



KURDISTAN: IS DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERALISM THE ANSWER?

BY ALEXANDER KOLOKOTRONIS
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Politics and the Academy

AT THE MOST RECENT DSC plenary session on 24 October, an emended resolution regarding the Doctoral Students' Council boycott of Israeli academic intuitions was unable to pass despite having more votes in favor, due to a lack of quorate. One of the claims of the opponents of the resolution, during the most recent debate, was that the DSC, in entertaining two plenary sessions that hosted lengthy discussions around the BDS resolution, was doing a disservice to the Graduate Center student body. This supposed disservice stemmed from the idea that the DSC (specifically the Executive and Steering Committees) was devoting time to the BDS resolution debate in lieu of other—"more important"—issues. Such individuals failed to recall the amount of work that the DSC has been doing and continues to do on behalf of the thousands of students at the Graduate Center (such as the recent unanimously passed resolution on mental health coverage, the continued access to legal consultation, and health service at the Wellness Center, sexual harassment in GC housing, and disparities in funding, to name but a few). A portion of the BDS debate touched upon the issue of whether or not the DSC should even be involving itself in political issues and if they should rather focus on, as one DSC representative put it, "issues that affect students." In response to this statement, a student attending the plenary said that she "refuse[d] the framing of Palestinian solidarity not pertaining to [her] everyday concerns" as her life and research were closely tied to the region.

Coming out of the recent plenary sessions debates is an important question of our role, as part of a student body as well as as individuals, in relation to broader political issues. Some of those that staunchly opposed the recent BDS measure have articulated a desire that the DSC be divorced from any political matter not directly affecting the student body at the GC, whilst some have gone as far as to advocate for a complete divestment from politics by those in the academy. Though these issues were raised in the last two plenary sessions, specifically during the BDS debates, the question of the role of the academy in broader political enterprises is a fundamental one that needs to be addressed in light of recent anti-political rhetoric. The recent debates in the DSC (as well as those within the English Studies Association at the GC) have highlighted three camps that endorse a refrain from political activity. The first and most vocal, are those that are critical of the DSC's engagement in politics outside of issues viewed as not directly relating to students, second

group are those that think the DSC should avoid politics as a body, though individual members should pursue their given political agendas, the last camp are those that articulate a complete separation between the academy and political activism.

The first two sets of folks, taking issue around perceived DSC involvement in political issues, are seemingly more concerned about the ways in which they (via the DSC) will appear if a contentious politically resonate resolution is passed within the DSC. They worry that such politically charged activity may jeopardize their future careers. While this may be true to some extent, it is merely a reflection of wider political issues which must be remedied. Here is a hypothetical example: let us say that a GC student loses out on some fellowship funds because of their political positions, which are antithetical to the ones held by the individual or committee deciding upon who receives the monies. Should future students with similar politics mute their political activism to secure a better chance at professional advancement? Some may answer yes to this, but why not destroy the socio-cultural apparatuses that allows such a process to persist rather than silencing oneself? The Steven Salaita case is a perceptible and recent reality of this in the neoliberal university, and he did not remain silent, neither should members of the DSC nor the DSC as a constituted body.

Still, there are others that legitimately believe that the DSC should not be involved in politics, or only in political situations relating to the student body. As the aforementioned exchange at the last DSC plenary hints, what one finds politically irrelevant may be part and parcel to a colleague's intellectual, social, economic, cultural, or even political existence. Furthermore, the DSC's engagement with politics is something that is fundamentally crucial to its viability as a body that advocates on behalf of students. To only involve itself with internal issues is to follow a course that elides interconnected societal issues that have an impact on students. Even those students largely unaffected by a given socio-political issue have a stake in it. If there are discrepancies in funding female students of color (a potentiality highlighted at the September plenary session), should the DSC take a stand on the internal issue in addition to the broader issue of oppressed nationalities in this country? Yes should be the unequivocal answer. One cannot take on the in-house political issue without, at the very least, recognizing that a broader process is fomenting such a course

internally. If members of the GC student body endeavored to bring forward an explicitly politically motivated resolution to the DSC, the body should not reject its presentation or debate over the given issue. If anything, such a debate can lead to further discussion on other important topics, as the recent BDS resolution has led to discussions revolving around how democracy is practiced at the GC and the role of students in relation to the academy and political activism. As the representatives of a body of public university students, it is the DSC's duty to remain politically involved in issues that directly affect its constituents as well as those that its membership find valid or politically salient.

Some of the initial fears around the politicization of the DSC in the September plenary regarded the body's relation to CUNY administration. At least one representative at that meeting lambasted the Executive Committee for ostensibly putting a strain upon the relationship between the DSC and the CUNY administration by simply entertaining the debate over the BDS resolution. Why should we, as individuals involved in rigorous and critical inquiries, be beholden to the (very political) whims of an administrative apparatus that largely views us as cogs (adjunct labor) in a rather lucrative machine? The political aspirations of GC students are as equally important as the politically influenced machinations of the bigwigs that work within this university. The DSC does not currently have the political space in which to say "abolish the board of trustees," "bring back open admissions," "stop hosting meetings and for charter schools," the last one very incongruous for a public university. But I will say (and advocate for) these things here, and if a DSC representative were courageous enough to put these thoughts in the form of resolution, again, it should be discussed and debated, without pressures to suppress such a measure of deliberation. Agreement on the issue is a different aspect entirely.

It is impossible to divorce our individual selves, or our collective selves from politics. Our scholarship is often politically influenced or derives from a particular set of experiences that involve political thought, this is particularly true for those of us in the social sciences and humanities. As graduate students, most of us pursuing a PhD, we are invariably engaged in political contestations, not only at DSC plenaries, but also in the class room or with colleague, at seminars, at workshops and the like. For the DSC to abjure politically charged issues amounts to a disservice to the students that the body represents. In fact, everything that the DSC does (and in general social relations and processes throughout U.S. society) can be construed as political. One of the most recent chartered organizations, a GC chapter of the International Socialist Organization was paradoxically

approved unanimously at the October DSC plenary. The ISO joins the CUNY International Marxist Club as a distinctly political organization supported and sanctioned by the DSC. Nothing—be it a social, economic, or cultural phenomenon, thought, or process—happens in a void, without a history, without an attendant political genealogy. The DSC is, and must remain, a body in which concrete (as well as diffuse) political agendas can be presented, debated, endorsed, and rejected. This must be the case without acceptance and devoid of attempts by "anti-political" people with the erroneous view that what the DSC constitutes does not, or should not represent a form of political engagement.

Though the majority of those clamoring that the DSC dissociate from any politically charged agendas are not opposed to political activity within the academy (just not in their "name"), there are those that would like to see a sort of purified academy, one bereft of politics, devoted solely to the common good an abstraction that has little salience given the plurality of the world in which we inhabit. Additionally, any sort of dedication to the "common good" as it were, on behalf of a university (or a group within) is devotion to the extant political practices. There is no room for reformism, let alone the possibility of revolutionizing our society if we, as members of the academy, do not use the tool (and it is a tool) of our access in the academy to attack the political problems, as well as the related socio-economic and cultural ones, that reproduce themselves in the wider polity. Going even further, we can revolutionize the academy itself, if we are bold enough to try, and why not attempt to leverage successes gained out of university struggles to broader social issues? The great potential of this has already been noted with the strikes and massive protests coming out of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in the wake of the disappearance and murder of student protesters by the police (see photo essay on page 10). The former (and hopefully future) Morales/Shakur Center at CCNY is serves as a prime example of why it is important to maintain a political presence on college campuses, even in the face of brutal assaults and clandestine subterfuges; important for both the university students as well as for the community in which the school is located (see article on page 28).

The university, particularly the public university, can serve the interests of a wide variety of groups. Currently, at CUNY, we see this in the most pronounced and aggressive form in the return of the Reserve Officer Training Corps to our campuses, largely aimed at recruiting the sons and daughters of Blacks and Latinos to serve in imperialist wars abroad and domestic repression. Political neutrality is an unfeasible in life as it is in academia. Even those that would say they are politically neutral implicitly support a given side

or agenda; generally the status quo or those groups or individuals with socio-political power skewed in such a way to benefit themselves. With a politicized university, there is the risk of reactionary measures by those in power or those with contesting or oppositional ideologies. This should not deter people from voicing their opinions, unless we truly endorse the tableau of a hermitic academic in the ivory tower. Without political activism on the university campus, the student bodies across the United States, as well as the professoriate, would be Whiter, straighter, more male, and feature less nuance and suppleness in the pursuit and production of knowledge. We can in fact expect that the university be supported

by the public and buttressed by a wide range of governmental institutions, but we must also agitate to change who exactly is considered part of the “public” and who wields state power. This monumental task can be accomplished with the support of a politically active and diverse university community, in fact it, drastic social change may very well necessitate a politicized university. We must remember that political discourse, confrontation, and activism is not anathema to universities’ venture in educating about, and interrogating the world in which we live, rather, it is the life-blood of the project, and can ultimately lead to the transformation of social relations throughout the broader society. Ⓐ

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Dangers of BDS

TO THE EDITOR:

The job of a professor or graduate student entails teaching, research, and service. We are not hired to do political activism, to campaign for social justice, or to craft foreign policy. Certainly as citizens we have the responsibility to participate in the democratic process. But in our roles as academics we have no business weighing in on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and other such controversies. Actually, it is our professional obligation to respect that the university is a public, apolitical institution, and that it should not be made into a lightning rod of political controversy.

Some will claim that the university is an instrument of political power, and that it therefore should be seen as a site of political struggle. This analysis has become a facile truism. Indeed, the university is under the sway of political pressures. But in a democratic society those pressures come from the people and from their representatives. The American people support the university, and so they expect something in return—namely that, where the university cannot be politically neutral, it will serve the public interest, as that interest is decided by a demo-

cratically elected government. In this specific case, that means crediting the country’s foreign policy agenda, as it is set by our representatives.

Of course, the country’s foreign policy agenda must be scrutinized. And academics, like all citizens, have every right to organize and work to change current policy. But the university is not the forum for doing that kind of activism. It is hubristic and demagogic to politicize the university—a space reserved for unbiased thought—rather than doing the hard work of lobbying voters and legislators in the politic arena proper.

Ironically some of the loudest voices supporting the proposed resolution are also some of the most vocal critics of “adjunctification.” Actually there is a causal relationship between campus political activism and the current academic labor crisis. For much of the university’s history, academics worked in contingent, underpaid positions (and many university teachers embraced this poverty as virtuous). But during the Cold War professors were more or less guaranteed comfortable, middle-class salaries. Of course, those plush labor conditions had everything to do with the federal government’s

heavy investment in higher education. But, as noted historian Laurence R. Veysey discusses, during the Vietnam War many students and faculty lobbied Congress to cut funding to the university. (Congress gladly obliged.) Meanwhile university activism eroded the public’s faith that the university is nonpartisan and hence worthy of broad support, and federal investment in higher education has been declining since the 1970s.

The historical lesson is clear: we cannot use the university for political activism and meanwhile expect to enjoy broad public support for higher education.

Certainly there are many complicated moral and political questions involved in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Anyone with a ready answer to those questions should speak out in newspapers, in the streets, and at the voting booth. But within the halls of the academy, it is our duty to be dispassionate, magnanimous, and keenly aware that scholarship involves asking questions rather than pronouncing self-righteous, moralizing answers.

— A.W. Strouse

Ph.D. candidate in English Ⓐ

PSC, Trustees Wrangle over Adjunct Pay

The PSC Bargains for a New Contract

THIS MONTH, THE NEW contract for adjuncts, faculty, and Higher Executive Officers (HEOs) is being negotiated between the PSC and CUNY. The campaign for a better contract started on 29 September, when close to 1,000 PSC members demonstrated outside of a CUNY Board of Trustees meeting at Baruch College, demanding that management come to the bargaining table with an economic offer.

A better salary, a more balanced teaching load for full-time faculty, job security for experienced adjunct faculty, and a clear path to advancement for CUNY's HEOs, are the main issues that this new contract is dealing with. The contract is more complex than most of the contracts for public institutions, because CUNY is funded by both the state and city of New York, whereas the rest are only funded by one. Will the University administration deliver a satisfactory economic offer that deals satisfactorily with all these issues?

Chancellor James Milliken has voiced his agreement on the need for increased pay: "There is no question that our faculty and staff are entitled to raises, and that this is a high priority for the City University of New York." There seems to be general agreement

among the PSC and the administration that in order to be competitive, CUNY has to be able to attract and retain outstanding faculty. But this can't be done without underpaid salaries. And so we are hoping that the administration, the city and the state come with an economic offer that would really work toward that end.

And, what about the other demands? Adjuncts need job security. Their contracts need to change. Regardless of their experience, they are not only poorly paid, but every year they struggle with the uncertainty whether they will be hired for the next semester. As for HEO's the bargain looks to include a mechanism for advancement that includes peer review, to provide HEO-series employees with a clear career path.

It is yet to be seen if the two sides can get to a satisfactory agreement, but an active participation of the union members is needed in order to press the administration to come down to the table with a good economic offer.

DSC Reps Vote Against the BDS Resolution

THE (AMENDED) BDS RESOLUTION for the endorsement of the academic boycott of Israeli universities and academic institutions failed to pass at the 24 October DSC plenary, because it did not have quorate majority. The vote showed a plurality of opinions with 31 yes, 25 no, and 10 abstentions. Thirty-nine votes were necessary if the resolution was to pass.

Now, we don't know if this vote reflects the state of affairs among



Protesters on October 2014 calling for wage hikes for adjuncts, faculty, and HEOs.

the student body, since it is only the student representatives who vote at the DSC meeting. How is this issue being handled in the individual programs? Are the student representatives having a dialogue with their fellow colleagues in their departments, or are they voting, as it is their constitutional right as elected representatives, according to their own opinion? The Palestine/Israel issue is one of those untouchables in this country. It mixes political and religious beliefs, and is also traversed by ethnicity. Ideally we would be able to have an intellectual debate at a center for graduate studies, where well learned and critical students come to think about relevant matters. The plenary debate in October, as well as the previous one in September, were by-and-large conducted with thoughtfulness, decorum, and respect for opposing viewpoints.

There were, however, also instances of racialized propaganda being distributed by members of the public

and allegations of personal attacks and aggressive rhetoric. Similar arguments as to the ones laid out in September were presented by both sides, though the claim that the resolution served to abridge Israeli Academic freedoms was not so vociferous. It is likely that another amended version of the resolution will appear sometime this academic year and be resubmitted to the DSC plenary for a vote.

CUNYfirst Comes to the GC in the Spring

EVEN THOUGH IT HAS proven to be a close-to-a-million dollar failure, the Graduate Center will get CUNYFirst in the spring of 2016.

As part of the roll-out with CUNYfirst, we are getting new email addresses, and the real bad part is that after a period of time our @gc.cuny.edu will no longer forward to the @gradcenter.cuny.edu addresses. Our students might not be able to get in touch with us, nor people we have

connected to academically using our school email address—emails from them will just be sent out into space and poof! The IT/Library committee member on the DSC said there is nothing we can do at this point except negotiate more time for forwarding. There is suspicion that CUNYfirst is a way for CUNY Central to conduct surveillance on members of CUNY's community.

But there is Good News Too!

CUNY HAS JOINED WITH Microsoft to create CUNY Live, and because of that we're getting cool stuff for free, like Office Suite for up to five devices!

CUNY Live features will include: 50 GB of mailbox storage (students and alumni), Outlook Web App experience will match Outlook client experience (students and alumni), mobile access (students and alumni), collaboration features like calendars, groups, contacts, etc. (students and

alumni), up to five installs of Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Publisher (PC), OneNote (Mac), Access (PC), and Lync (PCs and Macs) (only for students), up to five installs of Office on tablets (only for students), up to five installs of Office on smartphones (only for students), access to online versions of Office (only for students), 1 TB file storage on the cloud (only for students), OneDrive for Business sync client (only for students).

According to IT, the features should be available by 1 December 2014. ☹



Ebola Czar, but No Surgeon General?

amy goodman with denis moynihan

THE UNITED STATES NOW has an Ebola czar. But what about a surgeon general? The gun lobby has successfully shot down his nomination—at least so far.

The Ebola epidemic is a global health crisis that demands a concerted, global response. Here in the United States, action has been disjointed, seemingly driven by fear rather than science. One clear reason for this: The nomination of President Barack Obama's choice to fill the public health position of surgeon general, Dr. Vivek Murthy, is languishing in the U.S. Senate. You would think that an Ebola epidemic would move people to transcend partisan politics. But Vivek Murthy, despite his impressive medical credentials, made one crucial mistake before being nominated: He said that guns are a public health problem. That provoked the National Rifle Association to oppose him, which is all it takes to stop progress in the Senate.

Dr. Murthy's statement on guns came in the form of a tweet: "Tired of politicians playing politics w/ guns, putting lives at risk b/c they're scared of NRA. Guns are a healthcare issue," he wrote in October 2012. A year later, the White House announced his appointment to the position of surgeon general, and on 4 February 2014, he testified before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. He received bipartisan support in committee, but his nomination has not yet come up for a vote in the full Senate, ostensibly because Sen. Harry Reid knows the vote would fail. Nominations only need a majority of 51 votes to win approval. Since the Democrats have a 55-to-45 majority in the Senate (at least for now), Murthy's approval as surgeon general should have been routine.


Fear of the NRA's perceived power, however, prompted several Democrats—those with tight re-election races in 2014—to indicate they would not vote to support Murthy. Among those expected to vote against him were Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, Mark Pryor of Arkansas, and Mark Begich of Alaska. These incumbent Democrats and others didn't want to provoke the NRA before the midterm elections. So the U.S. has no surgeon general.

What exactly does the surgeon general do? The position dates back to 1798, when Congress established the country's first publicly financed health service to care for ailing merchant sailors. Now, the surgeon general commands more than 6,500 healthcare workers in the "Commissioned Corps" who are tasked with protecting U.S. public health.

An equally important role of the surgeon general is to be "the nation's doctor," to use the position for public advocacy, to educate and inspire people to take health care seriously. So, while there is an acting surgeon general, Boris Lushniak, who is keeping the lights on at the organization, he hasn't assumed the full public role that the position demands. In 1964, then-Surgeon General Luther Terry released a groundbreaking report, "Smoking and Health," which prompted significant shifts in tobacco policies, like the printing of warning labels on cigarette packs and the banning of tobacco ads on TV and radio. In the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan's surgeon general, C. Everett Koop, advocated for education and action to combat HIV/AIDS, against the wishes of Reagan, who didn't even utter the phrase "AIDS" for the first six years of his administration as thousands died of the disease.

We can only assume that, were Dr. Murthy confirmed as surgeon general, he would be a leading voice of reason in the national response to the Ebola epidemic. Instead, we get ill-informed talking heads demanding a travel ban to and from West African nations, which every public health official acknowledges would exacerbate the epidemic, ultimately driving more infected people to cross borders illegally, avoiding the checkpoints where they might be directed to care. This scenario would definitely result in more cases of Ebola in the United States.

And what if the surgeon general also stumped for common-sense, data-driven policies to reform our gun laws? The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (named after President Reagan's press secretary, the late James Brady, who was critically wounded during an assassination attempt on Reagan) points out the scale of the problem with guns: On average, 128 Americans are killed or wounded by guns every day. More than 30,000 die from gun violence every year.

As far as we know, there are only two people in the United States currently with Ebola. There are 300 million guns. Ebola can be stopped with proper public health procedures and by rapidly deploying a massive influx of public health workers, equipment and other resources to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. The Senate should immediately vote to approve the nomination of Dr. Murthy as surgeon general. 

Amy Goodman is the host of *Democracy Now!*, a daily TV/radio news hour airing on more than 1,300 stations. She is the co-author of "The Silenced Majority," a *New York Times* best-seller.

advocacy access participatory open-source

DSC-chartered own your own data digital media

student-run academic student-based



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International Solidarity with Mexican Students

cuny internationalist clubs

CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW York students and adjuncts have joined immigrant workers and other activists in emergency protests against the massacre of teachers college students in Mexico. Held on 5 and 8 October in front of the Mexican consulate in mid-town Manhattan, the protests were built by the CUNY Internationalist Clubs in solidarity with students at the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College in the state of Guerrero, Mexico.

On the night and early morning of 26-27 September, police in the town of Iguala attacked students from the Ayotzinapa school as they were returning from a protest. Six people were killed in the attack,

many more were wounded, and 43 students were pushed into police vehicles and “disappeared.” Mass graves were later found with at least 28 charred and mutilated bodies. Authorities say these are not those of the kidnapped students, but a team of Argentine forensic experts has stated that it is too soon to tell, while many other graves remain unexcavated. In Mexico, the events have inevitably recalled the Tlatelolco massacre of October 1968, in which hundreds of student protesters were killed by army troops, ordered in by the government to “clear the way” for that year’s Olympic games.

Press coverage in the United States of the Iguala massacre has highlighted local politicians’ ties to





drug cartels, while systematically downplaying the national and international political background to the attack. The Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College is renowned throughout Mexico for its long history of participation in social struggles. One of the first acts of the present governor of Guerrero was a previous police attack on activists from the school in December 2011, in which two students were killed on the highway leading to Acapulco. As a nationwide drive is underway to close the rural teacher training institutes, militant students have been demonized by government officials and the press. The schools are targeted for closing as part of the international privatization offensive against public education, which is ordered by global financial institutions and

the United States government—which also massively arms and finances Mexico’s military and police forces.

In Mexico, protests against the massacre and kidnapping of the Ayotzinapa students have continued to grow. Teachers throughout the state of Guerrero walked off the job and militantly besieged state government offices. In Oaxaca, teacher activists, many of them veterans of the 2006 mass rebellion in that largely indigenous state in Mexico’s south, organized a solidarity caravan to Ayotzinapa. On October 13th in Mexico City, a mass meeting at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)—Latin America’s largest university—launched a student strike in protest against the killings and in solidarity with Ayotzinapa. At the time of writing, comrades in Mexico report on an “inter-university assembly” of 3,000 students in UNAM’s Che Guevara Auditorium, where they have been calling for a “national strike against the murderous government.”

Solidarity actions continue to multiply internationally. In Brazil, the Rio de Janeiro state teachers union—known for its work stoppages and demanding freedom for former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal—has called a protest at the local Mexican consulate there under the slogan “From Guerrero to Rio, an injury to one is an injury to all.”

As protesters chanted in front of the Mexican consulate here in NYC: **¡Normalistas mexicanos, estamos con ustedes! Mexican teachers of college students, we are with you!** ☺

For information on further solidarity actions in New York, write: cunyinternationalists@gmail.com



Snapshots from Ayotzinapa

(Slogans, graffiti, and a father's speech, with sources)

cristina pérez díaz

their anger is ours
they are not alone

it was the State
if you are not angry

you are not paying attention
their bullets will come back to us

we are not from the left we are those from beneath
good night heads of the household

you have children too
and you also feel bad

it could happen to you
what has fallen upon us it really pisses me off

that this bastard
has taken advantage of our children

he has fun with us I would like
to give you my phone number

because people are taking up the arms
we are ready

to go after those mother fucker assassins
because we are angry

we would like to have them face to face
and get rid of them little by little

and with your help
go ahead and write down my number

because all the people we are going
after those bastards
we have to find them

as we want our children alive
we are giving them two days

no more, we are already tired
we are gonna knock him down that
bastard son of a bitch

we are all very pissed off
I want to see their face

let's turn our pain into anger
who leaves a trace does not disappear

the government has taken so much from us
it has taken away our fear

Peña, asshole, we came from Ibero
assassin, get out of Los Pinos

They kill the people and they say they don't
government and narco the same shit are both

If you are not indignant
the dead one is you

For those companions fallen at the
hands of a criminal government

<http://www.sopitas.com/site/394023-mas-de-70-escuelas-en-paro-mas-de-100-manifestaciones-en-todo-el-mundo-unete-e-pnbringthemback/>

<http://revistaanfibia.com/ensayo/ayotzinapa-el-nombre-del-horror/>

<http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=385551>



ANNA MAY WONG

FROM LAUNDRYMAN'S
DAUGHTER TO
HOLLYWOOD LEGEND

Anna May Wong remains the ultimate Asian-American film star, having appeared in over 50 films with such legends as Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. Ramon Navarro, Joan Crawford, Lon Chaney, Marlene Dietrich, Sessue Hayakawa, Werner Oland, and many others. Despite being forced to play degrading roles, Wong's global fame crystallized the image of the Asian woman in the first half of the twentieth century. Join **biographer Graham Russell Gao Hodges** for a brief introduction to the famous actress' life, focusing on her stage and vaudeville career, and her innumerable friendships among New York's intellectual and artistic communities.

WHERE:	THE GRADUATE CENTER ROOM 9100: SKYLIGHT ROOM
WHEN:	NOVEMBER 06, 2014: 6:30 PM-8:00 PM
INFO:	GOTHAMCENTER.COM
ADMISSION:	FREE

The No State Solution

Institutionalizing Libertarian Socialism in Kurdistan

alexander kolokotronis

IN WHAT MANY OUTSIDE of the territory are referring to as the Rojava Revolution, a major shift in political philosophy and program has taken place in Kurdistan. Yet, this shift is not limited to the region of Rojava, or what many also call Syrian Kurdistan or Western Kurdistan—a region where the Democratic Union Party (PYD) has taken an active part in this change. In “Turkish” Kurdistan—or rather Northern Kurdistan—the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) has been the foremost leader. In Eastern Kurdistan (lying within Iranian borders) the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK) has taken to the shift as well. It is an expanding movement towards what is internally being described as a “democratic, ecological, gender-liberated society”—a collection of ideas, institutions, and practices that compose the political, economic and social outlook of democratic autonomy and democratic confederalism. As stated in *Democratic Autonomy in North Kurdistan*—a book written by the group called TATORT Kurdistan, which ventured from Germany into Kurdistan for their research—the paradigmatic shift to democratic autonomy and democratic confederalism has meant renouncing the establishment of “a socialist nation-state and instead” seeking the creation of “a society where people can live together without instrumentalism, patriarchy, or racism—an ‘ethical and political society’ with a base-democratic, self-managing institutional structure.” In short, “democracy without a state.”

Contrary to what many might believe, the ideological shift did not take place in the last few months or even the last year. Rather, approximately a decade ago it forthrightly appeared when Abdullah Öcalan, long-time leader of the once Marxist-Leninist PKK, issued *The Declaration of Democratic Confederalism*. In it, Öcalan disavowed the nation-state, deeming it an organizational entity that serves as an obstacle to self-determination instead of an expression of it. Öcalan states that “within Kurdistan democratic confederalism will establish village, towns and city assemblies and their delegates will be entrusted with the real decision-making.”

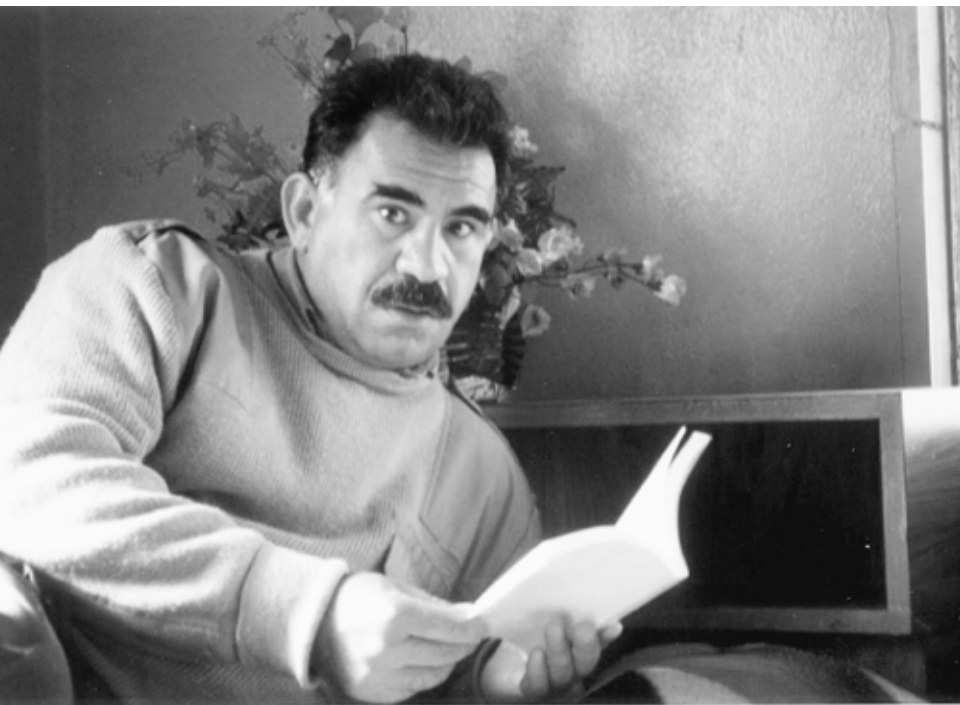
For Öcalan, this means that the “democratic confederalism of Kurdistan is not a state system, but a democratic system of the people without a state.” This system of democratic autonomy and democratic confederalism is composed of overlapping networks of workers’ self-managed enterprises, entities of communal self-governance, and federations and associations of groups operating according to principles of self-organization. These assemblages function according to direct participatory democracy as well as with close-to-home delegate structures that are accorded through a council system. The year 2005 marked the beginning of the construction of such councils. In urban settings, this took place on concentric levels of the neighborhood, district and city. In 2008 and 2009, these councils were reorganized so as to include the input and power of various “civil society organizations, women’s and environmental associations, political parties, and occupation groups like those of journalists and lawyers.

Before venturing any further, it is important to discuss the ideological roots of democratic confederalism.

Theoretical Roots of Democratic Confederalism

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID about the influence of eco-anarchist Murray Bookchin’s on Abdullah Öcalan, who has been imprisoned since his arrest in 1999. In fact, through his lawyers, Öcalan contacted Murray Bookchin. Bookchin was too sick to enter into serious dialogue with Öcalan, but he sent his wishes that the Kurds would be able to successfully move towards a free society. Yet, Bookchin’s influence on the wider Democratic Confederalist movement can’t be overlooked.

Bookchin is not well known outside—and even inside—anarchist circles. Yet, the scale of his political involvement and writing was immense. As Janet Biehl denotes in her article “Bookchin, Öcalan, and the Dialectics of Democracy,” upon Bookchin’s death in 2006 the PKK went as far to call Bookchin “one of the greatest social scientists of the 20th century.” Bookchin upheld what he called social ecology. His



social control—that is, when people are plucked out of their everyday lives in a community and expected not only to ‘administer’ it but to do so with the backing of a monopoly of violence—that we can speak properly of the State.”

Such coercion is utilized by the State for the purposes of molding a given manifold of cultures and ethnicities into “a single identity population,” to use Joost Jongerden and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya’s concept. More often than not, such ventures are violent, and the Turkish State has been no exception to this. Turkey does not allow the Kurdish language to be spoken or taught within state-run institutions, including public schools. Raids are frequently carried out on an array of

view was that “the basic problems which pit society against nature emerge from within social development itself” and that placing society and nature into an oppositional binary was both descriptively erroneous and prescriptively destructive. More elaborately and succinctly put, “the domination of human by human preceded the notion of dominating nature. Indeed, human domination of other human gave rise to the very idea of dominating nature.”

With the ideas of social ecology, Bookchin sought to broaden the scope, nuance, and depth in the ways we look at systems of oppression as well as the ways in which they are intertwined with social hierarchies and often serve in reproducing them. He looked both at the roots of hierarchy and its various manifestations and institutionalizations, as well as at the conditions for its abolition and the founding of institutions based on non-hierarchical relations. Like many anarchists, Bookchin saw the State as the highest manifestation of hierarchical organization. Why the opposition to the State? In Bookchin’s own words:

“Minimally, the State is a professional system of social coercion—not merely a system of social administration as it is still naively regarded by the public and by many political theorists. The word ‘professional’ should be emphasized as much as the word ‘coercion.’ Coercion exists in nature, in personal relationships, in stateless, non-hierarchical communities. If coercion alone were used to define a State, we would despairingly have to reduce it to a natural phenomenon—which it surely is not. It is only when coercion is institutionalized into a professional, systematic, and organized form of

municipalities and civil society organizations. Furthermore, treatment of Abdullah Demirbas is exemplary of Turkey’s treatment of the entire Kurdish population. He was elected in 2004 as the mayor of Sür, a district in Amed. One of his promises was to conduct affairs in Kurdish, however, according to TATORT, “three years later the Council of State removed him for using Kurdish, Assyrian, and English in providing municipal services.” He was re-elected in March 2009 by an even wider margin, but in May of that year he was arrested again for supposed ties to the Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK) as well as “for language crimes.” For this he was sentenced to two years in prison.

While there are differences between Bookchin and the Kurdish people Bookchin has influenced, what has been most strongly imparted from the former to the latter are goals of building “dual power” and implementing a system of governance that is composed of varying forms of stateless equalitarian assembly democracy. With a strategy of building dual power one finds the goal of building “a counter-power...against the nation state.” This means building a parallel societal structure. Or rather, building a network of alternative and counter institutions that are decidedly different from, and run in contradiction and opposition to, the dominant system: in this case, the nation-state and capitalism. This notion is not original to Bookchin, as one can find its explicit articulation in the works of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, and even earlier in the writings of Pierre Joseph Proudhon. Öcalan himself embraces this outlook of building dual power with his exhortation that “‘regional associations of municipal administration’ are needed, so these local organizations and institutions would form a network” and as such a “nonstatist political administration.”

Building a Solidarity Network

AS A MEMBER OF the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) denotes, it is “not just about autonomy—it’s about democratic autonomy.” As such, this has meant organizing institutions outside of the state that are based upon and operating in accordance to self-organization and self-management. The knitting together of a solidarity network is, in part, a macro-political production of a relationship between such institutions. These institutions are being built in numerous ways on local levels. In their article “Democratic Confederalism as a Kurdish Spring: The PKK and the Quest for Radical Democracy,” Jongerden and Akkaya quote a chair of a neighborhood council in one of the poorer areas of the city of Amed asserting, “our aim is to face the problems in our lives, in our neighborhood, and solve them by ourselves without being dependent on or in need of the state.” This best expresses the meaning of Kurdish communities seeking to establish democratic autonomy. As such, Jongerden and Akkaya define democratic autonomy as the “practices in which people produce and reproduce the necessary and desired conditions for living through direct engagement and collaboration with one another.”

With the DTK, such a network is given institutional shape and form. In 2005, the DTK was founded, with the intention of bringing together a diversity of groups. The DTK contains a gender quota, the continuation of its operations contingent on meeting the requirement of at least 40% of attendees and positions being filled by women. The organizational structure of the DTK largely consists of the General Assembly, which meets at least twice per year, and the Standing Committee. The General Assembly holds at least 1,000 delegates, 60% of which come from the grassroots level, and 40% of which are elected officials such as representatives or mayors. The General Assembly elects a Standing Committee of 101 people. There is also a Coordinating Council, which consists of 15 people, and works in the areas of ideology, social affairs, and politics. On all levels, committees are frequently organized based on these three areas. The DTK itself holds numerous committees and commissions, which range from areas of ecology, women, youth, economy, diplomacy, culture as well as many others.

The building of such a model is closely aligned to Bookchin’s conception of confederalism which he defines as “a network of administrative councils whose members are elected from popular face-to-face democratic alliances, in the various villages, towns and even neighborhoods of large cities.” Such administrative councils do not make policy, but rather are “strictly mandated, recallable, and responsible to the assemblies that choose them for the purpose of coordinating and administering the policies formulated by the assemblies themselves.” Administrative councils are just that,

they administrate and do not constitute a system of representation which accords high levels of decision-making and policy-making power to representatives. Thus, as Jongerden and Akkaya remark, “Democratic Confederalism can be characterized as a bottom-up system of self-government.”

The City of Amed

AMED, ONE OF THE largest cities in North Kurdistan, by official estimates containing over 1.5 million residents, is largely influenced by the DTK. Similar to other cities in Kurdistan, Amed is composed of councils and assemblies on all levels. These include street councils, neighborhood councils, thirteen district councils, and a city council. The city council is comprised of 500 people, containing the mayor, elected officials, delegates from women’s and youth organizations, NGOs, political parties, and others.

The city council is organized along five different areas: social, political, ideological, economic, and ecological. Within these five areas committees are formed, which all hold the aforementioned 40% gender quota. The political portion of the council maintains a coordinating committee, which includes women’s councils (there are strictly women’s councils, which are self-organized, and mixed gender councils), youth councils, political parties, and others. The economic portion of the council concentrates on forming cooperatives. The social area concentrates on things such as education and health. For juridical matters, committees handle conflicts and disputes. Their goal is to engage in conflict resolution so that the disputing parties can come to a consensus. In other areas of North Kurdistan, such as Gewer, legal committees do not purely hold lawyers, but also contain feminist and political activists.

The Town of Heseke

HESEKE IN ROJAVA, WESTERN Kurdistan, holds a similar institutional layout to Amed. Like Amed and the DTK, its governing bodies uphold a 40% gender quota. Its city council, however, is comprised of 101 people, and of five representatives each from five other organizations, including the PYD and the Revolutionary Youth. There is also a coordinating council, which is made up of 21 people. Heseke holds 16 district councils.

District councils hold anywhere from 15-30 people, who meet every two months. Anywhere from 10-30 communes comprise a given district, with 20 communes approximating to 1,000 people. This means that there is often one delegate for every 100 people in a district, which is far more direct than many other institutional structures across the world. It should be kept in mind though that what is most frequent is the convening of peoples’ assemblies, a phenomenon that also spans across Kurdistan and serves as the base for

democratic autonomy (many areas in Kurdistan have weekly peoples' assemblies).

In Heseke “communes have commissions that address all social questions, everything from the organization of defense to justice to infrastructure to youth to the economy and the construction of individual cooperatives.” The commissions for ecology are concerned with things such as sanitation and specific ecological problems. There are also “committees for women’s economy to help women develop economic independence.” This body also sends delegates to the general council of Rojava. Similar to many other areas in Kurdistan, resolutions and decisions are rather made by consensus than by simple majority vote.

Embrace of Heterogeneity

THE *CHARTER OF SOCIAL Contract*, a constitution formed by cantons in Rojava, begins with an embrace of pluralism:

“We the peoples of the democratic self-determination areas; Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians (Assyrian Chaldeans, Arameans), Turkmen, Armenians and Chechens, by our free will, announce this to ensure justice, freedom, democracy, and the rights of women and children in accordance with the principles of ecological balance, freedom of religions and beliefs and equality without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, creed, doctrine or gender, to achieve the political and moral fabric of

a democratic society in order to function with mutual understanding and coexistence with diversity and respect for the principle of self-determination and self-defense of the peoples.”

This alone contradicts the often oversimplified depictions of the Middle East by Western media. According to the translation of Zaher Baher of the Kurdistan Anarchist Forum (KAF), the *Charter* goes on to state in its first page that “the areas of self-management democracy do not accept the concepts of state nationalism, military or religion or of centralized management and central rule but are open to forms compatible with the tradition of democracy and pluralism, to be open to all social groups and cultural identities and Athenian democracy and national expression through their organization.”

Yet, if one is to truly talk about an embrace of heterogeneity, it must involve the non-human just as much as it involves the human. This means going beyond the multilingualism and cultural diversity that many in Northern and Western Kurdistan have embraced—even institutionally—to looking at the ways in which the question of ecology is being tackled.

Ecology

FOR AYSEL DOGAN, AN ecology activist and president of the Alevi Academy for Belief and Culture in Dersim, “the best way to create an ecological system is to build coopera-



tives.” Other eco-minded activities include the development of seed banks, protesting the notion of nuclear power plant development, and the disallowing the entrance of mining companies. All of these are seen as a means to foster an ecologically geared social consciousness.

Much of this also includes education, and as such ecological schooling is part of the explosion of academies and other learning institutions that inhabit the region. The increase in academic and cooperative development has interlocked with other emancipatory efforts as well.

Education

A NUMBER OF ACADEMIES have opened across Kurdistan. This includes the founding of the Mesopotamian Social Sciences Academy in late August in Qamislo in the Cizîrê canton of Rojava, which operates according to “an alternative education model.” According to *Rojava Report*, in Cizîrê alone 670 schools with 3,000 teachers are offering Kurdish language courses to 49,000 students. Language, cultural, and historical academies oriented towards preserving and building identity aren’t limited to Rojava. They have taken off in North Kurdistan as well. As of July 2012, there are “thirteen of them, with various foci, including nine general academies, two women’s academies and two religious academies, one for Alevis and one for Islamic beliefs.”

Commenting on a number of schools run outside of the auspices of the Turkish State, a representative of the Amed General Political Academy stated that, “these schools want to work out the essence of Islam and connect to the oppositional Islamic movements, which reject rulers and an Islamic state but nonetheless are connected to Islam.”

As indicated by the Amed General Political Academy, much of the politicized Kurdish population carries an anti-capitalist, anti-State outlook. TATORT reports in the academy’s three-month course “all participants reflect on what they have learned and formulate a critique of state and ruling class.” These political academies also teach things outside of class analysis, such as histories of women and the development of patriarchy. Also, in Amed lies a center that offers courses to women, ranging from technical and practical skills to teaching the Kurdish language and literacy, as well as courses in law and women’s rights. Other centers offer health and sexuality courses. There are also seminars offered on democratic autonomy.

Empowerment of Women

IN MULTIPLE WAYS WOMEN are empowering themselves in Kurdistan, and as a result serving as the main thrust of the movement. As already indicated above, the gender quota is institutionalized on nearly all levels of society, and throughout learning sites and academies. Another great

example of the latter is the Amed Women’s Academy. According to leaders of this academy, “the liberation of women, and of gender, is as significant as the liberation of men in society.” They work on projects such as transcription of oral histories and engage in “female writing of history.” They also offer courses through a participatory discussion-based model. Many of these academies and the Free Democratic Women’s Movement (DOKH) also engage women by simply striving to empower them to step outside of their home. Some women within this movement take on a particularly radical perspective towards the state, viewing it as having a role in producing a hierarchical logic within the family unit.

Along with women’s councils, academies and centers, there are women’s cooperatives wherein the goal is to “help women create their own relations of production, where they can work and participate.” Through women’s cooperative development the altering of gender relations takes place on a number of levels: in women’s relation to the workplace (they previously have very little of such, if at all), in relation to their husbands and male relatives (breaking culturally embedded taboos and gender roles), and in relation to society as a whole (by being ever more participative in and through the program of democratic autonomy). Through these cooperatives, many women have become economically independent, have engaged in individual capacity development, and are thus breaking female internalizations of patriarchy.

Throughout Northern and Western Kurdistan there is “a system called Joint Leaders and Organizers,” meaning “the head of any office, administration, or military section must include women.” Such organizational layouts are manifest in a number of the councils and committees mentioned throughout this article.

“In addition to this, women have their own armed forces.” Thus, within People’s Protection Units (YPG), there has been the formation of Women’s Protection Units (YPJ). The YPJ, a 7,000 strong military group, have been on the frontlines against ISIS. As might be expected, the emergence of the YPJ has significantly punctured many conceptions of preordained gender roles.

Empowerment of Youth, and Workers Self-Management

WITH DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY, YOUTH councils, both for those under eighteen years of age and for those over have emerged. Like the other councils, the youth councils have say and power in the carrying out of initiatives and projects such as, in the building and modifying of recreational sites and spaces. Besides this, some of the most radical perspectives, with clear articulation and vision, come from the Kurdish youth.

A Kurdish youth remarked to TATORT: “we don’t con-

sider ourselves nationalists. We're socialist internationalists." And another one stated that:

At the moment we're moving into a new phase of the revolution through the construction of communes, collectives and cooperatives. Popular self-organization of the economy has the goal of laying the groundwork for comprehensive change in prevailing social relations... the movement is building village, youth and women's cooperatives... The different levels of self-management let us enter into the process of organizing more easily.

There are varying results with the federating of cooperatives and communes. According to a member of a women's cooperative in Baglar, anarchists in twenty-two communes in Gewer have gone as far as to abolish money as a means of exchange.

Kurds, Turkey, the United States, and the Fight Against ISIS

THE LARGELY LACKLUSTER SUPPORT given by the United States government to the Kurdish line of defense against ISIS should come as no surprise, especially when considering the close ties between the United States and Turkey. Given Turkey's extensive history of repressing the over 20 million Kurds that reside within its borders, and given that presently the Kurds are on the frontlines fighting against ISIS, the deficient response by Turkey to ISIS should not be a shock.

From 2009 to July 2012, over 8,000 people were arrested for alleged membership in the Union of Kurdistan Societies, the KCK, under the Anti-Terror Law. Closing reports have asserted that as many as 10,000 people have been arrested in anti-KCK operations. The incarceration of Kurds is at such scales that one finds examples of thirty-five people pitted to a cell, with people being forced to sleep atop one another. The overcrowding of prisons has come to the point that Turkish built F-type cells, originally intended for solitary confinement, often hold four people at a given time.

Turkey's policy to expand its hydropower base through the building of dams has doubly served as a means to destroy Kurdish culture. As Aysel Dogan, the head of the Alevi Academy for Belief and Culture, stated: "Since the holy places are endangered by the dams, the state sent [a] so-called scientist here who's supposed to provide expert opinion. He says that there are only stones here and no indication that it is a holy place. But these stones are sacred for us."

Yet, many involved in mainstream political currents trumpet their shock at Turkey's and the Obama Administration's hitherto low level response to ISIS. On 22 September, the BBC reported that Turkey closed a number of border

crossings upon the crossing of tens of thousands of Kurdish refugees. This is consistent with Turkey's existing relationship with the Kurds, and so is the United States government's caution in carrying out a policy of bolstering Kurdish defense. Only very recently has the United States supplied arms to Kurdish forces in Kobane. Recent reports even show the Kurds gaining on ISIS. Yet, one wonders how far the Obama Administration is willing to go in supporting Kurdish forces that carry strong anti-state, anti-capitalist tendencies.

Simultaneous to all of this, Turkey allowed the Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga passage to Kobane in Rojava to take part in the fight against ISIS. At first this may come across as a strong policy reversal from Turkey, but amongst the four regions of Kurdistan it has by-far held the best relationship with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq, or what is otherwise known as South Kurdistan. The KRG, led by Massoud Barzani, has historically been in violent tension with the PKK, with Turkey naturally welcoming episodes of violence between the two camps. The KRG has also indicated a level of distrust and disavowal of the activities in Rojava, particularly with the PYD, which maintains a cordial relationship with the PKK.

Conclusions

TO ANY LIBERTARIAN SOCIALIST the developments in Kurdistan over the last decade are strongly encouraging. Democratic confederalism positions itself as a body with transnational capacity. Many within Kurdistan, including Öcalan himself, find it as a means to bring peace and emancipation in the Middle East. Proponents of Democratic Confederalism, as indicated by their apparent openness to cultural diversity, do not simply consider this a solution for the Kurdish population, but for the multiplicity of the groups and ethnicities that constitute the wider region. Öcalan has gone as far as to assert that dual power must be built on a global scale, and that with such, a transnational body competing with the United Nations must be formed.

Not only does democratic autonomy and democratic confederalism constitute an ideological and institutional push away from the state and capitalism, but it is a system that is keen on increasingly moving away from representative political structures to those of autonomous and performative practices. Yet, if the institutions and practices that constitute democratic autonomy and democratic confederalism are to deepen inwardly and expand outwardly, then a critique of all hierarchical social frameworks must be maintained, and the concretization of an anti-hierarchical and non-hierarchical societal outlook and vision can continue to be applied and actualized. ☸

SILENCING

DISSENT:

PROFESSOR STEVEN SALAITA NJ/NY TOUR
HIRED by The University of Illinois as a tenured professor of American Indian Studies **FIRE**d by the University of Illinois for his tweets about Israel's invasion of Gaza **BECAUSE OF** pressure from big money donors to the University of Illinois

MONDAY NOV. 17TH

11:30am-1:00pm
RUTGERS NEWARK

**The Firing of Professor Steven Salaita:
Silencing Dissent**

Robeson Student Center 350 MLKing Jr. Blvd
Newark Students for Justice in Palestine

4:00pm-6:00pm
RUTGERS NEW BRUNSWICK

**Silencing Dissent: The University vs. Academic
Freedom Featuring Steven Salaita**

Women and Gender Studies 162 Ryders Lane, Douglass
Campus Center for Middle East Studies, Rutgers
AAUP-AFT, African, Middle East and South
Asian Languages and Literature, Women and
Gender Studies, Journalism and Rutgers SPJ

7:30pm-9:00pm
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

The Case of Professor Steven Salaita:

Academic Freedom vs. The University

Beit's Auditorium Architecture Building
Princeton Committee on Palestine and the Program in
Near Eastern Studies.

TUESDAY NOV. 18TH

2:30pm-4:00pm
STATEN ISLAND CUNY

**The Firing Of Professor Steven Salaita:
Attack On Academic Freedom**

Building 13, Room 116, 2800 Victory Blvd
Staten Island Students for Justice in Palestine

6:30pm-9:00pm
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

**Inter/Nationalism: Encountering Palestine In
American Studies**

Kimmel 905, 60 Washington Sq. So.
American Studies, Kivorian Center,
NYU Students for Justice in Palestine

WEDNESDAY NOV. 19TH

12:00pm-2:00pm
THE NEW SCHOOL

**Steven Salaita: Scholarship Exiled:
Threats to Academic Freedom & Activism
on University Campuses**

Featuring Dr. Steven Salaita in conversation with
New School faculty and students, Moderated by
Claire Potter, Professor of History, The New School
for Public Engagement

Theresa Lang Community and Student Center
55 West 13th Street
New School Students for Justice in Palestine

THURSDAY NOV. 20TH

6:00pm-8:00pm
BROOKLYN

Silencing Dissent: A Panel Discussion
Place TBA

Overcoming Fear

Negotiating a Position on the Doctoral Students' Council's BDS Resolution

dadland maye

ON 24 OCTOBER 2014, the Graduate Center English Student Association (ESA) overwhelmingly voted to affirm the Doctoral Students' Council's (DSC) Resolution for the Endorsement of Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions. Before the vote, members shared and argued their positions on the ESA's listserv. Some persons suggested it wasn't the ESA's role to step outside the boundaries of research, writing, and teaching to engage "politics." Others members affirmed those views, rejected them, or neutrally questioned them. In the end, it's a widely held view that the ESA emerged as a stronger more relevant body. There is also an expanding sense of pride that someday scholars might locate this history of political-academic participation and analogize the academically activist character of its foundations alongside that of the many student groups of the civil rights era. Cheers erupted after the vote. My cheers were buried in the wetness behind my eyes. But I doubt I cheered for the exact thing many ESA members celebrated.

I thought long about whether I should have stated my position on the ESA listserv or whether I should have just voted at the ESA meeting on 24 October—voting quietly in order to secure a sort of invisibility. To not speak on the listserv, to speak privately with the ballot (because I thought that was how the voting would have been conducted), to speak invisibly is to speak safely and peacefully, I thought. To speak with visibility is an act I construed as dangerous. What are its ramifications? How might ideological passions and poisonous tongues of others clog the auditory channels that need to remain open to keep my speech clearly packaged as I intended to transfer it? I'm professionalizing myself as an academic, so in what ruined bucket will listeners automatically dump my testimony, ideology, and the memories they had held of me, and what they thought they had known of me? How might speaking openly brand my name in an erroneous fashion? Where will disgruntled others place my desires and me? Will these placement sites be suitable for me—for them—for the English program—the GC community—for our goals as young scholars to speak, to hear, to be

understood, to network?

You might understand why the preservation of invisibility became most desirable to me. It seemed easy, safe even. It was harmony. When exchanged, the smiles of my peers would mean the same thing: I still care about you. I, however, decided to declare my position on the ESA's listserv. I didn't arrive at that decision because I was bold. I got there after observing the civility of the discourse and acknowledging the multiplicity of viewpoints and the care with which people researched information and explained it. The article in the previous issue of the *Advocate*, "CUNY and the Boycott" by Gordon Barnes and Conor Tomás Reed also gave me courage to speak. (I learned much from all these speakers; I felt proud to be a part of the actively speaking-and-doing Graduate Center communities.) I got there, too, because I realized there were many persons like myself, holding the same fears. Really, many were fears of consequences, fears of peer rejection, and fears of political retribution in our future careers; all based on decisions we would take that day. As well, I got there with increased conviction that I should allow no grave to hold my body down.

I intended not to make prescriptions for anyone; but I testified—that in my life time, fears had been the many graves that sought me, buried me, psychologically terrorized me, emotionally ruined me; and even my physical body, my skin, and the soul in my voice nearly dead. So many fears grew so huge and did those things to me. But a fire always kept burning in me. Sometimes mightily. Sometimes it was just a glow; but it kept burning—slowly destabilizing fear. Thus, graves should never hold me down forever, I often counseled myself, especially since I come from a tradition in which fear consistently mounted itself when I needed to make important decisions. But luckily, I always found a way to speak. For what remained most important to me was the very thing that troubled Audre Lorde in her dying days when she said what she feared most were the moments in which she was silent. Yes, I feared silence too—much greater than I fear what seemed to be consequences of my speaking visibility. I feared conscience would haunt me, given that there were people engaging in open-speaking labor—speaking so much wisdom in the ESA forum to me, yet I acknowledged history (and them) with silence. I feared my integrity (nobody else's) was in jeopardy because I was compelled to speak but I engaged speech confinement. I was surviving upon the vulnerable backs of others! What's my legacy, my response, to injustices against free speech? I was convinced there is "apartheid" in Palestine. I doubt I need to examine the historical architectures of apartheid, chart my findings, and then raise the question: Are these examples present in Israel and Palestine? Some persons might prefer a euphemism, than saying "apartheid." But how could one deny the

presence of a violent architecture, which human beings must confront, survive daily, or surrender their last breaths to?

Certainly, I acknowledged that the Israeli state has to keep itself safe. I also understood that some Palestinians groups have been hurling bombs into Israel. But I wondered—if I were a Palestinian denied clean drinking water, an adequate food supply, freedom of movement, human contact with the outside world—would I hurl bombs, too, to give a better future to my mother, brother, and babies? Or would I just lie low beneath a bed and pray, hoping that people in the United States and Europe would see how well behaved I was? Let's hope that while I prayed, my babies' body wouldn't deteriorate too fast from starvation. Now, what would Americans call someone like me, if I were that woman, transgender person, or man, or any person in an oppressive situation?

I also understand Israel fears that social equality will give Palestinians too much political and economic power, and Palestinians might then use it to marginalize Israelis (the Jews). So yes, Israel has to protect itself and Israel has been protecting itself. But why are people afraid to conceptualize the framework of that protection strategy? Isn't it clearly apartheid (or whatever you want to name it)? Isn't it violence (or counter-violence?) perpetrated by Israel with the full backing of the United States' political diaspora and war machine? I call it apartheid in order that I can move ahead and ask (but not answer; because I don't know how to)—is apartheid ever a valid, moral, legitimate survival course of action?

Before one rushes to cite South Africa and answer Yes or No, I would caution one to return to an examination, not only of the architectural similarities but differences between South Africa and Palestine. On the one hand, the similarities must account for the brutalities in Palestine today. But then, a critic could argue that the brutalities referenced occurred in a nation-state—South Africa. Analogizing that to the Middle East, they would contend that most of the brutalities occur in Palestine—the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They would conceptualize those territories as not belonging to Israel, and therefore assert that apartheid is an act that affects only persons living within the nation-state. Violence or counter-violence shouldn't be considered apartheid but as attacks on and sabotage to the enemy, they would maintain. Indeed, there is room to debate those blurring lines. But, at the moment, I emphasize and maintain that apartheid exists in both Israel and Palestine. Palestine has not been granted nation status. With the support and force of European and American led world power structures, Israel has been able to use its own national status to shape and sabotage the lives, movements, laws, and bodies, burials, and breathing qualities of Palestinians.

To leap from my unanswered question, I need to acknowledge that critics of Israeli policies are constantly attacked, harassed, and their careers are ruined; but I have also observed that Israeli policies are many times unfairly targeted by ideologues, most of whom fail to decode the differences between Palestinians with a desire for the recognition of nation state sensibilities and those thirsty for religious expansionism. As an atheist activist, I often grow unsettled by religious expansionism that is not sufficiently interrogated. Indeed, the extent of Christianity's historical and contemporary violence continues to receive scrutiny in the United States. But when it comes to Islam, critics are increasingly told to shut up. Those who resist are labeled as Islamophobic, a label that draws no distinction between phobias of religion and nation-culture. No doubt, the post 9-11 paradigm has resulted in discrimination against Arab peoples. But it seems that the format for counteracting discrimination has been to shut down critiques of followers of Islam in the West. Nowhere has this been more blatantly demonstrated than years ago when persons responded to the Danish cartoonist (Kurt Westergaard). Then, many persons ignored the role of art in order to pacify religious sentiments—and the threat of religious violence upon Western people who dared to affirm art's satire. Remember the many Muslim persons slaughtered by other Muslim persons that week? What was that? Responses of national diasporic solidarity or religious solidarity? We will never know enough, because availability of the post 9-11 card is posted on every bus stop in town. "Islamophobia!" it is. It many times springs from a default logic reminiscent of other local and international calling cards: "Sexist," "Racist," "Homophobic."

I went down the road to talk about religion in order to explain that I too was questioning what was my position liberating: Palestinians or Islamic sects? Have we deeply examined the blurring lines between Islam's desire (for some followers) and that of Palestine's national desire? What word should we use to critique followers of Islam: Islamist or Muslims? Are these desires the same? What does Israel think about these differences that we haven't considered sufficiently? What are we responding to here in the West—the right for religious freedom or nation freedom or, is there no dividing line? If I am liberating diversities of Islamic sectarianism, that makes me uncomfortable; because with all my heart, I would love to see the force of Christianity and Judaism crippled. So why would I hope to give more currency to Islam, when returning to memories of diasporic movements like that mobilized around the Danish cartoon?

At the same time, I knew there are people in Palestine who are atheist like myself, but are their numbers significant enough to prevent Palestinians from using a new, non-apartheid state and unsettle Israeli democracy? Yes, I'm deeply

concerned about Israel being allowed to survive in peace, for many reasons, including that Israel is the only place I can go and walk around freely in a dress if I please. Freedom matters to me. However, I cannot imagine freedom if its preservation not only breaks the dreams and bones of an entire group but dialogue about its formation, constitution, and agency is punished in the United States.

I explained to the ESA that I supported the DSC resolution, not fundamentally because it opposes apartheid. Let me emphasize that I cannot take a position on apartheid without knowledge of what will occupy its absence. I framed my position out of a desire to depart fear, to uncloak invisibility. I have long been afraid of criticizing Israel—afraid that what happened to persons like Judith Butler last year when she visited Brooklyn College in support of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and now Steven Salita. Will—when—will that happen to me? I'm afraid of America's political leadership. As I see it, the ESA, DSC, and BDS erect opportunities to break the graves of political and literary discourse in America. I decided to hop on the bandwagon. BDS has stood up to oppose not only the violent culture in the Middle East but to also gather voices that destabilize the transnational machineries that replicate cultures of fear. I have no doubt apartheid exists in the Middle East, but I need more information to learn whether a system that has no apartheid will be safe for Israel.

More than six million Jews were killed during the holocaust. And anti-Semitism, homophobia, and racism are still alive and well in Palestine. The argument that Israel needs to protect itself is a valid one. If one tries to ignore it or mock it, they will not change my position. Could a free Palestine enable another holocaust? This, I think, is a valid question. But if that research has already been done, I would question its depth, because enough political and academic currency have not been traditionally given to enough persons who can staunchly reject such an argument. In other words, I'm saying that I don't have access to enough information that I trust to examine the merits of Israel's explanation that justifies what I consider to be apartheid.

However, for such a long time, I needed that information, but the political structure continues to hunt people who try to objectively produce it. Hence, my support for the ESA and DSC resolution was one designed to aid the disruption of the safe sites from which political establishments have censored free speech, particularly in the United States. Will this lead to the dismantling of apartheid in Palestine? I don't know. But what I know is that my declared stake in the ESA/DSC/BDS resolutions holds promise that I will fear less in the future when I want to speak my mind about Israeli violence or Palestinian violence or Christianity's violence or Islam's violence. 🕊

The Adjunct Wage Gap and the War for the Soul of a Union

Job Security Is Good but It's Time the PSC Took Real Action on Adjunct Parity

james d. hoff

ON MONDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER, close to 1,000 PSC-CUNY members, including many contingent faculty carrying signs demanding \$7,000 per course, rallied in front of the CUNY Board of Trustees meeting at Baruch College. Like so many union members before them they came together to stand in solidarity with one another and demand fair wages for fair work. Adjunct and HEO, assistant professor and department chair, they marched side by side to fight for a fair contract for all. But if the PSC gets what it's asking for, this next contract will be anything but fair for adjuncts.

The problem is that the current union contract demands, as articulated by the union leadership, once again include nothing meant to address the growing wage gap between contingent and full time faculty, a moral cancer that has already created a vast underclass of CUNY employees and which, left unaddressed, threatens to split the union and the university in half.

Even as the PSC has finally mounted a public campaign of protests and marches to pressure CUNY to put an economic offer on the table, they have been working behind the scenes and within the union to rally the membership around the leadership's key contract demands for faculty: *across the board wage increases, courseload reductions for full timers, and job security for adjuncts*. Though fighting for these demands is important, and though every member of the union deserves to see real wage increases and gains in this next contract, the structural issues of adjunct inequality and the huge wage gap between adjuncts and full time faculty once

again seem to be either on the back burner or not on the agenda at all. Without a clear plan to dramatically increase adjunct wages, the new contract will almost certainly widen the already huge rift between what an adjunct and a full time faculty member earn for the same work.

The reason for this lies partly in the union leadership's continued insistence that any percentage increase in wages be equally shared, across the board, by all union members. On the surface this approach seems reasonable, and in fact it is a good idea for workers who are performing the same job for more or less the same wages, or for workers in the same shop performing different jobs. But when you already have employees performing essentially the same job for vastly different sums of money, as you do between full-timers and adjuncts at CUNY, across the board raises only increase the disparity between the haves and the have nots, especially when there is little to no chance for workers to advance from one title to another. Although it sounds just, across the board raises actually increase the wage gap and—because such a gap makes using contingent faculty even cheaper relative to more expensive full timers—contributes to the further abuse and exploitation of contingent faculty.

To get a better picture of how this works, let's compare two new CUNY hires. One is an Assistant Professor at Brooklyn College, and the other is an adjunct lecturer at that same college. The new full time assistant professor, making a starting salary of just \$65,000 for a course-load of seven classes per year, would be earning approximately \$9,285 for each course taught. The new adjunct making only about \$3,000 per course. Of course, this number does not take

into account the significant amount of service and research required of an assistant professor at a senior college, so let's assume that only two-thirds or about 66 percent of this professor's wages are going towards their teaching commitment. Even with such a generous amount of time given over to service and research, this professor would still be earning about \$6,128 for each course taught. That's a wage gap of \$3,128 per class. Now, imagine that the PSC miraculously manages to negotiate an across the board wage increase of 10 percent for the four years of the expired contract. The assistant professor would now be making \$71,500 per year. At two-thirds salary, divided by seven classes, this professor would now be receiving a compensation of \$6,741 per course (only \$259 less than the current demand of \$7,000 per course being pushed for by many CUNY adjuncts). Meanwhile, under this new contract the adjunct would see their wages increase by a paltry \$300 per course. This means that the assistant professor would then be earning \$3,441 more per course than the adjunct—an increase in the wage gap of \$313. Now imagine twenty years of these kinds of unequal raises and you can see why adjuncts make so much less per class than other faculty members and why they feel so cheated. By focusing on across the board wage increases, the union and the CUNY administration have allowed adjunct compensation to erode to almost nothing. It is important to note here that these calculations, however, do not even take into consideration the 24 credits of release time and the vastly superior benefits and pension plans available to new assistant professors.

More scandalous, however, is the fact that this wage gap increases even more the longer a contingent faculty member remains at the university due in large part to the fact that full timers earn more raises more frequently than contingent faculty. Though the individual wages of an adjunct may rise over time, thanks to the occasional step increase or the bump they might receive for earning a Ph.D., this is nothing compared the gains earned by their full-time colleagues. Based on the current expired contract, adjunct lecturers cap out after only four steps at a rate that is less than 25% more than the starting wage. Assistant professors, on the other hand, can earn sixteen steps, capping out at a rate that is almost 100% more than the lowest starting salary. And a similar disparity exists between contingents and full-time lecturers, who level off after sixteen steps at a rate that is more than 75% the lowest step. At this rate, an adjunct with five or six years of experience could be earning as little as \$3,800 per course, while a full timer with the same amount of experience would be receiving a salary above \$80,000. At two-thirds wage, that's \$7,542 per course, or a wage gap of \$3,742.

But across the board raises and step increases are not the only things contributing to this growing wage gap. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that, despite frequent denunciations of the exploitation of contingent faculty, the union leadership has continually refused to directly address the problem of adjunct parity, and has instead pursued a policy of fighting for specific gains for each of the different faculty groups it represents. This has too frequently meant



winning big economic gains, such as courseload reductions and paid maternity leave, that do not apply to contingent faculty. The result is that these gains have increased the per-class compensation for full-timers, while doing nothing to increase the wages of contingent faculty. And unfortunately, it looks very likely that the next contract will be more of the same. If the union manages to win a course reduction for full timers (and I sincerely hope they do) without some kind of equal reduction in workload or significant increase in wages for adjuncts, the wage gap will only increase. Winning such gains on the backs of the most vulnerable union members is the opposite of solidarity. Though it seems clear that the union is taking the issue of adjunct job security seriously, such non-economic gains are cold comfort for those adjuncts struggling to survive on the paltry wages currently on offer from CUNY.

Across the nation, adjuncts are organizing and forming their own unions. At CUNY, the received wisdom, at least for the last decade or so since the New Caucus took power, has been that adjuncts fare better when they fight alongside full-timers and other professional staff, and any talk of forming a separate union has been quickly shut down. However, several years of more or less stagnant wages and increasing inequality have stretched such easy platitudes to their limit. Telling adjuncts to come out to fight alongside their union increasingly feels like asking the residents of favelas to come help build the houses of the rich because such mansions will improve the view.

Though the New Caucus talks a good talk when it comes

to adjuncts, the fact is there has been little to no actual movement toward greater parity between adjuncts and full timers. Indeed, there seems to be little reason anymore for adjuncts to continue to support a union which so brazenly and so consistently neglects to address the deep inequality and exploitation of the adjunct labor system. Whether full time or part time, HEO or research associate, such exploitation affects us all, for the longer we allow our adjunct brothers and sisters to be treated like second class citizens, the longer we turn a blind eye to their continued exploitation, and the weaker we are as a union.

When I started adjuncting at CUNY thirteen years ago, I was shocked by how little anyone seemed to care about me or my working conditions. Since then, thanks in large part to the hard work of CUNY's small but dedicated cadres of adjunct activists, there has been a real change in consciousness around the issue of adjunct exploitation. Nonetheless, this change in consciousness has not translated into any real change in the system of exploitation that CUNY runs on. Now that I am an assistant professor, the difference in my salary, my working conditions, and in the amount of respect and support I receive is startling. Everyone who teaches at CUNY deserves to receive the same compensation and the same support and respect. This will only happen when the full time members of the union come together to say unequivocally that they will not accept another contract that increases inequality or a single dollar more from CUNY until the university commits to treating all of its faculty fairly and equally. Ⓐ



Colonizing City College

Remembering the Morales/Shakur Center One Year Later

russell weiss-irwin

BEING AT CITY COLLEGE this semester has been different than in the five I have spent here before. Between classes, I find myself wandering around, going to the library, an empty classroom, or just heading home. Wherever I go, if I see a friend, it's a pleasant surprise. I don't have a place to hang out, and neither do my friends.

For the first two years that I was at CCNY, I always knew where to find people: the Center. The Guillermo Morales/ Assata Shakur Community and Student Center, that is. From the first orientation session I went to, before I even started at City College, I was drawn to the huge black fist painted on a red door, prominently placed on a corner on the third floor of the monumental North Academic Building or NAC."

In the Center, I found a community, which existed long before I came to City College, that also opened up to allow me to be part of building new parts of that space. The first time I went in the Center, there was a flurry of activity: people were joking and arguing, chicken over rice sat in Sty-

rofoam containers on plastic folding tables and someone was sprawled out across a couch. The room itself was an explosion of color: there was a Pan-African flag hanging from the wall, flyers and posters of all kinds on tables and benches, pictures of political prisoners held all over the United States, and old covers of the *Messenger*, which at one time was published out of the Center. Above it all was a bold banner stretching across the edge of the ceiling, a reminder in huge, red block letters: This place was won thru struggle.

I got to be familiar with the Center that way, full of people, full of life, everyone relaxed and talking and eating and getting to know each other. I got to be familiar with other ways that the Center could be, too. The Center at 8am, with just myself and another person, drinking coffee and doing homework. The Center with a meeting going on. It could be the meeting of a neighborhood credit union that I accidentally walked in on, while I went to grab my bag, or a meeting I was participating in, with thirty people debating what to do about the war criminal David Petraeus being hired to teach



at CUNY, or even a meeting I was facilitating, talking about how to organize a walk-out at CCNY to protest tuition hikes.

But maybe my favorite face of the Center was people passing through and talking. The fist on the door intrigued them. Like me, they thought that maybe this place would have what they needed. People came in with questions, like students wondering how to deal with bureaucracy or wanting to sell a textbook. Other times people came with a story that needed to be heard. There were a group of us who were always in the Center, and we learned how to answer people's questions and listen to their stories.

The Center had its own story as well. Once my mother came to visit campus to see what my college was like, and I took her to the Center. "It's so nice that the school gave you all a space like this," I remember her saying. But the school never gave it to us. In 1989, major tuition hikes were proposed for CUNY, and so students took over the entire main campus building at City College, the NAC. When we won, and Governor Pataki dropped the idea of a tuition hike, we returned the building to the administration, but kept the Center. The students then named it for Assata Shakur and Guillermo Morales, who both graduated from City College and were heroes for working class and oppressed people.

Assata, an amazing writer and activist, was shot by police and then accused of shooting them, put in prison for years, she eventually escaped, finding safety only in exile from her native land, in Cuba. Guillermo Morales was part of the struggle for open admissions at CUNY, the policy which finally integrated our school racially in 1969, and then was part of the fight for Puerto Rican independence. He was ac-

cused of a bombing in Manhattan and had to seek asylum in Cuba as well.

In a dark irony, the Center named for those exiles is now exiled itself. In the wee hours on 20 October 2013, the Center was violently seized by the Administration, which used the laughable excuse that they urgently needed to create a new "career center." That's why there's nowhere for me to go on campus. The last space that was controlled by students and the community, that we had the keys to, that was autonomous, is lost and taken. It makes it a lot harder to organize on campus. We struggle to get space to hold meetings, to keep things, to hang out, to find each other, to relax and let our guard down against the constant harassment from Campus Security.

Fundamentally, a lot of our struggles at City College are about space. Student space for clubs has been taken and reduced and restricted for decades, so there is practically no space that belongs to student organizations, even those that don't directly challenge the Administration. Students are pushed out of the library when it closes at 11pm, and we have no space to study late at night. We are fighting for a Gender Resource Center on campus, because we need a space that can be a refuge from the rape culture that is ever present at City College. Now, the Administration is taking away library spaces for science students and prayer space for Muslim students. Every time they take space from us, they create more space for the privatization of the school: career centers to focus the university on serving the needs of employers, not students, not communities; more space for security to expand the methods they utilize to dominate, control, and exact violence against us; or more space for administrative offices.

Pushing people violently out of their spaces in order to control more space and use it more effectively for profit is gentrification and it is colonialism. At a public meeting a month after the taking of the Center, Administration officials claimed that they had taken the Center because it had been disorderly, and they would be happy to create an "Urban Center" on campus so that the activities that had happened in the Center could go on. This was a lie, but the logic of the proposal was clear then. As a student pointed out in that very moment, colonizers always say that they will help civilize and bring order to the messy ways of the people they are conquering. And they do so with violence.

A year later, City College students and Harlem community residents are fighting the re-colonization of our spaces, on campus and off. We are on the defensive, as more and more of New York City and City College is gentrified and seized. In Puerto Rico, the homeland of Guillermo Morales, the people still struggle for independence. We have lost many battles, but we believe we will win the war. Ⓐ



The Means Justify the Ends

An Argument for a Process–Centric Decision Paradigm

maryam ghaffari saadat

HOW SHOULD WE EVALUATE a decision? Should we judge it solely by its outcome or should we account for the soundness of the process leading to the outcome? These are important questions in normative ethics which apply to our daily lives, both as individuals and as communities. As individuals, we decide whether or not to tell a so-called ‘white lie’ to spare someone from feeling hurt by the truth, we may take irrational risks in the hope of reaping substantial rewards, we might deviate from our values to fit in and be considered a member of a community. As a community, we may suppress individual freedom to achieve collective harmony, or sacrifice social goods in pursuit of efficiency or more individual freedom. We know that every alternative has pros and cons, but if the means used for achieving a goal violate certain fundamental principles (such as human dignity and fairness), is the outcome, whatever it may be, worth the cost? In other words, do the ends justify the means?

One may argue that the answer depends on the particular context, and a simple cost-and-benefit analysis could clarify whether the pursuit of a goal is worth the costs entailed by the chosen methods. This could be a valid proposition if we assume that human beings are perfectly rational and objective in their assessments. However, from a psychological perspective, focusing solely on the ends promotes narrow-mindedness and an instrumental view of other persons and communities. Furthermore, believing that the ends justify the means makes it too easy to fool ourselves and others into believing that an inappropriate course of action is warranted given the circumstances, and in fact we may do so subconsciously if not intentionally.

In favour of focusing solely on ends, one might also ask whether it is not true that any method could be misused. Of course, but some methods are designed to help us correct our cognitive biases and arrive at decisions which are relatively well-rounded. One such method is to commit to a set of basic principles in advance and hold on to them regardless of the circumstances. This approach helps us refrain from glorifying our intended goals to rationalize our actions.

For instance, if we commit to being honest, then in a situation where we have a choice between telling a ‘white lie’ and telling the truth, we tell the truth or find a way to omit saying anything about the matter. Refraining from telling a lie despite complicated situations not only strengthens one’s character and provides the self-discipline required for truly autonomous behaviour, but also elicits respect and reciprocity on the parts of those who value honesty and self-control. After all, that is how norms are initiated and sustained in social contexts: commitment by a few individuals and replication by others. Without proper norms, our societies will disintegrate into less coherent communities until we are reduced to a collection of uncivilised individuals fighting for resources without any inhibitions. If we disregard the consequences of our choice of means, we essentially discount the importance of valuable principles and norms which constitute the foundation of societies.

Due to the crucial role of norms as infrastructures of our societies, I suggest that the means, which have to do with norms and have a long-term effect on the entire population, are more important than particular ends which are often in the short-term interest of a subgroup of the population. In other words, if appropriate means are employed, even if the goals are not achieved, the society as a whole will be better off. But if the crucial norms are abolished, then the infrastructure is harmed. Thus, everybody will be worse off in long-term and it will take a substantial amount of time and collective effort to repair the damage and re-establish those norms.

Take, for instance, the too-big-to-fail bailout in which certain financial institutions were considered too important for the functionality of the economy to fail, and consequently were supported by the national government in the financial crisis of 2008. In order to manage the severity of economic crisis, the government essentially decided to transfer the cost of unreasonable risks taken by those financial institutions from the risk takers to the public. The means was justified by the end of saving the economy from an even worse decline. However, if the decision makers who take unreasonable risks do not have to bear the consequences

of their failure, what would prevent them from taking even bigger risks at the expense of the public? Given that large firms have more influence over the conditions of the economy, does it not jeopardise the stability of the economy to give such firms the right to make mistakes without bearing the consequences? Is it not unfair that sufficiently large firms are not required to take risk management as seriously as smaller firms? Does this not provide an unfair advantage for firms that are already prominent? Clearly, this quick fix has not addressed the underlying problem, and it has changed the norms governing the economy in favour of institutions recognised to be too big to fail.

The current governmental-economic system encouraged the very risk-seeking behaviour that led to the crisis, but also increased the disparity between the affluent and the non-affluent by allowing the former to outsource their accountability to the latter. These long-term effects should be taken into account by carefully considering the soundness of the policies in the long-term and not focusing solely on the short-term survival of the economy at the expense of the fairness of competition and other social goods.

Another contemporary example of allegedly worthy ends being used as justification for inappropriate means is the privatisation movement, in which the end is often the promotion of efficiency. An instance is the emergence of the for-profit prisons, developed as complements or alternatives to state-run prisons in pursuit of efficiency. These private prisons are run by third-party companies contracted by a governmental agency and are given a fee per prisoner accommodated by their facilities. Aside from the moral repugnance of the shift of the primary focus of running correctional facilities to profit-making, many important issues have arisen from this experiment in privatisation of governmental functions. A few such issues are as follows:


1. Judicial corruption: private prisons are found to seek agreements with judges to acquire, in large numbers, low-risk prisoners, and are a major contributor to increased mass incarcerations. In an extreme case of corruption, a private prison company which runs juvenile facilities was found guilty of paying two judges to send a number of children to their facilities for minor crimes such as trespassing in vacant buildings and stealing DVDs.

2. Inadequate staff training: evidence shows that lower investment in for-profit prisons for staff training may lead to increases in the incidents of escape and violence (both among prisoners and between guards and prisoners).
3. Slave labour: in order to increase their profit margin, private prisons are found to exploit their inmates as slave labourers. These are just a few of the negative consequences of privatising an important governmental role. To make matters worse, studies have shown that private prisons are not significantly, or at all, more efficient than state-run prisons. Furthermore, the slight advantage in efficiency, if any, results from admitting only low-risk inmates, investing less in security guards, and making profit by exploiting the inmates as a source of slave labour. Similar to the bailout example, the long-term and broad negative consequences of privatisation of prisons have been disregarded in favour of an end which not only has not been materialised, but also is far less important compared to the mentioned effects on norms governing the judicial system and the society as a whole.

In conclusion, the evidence shows that if we operate under the assumption that the ends justify the means, then we are likely to underestimate, or altogether disregard, the long-term and large-scale impacts of the chosen means. I submit that the emphasis should be on the means, instead of the ends. The supporting argument presented in this article was based on two main grounds:

1. due to our cognitive biases, focusing on decision processes (i.e., the means) leads to more well-rounded decisions rather than focusing merely on outcomes (i.e., the ends); and
2. the means influence the norms which are the infrastructures of our societies, affect everybody, and are expensive to re-establish, whereas the ends often favour certain subgroups of the whole population and should not take precedence over the norms.

Furthermore, the ends are essentially evaluated based on snap-shots of an unravelling process, whereas the chosen means determine the direction in which the society is headed. Therefore, one could say the means justify the ends, not the other way around. ☹



THE GRADUATE CENTER WILL BE CLOSED
BOTH THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, 27-28 NOVEMBER 2014

On Luck

The Link Between Agency and Culpability

eric e. bayruns

LUCK PERVADES EVERY FACET of our lives. Luck determines things such as who one's parents are, where one grows up and what opportunities one can take advantage of. We, human beings, tend to not take luck into account when accounting for both human accomplishments and failings. We seem to have a grandiose sense of what individuals are able to accomplish. If we better understand luck's role in our constitution as human beings then this grandiose sense of human agency must be revised.

By the term luck I mean the everyday notion of chance or randomness. Luck influences how we are constituted in many ways: the parents one has is due to luck, as is the socio-economic status one initially has, the school one goes to, or the abilities one has. The fact that individuals have no influence over who their parents are is not trivial. We just end up with certain parents. One's life outcomes are incredibly affected by this. If parents read to their child in a certain way and with a certain frequency then their child will likely have better reading comprehension. That is, the child will have better outcomes as opposed to parents who read less to their child, or didn't read to them at all. Of course there are outliers. There are children whose parents did not read to them a lot yet they still had good reading comprehension outcomes. Despite these outliers, I take it as uncontroversial that certain parental activities have beneficial effects on their children. Thus, who your parents are can affect how you are constituted later in life.

Luck affects one's constitution in innumerable ways. Whether one has moral exemplars to model oneself on can affect one's moral character. If someone does not show an adolescent that certain behaviors are wrong then it is not obvious that the adolescent will figure it out. At least, the adolescent might not develop the right moral sentiments, reactions to, or feelings to what their particular society deems right or wrong. Thus, luck seems to affect whether one's moral judgments are in line with what society deems morally right or morally wrong.

Most people tend to have a grandiose sense of agency. Conservatives, for example, attribute CEOs with this sense

of agency. They credit people like Michael Bloomberg with such agency. That is, they think Bloomberg is in a morally laudable for creating his company. They believe that he is the unique origin of his success. If one watches any biography of Bloomberg, or most successful entrepreneurs, then one will notice that there is a lot of heralding of particular actions, attributed solely to the entrepreneur, which had particular effects. These particular actions are attributed solely to Bloomberg. They are in a sense, hero narratives of great individuals. That said, if we take luck into account, there are innumerable things that factor into all of Bloomberg's particular actions which lead to his success. We can tell a causal story of how luck played a role in Bloomberg's constitution being as it is. If we can tell this story then it is not clear that Bloomberg is a unique origin point of his success. If Bloomberg had been born to other parents, had he grown up in a different city, or had he gone to different schools then it is unlikely that would have succeeded the way he has. We, as a society, tend to herald great individuals. If we take into account constitutive luck then I think we should extol these individuals less. Rather, we should ask ourselves what are the causal factors that led to this success, so that we can replicate these causal factors in a more egalitarian way.

It is not my aim to engage in a project of deflating successful individuals' accomplishments. The same reasoning can be applied to individuals that society does not tend to commend: it is amenable to deflate the sense in which we hold, say, criminals responsible. Human beings tend to react to morally abhorrent behavior with a response of "how could someone do such a thing" or with general disgust. We react to such behavior with an immediate attribution of blame, tending to view individuals who commit morally wrong acts as responsible. We hold them responsible in very robust way. By 'robust' I mean we hold people culpable for intending to commit immoral acts.

Intentions play a large role in moral assessment. For instance, when we hold someone responsible for murder, the murderer's intention is not morally insignificant. Law, in the United States, recognizes the difference between intending to kill and not intending to kill. If one intentionally kills an-

other person, they will receive a harsher sentence than those who did not intend to kill. The difference in punishment is, in part, due to our grandiose notion of agency.

Intentions are physical things. That is, intentions are mental states instantiated in the brain via neuronal activity. If intentions are physical things then they can be affected by things one has experienced in one's life. So, the kind of intentions one has are due to innumerable kinds of influence that are beyond one's control. Examples of this influence are one's parents, one's school, whether one had a support network of family and friends, and so on. Moreover, when I reflect on my own intentions it is not obvious that I have a great deal of influence, if any, over them. At the very least, it seems that the character, tenor or valence of our intentions are influenced by things that we cannot control. That is, our intentions are constituted in large part due to luck.

Therefore, it seems wrong to hold people responsible in a robust way for their intentions. That said, I am not claiming that we should not hold people morally accountable. Rather, I suggest that we should revise our notion of culpability. We should revise it to a less robust notion.

This grandiose sense of agency is one that seems to cause us to attribute excess agency to both individuals who we commend for success and individuals who we censure for immoral behavior. We attribute these agents with more morally significant influence over their actions than they have. If we take into account constitutive luck then we must revise our notion of agency. We should revise it from a grandiose notion to a more dialed down notion. Doing this might have the effect of ameliorating immoral acts. If we understand the causal story of immoral acts then we might have more success in preventing them. 🌀

MIND GAMES ANSWERS

Check out the puzzle column on our Back Page.

Puzzle #3 Solution

► SEAT: note that AT is already in alphabetical order. And since E comes after A in our list of letters, SE** comes immediately after SA** words. There are 2 ways of completing a word of the form SA**, so the rank of SEAT should be $6+6+2+1=15$.

► TEAS: all words of the form A**, E**, and S** come before words of the form T*** (that is $6+6+6=18$ words). Also, words of the form TA** come before words of the form TE** (there are 2 possibilities for TA**). Since AS is already in alphabetical order, the rank should be $18+2+1=21$.

Puzzle #2 Solution

WE CAN FORMULATE THE following equations, where k represents Kate's credits, l represents Lily's credits, and x is the amount we are looking for:

$$k - l = 3 \times (1 + 1)$$

$$3 \times (k - x) = 1 + x$$

From the first equation we can derive: $k = 7 \times l$

Substituting k with 7l in the second equation, we can get the following:

$$3 \times (7l - x) = 1 + x$$

$$20l = 4x$$

$$x = 5l$$

Thus the answer is 5.

words of the form E** (where each star can be replaced with one of A, S, and T), and so on. It is helpful to see how many words of the form A** there are. The first star can be replaced with one of E, S, and T. So there are 3 possibilities. Once we replace the first star with a letter, we have two letters left to replace the remaining stars with. So we have two possible ways of replacing the second star with a letter. Finally, the remaining letter replaces the last star and we will have a full word. So overall we have $3 \times 2 \times 1 = 6$ possible ways of constructing a word of the form A**. This is also the case for words of the form E**, and so on. With this in mind, the ranks can be calculated as follows:

► EAST: all words of the form A** come before this, and since AST is already in alphabetical order, this word comes immediately after the A** words. So the rank is $6+1=7$.

► EATS: this one only swaps T and S in EAST, and thus the rank is $7+1=8$.

► SAT: all words of the forms A** and E** come before this (that is $6+6=12$ words). Immediately after the E** words, we have SAT with rank of 13. By swapping the last two letters, we get SAT, so the rank is $13+1=14$.

Puzzle #1 Solution

ONE CAN HAVE 3 quarters, 4 dimes, and 4 pennies amounting to \$1.19 and still not have exact change for \$1 (any combination of these coins either falls short of or exceeds \$1).

But if we have at least \$1.20 (that is 120 cents), then we can certainly find a combination of coins that amounts to exactly \$1. We can verify this result by trying to add one more coin of each type to 3 quarters, 4 dimes, and 4 pennies and see that in each case we can put together a subset of the coins evaluating to exactly \$1.

► If we add one quarter, the subset of 4 quarters amounts to \$1.

► If we add one dime, the subset of 2 quarters + 5 dimes amounts to \$1.

► If we add one five cent coin, the subset of 3 quarters, 2 dimes, and a five cent coin amounts to \$1.

► If we add one penny, the subset of 3 quarters, 2 dimes, and five pennies amounts to \$1.

Therefore the answer is c = 120.

Puzzle #2 Solution

THE ANAGRAMS ARE EAST, EATS, SAT, SEAT, and TEAS. For computing the ranks, note that all the words with the general form A** (where each star can be replaced with one of E, S, and T) come first, followed by

The Planet Family Oddball

The Debate over Pluto's Planetary Status

greg olmschenk

TWO CENTURIES AGO, A new world was discovered orbiting the Sun. Though it was far smaller than all the previously known planets, the object was given a planetary symbol and added to the lists and tables of planets in the astronomy books. Yet soon, siblings of this new planet began to emerge from the darkness of space. They all orbited the Sun in the same general area, not with separately defined orbits like the rest of the planets. They were all made of the same kinds of material. Though the others were smaller than the new “planet”, all the new objects had far more in common with each other than any of them had in common with any of the original planets. After further contemplation, it was decided that these new objects, including the one originally labeled a planet, should be understood as a class of their own. So it was that the planet Ceres was removed from the list of planets, a place it had held for half a century, to take up instead its role as the largest asteroid.

The story of Ceres should sound familiar as it is echoed in almost every way possible by the story of Pluto. The first of a new breed of objects was found, it was labeled as a planet, more siblings of the object were found, and a new definition was given to classify the family. The disparity between the two tales is in the reaction of the public. People were—and still are—outraged at Pluto's loss of planetary status. However, most of the people who want to reinstate Pluto's “planethood” do not also want to elevate Ceres or similar objects to the category of planets. Pluto's current position, its past, and its likely future, along with people's attitude towards it, requires a bit of unpacking.

First off, why do people care so much about conserving Pluto's classification at all? In other fields of science, the general public usually doesn't care in the least how things are classified. Yet, there's something special about Pluto that captures the hearts and minds of people everywhere. It starts young. From an early age, people were taught that there are nine planets. Though it has nothing to do with science, many early science classes have children memorize mnemonics about the planets. The teachers then proceed to test the students on their ability to recite exactly what they were

told. This gives the illusion that there's something scientific and special about the enumeration of planets, rather than understanding their similarities, differences, and what we can learn from them. Despite how meaningless this rote memorization is, as long as adults test children on it, the children must assume that it's important.

Next, in the United States, Pluto has particular influence. The discoverer, Clyde Tombaugh, had a classic all-American story. He grew up working on his family's farm in Illinois where he developed a passion for astronomy. Due to a hail storm ruining his family's crops, he was unable to attend college. Despite his lack of formal education, Tombaugh set about teaching himself the necessary mathematics to study the universe and he built his own telescopes out of random pieces of farm equipment whenever he could. Managing to secure a job at the Lowell observatory, he dedicated himself to finding the ninth planet that was predicted to exist beyond Neptune. His tireless effort paid off with the discovery of Pluto and yet, throughout his fame, Tombaugh remained humble. It's easy to see how people can be touched by such a story.

In people's love of Pluto, perhaps the greatest impact of all comes from a simple cartoon character. Pluto, the Disney dog, was created within months of the discovery of the new planet. Kids learn the planets long before the

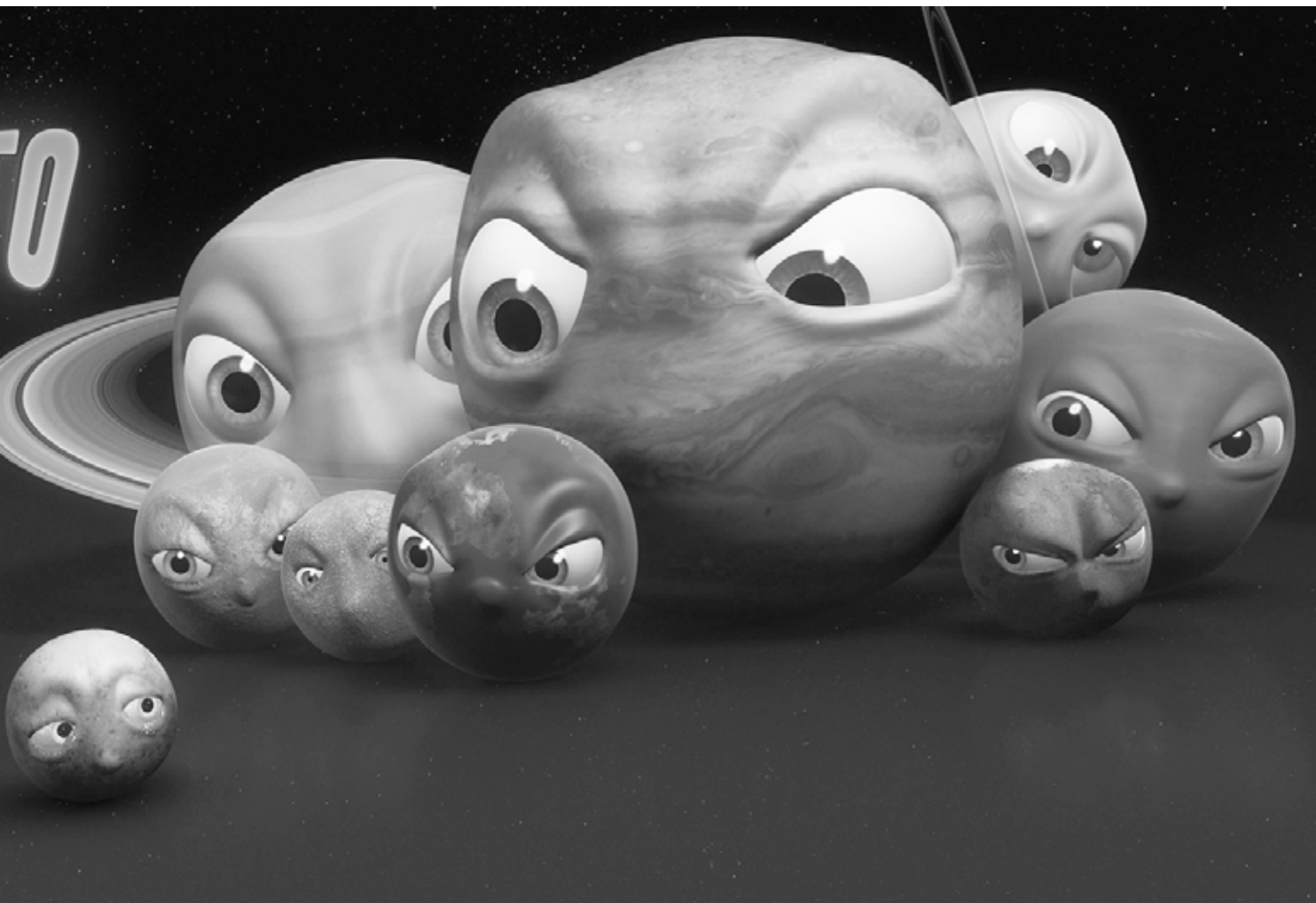


Roman gods whose names are attributed to them. Among them, Pluto is the only name they've heard elsewhere. For them, the name comes as a reminder of their favorite TV shows. This creates a permanent link between the trans-Neptunian object and the hearts of children everywhere. Any assault on Pluto now becomes an assault on the childhood memories of many generations. With all these factors, it's no wonder that Pluto consistently tops the list of the public's favorite planet, and millions of people feel the need to defend the tiny world which seems to be helpless and under attack.

So why then did the International Astronomical Union decide to reclassify Pluto? Why didn't they just leave the solar system alone? To get a better sense of the reasoning, we need to consider the meaning of the word "planet" up until now. In the original Greek, the word simply meant "wanderer". In the sky, there were those "fixed" stars which all held the same relative position to each other, and those few "wanderers" that slowly moved against these background stars. This original list of planets included the Sun, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—and the seven days of the week are still named after various gods attributed to these planets. Then Copernicus came along

showing that the Sun was at the center of the solar system rather than the Earth. Both the Sun and the Moon lost their planet status and now Earth was added to the roster. A couple hundred years later, Uranus was discovered. Then came Ceres' bout of "planethood" and Neptune after that. So far, no formal definition of a planet was ever given. Other than the slight complication of the asteroids, there was never a need for a definition. There were planets, moons, asteroids, and comets. None of these seemed enough like another to blur the lines between them.

When Pluto was found, it was thought to act extremely differently compared to the other planets. Still, it had to be put somewhere. With nothing else like it, Pluto was lumped in with the rest of the planets. Yet, it is worthwhile to note just how different Pluto is. While all the planets have properties that make them unique to one another, Pluto's list may be longer than all the other planets' lists combined. Most people know it's the smallest planet—11% the volume of Mercury—but fewer know that its relative mass is even less—4% the mass of Mercury. This is largely because more than half of Pluto's volume is ice, which is another oddity. If Pluto had the orbit of Halley's Comet, its ice would melt and form a comet tail which would streak across our sky.



Pluto's moon, Charon, is so large relative to Pluto that both bodies orbit a center of gravity outside of Pluto, a situation that no other planet-moon system has. The Earth has tidally locked its moon, so that the moon always shows Earth the same side of its surface. The moon is trying to tidally lock the Earth as well—slowly making our days slightly longer—but the moon is small enough relative to Earth that it won't complete this task during the lifetime of the Sun. On the other hand, Charon has already tidally locked Pluto. Again, no other planet has had a moon do this. The inclination of Pluto's orbit is more than twice that of any other planet. Pluto also has the most elliptical orbit. In fact, it's so elliptical that it crosses the orbit of Neptune, meaning that as Pluto orbits it changes from the ninth planet to the eighth planet and back again. This crossing leads to Neptune's gravity controlling Pluto's orbit. Neptune forces Pluto to orbit the Sun twice for every three times Neptune does. No other planet's orbit is controlled by another. The only major property Pluto actually has in *common* with the rest of the planets is that it's round. Today, a slew of objects like Pluto have been found. Eris, Makemake, Sedna, Haumea, and many others have been found which share most, if not all, of Pluto's quirks. It has become extremely clear that these newly discovered objects are in Pluto's the immediate family, where the other planets are at best very distant cousins.

It turns out, most of the scientific community doesn't care whether or not Pluto specifically is a planet. Their goal is not to belittle or attack Pluto. Instead, what they care about is having a consistent and useful definition of the word "planet"—it's worthless to have a word that is just handed out arbitrarily. They voted, and the definition they landed on had three requirements. First, a planet has to be the primary object in the orbit—it can't be a moon of another object. Second, it needs to have enough gravity to be round. Third, it needs to have cleared its orbit of debris. The only requirement Pluto doesn't meet is the last one. Unfortunately, if we drop that last requirement we have to add an additional 5 planets to the list immediately—including Eris and Ceres—and will certainly need to add more in the future.

The next option to give Pluto back its status would be an arbitrary size requirement. Eris is thought to be a few miles smaller than Pluto. Though it's very likely we will eventually

find another object like Pluto that's larger than it, we could for the time being add only Pluto to the planet roster again by making a size requirement just below Pluto's size. However, this definition would have little meaning. If we had a close copy of Pluto that was just slightly smaller, we would group this new object differently than the original Pluto even though they are the same in every important aspect. Every other option conceivable has the same problems. Either the definition changes the list of planets or the word "planet" becomes a meaningless term that's only used when forcing children to memorize an arbitrary list.

On the other side, the best argument for keeping Pluto a planet is that the arguments against it being a planet are

themselves problematic. Pluto is clearly more similar to the other objects in the Kuiper belt than it is to any of the planets. However, the terrestrial planets—the rocky, solid ones—are all more like each other than any of them are to the gas giants. Among the astronomical community, when you start discussing planets you immediately have to specify whether you're talking about terrestrial planets or gas giant planets because these two categories are so distinct. Proponents of Pluto's "planethood" point to the seemingly arbitrary joining of these two groups into the planets and ask why Pluto's family can't be added

to the planet types as well.

In all reality, the solar system is turning out to be much more intricate than anyone had ever predicted. The word "planet" is far too broad and unspecific to recognize the true diversity of objects we've discovered. Instead, a more valuable approach would categorize the solar system into families of objects, such as the terrestrials, the asteroids, the gas giants, the Kuiper belt, and the Oort cloud, foregoing the use of "planet" all together. Most astronomy classes, books, and museums already set these groups apart in this way in their accounting of the solar system—with the exception of still tacking the word "planet" on after "terrestrial" and "gas giant". Unfortunately, most of the general public disapproves of abandoning "planet" even more than they do just leaving Pluto off that list.

In the end, whatever definition we give Pluto, it doesn't change what it is. More than half of its volume will be ice even if we call it a planet. It will still be just as large even as a Kuiper belt object. No matter how much you refuse to call it a comet, if it were where Earth is, the ice would still melt and form a cometary tail. No matter the designation, Eris is more like Pluto than any of the eight official planets are. No matter what we call it, Pluto itself really doesn't care. ☹

No other planet's orbit is controlled by another. The only major property Pluto actually has in *common* with the rest of the planets is that it's round.



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The Virtues of Dictatorship

Ancient Magistracy and Modern Perspective

mark wilson

I'VE BEEN IN THREE multiyear long-term relationships with three very different men, but they all had one thing in common: their eyes would glaze over as soon as the subject of history came up.

It didn't matter if I was recounting a bizarre new discovery or a sudden insight during the writing of a paper that changed everything. I could be telling my favorite two-thousand-year-old joke—a guaranteed killer, honest—and it would be no use. At the first sign of very dead people—as one of my partners called the subject of my chosen vocation—their brains snapped off like a city hit by a sudden blackout. It was like the camera panning up to that thought balloon over Homer Simpson's head where barnyard animals played “Turkey in the Straw”—as another of my partners, with a certain gleeful heartlessness, once explained it to me. By the end of our relationship he had started humming “Turkey in the Straw” if I dared talk about history for more than two sentences at a time.

I don't doubt my ability to make history interesting: if I did, I wouldn't teach history (if only all academics adhered to such self-assessment). But outside the group of students who choose to explore the past with me, history, especially ancient history (in which the very dead people are, after all, very, very dead), does indeed often work like an off-switch for the incurious mind.

Interestingly, no one ever comes out and asks, “Why would you want to study that?”, and that's probably because everyone knows there's a pat answer. You know it too—it's Santayana's dictum: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” It's a great quote, and we historians are all super-grateful to Señor Santayana, but it's one of those famous sayings where the more you think about it, the more it starts to seem kind of “academic” in the pejorative sense. It's hard to see how to apply the sentiment practically—unless you're actually planning on invading Russia in the winter, or bringing into the city that huge wooden horse that's making the funny muffled clanking sounds inside. Even then, you're liable to think like Hitler: “Yeah, but Napoleon was a fuckhead.” That's a genuine quote, by the way.

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With ancient history it's a bit worse yet. Even other historians, who tend to have access to millions of pieces of evidence of all kinds ranging from disgustingly exhaustive official archival records to the masturbation journals of Honoré de Balzac, fall prey to thinking that studying ancient history is perversely idle since—with no new evidence that hasn't been picked over by everyone from Cicero to Charo in the intervening millennia—there must be nothing new to say.

People who think so are forgetting the cardinal unwritten rule of the historian: Everyone who came before you is wrong. Too crass for you? Too cynical? I totally hear you. Fortunately, restating in the form of a bland academic theorem legitimizes any assertion, so let's try it this way: The academic consensus of the previous generation of historians on any given interpretable problem will necessarily have been in part conditioned by subjective factors endemic to the social prejudices and outmoded academic processes of the era, and therefore can be expected to be in urgent need of reassessment by subsequent historians who aren't nearly as blinkered and culturally brainwashed as the unfortunate, thick-headed Philistines who came before them. I'm not sure I would have embraced this axiom quite so fervently were it not for the Roman dictatorship.

“Dictator,” today, is an incontestably bad word, and as such is applied indiscriminately to anyone we don't like, from Kim Jong-Un to grumpy department chairs. But in researching the original dictatorship for my dissertation I came to understand that practically everything we know about it is wrong. And the worst part is, if we didn't think so many wrong things about the dictatorship, it would suddenly start to make a whole lot of sense.

The Romans were governed by a Republic for a period of about five centuries, from 509 to 27 BCE, and, amazingly enough, it was during this time of collective rule they accomplished their greatest feats—including, but not limited to, the domination of the entire Mediterranean world. (Both those dates are debatable: the latter because Augustus invented the emperorship in stages, the former because the date is both legendary and based on a flawed calendar.)

The Republic came about when the Romans rejected a perfidious and selfish king, and it had a single guiding principle: no one was allowed to develop power and standing above the rest of the nobles. Everything was geared toward preventing any one man from accumulating power over others in Rome. The chief magistrates, the consuls, ruled in pairs, and for only a year at a time. Policy was decided not by the executive but the collective wisdom of the senate. *Imperium*, the power to command, was granted only after it was ratified by both the Roman citizenry and the gods as well, and any citizen could appeal the actions of a magistrate to the entire assembly. The desire to achieve personal pre-eminence—*ambitio*—was considered not only a crime but a sign of defective character, like groping statues or singing Nicky Minaj songs really loudly in your cubicle even after you’ve been asked not to on multiple occasions.

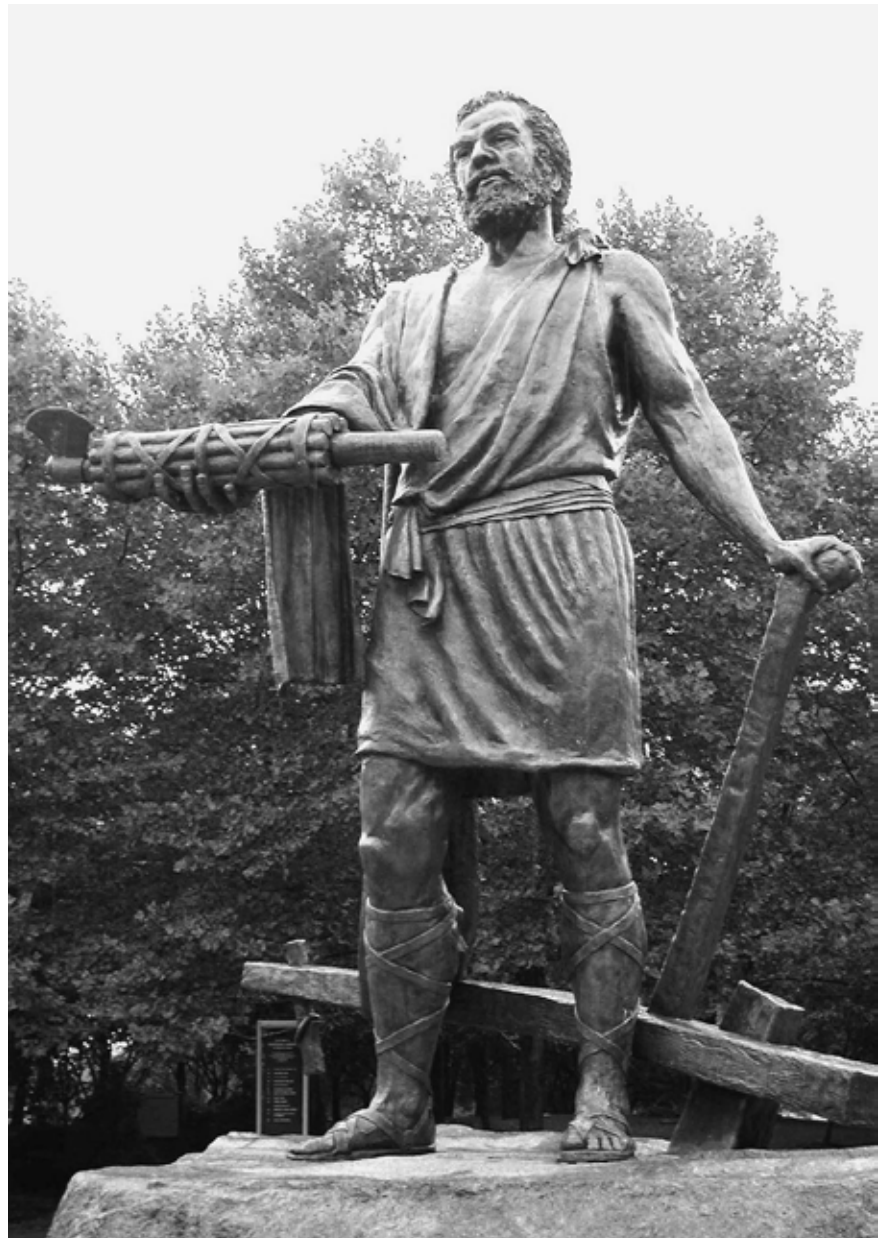
At the same time, and apparently incompatibly, for the first three of those five centuries the Romans regularly resorted to the dictatorship—a magistracy that seemed to defy everything that Romans valued in their system of government. The dictator ruled alone, without a colleague. He was appointed by the consul, not elected. He was immune from the both citizen’s right of appeal and the senate’s interference. Most startlingly of all, he was described by ancient authorities as having *summa potestas*, the whole power of the state, vested in one man. The Republic was created to eliminate forever from Rome that very thing, and there it was—a contingency that the Romans, between the founding of the Republic and the seminal moment of Hannibal’s defeat in 202 BCE, turned to no fewer than eighty-five times.

The routine use of the dictatorship for most of the history of the Republic is enough of a paradox that most modern historians of Rome, when discussing the admirable checks and balances of the Republican constitution, simply leave it off to the side, thumbnailed in two or three sentences and otherwise ignored and unexplained. Even the great nineteenth-century historian Theodor Mommsen, in his magisterial work *Römisches Staatsrecht* (*Roman Constitutional Law*), quarantined the dictatorship in its own chapter and made no effort to explain or reconcile this impossible office with everything else he said about the collective and balanced polity of the Roman Republic.

It might help if, in that chapter, the founda-

tion for all subsequent modern writing on the subject of the dictatorship, he hadn’t gotten almost everything wrong. Of course, we shouldn’t blame old Ted for that. He was relying on what ancient authorities like Cicero, Polybius, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus said about the dictatorship. The problem is, the ancient authorities—even the Roman ones—got it wrong too.

It’s understandable that the Greek writers of the ancient world couldn’t make head nor tail of the dictatorship: they had nothing even remotely like it out their way. The Greek *tyrannos* was very different—and similarly misunderstood, but that’s a rant for another day. But the Roman authorities were all writing at a critical remove: not only were they writing at a minimum of a century and a half after the dictatorship had fallen into disuse, but they were also writing after it had been reanimated as a misshapen, monstrous zombie version of its former self by two of the most ruthless war-



lords of the blood-soaked final century of the Republic, L. Cornelius Sulla and C. Julius Caesar. Both Sulla (120 years after the last dictator) and Caesar (33 years after that) used the disinterred dictatorship to crush their enemies and reshape the Roman polity to their liking and the demands of their faction. And that means that any ancients who lived after Sulla, and especially after Caesar, could not help but hear the word *dictator* and think “abominable misuse of absolute power.” And when they, in turn, spent a few paragraphs describing the dictatorship in their works, they described not how the office had originally functioned, but what “dictator” had come to mean as perverted during the horrors of the Roman civil wars.

And there’s the rub, because when we look at the year-to-year narrative of Roman history, rather than those later capsule summaries of the office, we find that the original dictatorship was not only not what Sulla and Caesar had twisted it into, but was, in fact, in its original form, damned useful.

The Republic worked really well most of the time, in part because the Romans made their system flexible and continually adapted it to new contingencies. There was no “constitution” but rather a carefully developed series of precedents that were reinforced when they worked and altered when they did not. There’s one aspect of elected magistrates, however, that you can’t really get away from: if you elect a consul to hold office for a year, you need to choose someone who’s prepared to handle whatever comes up during his term of office. Normally, that means you’ll elect someone who’s generically competent, and tell him to deal with whatever crops up within the space of one year.

But in an extreme emergency when the city is in dire peril, that generically competent person might not be the right person to deal with the specific threat that’s about to tear Rome apart. Early on in the Republic, then, the Romans tried something different: when the city of Rome was in direct and real jeopardy, whether from a seditious demagogue or a terrifying army of Gauls (thanks to the sacking of Rome in 390 BCE, the Romans had a peculiar and notorious dread of the Gauls) or an “peninsula-wide conspiracy of graft—to take three examples of crises sufficiently dire as to unnerve the Romans enough to take radical action—the consul could choose the man whose experience, position, and temperament made him ideally suited to resolve that exact threat, and invest him with the power to do whatever was necessary, with no let or hindrance, to resolve the crisis that was endangering Rome itself.

It worked, and so the Romans kept doing it whenever there was a crisis so extreme that the Romans were close to panic: the needed man was found and made dictator, and he took office, resolved the crisis, and stood down, often within

days of his appointment. None of them cackled with malevolent glee or set about slaughtering babies or established headquarters under a volcano. Even Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who lambasted the Romans for subjecting themselves to what he thought the dictatorship was (and he, too, was writing after Sulla and Caesar), marveled wide-eyed that none of the dictators during the original run of eighty-five had abused his absolute power even a little bit.

This is the point: the dictators were not given total power over Rome; they were given total power over a specific crisis. The support for this assertion comes in multiple forms, but the two best proofs are, first, that the one and only one of the eighty-five dictators who tried to overstep the crisis he’d been appointed to resolve was shamed into immediate resignation, and, second, that every single one of the remaining eighty-four dictators abdicated his office the instant he’d resolved the crisis that had brought about his appointment. The same can even be said for Sulla, for that matter, but that’s yet another rant for yet another time.

The Greek historian Polybius famously praised the Roman Republic for having a “mixed constitution,” in which the best aspects of monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy meshed to form a distinctive and uniquely workable system. But the true nature of the dictatorship reveals that the Romans pioneered the development of complementary executives empowered along entirely different axes: the Republic benefited both from ordinary magistrates conditionally empowered for a limited time (the consuls) and from super-magistrates unconditionally empowered for a limited task (the dictators).

The fact that this is not widely known or understood about the Roman system of government is kind of heart-breaking. The Romans invented this entirely new and extremely nifty way of empowering two different kinds of executives, and yet the whole concept was lost to political theory. Today, we assume elective magistrates are the only proper solution, not only for ourselves but for the benighted denizens of the past: like the Greeks, we tend to think of anyone under a system of government not our own as barbarians. Yet how might the evolution of the modern state have gone if we had but remembered the true meaning of the word dictatorship? And you wonder why I study history.

Okay, fine, since it’s been bugging you this whole time, I’ll tell you my can’t-fail two-thousand-year-old joke. Ready? All right, here goes. A Roman intellectual is out at sea on his ship, which is manned by his household slaves. Suddenly a terrible storm blows up, and the little ship is tossed madly in the roiling waves and all sight of land is lost. The intellectual stands at the front of the ship and shouts reassuringly over the storm to his slaves, who are weeping with terror. “Don’t cry!” he consoles them. “I have freed you all in my will!” 🌀

A Beer, A Beer, My Kingdom for a Beer

► *ShakesBEER*. New York Shakespeare Exchange.

bess rowen

SOME OF THE BEST conversations I've ever had about theatre have often occurred at a bar after some of my colleagues and I have seen a show. After all, Dionysus is the god of both wine and theatre, and that is hardly a coincidence. So perhaps I should not have been so surprised to find that New York Shakespeare Exchange's *ShakesBEER* pub crawl was such a lovely balance of drinking and theatre.

As their slogan states: 4 beers, 4 bars, 1 bard! That's exactly what one ticket includes, with one beer and one Shakespearean scene at each bar before the entire group moves to the next bar to repeat this ritual. The October show began at The Gaf in midtown, where we were treated to a scene from *Henry IV*. One of the best known drunken characters in Shakespeare, Falstaff, seemed far from out of place in the

wooden interior full of beer-drinking spectators.

From the very first line the actors took full advantage of the space, while the audience members (and other bar patrons) moved about as needed in order to stay clear of the actors. This negotiation is one of my favorite things about theatre in non-traditional spaces, because it literally keeps people on their toes. This special spatial relationship became increasingly amusing as we moved from bar to bar, where we encountered more and more laymen—bar patrons who were truly surprised when a Shakespearean scene sprouted up from a table here or a bar there. At these moments, an alternate performance began to occur, one where paying audience members took it upon themselves to inform the others about what was happening.

But before I continue, I want to add a bit of a historical note to explain why I am so particularly excited about this



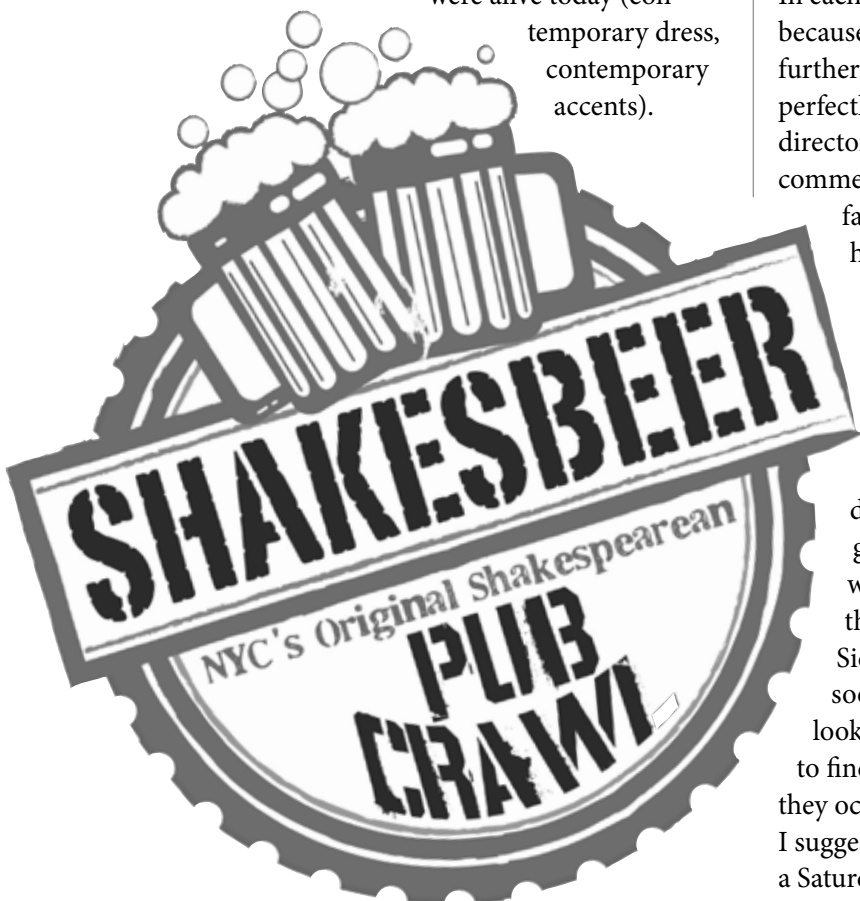
A scene from the April production of the *ShakesBEER* pub crawl.

venture. I have seen a lot of very serious Shakespeare. I'm sure, if you've seen any Shakespeare, you've probably seen your share of serious Shakespeare too. I am not saying that a play like *Hamlet* or *King Lear* can't be dark and tragic. What I object to is the countless ways that contemporary productions do "Shakespeare" and not Shakespeare. "Shakespearean" plays consist of a lot of actors trying to sound like British royalty while making sure you, the audience member, don't miss this important quote.

Those people forget that Shakespeare is filled with a lot of bawdy humor (there is an entire book called *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, which goes through every play and lists all the euphemisms and their meanings in context). They also forget the cheap seats in the gallery of a theatre like the Globe, where drunken, rowdy patrons paid a few pennies for standing room. I'll give you a hint: they weren't nearly as well behaved as *Shakespeare in Love* makes them seem.

Why should all of this matter? The "best" way of performing Shakespeare has been an ongoing debate in theatre circles since Shakespeare's death in 1616. Since that time, people have thought of "authentic" Shakespeare in several ways: authentic to the periods and places that Shakespeare wrote about, authentic to the way Shakespeare and his company (Lord Chamberlain's Men, later the King's Men) would have performed them, or authentic to how Shakespeare would perform them if he

were alive today (contemporary dress, contemporary accents).



My feeling is that New York Shakespeare Exchange is expert in their pursuit of the final one of these theories. Their mission states that they seek to show work "that explores what happens when contemporary culture is infused with Shakespearean poetry and themes in unexpected ways." In following this company for several years now, I have seen them succeed again and again in ways that I can't help thinking Shakespeare would have liked. They prove that Shakespeare is not some unassailable member of the canon, but rather remind us that he was once a playwright who was simply popular.

Another good example of this philosophy in practice was obvious in the electric scene from *Romeo & Juliet*, expertly played by Harry Barandes and Katelin Wilcox. The famous balcony scene was imaginatively rendered by use of a single light and two tables. Not only did Wilcox's Juliet have a Mike's Hard Lemonade—the obvious drink of choice for a 14 year old in love—but her delivery reminded us that a contemporary Juliet should sound less like someone who reads Nietzsche and more like someone who has a wall full of Justin Bieber pictures. That's right, Juliet would probably have been a "Belieber". This appropriately youthful tone brings the comedy and absurdity out of this scene, from a play that depicts very young love indeed. The other two scenes gave a glimpse at two other plays that deal with kinds of drunkenness: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*. In each case, the characters are drawn to behave absurdly because they are enchanted, in the former, and tricked into further infatuation, in the latter. All four scenes thus played perfectly in the four bars spread throughout midtown, and directors Eva Gil, Kim Krane, and Ross Williams should be commended for using these spaces so well. Williams is in

fact the Producing Artistic Director, and always has a hand in making wonderful and exciting productions.

The walks between the bars brought a different kind of performance onto the streets of New York, where the city landscape and inhabitants are always the players in a special kind of performance. The pub crawl moves its location for each of its installments, thus insuring a different milieu as well as different plays and bars. This means that I'm certainly going to attend their next edition of *ShakesBEER*, which will take place on 6 December. Details about the area, which will be somewhere on the Upper East Side, and the plays to be performed will be released soon. Check their website: shakespeareexchange.org, or look for New York Shakespeare Exchange on Facebook to find out more details. And if you can't make that one, they occur several times a year, so do keep an eye out. Also, I suggest you book ahead if you don't want to be stranded on a Saturday saying to yourself, "a beer, a beer..." ☺

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JACOBIN

Bed Bugs and Budget Cuts

The following appeared in the Advocate in October of 2009.

Putting the Criminal Back in Criminal Justice

HATS OFF TO THE John Jay College of Criminal Justice who made this month's most significant contribution to ensuring CUNY's enduring track record of cooking the books. A recently released audit by the State Comptroller's Office finds that a handful of CUNY colleges aren't bothering to report campus felonies. John Jay leads the way, failing to report nineteen of twenty felonies, followed closely behind by Queens, Baruch, Hunter and Medgar Evers Colleges, who collectively buried a whopping 73 percent of campus crimes during the period under State review. According to the *Gothamist*, "John Jay administrators are also accused of keeping two sets of crime logs, one created two weeks before auditors arrived."

Students, unsurprisingly, were upset by the news. Speaking to the *New York Post*, John Jay sophomore Deana Kelley pointed out that "I think it's unethical. It's like if there's a crime in your neighborhood, you want to know what's going on." A graduate student at the college, Juliana Velazquez, added, "It's shocking to hear you attend a criminal justice school and there's still crime." Yeah, imagine that.

In case you were worried that CUNY couldn't care less about the safety of its students, university spokesman Michael Arena reassured anyone who'd listen that the colleges were taking concerted action to remedy the situation. An emergency two-day training session for every campus security director was immediately convened. What, exactly, these crime-

fighting professionals were being trained in remains unclear, but CUNY officials contend that the problem has been meaningfully addressed.

Of course, as in all things, despite CUNY's impressive capacity for internal corruption, the university once again failed to beat out New York University for top honors in the city. You thought our numbers were bad? NYU failed to account for nearly 90 percent of its campus crime last year. When all crimes committed in the NYU's residency halls and classroom buildings are tallied up, the school ranks as the second most dangerous campus in the country. And here we were thinking those kids on Washington Square were just a bunch of poseurs!

It Takes a Pillage

JUST TO MAKE SURE that he seals his legacy as "WORST GOVERNOR EVER" of New York State, David Paterson has ordered yet another rape and pillage campaign against the state budget, unsurprisingly proposing to slash \$53 Million from allotted funds for CUNY. This, of course, instead of, uh, we don't know, maybe increasing taxes on the rich by ½ a percent? In case other educational institutions might have been feeling left out, the governor also proposed cutting \$90 million from SUNY's annual budget, and hacking off \$35 million from monies allotted to the Higher Education Services Corporation which administers student aid.

Paterson's proposed cut come on the heels of the \$44 million he cut earlier this year, which followed \$68 million in downsizing in 2008. Meanwhile, CUNY students were also squeezed for an additional 15 percent tuition raise to make up for Paterson's

unwillingness to go after other areas of the budget or raise taxes on New York's wealthiest. What a Coward.

According to Professional Staff Congress president Barbara Bowen, "CUNY cannot absorb any more cuts. The University is already cramming students into overcrowded classrooms and squeezing sixty adjunct faculty into a single office. Enrollment is the highest it has ever been; the demand for a CUNY education has never been greater. It makes no sense—economically or morally—to cut the University now." The PSC, she announced, "calls on the legislature to reject this destructive proposal. Now more than ever, when the recession continue to hit New Yorkers hard, CUNY represents the only chance for a college education for thousands of ordinary people. A cut of this size could force the University to reduce its student population and deny thousands of people the opportunity for a better life. That's the wrong choice at any time, and especially wrong now."

Bed Bugs

WHILE AUTHORITIES AT JOHN Jay are busy covering up campus crimes they pretend never happen, students are falling victim to another kind of assault—this time, from bed bugs. Towards the end of September, the school announced that an army of bedbugs had taken up residence in John Jay's classrooms and administrative offices. But don't be alarmed: just as there isn't any crime at the school, John Jay officials assure their community that the bugs aren't a major problem, describing the situation as a "condition." "Infestation is when you see them swarming," college spokesman Jim Grossman told reporters. 🐛



LIVE@365 PRESENTS

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: EMEL MATHLOUTHI'S ARABIC TRIP-HOP

Firebrand Tunisian singer, songwriter, and composer Emel Mathlouthi stands with the great divas of the Arab World but has also inherited the legacy of protest singers from the '60s. She gained attention when her song "Kelmti Horra (My Word is Free)" was adopted by the Arab Spring revolutionaries on the streets of Tunis and soon became an anthem throughout the regions. Mathlouthi's gorgeous, intricate sound moves between rock (she plays guitar and cites Joan Baez as an influence), trip-hop (she has collaborated with Tricky), and electronica, with a strong Arabic music connection. Her intimate songs express love, suffering, and longing for home, in a deeply confessional style verging on sacred Sufi music.

"It's the astonishing range and sensuousness of Mathlouthi's voice that is most compelling. There are swoops and growls reminiscent of Bjork, whom she cites as a major influence, and even traces of her goth past as she picks out minimal, reverberant lines on electric guitar which make you wonder if she's also been listening to the xx."—The Guardian

WHERE: The Graduate Center 1201: Elebash Recital Hall
WHEN: November 20, 2014: 7:00 PM-8:30 PM
ADMISSION: \$25, \$20 Members
RESERVATIONS: 1-888-71-TICKETS or <http://www.showclix.com/event/EmelMathlouthisArabicTripHop>

Making It Last Is Like Cultivating Basil

Dear Harriet,

Over the years you've been asked a lot of strange questions about relationships and love, but you've never really addressed the most important one of all: How do you make a relationship last?

— Afraid of Being Bereft and Alone

NOW THAT IS A good question, ABBA, and it's also a very timely reminder that not all of my readers are wild-haired cultists with furry squirrel suits in their closet harboring dreams of one day indulging in a three-way in which they're blissfully sandwiched between Madeleine Albright and the Gerber baby. I was recently on a website devoted to cataloging (and snarking) about the endless parade of perversions available on the internet and someone had actually created a thread about "certain grad school newspapers" in "New York City, home of the perverts" that foster "depraved conversations" about "sex and sex-related activities." It was all maddeningly vague but I think, based on a passing reference in the thread to the manliness of fisting, that they were actually referring to the column last May that was guest-written by my mother.

What I find interesting about your question, ABBA, is that you refer to relationships and love, but I think it's pretty clear that they're not the same thing, and you ask not about making love last but about keeping the relationship as preferable to the forlorn alternative in which we sit in the end of our bed in an empty apartment, contemplating the smudged windows that look out onto a soulless amalgamation of concrete and steel and glass infested with men and women whose sole object is their own personal satisfaction, thinking that they became that way because they are wandering life alone with companionship, without the anchor of a human being inside your mind and heart.

If love and relationships are separate entities, separate conditions, then we must consider the relationship in isolation, apart from the love that may have

brought it into being.

Can a relationship persist after the love has worn away? Is that a good thing? Are we still better off with someone, rather than being left to fend for ourselves in this nasty, cut-throat, Hobbesian world of greed and desperation around us?

My friend Marie has been in several relationships that lasted years, and everyone always wondered how she did it. I have finally come to the conclusion that she's got an advantage over a lot of the rest of us: She's completely clueless. The warning signs of relationship peril were all there—her partner's mysterious absences, fights about nothing, passive-aggressive notes left on the fridge, and so on. Yet Marie blissfully went on coasting, leaving things exactly as they were, being just active enough to keep her partners from thinking she didn't care—because she did care, but not enough to fix things or walk away. So this would go on forever until finally the guy had to shake her by her figurative lapels and let her know things were not good. And the funny thing is, after she promised that her wake-up call was received and heard, she's hit snooze again for another year, until finally the boyfriend, still in love but fed up, was forced to walk away.

The cynic in me wants to applaud Marie for keeping her relationships going so long, but was she really happy? She wasn't alone, but I have to believe that some amount of the psychic pain her guy was experiencing infected her as well. It seems like she was better off, but I really wonder.

So perhaps we're back to keeping love alive. There's one thing I believe, ABBA, and that's that love is not a passive thing. Work at it. It must be fed and cultivated, like that nice-smelling basil plant in the plastic dish in my kitchen window. You keep love alive by acting on it, making the moments you spend with your loved one matter. Because if you stop watering that basil plant in the window, you might still have a kitchen, but it won't smell as nice. 🍃



Your Email Address Is Changing

Student Services

IN THE LAST MONTH, the Executive Committee (EC) of the Doctoral Students' Council met with administrators throughout the Graduate Center to advocate for improved student services. The EC discussed issues of student funding with President Chase Robinson, continuing to ask for tuition remission for students beyond their 5th year. They also requested that the GC's current efforts to waive application fees for CUNY students be expanded to encompass students from disadvantaged backgrounds like those participating in federal TRIO Programs.

The Executive Committee hopes that such efforts will be in keeping with a diversity strategy that remains part of larger social justice framework. To that end, EC members also met with the student representative on the campus-wide Diversity Task Force to discuss the most effective strategies for addressing the under-representation

of students from historically marginalized racial and ethnic backgrounds at the Graduate Center.

New Emails Coming 1 December 2014

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE and Steering Committee also met with the Information and Technology (IT) Department around a planned transition to new student email addresses ending with the extension @gradcenter.cuny.edu.

Officer for Library and Technology, Hamad Sindhi, will continue working with IT to ensure that students have optimal access to their existing accounts.

Online Information

THE DSC CONTINUES TO improve its online presence and increase accessibility to information about student services.

Upcoming features will include more information on outreach events

to Graduate Center programs based on other campuses, regular updates by steering officers, information on local student discounts, and a redesign of the Unofficial University Student Senate (UUSS) website.

The DSC's UUSS web presence will make accessible minute's records in particular, and other documents thus far not available on the University Student's Senate own page.

Free Meditation, Discounted Services

OFFICER FOR STUDENT LIFE and Services, Ashna Ali, has coordinated a free session of Zen Buddhist Guided Meditation for GC students on 9 December 2014.

If there is sufficient interest future meditation sessions will be held. Ashna is also aggregating a list of local businesses offering discounts to GC students. Any tips can be submitted for publication to services@gc.cuny.edu. ☺

Never Submit. Contribute!

The *GC Advocate* newspaper, the only newspaper dedicated to the needs and interests of the CUNY Graduate Center community, is looking for new writers for the upcoming academic year. We publish six issues per year and reach thousands of Graduate Center students, faculty, staff, and guests each month.

Currently we are seeking contributors for the following articles and columns:

- Investigative articles covering CUNY news and issues (assignments available on request)
- First Person essays on teaching at CUNY for our regular "Dispatches from the Front" column
- First person essays on life as a graduate student for our "Graduate Life" column
- Feature "magazine style" articles on the arts, politics, culture, NYC, etc.
- Provocative and insightful analyses of international, national, and local politics for our Political Analysis column
- Book reviews for our regular Book Review column and special Book issues
- Local Music Reviews and Art Reviews

To view recent articles and to get a sense of our style, please visit the *GC Advocate* website: <http://opencuny.org/gcadvocate>. Payments for articles range between \$75 and \$150 depending on the length and amount of research required. We also pay for photos and cartoons.

Interested writers should contact the Editor at gcadvocate@gc.cuny.edu.

MIND GAMES BY MARYAM GHAFARI SAADAT

Puzzle #1: Exact Change for \$1

SUPPOSE YOU KNOW YOU have c cents in coins, where the total exceeds \$1 (i.e., $c > 100$). You do not know what combination of coins you have (i.e., how many quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies). What is the smallest c such that for every amount at least as large as c you will be certain to have exact change for \$1?

Note that any amount larger than the solution must also contain exact change for \$1. For instance, 101 cannot

be the solution since you can have 105 cents (3 quarters and 3 dimes) without having exact change for \$1. So a good way to approach this is to first find the largest amount in coins that does not include an exact change for \$1.

Puzzle #2: Find Rank of Anagrams

CONSIDER ALL THE WORDS (meaningful or not) made up of letters A, E, S, and T. If we arrange them in lexicographic order starting with AEST and ending with TSEA, we can give each of them a rank between 1 and 24 (includ-

sive). There are 5 meaningful words amongst these.

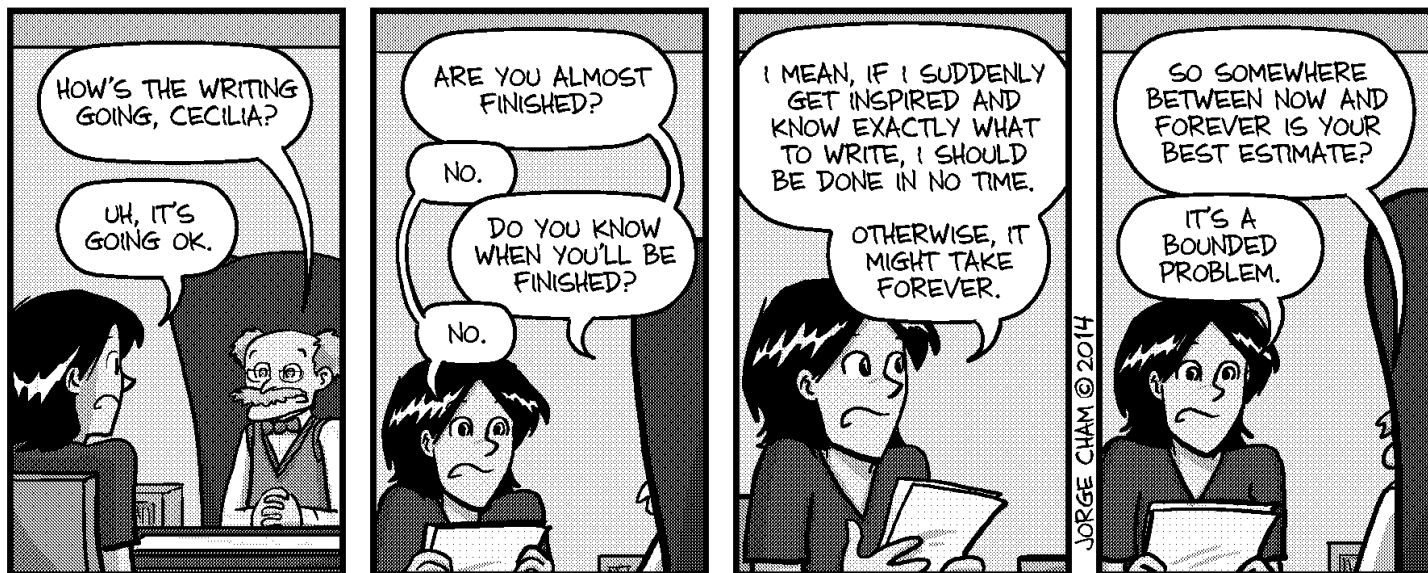
What are these anagrams and what is the rank of each of them? Try to find the solution without listing all the words.

Puzzle #3: Play with Fortunes

IF KATE GIVES ENOUGH to double Lily's current credits, she will still have 3 times credit as Lily. How many multiples of Lily's current credits should Kate transfer to Lily so that Lily will have 3 times credit as Kate? ☹

solutions on page 33

PH.D. COMICS BY JORGE CHAM



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