

HMU: Dialogues

Harrison Middleton University

11/18/2020

Volume 7, Edition 2

Letter from the Editor:

I am grateful that you are here! What a tumultuous year. No matter where you are and what you are doing I know that you have experienced a hardship or two this year. And so, I thank you for spending this moment with us.

We also want to thank our 2020 Fellows in Ideas and wish them well in their future endeavors. They came to us from around the world, and we are grateful for their time this year, especially considering the crazy circumstances for so many!

If you are interested in spending time in a virtual conversation with us, consider attending the next Quarterly Discussion. We have discussion opportunities on either Thursday, January 21 at 4 pm PST or Saturday, January 23 at 9 am PST. Email Alissa at asimon@hmu.edu for more information or to register. We hope that it will be a nice way to start the new year. Also, consider joining the upcoming Film Series, announced on page 6.

I sincerely look forward to 2021, which I hope will bring more in-person conversations! I hope that you are comfortably settled somewhere, good book in hand. Be well. Read often.

We wish you health and comfort. And, as always, thank you for your participation!

~ Alissa



Reviews and More:

The following book review is by Fellow in Ideas **Taiwo Olanrewaju-Lasisi**.

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Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research, 3rd edition
by T.L. Knutsen and J.W. Moses

The book *Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research...* by Moses and Knutsen (2019), exposes how epistemological knowledge is not really about methods but more about underlying philosophies and purposes of one's research. It gives more clarity on the way the choice of a researcher's "hows" affects the choice of his "whats" in research.

In dissecting the knowledgeable gains from their book, the first aspect that drew a great attention is the issue of clearly differentiating between Methodology and Research Methods. Moses and Knutsen considered Methodology as "well equipped tool boxes," with research methods as the "tools" you put into the boxes (4).

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Review (continued):

It is so rewarding to know that “research methods” is no fancy word for “methodology”, but that they actually mean different things, methodology being more comprehensive, foundational and ontological in nature, and research methods being more related to problem-specific techniques. Methodology in this sense has to do with humanities and an ontological dimension of dissecting books, articles and other forms of research.

The next point is on the discussion of methodologies and the roles they play in the ways we obtain knowledge. These methodologies considered by the authors were classified into three: naturalism, constructivism and scientific realism. The tie between the Naturalist and Constructivist methodologies of how knowledge is obtained is one I found most interesting, especially as regards to their converging and diverging values on how the world is perceived. According to the book, naturalists have the opinion that we gain knowledge through sensory perceptions which help us identify patterns and regularities. They are also of the notion that these patterns can be identified objectively with separation of individual biases.

However, the constructivists do not think so about the way knowledge is obtained. They are of the opinion that individuals' acquisition of knowledge is subjective to how they view the world, which is usually spurred by their experiences, backgrounds, nationalities, race and other social constructs. They argued against the naturalists' affirmation of the existence of a “real world” are influenced by social experiences, ontological underpinnings and other values they hold in high esteem regarding their explanations of what constitutes the way knowledge is attained and reproduced. The belief that histories and generalizations are made of “multiple stories” (221) was one the constructivist intellectuals found liberating according to the book, because it paved a way to bring in the center unheard stories and perceptions of individuals about the world.

The explanation the authors gave on the experimental method was also insightful and useful, particularly as regards the issues of internal and external validity, as well as the trade-offs involved. From the book, experimental method was proved to provide external validity. The Francis Bacon classical experiment of the effect of heat was a very good illustration in helping me understand external validity. It offers illustrations on how to experiment with new teaching techniques among students. The authors stress that it is important to ensure validity through the experimental process. I appreciated that the issue of “context” from which the information is derived was mentioned to be the reservation constructivists have with the experimental method. I would say this, for me, points to why we see that quasi-experimental and not experimental methods are mostly used in the social science field, because of the humane and contextual nature of the field.

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Review Continued:

Finally, the authors discussed the historical link of what we consider knowledge today, ranging from the natural sciences to social sciences. For example, how the research methods and concepts we have today, such as qualitative methods were developed. It is interesting how the authors mentioned that the naturalists' and constructivists' different world views also inform their rationale for adopting this type of data collection. A major takeaway from Moses' and Knutsen's work will be that, though the naturalist methodology and the constructivist methodology are different, they need not be incompatible. I agree with the "scientific realism methodology" discussed in the book, which is addressed as the middle ground perspective that combines the strengths of the two prior methodologies.

However, one major criticism about the book is this automatic fusion it poses for qualitative and quantitative research to make a great methodology. This is not necessarily the best way for knowledge development especially depending on the field and nature of inquiry. For example, humanities, linguistics and sociology fields might find an excellent basis with which to answer questions in a purely ontological, constructivist, and/or qualitative approach. Nonetheless, mixed methods can be appropriate in answering questions that require both methodologies, with a goal of producing greater value in the most effective and prudent way when both methods are employed. *Ways of Knowing* is a great book indeed worthy of wide readership!

Knutsen, T. L. and J.W. Moses. *Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research*, 3rd edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2019.

HMU Welcomes A New Tutor



Jim Thurman has taught Political Science, History, and International Studies at the college and university level for more than twenty years, in the US and overseas. Following MA degrees in Political Science, and Humanities/History, at other institutions, he completed HMU's doctoral program in 2014, focusing on the Great Idea of Tyranny and Despotism, with forays into such related Great Ideas as Monarchy and Oligarchy. More recently, he has been studying

Literature at HMU, in a program centered on English-language literature.

Jim places great value on primary source material; where the Great Books are concerned, his biggest challenge has always been determining what he's not interested in. A long-time resident of the Mountain West, in addition to more than a decade living and working abroad, he also appreciates hiking, kayaking, mountain biking, and most forms of travel.

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Student Corner



~ Please join HMU Tutors and staff in congratulating Dr. **Charlotte Hughes**, who successfully completed the Doctor of Arts program at Harrison Middleton University. Dr. **Hughes** submitted a creative writing Capstone in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Arts degree requirement, "Alice: The Life and Times of Alice Fain (1924-2011)."

~ Congratulations to Dr. **Tamra Skye**, who successfully completed the Doctor of Arts program at Harrison Middleton University. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Arts, Dr. **Skye** submitted her Capstone: "Nurturing Happiness and Personal Agency: Preparatory Guidance for Parents of Children with Sensory Processing Sensitivity."

~ Another congratulations goes to **Kurt Strom**, who successfully completed the Master of Arts program at Harrison Middleton University. Mr. **Strom** submitted the following Capstone in partial fulfillment of his Master of Arts degree requirement, "On Epistemology."

~ Finally, congratulations to Dr. **Melissa Hingstrum Kubis**, who successfully completed the Doctor of Arts program at Harrison Middleton University. Dr. **Kubis** submitted the following applied project in partial fulfillment of her Doctor of Arts degree requirement, "The Army's Cultural Identity: A Discussion of the Army's Use of Slang and Jargon."

~ All four have been inducted into Delta Epsilon Tau Honor Society, the premier national honor society for America's accredited distance learning institutions. The Society encourages and recognizes superior student achievement, character, and leadership.

~ Dr. **Minette Bryant**, HMU alumnus and 2020 Fellow in Ideas, has published two books. The first, *Seeking Samuel*, which was also her Capstone Project, was recently published by Outer Banks Publishing. The second is a choose-your-own-adventure book titled *Coronavirus 2020: Choose Your Own Grief*. Both are available in print and Kindle versions on Amazon.

"'Inconsistencies,' answered Imlac, 'cannot both be right; but, imputed to man, they may both be true.'"

~ 'The History of Imlac' by Samuel Johnson

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Faculty Highlights:

~ **Peter Ponzio** attended Dickens 150, which celebrated the 150th anniversary of Dickens's death. The virtual event was held over a period of five days and included presentations from Dickens scholars around the world. He also participated in Dickens Universe, which contained virtual presentations from Dickens scholars focusing on a dual reading of *David Copperfield* and *Iola LeRoy*. Finally, **Peter** participated in a project held by the Dickens Universe called Dickens-To-Go, which consists of a series of videos in which the presenters shared their favorite passage in Dickens. **Peter's** video is entitled "Little Dorrit and Arthur Clenham : A Modest Life of usefulness and happiness." Access it here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Bb4BTJRSTBKKoLH6xPcpVqRmzl_xOYtw/view?usp=sharing

~ **Edgar Daniels** was recruited by the American Council for Education (ACE) to serve as a Faculty Evaluator Team Member to participate in a Virtual Review of Penn Foster College's early childhood courses to determine whether they align with post-secondary education standards. ACE is a membership organization that "mobilizes the higher education community to shape effective public policy and foster innovative, high-quality practice. It is the only higher education association to represent all types of U.S. accredited, degree granting institutions." The review took place in July. **Edgar** was also invited to teach a course, "Understanding the 7 Deadly Sins Through the Short Story" for The Enrichment Academy in association with The Village Center Community Development Districts Board in The Villages, Florida. The Enrichment Academy provides "extra-curriculum courses that enhance and expand learning opportunities for residents and the general public." The course **Edgar** will be teaching is a variation of one of the two college level courses he developed as part of his HMU Doctor of Arts Capstone Project.

~ **Michael Curd, Becca Fisher, and Lauren Guthrie** attended the Distance Education Accrediting Commission's Virtual Fall Workshop on October 19th and 20th.

~ **Lauren Guthrie** attended the virtual annual conference of the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators October 27th and 28th.

~ **Alissa Simon** is attending the Colby College Great Books Fall Institute, a series of virtual discussions on November 20, 21, and 22.

"[I]t is only what we are vividly conscious of that we can vividly imagine to be seen by Omniscience."

~ *Middlemarch*, Book 7 by George Eliot

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HMU Announces the 2021 Film Series

There's something happening here

What it is ain't exactly clear

There's a man with a gun over there

Telling me I got to beware

I think it's time we stop, children, what's that sound

Everybody look what's going down

"For What It's Worth," Recorded by Buffalo Springfield, 1966

Among our highest values — the goods we ought to seek, secure, and preserve — lies justice. And as a good, it is unlimited. We can't have too much of it. It would be absurd to characterize a judgment as being too fair. Surely, Justice ranks among the most important and influential of the Great Ideas. And Justice — social justice in particular — is the Great Idea we will interrogate in the 2021 Harrison Middleton University film series.

The series includes Spike Lee's masterpiece, *Do the Right Thing*; Academy Award Best Picture, *Parasite*; Raoul Peck's blistering documentary about James Baldwin, *I Am Not Your Negro*; and Shakespeare's controversial classic, *The Merchant of Venice* with Al Pacino. Our screenings and discussions will be guided by a syntopical look at Justice. We will use short provocative quotations from Hume, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Hobbes, Pascal, Plato, and others as a lens through which we examine the films and the important focus each gives to a social justice issue.

We will use Zoom to facilitate our discussions for this series, allowing us to view quotes and clips from the movies for our syntopical approach. To register, please contact Rebecca Fisher at rfisher@hmu.edu. Once registered, additional information on quotes, films, and Zoom will be provided.

Film Series Schedule:



Discussions will be held on Thursday evenings:
5:00 pm PT/6:00 pm MT/7:00 pm CT/8:00 pm ET.

Thursday, January 14th at 5:00 pm PST – *Do the Right Thing*

Thursday, February 4th at 5:00 pm PST – *Parasite*

Thursday, February 25th at 5:00 pm PST – *I am Not Your Negro*

Thursday, March 18th at 5:00 pm PDT – *The Merchant of Venice*

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Thanks to Gary Schoepfel for these parting notes Reading During a Pandemic



Even though many events have been shut down by the pandemic, Gary Schoepfel's book group is going strong. He shares this note with us as a motivator and idea generator:

One might think that lockdowns, travel restrictions, and few opportunities to socialize would make for long empty days. But since February, I found my waking hours filled with a variety of exciting and rewarding projects.

In March, I conducted 15 discussions on the libretti of Wagner's marvelous four-opera Ring Cycle.

In June, Dr. Ronald Herzman led 10 Zoom discussions on Dante's *Purgatorio*, which I attended.

In July, I conducted a 15-session Zoom discussion on *Moby Dick*.

In August, we launched read aloud sessions of *War and Peace* on Zoom. We read twice per week, and have miles to go before we rest.

In September, I joined a Zoom discussion group on Elena Ferrante's four novels that comprise her *Neapolitan Quartet*.

In October, we launched "Sunday School," a Sunday morning discussion group beginning with Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

So much for free time....

Harrison Middleton University is a great ideas, great works, great conversations, distance learning university that offers graduate education in the humanities with concentrations in imaginative literature, natural science, philosophy and religion, and social science. Harrison Middleton University promotes student-faculty scholarship through research, discussion, and the development of collaborative publications.