EDUCATIONAL THEORY

EXISTENTIALISM AND EXEMPLARS

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Abstract. In this paper, Kate Kirkpatrick argues that the recent return to moral exemplars in exemplarist moral theory might benefit from engaging with existentialists' use of exemplars in two ways: first, by considering the role of negative exemplars and the power of emotions other than admiration in moral formation; and second, by considering objections to exemplarist education, in particular Simone de Beauvoir's objection that narrative exemplars often serve an ideological function and perpetuate oppressive ideals — especially (but not only) about women. After situating this discussion in ancient and recent debates about the role of literary narratives in moral formation, Kirkpatrick outlines a moral perfectionist reading of Beauvoir and an objection to exemplarist moral theory's reliance on exemplars that "we" admire on the basis that "the admirable" often serves to promote the interests of the powerful rather than the flourishing of all human beings. Finally, while agreeing with this symposium's editors that efforts to improve our understanding of how to use narrative exemplars in educational settings are valuable, she asks how, given the force of the Beauvoirian objection, their criterion of "appropriate critical reflection" might be met.

Key Words. existentialism; Simone de Beauvoir; *The Second Sex*; Friedrich Nietzsche; moral perfectionism; exemplars; Martha Nussbaum; ethical criticism

Introduction

The publication of Linda Zagzebski's *Exemplarist Moral Theory*[1] has prompted renewed interest in the question of *how* moral and narrative exemplars might shape the character of learners, as well as excitement about "the prospects for practical applications of the theory."[2] However, exemplarist moral theory (EMT) has also met with objections on the grounds that it — like other forms of moral exemplarism — is limited by its focus on the fallible emotion of admiration and by its failure to recognize that agents' perception of moral excellence depends on multiple (arguably non-moral) factors. Alkis Kotsonis, for example, argues that Zagzebski disregards the contexts of moral practices, with the result that her theory suffers from two limitations: (1) that agents do not identify exemplars *in vacuo*; and (2) that if one adopts what he calls a Butlerian social constructivist account of gender then EMT results in a "counter-intuitive gender-specific understanding of morality."[3] Kotsonis charges that scholars working on exemplarism "seem to ignore the significance of personal features and characteristics, such as gender and age, to the guidance one gets from exemplarism."[4]

1. Linda Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017).

2. Lani Watson and Alan T. Wilson, "Review Essay: *Exemplarist Moral Theory*," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 16, no. 6 (2019): 766.

3. Alkis Kotsonis, "On the Limitations of Moral Exemplarism: Socio-Cultural Value and Gender," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 23, no. 1 (2020): 225.

4. Ibid.

As I read it, Zagzebski's *Exemplarist Moral Theory* does acknowledge that agents identify exemplars in variable and fallible social contexts and it does accommodate change within both persons and cultures. Indeed, when outlining the aims of her theory, Zagzebski states explicitly that she wants an ethical theory "that tracks moral development" and "explains and justifies a genealogy of morals." This genealogy, on her definition, concerns "both the moral development of an individual person and the development of a cultural community that is capable of undergoing moral change, even the rare moral revolution."[5] Zagzebski acknowledges that "different kinds of exemplars dominate different cultures";[6] she invokes semantic externalism (in part) to explain this phenomenon;[7] and she puts forward the view that morality can change by "internal critique, not just by the accident of political power and cultural influence" — citing instances of changing evaluations of racism and sexual harassment as examples.[8]

Even so, I will argue, Kotsonis's claim that "employing the emotion of admiration to identify the meaning of value and deontic terms leads to a culture-specific understanding of morality"[9] is a challenge scholars working on exemplarism should take seriously — not only on the inter-cultural grounds Kotsonis highlights but also on intra-cultural grounds. Drawing on existentialists' use of narrative exemplars and Simone de Beauvoir's criticisms of narrative exemplars of women, I offer two related criticisms of EMT — one internal and one external — and argue that these criticisms could usefully inform empirical research and educational practice concerning narrative exemplars. The first, internal, criticism brackets the question of normative justification — remaining agnostic about whether exemplary moral theory can provide "a comprehensive ethical theory" without appeal to any other normative justification[10] — and argues that EMT might benefit from further engagement with negative exemplars and animating emotions other than admiration. The second, external, objection draws on Beauvoir to ask whether Zagzebski's proposal to locate the point of origin of ethics in the exemplars that "we" admire often serves to promote the interests of the powerful rather than

5. Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory*, 4. In chapter 8 of the book, Zagzebski discusses the "moral revolution" in attitudes to persons of different races, for example.

6. Ibid., 97.

7. Ibid., 104.

8. Ibid., 19, 190.

9. Kotsonis, "On the Limitations of Moral Exemplarism," 226.

10. Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory*, 3.

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the flourishing of all human beings.[11] Given the importance assigned to narrative exemplars in EMT, I begin by situating existentialists' use of exemplars within literary and philosophical debates concerning the contested role of narrative arts in moral philosophy — to which we will return in the final section's discussion of "appropriate critical reflection" in educational settings.

The Ancient Quarrel and the Ethical Turn

In Book X of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates revisits a subject that has already been discussed in that dialogue: the "ancient quarrel" between philosophy and poetry. Poets, Plato tells us, serve up products that "maim the thought of those who hear them" — their stories' beauty can make us admire the bad and deplore the good. Consequently, Plato proclaims that poets should be banished from the Republic (although Socrates doesn't quite agree with himself about whether *all* poetry should be banished, or just the imitative).[12]

Many philosophers since have upheld disciplinary hierarchies in which philosophy reigns supreme. Another, more liberal (but nevertheless hierarchical) view about philosophy and literature — pertinent for the existentialists we will soon discuss — was expressed by G. W. F. Hegel in the nineteenth century. Hegel claimed that Understanding required the three forms of "absolute spirit": art, religion, and philosophy. On his view, philosophy presents truth most clearly and adequately, in the rational sphere of dialectical concepts, whereas the understanding of truth conveyed by religion is presented in faith, feeling, and imagination. Although philosophy gives us access to truth in its clearest articulation, Hegel claimed that we need the images and stories of religion because, as Stephen Houlgate puts it, "human beings could not live by concepts alone."[13] Hegel claimed that for the majority of people philosophy plays a small role in their lives, making religious faith the primary locus of their understanding of truth: "It is in terms of religion that a people [*Volk*] defines what it considers to be true."[14]

On Hegel's view, philosophy and religion help us understand truth in concepts and faith, but because we are concrete beings, we also need to encounter the truth concretely in *beauty*.[15] It is the "sensuous *appearance* [Scheinen] of the Idea," "a specific way of expressing and representing the true."[16] On

11. I hesitate to use the term "flourishing" here because it is a matter of scholarly debate whether Beauvoir's ethics are eudaimonist. In using the term, I do not necessarily take it to play any role in the normative justification of her view, nor do I assume that such flourishing is possible without meeting the material and moral conditions for the development of moral freedom.

12. See *Republic* X 595a5; 398a1-b4.

13. Stephen Houlgate, ed., *Hegel and the Arts* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), xv.

14. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. Hugh Barr Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 105.

15. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1:97–98.

16. Ibid., 1:111, 1:91.

Hegel's view, beautiful art addresses the senses but it does not address them alone: it also speaks to the mind, showing the freedom of the human mind in sensuous form.[17]

Contra Plato, Hegel describes poetry as "the most perfect art," because it is closest to pure thought. Poetry — in the form of the novel — provides the most concrete and rich expression of spiritual freedom — as inwardness *and* action unfolding in space and time. In Hegel's structural account of the forms of art the novel takes the place once held by the ancient epic. The epic's role was to delimit "the entirety of an outlook on the world and life,"[18] and the novel inherits this duty. Despite assigning the novel such importance, however, Hegel's attitude on the novel's historical emergence has been described as one of "disillusion"; the prevalent critical opinion of Hegel's day was one of prejudice against the novel as immature, vulgarly popular, and *feminine*. To give a few examples: Immanuel Kant held that novel reading led to poor mental hygiene; August Schlegel dismissed the genre, as late as his lectures in 1802, as a French and English ladies' pastime. (And, lest we forget: one of Plato's worries about poetry was that it might make the guardians "soft," "effeminate," and emotional.)[19]

In Anglo-American philosophy in the last four decades the "ancient quarrel" has been reinvigorated by the so-called "ethical turn," with many arguing against Plato that literary texts — and narrative exemplars — can make us better people and contribute to a better society.[20] The precise nature of literature's ethical contribution, and the means by which a reader's edification is achieved (if, in fact, it is), has since been the subject of much debate. Richard Rorty, for example, argues that literature expands our empathy, enabling us to see others as part of "us" rather than "them";[21] others argue that literary texts function like "simulations," either to imagine the possible consequences of decisions[22] or to fine-tune our faculties of moral decision-making.

In 1983 Martha Nussbaum described a moral theory of literature as well as a practice of reading that developed what she later calls "the narrative

17. Ibid., 1:35.

18. Ibid., 2:1093.

19. For Kant, see *Anthropology*, §47, Ak. VII: 208; for Schlegel, *Vorlesungen*, II, 35; for Plato, *Republic* 387c–388b.

20. See "Literature and/as Philosophy," special issue, *New Literary History* 15, no. 1 (1983), https://www.jstor.org/stable/i220220. The issue includes Martha Nussbaum's "Flawed Crystals: James's *The Golden Bowl* and Literature as Moral Philosophy," 25–50, https://doi.org/10.2307/468992.

21. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 192.

22. See, for example, Gregory Currie, "Realism of Character and the Value of Fiction," in *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

imagination."[23] In *Love's Knowledge*, Nussbaum argues that the "predominant tendency" of her philosophical contemporaries was either "to ignore the relation between form and content altogether, or, when not ignoring it, [to treat] style as largely decorative — as irrelevant to the stating of content, and neutral among the contents that might be conveyed."[24] Cognizant that many philosophers take the truths of philosophy to be such that "the plain clear general non-narrative style most frequently found in philosophical articles and treatises is in fact the style best suited to state any and all of them," Nussbaum's aim in *Love's Knowledge* is to "establish that certain literary texts … are indispensable to a philosophical sphere."[25] Her claim is strong: while literature is not a sufficient source of philosophical insight, it is a necessary one without which "the enquiry cannot be complete."[26] She does not generalize about "the novel" because it is the complex particularity of individual works that shine light on the ethical life — and especially, in her words, on "the role of love and other emotions in the good human life, … the relationship between emotions and ethical knowledge, and deliberation about particulars."[27]

Nussbaum's position is premised on a belief that readers "read for life," "searching for images of what we might do and be, and holding these up against the images we derive from our knowledge of other conceptions, literary, philosophical, and religious."[28] Her view of the relationship between philosophy and literature has many critics. But before turning to her critics, I will turn to antecedents of her view in so-called "Continental" philosophy and theology, where the exemplary potential of literature has been the source not only of injunctions to *read* literature, but also to write it.

Although Nussbaum does not explicitly frame her discussion of literature in these terms, aspects of her position resemble Nietzsche's account of the value of good reading in "Schopenhauer as Educator." There Nietzsche discusses what he calls our "immeasurable longing to become whole,"[29] to find our own *genius*, or (as he most famously put it) to become who we are. He writes, "We are responsible to ourselves for our own existence; consequently, we want to be the true helmsman

23. See Nussbaum, "Flawed Crystals"; Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Martha Nussbaum, "Democratic Citizenship and the Narrative Imagination," *Teachers College Record* 110, no. 13 (2008): 143–157.

24. Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 8.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 23–24.

27. Ibid., 23.

28. Ibid., 29.

29. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer as Educator" (1874), in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 163.

of this existence and refuse to allow our existence to resemble a mindless act of chance."[30]

Rejecting Ralph Waldo Emerson's view that "imitation is suicide" (because, in some sense, it amounts to a failure to *be yourself*), Nietzsche claims that admiration of a certain kind is a necessary component of becoming a self. "True educators and formative teachers," Nietzsche writes, reveal the "true basic material of your being" in a process of liberation.[31] Drawing on the image of Heraclites' ever-changing river, Nietzsche compares human existence to being submerged in a stream: the water flows ceaselessly, and we are too busy treading it to lift our heads very high above the surface. So, Nietzsche says, "we have to be lifted up" — and the people who do this are "true men": philosophers, artists, and saints.[32] These people are, in the Nietzschean sense of the word, "exemplars" — not ideals to imitate but spurs that lead the individual to a fruitful discontentment with himself. Exemplars' excellence reveals human possibilities; they are temporary inspirations that set the bar of one's aspirations at its ideal height.

Nietzschean exemplars are not to be conflated with heroes: on Nietzsche's view, a "hero" implies an otherness that encourages ethically impotent admiration, a form of avoiding the demand for self-transformation. Inspiration by exemplars, by contrast, requires only "the seriousness of the efficient workman." In *Human, All too Human*, Nietzsche dismisses much talk of genius and innate talent as counterproductive; it perpetuates the "herd" mentality by making genius and talent — or indeed virtue — to be matters of *nature* rather than habituation.[33]

On James Conant's reading, three conditions must be met to qualify as an exemplar in Nietzsche's sense:[34]

- *Commonality of genus*: an exemplar is compared with members of its own genus. (So humans have other humans as their exemplars — although we will return to question this.)
- *Exemplarity*: an exemplar illustrates a feature of interest which other members of the genus display to varying degrees.
- *Exemplariness*: an exemplar is distinguished by the pronounced degree to which it displays the feature in question (where the feature represents a virtue, excellence, or perfection).

30. Ibid., 128.

31. Ibid., 129.

32. Ibid., 159.

33. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), I.163, 86. Zagzebski's argument for excluding "genius" from her account is similar: her notion of the exemplar includes the saint, hero, and sage, but excludes the genius because on her definitions the genius's talent is natural and therefore non-imitable (*Exemplarist Moral Theory*, 1–2).

34. James Conant, "Nietzsche's Perfectionism: A Reading of 'Schopenhauer as Educator'," in *Nietzsche's Postmoralism*, ed. Richard Schacht (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Exemplars play an important role in moral formation, on Nietzsche's account, because in the wake of the so-called death of God, a "revaluation of values" is necessary. But we cannot think of values without reference to the existing values of which we are aware: Nietzschean self-creation is not creation *ex nihilo*, and our admiration does not arise *in vacuo*.

Existentialism and Exemplars: EMT and the *Via Negativa*

It is an uncontroversial claim that existentialist philosophers employed *literary* techniques with the explicit intentions of appealing to the freedoms of their readers — and provoking the possibility of moral transformation. Although disagreement abounds about who counts as an existentialist and on what grounds, most of the thinkers included in "canonical" definitions — Søren Kierkegaard, Gabriel Marcel, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus — wrote works rich in exemplars, even when they were not writing "literature" per se: Kierkegaard's knight of infinite resignation in *Fear and Trembling*, Nietzsche's last man in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and Sartre's waiter in *Being and Nothingness* (among many others), provoked their readers to reflect on the ways in which they resemble these exemplars in order to recalibrate their aspirations — and these passages are among the best-known in recent European philosophy. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre held widely divergent views about metaphysics and morality, but they agreed that the poetic, the imaginary, and the literary had the capacity not only to "maim" human thought, but to elicit it — and to stimulate moral reflection and growth. However, they did not think exemplars served only to provoke *admiration*: sometimes morally fruitful discontentment was achieved by the shock of recognizing what was not admirable within oneself, or by the discomfort of uncertainty about exactly what example the exemplars were supposed to serve. All of the exemplars listed above, in fact, were *negative* exemplars — intended to illuminate the *via negativa* of the moral life. This — they show their readers — is how *not* to live.

In the case of French existentialism, the second quarter of the twentieth century saw debates about the relation between form and content unfold alongside evaluations of the competing legacies of Christianity, Hellenism, and modernity. Nietzsche and the readings of Hegel by Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hippolite entered French intellectual life among debates about whether the soul of France was "rational" or "mystical." Camus claimed that what his time needed was a "mystic reason" that facilitated dialogue between reason and the heart. Rejecting Hegel's hyperrationalism, Camus claimed that "[p]eople can only think in images. If you want to be a philosopher, write novels."[35]

In the 1930s Jean-Paul Sartre, too, privileged imagination and aspired to be a writer more than a philosopher. In an interview he reported that by 1924 (that is, before the age of 20), he had come to the conclusion that "imagining involved a free leap into what is not," revealing that "human consciousness is essentially free —

35. Albert Camus, *Notebooks 1935–1942*, trans. Philip Thody (New York: Knopf, 1963), 10.

free to negate the given, to posit and create what is not, to rise above the reality in which it is enmeshed."[36] Sartre would go on to write novels that even Nussbaum's critics count as "borderline cases, hybrid works which combine the imaginative world-building of literature with the argumentation of philosophy" — and to admit that we can learn from them but "*only insofar as they are philosophical*, which is to say only insofar as they deploy convincing chains of reasoning."[37]

Zagzebski's EMT assigns narratives greater, and less conditional, value than Nussbaum's critics: she describes narratives as "one of the primary vehicles for the moral education of the young, and the basic way humans of any age develop and alter their moral sensibilities."[38] Like her existentialist precursors, Zagzebski claims that "Narratives capture the imagination and elicit emotions that motivate action."[39] Yet her account says very little about the ways emotions other than admiration can be morally educative or, as she puts it, "reveal moral value" and serve as the basis for moral judgments. Zagzebski does identify "contempt" as the opposite of admiration and acknowledges the incompleteness of a theory that does not take it into account, writing that "[a] fully developed theory therefore ought to give attention to contempt,"[40] including empirical investigation of what she calls "anti-exemplars," who are deserving targets of it.[41] But her claim that it is easier to emulate what we admire than to model ourselves on what we want *not* to be sets her apart from many exemplarists in the history of philosophy.

As Bryan Warnick's study *Imitation and Education* makes clear, classical sources such as Livy's *History of Rome* offer the reader examples with an explicit invitation to "select for yourself and your country what to imitate, and also what, as being mischievous in its inception and disastrous in its issues, you are to avoid."[42] Nonadmirable exemplars abound in religious narratives — the Bible and the Qur'an include multiple exemplars of error and failure, and the scriptures of the Abrahamic religions are far from alone in doing so. Moreover, for many readers over many centuries, the emotions these exemplars elicit is much more wide-ranging than admiration and contempt.

Indeed, it is part of the temporal structure of reading or hearing narratives that one's emotional response to an exemplar may change dramatically during the

36. Sartre made these remarks in an interview with Redmond O'Hanlon, "Sartre on Literature and Politics: A Conversation with Redmond O'Hanlon," *The Crane Bag* 7, no. 1 (1983): 82.

37. Joshua Landy, "A Nation of Madame Bovarys: On the Possibility and Desirability of Moral Improvement through Fiction," in *Art and Ethical Criticism*, ed. Garry L. Hagberg (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 77.

38. Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory*, 8.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 31.

41. Ibid., 232–233.

42. Livy, quoted in Bryan R. Warnick, *Imitation and Education: A Philosophical Enquiry into Learning by Example* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 15.

process. Take, for example, Camus's novel *The Fall*. Its form is that of a first-person narration, a confession. The narrator tells us that his name is Jean-Baptiste Clamence. In his past he was a well-known lawyer in Paris who specialized in good causes. Now he is sitting in a bar in Amsterdam reflecting on why his respectable life left him feeling "at ease in everything, yet satisfied with nothing."[43] Clamence is preoccupied by questions of judgment and guilt, but at the novel's outset the reasons why are opaque. It is unclear whether his example is positive or negative, whether his narration is trustworthy or unreliable. He attempts to name the struggles that haunt his conscience: self-love, a desire to dominate others, ambivalence about wanting to be loved, cruelly treating people as a means to his ends. Clamence tells his confidant, "We do not want to correct ourselves or to be improved: for that, first of all, we should have to be judged and found wanting."[44] Using literary techniques that promote disidentification and identification at different stages of the narrative, Camus invites the reader into judgment on the narrator, only to find herself *accused* into recognition: in the act of reading she, too, may become guilty of the phenomenon he describes — human condemnation. "We have no need of God to create guilt or punish. … You speak about the Last Judgement. … I have known the worst it can offer, which is the judgement of men."[45]

Given the importance of nonadmirable and mixed-trait narrative exemplars in many traditions of ethical formation, negative exemplarity and the neurological significance of emotions other than admiration and contempt may be valuable avenues for further research. As Koji Tachibana notes, the "neurological substantiation of admiration does not imply the theoretical necessity that admiration is philosophically required to identify a moral exemplar."[46] One may, of course, wish to object that "negative emotions" are less reliable than admiration. But as Watson and Wilson point out,[47] and the case of Jean Vanier demonstrates, admiration itself is fallible. Rather than explore the question of whether a wide range of fallible emotions will substantiate the claims of EMT, I will now turn to consider the question of *whose* admiration is included in the plural pronoun "we."

Form, Content, and the Feminine Condition

In the same decade that Sartre and Camus decided that the imagination was central to their philosophies, Simone de Beauvoir determined to be a writer of "the novel of the inner life" — in particular, a novel in which she depicted the realization of a young woman that she was free to choose herself. As a philosophy student in Paris in the 1920s she encountered philosophers who praised the novel's ability to depict the inner and outer dimensions of human experience — for

43. Albert Camus, *The Fall*, trans. Robin Buss (London: Penguin, 2013), 20.

44. Ibid., 52.

45. Ibid., 69.

46. Koji Tachibana, "Nonadmirable Moral Exemplars and Virtue Development," *Journal of Moral Education* 48, no. 3 (2019): 354.

47. Watson and Wilson, "Review Essay: *Exemplarist Moral Theory*," 759.

example Henri Bergson, who claimed that literature can tear "aside the cleverly woven web of our conventional self."[48] When Beauvoir read this in his *Time and Free Will*, she had a "great intellectual rapture" because she saw in his philosophy not just "logical constructions" but "palpable reality."[49]

Like Nietzsche, Beauvoir was a reader of Schopenhauer. In his essay "On Women," Schopenhauer wrote that women are "the second sex, inferior in every respect to the first," and that they exist solely for the continuation of the human species.[50] He thought that it was possible for women to have talent, but agreed with Rousseau and many others that women could never attain genius: "the most distinguished intellects among the whole sex have never managed to produce a single achievement in the fine arts that is really great, genuine, and original; or given to the world any work of permanent value in any sphere."[51] To which Beauvoir objected, why didn't the Nietzschean injunction to "become who you are" apply in the same way if the "you" in question is female? In 1949, Beauvoir argued that dominant social scripts depicted women as destined to lives as wives, mothers, mistresses, or mystics — instead of pursuing the kinds of projects that tend to be given the moniker "genius." But, Beauvoir pointed out, "*to be* is to have become."[52] Whereas Nietzsche dismissed talk of genius, innate talent, and virtue as counterproductive on the grounds that it perpetuated the "herd" mentality, Beauvoir turned to the concept of "femininity" to subject it to a similar scrutiny, asking why some took "femininity" — and indeed women's "inferiority" — to be a matter of *nature* rather than habituation.

Following Judith Butler's influential article on *The Second Sex*,[53] some readers have taken Beauvoir to employ a distinction between "sex" and "gender" and to endorse a social constructivist view of "gender" on the basis of its most famous sentence, which appears in volume II: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."[54] But prior to making that assertion, in volume I of *The Second Sex* Beauvoir claimed against Schopenhauer that "one is not born, but becomes, a genius; and the feminine condition has, until now, rendered this

48. Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

49. Simone de Beauvoir, *Diary of a Philosophy Student Volume 1, 1926–27*, ed. Barbara Klaw, Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir, and Margaret Simons (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 58–61, 66; she cites Bergson's *Time and Free Will*.

50. Arthur Schopenhauer, "On Women," in *Studies in Pessimism*, trans. T. Bailey Saunders (London: George Allen, 1913), 115.

51. Ibid., 114.

52. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevalier (London: Vintage, 2009), 13.

53. Judith Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*," *Yale French Studies* 72 (1986): 35–49.

54. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 293.

becoming impossible."[55] In order to understand Beauvoir's engagement with the moral perfectionism of her predecessors and her challenge to EMT, we must turn first to Beauvoir's moral philosophy and her conception of the relation between philosophy and literature.

Beauvoir's first published philosophical essay, *Pyrrhus and Cinéas*, was written in 1943 and released in September 1944, after the liberation of Paris. In it she confronts the apparent absurdity of human projects in the absence of transcendent values, writing that human projects "seem absurd because they exist only by setting limits for themselves, and one can always overstep these limits, asking oneself derisively, 'Why as far as this? Why not further? What's the use?'"[56] Her essay begins with an imaginary conversation between characters from Plutarch: between Pyrrhus, the king of Epirus in the fourth century BCE, and Cinéas, his advisor. They are discussing Pyrrhus's plan to conquer the world when Cinéas asks him, What difference did it make whether one conquered the world or rested at home?

What's at stake in existentialism, for Beauvoir, is how one should live — how should I exist in this river of time that is mine? So she frames her essay ethically, with injunctions from narrative exemplars her audience would be sure to recognize: Voltaire's Candide and Jesus Christ. She knew well that these figures' authority would vary depending on the self-narratives of her readers, some of whom would be staunchly secular, some Catholic. Candide famously suggests that the ethical life demands that we must "cultivate our garden," and Christ that we should "love our neighbor." But what, she asks, *is* my garden? Who *is* my neighbor? And how should I act, to love him? In the absence of God, Beauvoir writes, only I "can create the tie that unites me to the other;" and only I can determine what is my garden, choosing "its location and its limits."[57] It is through action that Beauvoir thinks one *makes* a neighbor of the other. Every human is thrown into the world in a place that is not of her choosing; but once there she must decide on

55. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 154. Few Beauvoir scholars agree with Judith Butler's claim in "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*" that Beauvoir endorses social constructivism about gender. Many of them dismiss this as a misreading based on the impartial and philosophically incompetent English translation by H. M. Parshley (Beauvoir never uses the word "gender" in *The Second Sex*). See, e.g., Sara Heinämaa, "What Is a Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of the Sexual Difference," *Hypatia* 12, no. 1 (1997): 20–39; Bauer, *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, and Feminism*; Moira Gatens, "Beauvoir and Biology: A Second Look," in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. Claudia Card (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Toril Moi, "While We Wait: Notes on the English Translation of *The Second Sex*," in *The Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. Emily R. Grosholz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. This case of reception is complicated in part because Butler's presentation of Beauvoir's views regarding sex and gender changes over time: Butler praises views she attributes to Beauvoir in her earliest publications but then, as Meryl Altman notes, presents those same views as the basis of her argument *against* Beauvoir in *Gender Trouble*. See Meryl Altman, *Beauvoir in Time* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 93, n. 31. See also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

56. Simone de Beauvoir, *Pyrrhus and Cineas*, in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Margaret A. Simons (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 90.

57. Ibid., 93, 95.

how she will occupy that place, and how she will shape the conditions of possibility for others' actions.

Beauvoir's ethics — which she will go on in the *Ethics of Ambiguity* to call "ambiguous" in order to distinguish it from Camus's "absurd"[58] — is defined in contrast to what she, like Sartre, calls "the serious mind," which claims that there are values in the world that exist prior to the human bestowal of value upon them. In the absence of God, Beauvoir argued that actions should be oriented to the human other, because here too they can take on an infinite dimension by being witnessed and by becoming the foundation of others' projects. When a child finishes a drawing, she writes, he is eager to show it to his parents — his accomplishment gains value when it is beheld by their eyes. Although solitude can be enjoyable, Beauvoir says, no one is satisfied with it for their entire life because human beings *need to be seen*. We need the positive regard of what she calls a "witness." Even Christian mystics who claimed to experience God directly and intensely — which is to say, who reached the *telos* of human life as they understood it — emerged from solitude to witness to and be witnessed by other human beings: "Saint Teresa wrote *The Interior Castle* and St John of the Cross his canticles."[59]

Beauvoir agreed with Sartre that our experience of others' gaze is often threatening: being seen by another person can result in shame, alienation, or objectification. But on Beauvoir's view "the gaze" of "the other" is not necessarily a threat to my subjectivity; it can also be a non-reifying invitation to my action. For in addition to *looking at* others, Beauvoir recognized that we *look to* them in becoming ourselves. She disagreed with Sartre that all *looking to* could be reduced to imprisonment in shame or the reifying gaze that reduces others to being a member of a social category or an object to instrumentalize. In some cases, she thought, looking to another was a call (*un appel*) to or recognition of their freedom, the locus of their particular personhood.

One of the central messages of *The Second Sex* was that when women look for exemplars in becoming themselves, they are often disappointed or confused, because instead of finding "true women," they find a multiplicity of one-dimensional myths. In the first volume of the book, she argued that philosophers, biologists, historians, psychoanalysts, political theorists, and literary writers had been guilty of making universalizing claims about "the human condition" on an unwarranted basis: the experiences of some men. In "the feminine condition," Beauvoir argued, *many* women were disproportionately defined "from without": they were seen as objects, not subjects, and confronted with contradictory claims about their value.[60]

58. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel Press, 1976).

59. Beauvoir, *Pyrrhus and Cineas*, 116.

60. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, volume I, part III.

Beauvoir's analysis of female exemplars raises a challenge to Zagzebski's proposal to locate the point of origin of ethics in the exemplars that "we" admire because — as Beauvoir put it, "women do not say 'we'"[61] — they tend to identify with the interests of their class or race rather than with others in the social category "woman." Kotsonis has charged scholars working on moral exemplarism with failing to note that "admiration is substantially influenced by prevailing socio-cultural norms and values," claiming that "exemplarist theories justify (and perpetuate) a counter-intuitive gender-specific understanding of morality."[62] But if Beauvoir is correct, then Kotsonis's "culture-specificity" objection does not go far enough — since EMT also fails to account for the influence of intra-cultural disagreement within and between social categories such as sex or gender. On Beauvoir's view, what it means to be a "good" or "virtuous" woman is not homogeneous, whether one asks men or women. Where age is concerned, too, what a child or a pensioner might consider to be exemplary will depend on their particular *situation* — bodily, social, economic, political, etc.[63]

The operative definition of "woman" in *The Second Sex* is "a human being in search of values in a world of values."[64] However, Beauvoir distinguished between the human condition and "the feminine condition" because abstract freedom and the concrete power to exercise it were not equally distributed in the world: "every individual may practice his freedom inside his world, but not everyone has the means of rejecting, even by doubt, the values, taboos, and prescriptions by which he is surrounded."[65] In *The Second Sex* Beauvoir turned to the values, taboos, and prescriptions concerning women, and came to the conclusion that *women* were persistently "looked at" in ways that reinforced their lack of concrete power in the world, and that they were socially encouraged to "look to" the imaginations of others in ways that prohibited them from choosing their own flourishing. In "the feminine condition" women are encouraged to accept that their value arises from being seen and desired *as objects* — being visually beautiful, an object of desire and love — and that their value is conditional on conforming to dominant social imaginaries about womanhood. On her view, women were too rarely told to "become who you are!" Rather, they were encouraged to "become who others wanted them to be," or to become "split subjects" — who would either fail to live

61. Ibid., 8.

62. Kotsonis, "On the Limitations of Moral Exemplarism," 225.

63. Although constraints of space prohibit considering other social categories, the point generalizes beyond gender and age to, e.g., race, class, religion, and sexuality. It would be interesting to know whether there are any asymmetries between narrative exemplars inviting identification when positive, and disidentification when negative — and whether conditions of identification with exemplars vary across or within social categories.

64. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 62. In full, this passage reads: "For us, woman is defined as a human being in search of values within a world of values, a world where it is indispensable to understand the economic and social structure; we will study her from an existential point of view, taking into account her total situation."

65. Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 78.

up to their own aspirations or be seen as failures at "love" because they pursued their own projects in life.

Beauvoir believed that literature was a more effective tool than philosophy for shaping social imaginaries because it offered what she called "imaginary experiences" of the world from different first-person points of view — "views from within."[66] It had the potential to reveal "possibles" (that is, concrete possibilities available to a particular individual) in a way that abstract philosophical approaches did not.

It was for this reason that, with some notable exceptions, she chose to write novels and, eventually, "memoirs" alongside more traditionally philosophical forms: because she believed that written images could appeal to the freedoms of readers through what she called "authentic adventures of the mind."[67] Beauvoir used literature and life-writing to show characters in concrete situations, because she thought that reading narratives offered an imaginative engagement — a way of understanding others — that revealed new possibilities for action.

But she was also aware that poetry had long been used to serve the interests of the powerful, and that exemplar narratives could be used to perpetuate the admiration of unethical traits. Writing in the late 1940s, there were men who still held Rousseau's philosophy of Sophie's education to be ideal:

> the whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, and to make life agreeable and sweet to them — these are the duties of women at all times, and what should be taught them from their infancy.[68]

In one of the least-discussed sections of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir analyzed narrative exemplars of women in five then-influential authors. The first, Henry de Montherlant — a prominent writer then, later elected to the Académie Française — was the author of the anti-feminist tetralogy *Les Jeunes Filles* (*The Young Girls*),[69] which sold millions of copies and was translated into thirteen languages.[70] Beauvoir objects to Montherlant's literature because he provides no examples of women as conscious persons in their own right: "He learns from Nietzsche that 'woman is the hero's amusement' and thinks that it is enough to get pleasure

66. See Simone de Beauvoir, "Literature and Metaphysics," in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Simons, 269–276.

67. Ibid., 272 (translation modified).

68. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or Treatise on Education*, trans. William H. Payne (New York: Prometheus Books, 2003), 263.

69. This set by Montherlant comprised four novels: *Les Jeunes Filles* (1936; "The Young Girls"), *Pitié pour les femmes* (1936; "Pity for Women"), *Le Démon du bien* (1937; "The Demon of Good"), and *Les Lépreuses* (1939; "The Lepers").

70. Louis Begley, "The Pitiless Universe of Montherlant," *New York Sun*, July 18, 2007, https://www.nysun.com/arts/pitiless-universe-of-montherlant/58590/.

from women to be anointed hero."[71] Montherlant's male protagonists desire to be dominant; their "heroic" status is achieved at the cost of the subordination of others in many social hierarchies (her discussion catalogues his orientalist, racist, and Nazi sympathies).

Beauvoir's D. H. Lawrence, too, "passionately believes in male supremacy" and "detests modern women … who claim a consciousness"; for Lawrence, women are "made to give, not to take."[72] The Catholic writer Paul Claudel presents woman as a risk taken by God in creation, a kind of wild card: woman "is the element of risk He deliberately introduced into the midst of his marvellous construction."[73] Only one of the literary writers Beauvoir considers commands her (qualified) moral respect: Stendhal was scandalized by the condition imposed on women, and he found the source of the faults blamed on women in that condition rather than their nature. Stendhal was explicitly interested in the question of women's genius, writing that "All the geniuses who are born *women* are lost for the public good; when chance offers them the means to prove themselves, watch them attain the most difficult skills."[74] In his literature, on Beauvoir's reading, he depicted women as subjects and never described "his heroines as a function of his heroes: he provides them with their own destinies."[75]

This chapter of *The Second Sex* explicitly acknowledges that literary exemplars are embedded in a narrative context, but that the "myths" that they convey are "differently orchestrated for each individual," depending on the self-narrative — and the material conditions, the entire situation — of the reader.[76] In each of the authors Beauvoir considers, she claims that the "true woman" is a woman whose destiny is to love a man: "In any case, what is demanded of her is self-forgetting and love."[77] She does not object to self-forgetting or love in themselves, but to the gendered asymmetry of these "virtues" and the narrative exemplars who illustrate them. If self-forgetting love is one of the heights of human accomplishment, then men too should be expected to climb it to the peak — by resisting the pervasive cultural norms that objectify, instrumentalize, and exploit women. Instead, on Beauvoir's reading, narrative exemplars of women often serve an ideological function, mystifying their oppression and naturalizing their subjugation in the name of love or nature. Recent defenders of exemplary education have claimed that one of the benefits of educating through exemplars is that exemplarism provides a

71. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 236.

72. Ibid., 239, 241, and 242.

73. Paul Claudel, *The Adventures of Sophie*, quoted in Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 246.

74. Stendhal, quoted in Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 262.

75. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 269.

76. For more recent work on the complex interactions of individuals and social conventions and structures, which speaks to some of the questions Zagzebski's theory leaves less developed, see Warnick, *Imitation and Education*, chap. 8.

77. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 273.

convincing phenomenology of admiration.[78] But an important part of coming to adulthood, on Beauvoir's account, is the recognition of a plurality of exemplars that precedes choosing for yourself what is admirable. This plurality can provoke a particular species of (potentially) fruitful discontentment which I will call *exemplary vertigo*: the dizzy possibility of realizing that all of these "morals" cannot be true at once, that you are going to have to appropriate one for yourself — and that in certain social conditions the "exemplars" that are offered to you may not be conducive to your flourishing. In fact, they may actively encourage you *not* to pursue it.

On the level of form, Beauvoir's views about literature are clearly similar to those of Camus, Sartre, and several others in their generation in France who thought philosophy could and should be expressed in literary forms to engage readers affectively and intellectually for transformative ends. On the level of content, however, Beauvoir was not shy about accusing her contemporaries of hypocrisy and moral failure: Sartre and Camus were outspoken advocates of the oppressed in battles against poverty, antisemitism, racism, and (arguably more in Sartre's case than Camus's) colonialism — but not when the freedom in question was the freedom of women. In *The Second Sex* she explicitly criticized the groundbreaking phenomenologies of "the body" offered by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty for failing to consider that the female body may be experienced differently in view of different bodily possibilities.

As previously noted, in her theory of the novel Beauvoir used Hegelian and personalist language to describe her fiction as "appeals to a freedom" and "authentic spiritual adventures." Like Nussbaum, she claimed that literature played a role that "pure philosophy" cannot; that it manifests

> an aspect of metaphysical experience that cannot otherwise be manifested: its subjective, singular, and dramatic character, as well as its ambiguity. Since reality is not defined as graspable by the intelligence alone, no intellectual description could give an adequate expression of it. One must attempt to present it in its integrity, as it is disclosed in the living relation that is action and feeling.[79]

Beauvoir's novels include female characters who have rich inner lives and projects they want to pursue — although they are often juxtaposed with female characters who deny their freedom in bad faith. But despite the presence of female exemplars Beauvoir's novels were — and still are — often described as "existentialist novels" about *men* who are struggling with the existentialist cliché: the anxiety of freedom.

Consider Beauvoir's novel *The Blood of Others*. Its thirteen-chapter structure alternates points of view, with seven chapters from the point of view of Jean Blomart, and six from the point of view of his dying lover, Hélène. Despite this structure, it is still today promoted as a "resistance novel" about Jean Blomart.

78. Michel Croce and Maria Silvia Vaccarezza, "Educating through Exemplars: Alternative Paths to Virtue," *Theory and Research in Education* 15, no. 1 (2017): 7.

79. Beauvoir, "Literature and Metaphysics," 275.

The back cover of the Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics edition begins with a blurb from Victor Blombert calling it "A breviary of existentialist beliefs," and then reads:

> Jean Blomart, privileged *bourgeois* turned patriot leader against the Nazi Occupation, waits through the endless night for his lover Helene to die. Flashbacks interweave the stories of both their lives until, with dawn approaching, Jean faces a momentous decision. *The Blood of Others*, written during the Occupation and published in 1945, portrays the agony of the French Resistance and the inner distress and awakening of a man impelled by anger and obsessed with family guilt. It remains one of Simone de Beauvoir's most gripping dramatizations of the existentialist's search to reconcile responsibility for others with personal happiness.

This is a novel that recounts *two* human searches for moral selfhood. So why is only one of them received as a narrative exemplar of existentialist ethics here?

Clearly, the context of reception can affect readers' perceptions of what a book is about; perhaps we should simply attribute Hélène's relative invisibility to androcentrism. But there are other important questions to be asked here. Did Hélène fail to meet some condition of exemplarity? Or must some condition be met in or by the reader to be able to see her as exemplary? To return to Nietzsche's criteria, do some readers not see her as belonging to "the same genus" — the human — such that they can identify with her? Beauvoir acknowledged in *The Second Sex* that literary exemplars are embedded in narrative contexts, and that the self-narrative of the reader will affect what is taken to be admirable or not. What more, if anything, can twenty-first-century readers learn from this example?

This question turns on many others, and here it becomes difficult to ignore the normative elephant in the room: When we use narrative exemplars in education, given the fallibility of our emotions and widespread disagreement, how can educators (or indeed writers) know whether we are perpetuating the norms we think we are? After all, it is easy to draw "edifying" lessons from a narrative — or several conflicting lessons from the same narrative — and this leads to the potential objection that it is a mistake to see the function of narrative exemplars in moral thought as anything but a sophisticated attempt to justify confirmation bias. As Landy writes, "As long as our listeners already subscribe to a particular piety, they will happily consider a story to illustrate it, indeed consider it to emerge automatically from the story, as the only possible inference; they will, under certain circumstances, go so far as to consider the story all the evidence it needs."[80]

Nussbaum famously referred to certain books as "friends" that guided her to live a more ethical life by attuning her perception to the particularities of ethical situations. However, as Richard A. Posner pointed out, "literature offers a vast choice of friendships. Many of them are with evil, dangerous, or irresponsible people — *awful* role models."[81] For this reason, Lamarque and Olsen claim that what Nussbaum identified is not philosophy *in* literature but philosophy *through*

80. Landy, "A Nation of Madame Bovarys," 68.

81. Richard A. Posner, "Against Ethical Criticism," *Philosophy and Literature* 21 (1997): 21, https://doi.org/10.1353/phl.1997.0010.

literature. Moreover, they claim that if you read for moral illumination, you are not reading a work as a *literary* work. A literary work might clarify your convictions, open up your eyes to experiences or ways of seeing the world that you had not previously imagined — but that is philosophy *through* literature, not *in* it.[82]

Although they are not articulated with analytic precision, Beauvoir's objections to Rousseau, Montherlant, and others parallel the "bad friends" objection in the ethical criticism debate: the narrative exemplars that are proposed to women as good friends are often very bad friends to them. But her answer is not to reject narrative exemplars *tout court*: the imagination — as the crucible of human possibility, the birthplace of personal and political transformation — is too important to be left to the Sophists. On Beauvoir's view, the answer to bad speech is not censorship but *more* and *more plural speech* — in this case, speech in women's own voices, contesting the narratives of those who objectify, instrumentalize, and exploit them. It is often a surprise to those unfamiliar with feminist history to learn that it was not *The Second Sex* alone that led many women to see Beauvoir as a feminist pioneer. *The Second Sex* provoked scandal after its publication in France in 1949 and sold 20,000 copies quite quickly, but it was only after the appearance of Beauvoir's memoirs in the late 1950s and early 1960s that the book sold in the hundreds of thousands, around the world, and played a role in launching several women's liberation movements: when she told *her* life as a story (*récit*), writing herself as a narrative exemplar and taking care (in her own words) to "avoid" the technical language of philosophy and psychoanalysis. On Beauvoir's pluralist perfectionism, as I read it, women needed better exemplars — not the "true women" of "men's dreams," who were often exemplary wives, exemplary mothers, or exemplary objects of desire — but women who exemplified generous freedom and pursued the possibility of everyone's flourishing, including their own. So Beauvoir turned to autobiography as an act of ethical and political commitment in the hope that it would engage the imaginations of her readers. She memorialized the philosophical account of moral development that she advanced in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex*, discussing the role of exemplars in the formation of her own aspirations — including the ways she learned from the lives of saints and the novels of George Eliot and Louisa May Alcott.

Conclusion: Narrative Exemplars and Education

What can we conclude from these discussions? I take existentialists' use of negative exemplars and Beauvoir's critical engagement with narrative exemplars of women to support the claim of this symposium's editors that "there is a great deal more scope for promoting our understanding of how exemplar narratives can be used … in educational settings."[83] However, in an age of political polarization

82. See Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, *Truth, Fiction, and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1994), 391.

83. Liz Gulliford, Edward Brooks, and Oliver Coates, "Symposium Introduction: The Pedagogical Potential of Exemplar Narratives in Moral Development and Moral Education," in this issue.

and echo chambers their use in education is fraught with challenges. Our cultures are plural, replete with competing values — and it is doubtful that "admiration" alone is sufficient to navigate the shifting seas of conflicting claims. Beauvoir's criticisms of female narrative exemplars remind us that the admiration of certain traits may serve to perpetuate the interests of the powerful, rather than to promote the flourishing of all human beings. Intracultural disagreement about what to admire can result in exemplary vertigo and unsettling uncertainty about what is admirable or how to live.

This brings us back to the question of what criteria must be met in order to achieve the "appropriate critical reflection"[84] this symposium's editors propose, and whether it is possible to meet them. But that answer depends on what the educator aims to achieve with their students, for whom their conception of "flourishing" may be an unwanted imposition. Plato's worry still seems apt: can't stories "prove" any value? I conclude by sketching a preliminary proposal that educators' use of narratives might usefully be informed by encouraging students to consider Landy's conditions of "true friendship." Building on Posner's objection to Nussbaum, Landy claims that in order for a narrative to be a "true friend," two conditions must be met by the work.

1. The work must have a sufficiently similar background scheme of facts and values to one's own (such that it can shed light on oneself).
2. The work must be axiologically complex: "If it is to spur us to serious reflection on our attitudes, then it must challenge us by placing at least two of our values into conflict, allowing each to assert its claim on us, rather than simply reinforcing one of them (in imagination) and making us feel … how astonishingly good and just we are."[85]

For Landy, a true friend is not a yes-man: she is not in the business of confirmation bias —and neither should exemplary education be. However, in order for such works to be effective tools of education, Landy argues, extratextual conditions must also be met. The work must also be "backed up *by the sanction of an external authority*,"[86] and met with receptively by the reader. Here Beauvoir agrees: when a reader opens a book, they must also open themselves to participate in the venture of reading, without presupposing that they have the key that will unlock its meaning.

This leaves educators with a conundrum. As Brookes, Coates, and Gulliford point out in the introduction to this symposium, the full psychological, neurological, and affective implications of reading are still imperfectly understood. Nussbaum's friends gave her images that were to be held up "against the images we derive from our knowledge of other conceptions, literary, philosophical,

84. Ibid.

85. Landy, "A Nation of Madame Bovarys," 80.

86. Ibid., 77.

and religious."[87] But educators may not know the content of their students' extra-textual "images," whether or not they provide the kind of sanction Landy prescribes, and whether the self-narrative of the reader is such that they are open to participating receptively.

Clearly, this leaves us with choices about the explicit curriculum: what narratives and questions we set, whether and how we make these problems explicit. But it also leaves us with choices about the implicit curriculum: how do we respond to students' schemata of facts and values? What do we praise? As Warnick points out, exemplars may be "learned from," but "they may also create the environment within which learning takes place."[88] Many of Nussbaum's critics agree with her and with Beauvoir that it is a pressing social need that we develop "the ability to see people as human beings, not simply as objects."[89] When educators themselves model a willingness to be challenged by social and axiological differences, they may *show* students that resisting reification is possible — even the reification of those with whom "we" disagree.

87. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 29.

88. Warnick, *Imitation and Education*, 85.

89. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 6.