaging in the anthropological study of each of the faiths. Of course, a number of our students do not believe in God, or at least they are searching for the transcendent, but Augustine, Aquinas, Bach, Newton, Milton and Einstein did believe in God. Divinity and Philosophy are at the heart of the Woodard tradition. At Ardingly we are called to be a theological community; in other words, we speak about God. We may not all believe; we do not all agree, but we talk and we listen because that is the beginning of wisdom, and surely wisdom, and the search for wisdom, is what education is all about?

It is odd that, until Christianity came along, atheism was never considered a reasonable option: even the ancient Hebrews worried about leaving Yahweh for other gods, not about abandoning belief in God altogether. According to the Psalms, 'the fool says there is no God'; atheists in that time were madmen. Of course, pure atheism in itself does not make much sense today either. While there is no intellectual contradiction in recognising the possible existence of an otherwise unknown, or even unknowable, God, if you are certain that there is no God you must

have a pretty good and clear picture of the God you don't believe in: you can never rule out the possible existence of the unimagined God. Herbert McCabe wrote something similar in his book *God Matters* and his point for our young boys and girls is that it is not God and religion that our students are apathetic to, but what they think God and religion are: that is a challenge in this secular age. That is the vision for our schools and for the government: to take the country, and the next generation, to give them a vision of a truly human education that does not merely look at what humans do, but why they do it. As my Head of Divinity and Philosophy states, 'Chartres Cathedral was not erected by accident, nor was the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel a substitute for Artex.'

The key in all of this is to ensure that what passes for Religious Studies must attempt to address the issue of religion and theology, not just to see everything in an anthropological or sociological way. It is partly because all students are theologians in their own way – all of them are asking, or will, at some stage in their lives, ask those three questions: why is there something rather than nothing? What do I want and why do I want it? How do I make sense of my life?

Religious Studies – or Divinity or Philosophy – are essentially cross-curricular, academic, respected by universities, and provide students with opportunities for reflection and, as I've said before, the original critical thinking subject.

I shall end with one final quote from my Head of Divinity: 'I shall end with just one example of the game I fear we must play to take back our rightful place. I mentioned we changed the Department name recently to 'Divinity'. Why 'Divinity' and not 'Theology'? When asked this, I made the great talk of choosing something exotic and unfamiliar, with few expectations, or a radical break with Common Entrance, or the deeply Anglican roots of the name, or its openness to embrace multiple conceptions of the divine. None of this was true, of course. D comes before T and R – in one stroke, we moved from the bottom to near the top of the list on the School documents/options booklets and reports: goodbye History, farewell Geography, vale English.'

Strange that something so small should make such a difference, but then we live in a strange land. Come on, 'the powers that be', it is time to do God and to provide a fully human education. At the very least, RS should be added to the Ebacc tables.

MAN SHALL NOT
LIVE ON BREAD
ALONE BUT ON EVERY
WORD
THAT PROCEEDS FROM
THE MOUTH
OF GOD



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