

Lupton Response
March 2, 2018

Thank you, Professor Lupton, for this thought provoking piece and thank you to the organizers of this event for the invitation. I'm very honored to offer a few words which I hope contribute to our thinking together.

Professor Lupton has given us a vision of virtue ethics, theoretically understood through the circuit of Aristotle, MacIntyre, and Nussbaum. This circuit is routed through Shakespeare's dramas where we encounter the creative and non-prescriptive staging of human and non-human virtue. Lupton looks to "test Shakespeare's virtues in the multivalent matrix provided by ethical philosophy, performance studies, organizational and design studies, and theories of pedagogy and enskillment [which] will allow her to reframe the virtuous dynamics of Shakespearean drama in a manner responsive to the value and import, the powers and offices, of the humanities today." (3) In my comments I'll flag two areas of observation and then offer a brief commentary on those.

First, I'm interested in the move to supplement MacIntyre's virtue ethics with Nussbaum (and Arendt). This does help us out of some of the difficulties encountered with, as Professor Lupton puts it, MacIntyre's "anit-modernism, anti-pluralism, and increasingly orthodox Christianity which fails to account for important dimensions of Shakespeare's cosmopolitan inquiries into virtue." (9) Nussbaum delivers the notion of *moral luck* which delivers us from the quandary of virtue being conceptualized as the product of the will of the lone human actor. Rather, virtue is contingent upon external forces which act upon the individual. The playing field of virtue is never level since, "the flow of virtue [can be] inhibited, blocked, or redirected by external and internal impediments." (10) This Nussbaumian supplement is more than simply saying that virtue is a social affair. MacIntyre would agree. Virtue, for Nussbaum, is also a worldly affair to the extent that the moral actor is exposed, in all her fragility and precarity, to the contingencies

of existence. And this is all well and good since Nussbaum's contribution to virtue seems to stem the tide of the Foucauldian critique that may have been leveled at a virtue theory bolstered by MacIntyre alone. And yet, Professor Lupton's project presses on in an unmistakably humanist shape, which brings me to my second observation.

Professor Lupton's chapter climaxes with a "Humanifesto"—and we are not here referring to the Canadian punk rock band of the early 2000s. Professor Lupton's Humanifesto raises questions that are both timely and powerful. Along with being a doctoral student on this campus, I am also an academic advisor where part of my duties have lately been to teach a class that presses the question of "what is college for?" upon meandering, confused, and sometimes lost students. I daily wonder, along with Prof. Lupton, how our educational efforts might "make students braver, more attentive, and more resilient." And yet, I also wonder—and I hope this will spark discussion—about those voices within the disciplines comprising humanistic studies, our colleagues and friends, who also wish for better educational outcomes, but who would view the penning of a Humanifesto as a pathogen indicative of a larger problem, that being the cultivation of a human-centered, text-centered, logo-centered world that has created the insidious effect of the nature/culture dichotomy. In this age of the Anthropocene, rather than pen a humanifesto they might have us write a Post-humanifesto. I'm thinking of work that gathers under the broad banners of object-oriented ontology (think Bruno Latour's ANT) or New Materialism (think Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* or Elizabeth Grosz' *Becoming Undone*). Perhaps we could consider ways in which Professor Lupton's work might share common ground with these thinkers? Indeed, just how to situate these varied projects that share a common desire to get out from under the weight of the humanist tradition has become of deepest interest to me lately. And, I think, for those like us, interested in understanding the cartography of and state of debate within the

humanities of today—that is for those who may desire virtue, unfettered, not hidden under the bushel basket, those who dare to speak of courage, hope, and justice, since after all it may be, in Professor Lupton’s words “the world we cohabit can only be healed by human action.” It may be, that we need to hear more from those voices of internal critique who strive to allude important aspects of a tradition upon which virtue ethics heavily depends. There is no bright line dividing humanist from posthumanist, so I hope that today we can begin to nuance how a bold and brave project such as Professor Lupton’s might engage the posthumanist impulse as well.