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Dear Instructor:

I write this cover letter to sum up my experience in the course. If there is one thing that comes to mind when I think of my semester in your class, it is extreme disappointment. Not in you nor in your class, but in myself. I am truly disappointed that I was unable to get the full experience and get the most out of your class. I really wished I had enough time to really delve into the ancient philosophies and writings of Plato and Aristotle, but I simply didn’t have the time to. I was so consumed by my calculus class that I barely had any time for any of my other classes. So I simply skimmed the documents writing with what little knowledge I was able to gleam from my rushed readings.

But all in all I can still say that this class was a wonderful experience and had I the time I would love to be able to take it again. Sadly, I can’t bring myself to retake any classes no matter how interesting if I don’t have to. The set back to my academic career just isn’t worth it to me in the long run. That being said I really did enjoy this class and I feel like I learned a lot more from it than I thought that I would.

I always thought that the writings of ancient Greek philosophers would be boring and hard to follow. I thought I would dread this class and would forget everything the second that I had finished the semester. I was proven wrong. Plato’s cave was such a telling piece of writing. Aristotle’s takes on friendship was very thought provoking. I am not sure I necessarily agree with all of the logic that Socrates used but the way he made people have to rethink their own ideas was brilliant. And I found out that I myself am rather utilitarian when it comes to my personal beliefs.

Now I was unable to get to all of the papers, I think I missed one or two and I was originally planning on going back and reading them. But I just simply didn’t have the time, even know all of my other classes are glaring down on me. But while I wish I was able to really delve into all of these writings I am glad that I at least was able to read and learn what I had from this class.

Sincerely

Cody Strange

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The Freedom to be Enlightened

What is enlightenment? Immanuel Kant a German philosopher wrote a paper on this very question answering it within his very first sentence “Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another.”(Kant, 1963). The paper is not about what enlightenment is but about what obstructs it and how we can achieve it. At the time that Kant wrote his paper he believed that he was part of the age of enlightenment not an enlightened age. There is much debate over what this “enlightened age” looks like, so I will be going over what I believe the enlightened age to be and how/why we have already achieved what Kant’s society could not.

After reading Kant’s *What is Enlightenment,*  I have concluded that that there are two things that are required to be able to create an enlightened age. Access to education and resources that allow each man to acquire the knowledge to be able to think for himself. And protection under law that grants every man the right to express his views on such knowledge freely without repercussion.

Access to education and resources are necessary for enlightenment to thrive in any society. You cannot expect someone to create a garden without first providing the seeds. For someone to be able to think for themselves it takes information and ability to process information to form ideas, beliefs, and values. Without these a person is bound to take upon themselves the beliefs and values of those who do have access to this information and ability. Therefore an enlightened age can’t form because the uneducated are forced to rely upon the educated to think for them and to be enlightened one must be able to think for themselves. You must have access to education if society is to ever enter an enlightened age.

Just as important is the right under law to be able to express the knowledge that you gain from education. Knowledge is useless unless it is applied and the same is for free thinking. It doesn’t matter how great of views and beliefs you come up with if you are not allowed to express them. You can give someone all of the seeds in the world but if you ban them from the garden what use are the seeds? A suppressed society cannot be an enlightened society, enlightenment isn’t just the capability of free thinking but also the application of free thinking.

Now for the great question, do we live in an enlightened age or in an age of enlightenment? While Kant lived in an age of enlightenment, I believe that in the United States of America in 2020 we live in an enlightened age. The main reason that I believe this is the right granted to us under the first amendment in the constitution. The right to free speech, this allows the freedom of expression, it allows everyone to think for themselves without legal constraints. On top of that the public education system, does its job by providing the basic knowledge required to allow for the average man to be able to think for himself. America even goes a bit further, as a culture the USA tries to promote education to the point that it may even be considered damaging if not used properly. America both provides the legal right and the education and resources to allow for its society access to becoming enlightened if they so choose. And its that choice that really counts, its not as much about being enlightened as it is about the freedom to be enlightended.

Plato, *Why Call it Plato’s Cave,* https://uvu.instructure.com/courses/519617/files/103419516/download?wrap=1

Ignorance, the shackles of the common man and the hubris of the enlightened

After reading Plato’s cave there was one thing that really stuck out to me. And that was the amount of ignorance that is taking place in the lives of us humans. It seems that people as a whole are doomed to be ignorant in some fashion no matter how enlightened we come to be. I feel like this was a subtle message that Plato’s cave gave but I also feel like it is a very important one that not many people notice.

In the analogy a man is forced to look at the light and it hurts his eyes so much that he wants to turn his eyes away from it as to save him from the pain of the fire. In this story the fire are the fallacies that the people get their sense of truth from. The fire was what was causing the shadows to appear and creating that false sense of reality that was confusing the minds of the ignorant man. The man is ignorant because he believes the shadows of objects to be the actual objects themselves, and when offered the truth he turns away because he can’t handle the pain that comes with it. This is a common occurrence throughout the little story, it is not until the man is dragged out of the cave and he has time to adjust to the real world that he finally comes to accept the truth and he loses his ignorance from before. What most people don’t realize is that he gains a new kind of ignorance in the process.

It is this point in the story that the man decides that he is going to go back to the cave to teach others about the truth. Now that his eyes have been opened, he couldn’t even imagine living in the darkness again. And it is this that causes the ignorance that is the hubris of those that are enlightened. When the man heads back into the cave his eyes are not adjusted for the darkness and when he tries to teach and explain to the other people in the cave, they merely see him stumbling in the darkness and think of him as a fool. They are more willing to try and kill him than listen to what he has to say.

Most people after reading this far into the story all think the same thing, in fact it is the same thing that the man in the story thinks. They all can’t believe that others, those in the cave would react like that when someone is trying to teach them. They can’t seem to understand why someone would reject him like that. It seems ridiculous to them and they think the people in the cave must be all but evil for not listening to what is obviously so blatantly the truth. The man thinks all of the people in the cave are fools and likely will end up thinking of them as less “intelligent” than himself, he fails to see the ignorance is not only in those he is trying to teach but in himself as well.

The man so quickly forgets that not so long ago he was no different than the rest of the people in the cave. He to was willing to kill someone who tried to do the things that he is currently doing. Even though he himself should have a perfect understanding what the cave people are doing and why he seems to have forgotten about his own experiences in the cave. He acts like he has always been enlightened and the others are fools for not choosing to become enlightened as well. But the truth is at one point he wasn’t enlightened, he should know how to deal with the cave people because he was once them. He should be able to use his past experiences as a way to connect with them so that he can teach them in a way that they would understand. But his newfound enlightenment acts as his own hubris in providing a pathway to others.

Schopenhauer, Arthur (2021)*.* Think for Oneself<https://uvu.instructure.com/courses/519617/assignments/5346044>

The price of original thought

Schopenhauer being a great German philosopher had some unique ideas as to what it took to be able to think for oneself. He believed that the key to becoming a free thinker capable of original thoughts was not from looking outside but inside oneself. He said that less knowledge was more useful than more knowledge in the sense of quality over quantity. It is better for a man to ponder the small amount of knowledge he has in order to get a complete understanding of it. Once he understands the truth of a knowledge, he can then compare it to other truths and then he “obtains a compete hold over it and gets it into his power.”

Schopenhauer’s philosophy seems to make sense, but it is slightly incomplete, this is because Schopenhauer is only telling us half of the story. Schopenhauer’s philosophy is idealistic in that it only sees the end result that is the ability to think for oneself and have original thoughts.

However nothing of use ever comes for free, and just like everything else there is a price to pay for these original thoughts. This price is knowledge, you have to give up the extensive knowledge that one would gain from simply reading and listening to other’s ideas and opinions. This is because if you listen to others before you gain an understanding for yourself your view will become tainted by that other’s view. This is a rather steep price, and the price only gets more and more inflated with time, as the world progresses, and knowledge becomes even more accessible the knowledge gets harder and harder to avoid. We are so heavily surrounded by other voices in this digital age that it is near impossible to do anything without hearing or reading about someone else’s view on it first, and this is only the *first* price.

The second price you have to pay is one of time, and time being one of the most valuable resources this is not a cheap cost. In order to be able to think for oneself and have original ideas you have to first take time and learn all about the subject on your own. No more quick Wikipedia sites or YouTube videos. This turns a five-minute process to gain some quick knowledge into hours of extensive research. You would soon learn that you would have to repress your curiosity on certain subject simply because you could not afford to take the time necessary to gain a complete understanding of it.

Once you start to add up the costs of original thoughts you begin to question whether or not it is really worth the price. There may be certain instances that you decide it is, sometimes it is worth it to take time to gain an understanding on a certain subject so that your view on it isn’t tainted by others. This would usually apply to knowledge that is very important to the person, this is because humans by nature are willing to pay higher prices for more valuable things. But for trivial knowledge, we don’t want to waste our precious time on something that we will be throwing into the back of our mind to never think of again until a specific instance requires it. Schopenhauer’s philosophy is correct in a sense, he is correct about the value of original thought and ability to think for oneself. He just doesn’t count the costs into the equation which is why in our modern age his philosophy is simply too pricey for most people on most topics.

Plato (2021)*.* Plato’s Euthphyro

[Assignment #4:  Plato's Socrates/Euthyphro on Piety (instructure.com)](https://uvu.instructure.com/courses/519617/assignments/5346034)

piety is above even the Gods

Socrates on his way to his “public indictment” he meets Euthyphro who is on his way to try his father for murder. Socrates sees that Euthyphro must be a very wise man because he was so certain in convicting his own father. So Socrates decides to question Euthyphro on the definition of what piety is, or what defines what is good and what is bad. I find the points that Socrates brings up and his overall goal of trying to figure out what pious is to be rather interesting.

First Socrates goal to figure out what pious is so that he can better defend himself in a court of law. Socrates was trying to define what pious is not what is pious, Euthyphro kept on bringing up things that were pious or gods that acted in pious ways, but he couldn’t seem to define what pious was. During Socrates conversation with Euthyphro every time it looked like they were getting closer to the answer they seemed to find themselves back where they started, almost like they were running in a circle. I feel like this is a question that hundreds of years later we are still trying to figure out. We create laws on what we believe to be pious, but it isn’t the law themselves that are defining what is right and wrong. We have to know what is right and wrong before we can create laws that decide what is right and wrong. This brings us to the argument that Euthyphro was trying to use, that it was the gods that decided what was and wasn’t pious. He says what is beloved by the Gods is pious and what isn’t beloved by the gods isn’t pious. This sounds compelling and like it makes sense, until you really start thinking about it, then you begin to see the flaws. The flaw that Socrates puts out is that that the gods are constantly at odds with each other, and that means that they would find different ideas and people beloved and if beloved translates directly into pious that means that they would have differing views on what was pious. I would like to expand on this and mention even more flaws with this argument. If everything that was beloved by any god was pious then that meant the definition of pious would be ever changing with the whims of the god. Religious law wouldn’t be static but constantly changing on what the Gods felt and that also meant that if a god ever killed someone that meant killing was now considered a pious act.

What I find interesting is when Socrates asks Euthyphro if things are pious because of the gods or if the gods do things because they are pious. And example would be, is murder impious because the gods don’t do it or do the gods not do it because it is impious? Socrates and Euthyphro eventually decided that it was the second. But this still raises the great question if the gods do what they do because it is pious then who decides what makes that certain action or person pious? I’ve thought a lot about this question after reading Socrates and Euthyphro’s discussion I still can not come up with an answer. I find myself asking, if God said that all evil deeds are now good, would that be so? Or would God simply cease being a just god and evil would still be evil while good will still be good? This would indicate that piousness is beyond even that of God and not even he has control over it. But then what does define it, it seems that the best answer I can come up with is that while God does not control what is good and evil, he has complete knowledge of what is pious.

Plato (2021)*.* Socrates’ defense

[Assignment #5: Plato’s Apology: Socrates defense (instructure.com)](https://uvu.instructure.com/courses/519617/assignments/5346035?module_item_id=8112497)

In reading The Apology of Socrates I came across one interesting trait about Socrates that stood out to me and really defines him as a man. Socrates is probably one of the wisest people to ever live, what he spoke of thousands of years ago still apply to society today. And he himself even recognizes that he was the wisest person of his time, but yet it wasn’t for his knowledge that he thought himself wise. In fact he repeatedly would claim that he wasn’t that smart, in his discussion with Euthphyro he was constantly praising Euthphyro while degrading himself. Yet Euthphyro couldn’t answer Socrates questions. Socrates considered himself the wisest man because of his lack of knowledge, he was the only one willing to admit all that he didn’t know while others wouldn’t.

I find this philosophy of Socrates to be almost contradictory, yet it makes so much sense that I cannot deny the truth of it. Socrates is humble and he knows it better than anyone else, that is why he considers himself so wise. And in turn he calls all of the learned people around him unwise for the very opposite reason that he calls himself wise. He will tell someone to their face the fact that they are not as wise is because they think that they know everything. And the other person after hearing this will become more angered because they cannot prove Socrates wrong, yet they refuse to admit that he is right.

This is probably what got Socrates in trouble in the first place, he has no fear of those with more power and knowledge than him. Even in the face of death he states that he does not regret anything that he has said or done. He defended himself to the best of his own ability and his only request was that the men before him learn from him. It honestly amazes me that a man after being sentenced to death looks at his condemners and asks them to teach others as he did. He is going to be slain for what he did and yet he is asking those who condemn him to do the same. Socrates is a man to admire and a man who is confident enough in his beliefs and in what he has done that he doesn’t fear death. He believes that he will go to the after life and knowing he has done nothing wrong he knows he has nothing to fear.

Aristotle (2021)*.* Loving

[Aristotle -- Virtue Ethics - Friendship: PHIL-2050-001-047-Spring 2021-XLIST | Bohannon](https://uvu.instructure.com/courses/519617/pages/aristotle-virtue-ethics-friendship?module_item_id=8147503)

The Limit of Love

Aristotle claims that only good and virtuous people are able to have true friends, and that those friends have to be good and alike in virtue. This argument states that evil, wicked, unvirtuous people can not have friends. Not only that but your friend is a friend for any reason beyond simply wanting to wish him goodwill then it is a faulty friendship that is bound to fail when the reason fades away. But the goodwill that you have built up with the other person will not fade away. To be specific Aristotle is referring to three types of friendships he calls utility, pleasure, and goodness. He believes that goodness is the only true type of friendship and the other two are bound to fail. Now through using the principles of calculus I am going to explain how Aristotle is wrong in his belief and how pleasure and utility can lead to true friendships.

In calculus there is a term called a “limit” what this is referring to is, the value that a function approaches as the input approaches some value. This is usually shown on a graph with the “function” being Y and the input being X. An example of this would be “the limit when X = 6 and Y = X is 6. This is because when X = 6, Y is approaching the number 6, and in this case it actually reaches the number 6, that means this function is continuous. But let’s say that the line on the graph had a gap in it, this time when X = 6 Y does not equal 6 instead Y = 8. This creates what we call a “discontinuity” the function is no longer continuous because the line breaks at X = 6 before continuing at xX= 7. There is just a small gap in the function, and this is where our limit comes in. While X = 6, Y=8 however if we say the limit of X=6 then Y=6. This is because as X approaches the number 6 Y approaches the number 6. X never quote equals 6 it only equals 5.9999999999 so therefore Y=5.9999999999 and we can round that up to 6. So while X = 6 Y may equal but as X gets infinitely closer to 6 without ever reaching it then Y becomes infinitely closer to 5.999999999.

Now you may be wondering what this has to do with Aristotle’s friendships, and how I can apply calculus to prove his philosophy wrong? Well let’s take our previous example and replace some of the numbers and letters with somethings that we have learned from Aristotle. Let’s take our calculus graph and change it into a love graph. Change X into TF( True Friendship) and let’s change Y into PP(Passion Points) so instead of Y=X we have PP=TF this means that we have a continuous line that states when our true friendship increases so does our passion and so long as our passion doesn’t overcome our friendship the friendship will stay true. Now let add the last piece of the function. Instead of X=6, Y=8 let’s change it to TF=6, PP=8. This is when we run into the problem, at this exact point our passion overcomes the friendship, and this is where the love fails let’s call this point FF(Failed Friendship). This FF is the gap in the line that we must pass in order to be able to keep our friendship that was built on passion and to do that we bring out limits. We need to find the Limit of TF=FF, in other words we need to find the point on the love graph as our true friendship is approaching the point that our passion will overcome our friendship and lead to a failed friendship. Let’s call this point of true friendship as it approaches failed friendship, HM(Higher Moral). This means that as our passion increases to the point where it would lead to a failed friendship, we use the limit or we use higher morals. This higher morals pushes us past the point of failed friendship so we can continue along the love graph without fear of our passion overcoming our true friendship.

John Stuart Mill(2021)*.* Utilitarianism

[Assignment #8: J. S. Mill & The Utilitarian options (instructure.com)](https://uvu.instructure.com/courses/519617/assignments/5346039#submit)

Utilitarianism, a moral compass, or a legal instrument?

Utilitarianism is founded on these basic principles, everything humans do is to reach a specific end. That end is pleasure or happiness, not necessarily bodily pleasure but all forms of pleasure, physical, mental, social, religious etc. There are many forms of pleasure and everything that humans do should be in pursuit of this pleasure, therefore pleasure must be considered good if that is the end goal for every human. It is upon that these fundamentals that utilitarianism is built upon and from what we will be expanding upon when evaluating utilitarianism as both a moral compass and a legal instrument.

I argue that utilitarianism should be adapted by individuals to be used as a moral compass to guide their actions and lives. The main reason, is for one simple fundamental concept that utilitarianism uses, “treat others as you want to be treated.” Or better known as the golden rule, John Stuart Mill states this in his paper. Utilitarianism teaches that you should view everything as a third party looking at the situation with an unbiased view. It says that you are no more important that those around you so you shouldn’t be giving yourself special treatment over others. In other words it teaches you to be selfless and to think about others needs not just your own. Many people struggle with the notion that everyone around them have lives that are just as important as their own. People are naturally selfish; we like to think of ourselves over others and utilitarianism pushes us to be better than that. Because utilitarianism focuses on creating the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people it forces you to think about others needs as much as your own. But while it pushes you to improve the happiness of others it also says that you cannot neglect your own happiness. This is because if you only spent your time on others you would eventually burn out to the point where you are unable to contribute to the overall happiness. So therefore you must think about yourself so that you can in the long run create the greatest amount of happiness as possible.

Now for the second part and more problematic side of utilitarianism, as I have previously discussed, utilitarianism works great as an individual’s moral compass. But it fails when it is forced upon people or is used as the basis for government. The reason is that if you take upon yourself to become a selfless person you become a better person. However if you try to force someone to become selfless even if it is against their wishes you start to infringe on other’s rights. An individual might decide to give his excess money to those poorer than himself and that is a great thing. A government would force that same person give money to someone else in the name of making him “selfless.” The big issue is that at the top of the government is still a human being, a flawed human being that may have a different moral system than that of your own. The person or people who get to decide what creates the most amount of happiness would have an overwhelming amount of power that could very easily be abused. This is the flaw that utilitarianism has when you try to use it as a basis as a legal instrument.

Immanuel Kant(2021)*.* Perpetual Peace

[Week #10: Kant's Perplexing Peace Possibility Proposal (instructure.com)](https://uvu.instructure.com/courses/519617/assignments/5475357#submit)

Nature of War

In Immanuel Kant’s paper, *Perpetual Peace.* He talks a lot about peace and war, what I want to focus on analyzing his is take on war. I find that he has some very interesting thoughts when it comes to war. First off, he does seem to truly hate war, he despises it so much that he believes that no country should have a standing army. He believes that if a state has an army, they will eventually find a way to use it, and that they will be signaling to other states to do the same. Now I disagree with this notion for one reason in particular, I don’t disagree with the idea that the state will find a way to use the army. I just argue the necessity for a standing army because if an evil country that wishes to take over other states has an army and you do not the evil country will have the means to do whatever they see fit. Each state needs a standing army for the soul purpose of dissuading other states from engaging in warfare, it is the idea of mutually shared destruction. One state doesn’t destroy you because they know you will take them down with you.

Now for his even more interesting idea, Immanuel Kant was rather confident that while war was evil and needs to be ended, he seems to believe that it was a necessity at some point. This is because he believes that nature itself pushes man to go to war with each other. The reason for this is so that mankind will populate the entirety of the earth. Kant wrote about how one thing that war accomplishes is pushing groups of people out of their preferred habitations and into more harsher areas of the world that they would not go if they were not in danger of being destroyed by and opposing army. He cites groups of people that speak similar languages but are in completely different places as the reasoning and proof for his belief. I find this theory of his to be rather interesting mainly because it seems as way that one might justify war as being more than a horrendous act. This is why I was really surprised to hear Kant talk about this, but I guess that philosophers will still believe in things that they despise.

The main part of *Perpetual Peace* is Kant explaining what must be done in order for the world to finally come to a “perpetual peace.” He goes over lists of rules and guidelines that must be followed; you can tell that this is someone who wants all war to come to an end. Another one of his guidelines is that we have to stop glorifying war. In this way he refers both the Americas and the Europeans as savage countries. This is because of the tendencies that both of the countries always seem to find themselves in wars of some kind. Part of the reason he believes this is because the fact that both of them are very firm about having a powerful military force. It also doesn’t help that Europe doesn’t have the cleanest record on invading other countries. It is also that glorifying war and combat is pretty common in our cultures. This is something that Kant states as another problem that is stopping us from reaching a perpetual peace. He believes war to be a very tragic thing and he seems to blame a decent part of it with how we view combat as an honorable action. We honor things such as war and like to glorify it in our stories and culture. He isn’t really wrong here, though I do believe that he doesn’t give enough respect to those who do fight for the country, especially those who are doing so to preserve their country or other countries freedoms. I can agree on the other hand that we tend to over glorify war and combat, though I am not sure what can really be done about it. If you look at our entertainment and news you’ll notice that we seem to really enjoy violent things, it’s just part of our nature.