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THE ULTIMATE STAR TREK AND PHILOSOPHY

THE SEARCH FOR SOCRATES

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Acknowledgments

The Command Staff of Utopia Planitia

Every Federation starship, from the original *Constitution*-class *Enterprise* built in the San Francisco Yards—or in Riverside, Iowa, in the Abrams-verse—to the *Sovereign*-class *Enterprise*-E, has a dedication plaque noting those individuals who were instrumental in the design and construction of these mighty machines. Although a book like this is less likely to travel to the farthest reaches of the cosmos or be instrumental in making first contact with extraterrestrial intelligent species, there is nonetheless a veritable army of personnel no less crucial to its construction. First and foremost, without the authors who wrote the chapters you're soon to enjoy, there would be no book to begin with—just a cordrazine hallucination on the part of the editors. Furthermore, this volume is but one member of a larger fleet headed up by Admiral William Irwin, under the sector command authority of Admiral Liam Cooper at Starbase Wiley-Blackwell, whose command staff headed by Allison Kostka devoted countless hours to its final preparation that may have been better spent preparing for the next Borg or Dominion invasion.

Finally, Captains Decker and Eberl have benefitted from Starfleet's 24th-century policy of allowing families to accompany deep-space missions, meaning that that Jennifer and August, as well as Suzanne, Kennedy, Ethan, and Jack, have had to endure Borg cutting beams, Klingon *bat'leths*, Romulan disruptors, and Ferengi counterfeit gold-pressed latinum in trying to eke out lives coexistent with wannabe Starfleet officers who've indulged in too much synthehol and spent too many hours in the holodeck. Hopefully, their sacrifices will be worth it to readers of this literary starship that we're finally ready to launch into the final frontier of philosophical imagination.

Introduction

A Guide to Living Long and Prospering

> GET A LIFE, will you people? I mean, for crying out loud, it's just a TV show! … You've turned an enjoyable little job that I did as a lark for a few years into a COLOSSAL WASTE OF TIME! … It's just a TV show dammit, IT'S JUST A TV SHOW!

One of the saddest days in *Star Trek* fan history was in 1986 when, in a *Saturday Night Live* skit, the incomparable William Shatner revealed to pudgy fans in Spock ears that there's more to life than *Trek*. Of course, most fans knew this already, but to hear it put so bluntly by "the Captain" himself was almost too much to bear. So let's just get it right out there, front and center: *Star Trek* is indeed just a TV show. But that fact alone doesn't render wasted the thousands of hours spent watching Kirk battling the Gorn, Troi sensing that somebody's "hiding something," or Archer feeding cheese to Porthos. By the way, you heard that right: *thousands* of hours—based on the reasonable assumption that a fan who's ranged omnivorously over all the series has watched each of the over 700 hours of *Trek* programming at least three times (some more, some less of course: Compare your frequency of *Wrath of Khan* viewings vs. the abominable VOY episode "Threshold" or, dare we say it, "Spock's Brain").

Certainly, there are more important matters demanding one's attention: work, school, family, *Star Trek* trivia (sorry, fell off the wagon there). As Jerry Seinfeld once exhorted his friend George Costanza, "We're trying to have a society here!" Given the human need to produce and consume, to have gainful employment, meaningful relationships, an SUV, and two plasma TVs, all of which require time and

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effort, do multiple viewings of "The City on the Edge of Forever" constitute "time suckage"? No, because *Star Trek* clearly has something worthwhile to say.

Okay, but *what* does *Star Trek* say? Of course, there's that "hopeful vision of the future" thing that can be heard in every interview about Gene Roddenberry's legacy. But are there other metaphysical, moral, social, or political lessons we can glean from the Great Bird of the Galaxy's vision? In 2008, the intrepid, forward-seeing (and humble) editors of this volume sought to answer this question by producing *Star Trek and Philosophy: The Wrath of Kant*, eighteen chapters on diverse topics in metaphysics, ethics, politics, religion, and logic—a veritable Babel conference on philosophy beyond the final frontier. The intellectual scope of the *Star Trek* universe, however, demanded that we set out on another journey. Just as the Federation expanded its exploration into the Gamma and Delta Quadrants (thanks to the Bajoran Prophets and the Caretaker, respectively), so we, too, have expanded our exploration into the *Trek* saga to mine it, not for dilithium or latinum, but for its treasure trove of intellectual riches.

Over the course of thirty-one chapters, our fellow explorers have tackled the kind of difficult questions that Q will probably challenge humanity to answer hundreds of years from now. In the realm of *ethics*, we examine the moral psychology of the elite individuals who rise to the rank of starship captain, as well as the reasons that justify the Prime Directive they've each sworn to uphold (with the occasional bending, ignoring, or outright violation). While Captains Kirk, Picard, Sisko, Janeway, and Archer often appear justified in their flagrant rule breaking, there are some instances in which their interference is evidently harmful: Why is Kirk so hellbent on destroying utopian civilizations? Is it out of jealousy for having "no beach to walk on" himself?

Other chapters examine the *social* and *political* ideas that underpin various nonhuman cultures: Why are the Klingons so different and yet seem so familiar to us? Do the Borg actually embody values that we might evolve into holding? Is the Federation economic system sustainable in a way that Ferenginar's unbridled capitalism isn't (at least until Rom takes over as Grand Nagus)? Is there a universal meaning of "justice" by which we as finite humans can judge the morality of the Q Continuum?

As a work of science fiction, *Star Trek* is able to raise *metaphysical* questions in a way ordinary TV dramas can't: Should we consider Data or *Voyager*'s holographic Doctor as "persons"? What would

it take for an individual to recover her identity once she's lost it in a collective consciousness? Would it have made a real difference if Commander William Riker had died and Lieutenant Tom Riker had taken his place on the *Enterprise*-D? Does it make sense that more highly evolved beings won't have bodies that can move, touch, and feel? How can we know we're not living in a holodeck right now, and would it really matter to us if we were?

The attempt to provide answers to speculative inquiries like these has inspired not only millennia of *philosophical* wisdom, but also the emergence of various *religious* belief systems. Roddenberry, an avowed secular humanist, envisioned a future in which humanity no longer relied upon faith-based answers to unresolved metaphysical or moral questions. Still, religious beliefs and values are treated seriously as essential aspects of Klingon, Bajoran, and other alien cultures in *Trek*. Is human culture of the future better off having divested itself of such superstition, or is there something to be gained by gathering "a few laurel leaves"?

This book is an expression of our "continuing mission" to explore the philosophical frontier of Roddenberry's enduring legacy. As we celebrate a half-century of *Star Trek* on television and in cinema, and with the crew of the Abrams-verse *Enterprise* embarking on their five-year mission in *Star Trek Beyond*, we can confidently say this book won't be the final volume on *Star Trek and Philosophy*, for indeed "the human adventure is just beginning.... "

Part I

ALPHA QUADRANT: HOME SYSTEMS

1

"The More Complex the Mind, the Greater the Need for the Simplicity of Play"

Jason T. Eberl

This chapter's title comes from "Shore Leave" (TOS), in which the *Enterprise* crew encounters an "amusement planet" designed by an advanced civilization—they return to this world in "Once Upon a Planet" (TAS). It may seem counterintuitive for highly intelligent beings to need a realm for fantasy entertainment. Some forms of play, however, may be not only beneficial but also *necessary* for intellectual, moral, and spiritual beings to *flourish*. Edifying play isn't aimed at mere pleasure seeking, but rather can lead each of us to a greater understanding of our own self, the world in which we live, and what reality, if any, may lie beyond this world. Along these lines, Josef Pieper (1904–1997) argues that beings capable of understanding the world around them, as well as inquiring into the deeper reality that may transcend the physical world, *must* seek intellectual, moral, and spiritual fulfillment through forms of play that take them out of their workaday lives. In a phrase reminiscent of my *Trek*-inspired title, Pieper says, "The more comprehensive the power of relating oneself to the world of objective being, so the more deeply anchored must be the 'ballast' in the inwardness of the subject."[1] In other words, "Know thyself," as the Oracle at Delphi proclaimed. Indeed, this idea was seized upon by Socrates as the starting point of all philosophy.

Pieper follows a philosophical tradition set down by Plato—who bears only a superficial relationship to "Plato's Stepchildren" (TOS)—Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas, all of whom could find some affinity with *Star Trek* and other sci-fi/fantasy adventures that tell a good morality tale or stretch the limits of human imagination. As

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Aristotle points out, humans, as *rational* animals, aren't satisfied with mere pleasure seeking, but are driven to reflect upon the limitless possibilities of existence. Continuing that line of thought, Aquinas states, "The reason why the philosopher can be compared to the poet [or the sci-fi writer?] is that both are concerned with wonder."[2] Truly, a sense of wonder pervades *Trek*, in which the judicious use of visual effects and theatrical acting—just look at the endless crew reaction shots in *The Motion Picture* while the *Enterprise* flies through V'Ger—helps convey and inspire such wonder while "rebooting" wondrous mythological themes from Homer, Virgil, Dante, and others.

Aristotle notes that "we work in order to be at leisure."[3] But Pieper adds that we need to break out of the economic cycle of *productivity* and *consumption* to fully access our sense of wonder and explore the "final frontier" of reality and consciousness. We need to allow ourselves the leisure necessary to *contemplate* the universe and our place within it. But leisure isn't simply "recharging our batteries." Rather, it's taking time to reflect upon those all-important questions of humanity, reflection that doesn't produce immediate, tangible goods that can be traded on the floor of the Ferengi stock exchange. Leisure is *not* idly twiddling one's thumbs; yet, Pieper finds there to be a "festive" element to human leisure that allows us to develop ourselves intellectually and culturally in a way that simple, pleasure-seeking *hedonism*—in the form, say, of Landru's "red hour"—fails to provide: "The leisure of man includes within itself a celebratory, approving, lingering gaze of the inner eye on the reality of creation."[4] Leisure, in all its proper forms, is a necessary element that must be reintegrated into the modern concept of a "happy life." With that in mind, our mission will be to review Pieper's concept of leisure and consider how contemplating *Star Trek* can be a stimulating and edifying form of play.

Life Is Not for the Timid

The philosopher Robert Nozick (1938–2002) offered an ingenious thought experiment in which people would reject a method for getting as much pleasure as they'd ever want. Nozick asks us to consider an "experience machine" to which a person could be hooked up for an extended period of time or perhaps their entire life—think of the virtual reality of "The Thaw" (VOY) but without the creepy clown.[5] During their time "in the machine," they'd experience nothing but pleasurable experiences that had been pre-programmed, all the

while being unaware that their experiences are artificially generated. Nozick thinks that rational persons would reject being plugged into the machine because we want to *do* certain things, not merely *have the experience* of doing them, and because we want to *be* a certain type of person. Nozick thus contends, "There is no answer to the question of what a person is like who has long been in the tank."[6] Ultimately, Nozick claims we also want to be in contact with a *deeper reality* than the artificially constructed world of the machine.

The problem with the idyllic enticement of the experience machine isn't that it's *ideal*, but rather that it's *idle*, presenting us with a mode of life that has lost its purpose. We have no unsatisfied desires, and there's no striving to change or to grow. In such a scenario, Q's ultimate verdict on humanity's guilt is all but assured and we suffer the "tedium of immortality."[7] It's not that the experience machine would make us immortal, but we'd endure the same purposelessness of continued existence that led to the first suicide of a Q in "Death Wish" (VOY). Philosophers from Aristotle to Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) have argued that *change* is the fundamental engine that drives reality forward, and that purposeful change is necessary if rational beings are to better themselves intellectually, morally, or spiritually—without it, they might *live*, but wouldn't *flourish*.[8]

Many depictions of similar "experience machines" in sci-fi also lead to the allegorical conclusion that human beings aren't meant to live in such a purely hedonistic environment. Consider "This Side of Paradise" (TOS), in which a group of human colonists become infected by spores that render them completely happy, peaceful, and healthy (even healing old scars). The "dark side" of life on Omicron Ceti III is that the colonists are *stagnant*. They produce only the bare minimum they need to survive and maintain a comfortable status quo. Once the *Enterprise* crew frees the colonists from the spores' hold—after initially succumbing to the spores' effects themselves—Kirk wonders: "Maybe we weren't meant for paradise. Maybe we were meant to fight our way through. Struggle, claw our way up, scratch for every inch of the way. Maybe we can't stroll to the music of the lute, we must march to the sound of drums."[9] There's more to life than mint juleps.

In what sort of activity should we engage? Humanity's "prime directive," particularly in Western societies as analyzed by Pieper, but increasingly in Eastern societies as well, seems to be "Work! Produce! Buy! Contribute!" But wait, this sounds suspiciously like the *Borg's* prime directive. The Borg certainly aren't idle: they're always working, producing, consuming, and all quite *efficiently*—no time is ever

wasted on a Borg cube or unicomplex. What makes humanity different from the Borg? For one set of answers, see the last four seasons of *Voyager* as Captain Janeway strives to help former Borg drone Seven of Nine regain her self-identity.[10] For another, we can return to Pieper's analysis of the value of leisure. Pieper argues that the difference between Borg and human productivity stems from a difference between two types of goods: *bonum utile* and *bonum commune*. The first is the good of "utility": what's *useful*. The second refers to the "common good" in which we seek the flourishing of each individual member of the community. Since there are no individuals within the Borg Collective, there can be no *bonum commune*; there's only the utility that each drone brings to the Collective. This difference, says Pieper, is also found in modern industrialized society, where employers often conceive of workers as little more than drones, and marketing gurus see consumers as absorbent, pleasure-seeking sponges.

So why isn't a perfectly pleasurable life under the spores' influence on Omicron Ceti III enough for a *happy* human life? Natural law ethicists Patrick Lee and Robert George place the value of pleasure within the larger context of "genuinely fulfilling" human goods, concluding that "pleasure is good (desirable, worthwhile, perfective) if and only if attached to a fulfilling or perfective activity or condition. Pleasure is *like* other goods in that a fulfilling activity or condition is better with it than without it. But pleasure is *unlike* full-fledged goods in that it is not a genuine good apart from some other fulfilling activity or condition."[11] Lee and George point to the case of "sadistic pleasures," pleasures that are attendant upon immoral acts, to show that the experience of pleasure alone doesn't suffice as a genuine good for us.[12]

Certainly there are various goods, unlike pleasure, that are both intrinsically desirable and "really perfective or fulfilling" for human persons. But the pursuit of mere pleasure is "disordered" because it involves treating one's body as merely an instrument to attain a goal. It also involves a retreat from reality into *fantasy*. Now, retreating from reality into fantasy may indeed interfere with living a genuinely fulfilling life—just think of the proverbial "couch potato" sitting in front of the television with over 500 channels at their disposal (and still nothing good on!), or individuals who habitually view pornography instead of cultivating healthy sexual relationships, or Lieutenant Barclay's "holodiction."[13] Despite this, a rich, imaginative fantasy life could support the pursuit of genuinely fulfilling goods for human persons. First of all, flights into fantasy aren't inherently bad for us, as

we see with the need to dream for our psychological well-being—as the crew of the *Enterprise*-D discovers in "Night Terrors" (TNG). Furthermore, various forms of fantasy entertainment—in particular, well-written and produced sci-fi—allow us to pursue the genuinely fulfilling goods of intellectual and moral contemplation.

The main way in which science fiction provides these kinds of goods is through *thought experiments*. Just like Nozick's test of our intuitions about hedonism by use of the "experience machine," these "What if?" scenarios let us test metaphysical, moral, and other hypotheses we can't examine by the methods of empirical science. As Ray Bradbury (1920–2012) famously put it, "science fiction may be one of the last places in our society where the philosopher can roam just as freely as he chooses."[14] Sci-fi holds up a mirror to contemporary society by placing ethical, political, social, and other issues in a different context, inviting us to reflect without kneejerk emotional or cultural reactions. After peering "through the looking glass," our metaphysical and moral intuitions may be either challenged or confirmed—or we may be left in that state of puzzlement, called *aporia*, in which Socrates left many of his dialogue partners. So one value of thought experiments lies in the role they play in Pieper's concept of leisure: the use of time in which mental and physical energy is directed away from merely productive or consumptive work and toward intellectual contemplation and the active pursuit of spiritual and moral goods that can lead to human flourishing in every dimension of our being.

Mrs. Sisko, Can Bennie Come Out and Play?

Pieper opens his book with the following passage from Plato:

> But the gods, taking pity on human beings—a race born to labor—gave them regularly recurring divine festivals, as a means of refreshment from their fatigue; they gave them the Muses, and Apollo and Dionysus as the leaders of the Muses, to the end that, after refreshing themselves in the company of the gods, they might return to an upright posture.[15]

Perhaps with the loss of the Muses in mind, Charles Taylor charts the movement in Western culture from an "enchanted" religious worldview to the secular world in which we live today. One of the hallmarks of this gradual shift in attitude is the waning of sacred or "higher" times. These include religious feasts that take a community out of the

realm of profane or "ordinary" time to remember events of spiritual and cultural significance. They also include times of communal leisure when the members of a community don't just break from their various labors, but engage in rituals that put them in a collective mindset, making present historical moments that have shaped their culture. The Christian celebration of Good Friday, for example, isn't a mere *remembrance* of Christ's suffering and death, but an event that makes his redemptive sacrifice *present* with the attendant spiritual graces:

> Higher times gather and re-order secular time. They introduce "warps" and seeming inconsistencies in profane time-ordering. Events which are far apart in profane time could nevertheless be closely linked.... Good Friday 1998 is closer in a way to the original day of the Crucifixion than mid-summer's day 1997. Once events are situated in relation to more than one kind of time, the issue of time-placing becomes quite transformed.[16]

It should be noted that, because of these comments about discontinuous times being close to each other, Taylor's field studies are currently under review by Agents Lucsly and Dulmur of the Federation's Department of Temporal Investigations ("Trials and Tribble-ations," DS9).

The value of festive pursuits during "higher times" is grounded in the connection between human and divine minds. Pieper notes that Aquinas "speaks of *contemplation* and *play* in a single breath: 'Because of the leisure of contemplation the Scripture says of the Divine Wisdom itself that it "plays all the time, plays throughout the world." ' "[17] The link between play and contemplation shows that leisure isn't merely resting or being idle. Rather, its purpose is to allow space for intellectual, moral, and spiritual development through religious rituals, charitable work, and the study of the *liberal arts*, which Pieper, following John Henry Newman (1801–1890), distinguishes from the *servile* arts aimed at providing the necessities of life as opposed to directly supporting the flourishing of the human intellect and spirit.[18] Anticipating in some ways *Star Trek*'s "money-less" economy, though not doing away with capital altogether, Pieper recommends certain practical steps to effect the "de-proletarization" of the modern labor– and consumer-driven culture in order to restrict the servile arts to benefit the liberal arts: "building up of property from wages, limiting the power of the state, and overcoming internal poverty."[19] He further distinguishes two types of merit-based

compensation for the two different types of arts: *honoraria* for those engaged in the liberal arts and *wages* for labor in the servile arts.[20]

Pieper understands leisure to involve the same "warping" of time that Taylor describes.[21] The contemplative possibilities that leisure affords take us outside of the routine cycle of mere work and rest to reflect upon the eternal truths that ultimately define existence. We can see this in the sense of *eternity* or "no time" experienced in the practice of various Western or Eastern meditative arts,[22] or by those who commune with the Bajoran Prophets in their Celestial Temple. These possibilities also lie in the capacity for well-done history and forward- or past-looking fiction to bring various truths about the nature of the world and the human condition to light, truths that would otherwise be obscured by the press of immediate happenings we see or hear about in the 24/7 news cycle.

At the heart of Pieper's view of the *philosophical act* is the ability "to see the deeper visage of the real so that the attention directed to the things encountered in everyday experience comes up against what is not so obvious in these things."[23] In this way, *Star Trek* provides a vision of what humanity might become in the future, a setting for thought experiments of both moral and metaphysical varieties. This imagined future also serves as a source of *aspiration* for us: we can believe in our social evolution toward achieving—and meriting—a better society, one in which, as Gene Roddenberry describes, "there will be no hunger and there will be no greed and all the children will know how to read."[24]

In *ST: First Contact*, Picard says of life in the 24th century, "The acquisition of wealth is no longer the driving force in our lives. We wish to better ourselves and the rest of humanity." He's describing a path for personal self-realization based on Aristotle's idea that "all human beings by nature desire to know."[25] Knowledge, according to Aristotle, is not only *speculative* in nature, encompassing scientific and theoretical reasoning, but also *practical*—that is, technical and ethical reasoning. The fact that Starfleet officers don't earn a wage, but are rewarded with the means to support their needs and also merit-based honors, shows that their service as explorers, protectors, and peacemakers is not seen as *servile,* but rather as a *vocation*, supporting their overall flourishing and that of humanity and other alien species. Their work provides the freedom to pursue the liberal arts, as evidenced by how well versed characters like Picard and Spock are in history, literature, philosophy, and religion, in addition to the various sciences and the technical details of running a starship.

Star Trek also underscores Pieper's idea of leisure as an opportunity for a different kind of labor: study and contribution to the liberal arts and intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. In "The First Duty" (TNG), Picard forcefully reminds young cadet Wesley Crusher, "The first duty of every Starfleet officer is to the *truth*, whether it's scientific truth, or historical truth, or personal truth." Rather than mere escapism, *Star Trek* and other time-honored sci-fi ought to be seen as entertaining, edifying preparation for thinking through the problems that the future will throw at us. *Star Trek*'s utopian vision isn't of a society in which all difficulties have been resolved, but of a community of individuals who *know*—in Aristotle's senses of "knowledge" as both speculative and practical—how to face such difficulties.[26]

Starfleet is fundamentally an *exploratory* body. Nonetheless, it utilizes military tropes—such as the chain of command and naval parlance—that make sense given the numerous phaser battles that ensue week after week. Starfleet also calls to mind the "band of brothers" mentality that's both a crucial and a natural quality emergent from the shared intensity of training and combat, as well as the shared commitment to the *mission*.[27] When the *Voyager* crew travels back in time to 1996 to stop someone from destroying the future, they elicit the help of a "local" who expresses amazement at the intrepid crew's sense of duty: "All this running around you do, your mission," she observes. "You're so dedicated, you know, like you care about something more than just your own little life." If we go back to Plato's picture of a utopia in his *Republic*, we find him recommending that the Guardians of the city should live in community, where all property, and even family, is shared such that each Guardian will learn to care just as much for the well-being of others as for his or her own well-being.[28] This communal ethic was later emphasized in the 19th century by utilitarians Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, who held that we should seek "the greatest good for the greatest number of people" and that, in determining the just distribution of benefits and burdens in society, every individual member should "count as one and no more than one"—or, as axiomatically put by Mr. Spock, "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few or the one."[29]

The Vulcan race has adopted a particular philosophy of logic and morality, the essence of which is captured by the motto "Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations." This pluralistic ideal is witnessed in the classic triumvirate of Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, and Dr. McCoy, with Kirk representing the balanced integration of reason and emotion in ethical decisions; in the specialized expertise of each Starfleet

crew member, working *cooperatively* to run the ship and accomplish the mission at hand; in Captain Picard's leadership style, consulting with his senior officers before making decisions with significant moral implications, availing himself of their unique perspectives and expertise instead of acting unilaterally; and finally in the *respect*—not merely tolerance—for intercultural differences, particularly in the case of *Deep Space Nine* where Humans, Bajorans, Ferengi, Cardassians, Klingons, and others who hold vastly different worldviews must learn to live and effectively work together. As these examples show, thoughtful viewing of *Star Trek*, both as a form of entertainment in itself and as a speculative depiction of future human life, is a fine example of just the sort of "play" that leads toward the ideal of human flourishing in our intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature.

Our "Continuing Mission"

Philosophy and science fiction both call us to the task of unceasing reevaluation of who we are as individuals and as a people, not resting content on the laurels of past accomplishments, but preparing ourselves—both practically and morally—to work toward an optimal future for ourselves and the generations who'll follow us. Socrates set the standard for our communal and individual self-exploration when he emphatically said that "the unexamined life is not worth living."[30] Such inner searching mirrors the stellar exploration depicted in *Star Trek* and other sci-fi literature, television series, and films. Pieper thus refers to the philosophical act as "a step which leads to a kind of 'homeless'-ness: the stars are no roof over the head."[31] He describes human beings as "essentially *viatores*, travelers, pilgrims, 'on the way,' we are 'not-yet' there."[32] To coin a phrase, we are boldly going "where no one has gone before."

Hence, watching the occasional *Star Trek* marathon can actually be a beneficial intellectual exercise—a true form of human leisure à la Pieper. Even when facing death in *ST: Generations*, Kirk can't help but find fighting Soren to have been "fun"—and the same should go for any worthwhile human endeavor. It doesn't follow from this that *anything* that's fun is automatically worthwhile. But it does mean that if you aren't *enjoying* what you do in order to be a productive, contributing member of society, then maybe you've been fed the wrong message. So just because something is entertaining, it doesn't follow that it isn't *illuminating* as well. A simple, hour-long, sci-fi television

story can often evoke the most complex and challenging of philosophical questions and ideas—a worthwhile retreat into fantasy that provides, as Pieper says, "that stillness that is the necessary preparation for accepting reality."[33] Perhaps that's why I see so many other professors dressed up as Vulcans and Klingons at sci-fi conventions.

Notes

1. Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1998), 90.
2. Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, bk. I, lect. 3; as quoted in Pieper, *Leisure*, 62.
3. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. X, ch. 7, 1177b4–6; as quoted in Pieper, *Leisure*, 4.
4. Pieper, *Leisure*, 33.
5. Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 42–5.
6. Ibid., 43.
7. See Bernard Williams, "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality" in *The Metaphysics of Death*, ed. John Martin Fischer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).
8. For elucidation of Whitehead's metaphysical worldview, see Melanie Johnson-Moxley's chapter in this volume (Chapter 20).
9. For a contrary assessment of the value of the utopian lifestyle afforded on Omicron Ceti III, see David Kyle Johnson's chapter in this volume (Chapter 5).
10. Seven of Nine's journey toward self-identity is aptly charted by Nicole Pramik in her chapter in this volume (Chapter 18).
11. Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, *Body-Self Dualism in Contemporary Ethics and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 115.
12. Ibid., 107.
13. For discussion of the paradoxical value of the pursuit of pleasure as depicted in *Star Trek*, see Robert Arp, "Mind Your Ps and Qs: Power, Pleasure, and the Q Continuum" in *Star Trek and Philosophy: The Wrath of Kant*, ed. Jason T. Eberl and Kevin S. Decker (Chicago: Open Court, 2008). For more on the ethics of holodeck use, see Philip Tallon and Jerry L. Walls, "Why Not Live in the Holodeck?" also in *Star Trek and Philosophy*; while metaphysical questions raised by holodeck use are explored in Dara Fogel's chapter in this volume (Chapter 26).
14. As quoted by *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry; from the "Inside *Star Trek* with Gene Roddenberry" bonus CD included with the 20th-anniversary edition of the soundtrack to *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Los Angeles: Columbia/Legacy, 1998).

15. Pieper, *Leisure*, 2; the quotation from Plato isn't cited.
16. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 55.
17. Pieper, *Leisure*, 18; quoting Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, bk. I, dist. 2 (*expositio textus*), which quotes Wisdom 8:30.
18. See ibid., 21–2.
19. Ibid., 44. For further discussion of future "Trekonomics," see Jeff Ewing's chapter in this volume (Chapter 11).
20. See ibid., 45.
21. See ibid., 34.
22. For discussion of Eastern meditation in comparison with Vulcan meditative practices, see Walter [Ritoku] Robinson, "Death and Rebirth of a Vulcan Mind," in *Star Trek and Philosophy* (2008).
23. Pieper, *Leisure*, 100.
24. For reasons why we should aspire to live in the Federation, see Jason Murphy and Todd Porter's chapter in *Star Trek and Philosophy* (2008).
25. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, bk. I, ch. 1.
26. For further discussion of how *Star Trek* exemplifies how we ought to approach difficult dilemmas, see Courtland Lewis's chapter in this volume (Chapter 13).
27. For more detailed discussion of how military ethics is embodied in *Star Trek*'s ethos, see Tim Challans's chapter in *Star Trek and Philosophy* (2008).
28. Plato, *Republic*, bk. III, 416d–e and bk. V, 462a–471b.
29. For further explication of utilitarianism as depicted in *Star Trek*, see Greg Littmann's chapter in this volume (Chapter 12).
30. Plato, *Apology*, 38a.
31. Pieper, *Leisure*, 94.
32. Ibid., 107.
33. Ibid., 31.

2

Aristotle and James T. Kirk: The Problem of Greatness

Jerold J. Abrams

> If … there be some one person, or more than one, although not enough to make up the full complement of a state, whose excellence is so pre-eminent that the excellence or the political capacity of all the rest admit of no comparison with his or theirs, he or they can be no longer regarded as part of a state; for justice will not be done to the superior, if he is reckoned only as the equal of those who are so far inferior to him in excellence and in political capacity. Such a man may truly be deemed a God among men. Hence we see that legislation is necessarily concerned with those who are equal in birth and in capacity; and that for men of pre-eminent excellence there is no law—they are themselves a law.[1]

Aristotle (385–322 BCE), in his *Politics*, imagines the appearance of a "god among men"—an actual superhuman—who can't be a citizen of the state because no merely human law can constrain such a spectacular being, and any attempt to do so would be like trying to restrain Zeus himself. Citizens have only two mutually exclusive options: they can exile—or even execute—a "god among men," or they can submit to superhuman monarchy. Aristotle thinks any state would choose the former, but finds the latter option superior and argues the citizenry *should* submit to the superhuman monarch because that's precisely what ideal citizens *would* do if such a being appeared in their society. This problem posed by such a hypothetical superhuman may seem outlandish, but Aristotle actually finds this same antagonism between excellence and equality—in less extreme forms—to permeate all human culture, and to appear vividly in great works of literature.

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