

Philosophy 255
Smith College
Fall 2005
MW 2:40-4

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Dewey 3
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Philosophy and Literature

Of late there has been talk of philosophy's being at an end or at least in need of transformation. In order to provide a measure of renewal, people are considering whether approaches taken and insights expressed in literature might enrich the study of philosophy. We will explore this issue through an examination of philosophical and literary treatments of friendship from different periods in the Western tradition, and of literary and philosophical reflections on the topic of human flourishing in the twentieth century. Since twentieth-century discussions devote much consideration to the role of interpersonal connections in the optimal human life, our exploration of these treatments will be strongly connected to our investigation of writings on the topic of friendship. Building on this foundation, we will then consider work by contemporary philosophers on the topic of what literature might have to contribute to the philosophical enterprise.

Required Texts

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. Tr. Samuel Beckett. New York: Grove Press, 1954. Copyright renewed, 1982, by Samuel Beckett.

Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. Tr. William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1974.

Camus, Albert. *The Plague*. Tr. Stuart Gilbert. New York: Vintage International (Vintage Books), 1991.

Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. Tr. Justin O'Brien. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Davies, Robertson. *The Manticore*. New York: Penguin Books, 1976. A reprint of the 1972 edition published by Viking Press.

Hesse, Hermann. *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Tr. Ursule Molinaro. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968. Bantam Books edition 1971.

Kafka, Franz. *The Trial*. Tr. Willa and Edwin Muir; revised, and with additional material translated by E. M. Butler. New York: Schocken Books, 1995.

Pakaluk, Michael, ed. *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991.

Plato. *Republic*. Tr. G. M. A. Grube. Revised by C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992.

Shakespeare, William. *Merchant of Venice*. Ed. Brechts Stirling. The Pelican Shakespeare. Reprint edition. New York: Penguin Books, 1970.

Sophocles. *Philoctetes*. Tr. David Grene. In *The Complete Greek Tragedies*. Ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore. Sophocles, vol. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. Foreword by Maureen Howard. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1981.

In addition, certain readings will be available on reserve in Neilson Library.

Schedule

Introduction (Sept. 14-19):

- a) Plato, *Republic*, Books 2-3 and 10
- b) Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, chap. 1 ("Introduction: Form and Content, Philosophy and Literature") (book is on reserve)

Unit 1—Philosophical and Literary Treatments of Friendship (Sept. 21-Oct. 17; Autumn Recess Oct. 8-11):

- a) Sophocles, *Philoctetes*; Julius Moravcsik, "Development of Friendship and Values in the *Philoctetes*" and David Konstan's commentary (on reserve)
- b) Plato, *Lysis* (in *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, pp. 1-27; hereafter, *Other Selves*); Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Logos and Ergon in Plato's *Lysis*" (on reserve in Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, pp. 1-20)
- c) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII and IX, and *Rhetoric* II.4 (in *Other Selves*, pp. 28-76)
- d) Cicero, "On Friendship" (*De Amicitia*) (in *Other Selves*, pp. 77-116)
- e) Seneca, "On Philosophy and Friendship" and "On Grief for Lost Friends" (in *Other Selves*, pp. 117-28)
- f) William Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*
- g) Edith Wharton, "Friends" (on reserve in *Women's Friendships: A Collection of Short Stories*, ed. Susan Koppelman, pp. 72-91)
- h) Montaigne, "Of Friendship" (in *Other Selves*, pp. 185-99)
- i) Immanuel Kant, Lecture on Friendship (in *Other Selves*, pp. 208-17)
- j) Hermann Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund*

Unit 2—Reflections by Twentieth-century Authors on the Topic of Human Flourishing (Oct. 19-Nov. 28; Thanksgiving Recess Nov. 23-27):

- a) Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, sections 9-16 (pp. 67-107); I.4 (pp. 149-68); I.5 (pp. 169-224) (book is on reserve)
- b) Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*
- c) Franz Kafka, *The Trial*
- d) Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, II.1-2 (pp. 274-348) (book is on reserve)
- e) Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus"
- f) Albert Camus, *The Plague*
- g) Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*
- h) Robertson Davies, *The Manticore*
- i) Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*
- j) Hans-Georg Gadamer, reading to be assigned

Unit 3—What Literature Can Contribute to the Philosophical Enterprise (Nov. 30-Dec. 14):

- selections from Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (book is on reserve)
- selections from Martha C. Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* and *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (books are on reserve)
- additional material to be assigned

Requirements

- 1) Regular and spirited attendance! Everyone should come to each class meeting prepared to discuss and assess the views presented in the readings. Participation of various forms, including short weekly commentaries, will make up 20% of the final grade.
- 2) One in-class presentation—15%. (Date: Depends on when you sign up to do one.)
- 3) Two 6-8 page papers, due Friday, October 21 and Wednesday, November 30 (the former paper should be turned in by noon on October 21 in the Philosophy Department office [Dewey II]; the latter paper is due in class on November 30)—20% each.
- 4) One 10-page paper, due Thursday, December 22 by noon in the Philosophy Department office (Dewey II)—25%.

Note: No late commentaries will be accepted. Grades on late papers (i.e., those turned in at any point after they are due) will be lowered one step (e.g., from A- to B+) each day.

Items on Reserve in Neilson Library

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*. Tr. P. Christopher Smith. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980. (Contains “*Logos and Ergon in Plato’s Lysis*,” pp. 1-20.)

———. *Reason in the Age of Science*. Tr. Frederick G. Lawrence. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981.

———. *Truth and Method*. Second revised edition. Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Crossroad, 1989.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

John, Eileen. “Reading Fiction and Conceptual Knowledge: Philosophical Thought in Literary Context.” From *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 331-48.

Koppelman, Susan, ed. *Women’s Friendships: A Collection of Short Stories*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

Lamarque, Peter and Stein Haugom Olsen, *Truth, Fiction, and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Moravcsik, Julius. “Development of Friendship and Values in the *Philoctetes*.” With commentary (“*Philoctetes’ Pity: Commentary on Moravcsik*”) by David Konstan. In *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 13, 1997, pp. 255-82. Ed. John J. Cleary and Gary M. Gurtler. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

Novitz, David. *Knowledge, Fiction and Imagination*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987.

Nussbaum, Martha C. *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

———. *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

Paley, Grace. *The Collected Stories*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1994.

Williams, Bernard. *Shame and Necessity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.