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## Platoa

by Richard Sepulveda

In this paper I offer you a new nation unlike any before in history. A nation I will appropriately call "Platoa." The meaning behind the name of this new nation will become clearer shortly. Platoa will be in design and in practice an "Intellectocracy." Since it is clear from my research that this term hasn't been officially defined before (and quite possibly never used before) I will coin the term and define it as follows: An Intellectocracy is a society where the learned and educated invariably rule and there are strict academic criteria to hold public office. Characteristics of an Intellectocracy: are the prevalence of deep seeded appreciation and championing of the intellectual, free education system (even at the college level) and a representative assembly composed of the persons elected from among a database of "suitable applicants." The idea of the Intellectocracy is derived from the philosopher Plato's idea of the "philosopher king."

The nation of Platoa will follow a Hobbesian approach to the social contract. Platoa will place the role of the sovereign in the hands of an assembly composed entirely of persons elected from a registry of citizens who meet the academic criteria to hold public office. In accordance with Hobbes's philosophy this sovereign entity will be empowered to enforce its citizen's contractual obligations amongst each other and those which extend to the state as a whole. This will be accomplished via some form of imprisonment and/or execution depending on the severity of the infraction and the establishment of guilt via trial by peers, (in this context peers refer to people who are at the very least pursuing a college level degree). In return the sovereign will be required to provide the citizenry with safety and relative security.

Since Platoa will be designed as an Intellectocracy and dominated by the learned, it is unquestionable (given the overall nature of the intellectual) that Hobbes's first and second laws of nature will be by and large embraced. For it is a historical truth that the greater a person's intellect the less likely they are to make rash or impulsive decisions and are more inclined to base decisions on things like: logic and reason. Therefore, it is reasonable to presume they would embrace peace initially as opposed to war. Platoa will also adhere to Hobbes's "Golden Rule" mandating that liberties shall be extended to everyone equally.

Here you may be tempted to ask the question "How is this true of Platoa when the liberty to run for public office will be reserved for the intellectual?" My

answer to this is both simple and just. Under Hobbes' philosophy all men are born equal. Over time however, it is undeniable that some advance mentally more than others. Therefore, in Platoa the means for all persons to advance ones intellect will be provided by the nation to all citizens equally. By extension, this means the liberty to become one of the "intellectual ministers" of the society is readily available if one chooses to utilize them.

Speaking on behalf of the people of Platoa, I am forced to reject John Locke's social contract assertions out right. In particular I find Locke's assertion that the dissolution of government must be by force to be clearly outdated in its ideology. In the modern era a violent revolution is quite impractical given the weaponry governments of the world currently have at their disposal. Non-violent civil disobedience is a more effective and enduring method of causing political change, and is also more in tune with the intellectual championing inherent to an Intellectocracy. Locke is also unfit to be the philosophical model for the nation of Platoa because of his strong stance on the need for individual consent to be a part of political society, and if not forthcoming then the individual is free to leave. This too, is clearly outdated as there is no land on earth of the twenty-first century that does not fall under the jurisdiction of some form of government. Consequently, all persons born in Platoa (just as in the United States) will by act of birth give implied consent to live in our political society.

At this juncture you may have some cognitive dissonance regarding the fact that Platoa as I have outlined will be a democratic republic and Plato himself despised the idea of a democracy. Here I will attempt to resolve this seemingly contradictory occurrence and simultaneously explain why Rousseau is also unfit to be the philosophical model for Platoa. Platoa's democratic voting system will be a "weighted" voting system, under which a person's academic achievements will directly impact the weight assigned to their respective vote. For example: A person with a PhD will have their vote counted as five votes instead of just one. By contrast a person with only a high school diploma or equivalent will have their vote only counted as one. In Platoa those persons who have not completed at least a high school education will not be permitted to participate in the political process by casting a vote. This is a harsh but necessary measure to ensure three critical elements to a functioning Intellectocracy: The first is to ensure politicians continue to value the voice of the wise and informed above all others and continue to support education as a means to secure a sound constituency. This would in effect give the educated a perpetual lobbying arm unlike any other past or present; second, to continue to foster the championing of the intellectual in the society; lastly, to guarantee citizen

participation in voting. For it is a truth of the human condition that when we earn something via our labor we invariably assign it greater value than if the same thing was perpetually available from the outset without having to be earned.

I believe this system of weighted voting will have put to rest any issue Plato would have had with the democratic system, with respect to voting at least. It also serves to illustrate why Rousseau's philosophy is inconsistent with Plato's national identity. Rousseau believed that men are unequal in strength and/or intellect although they become equal through civil society. In Plato all persons are born equal but our civil society acknowledges that they become unequal and believes it is the responsibility of civil society to encourage people to rise to the upper echelon of their potentiality so that everyone can once again become equal and in doing so they collectively advance the plane of intelligence for the whole society and human civilization in general.

Rousseau's doctrine of the "General will" is also problematic for the people of Plato. Rousseau's premise that the "General will" as represented by the majority of a society is always right tends to reek of cultural relativism. For if this premise was true this would mean that any dissenting viewpoint regardless of its merits and validity is arbitrarily declared wrong. It also means that if two similar societies have majorities that express opposing views on a topic then both societies are in step with their citizens "General will" and therefore equally valid in their respective claims of the right.

For the purpose of being concise I will not explain why relativism is a failed philosophy. Suffice it to say it has been easily refuted by and large in philosophical circles. The point however is, Rousseau combines the general will with the majority and with what is right. In doing so he condemns the entire society to social stagnation and a dictatorship of the majority. Such a majority could potentially be composed of: xenophobes, homophobes, idiots etc. Or worse still a combination of several unethical and uninformed individuals of various sorts and degrees. This system is fundamentally unjust to the righteous minority struggling to have their voices heard.

In Plato, the world's first Intellectocracy, there will be no tyranny of the majority. All citizens will have equal opportunity to realize their learning potential and only those who are academically successful and proven that they have the intelligence and ability to progress society to greater heights will be permitted the honor to do so. Our champions will not be the: movie star, supermodel or any of the superficial role models the

MTV generation holds in such high regard. Plato will champion: the scholar, the writer, the doctor, the teacher and above all the thinker. Long live Plato and our great intellectual dream!

## Cosmopolitanism by Terron Johnson

Cosmopolitanism is the idea of having a world without cultural barriers and introducing diversity to all parts of the world. In the book *For Love of Country?*, by Martha Nussbaum, the pros and cons of a cosmopolitan society are discussed. She talks about how we should “work to make all human beings part of our community” (Nussbaum 7), and how in a cosmopolitan society all people would be accepted and embraced as citizens of the world, and not be demarcated by race, religion, or creed. Cosmopolitanism is a utopian concept that embraces inclusion, and in theory will give equal rights to all human beings, but this notion cannot work because of the prevalence of prejudice ideology that exists in our society.

The idea of cosmopolitanism promotes unity and is focused on bridging the gap that separates cultures. Although this idea is overly optimistic, if it were to come to fruition it will ensure equal rights for all and in theory do away with discrimination. Cosmopolitanism will allow people to step outside of their comfort zone and embrace people of all lifestyles and cultures; because instead of categorizing people as the “other” all people will be acknowledged as citizens of the world.

In ancient Greece there was a well known group of philosophers called the Stoics. They believed that the best way to conceptualize the ideal relationships between individuals is to imagine concentric circles that surround people. The first circle surrounds an individual; the second encircles the immediate family, followed by the extended family, and then comes friends, neighbors, city residents, etc... These circles surround people based on language, gender, sexual preference, and ethnicities. As humans we tend to keep our circles tight excluding those that differ from us. In order for us to become citizens of the world we have to make our largest circle branch out to include all human beings. Nussbaum writes:

*“Our task as citizens of the world will be to draw the circle somehow toward the center, making all human beings more like our fellow city-dwellers, and so on. We need not give up our special affections and identifications, whether ethnic or gender based or religious. We need not think of them as superficial and we may think of our identity as constituted partly by them.” (pg 11)*

We should embrace all human beings no matter what their race, gender, or religion is; instead of ostracizing a person that comes from another country

because they speak differently or have different social customs, we should look at them as if they were a resident in our own neighborhood. Instead of placing epithets on people we should look at everyone as a citizen of the world.

However, Nussbaum does not acknowledge the fact that even though America is one of the most diverse countries on the planet; people stay stuck to their cultural enclaves. Americans do not look at foreign residents, native born blacks, or Indians as citizens of this country; instead of all Americans being identified as Americans, we categorize people as the “other”. There is an indelible stigma placed on the other that is displayed through senseless acts such as racial profiling and hate crimes. On November 25, 2006 a man by the name of Sean Bell was shot and killed on his wedding day because he allegedly had a gun that was never found. Also, Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. was arrested for trying to break into his own home. These two men were both victims of a stereotype that paints a picture of black men as criminals and deviants. It almost seems that the in America the other has become synonymous with criminal, so how can we have a cosmopolitan society extending beyond our borders when right here in our own country, so many different groups of people are considered social deviants based on the color of the skin?

## Puppeteer by Erick Aguero

Gender is used to categorize the human race into two separate groups: males and females. However, when applied in context with social structure, it determines behaviors, activities and attributes that a specific society grants to be appropriate for men and women. Media has a great impact on our cultural construction because they are responsible for creating as well as selling such idealization of male and female. "Focusing on Friends," by Steve Tesich, narrates the conflict encountered by the author to express his feeling toward his male and female companions because of boundaries created by gender. "Why Do We Hate Our Bodies," by Gillianne N. Duncan, interrogates the impact of the media upon society, how media influences individuals to achieve the standard beauty. The text "Gender Stereotype and Selling Techniques in Television Advertising: Effects on Society" by Debra Pryor and Nancy Nelson Knupfer examines gender stereotypes in television advertising, which shapes consumers' beliefs on how people should act or look. Following, the last text-reader is text "Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture" by Sut Jhally collects numerous texts and analyzes the impact of media in the three different branches; gender, race and social class. In this essay, I will argue that media contributes to our social construction because it empowers acculturation. It exposes people to the continuing process of learning the norms, values, behavior, and social skills considered appropriate to his or her position. In other words, it establishes people's social purpose and determines the way a specific society must behave. Those who do not meet these standards are subjected to rejection and discrimination from society.

Media shapes the definition of gender, masculinity and femininity, in order to establish social boundaries and construct what they consider adequate men and women. It is known that media strongly influence the public viewer to believe or consume something that they see on television or magazine. Therefore, the media exposure of model figures highly incentive the viewers to incorporate specific attributes of gender in belief of building a proper and strong persona. In this case, women will relate their values to what is seemed to be feminine while men will tend to adopt masculine characteristics. Gender stereotypes are portrayed in television and Ads because they are easy accessible, require a minimal skill for understanding, are mostly visual and are highly appealing to people. For example, the television show *Desperate House Wives* focuses on the feminine traits of shop and gossip and limits women's social role and daily activity to

nothing more than to remain beautiful for their strong football player husbands. Although the feminine imagery portrayed is absurdly pathetic, it shapes the audience to believe that women's roll in society is to always look beautiful and that being "catty" is a feminine quality, or at least a cool trend among women. Debra Pryor and Nancy Nelson Knupfer discuss on their essay the gender stereotype in television ads and the way the women are portrayed.

*"Women are depicted as feminine and showing their beauty, grace, style, and sexual attractiveness. Yet the imagery of feminism is defined by the television producers and advertisers, not by real woman in real life. In addition, advertisers like to show women shopping, cleaning, cooking, and looking after others. In the never-ending war on dirt, the act of cleaning takes on a meaning of love, order and conformity." (Pryor and Nelson 285).*

The author illustrates the way media portrays women and femininity. Television advertises the expected women behavior in order to establish women's boundaries in society and influence the gender construction of the female public. The author affirms that "feminism", which is the movement that advocates equal rights for women, is not defined by "real women in real life". Therefore, women's rights remain unequal and inferior to men's. Producers and advertisers shape and define feminism and femininity. The passage illustrates that stereotype projects an ideal image of the female gender and whenever a woman is subject of discussion the image of the caring housewife flashes before our eyes. On the other hand, media portrays the masculine gender as leaders and superior race. Masculinity is characterized by qualities such as strength and intellect, like the famous fictional character James bond. The Social boundary of the male gender is illustrated in Tesich's essay when he alternates between two different languages used to communicate to his male and female friends. The author states that, "[He] can tell women [he] love them. Not only [he] can tell them, [he] am compulsive about it. But [he] can't tell the men. [he] just can't. And they can't tell [him]"(Tesich 41). The author repeats the word "can't" to emphasize the social obligation to not express emotion towards another man. He loves the women because that is what our society expects from the male gender. On the other hand, telling his male fiends he loves them is not accepted and breaking such rules would affect his masculinity. Both passages state different roles played by men and women and society. We note the impact of the media on the definition of gender in order to achieve acceptance in society. People are pressured to "fit in" because those who don't suffer from rejection and discrimination. Hence, they are looked at as outcasts.

Throughout the decades the image of male masculinity has shifted, and allowed man to incorporate feminine traits. In history, the masculine image is known to be the strong working class. For example, when agriculture first emerged, men worked on the fields while women stayed at home. Men worked manual labor and dealt with filthy conditions in order support their family. Therefore, it allows the stereotypical association between masculine man and construction worker. "To Be a Man" by Gary Soto, takes place in the 60's and narrates the authors experience as a kid of ten attempting to be a "man" working his first job. Soto argues the requirements necessities to be a man based on the masculine stereotype.

*"It was too much work to be a man. [He] looked at my stepfather who was beaten from work, from the seventeen years that he hunched over by the conveyor belt, stuffing boxes with paperback books that ran down the belt quick as rats. Home from work, he sat in his oily chair with his eyes unmoved by television, by the kids, by his wife in the kitchen beating a round steak with a mallet. He sat dazed by hard labor and bitterness yellowed his face. If his hands could have spoken to him, they would have asked to die. They were tired, bleeding like hearts from the inside."* (Soto 107).

The author refers to his father being "dazed by hard labor and bitterness yellowed his face" with hands like "bleeding hearts" to emphasize the mental and physical stress as consequences of the masculine role. It also presents the impact of racial class on his family's social construction because, struggling immigrant families, when brought to this country tend to make the living from low jobs. They are subjected to cultural discrimination and, as one of the consequences, they have difficulty finding good jobs, such as, public or office jobs. Therefore, working "McJobs" or jobs of physical labor are their only option because the possession of an American college degree, and the accordance with the common American culture are not required. They receive a low payment and are exposed to longer shifts. Soto bases the image of his father to illustrate the man stereotype of the 60's. The passage portrays his father's masculinity as to be able to do labor, endure pain and being the authority model figure of the house. On the other hand, the males of the present day are the most primped and pampered examples of their species. The media has shifted the traditional "rough and dirty" masculine image to an innovated "cut clean" figure. The Dolce & Gabbana advertising of March 2007 portrays a man dominating a girl while other four guys in the background watch the incident. The woman is depicted helpless with a hostile

expression; thus, it evokes the representation of abuse and violence toward women. We clearly see the superiority and power of the male race opposed to the weakness of the female who is being held down in a degrading manner. Furthermore, the male supremacy is demonstrated through the prevalence of the male figure in the advertising. The male upper body is portrayed nude, toned and strong. It resembles the strength that men required in order to fit the stereotypical hard working hours in 60's. However, the labor is replaced with five weekly gym sections and a few bottles of baby oil make up for the sweat. They wear tight clothes by D&G rather than the old uniforms and have a much cleaner look; they shave and get their hair and make up done. Our advertisers incorporated new values to the masculine figure that are now accepted in our society. Therefore, the male figure of nowadays embodies feminine traits conceiving society with a new branch of masculinity and men, called the metrosexuals. Both, the text and the cultural text, show two different imageries that compose man's masculinity. Therefore, we observe the impact of media on the creation of gender and the shift of the masculine image. Media sells the new model of men, as icons of desire, and influences our society to incorporate innovating attributes to the construction of men. The old ideal man who prides himself on rugged strength and self-sufficiency has long been buried and surfaced in the twenty-first century decked out in designer jeans and gadgets, with fresh manicure, pedicure and no calluses.

Media advertisements break the barriers into people's lives and impact our cultural values. The media stereotypes influence the public to adapt to certain beliefs that shape and modify our culture. The text "Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture" by Sut Jhally analyzes the impact of the advertising in our culture. The author acknowledge the New York advertising agency N.W. Ayers who was hired in 1938 to change the public attitude towards diamonds and in 1947 the slogan "a diamond is forever" transformed the precious stone into a symbol of everlasting love. "Since 1939 an entirely new generation of young people has grown to marriage age. To the new generation, a diamond ring is considered a necessity for engagement to virtually everyone"(Jhally 250). The author states that the diamond is a necessity in order to express love although it was not part of our culture until 1938. Nowadays, girls dream of their wedding day and their diamond ring. Women are shaped to believe that love is measured on the price of a stone. Therefore, those who do not receive a diamond ring are looked at differently and considered not to be as loved as those who are gifted with the diamond. On the other hand, men that cannot afford to buy the ring do not meet the male attribute of being able to provide for his family. Yet they are not ready to commit and are humiliated when the title of "man" is being questioned. The

passage portrays the effect of media upon their public; it presents how our advertisers alter the most intimacy cultural believe, such as, marriage and love shaping the marriage image of men and women that desire to commit. We see a related impact of the media in our cultural values in the essay by Gillianne N. Duncan. The author illustrates the impact of television shows, such as, Extreme Makeover and Nip/Tuck that incorporates diets, Botox, and plastic surgeries as resources to standardize beauty. These, shape the viewers to believe that they can look better and sells desire for plastic surgeries. Duncan states that "without the media's constant need to make people feel bad about themselves shows like Nip/Tuck, Extreme Makeover, and Dr. 90210 would not exist. But they do, as a reminder that we are not perfect, these shows reinforce the ideas and beliefs of hatred towards the body"(Duncan 122). The author believes that the shows incentivize people to hate their body because of torture and the use of unnatural procedures in order to achieve the alternate look. The passage portrays the effect of the television towards the concept of beauty. It makes people insecure of their body and to seek for alternative beauty. Therefore, women will get their breasts implants and tummy tucked while men will purchase abs implants. However, there are worst methods of achieving the glorious "look", such as, anorexia and bulimia, which have been the causes of many deaths in the twentieth century. Being "beautiful" has become a priority nowadays and is influencing discrimination in our society. For example, Abercrombie & Fitch, requires its employees to meet the standards of gender and beauty, hiring only tall and muscular man and petite and fragile women. We clear see the impact of the media enforcing the idea that plastic surgery is a necessity for beauty as well as a diamond is for love. Therefore, it impacts the social construction of men and women that are shaped to acquire certain characteristics. Both authors discuss the impact of the media advertising on our cultural values.

Media exposes people to the continuing process of learning the norms, values, behavior, and social skills considered appropriate to his or her position. It strongly impacts the public viewer and may alter the most intimate cultural values. Therefore, media is an important factor for our social construction because it shapes people's thinking and define who they are. It is the great puppeteer manipulating our actions in this spectacle called propaganda.

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## The Industrial Food Complex and America's Dysfunctional Relationship with Food

by Liz Montesclaros

Why are there so many diet books and celebrity chefs in America? I seriously believe this is because most Americans are overweight and do not know how or have the desire to cook. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 67 percent of non-institutionalized adults age 20 years and over are overweight or obese. As far as Americans' lack of cooking skills, it is debatable, but one need only look at the rise of fast food corporations to deduce that cooking at home is not a top priority in our nation. The industrial food complex capitalizes on our ignorance about where our food comes from and what it does to our bodies. It also capitalizes on our fast-paced way of living and pushes these fast, convenient so-called meals that nourish neither the body nor the soul. In turn, we sustain the relentless industrialization of our food system by being uninformed and irresponsible with the choices we make about our food. This unhealthy relationship between the food producers and consumers has far-reaching impact, from our health, to the health of not only our nation, but the health of our planet.

The problem of food production and consumption in America is a complex, multifaceted issue with staggering physiological, ecological, political and ethical (just to name a few) implications. I want to focus on how the industrial food complex deliberately perpetuates America's dysfunctional relationship with food and how it leads to some very disastrous consequences such as the triumvirate of largely preventable diseases; obesity, coronary heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

One of the most pressing problems in our country is that most Americans are overweight. Being overweight and obesity is causing health problems that is costing lives and is taking a financial toll on our health care system. Although all segments of the American population are getting overweight, the scales tip toward those who come from lower income families and those with lower education levels. "A recent paper in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition argued that the poor tend toward greater obesity because eating energy-dense, highly palatable, refined foods is cheaper per calorie consumed than buying fish and fresh fruits and vegetables" (Lambert). The greater tendency toward obesity in this demographic is probably due to economic factors. One, people with lower income simply cannot afford the healthier but more expensive food. Two, since lower income neighborhoods do not generate profits for higher end stores where they carry

better quality food, access to healthy food is very limited or nonexistent.

It is very unfortunate that there is no equal access to nutritious food. The cost of eating these cheap, processed foods is very high. The CDC points to a 2003 study published in Health Affairs, a health policy journal, that the national costs attributed to both overweight and obesity medical expenses accounted for 9.1 percent of total U.S. medical expenditures in 1998 and may have reached as high as \$78.5 billion. The figure in dollars is staggering, but I believe that the cost in human life and suffering is even greater and cannot be quantified.

Why is unhealthy food more readily available and cheaper than healthy food? There are several reasons for this. Michael Pollan, a journalist and world-renowned food expert, addressed this question in his book *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. According to Pollan, the government subsidizes corn and soybeans, which is the raw material in animal feeds that are used in CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Farm Operation) and processed food. Because the materials for making processed foods and force-feeding animals are cheap, the food manufacturers can sell food to us at lower costs. I believe that the other reason why unhealthy food is readily available is the high demand for fast and convenient food. In our capitalist society, whenever there is a demand, there will always be someone enterprising enough to satisfy it. Therefore, it becomes a vicious cycle of demand and supply. We keep up the demand and the food industry will keep up the supply. There is so much surplus of cheap, unhealthy food that the producers have to be clever in getting the consumers to gobble up all it can.

One could point to personal responsibility, or rather the lack thereof, as another factor in causing obesity. I think personal responsibility has a bearing on our obesity epidemic, but it is not the only factor. We live in an environment that makes it difficult to make informed and healthy decisions. It is difficult to make responsible choices when there is a lack of solid, readily available information. In my interviews for this project, I found that like me a lot of my friends and family are not too aware of where their food comes from or how it is produced. According to the CDC, our society has become "obesogenic," characterized by environments that promote increased food intake, non healthful foods, and physical inactivity."

One of the main causes for this obesogenic environment is the food industry's manipulation of our food system. In the movie *Food, Inc.*, filmmaker Robert Kenner, along with investigative journalist and author of *Fast Food Nation* Eric Schlosser exposes the food

industry's machinations in its unrestrained quest for profits. Food, Inc. showed the various ways the key players in the food industry try to control and keep secret where our food comes from, how it is produced and what it does to us. For every law proposed that will help keep consumers informed about their food, the different sectors of the food industry fight against it with their team of lawyers and lobbyists. From lobbying against the labeling of genetically modified foods to passing food defamation laws, the food industry is working hard to keep us uninformed.

We need to focus on awareness and education about food. We can start by educating ourselves by reading about food and doing our own research. Please watch the movie Food Inc., it is a great piece of investigatory documentary that will open your eyes to the truth behind your food. Pass along the information you learned to your friends and family members. The internet is a great tool to spread ideas and information. Spread the word. The consequences for our lack of knowledge about our food are far-reaching. By not knowing what our current food choices do to our bodies and to the environment, we keep making the wrong decisions. If we see the reality behind the food industry's practices, we will be moved to demand greater transparency and changes in the legislation regarding corn and soybean subsidies, food labeling and food safety. We need to stop the exploitative and unsustainable way we produce and consume our food. Our lives depend on it.

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## Analysis of Ontological Arguments by David Morales

Ontological arguments for God's existence are a priori (prior to any experience) arguments that try to prove the existence of God based on the concept of God alone. The first known ontological argument was proposed by Saint Anselm in the Proslogion. Here is a quick version of the argument:

1. God is a being that none greater can be conceived.
2. It is greater to exist in the understanding and in reality than to exist only in the understanding.
3. A being that exists in the understanding but not in reality is not a being that none greater can be conceived. (2)
4. Therefore, God exists in reality. (3)

God is the greatest possible being, or as Plantinga would put it: God is a "maximally great" being. By the very concept of what a maximally great being is it must exist, since if you deny the existence of this thing you come to a contradiction. The contradiction is that you are thinking of the greatest possible being (by speaking of God) and you are not thinking of the greatest possible being (by saying God lacks something that other beings have) at the same time. So God must exist.

Immanuel Kant countered this argument and all ontological arguments (besides the one from possible worlds by Plantinga) by stating that there is no logical contradiction in denying the existence of something, because if one denies the existence of the subject then one also denies the existence of the predicates (qualities, traits) of that subject. So if one of God's qualities is "necessity" and Jack makes the claim "there is no God," then Claire cannot counter "but he is necessary, so you cannot deny him without contradiction" because Jack is also denying the existence of God's predicates, one of which is necessity. If we deny the existence of a triangle, then we also deny the existence of its three sides, its three interior angles, etc. The triangle's three sides don't stay around if there is no triangle, and neither does God's necessity if he does not exist.

Kant also counters that "existence is not a predicate," which is to say that no subject can have or lack the quality of existence. If we were to say that existence is a predicate, then we can say there is a thing which has the property of existing. This would entail that we could conceive of anything with the property of existence and we (as rational agents) would be forced to admit the existence of this thing. So I can conceive of Jar Jar Binks, who has the properties of being incredibly

annoying and existing, and I would have to admit that this thing exists (and of course, is incredibly annoying). This is a ridiculous (and grim) way to view existence that makes many problems arise, so existence mustn't be like this. It makes much more sense to say existence is a quantifier, not a predicate. To say "X exists" is to say "there is at least one X" and to confirm the existence of all the predicates of X. To say "X does not exist" is to say "there are zero X's" and deny the existence of X's predicates. As a result of existence being a quantifier and not a predicate, existence does not improve or add to a subject. In this case, existence does not improve God. So premise 2 is null, and as a result, 3 and 4.

Alvin Plantinga formulated a modern ontological argument that sidesteps Kant's counter by arguing from possible worlds. A possible world is a statement of a possible way things could be. For example, there is a possible world where there is no law of gravity, there are no colors, everyone travels exclusively by doing cartwheels, and there are only two kinds of emotions. There is nothing logically inconsistent about this idea, so it is a possible world. This is compatible with the idea that existence is a quantifier and not a predicate, since there is a possible world where there is one Jack, one Claire, and (according to Plantinga) one God. Existence does not need to be a predicate for the argument to follow through.

Plantinga's argument goes as follows:

1. God is a maximally great being.
2. A maximally great being is possible.
3. A maximally great being is maximally great only if it is necessarily "maximally excellent" (is omnipotent and omnibenevolent) in all possible worlds.
4. If something is necessary, then it exists in all possible worlds (axiom S5 of modal logic).
5. There is a possible world where a maximally excellent being exists. (2)
6. Therefore, a maximally great being exists in all possible worlds. (3, 4, 5)
7. Therefore, a maximally great being exists in this world. (6)
8. Therefore, God exists. (1, 7)

To put it formally, God has qualities that make him a necessary being. As something that is necessary, he either exists in all possible worlds or in none. So if it is the case that God exists in one possible world, then that shows us that he exists in all (axiom S5). The argument seems logically consistent, but it has its problems. Epistemologically, the idea of God may seem possible, but there is the question of the metaphysical possibility of God. We can give the same argument but

change premise 2 to show that God necessarily does not exist.

still some room in the philosophy of religion for ontological arguments.

1. God is a maximally great being.
2. A maximally great being is not possible.
3. A maximally great being is maximally great only if it is necessarily "maximally excellent" (is omnipotent and omnibenevolent) in all possible worlds.
4. If something is necessary, then it exists in all possible worlds (axiom S5 of modal logic).
5. There is a possible world where no maximally excellent being exists. (2)
6. Therefore, no maximally great being exists in all possible worlds. (3, 4, 5)
7. Therefore, no maximally great being exists in this world. (6)
8. Therefore, God does not exist. (1, 7)

Unfortunately it seems that all this argument does for us is restate the 4th premise. If God exists, then he exists in all possible worlds. If God doesn't exist, then he doesn't exist in any possible world. The question remains of whether or not God is possible. In his book *The Nature of Necessity*, Plantinga claims that it is rational to accept the conclusion of his argument because it is rational to accept the premises. Can't the same be said of the counterargument? Must I accept the conclusion of this following argument then?

1. Badass Jackson is a maximally awesome being.
2. A maximally awesome being is possible.
3. A maximally awesome being is maximally awesome only if it is necessarily "maximally badass" (is omnipotent and omni-malevolent) in all possible worlds..... (I hope you see how this ends by now)

Why is belief in Badass Jackson any more or less rational than belief in God? If there is an answer to that, it does not seem that Plantinga's ontological argument (or perhaps ontological arguments in general) will be able to supply us with one. Must I accept that Badass Jackson exists? I can simply say Badass Jackson is not a possible being, but whether he truly is or not is another question... Unfortunately we are still unsure of whether or not Badass Jackson exists at the end of the argument, and of course we are still unsure of whether or not God exists.

In conclusion, Plantinga's argument is impressive in the way it avoids Kant's objections and may fill one with hope (or perhaps dread) that there is

## The Seer by Jumana Yahya

I do not know why I received this miraculous gift. That is, if you can call it a gift. Some would consider it a terrible curse. Either way, I do not know why I was chosen nor do I know who chose me. All I know is that I was never to be normal again. Not since that night.

My name is Nicholas Connors. I live in New York City. Hell's Kitchen, to be more specific. By profession, I am a journalist. It is very easy to be a journalist where I live. Hell's Kitchen is riddled with bewildering activity and I have never found myself having to search for a story while living here. Now that I think about it, my profession and my location make me a prime candidate to be endowed with my cursed gift. I have witnessed horrors here that no human being would wish upon their worst enemy. I have watched fifteen year old boys selling heroine on the street corners; I have seen a prostitute raped in a dark alleyway; drive-bys and robberies have become an everyday norm for Christ's sake! But none of it compares to what I saw after that night.

That night happened in the summer of '63. It was a dark night; the only light that illuminated the desolate streets that lay ahead of me came from the few lamp posts that haven't yet been broken by stray bullets or bored kids. That night was foggy. The thick mist that hovered over the city made it hard for me to see far ahead, and the lack of lights didn't help. As I shuffled my feet against the uneven concrete, thinking about god knows what, I noticed a black car creeping out of the heavy fog towards me. I had no reason to suspect that it was coming for me, but my stomach clenched up nethertheless. The clenching slowly and steadily turned into a sharp pain when the car pulled over next to me and I saw who lowered the backseat window.

It was Anthony Backarella, the sole man who controlled both organized and disorganized crime in Hell's Kitchen. He was the king of criminals, the mastermind behind destruction, and the hand that controlled the puppets who did his dirty work. He was powerful and untouchable. He was hungry for my blood.

"Well if it isn't the brave Nicholas Connors. Mr. Brass Balls himself. Do you know who I am?" he asked, in his deep and raspy voice.

"Yes," I whispered, mortified by what was happening.

"Of course you know who I am. You must know who I am. It were your fingers, after all, that typed my name in the same sentence as the name of a respectable and deceased police officer... it was your mind that chose the adjectives that described the crime that you claim I committed... your hands that handed the finished article to your editor for printing."

"I... I..." but my words failed me. My knees started to tremble as I saw Backarella's arm extending out of the window. In his hand he was clutching the gold handle of his .44 Magnum that had taken countless lives at the squeeze of its trigger. My trembling became uncontrollable and sweat started to profusely drip down my forehead.

"Did I sound like I was finished? I should warn you, I'm not too fond of interruptions, especially when I am speaking. Now, did you really think I was gonna let you slip by with that article you wrote two weeks ago?"

"Please, Mr. Backarella," I pleaded. "That article I wrote, I didn't say you were the one responsible for the death of that cop! I only said you are one of the suspects! I didn't accuse you of anything! Please, Mr. Backarella!"

"Shut your mouth fool," Backarella snapped. "Whatever you meant to imply means shit. The bottom line is that you associated my name with the murder of a sergeant and had it published in the god damn newspaper! I will not stand for that kind of slander!"

With those last words, Backarella raised the Magnum to my forehead and after a brief pause, just long enough for him to smirk, he pulled the trigger. My body fell to the floor and a pool of blood started quickly gathering underneath my head. The last thing I heard was a hearty and booming laugh of amusement, muffled by the aftershock of the Magnum's roar, and the car slowly driving away.

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I opened my eyes several hours later, but found that I couldn't see right away. It took quiet a while for my eyes to adjust to the bright light that was engulfing the area where I was. As my eyes started to focus, I started recognizing things around me. There was a chair and walls. I was inside somewhere. A room with white walls. And then my concentration was broken by a voice that startled me.

"Oh, look who's awake! Thank God, we thought you weren't going to wake up at all, Mr.

Conners. An angel must be watching over you!" said a nurse.

I gaped at the woman like an infant gapes at his mother. I could not believe what my eyes were seeing.

"No, the angel is watching over you," I wanted to scream but my voice would not permit it. All I could do was stare at the nurse, trying to figure out if I was hallucinating or if I just went plain ol' crazy. Hovering over the nurse was a beautiful woman with pale skin and golden hair, wrapped in a white cloth and adorned with a pair of giant feathered wings! The light that illuminated this room so brightly came from this majestic creature and warmth radiated from her presence.

The nurse continued talking to me, blabbering about something or other, but I was entranced by this being levitating above her. This angel was speaking to me.

"You have been spared to carry out a great deed," her angelic voice sang to me. "You have been given the gift of sight. You shall see the truth for what it is."

"... And last week we had a patient that wasn't nearly as lucky as you, died from what appeared to be a flesh wound from a stabbing..." went on the nurse, not realizing what was happening right behind her.

"Go find the one who made you come here. Find him and avenge. Avenge yourself and avenge the fallen one."

Her eyes then slowly floated back onto the nurse and there she lingered, just watching. I was shocked. I have neither seen nor imagined anything like this.

"Avenge who?" I asked, bewildered that I was trying to communicate with this entity. "What are you talking about? Who are you? What are you?"

"Mr. Conners, and you alright?" asked the nurse, with a hint of a nervous tremor in her voice. "Would you like me to call a doctor, Mr. Conners?"

"I'm talking to that!" I finally managed to tell the nurse, pointing at the angel behind her. She turned around but did not see what I was seeing.

"Are you sure you're ok, Mr. Conners?" the nurse asked again.

Then, the angel looked at me once more. This time, her voice was loud and deep, booming throughout the whole room. Her eyes were fierce and were glaring right into mine.

"It must be done! You must accept your fate and you must find the one who did this. When you lay eyes upon him, you shall see his evil. When you lay your eyes upon the eyes of his evil, you shall see the past and the future. Now go! Take this and go fulfill your destiny!"

She raised her arms in the air and a dagger appeared right above her. She guided the floating dagger down towards me and placed it gently on my chest. The nurse by now had her back turned to me, checking the machines that were monitoring my increasingly fast paced heartbeat. She did not see this. I took the dagger in my hand and studied its long, thin handle. It was made out of gold, I could tell, and was encrusted with sapphires and emeralds. The blade was curved and sleek, ready to penetrate almost anything that it encountered. Although it looked as if it should weigh a ton, this dagger was light as a feather. I slipped it underneath the sheets so that the nurse wouldn't see it. All of a sudden, I felt very drowsy.

"I gave you something to relax you and help you sleep, Mr. Conners" said the nurse. "Hopefully you'll be making a little more sense when you wake up again. Good night!"

She left my room and I drifted into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

The next time I awoke was early morning. The clock on my bedside table flashed 5:17AM. I got out of the bed and stretched my legs a little bit. I noticed a bathroom straight ahead of me, so I slowly made my way towards it. I went straight to the sink and turned on the cold water. I ran my hands underneath it and splashed it in my face. I looked up into the mirror and what had happened to me the previous night came flooding back into my memory. The hole in my goddamn forehead, bandaged at the time, was an instant reminder of Backarella and his Magnum. Suddenly, I understood what the angel has told me. She told me to find the one who put me here, the one who did this to me. I have to find him. I have to find Backarella and end his life just like he tried to end mine. I stormed out of the bathroom, found my blood stained clothes hanging in a small closet and vacated my room. I went to the bed and found the dagger folded up in the crevice of the

sheets, just where I left it right before I fell asleep. I slowly pushed the door to my room open, checking for any guards that might be watching. The coast was clear, so I headed for the first staircase I saw and began to descend the fourteen flights. I saw nurses and doctors and patients pass me by on the staircase. I watched them with the same bewilderment that I gaped at the nurse with. They all had their own angels behind them. Except one.

I saw a man that had a terrifying beast stalking him instead of a heavenly angel floating behind him. Then I remembered what the nurse's angel told me...

"When you lay eyes upon him, you shall see his evil. When you lay your eyes upon the eyes of his evil, you shall see the past and the future."

I can see this man's evil. That's what it must be. The angels watch over the good while the demons stalk the evil. I approached the demon that was sulking after this strange man and stared into its eyes. The things that I saw! The beast's eyes were playing a movie, a montage of all the horrible and evil acts that this man has committed. I saw the horrible things that he had planned to do in the future. He was on his way to steal morphine from the drug supply room and give it to young boys who were pressured into selling drugs for lazy, despicable vagrants such as the man to whom this demon belonged to.

I broke the eye contact with the beast and continued on my way, contemplating what I have just seen. It seems as if these beings are manifestations of a person's true nature. Those who are truly evil are followed by beasts and shadows. Those who are truly good are accompanied by divine creatures and warm light. I was confused and perplexed. I knew exactly what was going on now but I couldn't even believe myself. It all seemed so surreal, almost like a dream. No, I don't feel pain in dreams. This can't be a dream because I feel an agonizing, throbbing pain in my forehead where the bullet had penetrated my skull. I soon forgot the pain, however, when I stepped outside of the hospital and saw how these manifestation had materialized themselves.

I looked up into the dark sky. It must have been past 6AM already, but the city was still shrouded in shadow and darkness. The sky was a deep, dark purple with giant whirlpools replacing clouds. Giant serpents swam through the sky, slithering between the whirlpools like the sky was a pool of water and they were some sort of water snakes. It was really a horrifying sight, one that almost knocked me off my feet. I gazed down towards the street level and I saw nothing but chaos and

havoc. Demons were roaming everywhere, filling the streets as if the city was some sort of weird and demented zoo. I lowered my head down and began to proceed towards the tallest skyscraper in this god forsaken city, the one whose penthouse office was occupied by none other than Mr. Anthony Backarella himself. The closer I got to the building, the tighter my grip got around the handle of the dagger that was hiding in my pocket. I was ready. Almost.

I stopped at a thrift store that I spotted on the corner of the block where I was. The owner was just opening the shop up and I decided to stop by and pick out a more suitable attire. I found a trench coat, a hat and a sheer black mask. I threw all the money I had in my blood soaked pockets at the woman behind the counter and walked out of the store while dressing myself. The last thing to be put on was the mask. It was perfect. All black, so one would only be able to see the shape and contour of my face. It was sheer so I was able to see through it perfectly well. But no one could my face. Now I was ready.

I continued to progress down the street and before I knew it, I was standing in front of the building. I looked through the glass walls and saw security sitting behind the desk that was stationed in the middle of the lobby. I stood there for eight minutes trying to figure out how to get past the security guards before I was assisted by some hoodlums shooting off guns by the other entrance into the building. The two security guards that were on duty equipped themselves with their weapons and proceeded to chase the hoodlums away, giving me the perfect opportunity to slip by unnoticed. I entered the elevator and pushed the topmost button. The elevator delivered me right to Backarella's office door. I could hear classical music blasting from behind the giant oak doors. Perfect. I was undetectable. I turned the door knob as slowly as I could and gently pushed the door open.

Backarella was standing behind his desk, at the far end of his office, with his back to me. He was looking down at the city. What a lovely view it must be for him, one who is not cursed to see the true ugliness and evils that reside in those streets. He was puffing on a cigar, just staring off into the distance. The entire room was crawling with demons of all shapes and sizes, rearing their ugly heads in my direction. They were slithering all around him, whispering in his ear and nudging him with their long pointy fingers.

And then I saw it. After that moment, I understood what I had to do. I understood what I was avenging. That nervous feeling in the pit of my stomach started to freeze over with a frost that spread through the rest of my body like an infectious disease. I saw the

demon, the one that was whispering in Backarella's ear when that cop was killed.

I slowly crawled towards the demon, careful not to be noticed or heard by Backarella, and grabbed the beast by its protruding horns. Staring deep into its eyes, I saw what really happened that night when the sergeant's life came to an end. He had it. He had the evidence that he needed to put Backarella away forever. He was pure of heart and he wanted to make a change. He dedicated his life to wipe Backarella out and break down the foundation of all the crime rings in this city. Then, Backarella found out. How he tortured that poor soul. Even if the cop survived, he would be a vegetable for the rest of his life. He was beaten, electrified, beaten some more, cut, beaten again, raped. He died after four hours of this, from loss of blood. That bastard Backarella was disappointed that he died so soon. He was disappointed that he didn't get the final satisfaction of pulling out his Magnum, adding to the collection of lives that it has taken.

I couldn't take it anymore. I looked away from the beast's eyes, feeling hatred and anger and vengeance. I looked at Backarella's back and felt my blood begin to boil. I unleashed the demon's horns from my grip and turned to face the man whom I was about to kill. I was sent here to avenge, to finish the job that the cop has started. I started to advance towards him, and that's when he heard me. He whipped around, reaching for the Magnum, but my hand was already wrapped around the back of his neck and the blade of the dagger was pressed against his throat.

"Who the fuck do you think you are?" bellowed Backarella. "Do you know who I am?!"

"Of course I know who you are," I replied. "It were my fingers, after all, that typed your name in the same sentence as the name of a respectable and deceased police officer... it was my mind that chose the adjectives that described the crime that I claimed that you committed... my hands that handed the finished article to my editor for printing. The same hands that will bring justice to this city. The same hands that will bring about your death and the end of your sadistic reign."

With those last words that I whispered into his ear, I glided the crooked blade of the dagger across his throat in a single smooth, sweeping motion and I felt his warm blood trickling down my fingers. Backarella started choking on his own blood and trying to grab me, but failed when his strength started to wither away. With every drop of his blood that was spilt, a demon shrieked in agony as it began to decay in front of my

eyes. I let go of Backarella and watched his limp body drop to the floor. I watched him die. I watched him die and felt satisfaction. He no longer was untouchable. He was dead.

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I made my way out of his office and found an emergency staircase a few feet away from the elevator. I kicked the door open and began to ascend the stairs to the rooftop. When I reached the outside, I took off my hat and pulled the black mask off of my face. The cool breeze felt good on my sweaty face. I sat on the edge of the rooftop, looking over the city that was still shrouded in darkness. I looked at my watch. It was 8:25AM. The sun should have been shining right now. I will never see the sunshine in this city ever again. I looked up in the sky and I still saw the serpent beasts swimming through the dank purple sky. I looked back down onto the streets and saw the demons that were crawling around the streets. This city is corrupt. There is too much evil in this world to rid of. It is an impossible mission that will never be accomplished.

So here I sit, on the rooftop, overlooking the evil that was slithering around bellow me. I can never rid the world of evil. It will never happen. But it doesn't mean that I can't try. This is the questions that now I must ask myself. Knowing this, that evil will never die, do I embrace my gift and use it to destroy as much wickedness as my lifetime will allow? Or should I ignore this curse and continue to live my life while having to witness these manifestations until the day I die? I thought and thought and thought, fingering the mask in my hand as I pondered.

Then I stood. I stood on the edge of the rooftop looking down. I pulled the mask over my face and placed my hat back on top of my head. My name was Nicholas Connors. That was in the past. Nicholas Connors is no longer here. I am someone new. I am forever different. I am The Seer.

## The Psychological Effects of Cosmetic Surgery

by Stanley Felix

It is stated in the Bible that humans are created in God's image. In the twenty first century, men and women no longer care about their predetermined image, but rather to pursuit physical perfection which promises youth and happiness. Happiness, for people who seek cosmetic surgery, begins by removing their birth faces, a face that plays a unique role in developing their identity at birth; humans have often found ways to manipulated nature at will to achieve their desires. Many question the ethic of cosmetic procedures whereas others believe the soul is disrupt, and some believe that when one removes their face, one is actually reconstructing their identity; I understand that a person's face does play a role in determining what their identity is but it's just a minor factor of how we identify ourselves. My research has provided me with a variety of information that allowed me to conclude that a person's face does not necessarily create their identity therefore when someone undergoes a face lift, it does not change their identity.

According to the Lexicon Webster Dictionary, a face lift is defined as a plastic surgery procedure for eliminating signs of aging on the face by raising sagging tissues and removing wrinkles. Richard Huxtable, Julie Woodley and Marry Tannen stated in their journal that four out of five people who have had a face lift done are female between the age of forty-nine to fifty-two and this procedure can cost up to \$20,000 .To remain attractive and confident, woman are not hesitating to go under the knife to reclaim their youthful beauty. Although face lift patients are changing their outside appearance, they are not looking to change their identity. According to Jill Neimark, most patients get cosmetic surgery done to match their psychological state of mind. That means most of the people that have had a face lift is because, within themselves, they do not feel how they look. As I explain before in the beginning of this paragraph, a person can be young spirited by being active, playful and simply enjoying life, but on the outside their appearance is old and wrinkled. Because the rest of the world cannot see their youthful state of mind, it's difficult for them to emulate their feelings to the outside world which can cause them to lose their confidence and self-esteem. In search of wanting to be transparent to the world, face lifts become the most reasonable choice for them to harmonize their body inside and out, and also to transfer their deepest emotion into physical reality; face-lift patients want to improve translation of their identity to the world instead of changing it.

Our everyday experiences help us form our identities. A philosopher named René Descartes believed that "it is certain that I (that is, my mind, by which I am what I am), is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it" (Chaffee 93). What Descartes is trying to explain about identity is that who we are is due to our minds because it is our mind that allowed us to perceive the world in our own individual points of view; those viewpoints give us distinct experiences on which our identities are based. Everybody sees the world differently because everyone has different perceptions; that is also the main reason why no two men can have the same exact point of view. This theory is well illustrated in the case of identical twins: their identities are very different due to their independent life experiences. I myself know a set of identical twins, one of them is always nice and gentle but the other one is rough and always fighting. In addition to that, a person who is born blind still has an identity, even though he has never see his or anybody else's face and therefore doesn't even know the nature and value of physical appearances; these example demonstrate why only life experiences can contribute to the development of our identity. Our identities may change over time because throughout our life we continue to have new experiences, whether good or bad, which teach us unforgettable lessons. We carry those memories in our mind as if they were life badges of honor that represent the influences of our identities.

The role that the face plays in shaping our identity is that it is the physical attribute that is the most noticeable when we interact with one another, when we need to see a physical representation to identify individuals, for example. A societal way of identifying people is with pictures; people are conditioned at birth to distinguish looks. According to a study that was reported in "Infant & Child Development", children are able to familiarize with their mother's face at birth. The study also suggests that children are able to assimilate their mother's face with her voice, which is evidence for the previous claim that our physical appearance is noticeable when we interact with each other. However our physical appearance can misinterpret or misrepresent who we really are. With each individual look comes a history of where that person came from and the specific genetic makeup of their two parents. One personal example of mine that can illustrate how appearance can misrepresent who we are is an incident that occurred with my brother. Him and I look alike and are sometimes mistaken for each other; one day, our neighbor saw my brother fighting outside the house and told my mother that it was me who was fighting. This shows how faces can deceive people, because I don't believe in fighting and therefore wouldn't engage in a fight although my neighbor believed I did.

When a person changes their face to improve their dissatisfying appearance, studies show that it is the person's family and loved ones that psychologically and emotionally suffer the most from the surgery. In the New York Times, there was an article describing what one family had went through after the mother had gotten a face lift. In the article, the mother, Mrs. Stern, said that "I was feeling more confident because men became more attentive toward me but my son did not like it because he could recognize me no more" (New York Times). This quote shows how the person that had the surgery is happier than those whose surround her and that one of the difficulty that the families of those who get cosmetic surgery have to go through is not recognizing their loved one. After the surgery, it is not just the patient that is recovering but also the families and friends need an adjustment period to get used to the new look. It is hard for someone to have a face of comfort taking away from them. Now the boy from the New York Times article feels that his mother's face is strange to him and that the face of comfort he used to identify with is no longer exists.

After doing this research, I learned that most of the people that are doing this procedure are regular, everyday women who are trying to look a little better, slow down signs of aging and to boost their confidence in society. This research allowed me to see the personal and emotional side of people, which is usually not a part of the common discussions about cosmetic surgery. The hardship that a person must endure when changing their face makes me wonder if it is worth every penny to look a way that will cause distress to my family and friends, the people who have loved that face without condition; it almost seems like the situation is reversed: before, your friends and family were happy with who you were, but now you are the only one happy and everyone else is left confused. I respect the fact that for some people cosmetic surgery is necessary; some people are born with birth defects and they don't want people judging them as freaks from another planet. Our identity is more than how we look, it is deep beneath our soul and it is with us until the day we can no longer experience the world. We should always remember that it is not destined for our identities to be a certain way and we can always improve our identities if we allow ourselves to do so. We ought to experience life through critical thinking to avoid developing a biased identity and for those who feel like they have no other choice but to modify their face can also experience life through critical thinking because their face doesn't determine the person who they are.

## The Role of Ignorance In Acquiring Knowledge

by Jonathan Challita

Wisdom is a concept that could be defined in many ways. Some believe that wisdom is simply an accumulation of knowledge, while others define wisdom as having common sense; good judgment, enlightenment, the ability to distinguish right from wrong and the ability to apply knowledge to action are characteristics that are often attributed to wisdom. For Socrates, one of the first ancient Greek philosophers and perhaps the true father of philosophy, to be wise is to know one's own ignorance.

It may seem counter intuitive to associate wisdom with ignorance, but Socrates believed that it was the first step to becoming truly enlightened. Socrates stated his definition of wisdom in one of Plato's dialogues, The Apology. This dialogue takes place in the court of Athens, where Socrates was put on trial for corrupting the youth of Athens, making weaker arguments appear strong, and teaching of gods that weren't accepted by the state of Athens. The Apology is Socrates' defense argument to the court, regarding his charges.

Socrates introduced his definition of wisdom in a particular part of The Apology, when he spoke of his friend Chaerephon, who went to the Delphic oracle and asked her who the wisest man in the world was, to which the oracle replied "Socrates". Socrates, still doubting his own wisdom, sought out every famed wise man that was greatly regarded for his supreme knowledge, which included primarily politicians, poets and artisans; he visited with each of these men to prove that they were much wiser than him. Socrates' conclusion, after these visits, was that he must indeed be the wisest man in the world because whereas these men claimed to have supreme knowledge that they truly did not possess, Socrates was the only one who knew and admitted that he truly knew nothing.

This statement could be interpreted in two different ways. First of all, one can say that the knowledge of having no true knowledge is the only true knowledge that one can possess; this position is pessimistic when it comes to human knowledge in the sense that it implies that humans can possess only fragments of true knowledge, but never the whole knowledge in itself. In this sense, since recognizing that one knows nothing is the only true knowledge that one can possess, then knowing that one knows nothing becomes the only qualification of being wise.

The other possible interpretation, and probably the one that Socrates was implying, could be that when someone recognizes and understands the fact that they truly know nothing, a certain thirst or passion for gaining knowledge is a necessary reaction to such a realization; this passion could become the initiative for that person to begin to acquire knowledge, in turn eventually leading them to become wise in the traditional definition (having knowledge and being able to apply it). If a person believes that they know everything, the passion for gaining new knowledge will not exist because that person would deny that there is such a thing as new knowledge in their case. At the same time, a person who knows that they do not know everything but believes that they know enough will also never acquire that passion because they feel that they have reached their limit in gaining knowledge and that any new knowledge would not benefit them and is useless for them to gain.

I believe that Socrates implied the second interpretation that I had listed because I don't believe that he was trying to make a claim that having any true knowledge, except knowing that one knows nothing, is impossible; I believe that Socrates was trying to point out that recognizing one's own ignorance is the necessary catalyst for setting off a desire to constantly try to gain new knowledge. At the same time, I think that Socrates also pointed out the importance of one not claiming to possess knowledge that one does not have, since that was why Socrates refuted the wisdom of all the famed wise men with whom he met. Overall, wisdom begins with the admission of ignorance, which fuels the desire to gain new knowledge in order to rid of the ignorance, which in turn inspires humility and a constant thirst to learn new things; a person with all these characteristics is one who we can truly call wise.

## Politicization of Prostitution

by Javier Velasco

### I. Forces contributing to the criminalization of prostitution.

Religion has always been the foundation where the condemning of sexuality derives from. For centuries Christianity has taken the words and teachings of the bible in a literal sense disregarding the ethical flaws in them. For example, centuries ago people took certain passages of the bible so serious that they would re-enact the punishment described in the passage such as, the following "But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman, then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you" (Deut 22:20-21). Certain individuals are also to blame for the demonization of sexuality such as, St. Augustine whom according to Father Thomas Raush Christianity was tainted by his negative appraisals, he said "It's regrettable that St. Augustine's influence and the negative appraisal of sexuality, based on his own struggles to be chaste has so impacted negatively with Christian tradition"(Whitaker 1). Saint Augustine was a Bishop of the Catholic Church who vowed a life of celibacy after already living a lascivious life. He left his children and mistress then afterwards condemned sex as a pleasurable act and considered it to be flawed, wicked and sinful. His struggle to remain celibate clearly demonstrates his lack of self-control over his urges and because his beliefs were so entrenched, he demonized the act in order to justify his hatred towards sexuality. Since, the saint was a man of the church his words were considered divine and people followed his example to this very day. The saint's issues with sex were so extreme that modern day psychology would list them as "obsessive-compulsive and borderline psychotic"(Whitaker

### A. Religion's effect towards the view of sex and prostitution

Due to centuries of persistency to demonize sex and the influence of mentally unstable figure heads of the church, people have been manipulated to fear sex even among spouses. Couples were restricted to the missionary position being the one and only acceptable position during sex, to have sex in any other way was considered a crime. The Catholic Church was so strict with their laws that at one point in history they had "sex police" (Whitaker 1). "A married couple could be burned at the stake if they were caught having sex with the women on top. Sex was only for conceiving children, and for the male (and especially the female) to

enjoy sex was not only deemed sinful, but could send you to hell" (Whitaker 1). Both men and women became so scared of going to hell that instead of consulting each other, for when it would be appropriate for them to have sex; they felt an obligation to seek the approval of a priest or rabbi for his permission. The criminalization of sexuality and prostitution obviously did not derive from air, there are ulterior motives for the church to continue and accept the ideals of church officials whose ethics seem to be left behind, and that motive is power and control.

### B. Reasons for demonizing sexuality

Christianity and other major religions deriving from Judaism such as Islam are male dominated religions. From the Pope of the Vatican, Cardinals, Bishops, and Rabbis all these high ranking positions throughout history have been male dominated. In the Catholic Church another name for the priest is "father" who is the preacher while the women who serve in the church are of a lower rank and called "sister" rather than mother. The Catholic Church today denies findings stating that Mary Magdalene was the favored and "the one most loved" by Jesus Christ and considered to be "the one who understood"(Whitaker 1). Today women and men are supposed to be considered as equals but when the discovery of possible evidence showing Mary Magdalene being "a powerful figure in the development of Christianity" the Catholic Church denied the claim and demonized her as a prostitute (Whitaker 1). "Prostitute" being a fabricated terminology for a woman who enjoys or has sex too much which was demonized in order to stabilize populations and avoid the spread of STD's. Therefore, the church took an act of human nature and fabricated a sin so they can then demonize those that oppose them.

Thesis: Politicization of prostitution by the conservatives of the U.S. government through the use of religion long ago led to the belief that prostitution is immoral thus making it illegal; whereas, other nations in the world, such as Germany and Holland, have long maintained liberal views of prostitution and sexuality in general leading to the decriminalization of prostitution.

### II. Conservative views of the U.S. towards prostitution

Conservatives come up with many reason as to why prostitution should always remain illegal and never decriminalized. All reasons range from the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, sex for sale as an act of immorality, and crimes believed to derive from prostitution such as sex trafficking and violence.

### A. Political Parties

Whether republican or democrat when it comes to prostitution the main view on all sides towards "sex work" is conservative. Conservatives claim prostitution

will increase crime, one conservative made the following argument "It violates the prohibition of torture and of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment because clients' acts and practices of sexual 'entertainment' and pornography are acts of power and violence over the female body" (Should prostitution be legal 1). Another argument made for the criminalization of prostitution is the assumption that the act of sex cannot be enjoyed or fully appreciated due to "violence, disease, unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortion" and present a "constant and grave risks for women and girls" (Should prostitution be legal 1). The case of ex-governor Elliot Spitzer is an example of the actions taken in the U.S. against other politicians accused of using prostitutes. The stigma of prostitution is so severe that politicians such as Spitzer who arise to power are immediately removed from power ruining their political careers. Spitzer was forced to resign and if he did not "Republicans are prepared to begin impeachment proceedings should the governor not resign within a window of about 48 hours" (Deadline: Republicans Threaten Impeachment 1).

## B. Religious Groups

Religious groups are the most notorious for their conservative views towards prostitution and sexuality in general. The Catholic Church condemns prostitution because it is "immoral" and it is preached that sex should be for procreation. Birth control is not accepted in the Catholic religion because the couple engaged in the act of sex using birth control is killing the possibility for life to happen. Therefore, if sex is for procreation and not for pleasure then prostitution is immoral because it is both promoting sex for pleasure and the prevention of possible life which some Christians consider an act of murder itself.

## III. Liberal views of Germany and Holland towards sex working.

Both Germany and Holland share a common view when it comes to sex work. Unlike the conservative belief that crime derives from prostitution, liberals believe that it is illegal prostitution which the crimes mentioned derive from not prostitution itself. Liberals believe that if prostitution is regulated and monitored not only would the crimes deriving from it diminish but the spread of diseases and unwanted pregnancies would eventually cease or sink down to a minimum when compared to illegal prostitution. The country benefits as well since all profits gained are taxed and goes back into the country thus, improving the economy since sex is high in demand.

### A. Germany

Germany unlike the U.S. legalized prostitution in 2002. They realized that sex is a natural demand of a human being. Therefore, legalizing it would be the most logical thing to do. The German government saw potential for profits that would generate from sex work and felt it would be the ethically right thing to do for the following reason "to remove the industry from criminal hands and thus reduce the illegal trafficking of women, make working conditions safer and reduce stigma"(Easton 1). The legalization of prostitution in Germany has allowed for sex workers to join "unions" and gain "health insurance" (Easton 1). In the U.S. prostitution is illegal and these benefits are unavailable to them. The German government has an estimate of "1.2 million German men" that use sex workers each year and the industry has an annual turnover of "US 1.6 billion" (Easton 1).

### B. Holland

Holland decriminalized prostitution and has further taken steps in the attempt to neutralize human trafficking and money laundering in the sex industry by introducing "regulations requiring people selling sexual services to obtain a permanent place of business {telephone land line and office} and register with the city"(Contemporary Sexuality 1). These actions demonstrate that there are other means of handling illegal prostitution other than demonizing the very act itself by instilling fear and paranoia into society. Amsterdam also has plans to "redevelop parcels of land in the sex district. Instead of promoting prostitution, future uses may include housing, shops and hotels" (Contemporary Sexuality 1). Amsterdam is slowly attempting to integrate sex work with the rest of society in hopes of reducing crime and stigma towards sex work.

The criminalization of prostitution appears to have more flaws and problems deriving from the ignorance imbedded in the mentality of conservatives who frown upon sex work. The criminalization of prostitution is a fabricated tool built over centuries to obtain and maintain power over a population. Political conservatives either have been brought up with the irrational thinking that sex for pleasure or profit is wrong due to religious influence or do not believe in the teachings but are inspired to obtain power in the way religion has; by demonizing others opposing popular belief in order for them to move up the ladder as in the case with ex-governor Elliot Spitzer. Elliot Spitzer was supposed to be "the guy that refurbished the Democratic party and cleaned up Albany, so this is much more shocking than it would be for any other incumbent" (Deadline: Republicans Threaten Impeachment 1). The people were shocked by the ex-governors actions but the republican party was rejoicing

rather than infuriated with his so-called immoral actions because in their eyes they just eliminated an opponent. Every argument or worry presented by conservatives is either preventable or less likely to occur if sex work were to be legalized. Sexually transmitted diseases can be prevented with a condom while most are already treatable or curable in the event an individual were to obtain an STD. The trafficking of women would go down if sex work were legalized because then women or men in the industry can get registered and obtain health care so that not only can they be traced but they are taken care of health wise protecting them and their clients as well. Working conditions would be much more sanitary, safer, and private for both the sex worker and client. This leads to the decline of street walking and the rise of sanitized and organized work buildings where business can be conducted. The invention of birth control also solves the problem of unwanted pregnancies, profits are also gained from sex work since sex is a demand that will never get old or expire therefore the economy can benefit from it.

## Philosophy Courses Offered at LaGuardia Community College Fall 2010

### **HUP 101: Introduction to Philosophy**

This course introduces students to the process of philosophical reflection. Utilizing the concept of freedom extensively, it seeks to develop the student's ability to analyze concepts and to explore life experiences in a structured and coherent fashion. Students are encouraged to develop their perceptions by critically examining their own beliefs, attitudes and assumptions in light of the philosophical analyses they encounter.

### **HUP 102: Critical Thinking**

This course explores the process of thinking critically and guides students in thinking more clearly, insightfully and effectively. Concrete examples from students' experience and contemporary issues help students develop the abilities to solve problems, analyze issues, and make informed decisions in their academic, career and personal lives. Substantive readings, a structured writing assignments and ongoing discussions help students develop language skills while fostering sophisticated thinking abilities.

### **HUP 104: Ethics and Morals Issues**

This course investigates the nature of morality and its place in human experience. Among the questions posed and discussed are: is morality simply relative to specific cultures? What are criteria for right and wrong? What is moral agency? Does love have a place in the moral life? Students are encouraged to explore how morality functions in their own lives.

### **HUP 105: Philosophy of Religion**

An examination of humanity's basic perceptions of itself as they are reflected in religion. Both Western Theism and Eastern Non-Theism will be explored and evaluated. Special attention will be given to the phenomenon of religious experience as it occurs in different traditions.

### **HUP 106: Social and Political Philosophy**

This course invited students to explore both classical and contemporary social and political philosophical theories. Time-honored philosophical perspectives will provide students with a stimulating foundation upon which to explore current social and political issues on a global perspective. With so many provocative challenges confronting the world, students will be offered a philosophical and comparative format through which to better understand and address these global concerns.

### **HUP 108: Environmental Ethics**

This course offers students an opportunity to investigate ethical issues concerning the environment. The study of Environmental Ethics relates in complex ways to moral theory, as well as global issues in economics, politics and science. This course will explore environmental questions such as our personal responsibility for solving environmental problems, health concerns, and our obligations to ourselves, and to other species. Potential solutions will also be explored.

### **HUP 112: Logic and Philosophy**

An introduction to modern symbolic logic with a focus on its application to actual philosophical problems. Topics to be discussed include validity, entailment, truth-tables, proofs, translations from English into symbolic form, as well as more philosophical topics like the relation of modern logic to earlier syllogistic logic, the possibility of the use of logic to resolve philosophical problems (e.g. God's existence or free will), the relation of English to logic, and the possibility of "alternative" logics.