

In This Issue...

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When we are caught up in the hectic activities of our daily lives, it is very easy to be consumed by the present. Being preoccupied with our busy daily routines means that we tend to lose our perspective on our place in the world and in history. In fact, our world today is the way it is because of the achievements of the generations of people who have lived before us. The Lynchburg College Symposium Readings (LCSR) program and other “Great Books”-type programs at institutions of higher learning across North America prompt students to consider how our lives today have been shaped by writers and thinkers in the past. Students in the LCSR program read classical and seminal works in all disciplines and look for parallels between ideas from the past and issues in today’s world. Faculty members who teach in the LCSR program encourage their students to think critically about their readings and to express their interpretations clearly in both written assignments and in oral presentations. This nineteenth issue of the *Agora* includes a representative sample of essays produced in LCSR courses together with one paper written by a student from Vancouver Island University, which, like Lynchburg College, belongs to the Association of Core Texts and Courses (ACTC). Just as the ancient Athenian *agora*, or marketplace, provided a setting for the exchange of ideas, so this online journal offers a site for today’s undergraduates to grapple with the ideas of writers in the past and to share their insights with the wider academic community.

The author of the first article, **Laura Marino Rugeles**, a recent graduate of Vancouver Island University, won the Kendall North Award for the best essay in this issue of the *Agora* with her paper, “What Is Justice? An Investigation of Leo Strauss’s Natural Right Proposition.” Laura discusses Strauss’s quest for justice: all humans seem to have a basic understanding of

natural rights, but defining the details of those natural rights has always been a challenge for even the wisest statesmen. To investigate the best way of building a just society, Strauss suggests that we look to philosophy and investigate the truths of human nature and the fundamentals of knowledge.

In the second article, “Wordsworth: Naturalness as Aesthetic,” **Taelor Skinner** analyzes three of Wordsworth’s poems and decides that “Tintern Abbey” is the most effective because of its simple, direct, natural language.

In the next paper, “Natural Instinct,” **Tess Evans** compares Montaigne’s attitudes towards education with those of the Transcendentalists, Emerson and Thoreau. Tess favors the Transcendentalists because by the nineteenth century they were more aware of the importance of the role of nature in children’s education than Montaigne had been three hundred years earlier.

In “Incentives and Success,” **Ben Calvert** discusses the connections between democracy and the free market economy. Democracy and capitalism complement each other so that citizens of countries that practice both systems have many advantages over citizens of countries where neither or only one of these systems exists.

Julia Kittel has written “A Performer’s Argument against the Hierarchy of Musicians Set Forth by Boethius in *De institutione musica*” to disagree with Boethius, who gives performers the lowest status in the musical community, lower than both composers and adjudicators. In contrast, Julia maintains that performers have advantages over composers and adjudicators because the performers are the ones who produce the music; they are not at all dependent on the other two groups for their musical experiences.

The next paper was written in an art history course. In her essay, “Photography’s Influence on Painting,” **Jill Markwood** explains how the invention of the camera led artists to experiment and to develop new directions in their paintings.

The final three essays in this issue of the *Agora* were written in Senior Symposium, a course in which Lynchburg College students interpret LCSR readings and public lectures on contemporary issues in terms of their own experiences and opinions. In “Sexual Selection in Modern Times,” **Allison Sypher** explains which feminine features males find the most attractive; after all, those are the key features that prevent the human race from dying out! In “Truth Decay: the Media and the Pursuit of Truth,” **Caitlin Flathers** suggests that as we are drowning in a sea of news and information presented by the media, we tend to forgo our responsibility to evaluate the facts critically; as a result, we can easily end up by missing the truth behind the messages. Similarly, **Tim Willis** in “Fake Photos in the News” continues this theme as he discusses editing techniques used by the news media that can lead to the public developing distorted impressions of current events.

All of these *Agora* writers have given us much food for thought, but the instructors who supervised the writing of these papers also deserve thanks for encouraging their students’ intellectual development. From Lynchburg College, they are Dr. Rich Burke (Skinner), Professor Michael Mitchell (Calvert), Dr. Cynthia Ramsay (Kittel), Dr. Delane Karalow (Markwood), Professor Nina Salmon (Flathers), and Dr. David Freier (Willis). From Vancouver Island University, another ACTC institution, the supervising faculty member is Dr. David Livingstone (Rugeles).

Next year we are hoping for an increased level of participation of students at other ACTC institutions in addition to those at Lynchburg College so that the *Agora* can showcase even more

of the fine writing that undergraduates in “Great Books” programs all across North America are producing.

Lyndall Nairn

Agora Editor