DPLS 745 Leadership & Personal Ethics  
Spring 2016  
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Fridays from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m.  
Jan. 15, Jan. 29, Feb. 12, Feb. 26, & Mar. 4  

November 3, 2015  

Please note that although the required readings and other course requirements, listed below, will remain the same for Spring 2016, this course is still very much under development. If things go well, I'll have time between now and our first meeting on January 15 to continue to develop, revise, and refine it. To any prospective students considering DPLS 745 for Spring 2016, please feel free to contact me if you'd like more information or you have any questions or concerns. Email is best.  

Brief Syllabus  

Prenote  

The Blackboard site for this course will be available soon (learn.gonzaga.edu). Behind the "Course documents" tab, you will find several documents orienting you to the nature, aims, organization, and requirements for this course.  

As I explain in "Orienting remarks," DPLS 745 is still very much in the making. This is a course in personal ethics taught from a personalist perspective. My present intent is to integrate a personalist philosophy and theology into a systematic Lonerganian framework (after Bernard Lonergan, 1904-1984). The challenge I face is to discover how best to compress the massive materials that belong to the basic idea into a two-credit course with only five meetings.  

The basic idea of the course can be taken from Garrett Barden’s After Principles (writing under Lonergan's influence):  

“What, then, of principles and precepts? The ethical principle is the ethical subject.”  


If this sounds like a koan, it's not meant to be. Grasping what Barden means by this conclusion would take us to the heart of the matter in our way of proceeding towards a personal ethics.  

The reading for the course is indicated below.  

The writing for the course, taking the form of a “reflective essay,” is explained below. No written work is required until the end of the semester, although you may submit your essay (or essays) anytime you are satisfied with a finished product. Our last class meeting is March 4; my grades are due on May 11. This leaves you roughly two months to write between our last class and the due date for final grades.  

Your reflective essay or essays are due no later than Monday, May 9.  

Required reading  

For Fri., Jan. 15  


For Fri., Jan. 29  


For Fri., Feb. 12  

Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism Is a Humanism (Yale University Pr., 2007).
For Fri., Feb. 26

Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search For Meaning* (Beacon Pr., 2006).

For Fri., Mar. 4

Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (HarperCollins Publ., 2000);

Rollo May, *Love and Will* (Dell, 1969);


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Recommended reading (from a list that could be indefinitely expanded)


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Thematic organization and texts

Our course in leadership and personal ethics is thematically organized under four headings: character, freedom, meaning, and love.

The first and second meetings: character

If the proposition is true that "leadership," as opposed to mere "power-wielding" (Burns, 1978), necessarily includes a moral dimension; and if the proposition is true that the exercise of "leadership" is personal and inter-personal in nature; then there is an integral, organic connection between leadership and character (where "character" is the moral dimension of human personality). A conversation about character and character-formation can be either poorly conducted or well conducted. Although Aristotle's lectures are two and a half millennia old, he nevertheless provides us with a more or less rigorous, more or less complete method, organized on the basis of a normative, evaluative distinction between "virtues" and "vices," for understanding, thinking about, and assessing what a sound moral character is; and not merely as the property of an atomic individual, but in the context of a healthy, morally awake, morally sensitive community.

In our second meeting, we will take up Garrett Barden's *After Principles*. This small book shows the imprint, not only of Aristotle's influence, but also of Bernard Lonergan's (and this is no accident).

The third meeting: freedom

If ethics is a "science" is the first place, then perhaps Aristotle was right to think of it as a "practical" rather than a "theoretical" science. In a practical science, however, more than one correct conclusion follows from true premises. Hence, there cannot be an "ethics algorithm." Or: only a free being is capable of moral judgment and the ethical qualities of action. But what is human freedom? The great founder of twentieth-century existential thought, Jean-Paul Sartre, offers a profound meditation on the situation of a free being in his lecture, "Existentialism is a Humanism." Sartre may be correct or he may be mistaken. In any case, his lecture affords us the opportunity to spend an evening thinking about what freedom is and what it means to be free, and particularly its place in personal character and conduct.

The fourth meeting: meaning

Suppose we are free in the morally relevant sense. Is the reality of a free being a world without meaning or purpose? The psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, reflecting on his experience in a Nazi concentration camp, takes up a challenge from the great German classicist and philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche had thematized what he
Frankl argues that even more fundamental than the will to power is the "will to meaning." Three times in his little book, Man's Search for Meaning, he quotes Nietzsche against Nietzsche, paraphrased as follows: the one who has a "why" to live, can live with almost any "how." Frankl argues that the will to meaning satisfies a human need as vital as our needs for food and shelter. What does it mean for a free being to live a meaningful life?

The fifth meeting: love

Frankl had argued that the existential need for a meaningful life could be satisfied through work, love, and redemptive suffering. Of these three existential sources, perhaps love occupies a privileged place, shaping our work and redeeming our suffering. But how can we think and talk about "love" without sounding like a Hallmark greeting card? Another great psychologist and philosopher might be able to help us out, namely, Erich Fromm, who wrote a beautiful little book called The Art of Loving. Fromm gives us the opportunity to think about the meaning of love as we exit our course.

We will also read Rollo May's Love and Will and bell hooks's All About Love to deepen our encounter with this theme.

I look forward to meeting and working with each of you, in the hope of mutually engaged, informed, literate, and most of all thoughtful and probing conversations.

Written work

Your written work will be due before my grades are due in the Registrar's Office. You will be writing reflective essays grounded in our reading, rather than a research paper. Your options will be to write either (1) a single essay on one or more of our books, in the neighborhood of fifteen to eighteen pages in length; or (2) two smaller essays, each on one or more of our books, each in the neighborhood of eight to ten pages in length.

The prototype of a research paper is a journal article for a research journal, and you are certainly free to write with the idea of publication in mind. But our aim in the course is philosophical reflection rather than quantitative or qualitative research in some determinate topic or area. Consequently, the aims of writing are exposition, critique, and reflective self-appropriation, having read, conversed, and thought deeply about the books that constitute the backbone of our course.

Moreover, whereas the style and tone of research are more impersonal in nature (depending on what one takes "objectivity" to be as a philosophical matter), a reflective essay, which might (or might not) be written more impersonally, inscribes the effort to concentrate one's own mind with the aim of making a personal record of one's own thought. Therefore, what I have in mind is not quite as free-form as a diary or a journal entry, which one typically sets out to write solely for oneself (although when we write, a "reader" is always presupposed), but your writing for the course will head more in that direction than in the direction of a report on the results of some or another statistical investigation and analysis.

You are to imagine yourself initially as entering into a conversation with our authors (on the Gadamerian view that reading and writing are like listening and speaking). Our authors are in some sense addressing you personally; they have something to say to you. On that premise, your aim in reading is to bring the "voice" of the author into the lifeworld of your own lived experience (as if you were going out for a walk or coffee or drinks with a friend). As you come to understand what your "friend" has to say to you, your first responsibility in active listening is to demonstrate that you have grasped what your friend has said (the conversational requirement of listening to the voice of another is an ethical as well as a hermeneutic imperative). Having listened well, which would show up in writing in the quality of your exposition, you have the same freedom as you accorded your friend to respond as seems best to you, whether to agree, to disagree, or to raise further questions (which would show up in writing in the quality of critique, where "critique" here has roughly the same meaning it has in "literary criticism").

In the European and Anglo-American traditions of philosophical investigation and reflection, the medium of its dissemination and development has been the written word, and it can be distinguished from literature on the one hand and the empirical or observational sciences on the other hand by virtue of conducting its investigations and reflections in the modality of argument, which essentially entails the exchange of positions with counterpositions in the attempt to discover what might possibly count as true. This search for truth through the sustained development of arguments (not in the sense of marital spats or office quarrels but in the sense of offering and developing reasons) is an integral moment in the process of forming and formulating beliefs (unless one simply believes what one believes in a manner essentially indifferent to what might possibly count as true).
From this point of view, having beliefs is a matter of holding-for-true. In turn, what one holds for true carries certain responsibilities, the key to which is one's own assumption of the responsibility for what Bernard Lonergan called the "transcendental precepts": be attentive; be intelligent; be reasonable; and be responsible. One's own personal commitment to these precepts, the willingness to become the custodian or steward of one's own intellectual acts and habits, taking responsibility for them as the integral characteristic of thinking for oneself, which is in turn the condition of the very freedom of thought, is the heart of reflective self-appropriation, and we might agree with Lonergan that reflective self-appropriation (self-knowledge and its entailments) is the aim of philosophy. Finally, then, a reflective essay is a written record of one's own attempt to live up to this obligation, to hold-for-true in the ongoing search to discover what might possibly count as true.

A general reflection on the choice of readings

I have opened the Blackboard site for our course and posted a prolix document called "The Big Aristotle Document." Since you'll have the chance to peruse it, I think you'll find it's self-explanatory. These sprawling notes relieve me of my overreaching want to lecture, knowing that this is not a lecture course and that our purpose instead in gathering these five evenings is to have worthwhile conversations about serious matters.

In these remarks, I want to reflect in a historical way on my choice of texts for our course, which I initially selected without having thought too much about how dated they are, from one point of view, or how much they belong to a period in intellectual life that might sometimes appear like an endangered species.

Aristotle is a perennial source for philosophical reflection, and I don't believe I have too much more to say about the justification for encountering his moral philosophy here, whatever reservations or enthusiasms each of us might bring to the table. It'll be worth it.

Otherwise, the remaining texts fall between 1944 and 1969, i.e. beginning in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Sartre gave his famous lecture as soon as Paris was liberated. Frankl, who had been interned at Auschwitz and other camps, originally brought out *Man's Search for Meaning* in 1946. Fromm's *The Art of Loving* came out in 1956. Frankl and Fromm were both German-speaking Jews, and Judaism is a deep and profound source for their thought and outlook. Although the late forties and early fifties are in many ways a long way off from 1969, May's classic *Love and Will* seems more in hindsight to be a late work in a then-fading genre and a body of themes and reflections that perhaps makes us think of these authors in the past tense more than the present, the world of half a century ago.

Sartre himself is in no danger of being forgotten today. His reputation has weathered the storm of anti-humanist philosophical critiques originating in Heidegger's influential *Letter on Humanism* (1947), on the one hand, and French structuralism and poststructuralism on the other hand, especially after 1968. (These criticisms are internally related to Sartre's project inasmuch as they belong to so-called "continental philosophy," while the dominant tendencies in Anglo-American philosophy, especially in the period in question, appeared in an altogether different philosophical style. At the time, the two philosophical traditions, continental and Anglo-American, were worlds apart.) Together with Simone de Beauvoir, Sartre coined the term "existentialism"; he is the greatest representative of twentieth-century existential thought; and this is how his philosophy is known. Now that some decades have passed, when first it was fashionable to be an existentialist, and then it was fashionable to declare the end of existentialism, Sartre's thought has proven to be durable enough over time that there is still a thriving cottage industry of Sartrean studies today.

By comparison with Sartre, the circumstances seem different for Frankl, Fromm, and May. What these thinkers share in common with Sartre is their respective commitments to existentialism. And they follow Sartre in regarding their matters of existential concern--freedom, meaning, love, and will--as fundamentally humanistic in character. On the other hand, the most obvious point of departure they share in common is their commitment to depth psychology and psychoanalysis. Sartre held psychoanalysis more at arm's length and worked out a critique of Freud. In their nearness or farness from Freud, then, Frankl comes closest to Sartre, identifying logotherapy as the "Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy" after Freud and Alfred Adler. Together with Karen Horney, Fromm is the major theorist of neo-Freudianism. Among the members of Freud's "Committee," however, May considered himself to be most in debt to Otto Rank, "the great unacknowledged genius in Freud's circle." In descending degrees of distance from Freud, I suppose the series moves from Sartre to Frankl, Fromm, and May. What Frankl, Fromm, and May share in common, then, partly with Sartre and partly not, are existentialism, humanism, and psychoanalysis.

Our course is definitely not a course in psychoanalysis or depth psychology, which it would be redundant of me to say that I have no portfolio to teach. What we're after instead is a certain approach to philosophical questions as they arise in personal ethics, namely, the approach of existential phenomenology. But our authors' relation to psychoanalysis is also a benchmark of what some people might think of as their obsolescence. In fact, it's a little
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extant conceptual modalities that are already easily available to us, and in a great many cases reliably so. After all,
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Why select such a dated literature for our course? After all, world circumstances have changed dramatically since
the mid-twentieth century, profoundly shaping the fate and fortune of the world of ideas. Without pretending an
exhaustive enumeration, at least three indices are prominent. With so-called "globalization," a eurocentric outlook
has obviously become untenable. With women's liberation as a worldwide idea whose time has come, a patriarchal
outlook is likewise increasingly untenable (even President George W. Bush proclaimed himself to be a feminist when
the United States overthrew the Taliban government of Afghanistan). And with revolutionary developments in
science and technology, it might also appear that an existential-phenomenological approach to the being, meaning,
and significance of the human animal is as obsolete as the medieval faculty psychology of the occult powers of the
soul is deemed to be in the mainstream of the going intellectual culture.

However saturated in a European milieu our authors are, Aristotle defines epagoge as "grasping the universal in the
clearly known particular." If we were reading the Dalí Lama instead, we would be reading an author saturated in the
milieu of Tibetan Buddhism. It may be the case that our authors carry a universal message in and through the
mediations of their own particular times and places. It's a question of cultural translation, which also presupposes an
antecedent willingness on our part to listen to what they have to say, in order to discover whether they have anything
to say to us.

Again, for anyone thinking within the proximate neighborhood of Freud, a certain patriarchal residue is perhaps
unavoidable, but I would argue that there's nothing intrinsically patriarchal in the thought of Frankl, Fromm, or May
(although I would not say the same of Aristotle). Sartre's feminism is clear and unequivocal. And I would be inclined
to argue vigorously that there's nothing intrinsically masculinist in an existential-phenomenological approach to the
specific range of questions that arise insofar as a personal ethics is concerned.

Finally, developments in science and technology are one thing, their interpretations for the meaning and significance
of one's own self-understanding another. In the latter sense, however, I believe we have come up against a limit
situation that we'll be required to negotiate one way or another. Research results from empirical investigation
bombard us daily; advances occur so rapidly that only specialists are able to keep up; today's latest technology is
obsolete tomorrow. But self-understanding and the understanding of our own humanity goes by an altogether
different pulse. For one thing, it's much slower: it pours like molasses; it moves like a glacier or the Roman Catholic
Church. There is therefore a standing temptation to adapt the latest scientific and technical developments to the
extant conceptual modalities that are already easily available to us, and in a great many cases reliably so. After all,
new conceptual modalities do not simply appear out of thin air or appear overnight (and this would be an objection to
the overworked word "paradigm": today we hear of "paradigm shifts" morning, noon, and night; but in the history of
human thought, arguably regardless of society or culture, time or place, things aren't like that; ideas in the serious
sense aren't like this year's fall fashions). At issue for us are the appropriate and best conceptual modalities with
which to grasp our own humanity and personality (in the philosophical sense), in the context of the continuously
metamorphosing development of one's own self-understanding. In societies like ours, the most recent developments
in science and technology are bound to be accorded a certain pride of place in how we think about this. But in the
absence of a wholly new way of thinking so unbeknownst to us we have no way of thinking it, we nevertheless have
ample and rich, seminal and fertile resources already at our disposal in the myriad traditions of whatever it is that has
been taken up and handed down from one generation to the next, some small slice of which we can encounter. So
the question concerns the resources that are best for the task at hand in personal ethics.

I will briefly argue that the limit situation we confront today and must negotiate one way or another concerns a rapidly
emerging if not already dominant notion of what a person is, a notion that has its conceptual roots historically in the
philosophy that affiliated itself with the seventeenth-century revolution in physics (the Copernican Revolution and the
Scientific Revolution). This philosophy is mechanistic materialism. It is exemplified in the thought of the seventeenth-
century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. In the absence of an elaboration here, I will come to the point and call
it the machine view of the person.

Here is where my own fundamental prejudice (I would hope in the Gadamerian sense) comes to the fore in our
course. Needless to say, you are by no means required to share it! If the machine view is still today the dominant
discourse of scientific materialism concerning our humanity and personality, then in the context of Ignatian pedagogy
and Jesuit higher education, I want to plant a countercultural flag through the reclamation of a counter-discourse.
And there is a word inscribed on the banner: it is "personalism." Personalism is the generic name for a philosophical
way of proceeding that has diverse world sources; the sources I'm most familiar with through my own training are Catholic, Scottish, and American. Personalism per se is neither religious nor a secular religion. But the fundamental idea is this: any conception of reality that is not fully adequate to the reality of the first and second persons, singular and plural, is an inadequate conception of reality.

An example of such an inadequate view is the machine view. To put it schematically and with admitted oversimplification, today it goes like this. The scientific and technological revolutions of our time, still ongoing, are the information revolution and the biogenetic revolution, which are really two aspects of the underlying metaphor and concept of information-processing. A research program of artificial intelligence is rapidly underway. Its horizon would be the construction of an artificial intelligence in every respect indistinguishable from our own (and differing from it only in clearly specifiable and unique ways, lacking nothing not also present in human intelligence; these differences perhaps even surpassing it, possibly on some distant event horizon to eclipse it). The counterargument is really very simple: human intelligence is partly algorithmic, partly creative; but machine intelligence is completely and ruthlessly algorithmic. There is therefore an aspect of human intelligence that a machine cannot mimic (because it is a machine; or, if it could mimic the creative novelties of human intelligence, it would no longer be the machine intelligence in question, and I would hedge my bets by suggesting that we’d cross that bridge as we came to it).

The going view, then, is (a) that thinking is information-processing, and (b) that we are information-processors: they are silicon-based, we are carbon-based, they are dry, we are wet, but these differences in materials are secondary, because the DNA molecule is an information-processing machine. (Notice, incidentally, that these are philosophical claims, not the results of specialized scientific research.)

On the other hand, in order to know we were not machines, we would have to have a method of access, or more profoundly, an ascesis, that would grant us a way of proceeding in the reality of the first and second persons, singular and plural. In turn, there is an element of interiority involved, which I think it is easy to misunderstand but can be properly understood (it is not Gilbert Ryle’s "Ghost in the Machine"; it is not B.F. Skinner’s "inner man").

One personalist method of approach or way of proceeding is existential phenomenology, which happens to be coincident with humanism in our selected authors. Since "humanism" is a rubber bag, its clarification and exposition are in order. Sartre, in the Catholic France of Emmanuel Mounier, Gabriel Marcel, and Jacques Maritain, didn’t use the term "personalism," and neither do Frankl, Fromm, or May. But they make major contributions to a personal ethics understood from a personalist perspective.

Again, our course is a course in personal ethics. It seems to me that we are therefore required to ask: what is a person?

I’d like to close by leaving the parting thought to Bernard Lonergan, writing in 1972 in Method in Theology (his second masterwork, after Insight: A Study of Human Understanding [1957]). At the time, the latest scientific and technological innovation was cybernetics. Here he is writing against reductionism and its successor in systems engineering in the human sciences (in the state of the question ca. 1970 as between Talcott Parsons and C. Wright Mills). Where we want him, he begins, “So mechanistic determinism used to be part of science; now it is a discarded philosophic opinion.” Today we can say: if only it were so! In the context of the twin revolution of our time, it seems that mechanistic determinism is alive and well. “In the human sciences,” Lonergan continues, “the problems are far more acute. Reductionists extend the methods of natural science to the study of man. Their results, accordingly, are valid only in so far as a man resembles a robot or a rat and, while such resemblance does exist, exclusive attention to it gives a grossly mutilated and distorted view....[Although general system theory] rejects reductionism in all its forms, systems engineering involves a progressive mechanization that tends to reduce man's role in the system to that of a robot, while systems generally can be deployed to destructive as well as constructive ends....Both in the natural and in the human sciences, then, there obtrude issues that are not to be solved by empirical methods” (pp. 248-49).

By the way, nothing I’ve talked about here needs to determine how we begin our course on Jan. 15. I just wanted you to have some idea of the rationale behind the choice of texts.