

DOI:10.14394/eidos.jpc.2021.0006

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Another Kind of Octopus

Abstract:

Philosophy nurtures its actuality from questions, or a call that comes from and leads to a lived risk. This paper embraces that risk in directly responding to nine of the fifteen questions in the Call for Papers for the issue, *Philosophy as a Way of Life in a Time of Crisis*. Attentive to the idea of PWL, I listened for each question's latent (or manifest) placement from seasoned historical thinkers. From that, I assigned the order of the questions. Each question served as a bright opening between the latticework of the authors and issues I revisited. I felt transformed and happy under this pergola. Philosophy as a way of life flourishes in such exchanges, and by what ferries *from* who writes, nurtured in the gardens *from* whom we write *for*. Here, too, there are paths to a genre-in-possible-community. May these paths lead us to "everything so that virtue and *phronesis* are made life-participating."¹

Keywords:

questions, Dewey, James, Bataille, community, Nietzsche, "philo-sophy"

1) Plato, *Phaedo*, 114c8–9.

Perhaps conceiving Romances means living through our own characters, making them live in our world, and delivering ourselves and our creatures to the minds of those to come, even when we will no longer be able to say I ...

— Umberto Eco, *The Island of the Day Before*

Introduction²

I noticed that the rich and poignant Call for Papers for the issue, *Philosophy as a Way of Life in a Time of Crisis*, contained fifteen questions.³ These selected questions prompted my responses (provisional answers) in the nine sections that follow, and served as a scaffold to counter the *temperato Saturni* (Saturnine Temperament), while mitigating an overload of uncertainty, pain, suffering, and anxiety in this “call” in the time of upheaval and crisis. This arrangement of questions also helped me join in the writing of roles and genres, bordering on the epistolary form. Here, I am already approaching the eroding permanence of the academe’s margins, subspecialties, border disruptions, and challenges, and all from philosophizing as a way of life. May these responses count toward a dialogue for those long held, mid-way, newly entering, or planning an escape, or retirement from the strictures of academic roles, rules, and venues.

Q1. “Disciplinary Capture” & Co.⁴

Question number 1 is, “ought we to challenge what Frodeman and Briggles call ‘disciplinary capture?’” Yes. We must indeed challenge “disciplinary capture” by challenging ourselves, as this will challenge the given spaces, themes, and the very grooming practice that captures. The boundary is clear in this challenge. It splits (demarkates) the concern and position one holds between print venues (in this very example), accessible to the more specialized roles and rites of references, from the broader, more widely accessible format of audience distribution. Here we approach Nietzsche’s contortions, where,

Every choice human being strives instinctively for a citadel and a secrecy where he is saved from the crowd [yet contact] constitutes a necessary part of the life-history of every philosopher ... [and if] fortunate, however, as a favorite child of knowledge should be, he will encounter suitable shortcuts and helps for his task; I mean so-called cynics, those who recognize the animal, the commonplace, and “the rule” in themselves.⁵

2) I am grateful to both anonymous reviewers for their insightful, honest, tough, and inspiring feedback. I have followed their recommendations, and enjoyed the challenge of reining in much of what was overwrought. I am also indebted to the editorial comments, and provocative suggestions by the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the journal – Professor Randall Auxier, where I felt as if in dialogue, as I responded and adjusted my text accordingly.

3) I recall here the words of Adorno, that “only out of the historical entanglement of questions and answers does the question of philosophy’s actuality emerge precisely.” Adorno, “The Actuality of Philosophy,” 29.

4) The sections of this article will begin with Q, and a number, 1 through 9, that correspond to 9 out of the 15 questions within the “Call for Papers Volume 5, no.1/2021 *Philosophy as a Way of Life in a Time of Crisis*.” If the space allowed, a 3×3 Magic square (where the sum of each line totals 15) would have been drawn. Then, the rearrangement of the Magic square number sequences, and this paper’s nine sections, would take on other possible sequences. I will leave this (im)possibility for another playful contribution, and game, in the near future, for the reader’s benefit, and mine.

5) Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §26. Are we forever caught in working through such a contorsion? Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 37–39.

Within their article, “The Institution of Philosophy: Escaping Disciplinary Capture,” Briggles and Frodeman begin with a respectful, though slightly naïve, nod to John Dewey’s 1917 essay, “The Need for a Recovery in Philosophy.”⁶ A closer look at the development of Dewey’s positions, in this call for “recovery” is worthwhile, though quite institutional sounding. If we step back to Dewey’s “Why Study Philosophy” of 1893, we find how “The philosopher, even he, is a social being” who “works out his ideas by expressing them, by trying them on others, by making them influence the actions of others.”⁷ Wonderful, but then comes the capture.

By the time he has freed himself of them, they have become embodied in the educational systems and methods, in the theological codes and dogmas, in the legal attitude and practice, in the turns and terms of language. In dying as philosophy the ideas come to live as part of the common and unconscious intellectual life of men in general. They become the presupposed background, the unexpressed premises, the working (and therefore controlling) tools of thought and action.⁸

One could stop here, seeing that the citadel walls are rising. For Dewey, at least at this early stage, it is only by the continual study of philosophy (or is it de-disciplining of philosophy?) that one may reflect, and master the ideas of philosophers that have become consolidated “tools of thought, and action.”⁹ Tall order, more walls, and interiors much obscured by kicking up motes from volumes of dust. For this reflexivity, we require the history of philosophy and, as Dewey concludes, by adopting a rather feral quote by F.H. Bradley: “some need no ‘why,’ who study upon instinct.”¹⁰ Perhaps this instinct happily lives in “field philosophy,” while it becomes damaged and denatured within the grind of orthodoxy, academic Mode 1 philosophy. Mode 1 Philosophy is “academic, investigator, and discipline based” and Mode 2 philosophy is “knowledge production [that] is context driven, problem focused and inter- and transdisciplinary in nature.”¹¹ Mode 1 and Mode 2 are shorthand terms taken from Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott and Trow’s 1994, *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*. Mode 1 will continue as a main center in academic philosophy. In contrast, philosophy engaged and conducted through, and due to social situations (Mode 2), would serve Mode 1 as enrichment. Yet, Mode 2 requires the interest and the structure of a community, where “philosophers work in real time with a variety of audience and stakeholders.”¹² We have seen where this approach works in and from various subspecialties within philosophical studies, and helps in discussing and at crucial times, guiding socially charged issues. In the end, for Briggles and Frodeman, there should remain an “institution of philosophy,” and at the same time a “people’s philosophy.” Somehow, the twain shall meet. I feel that Nietzsche’s contortions and labyrinthine citadels will continue to haunt such a meeting.

We next come to Dewey’s 1917 essay, “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy.”¹³ This is the only text by Dewey where Briggles and Frodeman pin Mode 1 to Mode 2 belief in a reconstruction of philosophy. In Dewey’s

6) Briggles and Frodeman, “The Institution of Philosophy: Escaping Disciplinary Capture,” 26–38.

7) Dewey, “Why Study Philosophy?,” 63.

8) Ibid.

9) Ibid.

10) Ibid., 65. The quote from F.H. Bradley was, “Metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons that we believe upon instinct, but to find these reasons is no less an instinct.”

11) Briggles and Frodeman, “The Institution of Philosophy,” 36. I will return to this issue when I discuss William James’ solution, from his brilliant 1904 “The Ph.D. Octopus.”

12) Ibid.

13) Dewey, “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy,” 3–69. See also Briggles and Frodeman, “The Institution of Philosophy,” 26–27.

essay, we notice a torsion caused by the capture of ideas, in and as practices mentioned above, and in Dewey's realization that "turning abruptly away from all traditional issues ... is impossible." Yet, he continues, one needs some kind of "emancipation of philosophy from too intimate and exclusive attachment to traditional problems."¹⁴ Here we go again. In this hoped for emancipation, the spaces between Mode 1 and Mode 2 could become fractal. However, we are then quickly placed within another torsion, by how "imaginative recovery of the bygone is indispensable to successful invasion of the future, but its status is that of an instrument. To ignore its import is a sign of an undisciplined agent."¹⁵ Could the volatile edges of Mode 2 be trained, re-formed, disciplined? What a "disciplined agent" is for Dewey, as it plays out in his massive collection of works, and in his 1917 "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," is beyond the scope of this piece, and best left to seasoned Dewey scholars. Yet, "vision, imagination, and reflection" appear as necessary pistons to the engine of "action" that Dewey calls for, and to what philosophy may become, even though "it is not necessary," as he adds, "it is not even desirable, to set forth philosophy as a scheduled program."¹⁶ Mode 1 breaks down, and it seems that the engine for Mode 2 has prematurely seized, or recoiled.

Stepping forward to 1920, we encounter "Changing Conceptions of Philosophy," from Dewey's *Reconstruction in Philosophy*.¹⁷ Here the origin and role of philosophy as subject is rightly challenged, and the hold of absolute, noumenal, and ultimate reality is pitted against the "ordinary empirical, relatively real, phenomenal world of everyday experience," that is, the "social and moral strifes of their own day" (RP, 23, 26). Mode 1, weakened, meets Mode 2 once again. Yet, this so-called liberation in granting philosophy a "new significance" only begins if "one will connect the story of philosophy with a study of anthropology, primitive life, the history of religion, literature, and social institutions" (RP, 25). Mode 1 piles it on, and Mode 2 is not happy at all. A tall order for changing conceptions of philosophy, made even taller by how each of these studies that one must patiently wade through are froth with the "revivals of memory," seeing that the "primary life of memory," and "ordinary man left to himself" "is emotional rather than intellectual and practical" (RP, 2, 5).¹⁸ The walls are rising, and becoming thicker. The parting of these ways (emotional /intellectual), while bracketing the emotional suggestiveness of hope, fear, love and hate, requires that one become "subjected to a discipline" (RP, 5). Where is instinct now? "Undisciplined human nature" must turn away from the figurative, the suggestive, and the drama of fancy, by placing the study of philosophy alongside "a study of anthropology, primitive life, the history of religion, literature, and social institutions" (RP, 6, 25). It seems that Briggie and Frodeman would have had to place this Dewey snippet along with the passages from Quine, Kripke, and Leiter, and the "remit of the professional philosopher."¹⁹ They might also need to rethink their positioning of Socrates, who was engaged from one end, made mouthpiece of another, and an outsider to the outsiders who displayed wider interests in anthropology, rhetoric, the history of mythology, literature, and a variety of audiences. He also did bite at the sophists for being liked.²⁰

14) Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," 5.

15) *Ibid.*, 14.

16) *Ibid.*, 65. Grateful for a comment by an editor, I would wholeheartedly agree that Campbell, *A Thoughtful Profession: The Early Years of the American Philosophical Association*, especially chapters 4 through 10, and chapter 16, "The Professionalization of Philosophy," would ground and animate the modes of philosophy here discussed. It would also prompt a lively satyr-play starring Arthur O. Lovejoy and John E. Smith.

17) Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, chap. 1. Hereafter referred to as RP with in text parentheticals and page numbers.

18) Again see Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §26.

19) See Briggie and Frodeman, "The Institution of Philosophy," 27. Remit or no remit, and as Briggie and Frodeman later add, "The need to survive, gain a job, and earn tenure drives many philosophers away from other fields and back to their disciplinary or subdisciplinary fold," *ibid.*, 34.

20) See *ibid.*, 37.

Back to the use of Dewey's work where, twenty-five years later, Dewey realized that "Reconstruction of Philosophy" was a more suitable title than "Reconstruction *in* Philosophy" (RP, Introduction).²¹ "In" can only go so far *in* without dragging everything in there with it, when there is a call for the transformation of the role, genre, and figure of philosophy and philosophers. Even the call to reconstructive work in "morals," as Dewey championed, is in "need of a ministry of Disturbance, a regulated source of annoyance; a destroyer of routine; an underminer of complacency" (RP, xvii).²² A touch of Nietzsche would have helped in that department. Once again, and without plunging into the depths of Dewey scholarship, moral reconstruction has its own self-corrective history, its *in* and well-travelled routes where the *of* in its routines will barely be disturbed.²³ The walls, tall and thick, are now receiving a coat of stucco, but its color obscured by volumes of dust.

In 1947, Dewey delivered an address to the Graduate Department of Philosophy at Columbia University entitled, "The Future of Philosophy." He clearly saw that the "serious obstacles is the state of the world ... so fearful, so frightful, in the literal sense of the word, that it's very hard to face."²⁴ We are in similar, yet more disturbing state and company. We may repeat with Dewey that there "are many obstacles in realizing the hope" of transforming the roles, genres, and approaches (in and outside academe's citadel) toward philosophy as a way of life. As our present crisis evolves, deepens, and sends damaging flares up ahead, showing us glimpses of what will remain scorched (roots and all), the kinds of possible reconstructions of philosophy that remain are problematized. If we cannot face our crisis, a torsion (previously shown in Nietzsche citation of *Beyond Good and Evil* § 26), will further emerge between reactionary modes of philosophizing (return to Medieval/Neo-Scholastic, logicism, Apologetics), in content, form, attitude, or purely escapist modes. Dewey believed that facing and working through the actual problems of his time would take centuries, years within which one could find the resurfacing of totalitarianism, fascism, and populism, in a word, the live ingredients (with the addition of the Covid-19 pandemic) of our present crisis. Of course, Dewey was addressing, and pinned more than some hope in, what he called those that "engage in philosophy professionally,"²⁵ those within the citadel of academia, those who would wear the form and flaunt the attitude that would very well further entrench disciplinary capture, if only to save, desperately, the institution and themselves.

Q2. "The Ph.D. Octopus"

William James would have been the better horse to bet on for Briggie and Frodeman. "The Ph.D. Octopus," from 1903, cuts deeper than Dewey's 1917, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy."²⁶ As outlined in the previous section, following a few of Dewey's reflections on the issues of recovery *of*, or reconstruction *in* or *of* profes-

21) Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, "Introduction – Reconstruction as seen Twenty-Five Years Later."

22) This quote is from C.D. Darlington, that Dewey received as a copy when writing his Introduction.

23) Dewey's push for moral reconstruction, along with pedagogical sciences and advances in psychology, warrant praise. But there, too, the call for an order among reformers becomes another "in" of an "of."

24) Dewey, "The Future of Philosophy," 466–70.

25) *Ibid.*, 467. It would be most pleasing to find out if William Pepperell Montague was part of the audience when Dewey addressed the Graduate Department of Philosophy at Columbia, and catch what lively retort Montague would have given, as he was famously known to do. As an example, "The quest for certainty – happily so christened by John Dewey but by him (also happily) not too meticulously pursued – that is the real source of our trouble." See Montague, *Great Visions of Philosophy: Varieties of Speculative Thought in the West from the Greeks to Bergson*, 11. For a fuller treatment, critique, and recognition of Dewey's position by Montague, see Montague, *The Ways of Knowing or The Methods of Philosophy*, 134–37, 156–57.

26) James, "The Ph.D. Octopus." See also James, *Memories and Studies*, 329–47.

sionalized philosophy, lead us into further torsions, knots, and institutional bramble.²⁷ Instead, James give us a succinct play-by-play of the problems of professionalization, institutional tyranny, the vanities of titles, a look at the damage done to particular temperaments, as well as suggest three possible routes of escape from the “hold of the Ph.D. Octopus upon American life.” It only took 24 years after Harvard granted its first doctorate in philosophy, and 34 recipients of the degree, for James to level this critique against the Ph.D. octopus.²⁸ Question number 2 prompts the reference and issues unfolded in this section. The question is, “What role can the work of philosophers have in helping individuals and communities strive for a wise, just, and meaningful life?”

William James did and, would as an example, play a positive role in how a philosopher (educator, mentor, and friend) could help individuals, and enhance communities of learning while taking them to task, all in amazing style and grace. Once again, it is beyond the scope of this particular section and contribution to track, review, and discuss the rich issues of pedagogy and education theory as they developed in the works and letters of James. So again, as with Dewey, I stand aside for the seasoned specialist or subspecialist in William James scholarship.²⁹ What interests me is what is happening in James’ “The Ph.D. Octopus,” and what I learned from having tracked this “brilliant student of Philosophy,” a graduate student who was, as James wrote, “one of the strongest men with whom we had ever had to deal.”³⁰ Such praise, seconded only by their letters of high recommendation sent to a “sister-institution” (soon to be revealed), came from the figures of Harvard’s so-called golden age of the Philosophy Department (Palmer, James, Royce, Santayana), and Münsterberg in psychology. Extremely impressive. Who could this student, this new Alcibiades be? The intrigue was just too much not to embark on, enjoy some sleuthing, and finally flesh out the story of the individual involved in James’ examples of an “incident ... so characteristic of American academic conditions” of his day, and more so of ours.³¹ Part of this inquiry is also an example of using the biographical/non-fictional genre to add to the role of writing the (mostly forgotten) lives of those in the field of philosophy. It turns out that this student’s character and exploits (as a short-lived professor at Bryn Mawr College) became a public scandal and trial, and was fictionalized by none other than Gertrude Stein, who was another student and mentee of William James, and a student of Josiah Royce. The cross between the biographical/nonfictional and the fictional would enhance the exposure to philosophy as a way of life, as once did, and still does, at least as an enticing undertow, Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of the Philosophers*.³²

Let us begin with James’ very brilliant student. The student’s name was Alfred LeRoy Hodder (1866–1907) who, after some nonchalance, institutional tribulation, and then some, received his Doctorate in Philosophy in 1897, with a Dissertation published in 1901, entitled, *The Adversaries of the Sceptic or the Specious Present: A New Inquiry into Human Knowledge*.³³ After reading and comparing his thesis to others before him, he does appear to be the strongest and most creative student they had had (up to 1897), *pace* Hall, Abbot, Santayana,

27) My use of “torsion” is best seen as what is unresolved in question 4 that will forever haunt a response to Q7.

28) The first twenty-four years, from 1878 to 1902, produced thirty-four Ph.Ds. I have not counted the six Ph.D. candidates from 1903, when James published his article in March of that year.

29) For a basic introduction see Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James: Briefer Version*, 123, 134–35, 144, and 326–28.

30) James, “The Ph.D. Octopus,” 329, 331.

31) *Ibid.*, 332.

32) Two more recent texts that would serve in this vein are Hamlyn, *Being a Philosopher: The History of a Practice*, and more so, Yancy, *The Philosophical I: Personal Reflections on Life in Philosophy*.

33) Hodder, *The Adversaries of the Sceptic or the Specious Present: A New Inquiry into Human Knowledge*. As Hodder noted in his “Preface,” his Harvard thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy contained the first four chapters, and part of the sixth chapter (of the expanded ten chapter, 339-page book). The chapters were, 1. The Dilemma of Scepticism, 2. The Specious Present, 3. Self-Transcendence, 4. Insufficient Reason, and part of 6, The Testimony of Consciousness.

and Bakewell. James could easily classify Prof. Hodder as part of the first class of individuals not affected by the “tyrannical Machine,” exam standard, and system of academic snobbery. They are “those born for professional success” where “examinations have no terror for them, and interfere in no way with their spiritual or worldly interest.”³⁴ Prof. Hodder displayed this in flying colors. There is a twist. He came to be known as the “Byron of Bryn Mawr.” He was involved in a love quadrangle, was sued for bigamy, dragged the then president of Bryn Mawr into a no-confidence status due to this quadrangle, then mysteriously died in a New York jail, weeks before a highly publicized trial with his common-law spouse Jessie Donaldson Hodder. His Bryn Mawr position, English Literature, was short lived, from 1895–1898. I will leave out other fascinating, admirable, and lurid details for those who wish to continue sleuthing.³⁵

What of those not so naturally brilliant? James saw them as either rising to the challenge without “some baleful nervous wear and tear ... of their inner life,” or becoming the “institution’s victims,” where “academic life may become, after a certain point, a virulent poison,” from either fighting the ordeal interminably, or turning away with spirits broken.³⁶ What does James suggest as remedies? First, lower the “fantastic standards ... and give the doctorate as a matter of course” as “bachelor’s degree” are “for due amount of time spent in patient labor in a special department of learning.” Second, have “universities and colleges give up their unspeakable silly ambition to bespangle their lists of offices with these doctoral titles.” Third, students who refuse to “take the higher degree ... because examinations interfere with ... immediate intellectual aims” should “not be made to suffer for” their “independence.” Instead, letters of recommendation from their instructors should “offset the lack of the bread-winning degree ... and back them later personally, in the market-struggle.”³⁷ These are clear steps on ways to de-discipline the professionalized and institutionally captured field of philosophy. Our present crisis could bring some institutions and communities to the brink of realizing this, *nolens volens*, when a return to “normal” will be anything but.³⁸

Q3. Community: Impossible

Question number 3 is, “Can Philosophy provide new visions of human community when community seems fraught or broken?” Only when the roles and works that challenge “disciplinary capture” (and philosophical traditions taught by rote) are clearly outlined, and reabsorbed (and discarded thereafter, or irreparable), will we

34) James, “The Ph.D. Octopus,” 335, 339.

35) Hodder, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Hodder, accessed on July 12, 2020. For archives of Alfred Hodder see http://dla.library.upenn.edu/cocoon/dla/pacscl/ead.pdf?id=PACSCL_PRIN_MUDD_C0450USNjP, accessed July 14, 2020. See also archive at Princeton University, <https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/collections/alfred-and-mary-gwinn-hodder-papers>, accessed on July 14, 2020. For some of his writing see <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupname?key=Hodder%2C%20Alfred%2C%201866-1907>, accessed July 14, 2020.

36) James, “The Ph.D. Octopus,” 339–40.

37) *Ibid.*, 344–45

38) For further and wider use, and more data on this issue see Nisbet, “The Octopus Revisited.” Another more personal reflection is found in McClay, “The Ph.D. Octopus, 100 years on,” 6. McClay reports that when asking a faculty member of scholarly distinction “what was the hardest part of his job,” the response given was, “You know what is really terrible? It’s watching what happens to young people when they come to graduate school. They arrive bright-eyed, eager, charming people of wide interests, who are so happy to find themselves in a place where ideas are talked about, and where they can meet people who have written the books they read in college.” Then he continued, “It is our job to break down that enthusiasm, to narrow them, to socialize them into an academic profession. To turn them into drudges ... sometimes it’s the best ones that leave in the first or second years ... sometimes the ones who finish, and go on into the profession, are the least interesting.”

be able to notice the silverpoint drawn sketches of a coming community.³⁹ As long as there are two individuals (or an individual and a book, poem, prayer) sharing this dawning vision, there is a community: impossible. Projected-oriented works (always already a capture of content and style), must yield to necessary writing, as Georges Bataille outlined in his 1943, *Inner Experience*. If fraught or broken, a community has no other style but to set writing against itself, against its own project, against heroics, and toward a glimpse of the cicatrix of silence, or a developing silverpoint drawing. To read then the history of philosophy, and philosophy as a way of life (PWL) in its thinkers as an anti-project (as sub-verse-shuns), is to recommence against the grain, and toward an *aphilosophical* community. In the words of Bataille, a “community of those who have no community.”⁴⁰ Exemplifications will house new singularities for those who step aside from a program of philosophy, for indeed “it is not even desirable, to set forth philosophy as a scheduled program.”⁴¹ Nay, exemplifications would make this impossible, for they are not what is most common; they are the tear in the canvas of the particular and universal, tears of writing in styles.

What we need in the roles and genres of writing is the elegance of waste, *sprezzatura*. We need a fluid audience, not one built-*in*, or built-*of* (or out of), but working-along with provisionally and humorously called “College(s) of Socratic Studies,” as Bataille *x*-tended. Alas. The elegance of waste, *sprezzatura* is the writing that wrests to untangle the work of the commodification of sheltered interiorized knowledge. It is best to soothe the call for more studies by applying Bataille’s own words.

A few of us can form ... a kind of organization or school, to which I propose to provisionally give the in part amusing title of “College of Socratic Studies,” a college that would publish nothing, would have neither means of propaganda nor of overt assembly, but that would nevertheless attempt to absorb, in its lack of solutions, the activity that is most clearly outside of each of its activities.⁴²

Perhaps here, one must conjure up Socrates himself, and his recommendation to Simmias: to “Do everything so that virtue and *phronesis* are made life-participating.”⁴³ What escaped Bataille (who bet on Zarathustra-Nietzsche’s laughter) was Socrates’ laughter, the laughter in the *Phaedo*. Socrates’ laughter was a tool (instrument) in the service of the philosophical life, a laughter that measures and helps reconcile dead philosophical theories and the philosophical life, accorded through life as the very affinity of a philosopher’s training.⁴⁴ This also escaped Nietzsche. It is not difficult to see how two out of the three propositions for what Bataille called a “College of Socratic Studies” – experience as sole authority, and the contestation of authority and non-knowledge – would find a connection to philosophy as a way of life. It would also find an interrogation that would be able to contest Bataille’s very call to “contestation and non-knowledge.”⁴⁵ This is possible because Socrates fully participates in the risk of communication at the rough edges of experience; ready to play a situation which itself is already

39) In having morphed from a life in the visual arts (and happy to return therein), the mention of silverpoint drawing is very intentional. Its substrate/ground preparation (commonly known as Cameo paper), requires taxing preparation, and the use of the stylus delivery from various metal points (silver, gold, bronze, copper, lead, etc.), is nearly impossible to erase without damaging the prepared surface, rendering each stroke indelible. The beauty is that as the drawing begins to age, oxidation and tarnish enrich the piece, each metal developing a particular hue.

40) Bataille, *Ceuvres complètes*, 5:483.

41) Dewey, “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy,” 65.

42) Bataille, “Socratic College,” 10. See also 5–17.

43) Plato, *Phaedo*, 114c8–9.

44) See *Phaedo*, 82a8–9.

45) Bataille, “Socratic College,” 11–12.

“rich with garbage,” as Bataille would say. Perhaps as a simpleton, or perhaps as a child, Socrates’ laughter is the very fragility of communication that slips. The slipping is what puts communication at risk, and what is risked is lived.⁴⁶ Simply put, Socrates’ laughter moves along within the risk of communication, while Zarathustra’s (Nietzsche’s) laughter, *pace* Bataille, is protection against miscommunication of the risk.

Q4. “*Nec speres aliquid nec extimescas*”⁴⁷

Risk quells fears, as well as hopes. Thus, question number 4 is, “Should we write consolations for ourselves in a world we cannot control?” Why not, but better naught, for how could we characterize Philosophy as a *magistra*, instructing us as the *consolatio* genre usually proposes, toward a cure, an individually tailored therapy, weaved along with philosophy’s own lament (*querela*)? How can a work of consolation even work, where an essential part of what consoles and cures was the individual’s realization and grasp of ultimate things, ultimate purposes, a world, truth, God? Could this work be the work that un-works itself, as in Meister Eckhart’s “I pray God to rid me of God”? Perhaps from Boethius, that the above consolation applies, we must swiftly turn ahead to Blanchot. However, if one must turn back, if one must study and take up the past thinkers of PWL, it is to the *Phaedo* where the consolation genre showed itself as problematized, a many faceted genre, a genre that widened its stations, and shared the worries, ideals, and searches of multiple lives and interlocutors. Socrates’ presence in the *Phaedo* showed itself as a testimony. More modes and philosophical life-stories.⁴⁸ A consolation for ourselves? Only if at the edges of what is expressed in language, we may struggle to disentangle or disappear, to wander into a reprieve of consolation, one that steals away the hope for a cure, and that leave the process in abeyance, in blanched-oughts. This, too, would incite critical reflection, even if only upon its edges, if only in practicing a genre.

Q5. “Style is the ultimate morality of mind”⁴⁹

Is there training in the practice of genres or styles for philosophy students apart from the seminar and research paper, thesis, or the ponderous dissertation? Unlikely. I hope that there are more assignments that are creative, experimental, and with many styles of approach and genres at the undergraduate levels. However, this impossibility at the Graduate level repeatedly reveals the deeper trenches of institutional/disciplinary capture. This is prompted by question number 5, “Do we pen dialogues, fictional works, and artistic essays to incite necessary thought and reflection?”

46) As a joyful acknowledgement to a comment by an editor, I agree that along with my mention of the *Phaedo*, one should add the *Euthydemus* in its entirety. Not only does the dialogue cover what I state as “risk of communication,” but mentions those, who are neither philosopher nor statesman, “occupying borders (μεθόρια)” (305c), who stay “clear of both risk (κιδύων) and conflict” (305e). In one swoop, the *Euthydemus* would gather my previous mention of institutional bramble, viz., the fashionable nihilism of eristic sophistry of that time, what James saw in his 1903 “The Ph.D. Octopus,” and the contemporary “pluralist presence” in American Philosophy, outlined by Wilshire in *Fashionable Nihilism: A Critique of Analytic Philosophy*. Think then of Crito, his son Critobulus, the question of taking up of philosophy (307a), our students, their parents, and Socrates’ recommendation that sails past the nihilist doldrums of indecision from pursuing any practice or study (see *Euthydemus* 307a-c, 295c, 292d, and the million dollar question at 274d).

47) “Fear naught and hope naught.” Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 8.

48) Revisiting the shadowy figure and fragments of Antiphon (the Sophist) would add to the split from simple consolation into a type of therapy, and self-mastery. See Furley, “Antiphon der Athener: Ein Sophist als Psychotherapeut?,” 198–216. See also Guthrie, *The Sophists*, 168, 285–94, esp. 290–91.

49) Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*, 24.

We can attempt various genres once outside institutional capture, if the mastery of style is present. However, can we mix genres?⁵⁰ For now, let us turn back to William James and his reflections from “The Ph.D. Octopus.” This will remind us of the story of the “brilliant student of philosophy ... one of the strongest men with whom we had ever had to deal.” Even though the thesis was finally written, brilliant and original that it was, James confessed, “we could not pass it,” for it “must also exhibit a heavy technical apparatus of learning.” Caught! The recommendation was to “pad out the thesis properly and return within the next year.”⁵¹ When writing sheds its attempts at capture due to constipated prose, or when it feigns, flows, falters, or is entangled, or when it takes by storm in a move dramatizing poetic spirit, what is ultimately revealed is that, in the words of Buffon, “Le style est l’homme même,” or not.

This is revealed beyond, outside, or more aptly, upon one, worn as garments, hand-me-downs (perhaps tailored?), whether after years of learning, practiced technologies, catechisms, recitations, mimicry, or, in name (*nom*) becomes a “one-person genre ... that genius ... may always consist in a *so-happening*, in finding, discovering or inventing oneself ... in a quasi-fortuitous manner ... genesis, genre, genealogy, generosity; and genius ... pays its respects to the heritage of name.”⁵²

The incitement to necessary thought and reflection emerges from works, in whatever genre they belong, only if they have indeed paid their respects to the “heritage of a name” (*nom*). For instance, notice how, on a careful reading, *The Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius is deeply indebted in-the-name (*nom*) of the verse-prose alternating literary genre of Menippean Satire.⁵³ What/who, or in what name (*nom*), are our texts, essays, articles, and books indebted? In selecting how we should write, in whatever genre or style, we have again circled back to one of Dewey’s torsions; that the “turning abruptly away from all traditional issues ... is impossible,” while we simultaneously seek “emancipation of philosophy from too intimate and exclusive attachment to traditional problems.”⁵⁴ The writing for broader or fewer readers so-happens in the way that Derrida recites about a *prière d’insérer*, in a book of Hélène Cixous, and that what happens is “the before-work and the outside-the-work (*hors-l’oeuvre*), the out-of-bounds (*hors-la-loi*) of the *oeuvre*.”⁵⁵ This is what approaches the art of living, of living with others, and the heritage and inheritance of an engaged community, of daily life, daily practices, and with these too, as expressions emerging from within the practices. The practices that face/efface us in upheaval, uncertainty, pain, suffering, and death, incite a need for teaching/writing due precisely to death, to victims forgotten, as compassionate remembrances drawn around all that live on before and outside the work. One must also recall that *habent sua fata libelli* (books have their fate).

50) See the example of writing, of *récit* at the limits of genres, in Blanchot’s *La folie du jour*, where, according to Derrida, Julius Peterson’s genre-disc spins “like a demented sun.” Derrida, “The Law of Genre,” 252, and 252n12. See also Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction*.

51) James, “The Ph.D. Octopus,” 329, 330–31. At the same time, each member of the Philosophy Department wrote glowing recommendations so that Alfred Hodder could retain his appointment at Bryn Mawr, on the condition that he present the thesis in one year, and pass. Hodder did, and he passed. Could this have been how the ABD was born? It did not hurt Alfred Hodder that his writing abilities shined, and his short stories and novels were very successful: *The Powers that Prey* (1900), *The New Americans* (1901), *A Fight for the City* (1903).

52) Derrida, *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres, and Genius*, 1, 8–9.

53) On this see Curley III, “*The Consolation of Philosophy* as a Work of Literature,” 343–67.

54) Dewey, “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy,” 5. This torsion effects style, substance, and self.

55) Derrida, *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres, and Genius*, 11. See also 18 for how this is “literature’s secret,” and 21 for how this inheritance, power, and secret is only so because it is “a pledge to the other.” In a furiously roundabout way, beneath Whitehead’s quip, “Style is the ultimate morality of mind” we find the something that he sees as above style: power, and the “fashioning of power.” Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*, 24.

Q6. Occasionalism Without God or Will

“During such times as these, what should the philosopher write and for whom?” is question number 6. It is impossible to write from nowhere, and to write for no one. Best to take on the epistolary form or, at least, as I have tried, to respond to a “call.” The writer, reader, author, audience, and teacher are deeply intertwined in shared historical contexts, both “agent and/as patient” as Dewey felt, and are living rites and rituals of each other. What to write emerges between them. This article is written to exemplify such rites, to stay close to a shared and engaging call. There is always the danger that a specific occasion, or call, must unfortunately submit to an avalanche of ready-pulled archived pieces. Even those covered in the robes of *homo academicus* are best when opening up, listening to the possibilities (or impossibilities) seen in other works, authors and listeners, and specific calls. Perhaps this leads to an impossible community, mostly provisional (from the standpoint of the cloistered theory-crat), though one should be reminded of Leibniz’s words as Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle recalled, “He said he liked to see the plants for which he had furnished the seeds growing in other people’s gardens.”⁵⁶ As writers-readers, we notice these plants growing in our gardens. Without them, we would be gardenless. They add to our own archi-textured gardening plans (wild or manicured), reminding us that there is more “work to-be-made” (*oeuvre à faire*); there are surprises, and implications.⁵⁷ In this case, the “what to write” is to find spaces and boundaries from the call (the call for a paper) itself, so to lessen the locus of in-turning volitional struggle, so to work from what was furnished as seeds, so to quell the hankering for writing from a *locus imaginarius*. Indeed, an Occasionalism beyond God and will.

We write *for* and *from* what we learned. This is to play between *muthos*, *istoria* and *logos*, or from a learning to know, to a knowing learned, and into a learned knowing, all in service of how one lives. “For would philosophy be worth an hour’s exertion if it failed to equip us for life?”⁵⁸ As does the cross between the biographical/nonfictional and the fictional enhance the exposure to philosophy as a way of life so, in this vein, would the autobiographical.⁵⁹ It is there that what ferries between *from* who writes is deeply nurtured *from* whom we write *for*. This is in full display by those (us all) that live their “work to-be-made.”

The work to-be-made never says to us: “Here is what I am, here is what I should be, a model you have only to copy.” Rather, it is a mute dialogue in which the work seems enigmatically, almost ironically to say: “And what are you going to do now? With what actions are you going to promote or deteriorate me?”⁶⁰

56) Garber, “Thinking in the Age of the Learned Journal,” 203. Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle was secretary of the Académie Royales des Sciences.

57) On the call for “work to-be-made” (*oeuvre à faire*) see Souriau, *The Different Modes of Existence*, and *Of the Mode of Existence of the Work to-be-Made*, 220, 230, 232.

58) *Ibid.*, 212.

59) Christine Overall gives us six good reasons for using, supplementing, and enhancing the work of scholarship with autobiographical philosophy. 1. It is reader and audience friendly, a hook. 2. It has epistemic value, in sharing values, and lives, and revealing how lives in philosophy are lived. 3. It underlines, and shows the courage of one’s social and academic politics. 4. It is a balance, a coming up for air, through topics that are long, winding, and not autobiographical, but that surface due to details of a life. 5. All works are part of one’s unfolding life interests, and struggles, as are chosen topics or methods. 6. I will give a full quote from Overall, for this final point, “Autobiographical philosophy is a way of talking both *to* oneself and *about* oneself, both *to oneself*, and *to other selves*.” Overall, “Writing What Comes Naturally?,” 227–35, see esp. 231–34. In this vein, see Yancy, *The Philosophical I: Personal Reflections on Life in Philosophy*.

60) Souriau, *The Different Modes of Existence*, and *Of the Mode of Existence of the Work to-be-Made*, 232.

Q7. Beyond Consolatory, Bower *Θεράπευτής*⁶¹

The title of this section is a condensed response to question number 7, “Can philosophy any longer be therapeutic or consolatory, as it was for the ancients?” No. Christian Apologists and Company destroyed this option. The styles of life of ancient philosophers were given new life, in name only, and monastically patched the many fragments (and accounts) lost precisely in, and due to, a reconstruction of a remembrance of God. The mix was lethal. Herein memorization, long played out, and accruing as the walls themselves (as Amphion’s song), triumphed as the very halls of academia that hauntingly surround, house, nurture, or starve the work of what was left of so-called “philosophers.”

New sophists (theo-sophists) replaced the old, living in the soul alone, and considered, while expressing that the ancients were a piece of insanity, and their banquets ridiculous, their myths fabulous fictions, and divine Eros merely a foil for neat speeches. Such was and remains Philo of Alexandria’s unscholarly shame.⁶²

By giving the name “philosophers” to the Therapeutae (and presumably, but unlikely, to the Therapeutride), Philo’s co-option, and appropriation of Ancient Greek philosophy are laid bare by his chorus described (compulsively dancing) in recollections of joys over their enemies perishing, and their intoxication at the wondrous works they childishly called God’s. Ancient philosophy was long dead before this, (and *laude* Gogol), counted as dead souls⁶³ long after, consolations behind, only the embers of derivative schools in front, and then the last gasps in *Lives*, as Laertius’ farewell before the onslaught of “barbarian philosophy.”⁶⁴ We must await another dawn.

Christianity and the affects. – Within Christianity there is audible also a great popular protest against philosophy: the reason of the sages of antiquity had advised men against the affects, Christianity wants to *restore* them. To this end, it denies to virtue as it was conceived by the philosophers – as the victory of reason over affect – all moral value, condemns rationality in general, and challenges the affects to reveal themselves in the extremest grandeur and strength: as *love* of God, *fear* of God, as fanatical *faith* in God, as the blindest *hope* in God.⁶⁵

To unburden this quote from Nietzsche would take us down crisscrossing paths. First to how question 7; “Can philosophy any longer be therapeutic or consolatory, as it was for the ancients;” is bound to question 4, “Should we write consolations for ourselves in a world we cannot control.” Without working through our most intimate of consolations (Q4), with all the risks of breaking, bracketing, or bracing ultimate things as the work that un-works itself, as in Meister Eckhart’s “I pray God to rid me of God,” we remain ill-prepared as therapists; speaking only *from* defenses, as we listen *to* defenses. The paths to modern affects (secret double-agent defenses),

61) *Θεράπευτής* (*Therapeutes*) – one who is attendant to the gods, or attendant to heal spiritually, or medically. My use of “Bower *Therapeutes*” implies bower as anchor, dwelling, and enclosure.

62) A condensed quip using, and draining some of the poison from, Philo of Alexandria’s *On the Contemplative Life*.

63) Many (mostly all) buy (repurpose) these dead souls for academic success. There are those who repurpose well-known dead souls and, more strategically, those buying lesser-known ones. Both pay by drawing up fancy deeds of purchase from finely ground scholarly papers, theses, articles, society memberships, and books. After many years of toil, some are registered in high-end journals, publishers, venues, and well cited to further boost the growth of souls that belong to their intellectual estate, so they may go on and distill works that are more spirited, purchase more dead souls, and enlarge their estate. So like *Chichikov’s Adventures* (as the committee added), but *Dead Souls* remained, and they do, plenty in fact for future institutional requirements for the growth of new conceptual estates.

64) “Barbarian philosophy” is how Apologists labeled their philosophy, of which they thought was “*the* philosophy.” See Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of life*, 128. See chapter 4 in its entirety.

65) Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, § 58, see also § 70.

are deformed by constant mishandling, botched restorations, and by overlooking the loss of self-mastery in small things, as self-satisfied soundbites are trumpeted, all while waiting to live.⁶⁶ Yet, from time to time, we too have caught a glimpse of incarnations of Socrates' Cleinias.⁶⁷

Q8. Return of the Repressed

Circling a-round again, of writing, the ways of writing, of the named yet negated, "What different genres can and should philosophers write and with what aim?" is question 8. The snare's rim is set with sources, literary models, authors, characters, styles, modes, genres, transtextuality, and then some.⁶⁸ One could easily see the choice of genre as nothing but a façade, a "scaffold of signifiers," but choosing a genre is not free from what is always already a primal repressed signifier. So mythic. In this case, "what different genres can ... philosophers write?" can only be answered in the lost object (*petit a*) of the source, of which the "aim is the way taken." In this case, the "aim" is also the "goal," and both circumvent the object sown as a return to the source.⁶⁹ Once again, a return to Nietzsche, whose symptoms lend us a hand.

The book becomes almost human. Every writer is surprised anew when a book, as soon as it has separated from him, begin to take on a life of its own. He feels as if one part of an insect had been severed and were going its own way ... what once has moved others is like an insect in amber, enclosed and immortalized in the general intertwining of all that exists.⁷⁰

As once, and in some perpetuity thus far, "disciplinary capture" reins in so much of the writerly. Yet, there too a type of stylistic-genre capture also follows, each its own citadel, each as a way to distinguish ways sown-round an eternal return of impossible completeness. So, with Nietzsche, "the game of writing ... remains subordinated to a new art of interpreting the world, the communication of a new perspective ... this new philosophy which looks for followers ... which wants to recruit enthusiasts by attracting them to 'new secret paths and dancing places'."⁷¹ Circling back, and dead ahead, there is Dewey's thought of how the philosopher, as a social being, "works out his ideas by expressing them, by trying them on others, by making them influence the actions of others,"⁷² and here again back to Nietzsche's styles: "a lifetime of effort, a self-conscious achievement: he showed that writing is perhaps the most important part of thinking ... since he also believes that thinking 'is an action,' we might with some appropriateness attribute to him the hyperbolic view ... that writing is also the most important part of living."⁷³

66) As further unburdening of this quote see Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, § 292.

67) See Plato, *Euthydemus*, 288d–290e

68) On transtextuality, and more textualities, see Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction*.

69) I have here played with a Lacanian approach about the "drive and its circuit." See Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, 174–86, see esp. 178.

70) Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits, Book 1*, 125, § 208.

71) Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 3–4. See also 178n21, and 178-9n23. The quote from Nietzsche is from *The Birth of Tragedy*, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," 3.

72) Dewey, "Why Study Philosophy?," 63.

73) Nehamas, *Nietzsche, Life as Literature*, 41. The quote by Nietzsche used by Nehamas is from *Will to Power* § 458, see also § 423.

Q9. "... the courage to live a philosophy ..."74

In continuing the play in the roles of writing and counting, the final question, number 9, is "What is the role for the professional philosopher today?" In the case of this question, the role(s) are the haunting return of a memory one had of "the philosopher" that now takes on the variegated form of a symptom. In the end, it was only as an idea (in many cases, left as one), or the churning up of thoughts and tomes. Nevertheless, one struggles along in maintaining this figure, between one's displacement of said idea, and a world that denies fishing in such memorialized thinking. Deeply, oceanically obsessive indeed. One inevitably dons the robes of these specters that one has worked on, by being un-worked by the very time that was given over to fixing their being tested in time.

Nietzsche had it right from the get-go; he asked, and had plenty to say in response.

What effect has philosophy now had *upon philosophers*? They live just like all the other scholars, even like the politicians ... They are not distinguished by a special manner of living ... they relate to their work as performers ... they occupy themselves with public *apices* ... they rush into writing ... they are not ashamed to teach, even when they are young ... the word "philosophy," has recently caused me difficulty ... I wish that from now on one would avoid this word and speak ... of nothing but "*intellectual housekeeping*."⁷⁵

Knock-knock. Today, we seem to be within another phase of intellectual housekeeping, as housekeepers that, for the vast majority of issues encountered, fastidiously and endlessly putter, to keep the inherited mansion, and many prized heirlooms of thought, in order for those who might visit, and mostly for those distinguished luminaries who live therein as heirs.

One of the roles of the professional (non-professional, independent) philosopher today is to stop using the term "philosophy" incorrectly. About this word, "philosophy," *Φιλοσοφία* I agree with Nietzsche; it causes me difficulty as well. It is high time, especially if we wish to speak of philosophy as a way of life in and through crisis, upheaval, and uncertainty, that the role of philosophers today is to get rid of the linguistic and conceptual drag created by the preposition "of" in the term philosophy that has offhandedly, and repeatedly, been translated, and handed down as the "love of wisdom." The translation is safe, simplistic, and totally misses the action of *φιλοσοφία* as the very living and working through in creative engagements with traditions, cultural lives, and at the same time, as, in, and through a teaching. Time to get rid of this "of," when speaking of *φιλοσοφία*. Let us recall Socrates' words to Cleinias, "It is necessary to love wisdom."⁷⁶

Φιλοσοφία, when lived and deeply felt, is an invocation, urge, or a command: "love wisdom."⁷⁷ No ifs, ands, or ofs. Before developing the discipline to call and act philosophy as an invocation, urge, or command, the more common reading of the term serves as a prelude. To say "the love of wisdom" is to be put in the position

74) The fragment, which I intentionally left with ellipses, is originally, "Internal: the courage to live a philosophy has broken down." Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, 107. It belongs to notes from 1873, from volume X of the *Grossoktavausgabe* (GOA). In a similar vein see Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, # 1, 115–16.

75) Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, 110, § 53, and 114, § 63.

76) *Euthydemus*, 282d, 288d

77) For further exploration of a "command," see Wittgenstein, *The Blue and the Brown Books*, 12; as well as *Philosophical Investigations*, Third Edition, Part 1, § 21, § 431, 432, 433. For a compelling, and similar call to nix an "of," see Anderson, "Philosophy as Culture: Getting Rid of the Professional 'of' in Philosophy as a Way of Life," 143–47.

of a spectator. An acceptable start, but only briefly, for lovers of easily become lazy *in*. The “of” that is missing in the term *φιλοσοφία* emerges (if at all) after one has acquired enough self-mastery from having been given a call, and in following through the invocation, or command: “love wisdom.” Until then, this “of” is a w/hole in the middle of philo-sophy. When you uncover your “of,” that will become the meaning of your place, your direction, your things, and at the same time, of a thing’s beginning, separation from, and point of action, as well as one’s account (*istoria*) of a mode of living with place, direction, and actions.

Philosophy – *φιλοσοφία* at its best entails the command, or invocation, “love wisdom.” As such, one needs to recognize a situation that necessitates carrying out the command, following through on an invocation, a call (a call for papers), in the overarching and substrate of this situation which is one’s life. As Royce so eloquently put it,

Philosophy, in the proper sense of the term, is not a presumptuous effort to explain the mysteries of the world by means of any superhuman insight of extraordinary cunning, but has its origin and value in an attempt to give a reasonable account of our own personal attitude towards the more serious business of life. You philosophize when you reflect critically upon what you are actually doing in your world. What you are doing is of course, in the first place, living.⁷⁸

78) Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy, An Essay in the Form of Lectures*, 1. “Philosophy ... does not want to substitute its formulas for life. It does desire to add its thoughtfulness to the intensity of life’s great concerns and to enlighten us regarding what aims life has always really intended to pursue.” Royce, *The Sources of Religious Insights*, 46. For Royce, life is “an indestructible accomplishment of deeds.”

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