

Roets  
ECE Lang and Comp  
2/24/16

*Three prominent authors gather in the waiting room of a laughter yoga studio. There is an awkward silence comparable to a first date in which Peter Singer takes advantage of the deck of conversation starters on the table.*

Singer: So I guess I'll break the ice here.

[Singer selects a card from a conversation card box]

Singer: The card says "What are the characteristics of a productive and successful community at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?"

Thoreau: Wait but I died in 1862?

[All the characters laugh. Thoreau smiles knowing he just made a great joke]

Singer: All kidding aside, productive and successful communities come from people denying themselves their excessive wants and equally distributing their wealth.

Russel: So socialism...?

Bernie Sanders: Nothing wrong with that...

Russel: Well yes there is. There comes a point where we need to recognize that "a happy life is to an extraordinary extent a good life". We cannot constantly live in self-denial to guarantee that everyone else in the world has their basic needs. "In fact, the whole antithesis between self and the rest of the world, which is implied in the doctrine of self-denial, disappears as soon as we have any genuine interest in persons or things outside ourselves."

Singer: But could we strip ourselves of unnecessary things? Like hundred thousand dollar cars?

Russel: Sure, but what about going out to eat with our families every so often? We must also have some pleasure in life. Maybe not in exorbitant spending, but in occasional indulgences.

Thoreau: When I went to the woods, I wanted to live simply. There was something so peaceful and pleasing about living a raw life in nature with only the basic necessities. Less is more. "Simplify, simplify, simplify".

Russel: I understand that Henry, but I don't think the rest of the population could sustain themselves off the land as you did. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is much different than the 19<sup>th</sup>. People have grown for the most part, materialistic, dependent on international markets, and...

*From within the yoga studio, a faint “hahahaha” of soft fake laughing is heard. Russel stops talking and the three of them turn towards the door.*

Russel: I can't wait to see what we are in for today! This is going to make us all happy, I can tell.

Singer: But think of all the children we could be saving with the cost of this session of laughter yoga!!!

Thoreau: This yoga that we speak of is very simple. We merely laugh for no reason...this is something we should practice daily for *free*, in my opinion. But Peter, I think we should just relax and enjoy this pleasure that life has granted us.

*Singer sighs. The door opens and in walks Lori Alvord eagerly talking with Scott Brown.*

Singer: Nice of you two to show up! Our class is in 15 minutes!

Alvord: You know punctuality in the winter is not my thing Peter! Still haven't mastered walking on ice without slipping!

[Thoreau snorts]

Alvord: Hey! You were born here! I am not accustomed to this landscape.

Russel: Okay, okay, relax everyone! What were you two talking about on your way here?

Brown: Oh we were just discussing the implications of social media on the community.

Singer: How ironic! We were just discussing community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century too! Social media is a huge part of it now that I think about it.

Alanis Morissette: Isn't it ironic, don't you think?

Brown: Yes I was just telling her about how we don't lose friends naturally anymore because of Facebook.

Thoreau: Whoa whoa whoa...what is this “Facebook” you speak of?

Mark Zuckerberg: Facebook is a social media networking site where you can post pictures, share ideas, and connect with others. You can become Facebook friends with people by adding them as a friend and responding to friend requests.

Thoreau: One time I face-to-face asked a girl in my school to be my friend and she said no.

Russel: Is that why you went to the woods?

[Everyone laughs but Thoreau looks upset.]

Thoreau: “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartanlike as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.”

Alvord: So what community did you belong to out in the woods?

Thoreau: Oh look! She accepted my friend request. This is great!

Brown: This is exactly the problem. Our community is not our Facebook friend community, it is the community of real people that we interact with on a daily basis. We are not defined by our virtual friendships, but our real ones.

Alvord: Look Henry, if she didn't want to be friends with you in real life, why does online friendship make it “great”?

Brown: Over the course of our life, we will make friends and, naturally, some will fade away. These are merely the result of the circumstances of our life. Henry “Mr. Natural” Thoreau, of all people, you should understand this.

Thoreau: Yes Scott, I do. I think it's just something about dead guys with 21<sup>st</sup> century technology.

[The authors all laugh but Singer is still impatiently clutching the conversation card]

Singer: I want to know!! What makes a community productive and successful?

Brown: Well I guess we have to define what our idea of a community is first. One community is definitely friendships – and since we are talking 21<sup>st</sup> century, I mean real friendships!! – our community of friends is one of the most important ones we have. A successful community of friends is a flexible and fluid one – we must be able to let people go when the time is right. The problem with Facebook is they are there forever, unless we are ambitious enough to unfriend. We cannot grow when we are still rooted down by the past.

Alvord: Friends are incredibly important, Scott. When I was at Dartmouth, the most important community was the community of Native Americans from various tribes. We were “a community of people connected by blood or heart, by geography and tradition, who help one another and share a belief system. Community and tribe not only reduce the alienation people feel but in doing so starve off illness.” When I was isolated and far from the reservation in Arizona, and completely shocked by the change in scenery, these people were there for me.

Being a part of this community has brought me the confidence I need to succeed in the real world. In my opinion, a community is productive and successful when they have common goals and support each other despite geographical and cultural differences. Culture binds a community together in new places.

Thoreau: Well since I am not from the 21<sup>st</sup> century, do not take everything I say as gospel, but I would say that a community is all the people on this earth. They will not always be there for you, as I learned from my time in the woods, and as a matter of fact, I went into the woods almost as opposition to the community – to find myself and understand my place in this world, my community. And I found that by going against my community, I understood my role as well as everyone's role in it. The community is successful and productive when people reduce to the basics of communal and personal needs.

Singer: Yes, I agree with you Henry. We must live with only the basics, and donate the rest to people who cannot afford these basics. I define the community as the world – all the humans. While I suppose I set high standards that I, admittedly, do not live up to, I still feel that a successful and productive community involves all of us sharing resources and living with only the bare necessities.

Alvord: Well change starts with you Peter! If you write so passionately about how we should give up all but the bare necessities, why don't you do it? You talk the talk but don't walk the walk. An author so prominent on the subject should live with the intention to make change.

Russel: Exactly Lori! I understand the point you are making, and in theory it works perfectly, but in reality, it doesn't. People are not willing to do what you suggest, especially if you can't do it yourself! A community is most successful, rather, when people are happy. People are productive when they are happy, when they love what they're doing and how they're living. Our responsibility to the community is our happiness – integrating our conscious and unconscious and being a “part of the stream of life, not a hard separate entity like a billiard ball, which can have no relation with other such entities except that of collision. All unhappiness depends upon some kind of disintegration or lack of integration; there is disintegration within the self through lack of coordination between the conscious and unconscious mind; there is lack of integration between self and society, where the two are not knit together by the force of objective interests and affections.” Our role is to be involved in society and make it a better place through our own happiness.

*The yoga studio door opens and they are greeted by an enthusiastic “Very good, very good, yay!” The five of them enter and participate in a session of laughter yoga. Though they don't always agree on every part of their community, they know that getting together and getting along (and of course, having fun!) is one of the most important aspects of a successful community.*

Namaste. Hahahaha.

## Works Cited:

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