



Kindly Library Tue, Jun 24, 4:27 PM (4 days ago)

to me

Kindle Library Publications Author Interview:

1. Your academic and professional journey spans philosophy, law, art, and even dance. How do these disciplines influence your writing and scholarship today?

Vastly diverse as these fields may seem, they are intricately interconnected and focus my writing and scholarship today. Both philosophy and law cultivate critical thinking and the examination of assumptions and values, which are often as powerful as they are invisible. Art and dance are often exercises in creativity and spontaneous innovation. As Arthur Koestler pointed out, there are different manifestations of creativity, which involves juxtaposing planes or spheres that are commonly held apart, where the shock of that juxtaposition is rendered cathartic through humor; resolved through scientific hypotheses; and rendered confrontational through art.

2. You've authored or co-authored over 20 scholarly books. What inspires your continued drive to research and write across such a wide range of fields—from criminal law to cultural theory?

What drives the inquiry is simply a curiosity that seeks to explore possible answers. In relation to criminal law and cultural theory, I am often drawn to examining how different societies or groups characterize crime versus law, often juxtaposing “monstrous” rhetoric/narratives with the rhetoric/narrative of the good citizen. Nevertheless, I remain a philosopher at heart, asking foundational questions, such as what is the ethical response to representations of violence and crime in mass mediated representations, such as in film and media.

3. Your award-winning work in Holocaust studies earned international recognition. What drew you to this subject, and how do you approach writing about such sensitive and profound topics?

I have been writing on film in general for a while, inclusive of horror and Holocaust films, and have been particularly attuned to the framing of these types of narratives. My analysis of film genres and how they condition certain responses from the audience through various cinematic narrative styles (horror or comedic or film noir stylistic techniques for example) led me to inquire into how spectators or viewers of film can interact critically with the material (rather than falling back on unthinking, consumeristic knee jerk reactions) while engaging with the aesthetic of films that deal with collective trauma, such as Holocaust films or serial killer films, for example. Films often represent various fears or “wounds” as much as hopes or dreams a particular society, at a particular point in history, tries to come terms with, or to attain. The award winning essay, which I wrote for *Dapim*, a scholarly Holocaust journal based in Israel, examines how Hollywood cinema and filmic narratives created by

the former U.S.S.R., for example, framed narratives of the Holocaust and the subsequent trials of former Nazis, examines the national narratives espoused by these films, and sets the groundwork for a “poethics” of film – a concept I develop further in my latest book on the master narratives of jihadi cool/chic and the various legal and cultural attempts to construct effective counter-narratives against the rhetoric and culture of jihadi cool/chic.

4. How does your legal practice as a criminal defense appeals attorney intersect with your scholarly work on philosophy, crime, and law? Do they inform each other in unexpected ways?

Legal practice is analytically distinct from the scholarly exploration of theoretical topics in philosophy. Nevertheless, both entail critical and creative thinking, research, argumentation, and logical reasoning. Since I am an appeals public defender, my role in serving justice, is to be able to advocate for, and tell the stories of the clients, as clearly and as fairly as possible, to a court of appellate and trial court judges. When I am doing scholarly work, I am engaged with larger theoretical questions that wrestle with questions like: “What is truth or justice?”; “How do the aesthetic and the ethical interact?”; “How do societies delineate and characterize crime and law?”

5. With your experience as both a former tenured professor and a practicing attorney, how do you see the relationship between theory and practice in your work and in society at large?

Paul Ricoeur, a phenomenologist, once characterized what he called “the circle of praxis,” and I think this is both accurate and relevant in describing the dynamic relationship between theory and practice, which is similar to Hegel’s dialectic, though grounded in experience. Paraphrasing and rephrasing Ricoeur, “theory” in order to be truly “theoretical,” has to break out of itself to transform itself into praxis (lest it devolve into sterile navel gazing), and “practice,” in order to be truly “practical” (rather than an unreflective, frenetic activism) has to break out of itself to wrestle with the theoretical, and the two poles continually spiral forth from each other, generating new questions and answers, both individually and collectively.

6. You’ve taught in the Philippines, South Korea, and the United States. How have these global experiences shaped your perspectives on law, culture, and education?

Each society or milieu has its own distinctive characteristics, though there are also commonalities across cultures. Being embedded in, and concretely living as an insider-outsider, especially as a former professor and now a lawyer, has made me particularly attuned to the process of communicating, adapting, and engaging in what Derrida calls “bricolage” across cultures. Nietzsche spoke of “dancing across different worlds” and I think that is an apt metaphor for what living across cultures (which concretely define the boundaries of law, culture and education in their own ways) entails.

7. You’re also an accomplished visual artist and dancer. What role does creativity play in your legal and philosophical work?

Although visual art and dance are analytically distinct from the practice of law and the theoretical exploration of philosophical questions, creativity is necessary to both realms. It is creativity that enables the generation of novel questions and answers, or finds new points of intersection across what are typically viewed as vastly disparate realms.

8. As editor of multiple academic journals and book series, what qualities do you look for in a powerful scholarly manuscript?

Clarity in posing questions, coherence in arguing through proposed answers, and concreteness manifested through the use of illustrative examples are qualities I prize. There is also an aesthetic element – a certain beauty in the flow and presentation of concepts explored; a seemingly effortless seamlessness and proportionality that makes the work a harmonious whole.

9. Your radio show once reached over two million listeners. What was the mission behind that project, and would you consider reviving it in today's digital media age?

The Dr. Caroline Picart Show was a radio show that was similar to NPR in format, featuring various guest speakers who were experts in diverse fields, such as law, philosophy, communications, art, psychology, sociology, religious studies, film, criminology, cultural studies, among others. Topics would flow spontaneously from the interests and activities of these various experts, though with a focus on communicating with a broad general audience in an engaging and compelling manner. Occasionally, to establish a better local connection, the show would feature, for example, the establishment of a new art center, the Center for Creative Release; the promotion of a Daddy-Daughter Dance sponsored by the local Rotary Club; a behind-the-scenes look of an international dance competition conducted by the Azalea International Folk Fair, among others. Much as I enjoyed and learned from the process of producing and hosting these shows, I will probably not have the time to develop new shows in the near future due to my current commitments; perhaps when I retire, I may revive the show.

10. What advice would you give to young scholars or creatives who feel pressured to stay in one lane, rather than explore multiple passions like you have?

There is a conventional wisdom in specializing in one particular area, though historically, this really emerges from the evolution from the classic mindset to the modern framework. For the classics, the love of wisdom (the etymological meaning of "philosophy" - "phile" (meaning "love") and "sophia" (meaning "wisdom")) spontaneously led to the examination of related, though diverse, fields. For the moderns, "scientia" ("science") and its pursuit of knowledge, became the focus, leading to the professionalization of specialists. It is important to be truly grounded in one field before one branches out to other fields, as "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing;" one must "drink deeply of the draught." It is also important to note that crises are often opportunities for growth and innovation; it is important to remain curious, passionate, and adaptable as one matures in a chosen profession. Branching across different realms has its challenges, but it is a rewarding, growth-filled, and fulfilling experience.