

learn about the settings and how to perform requisite tasks. Students volunteer ten to twelve hours per week, with regular supervisory sessions included in this time commitment.

The PULSE office is headed by a full-time director, Dr. David McMenam, who also teaches PULSE courses. In addition to the director, the office personnel consists of an administrative assistant, and a select group of sixteen undergraduate students known as the PULSE Council. Student enrollment in the program's courses and placement in the program's field are handled by PULSE personnel. Each summer the office renews, modifies, or terminates placement agreements with the current set of agencies after a careful process of screening and evaluation. In addition, the office is responsible for developing various workshops, for communicating with agencies, for transportation and for a formal evaluation of each student's performance in the field.

Student Writing

"Power and Just Punishment" by Kerry Dolan

A punishment is just when it relieves a person from his or her injustice. The expression of remorse is often a sign of a just punishment. When it is received, justice is accepted. It is a sort of curing or cleansing that alleviates the harmful effects of the shameful action. A shameful action is one that causes the loss of respect of another because of the improper behavior of oneself (we are viewing ourselves through the eyes of another). The desire for what is best for oneself is the thing that is betrayed. The inconsistency of this results in a loss of self-respect. A just punishment is the only thing that can redeem these qualities.

Isaac, one of the boys I work with at Challenge, is charged with murder. In the midst of a heated argument with a friend of his, Isaac pulled out a knife and stabbed him. He thought that stabbing his friend would be a good thing: It would be the end of the argument and would be a demonstration of his "power." By exercising his control in every way possible, he believed he would feel better. His only regret, at first, was that he was caught and was going to be punished. Isaac's initial feelings are the same that Polus (in Plato's *Gorgias*) expressed: it

is not good if you get caught doing an injustice. What Isaac and Polus did not realize was that the injustice is worse if there is no punishment. They were also mistaking the definition of power.

Since then, Isaac has realized that stabbing his friend was not an exercise of power. It accomplished nothing and did not result in a benefit for him. Everything about what he did has turned out to be bad for him. He will be going to jail, he disappointed his family, and he has lost a friend. There was absolutely no good that resulted, even though he previously believed (falsely) that there would be. I overheard Isaac talking during lunch and he was saying all that he learned by being punished. He learned that it never does a person any good to do bad things. He continued to say that he was glad that he was being punished for what he did because now he knows that what he did was bad. If he had never gotten caught or never been punished, he would have remained ignorant and continued to follow his false beliefs about what would be a benefit to him.

Power is something that is a benefit (good) to its possessor. By using this definition, which both Socrates and Polus agreed upon, Isaac's actions were not expressions of power. Power is not what is actually wanted, but simply an avenue that one may be taking to get something that is desirable. All people want what is good for them and not what is bad. When people do not know what is good for them, they follow their beliefs about what will be good for them. This fact alone makes them powerless because the beliefs may be wrong. When a person commits an act as a means to an end (if I lie to my mother, for example) the actual goal is not the act, but rather the object of the act (to be able to go out). When a person does something that they believe will end in an advantage, and that action then turns out to be a disadvantage (the belief was wrong), then the person never really did what was wanted. Nobody wants what is bad for them. Therefore these examples do not demonstrate an exercise of power. The results were bad and not a benefit.

People are happy if they are honorable and miserable if they are wicked, but even more miserable if they do not receive a just punishment for their wickedness. The happiest person is the person who has no badness in his soul, and therefore never commits any evil acts. The



next happiest person is one who had been cured, through just punishment, of the wickedness. If one is not punished, then the evil is rendered permanent, never cleaned from the soul, and is the worst. Like Polus, many people believe that power is being able to get people to do things that would benefit themselves, but this is not what power really is. To have power, one must have the knowledge of the good. Isaac was misled by his mistaken belief of what would have been good for him. Socrates realizes that power is the knowledge of right and wrong.

This argument is defended by the fact that people always want what is good. What is good is always what is just because justice is best and that is what people always want. If there is knowledge about what is good, then no injustice, bad or evil will ever be done. Problems are most often encountered when people have false beliefs about what they want. The only way around this is to acquire the knowledge of what is right. This knowledge is the only that can give a person power.

Student Writing

"A Nice Guy" by Kevin Barry

A few days ago, I was telling my Dad about my tutoring a man named Chuck in the parts of speech. Chuck is a very eager and hardworking man who practically begs me for more homework to complete in his cell, and who tells me that he survives each day by having "faith in the Lord." I told my father that Chuck was "a really nice guy" and my Dad corrected me, noting that Chuck was in jail. I believe that my father was right but maybe the difference lies in what we define as "nice." Perhaps being "nice" is the ability to show one's desire to be in harmony with oneself and one's environment, through external actions, and can therefore be defined as acting in a way conducive to one's best interests. Therefore, when one is described as being "nice," it can be said that he is acting justly and in accordance with the positive good--his proper function, thus reflecting one's desire to achieve excellence and to be the best person one can be.

When one commits an act of injustice, as did Chuck, he is acting in a way contrary to his



proper function and desire for excellence and so can no longer be called "nice." However, when one becomes reformed through just punishment and is made just, therefore realigning himself with his desire for selfhood and excellence, is it not also true that in the process he may be able to exhibit "nice" behavior once again?

I believe that Chuck is a "nice guy" because I believe that he had begun to rediscover what truly is best for himself and what is conducive to making his life one that serves his best interests. This is not to say that Chuck is reformed, however, for reform comes when one knows that his proper function is a life aimed at excellence, and therefore seeks to live in accordance with this idea. I think that Chuck had a good idea about his achieving excellence in life--his concern for his work, his regard for others, and in his faith in God. However, it will take a further understanding of the highest good that is excellence and a commitment to what he knows is in line with his best interests in order to constitute a total reform.

Student Writing

"A Conversation with Anna" by Christine Pepe

During my placement, my supervisor usually stations me on one of the floors for an hour. I was sitting on the third floor, just "keeping watch" of the transitional working ladies. They encouraged you to bring books and read, so being a productive student, I succeeded in finishing up a history chapter. While I was reading, Anna came up and sat in the chair next to me. One of my goals when I go to Pine Street is to listen to what the ladies have to say and show them that someone does care. I want to provide for them a light in the harshness of their reality. Also for selfish reasons I suppose, they have so much to offer and teach about life. Anyway, after I had introduced myself to her, she began to express the fact that she was upset because she has not been able to get in touch with her daughter by phone. Then, she willingly began to tell me about her life. Equally incredible to me was the fact that I told her about my life too and she was equally interested. We shared.

Anna is a sixty-year-old homeless woman who lived in New York about thirty years ago. She became pregnant at the age of thirty by a married black man. Her mother wanted her to



have an abortion, but she refused. Realizing that everyone was humiliated because she had decided to bring [into the world, out of wedlock, a child of mixed race], she moved to Boston. Here, Anna alone raised her daughter. She said it was difficult because of prejudice and financial struggles. She felt as though economically she let her daughter down. Before her mother died, although she never saw her granddaughter, she admitted to Anna that she was glad that an abortion never took place. I do not know all the exact details about when her daughter moved out or the circumstances. I do know that Anna was a nun for quite some time. She also revealed to me that she had a drinking problem before and after nunhood, even recently. She told me also that she is handicapped, contributing to her difficulty to find work. Pine Street is giving her room and board as pay for her work at the shelter (Transitional Program) although currently she has not started working. I expressed to her how I felt the homeless were inhumanely clumped together as a statistic. She came out and said that she would never accept money from anyone, begging on the streets for example.

However, I quoted to her one of the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the meek/humble" and proceeded to explain what I had learned in class, that when someone lives in the right way, without patting himself or herself on the back, but rather acknowledging that being able to give is a gift from God, accepting is noble. When I give of myself, it is not because I am a noble person by myself. However, it is because God has created me and given me the grace, the gift to pass his divinity on. In a sense, when we give of ourselves, we are allowing someone else to experience God through actions. And of course this involves the hand of God leading us in that direction, provided we have faith. After I mentioned that Beatitude, I quoted another, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Then I continued to say that in a sense poverty and suffering can strengthen. We discussed the fact that we all play a role in the Kingdom of God, which she knew was continuing after death, eternal. I quoted what [Professor Byrne] said in class, "suffering can provide detachment from all the finite things to free one for the attachment to the infinite." I apologized because I felt shallow, sitting there saying that suffering strengthens. Compared to Anna, I don't know what suffering is. But suffering can strengthen, as well as cripple. She replied, "You are not shallow because you are



here, experiencing it." I guess in a way that is true, but I won't pat myself on the back.

As we continued this conversation, the entire time I was thinking to myself how incredible this was. I have never willingly preached to someone about God. Also, I have never been so captivated by our Faith. Even right there, the fact that I said "our" scares me because I doubted the Catholic Church and the reality of God all first semester. But part of believing is disbelieving. It comes down to faith. The disciples doubted Jesus when he was dying on the cross. But what would be the point if Jesus came gloriously, conquered dominantly and then saved himself?...

I asked her, "What is prayer to you?" I asked this because I have always wondered if the traditional idea, my Catholic school version of prayer, is the only way. I now know it is not. She replied, "prayer is anything you want it to be." To me, prayer is any experience of God, a deepening of faith. My experience with Anna was prayer. After my conversation with her, I wrote everything I could remember down, I never wanted to forget this experience...

Some of the things she said amazed me. For example, "I am just so happy to be alive and thankful to God for everything." I am thinking to myself, how exceptional is this woman? Hours before I was just complaining to myself about the cold and how miserable tired I was. How ignorant and selfish am I? My problems have been so trivial compared to those who truly suffer. Granted we all suffer, but complaining about it robs it of all nobility. This woman is homeless, handicapped, unmarried and jobless, yet she has a fondness of life. To truly live one must strive. And although she has suffered in the harshest sense, she is happy. She said that it is always important to remember that there is something higher, a divine force to which we owe everything. I truly believe this. Otherwise why would we be here? If we didn't have anything--or should I say anyone--to strive for, what would be the point of life? We would have no direction, acting only for selfish reasons. She said something that I had never heard before, "God wants us to love ourselves correctly." I know partially what this means. Love ourselves and each other in the eyes of God. It also as to do with fondness and respect for life because it is a gift...

An hour had passed, and it was time for me to go back downstairs. Anna had a key to the



elevator so she rode down with me. The things she said to me in the elevator probably affected me the most. She said that I made her so happy. She said that I am a great person and that my parents must be proud. The thought of my parents for some reason made me want to cry. That word "proud" has such immense power, especially in reference to my parents. It was one of those moments at which you just want to reach out. I wanted to hug her but I didn't. I have had some experiences like this, when you feel humanity. I can't explain it. It is a feeling you get through another person. I realized that I had experienced God through her. But isn't that why we are here, to share God's gift of faith with others through our words, action, touches, and eyes?

