

Core 102-- Quality of Life: Culture and Values

PERCEPTIONS OF GOOD

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Office hours: 12:30-1:30 and 6:00-7:00 TTH

Lectures TTh 4-5:50PM THH 112

Lab, Writing classes, etc. ?????

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE:

In preparing for our future we can be sure that one thing will not change. We will be governed by some mixture of our individual perceptions of what is good (or to be sought) and bad (or to be avoided) and of the perceptions of good that dominate our group life and leaders.

A second thing we can be sure of is that we (individually and in groups) will make mistakes about what actually is good for ourselves and others, and that we therefore are frequently in danger of doing so--often with tragic results. Our perceptions and judgments about what is good are highly fallible. But they are also unavoidable, and they are also capable of being right. Can we ever know they are right, and, if so, how? What do we do when we can't?

This course explores how human beings have tried to come to grips with their need to find what is good and to be able to live wisely on the basis of perceptions of good. Major players in the drama are the gods and their presumed representatives, human capacities of reason and sensation, progress (historical, scientific, economic, etc.), as well as the social forces that govern so much of contemporary life.

We will work toward understanding (1) what it is for something or someone to be good (or bad), (2) how one might know that a certain thing, person or course of action is good (or bad), (3) the interplays of desire and good, (4) the capacity (or incapacity) of science and sense-perception to deal with values, and (5) the de facto authorities (arts, commercials, education) that currently form our perceptions of what is good (and bad) and what is the 'smart' way to feel, think and live.

Course Mechanics: Two mid-terms and a final exam, two 5 to 7 page "thought" papers, 3 or 4 precis on a "next day" assignment (to be designated), regular attendance upon and participation in the lecture/discussion meetings and labs. The two mid-terms will each be worth 15% of the course grade, the final 30%, the two short papers each 15%, and the precis all together 10%.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Weeks 1-3:

August 31 through September 14--

Introduction: The 3 forms of human understanding (bodily/social, 'images' and reason) and the problem of finding knowledge to base life upon. Especially, the problem of being on target about what is good and what is to be done.

The interplay of authority, thought and sense-experience in individual life and human history and society. The unavoidable burden of human existence. Camus on the only real philosophical problem: the justification for existing.

The Gods and perceptions of the good for human beings.

Readings: Homer, Iliad

Holy Bible (Exodus; I Chronicles chapter 8 through II Chronicles 36; Ezra; Psalm 1, 23, 32, 34, 35, 51, 103, 145, Isaiah chapters 40-66; Jeremiah chapters 10, 15, 31; Daniel chapters 2 and 12; Matthew chapters 3 through 8 and 23 through 28; Acts; Romans chapter 1; I Corinthians chapters 13 through 15, I John; Revelation chapters 20 through 22.)

FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE SEPT. 21

Weeks 4-5:

September 19 through 28--

The Good above the Gods

The discovery of Reason as the way to the Good.

(Plato) Epicurus and Epictetus (refined Hedonism and Stocism; good as feeling and as will, respectively) Bruno Snell on "the discovery of the mind." Gilbert Murray on the "failure of nerve" in Greek civilization.

Readings: Plato's Republic.

Selections from Epicurus and Epictetus (handout)

FIRST MID-TERM ON OCTOBER 3

Weeks 6-7

October 3 through October 12--

The retreat to Redemption: Good and the Gods Part II

The development of monasticism as a form of human association in pursuit of well-being. Cp. Plato's Republic. "The imitation of Christ" as a way of dealing with life. Hegel and Royce on the Imitation. A comparative glance at the solutions of Maimonides and Spinoza.

Readings: The Rule of St. Benedict
Selections from Kempis, The Imitation of Christ
(handout)

Weeks 8-9

October 17 through October 26--

Human Nature and its powers as the source of good

All problems solved by development of human techniques.

Readings: Pico, On the Dignity of Man
David Hume, selections (handout)
Condorcet, selections (handout)

SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE NOVEMBER 7

Weeks 10-11

October 31 through November 9--

The promise and peril of History for human good

Hegel's big Idea about good and perceptions thereof; and Darwin's.
Nietzsche and the dissolution of absolutes in historical process--almost.
The triumph of will and desire.
Faust, Frankenstein, DDT, and the human genome.

Readings: Christopher Marlowe, The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus (handout)
Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

Week 12

November 14 through November 16--

20th Century forms of Nihilism

Existentialism (Sartre).

Positivism (Scientism, Ayer).

The "Postmodern Condition."

Readings: Sartre, Nausea

Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic.

(Begin reading Hibbs, Shows about Nothing.)

SECOND MID-TERM NOVEMBER 21

Weeks 13-15

November 21 through December 7--

Where we stand today with respect to PERCEPTIONS OF GOOD

Life according to television and the internet.

The American Dream/"Coming to America."

Perceptions of good in:

Journalism,

Education,

Commercials, and

Sit. Coms.

Good as mere perception.

Nihilism institutionalized in Law and Culture.

"The Abolition of Man"

Prospects of "Postmodernism."

Is there hope?

How can you cope?

Readings: Hibbs, Shows About Nothing

Lewis, The Abolition of Man

ONE REVIEW SESSION--TO BE SCHEDULED

FINAL EXAMINATION 4:30-6:30 PM DECEMBER 12

LIST OF TEXTS

Homer, Iliad, E. V. Rieu, Lattimore translation, University of Chicago Press, ISBN 0-226-46940-9.

Bible, selections from Old and New Testaments, Holy Bible: New Living Translation, Tyndale House Publisher, inc.
ISBN 0-8423-3347-9

Plato, Republic, AHM Publishing, 0-88295-118-1

Epicurus and Epictetus (Classical Hedonism and Stoicism)
short selections provided.

The Rule of St. Benedict, Image books, 0-385-00948-8

Thomas a Kempis, Imitation of Christ, selections provided

Pico Della Mirandola, On the Dignity of Man, Hackett Publishers, paperback, 0-87220-396-4

David Hume, selections provided.

Condorcet, Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind, selections provided.

Marlowe, Dr. Faustus (provided)

Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Vintage, 0-679-72465-6

Sartre, J.-P., Nausea, New Directions Publishing,
0-8112-0188-0.

Ayer, A. J. Language, Truth and Logic, paperback ed. <I CAN'T FIND THE ISBN RIGHT NOW>.

Hibbs, Thomas, Shows about Nothing: Nihilism in Popular Culture from 'The Exorcist' to 'Seinfeld', Spence Publishing, 1-890626-17-1.

Lewis, C. S. The Abolition of Man, Macmillan,
ISBN 0-02-086790-5

The works will be read in the order listed.

A few additional handouts will be provided in the course of the lecture/discussions.

TOPICAL PROGRESSION OF THE LECTURES/DISCUSSIONS:

1. Introduction: The 3 forms of human understanding (bodily/social, 'images' and reason) and the problem of finding knowledge to base life upon. Especially, the problem of being on target about what is good. The interplay of authority, thought and sense-experience in individual life and human history and society. The unavoidable burden of human existence. Camus on the only real philosophical problem: the justification for existing.
2. Good and the Gods
Iliad
Old Testament selections
3. Good and the Discovery of Reason
the Republic--Good above the gods.
Selections from Epicurus and Epictetus (refined Hedonism and Stoicism (good as feeling and will, respectively)
4. Retreat to Redemption: Good and the Gods Part II
The Rule of St. Benedict
Kempis, Imitation of Christ
Maimonides's Guide of the Perplexed.
A look at Spinoza's solution to the human problem of perceiving and pursuing good.
5. Human nature in the place of God: all problems solved by the development of human techniques:
Pico
Hume
Condorcet
6. The promise and peril of history for human good.
Hegel's Idea
And Darwin's
Nietzsche and the dissolution of absolutes in historical process--almost.
The triumph of will and desire
Faust, Frankenstein, DDT, and the human genome
7. 20th Century forms of Nihilism
Existentialism
Positivism (Scientism)
The "Postmodern Condition"
Life according to television and the internet.
8. Where we stand today:
The American Dream/"Coming to America."
"The Abolition of Man"
Perceptions of good in:
Journalism,
Education,

Commercials, and
Sit. Coms.
Nihilism institutionalized in Law and Culture.
Prospects of "Postmodernism."

9. Is there hope?

NOTES TO GUIDE DISCUSSION OF READINGS FROM THE BIBLE

Recall from the 9/12/2000 meeting:

1. The creation of all that is ("the heavens and the earth") by an act of one God, who pre-exists the physical universe etc. and is totally in charge of it. Gen. 1:1ff

2. The creation of humanity by God's act (however carried out, evolution or fiat) and for moral purpose--i.e. to lead a life that is good and productive of good. Governing the earth for good. Gen. 1:26-31. Creation including humanity is said by God to be "very good." The general idea of one supreme and unlimited God who does all things because they are good. Contrast with Zeus and the Greek group of gods.

3. Humanity fails to lead a life that is good and productive of good, and there emerges a humanity in rebellion against God and mutually destructive. The "fall" and its effects. (Gen. 3, 4:8, 6:1-7, 18:20-23)

4. God makes a covenant with Abram (later "Abraham") and his descendents to bring moral recovery and blessing to "all the nations of the earth." (Gen 12:1-3, 17:1-11, 18:17-22)

5. Abraham's grandson, Jacob, moves the family or, now, clan to Egypt for economic reasons. Over a few centuries, the descendents of Abraham become a group of millions of people in Egyptian slavery. They have no culture or identity, but are a mob of people of the lowest socio-economic class. They become a people with a cultural identity through the "exodus"--traditionally dated at 1446 B.C.--from Egypt and subsequent years of wandering and fighting. See the outline of the book of Exodus handed out:

I. Getting the group out of Egypt. Exodus chapters 1-18

II. Moral formation of the group by Sinaitic covenant
(chapters 19-24)

III. Ritual formation of the group. The "Tabernacle," the "Ark" and the religious practices involving them.
(chapters 25-40)

Note the profound and touching statement in Exodus 29:38-46, especially 45-46 as to what the religious operations were all about: The constant presence of the spiritual/non-physical God among his covenant people.

6. As the people following Moses are being formed into an ethnic unit, they are without a place, wandering, and in a constantly embattled condition, under attack. After 40 years of this they take the military initiative and conquer most of the area around the Jordon river. See Map 3 at the back of your edition of the Bible. Fighting over this land continues for centuries. The largest area ever controlled by Israel was during the reign of

kings David and Solomon. (See map 4)

7. The time from Moses to Solomon was a period of relative weakness of the great national powers to the North and the South.

This period has been referred to as the time of "The Hebrew Iliad." Through conquest and growth Israel becomes an internationally significant state. After the death of Solomon in 930 B.C. the state divided into two: "Israel" to the North and "Judah" to the South. (See map 5) "Israel" was finally wiped out by the Assyrians in 722-721 when Samaria fell, and "Judah" fell to the Babylonians in 586. The story from the death of Saul to the fall of Judah is told in I and II Chronicles. The state of Israel ceased until it was brought back into existence in 1948.

8. From Moses to Saul (begins reign in 1050) the Israelites had not civil government. All governmental functions were carried out through their religious institutions and leaders, and special persons "raised up by God" to deal with special needs. (See the book of Judges.) After Samuel, the last of the "judges," the nation has a king at their own request. They become "like all the nations." (I Samuel 8)

9. The high point of Old Testament Jewish culture is with the completion of the temple of Solomon. (II Chronicles 7:12-22, and compare Exodus 29:42-46) After that it is all downhill for the nation, dragged primarily by their "kings" into oblivion. (II Chronicles 7:12-22)

10. Note verses 22-23 of II Chronicles 7. God begins to use Gentile kings as civil government of the Jewish people. Under such government the temple is rebuilt by Ezra. (See the books of Ezra, Haggai and Zechariah in the Old Testament section of the Bible.) The walls of the city of Jerusalem are rebuilt by Nehemiah under the supervision of Gentile kings. In the period the understanding of God as the God of the heavens who oversees all human governments comes to the fore. (See Ezra 5:11-17, and Daniel chapters 2 and 12)

11. In the midst of the ongoing civic disaster of the Jewish nation, the religion of the Jews develops one of the highest visions, if not the highest visions of God and the moral life yet seen on earth. Of course that is something that is debated at present, and we shall have to look at some parts of this debate as we go along. But in any case it is the vision upon which what came to be known as Western Civilization was (supposed to be) based. It is one massive perception of good, of what human well-being is, and what kind of person a human being ought to be.

12. Human well-being is understood in terms of being in the company of God, of being in a "right" relation to him. Thus, for example, Psalm 1, 23, 34, 35; Isaiah 42:1-9, 61:1-9. The Biblical view of well-being is that if there is the right relation to God you have well-being, no matter how tough things

are otherwise. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him," as Job says (Job 13:15), and this view of human well-being carries over to the biblical development of ideas to the end of the New Testament. Compare it to Plato's Republic and the later views we will be studying.

13. Human goodness, what a person ought to be, comes to be understood as conformity of the heart to the law that God has given. But this is not primarily outward behavior, and certainly is not religious ritual. The idea of the circumcised heart. (Deut. 10:16 -- read verses 10:12-11:1--and Deut. 30:6. The "Hear, O Israel!" of Deut. 6:4-6. The "law written in the heart" of Jeremiah 31:33-34. The "rend your heart and not your garments" of Joel 2:13. The "Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God" of Micah 6:8.

"Love" of others is not so much emphasized in the Old Testament writings as is justice and kindness (mercy). But it is stated as a requirement in Leviticus 19:18 and 34. Probably the best way to think about this is that in these writings love is regarded as being justice + kindness.

14. In the New Testament writings, human well-being is not substantially different from what it is held to be in the Old Testament. It is to be under the care of God or to live in the kingdom of God. Human goodness has two important changes:

a). It is love, as a pervasive characteristic of human personality. Likeness to God in terms of love. See Luke 10:27, John 13:34-35, Romans 13:8-10, I John 4:7-21. Matthew chapter 5:21-48 concretizes love in specific life situations. I Corinthians 13 is of course the all-time classic statement on love as human goodness.

b). It is totally non-ethnic. To be a good person one has no need to be Jewish or of any other ethnic group. The New Testament book of Acts is the story of how this huge transition was accomplished in the decades following the death of Jesus. (See especially the Council of Jerusalem of Acts chapter 15.) The significance of statements such as Acts 10:34-35, Ephesians 2:11-22, Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11, as well as those in the Gospels describing Jesus' behavior toward all kinds of people, are difficult to appreciate today, when almost everyone in the "Western" world pays lip service, at least, to such ideas.

Needless to say, the dominant perceptions of good among the "Pagans" did not depart the earth because of the rise of the biblical perceptions. We now turn back to them in Classic Greek thought, beginning with Plato's Republic, and we shall later see how they continue in contemporary culture.

Core 102: REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE EXAM ON OCTOBER 3rd

1. On reviewing our initial discussion of good and perceptions of good, explain and illustrate the connections(s) between individual or group action and perceptions of good.
2. An urgent task for human beings is to find a basis in knowledge for action and life. Explain and illustrate (from your own experience if possible) the importance of knowledge for action and life, and what truth has to do with that importance.
3. How is truth relevant (is it?) to perceptions of good, if we think of "good" as what we would choose if we were both rational and fully informed about the consequences of our choice?
4. What do you take to be the most reliable source of knowledge of good? Authority, reason, or experience? Why? Where does study of texts, such as the Iliad, the Bible, or Plato's Republic fit in in our search for reliable knowledge?
5. Drawing on the stories in the Iliad, explain and illustrate how emotion and character may harmfully influence the accuracy of our perceptions of good. (Cite and discuss some texts.)
6. Explain how the prominent men and women in the Iliad differ in their views of what should be done (what is "good") in specific cases. E.g., Andromache and Hektor, or Hekabe and Priam. Comment on why they differ as they do. Is the situation the same or different with male and female gods? (Cite and discuss some texts.)
7. Achilles presides over the games in honor of Patroklos. Here he seems quite different in spirit and attitude from his earlier (and later) appearances in the Iliad. If you agree that he is different, what, in your considered opinion, changed him? Explain. If you don't think he is different, say why you don't.
8. The Bible seems to present an infinite creator god, intent on producing a social unit or "people" unlike any other on earth. (Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Amos 3:2, etc. etc.) Explain how the events of the book of Exodus might be viewed as contributing to such a purpose. (See outline of Exodus provided, as well as the handout "Notes to Guide Discussion of Readings from the Bible, as well as your notes on class sessions.)
9. Explain the view of human well being (the "good for man") as presented in the Bible selections read or referred to in class. Explicitly take into consideration Psalm 23 and the Beatitudes, along with whatever else you wish.
10. What would I Corinthians 13 do for Agamemnon and Alexandros (Paris). How would their behavior differ if they had known and accept accepted it? Could one be a warrior with agape love in their heart? (Recall the reading of agape love given in class.)

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WRITE ON ANY 3 OF THE FOLLOWING 5 QUESTIONS, CLEARLY INDICATING WHICH QUESTIONS YOU ARE WRITING ON. YOU MAY USE THE ILIAD AND THE BIBLE AS YOU WRITE.

1. How is truth relevant (is it?) to perceptions of good, if we think of "good" as what we would choose if we were both rational and fully informed about the consequences of our choice?

2. The Bible seems to present an infinite creator god, intent on producing a social unit or "people" unlike any other on earth. (Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Amos 3:2, etc. etc.) Explain how the events of the book of Exodus might be viewed as contributing to such a purpose.

3. Drawing on the stories in the Iliad, explain and illustrate how emotion and character may harmfully influence the accuracy of our perceptions of good. (Cite and discuss some texts.)

4. Explain the view of human well being (the "good for man") as presented in the Bible selections assigned to be read or those referred to in class. Explicitly take into consideration Psalm 23 and the Beatitudes, along with whatever else you wish.

5. What do you take to be the most reliable source of knowledge of good? Authority, reason, or experience? Why? Where does study of texts, such as the Iliad, the Bible, or Plato's Republic fit in in our search for reliable knowledge?

Use blue-books provided. Leave time to re-read what you have written and make corrections/additions. The exam is over at 5:40.

Notes for a discussion of Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494),
On the Dignity of Man--

1. When at the age of 24 Pico went to Rome from Florence, he startled the leaders of the city by publishing a list of 900 propositions in every area of thought which he was ready to defend against all comers, offering to pay the traveling expenses of any challenger from whatever land he might come. On the Dignity of Man was an oration delivered to the leaders as a preface to this proposed battle of wits.

2. His aim was to draw all learning from all sources together to show how they all agreed on an exalted Platonic/Christian view of man ("microcosm") and universe ("macrocosm"). One of his feudal titles was Count of Concordia, and he assumed the mission of showing agreement between all significant thinkers and traditions. (pp. 21-22)

3. The philosophy presupposed, however, is heavily platonic, as anyone familiar with only The Republic will quickly recognize, though this is strongly interwoven with Aristotelian views of God and world and soul (especially the mind) and with the Old and New Testament.

4. Pico is remarkably prescient, however, with respect to 3 major points:

A. That the human being ("man") has no nature that limits what he shall become. (Study pp. 4-5)

B. That he must make himself to be whatever he becomes. (pp. 5-7)

C. That with respect to the great religious and philosophical traditions, e.g. Hebrew, Christian, etc., their "real" content is of a conceptual and spiritual nature that can be separated from any merely historical facts or claims. The "moral" and "spiritual" content has nothing to do with what did or did not happen in history. This of course is essential to being able to make them all 'agree' in philosophical substance. This view underlies many discussions of "pluralism" in the current scene. Spinoza, Fichte and many others since Pico have made it an essential part of their views.

5. The entire situation of man and the universe is still in Pico attributed to a personal creator God, however. (pp. 4-mid-5)

6. Man is placed by God at "the center of the world"--half-way between God and the lowest creatures--that man may "see whatsoever is in the world" and decide what to make himself. (p. 5)

7. The four possible areas of possible becoming are simply the three types of soul in Plato/Aristotle (recall The Republic) and the spiritual reality of God and his kingdom in Jewish/Christian

thought. (Study pp. 5-mid-10) See especially the discussion of the "cherub" on 7-8 and "Jacob's ladder on 9-10). (The Seraphim <pp. 7-8 and mid-14> are at the level of God himself.) Continuing illustrations are Job (pp. 10ff), intermingled with references to moral philosophy, dialectic, and natural philosophy, and then theology on p. 11 (and 16-17 etc.). The involvement of Moses on pp. 12ff and intermingled with "the true Apollo" on 14-15. Then Pythagoras and the Greeks on p. 15 and "the records of the Chaldaens" on p. 16.

8. The modus operandi of Pico is not, for the most part, straightforward argument by premisses and conclusion, but one of piling image, story, analogy and suggestion upon image, story, analogy and suggestion--though in fact he does occasionally argue. He tries to overwhelm by parallels of various kinds, that, coldly examined, are often little more than mere hints and suggestions.

9. Note his motivations to debate the propositions and his view of the nature of philosophy on pp. 17-19, and (before you read Faustus) the two kinds of "magic" on 26-29. The "good" magic may very well be what we have later come to call "science." (See p. 28) And note the very explicit attempt to make the Jewish (Hebrew) "mysteries" to say what fully developed Christian teaching says, Trinity and all. (mid-29-32)

10. He concludes with further protestations of his virtue and good intentions. (pp. 33-34)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE EXAM ON NOVEMBER 14th

1. What is the central problem posed to Socrates in the Republic (see opening of Book II) and how does he finally solve it? Your thoughtful critique of his solution?
2. Explain what "justice" turns out to be in the Republic, depending on Plato's view of the parts of the soul and the parts of the "city." (Book IV)
3. Correlate the elements of the "divided line" (p. 172) with those of the "cave" (p. 175), and discuss how those elements relate to Plato's plan for educating the guardians of the city. (culminating on p. 201, but see the paragraphs from bottom of 193-top of 194).
4. Do you find Plato's restrictions on the "story-tellers" and musicians (what are they--pp. 48-73) reasonable? What effect would they have on individual and social life today?
5. Compare the Epicurean and Stoic use of "reason" and "nature" to that of Plato. (Just explanation on this question.)
6. Critically evaluate Plato's plan for producing "just" (good) people with that of St. Benedict.

You will be asked to write on two of three of these questions on the exam. Open book. No notes.

Remember, explain your main terms, and spell out reasons, whether yours or those given in the texts you are working on.

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Second Mid-Term

WRITE ON ANY 2 OF THE FOLLOWING 3 QUESTIONS, CLEARLY INDICATING WHICH QUESTIONS YOU ARE WRITING ON. YOU MAY USE ANY OF THE READINGS ASSIGNED, BUT NO NOTES, AS YOU WRITE. Use the blue-books provided.

1. What is the central problem posed to Socrates in the Republic (see opening of Book II) and how does he finally solve it? Your thoughtful critique of his solution?
2. Correlate the elements of the "divided line" (p. 172) with those of the "cave" (p. 175), and discuss how those elements relate to Plato's plan for educating the guardians of the city. (culminating on p. 201, but see the paragraphs from bottom of 193-top of 194). (No evaluation called for here, though you may give one if you wish.)
3. Critically evaluate Plato's plan for producing "just" (good) people with that of St. Benedict.

Remember, explain your main terms, and spell out reasons, whether yours or those given in the texts you are working on.

Core 102

Points to be covered in class, November 2, 2000, on Nietzsche's BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL.

1. Review what we were saying last time about Nietzsche turning away from reason (the philosophers) and to history.
2. The will to truth / nihilism. (bottom p. 16)
3. Away with soul, teleology and -- physics. (pp. 20-21)
4. Self-knowledge--thinking and willing. (24-26)
5. And goodbye "free will." (28-29)

6. And yet--Hello "free spirit." Part Two, pp. 35ff.
7. "Opposites" dispelled. (p. 35) Martyrs and "serious" people. (35-36) The "indignant." (top 39)
8. Flee to solitude. (mid 36-37)
9. The "higher type of man." (bot. 41-top 43)
10. The three ways of valuing action. (p.44)
11. Value (disvalue) of truth. (bot 46)
12. Drives, instinct and will to power. (48)
13. Getting "unstuck." (52)
14. The free spirit at last. (bot 53-56)

15. Religious faith and the transvaluation of values. (60)
16. The "saint" and the will to power. (65)
17. "the great ladder of religious cruelty." (67)
18. The emerging indifference to religion. (69-70)
19. How "we free spirits" will make use of religion. (72-74)
20. And the "bad" or "hopeless" side of religion. (74-76)

Points to be covered in class (Nov. 7th) from Beyond Good and Evil <continued>

From "Part Five" (pp. 97-118)-----

1. The task of "a typology of morals" as contrasted with that of supplying "a rational foundation for morality." (p. 97)
2. "the common faith in the prevalent morality." (98)
Schopenhauer's task. (top 99 and note #3)
3. What the various moral theories actually do. (99-100)
4. What is essential and highly valuable in every morality: "a long compulsion" (100) and "obedience over a long period of time and in a single direction." (top 101) Read this latter paragraph very carefully!!!!!! And the last sentence on p. 101.
"stupidity, as a condition of life and growth." (top 102)
4. The role of "sublimation." (p. 102 and note #6)
5. The "rabble" and utilitarianism. (103)
6. The Jews and the "inversion of values." (108)
7. Prudence, happiness and the "herd." (109)
8. European herd man and the truly great man. (110-112)
"real mastery...in waging war against oneself." (112)
9. The herd morality and true greatness (113-114), and especially the paragraph spanning 113-114.
10. Degenerate European morality and democracy and pity. (115-116)
11. "We" new philosophers and the revaluation of values. (117)

For the 9th, review Beyond Good and Evil up to p. 118, and bring the book with you to class.

We will want to conclude on the 9th with summarizing his views, and considering whether he supports his assertions and denials, or only asserts them.

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In reading and thinking about Hibbs' Shows about Nothing, you might profitably focus upon clarifying and filling out for yourself the following passages:

"...we have no other culture than popular culture, and popular culture is Hollywood, especially television, culture." (p. 4)

"...a perverse affirmation of life and freedom in opposition to a degrading moral system. The pursuit of evil, then, can have a certain grandeur to it--or at least seem cool and hip." (p. 5)

"The thesis of this book is that our popular culture, the product of overlapping and interrelated world views, is dominated by what I call demonic anti-providence. The naked public square that religious conservatives bemoan and secular liberals celebrate does not exist, for it is populated by demonic anti-heroes." (p. 9)

"...the 'terms autonomous and moral are mutually exclusive'." (p. 35)

"Descartes...never conquered the dark god." (p. 47)

"...the promise of eliminating both physical and moral evil, is no longer credible." (p. 55)

"The comic trajectory of much of contemporary horror presupposes that we have found something attractive in the malignant hero, something that seduces us." (p.82) "The problem with these heroes is that they negate much and affirm nothing." (83)

"Arendt's account of evil is highly suggestive. We have already seen that it coincides at least in certain respects with our view of the trajectory of the aesthetics of evil, with its tendency toward a mixture of comedy and horror that renders heroic evil dubious and farcical." (p. 103)

"What is peculiar about the late twentieth century is the way meaninglessness has indeed become both a prevailing, if unremarked, supposition and a fertile source of comedy." (p. 137)

"Seinfeld marks a decisive break from nearly all conventions of the classic American comedy." (p. 146)

"Seinfeld's will to power knows no such grand aspiration." (p. 154)... "The hollow assertion of a dignity based in autonomy becomes fodder for the comedian." (p. 157)... "Seinfeld's world is populated by Nietzsche's last men..." (p. 162)

"'I can understand your not caring about us, we're human, but what about the fish?'" (p. 170)

"If nihilism means anything, it is that there is no basis...for confirming the truth of any position whatsoever...." (p. 174)

"Art narcissistically turns in on itself,..." (p. 183)

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When you have time to move on the Lewis' The Abolition of Man, pay special attention to the quotation from "The Green Book" on p. 14, and Lewis' response to it on the immediately following pages. See also the remark about "the Conditioners" on pp. 74-80, and what it means to "abolish man" on p. 85.

"Man's conquest of Nature turns out, in the moment of its consummation, to be Nature's conquest of Man." (p. 80) How's this?

Who are the "Men without Chests"? (bot. p. 34)

What is the problem for The Innovator? (pp. 54-56)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE FINAL EXAM

1. On reviewing our initial discussion of good and perceptions of good, explain and illustrate the connections(s) between individual or group action and perceptions of good.
2. An urgent task for human beings is to find a basis in knowledge for action and life. Explain and illustrate (from your own experience if possible) the importance of knowledge for action and life, and what truth has to do with that importance.
3. How is truth relevant (is it?) to perceptions of good, if we think of "good" as what we would choose if we were both rational and fully informed about the consequences of our choice?
4. What do you take to be the most reliable source of knowledge of good? Authority, reason, or experience? Why? Where does study of texts, such as the Iliad, the Bible, or Plato's Republic fit in in our search for reliable knowledge?
5. Explain Nietzsche's concept of "beyond good and evil," and evaluate his argument that Modern/Contemporary humanity is in transition to a "new" 'morality'.
6. What is Sartre's Nausea, and how does it relate to the status of Good or Value (or 'Project') in life. State two problems Sartre would have in justifying his view.
7. Explain Ayer's "emotive" theory of good (or value generally), and outline the argument (about mind and meaning) upon which it is based. Relate it to the more traditional heading of "Empiricism," and state and explain two of the serious criticisms this entire tendency of thought (Empiricism/Positivism) faces.
8. Carefully spell out any important differences between the "Nihilism" of Nietzsche and that of Sartre and Ayer. What is the human problem that remains given Nihilism in any of its forms? Given Nihilism, how can that problem be approached? (Be inventive on this last question.)
9. Outline Hibbs' discussion culminating in his view that "What is peculiar about the late twentieth century is the way meaninglessness has indeed become both a prevailing, if unremarked, supposition and a fertile source of comedy." (p. 137) Give a brief critical appraisal of his view.
10. What is the "abolition of man" for Lewis, and how could it come about? What's the Tao got to do with it?
11. How can individuals and groups today stand any chance of arriving at true perceptions of what is good? (Creatively integrate.)

Core 102
Fall 2000

FINAL EXAM

The exam is in two parts:

I. Write brief essays in response to 3 of the following 5 questions:

1. How is truth relevant (is it?) to perceptions of good, if we think of "good" as what we would choose if we were both rational and fully informed about the consequences of our choice?

2. Explain Nietzsche's concept of "beyond good and evil," and evaluate his argument that Modern/Contemporary humanity is in transition to a "new" 'morality'.

3. What is Sartre's Nausea, and how does it relate to the status of Good or Value (or 'Project') in life. State two problems Sartre would have in justifying his view.

4. Carefully spell out any important differences between the "Nihilism" of Nietzsche and that of Sartre and Ayer. What is the human problem that remains given Nihilism in any of its forms? Given Nihilism, how can that problem be approached? (Be inventive on this last question.)

5. Outline Hibbs' discussion culminating in his view that "What is peculiar about the late twentieth century is the way meaninglessness has indeed become both a prevailing, if unremarked, supposition and a fertile source of comedy." (p. 137) Give a brief critical appraisal of his view.

II. Write for one hour on the following course-integrative question:

How can individual and groups today stand any chance of arriving at true perceptions of what is good?

Utilizing the texts and lecture/discussions of the course, clearly state your views on this question, and give your reasons for those views, as fully and clearly as time allows.