

Philosophy 255
Smith College
Fall 2011
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, practitioners 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 e-reserve through 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*, pp. 3-53 ("Introduction: Form and Content, Philosophy and Literature"—on e-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 e-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*" (in Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, pp. 1-20—on e-reserve)
- 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" (in *Women's Friendships: A Collection of Short Stories*, ed. Susan Koppelman, pp. 72-91—on e-reserve)
- 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) (on e-reserve)
- b) Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

- c) Franz Kafka, *The Trial*
- d) Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, II.1-2 (pp. 274-348) (on e-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, readings to be assigned

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

- Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, pp. 1-20 (“The Liberation of Antiquity”—on e-reserve)
- Martha C. Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*, pp. 53-78 (“Rational Emotions”—on e-reserve); revisit Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, pp. 3-53 (on e-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 weekly commentaries of 1-2 pages in length, will make up 20% of the final grade. As the use of laptops and other electronic devices in class can pose a distraction, I would ask that they not be employed.
- 2) One in-class presentation—15%. (Date: Depends on when you sign up to do one.)
- 3) Two 6-8 page papers, due in class on Wednesday, October 19 and Wednesday, 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

— — — . *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.

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

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.