

THE GADFLY

Ex Nihilo Nihil Fit

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SEASON'S GREETINGS!!!

The giving season is upon us, so in the spirit of intellectual giving, we've put our heads together to pass along some suggestions about what you might read for sheer pleasure and curiosity once you are done with final exams and papers. If you are like many of us, the prospect of reading *other* things can seem delicious when you are plugging away on the things you *must* read. May you find at least one little pearl in these suggestions. Best of luck to you with your final papers and exams. When you are all done, rest easy and enjoy a well-deserved respite.



THE STONESTREET BABY COMETH

Erica Stonestreet and her husband Aaron are expecting a baby boy, currently nicknamed *Pebble*, at just about any moment. When asked what she'll be doing next semester, Erica replied, "Well, I'll be on leave—for the first few weeks, I basically expect that I'll be doing just what the baby does: eat, sleep, poop, and cry. After a while, I figure I can get the little guy a head start on his philosophical education by reading to him. We'll cover the classics: Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant. You know the canon. Maybe when he's five or six months old we'll tackle the Existentialists, then move into the twentieth century. With any luck, he'll be just as much a prodigy as John Stuart Mill was—and I can continue my own scholarship at the same time." What will the baby be called? "We haven't decided yet. On the 'stone' theme, Rocky and Cliff are still in the running. Aaron, the engineer, was thinking about Rein Forest, but I'm not too sure about that one. Maybe Immanuel Maxim." The Stonestreets welcome bets on when the baby will arrive. The prize will be some of Gene Garver's old books and a cookie. Yum, yum.

BIRTHDAYS

- Noam Chomsky, 12/7
- Anne Finch Conway, 12/7
- Gabriel Marcel, 12/7
- George Santayana, 12/16
- Elizabeth of Bohemia, 12/26
- Charlie Dunbar Broad, 12/30

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**Books,
books, and
more
books.**

BOOK SUGGESTIONS—THE EXTRAVAGANZA!

Contemporary Novels - Wallace Stegner's *Crossing to Safety* – the moving story of a friendship between two couples over the course of their adult lives... Barbara Kingsolver's *Pigs in Heaven* – a humorous, heart-warming tale about a legal struggle over a Cherokee child adopted by an offbeat mother... Richard Russo's *Nobody's Fool* – Sully, an underachieving fellow with a bum knee, has a change of heart when he takes his fearful grandson under his wing in this hilarious story... Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* – this post-apocalyptic story of a father and son making their way to the coast is a grim but ultimately uplifting tale of love... Richard Flanagan's *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* – tells the poignant story of two Slovenian refugees, a father and daughter, in remote Tasmania as they struggle with the loss of a wife and mother.

Biographies - Isaac Deutscher's *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky 1879-1921* – part one of Deutscher's three-part biography of Leon Trotsky, a man who lived a life larger than anything Hollywood could ever dream up... Martin Duberman's *Paul Robeson* – another biography of a larger than life figure, someone largely forgotten but one of the greatest American figures of the 20th century... Christopher Hitchens' *Thomas Jefferson: Author of America* – a distinctive biography of a complex, brilliant American... Michael Ignatieff's *Isaiah Berlin* – an intellectual biography of one of the 20th century's greatest philosophers... Richard Sewall's *The Life of Emily Dickinson* – an expansive look at a great poet's life.

Psychology – Antonio Damasio's *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* – a graceful exploration of the neuro-chemical basis of the mind... Robert Jay Lifton's *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* – an account of the physicians who ran the death camps and how they reconciled their oaths as healers with their lives as killers... Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* – the groundbreaking study that challenged male-centered views about moral development... Owen Flanagan's *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism* – a philosophical appeal for a view of ethics properly informed by the facts of our empirical psychology.

Political Philosophy – John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* – a classic defense of individual rights by a giant of the 19th century... John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* – one of the most influential philosophy books of the 20th century... Ronald Dworkin's *Law's Empire* – a brilliant but accessible theory of the law... Susan Moller Okin's *Justice, Gender and the Family* – a critical look at the implications for justice of ignoring the “private spheres” of marriage and family... Robert Bellah's *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* – an interesting examination of the tension between individualism and community in America.

Ethics – Martha Nussbaum's *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* – an eloquent meditation on the theme of “moral luck” in the Greek view of life... Bernard Williams' *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* – a wide-ranging critique of modern moral philosophy by one of the 20th century's greatest moral philosophers... George Harris' *Reason's Grief: An Essay on Tragedy and Value* – a groundbreaking account of the inevitable tragic dimensions of the human condition... Jonathan Glover's *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* – a chilling account of the inhumanity of the 20th century... Susan Neiman's *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* – an interesting case for seeing evil at the heart of modern philosophy.

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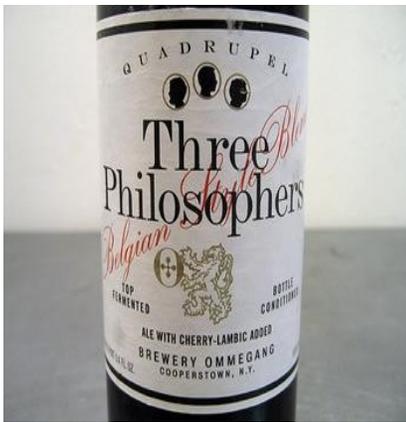
“Easier-On-The-Eyes-And Brain” Philosophy – C.S. Lewis’ *The Four Loves* – an eloquent meditation on friendship, agape, erotic love, and love of God...**Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*** – the famous account of Thoreau’s attempt to live deliberately in Walden’s woods...**Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Self-Reliance and Other Essays*** (Dover) – six essays by one of America’s greatest essay writers...**Victor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*** – a moving personal essay about Frankl’s experience in Auschwitz...**Virginia Wolff’s *A Room of One’s Own*** – a classic, hard-hitting expose of the profound costs for women in patriarchal English society.

Classic Literature – **Jane Austen’s *Pride & Prejudice*** – the comical, brilliant tale of Jane Austen’s magnificent heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, and the all-too-proud Mr. Darcy...**Homer’s *Iliad*** – the classic tale of bold Achilles’ wrath, still relevant after all these years...**Henry James’ *The Golden Bowl*** – a mountain of a book (intellectually and physically), but a truly great one...**Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime & Punishment*** – what’s not to like about a Russian thinking hard about the human condition?...**William Faulkner’s *Light in August*** – who can possibly resist a story with a character named Joe Christmas, especially when the story is crafted by the Southern master himself?

Non-Western Thought – **Phillip Kapleau’s *The Three Pillars of Zen: Teaching, Practice and Enlightenment*** – a classic book on Zen Buddhism by a westerner who became a renowned Zen teacher...**Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching*** – the beautiful Taoist text from the 6th century B.C....**Mahatma Gandhi’s *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*** – the autobiography of one of the giants of the 20th century...**Rabindranath Tagore’s *Gitanjali: A Collection of Poems by the Nobel Laureate*** – a collection of poems from the famous Bengali poet...**Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*** – the story of an Igbo tribesman trying to preserve traditions in the face of change wrought by colonization.

Memoir – **William Styron’s *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness*** – an illuminating personal account of clinical depression by one of America’s greatest living writers ... **Nancy Venable Raine’s *After Silence: Rape & My Journey Back*** – a powerful account of sexual trauma and healing...**Alexandra Fuller’s *Don’t Let’s Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood*** – a moving, delightful journey through a white African’s unusual girlhood...**Jack Erdmann’s *Whiskey’s Children*** – a gripping account of the horrors of alcoholism...**Toni McNaron’s *I Dwell in Possibility*** – the thoughtful story of a woman coming to terms with her own sexuality an unfriendly American South.

Plays – **Ariel Dorfmann’s *Death & the Maiden*** – a riveting revenge/justice drama set in a fictional South America country....**Brian Friel’s *Translations*** – a poignant play about the Anglicization of Irish place names in remote Donegal early in the 20th century...**Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*** – a classic dramatization of the Salem witch trials...**David Mamet’s *Glengarry Glen Ross*** – a hard-hitting expose of raw capitalism (reader beware: a whole lot of swearing in this one) ...**Martin McDonagh’s *The Beauty Queen of Leenane and Other Plays*** – wickedly funny, abrasive plays from a brilliant Irish playwright.



Three Philosophers... What Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle drink. What all the guys at the Symposium slugged down when they waxed poetic about love. Yep, there's nothing like a good Belgian Ale to grease the wheels of talking a bit of smack about love. *Three Philosophers...* Know when to say when.



THE SCHOOL OF ATHENS: THE BIG REMAKE!

The Philosophy Department teamed up with some good folks to do a tableau vivant (“living picture”) of Raphael’s School of Athens in the CSB Gathering Place on Friday, December 10th. For the story and other pictures, see <http://www.sctimes.com/article/20101211/NEWS01/112110012/1009/CSB-SJU-faculty--students--staff-recreate--Athens--fresco>

MARCEL PROUST’S *IN SEARCH OF TIME PAST*

My Christmas gift will be the books I am reading. Right now I am on Volume 3 of Proust’s *In Search of Time Past*. The novel (in seven volumes, but just one novel) is not a page turner. I can sometimes only read two or three pages at a time. It is perhaps the most philosophical novel I have read, apart from the second Epilogue of *War and Peace*. The issues of relationships and of Marcel’s obsession first of all with Gilberte and then with Albertine are not as interesting to me in terms of a novel, but what is interesting to me is his treatment of space and time, of beauty, of the writing art. It surely is not a novel that I will read again, since I like it much less than many other novels and find Marcel’s obsessions quite annoying. But what I think is that his roaming over the obsessions of Marcel is a psychological assault upon the reader that is somewhat unparalleled for me in what I have read. I recall quite well Father Dunstan Tucker, a wonderful English teacher, who was a teacher here when I was still dabbling as an English major, who said one day, “You people think you’re educated and you’ve never read Proust? Well, you’re wrong.” (Rene McGraw)