



FORUM

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This booklet continues the tradition of The Forum, a publication of non-fiction prose by Loyola Students. The Forum encourages submissions from students. If a paper is too technical or specialized, we ask the author to revise it for a broader audience.

. . . then time itself began running
in circles, and so the beginning was
where the end was, and the two were
the same, and one thing ran into
the next and time went around
and around . . .

"The Ring of Time"
E. B. White

Black Jelly Bean Breezes

Whenever a sudden swoosh of warm, refreshing, summer-scented air penetrates the cold, smoke-smelling, autumn air and whisks across my body, I am helplessly charmed into my past.

Like a brief interlude of sunshine on a rainy day; like a school of sunfish that momentarily appear as you stare into a muddy, dead-looking pond; like the luscious whipped cream in the center of a somewhat tasteless pie, this sudden surge of mellow warmth, in the midst of cold autumn air, beckons me to my carefree past, the cream in my somewhat monotonous present. As I walk down the same dingy grey sidewalk, staring at the same red-bricked apartment buildings, and the same pile of ever angry, ever hurrying drivers, thinking to myself, "How will I ever be able to stand this same walk every day, thinking of my same anxieties about my same Calculus and English classes"—it happens. A sudden warm breeze lingers, soothing my cold nose and hands, luring my perturbed mind back to the careless thoughts of my early childhood.

Although the sensation lasts only a few moments, the moments seem like hours, as my mind traverses my senses and my memories in search of a time when I felt this same warmth and contentment, like a licorice lover who sifts through a bag of assorted jelly beans, searching frantically for the black ones; sparked by the sight of the jelly beans, he recalls licorice on his tongue, and he wants the sensation again. I savour a joyous moment of my past. The breeze calls to mind a picture that my parents had taken of my four brothers and me when we were very young; the picture, which I have not seen for nearly four years, flashes in my mind, and, in that never-ending instant, I notice that our eyes were squinted, our T-shirts were wrinkled in some places and puffed out in others, and our hair was forced to one side of our faces, indicating that the picture was taken on a sunny, breezy day. But why does this momentary breeze cause me to think of that childhood picture? I must have been happy at the moment when the picture was taken. I must have found one of my black jelly beans.

As we experience pleasure, our memory must store specific sensory images that can be sparked at any time to cause us to remember. As that warm, refreshing breeze sweeps across my skin, bequeathing a lingering flutter of enjoyment, I remember another warm, breezy day when my brothers and I played together; a day when we all wore that same bright orange "Orioles" T-shirt, those same cheerfully dirtied sneakers, those creatively torn "flood" pants and those sly, carefree smiles; a day when my brothers accepted me and I felt accepted; a day when I felt the warmth of a cool, carefree, summer breeze from a carefree summer life. But—I trip over that confounded crack in the sidewalk. I nearly choke, as my black jelly bean is abruptly forced down my throat. The moment has ended. Though I wish the moment could have lasted forever, it has passed as quickly as the sudden summer breeze that awakened it.

The unexpected, pleasurable, seemingly insignificant diversities in our daily routine make life worth living. Realizing this, maybe the next time I walk down that dingy, grey sidewalk or by those same apartment buildings, or down the small hall of Maryland Hall, I will walk, not with dreary thoughts of my monotonous life, but with the hope of recalling a happy time in the past; or, better yet, a chance to experience a new, silly joy, a chance to add a new, black jelly bean to my assortment.

Mary C. Wilhelm
Effective Writing

AUGUST IN THE SMOKIES: National Parks in Conflict

Though it was the middle of August, the pre-dawn air gave no hint of yesterday's heat, and I pulled my blanket closer as we were trundled sleepily out of the house to the family car waiting in the driveway. Dew obscured the windows and darkened the tarpaulin which covered the bulging mound of gear lashed to the roof. One of the lumps I recognized as the family tent, a heavy blue canvas affair, which always smelled musty and seemed to require a vast number of mysterious poles and much fuss to build. As the three of us piled into the back seat, too sleepy even to argue about who would sit in the middle, Dad struggled to fold a particularly unruly map. Mom burned her hand trying to pour a cup of coffee.

The sun rose, the heat returned, Dad got lost, my brother got sick, Mom was mad, and I had to go to the bathroom. At last the sign said, "Great Smoky Mountains National Park." A heated debate arose while Dad went to speak with the ranger: Mom wanted to camp near the bathrooms, Dad wanted a site by the stream, and my brother wanted to die. We camped by the bathrooms. As Mom sorted out dinner, Dad struggled with the mysterious poles and made the rest of us perfectly miserable. Mercifully, Mom sent me off at last to gather firewood. She was not even mad when I returned an hour later, soaked to the waist, carrying only an unusual stone I had found in the stream. I think she expected it.

Days in the Great Smokies were pleasantly empty, yet full: swatting flies, skipping stones, building secret hideaways, teasing the ranger's pet king snake, worrying toads, worrying Mom, walking, climbing, wading, hiking, sitting. In the evenings we had a fire and I burned marshmallows and made fireworks in the air with the glowing end of a stick. As the mosquito repellent began to wear off, we went to bed. When we became bored and Dad was strong enough to leave his hammock, we went on nature walks. With a good map and a reliable compass it was quite possible to get lost in the woods for an afternoon. It was 1966.

We went back to the Smokies in 1978, and the campgrounds were full. We had to walk a long way to the bathrooms and there were no trees for Dad to rig his hammock, but we were fortunate; many were turned away that weekend. My stream was gone; the spring which fed it had been tapped to provide drinking water for the growing summer crowds. There were more people, more campsites, more noise, more garbage, fewer toads, and the trails were marked with brightly colored signs. It was harder to get lost in 1978.

The decade or so which passed between 1966 and 1978 changed significantly America's attitude toward her wilderness, bringing soaring numbers of visitors to the national parks. "Ecology" was taken from the biologist and given to the politician and the businessman, the laborer and the craftsman, and their families seeking weekend recreation — a shift which placed a heavy burden on the Park System. Camping was no longer an activity only for eccentric professors of botany, boy scouts, and bearded lumberjacks who thrived on beans and jerky. A younger generation embraced backpacking. Campgrounds and trails began to fill up, and signs of abuse and overuse appeared: litter, noise, scarred trees, and worn and eroding trails. Food left about by careless Yellowstone visitors brought the bears into conflict with people; bears which cannot be relocated are killed. Trails in the Grand Canyon basin became so popular that erosion has left scars more than a yard deep.

Park managers have long been aware of the need to protect their lands from those who would willfully destroy: poachers, axe-wielding campers, motorcyclists, snowmobilers. Strict regulations and penalties have, when enforced, been fairly successful. Alligator poaching in the Everglades, for example, which in the 1960's threatened to extinguish the entire alligator population, has been reduced to a level which, at least, will allow the species to survive.

The underlying problem—overuse—however, has scarcely been addressed. There are too many people. These are not people who throw gum wrappers on the ground or carve their initials into the trees; they are the child playing in the stream, the elderly couple watching birds through a

pair of binoculars, the young family roasting marshmallows over a fire in the evening. They are not careless; they are even environmentally sensitive. But they are many. In 1980, 300 million people visited American national parks, up from 68 million in 1957. Each shoe carries away a few crumbs of soil; the elderly couple, intent on their prey, trample vegetation along the path; each log on the fire removes a source of nutrients for the soil and leaves a pile of ashes. The Park Service has traditionally maintained a policy of virtually unrestricted access to public wilderness areas. Only a few parks that were recognized as being particularly fragile, such as the Everglades, were restricted. As ever more people flock to the parks, however, managers and ecologists are finding signs that the Smokies, and every other park in the system, are equally fragile. Crowded trails and campgrounds drive larger animals, particularly deer, mountain lions, and bears, from protected lands into surrounding areas, where they are often killed by hunters. Populations of these animals are decreasing alarmingly. Hiking on the Appalachian Trail, which runs through the Smokies, has increased such that park management has had to limit the size of groups on the trail and restrict the areas in which they camp to spread out their impact.

This problem of overuse has been approached in two ways. The first seeks to continue the Park Service tradition of essentially unlimited access to public lands, while protecting delicate ecosystems by insulating visitors as much as possible from damaging contact with the environment. In the Everglades much of the park is accessible only from the window of a park-operated bus. In Yellowstone, trails are well-defined and strict regulations are enforced against venturing into the delicate sulfur formations which are one of the park's major features. A similar plan is being considered for Yosemite to protect the great redwoods, which are dying as the ground around their roots is trampled by thousands of feet each day.

The second approach emphasizes the quality rather than the quantity of the wilderness experience. By limiting the number of people who actually enter the park on a daily and seasonal basis, management gives the environment more time to recover from closer, more damaging, contact. Already one

smaller park has established such a system. Cumberland Island National Seashore, off the coast of Georgia, allows only 1460 daily visitors and 100 overnight campers to make the short boat ride to the especially fragile dune environment. Quotas are also being considered for many of the larger parks, and a national reservation system is being developed. One stumbling block in this solution, however, is the actual determination of the quotas; ecological studies are underway in many parks to determine the so-called carrying capacity of the land.

Reservations and quotas will certainly bring an end to impulsive weekend getaways, and there will surely be loud protests. When in the late 1960's the Park Service instituted wilderness permits for backcountry use, even the environmentalists objected; they were not accustomed to sharing the wilderness. Yet, washed-out trails and campsites scarred from too-frequent use asserted the need to compromise. That is, indeed, the heart of the problem — and the heart of the solution. If something as fragile, and as valuable, as America's wilderness areas is to be shared by a population seeking it in every greater numbers, everyone must compromise; they must respect that which, if broken, can never be restored, and be willing to wait while others have a chance to explore.

Some day I will have a family of my own, and one weekend we will pack the car and, in the early morning hours with dew still clinging to the windows, drive to the Smokies. Perhaps we will have to wait patiently for that day while others have their chance, but that does not matter. All I ask is that when we get there, my son will be able to chase toads, swat flies, skip stones, and get lost in the woods on a lazy afternoon in August.

Jonathan Hoyt
Advanced Prose

Patrick Campbell

It's strange how you see some people everyday who remain complete strangers, while you may meet someone briefly who affects the rest of your life. I met Patrick Campbell over a year ago and only knew him for about five days, yet my memory of him and respect for him are still very vivid. I remember him clearly; I can still hear his voice speaking to me of the old Irish traditions and of the old English oppression. He had seen a great deal of change and suffering in his lifetime, but he kept his sense of humor. Neither embittered nor cynical, he worked hard to secure a good life for his family and had no time to bear grudges. He was an intelligent man, a temperate one, who worked all of his life and tried to be the best person that he could.

Patrick Campbell was born into a life of hardship and poverty. His family owned a small plot of rocky, infertile land in the wilds of western Ireland. He was raised with stories of hunger and broken hearts because of the potato famine, and he saw the decaying cottages of neighbors that had been forced off the land. His mother died at the age of twenty-eight while giving birth to her third son, and his older sister was sent off to relatives in America to grab a chance at a better life. Family ties became very important to him.

Pa, as he was called by family and friends, was only a teenager during the early twenties when Ireland gained her independence from England. He was never a war hero, nor was he a politician who galvanized the spirit of his countrymen. He was not a famous man, and his name will never reach the history books, but he was a good man. He grew food to feed his country and raised a family to make his country strong.

I knew nothing about Pa before I met him, besides the fact that he was my grandmother's brother. He and his youngest daughter, Ann, met my parents and me at the airport. While the others went to get the car, Pa and I stayed with the suitcases. I was astonished by this small man with the thick brogue, and just a little scared by him too. He looked like a fierce leprechaun with his bushy gray eyebrows and timebeaten face. At first I thought he was speaking

Gaelic, but later I found out that when he was a boy, the English soldiers would shoot anyone heard speaking Gaelic, so for safety's sake, he never learned it. I did not know what to say to him, but within a short time he had put me at ease and was telling me the history of the airport and the surrounding countryside. He talked to me person to person, not condescendingly as old man to young girl.

During our short visit to his farm near Dublin, I learned a lot from him. He proudly showed the land that he had worked for thirty years. He described how the Irish cut turf from the bog and use it as fuel. He discussed politics. He had little formal education, but he did not let his mind go to waste. His recollection for details was amazing; if someone asked when a certain church was built, he would know the year, the person who built it and what style of architecture it followed. "I always was a man for day and date," he once told me.

He drove with us to the little farm where he and my grandmother grew up. He told us of the day my grandmother left. He was only five years old, but he still remembered her tears as she was taken away on the horse cart. He told us that in a matter-of-fact manner. He wasn't looking for sympathy; he just thought we'd be interested. He then took us to the graveyard where his parents and grandparents are buried. All four of them are interred in the same grave, he told us, to save valuable land. He knelt by the grave for a few minutes and whispered a prayer, then went on to tell a joke about a pig who ate five pound notes. He kept his sorrow to himself, for he did not want it to touch us.

Pa wasn't the stereotypical Irishman. He wasn't lazy. He didn't spend all of his free time in pubs drinking away the family money. He might offer a guest "a drop or two" of whiskey, but Pa would only have a jug of porter on rare occasions. He didn't have a quick temper nor carry on clan-nish feuds. He had people he didn't like, but he'd keep his peace and not have much to do with them. When his cousin Mick Gerahty needed a hiding place from the British soldiers, Pa hid Mick in the cow shed for a week, even though he didn't agree with Mick's IRA activities. When a man asked him for help, he gave it, regardless of the personal consequences.

Patrick Campbell had the largest funeral procession that had been seen in that part of Ireland for, oh, twenty, thirty years. That was a sign of love and respect from his countrymen. Pa was known as a good farmer, a shrewd businessman, and a wise father. He worked hard all of his life and pulled his family out of poverty. He was a religious man, but he wasn't pious. He was never dishonest, except to British soldiers, and in Ireland that doesn't count.

I've seen pictures of his grave, and heard the story of his funeral, but to me, Patrick Campbell is still alive. I remember him often. He was a strong man, a loving man, a man who won my respect and affection. I feel fortunate to have known a person like Pa. I am a better person for thinking of him.

Eileen McCloskey
Effective Writing

My Little Town

I grew up in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, a town you most likely haven't heard of until now. You probably wouldn't want to visit Aliquippa, for it's a dingy steel town, hiding outside of Pittsburgh, and has seen labor strikes and racial outbursts, not to mention icy winters and rainy summers. No, you certainly might not like Aliquippa much, but right now I wouldn't live anywhere else. This wasn't always so. Just last year I couldn't wait to escape the confines of Aliquippa. Now, the town which once enveloped my mind like an iron curtain has opened it so much that I can see good where I once saw bad.

I disdained Aliquippa's primary means of employment, a steel mill, until I saw Jones and Laughlin Steel as a vital part of my life. I never really knew precisely what the men in the mill did. I only knew that they made steel and used blast furnaces in the process. I still didn't know how the raw materials got to be steel. Because I didn't know what my father really did at work in J&L, I found it hard to take pride in his job. What I did know, I saw and couldn't be proud of. I saw my father leave for work at all different times. When he worked from four in the afternoon until twelve midnight, he couldn't even eat dinner with his family. Daddy only worked a normal eight a.m. to four p.m. shift one-third of the time that he worked. And I can't even call that third normal. Daddy came home with blistered hands and aching muscles. In Father Knows Best, after Robert Young took his son on a fishing trip, he might have come home with a sore back. My father often suffered a tender back after a typical eight-hour work day. I thought that Daddy deserved better, and I hated J&L for what it did to him. I scorned the mill in vain, though, for I couldn't exist without J&L. Every bite of food that my body absorbs, every skirt and blouse that clothes me, every piece of education that my brain swallows, I owe to J&L. Without that mill, Daddy might not have had a good job. I might not even have had doctor and dental bills paid. But what a way to get life's necessities!

I was never exactly ashamed of my father because he enabled his family to gain life's essentials by wearing a blue collar into a steel mill instead of a white coat into a

hospital. Yet his work seemed so menial. Rick Webber, a cardiac surgeon on my favorite soap opera, General Hospital, helped people, healed people, and even saved lives. I never saw my father bring a nearly dead man back to life until the summer of my fifteenth year when I started candystripping at the Aliquippa Hospital. There, I saw lifesaving wonders that wouldn't exist without steel: respirators to help comatose patients to breathe and ambulances to transport dying stroke and accident victims to the hospital.

That summer I indeed gained new appreciation of Aliquippa's laborers and J&L steel, but when I returned to school in September, Aliquippa's inferiority again swarmed in my mind like a cluster of flies. With poignant sentences, F. Scott Fitzgerald drew me, an innocent victim of a course entitled American Novels, into the splendid world of the The Great Gatsby. In my dreamland, I ran my hands over the silk shirts which spilled out from Gatsby's drawers. I swam in the blue waters which made Gatsby's pool glisten. On every warm summer night, I sipped imported Rose from Waterford crystal as I talked with Gatsby amidst moonlight and socialities. As I tried to finish my reading assignment before reaching home, a jarring ride on a rickety school bus over pothole-laden roads forced me to leave Gatsby's world and re-enter my own, a less spectacular one where, on my front porch, I drank iced tea from Libby glasses while chatting with my mother among stinging mosquitoes and stillness. Yes, for a moment, I wanted to stay in the world which Fitzgerald had created, but only for a moment. Gatsby and his friends could never do the wonderful things that my father and fellow Aliquippians could. After the last drop of wine trickled down the last guest's throat, Gatsby hid inside his castle, never making a notable mark in his community. My father and I led dull lives, but when the dilapidated bus glided across the Ambridge-Aliquippa Bridge, I witnessed my father's contribution to our community. Engineers could never have build the span without the steel made in J&L.

With my new discovery of J&L's worth, I zealously researched the mill's origins, the history of labor unions, and early days when Aliquippa's name was changed from Woodlawn in honor of an American Indian queen. What could be more American than naming a town after an Indian? But

we weren't a typical American town. Aliquippians held so tenaciously to their alien origins that I thought that each nationality spurned the others. Now, I see a miniature melting pot, rich in ethnic flavor in place of the odd assortment of estranged foreigners. I discovered that we were different from the all-American Brady Bunch when, in first grade, my friends, Janet Barbuto and Janice David, both American-born, argued over whether Italians were better than Lebanese people. I never heard Marcia or Peter Brady refer to themselves as anything but American, forever proud of their California heritage. I wished to be proud of my American birth too, while foreign remnants surrounded me. The Greeks fried fantastically greasy food. The Italians drowned pasta and exotic fish in tomato and wine sauce. Those from the Balkan states danced. Each group did its own thing. As a little girl, I saw all the cultures come together only in the middle of each July for San Rocco Festival. This splendid celebration begins after Sunday morning mass when the Musical Political Italian Club's band leads a parade from Saint Titus Church to Morell Field, several miles away. In the days following, all of Aliquippa's people gather at the park to watch fireworks and gobble hot sausage sandwiches. After a while, Aliquippians forget that this holiday started out to be primarily an Italian-Catholic one. San Rocco is the hallmark of every Aliquippian's summer, Italian, Polish, Irish, or otherwise. Why, San Rocco is to Aliquippa as Cherry Blossom time is to Washington.

After I saw San Rocco as a community celebration rather than an Italian one, I began to see other foreign groups extending arms out to the entire population. If you ever take a stroll down Mill Street, you may hear sweet music outside the Croatian Club. Venture inside, and you'll see Tamburitzaans, girls in kaleidoscope-colored skirts and boys in cardinal-red vests, swirling gracefully. Although the dancing troop consists mostly of Croatian youths, it is open to anyone who wants to learn the traditional Balkan dances, and many Germanic and Latin Aliquippians take up this form of dance rather than the customary tap or ballet. As in the typical studio dances, the Tamburitzaans often perform for the public so that all can share their culture.

Save the fabulous ethnic feasts and performances, nothing exciting happens in Aliquippa. You can very well say that Aliquippa is a boring little town. But after living there a while, I think that when Paul Simon wrote of his little town, "After it rains, there's a rainbow, and all of the colors are black; it's not that the colors aren't there; it's just imagination may lack," he was speaking about Aliquippa. The colors are there although sometimes they appear faded, and it took me a while to see them. When I go to a grocery store in Aliquippa, I see the same faces day in and day out. I may see the same faces, but the people change. Maybe one week, I'll see a friend preoccupied and melancholy. The next week, I might see the same friend, bubbling over with enthusiasm. She'll approach me, to happily inform me that she has just gotten accepted into Carnegie Mellon University's school of architecture. Perhaps she'll go on to be another Frank Lloyd Wright. I always knew that she loved to draw, and her math grades always far surpassed mine, but it took me a while to realize what real talent she had. A girl just like that may exist in Baltimore City, but because the city is so impersonal, few may share her good fortune. This girl lacks color only if no one stops to see the color in her.

About thirty years ago, Aliquippians may have had a hard time recognizing the extent of one young man's gift for music. He lived in West Aliquippa, a section of town which sits on the banks of the Ohio River. There, he played piano and wrote beautiful melodies. Henry Mancini went on to write the themes for the movies, The Pink Panther and Silver Streak. You just may have heard his name before.

Not everyone in Aliquippa becomes famous. Most Aliquippians, however, are genuine people, full of color. They're friendlier than most. The shopping mall in Beaver County, which most Aliquippians frequent, is full of laughter and amiable voices while those in Baltimore and Pittsburgh are filled with stoics, there only to shop, not to socialize. Aliquippians aren't self-conscious stuffed shirts like those who reside in big cities and affluent suburbs, such as Potomac, Maryland. What Potomac lawyer would shout to an acquaintance across Phillips'? An Aliquippian will do just about anything short of standing on his head to acknowledge a friend in Beef Steak Charlie's. My face used to turn red when

my mother would laugh and call to a neighbor from one side of Hills Department Store to the other. Now, I do the exact same thing.

Aliquippa has never had a case like the Boston Strangler. You'll have to admit, though, that it's a lot safer and more pleasant than Boston. All right, so Aliquippa's a little dull and its people are a bit eccentric, laughing and hollering across restaurants and supermarkets. I certainly wouldn't recommend Aliquippa for your next vacation. It's not the most exciting place to visit, but it's a wonderful place to live!

Mary Anne Ross
Effective Writing

The Carousel

Two summers past, a summer that will never be again, we sat in the tavern, as we had done every year on our sea-shore vacation. We, family and neighbors, laughed at the show's aging emcee, poked fun at the familiar, fat drummer, and sang choruses of "Toot, Toot, Tootsie Good-bye."

I turned to Nancy, a friend one year older than I, and she was crying. I did not know why she cried. She did not explain.

Last summer, a summer that will never be again, Nancy and I rode the boardwalk carousel. As the carousel turned, objects whirled by - a "wheel of fortune," a young couple, a concession stand where I used to buy candy apples, a little boy, an old man.

I spun past the spot where my parents used to stand, watching their little girl go around. I remembered the fear I had whenever the carousel began to rotate away from my parents, and how I thought they might leave me while I was gone. I remembered waving and smiling when the horse returned me from the foreign land.

On this ride, I did not need to see Mom and Dad. Yet, I felt the same fear of loss. I clutched the silver pole and held it tightly. I never wanted to let go; I never wanted to climb down from the horse; that horse was my childhood.

I thought that September would begin my last college year. I realized how unsure I was of future paths. They might never be smooth, clear, guided as my childhood rides. They might never return me to anything familiar. For a moment, a split, cruel moment, the carousel music stopped, though only for me. The boardwalk's bright lights dimmed, but I was the only one who saw.

From the painted saddle, I looked onto the boardwalk. Two teen-aged girls flirted with a curly-haired attendant at the "wheel of fortune." He cleverly tried to swindle their money from them. I wanted to watch his strategy, but the horse spun me away too soon.

I passed my parent's spot again, but strangers stood there - the young couple, waiting for one special horse to bring their child back from foreign lands. They were the ones whose eyes followed their child until she could not be seen. They now waited for a small vanished child to return.

I caught another glimpse of the little boy by the concession stand. His mouth and cheeks were red from the candy apple held in his sticky fingers. Another little boy ran passed and bumped him, making him stumble forward, but he didn't look up. His eyes stayed fixed on the apple. He took two more bites and chewed away.

I rode past the old man. When he saw me looking at him, he smiled. I smiled back. Then he was gone - another stranger I would never know.

The carousel began to slow. My horse stopped by the "Wheel of Fortune." The girls had disappeared. The curly-haired boy leaned against the wooden stand, arms crossed, talking to no one and staring at nothing.

I looked at my hands clutching the silver pole, and I let go. Through tears, I turned to Nancy, a friend one year older than I. Nancy nodded and smiled. I understood.

Cathy Bowers
Advanced Prose

Jesus Christ: The Foundation of Life

What is water? It is H₂O, a liquid compound which freezes at 0° centigrade and boils at 100° centigrade. Its maximum density, which occurs at 3.98° centigrade, is one gram per cubic centimeter. It has a specific heat value of one calorie/gram degree centigrade and a molecular weight of 18.015 atomic mass units. Water operates as an acid, a base, a reducing agent and an oxidizing agent. Of all chemical compounds, water is perhaps the most important and certainly the most versatile.

We often see water through a very western problematic scope. It is a chemical substance that we use in different ways. We use it to drink when we are thirsty. We use it to water lawns and gardens and to wash clothes and dishes when they are dirty. We use water as a dumping ground for all our trash, garbage and chemical toxins. There is nothing mysterious about that. Water, like anything else in the world, is a tool to be used for our benefit.

Our western viewpoint hardly helps us to understand the symbolic meaning of water in the Gospel of John. John's use of water in his gospel has roots in the eastern viewpoint and appreciation of water.

Judea was located at a latitude of approximately 30° North and a longitude of approximately 30° East, a semiarid and arid piece of land with temperatures reaching 100°F at Jerusalem in the month of July and 120°F at regions such as the Dead Sea. Water was scarce, for there was no national water system at the time of Jesus. There were only a few springs and man-made wells spotting the countryside. Extreme heat and the scarcity of water made it the single most important element to the men and women of Judea, even worth dying for. To lose water meant certain death.

The Judean men and women saw as well the mystery of water, for it was an entity all to itself. Water was not just a substance to be used, but a "being" to be respected. Water was an entity that kept men, animals and plants alive. It cleansed and healed. Water was a gift of life from the Earth, from the gods or from Yahweh, not to be wasted nor spoiled by throwing something into it. Water was sacred and holy.

Water, then, provided a foundation for symbolic belief by people of many nations. Though each culture developed its own symbolic system, some truths were universal: Water represents death and destruction; paradoxically, water is also the source of sustenance of life. Water cleans and water heals.

Water was first imagined, by the Israelites, as a dark, chaotic substance where death reigned. The water of the abyss was the water of nothingness. In the beginning was this primordial ocean, a "turbulent ocean. . . completely beyond control, inspiring terror and despair, with powerful forces of destruction sucking down and crushing all possibilities of life and order and meaning."¹ Yet out of this darkness was the possibility of life. The ancient people of the world held water as "the reservoir of all the potentialities of existence"; which precedes every form and sustains every creation. For the Israelites, though, this potentiality only came through the will of God. God gave life to the water or more appropriately he brought forth life from the water. "Then God said, 'Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other.' " (Gn 1:3). "Then God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear.' " (Gn 1:9). "Then God said, 'Let the water teem with the abundance of living creatures. . . .'" (Gn 1:20). Yahweh brought forth creation from the waters of the abyss and land and living creatures from the water of the earth.

Once life came from the water it was water that sustained life. When the rains fell they filled the lakes, rivers, and streams. These bodies of water flowed throughout the countryside nourishing the land. Water allowed trees, grass, and flowers to thrive in land that was otherwise dry and barren. Water provided crops for the farmer and fish for the fisherman. A stream provided for a shepherd and his flock or for a man and his family. Where there was water there was life.

Water was a literal means of purification and healing. Water was the obvious substance to be used in washing the dust from the body. Water also provided soothing comfort to an open wound or painful skin disease such as leprosy. Water

washed away the germs, and this cleaner "atmosphere" made it easier for the body to heal itself. But ancient peoples gave water a deeper meaning as purifier and cleansing agent. Water not only cleaned away dirt, it cleaned away evil spirits. Water was sprinkled on man when he was alive to wash away the evil from his soul and it was sprinkled on him when he died to protect his soul from the darkness. Water was a gift from the gods and it contained the supernatural power of the gods.

The Jews shared these universal interpretations of water, but they differentiated between living water and water stored in jars or cisterns. Living water was ever-flowing spring water. Since it came from below the surface of the earth it was always cold, fresh and clean. Water stored in cisterns or man-made wells was often contaminated and always just a bit stale. It kept a Jew alive when thirsty, but it was never as refreshing as spring water. In Leviticus 14:5 the priest is told to slay one of the birds over a vessel containing spring water as opposed to stored water.

The Jews extended the differentiation further. The spring from which the living water flowed was Yahweh and the man-made cisterns represented man without God. Jeremiah 2:13 pointed out:

Two evils have my people done:
they have forsaken me, the source
of living waters:
They have dug themselves cisterns
broken cisterns that hold no water.

Yahweh, the source of living water afforded life and salvation to the chosen people of Israel. In the Near East, the common name for 'spring' is 'God's gift.'² It was permanent, as in the story about the water from the rock (Exodus 7:1-7). As the Israelites wandered in the desert, they became thirsty, but there was no water around. Yahweh intervened and had Moses draw water from a rock. The flowing waters teemed from the rock and were there to keep the Israelites alive. Stored water, conversely, came from man. Man stored the water in cisterns, but these man-made cisterns often broke, releasing the stored water. Those who did not follow Yahweh were lost in the end just like the water stored in the broken cisterns.

It is in the Gospel according to John that water gains its ultimate richness as a symbol. John gives water a further, deeper meaning.

Water and its Old Testament understanding is extended to a New Testament understanding. The water of the ancients and of Yahweh becomes the water of Jesus.

In chapter one water is mentioned in association with John the Baptist. He says, "I baptize with water." (Jn 1:26). Baptism is re-immersion into the life giving waters. The death of the old self sees a simultaneous rebirth of a new self. The Israelites had, throughout history, "baptized converts who have come from among the nations seeking membership in Israel as a people of God."³ Yet John, in mentioning the baptisms of John the Baptist with the descent of the Spirit onto Jesus, foreshadows the new baptism and the new meaning of water as entrance into the community of Jesus and a closer relationship to God.

In chapter five John recounts the story of the healing of the disabled man on the sabbath. In mentioning the Sheep Pool at Bethesda and its mysterious healing powers, John employs the old interpretation of water as a healing agent. To be disabled and to get into the pool when it was stirred by the angel meant being cured. John used Jesus, though, to give this old interpretation deeper meaning: Jesus actually becomes the water of healing, curing the man himself. Jesus replaces Yahweh's tool with himself, redefining how the Israelites saw water and thus how they saw the relationship of God to man.

In chapter six Jesus calms the sea. Water is a destructive agent as it was in the story of creation. "By this time it was dark, and Jesus had still not joined them; moreover with a strong wind blowing, the sea was becoming rough." (Jn 6:18). Jesus then walks on the water and brings the apostles' boat to safety. John again correlates Jesus and Yahweh. Yahweh brought forth life from the waters of the abyss and Jesus brings forth life from the rough sea. John does suggest that Jesus is God.

John's final use of a universal interpretation of water comes in chapter thirteen. In the story of the washing of the feet, John uses water as a purifier of the soul. Again Jesus replaces this water: The water used to wash away the evil from man is replaced by Jesus' forgiveness of sins. Through Jesus, man is made clean and thus is able to share in his and his father's heritage.

Thus in chapters one, five, six and thirteen John associated universal symbolic meanings of water with Jesus. In chapters four and seven John gives water, the fluid itself, a deeper and new meaning.

In chapter four, Jesus asks a Samaritan woman for a drink from the well, but she refuses to give him one. Jesus then reprimands her with the reply:

If only you recognized God's gift,
and who it is that is asking you for a
drink,
you would have asked him instead,
and he would have given you living
water. (Jn 4:10)

The Samaritan woman understands living water to be spring water, as opposed to stored water. He replies:

You do not have a bucket and this
well is deep. Where do you expect
to get this flowing water? (Jn 4:11)

Jesus responds:

Everyone who drinks this water
will be thirsty again.
But whoever drinks the water I give
him
will never be thirsty;
no, the water I give
shall become a fountain within him,
leaping up to provide eternal life.

(Jn 4:13-14)

The woman still does not understand, but the living water has become fulfillment or salvation. Many Jews had applied living water to divine revelation or more specifically the Torah, but this water (Torah) was 'eternal' to men. It could quench one's thirst for only a short period of time; it had to be drunk every day to be effective. This new living water

was Jesus' "own water of the spirit, which was internal to men, an interior guide." The new living water, drunk only once, quenched thirst forever. It not only satisfied a person, it fulfilled him.

John thus shows Jesus replacing the Torah; John shows that Jesus is God. John makes Jesus the fountain of the living water. If the Jews believed that Yahweh was the fountain of the living water, John, in having Jesus announce that he is the fountain, is subtly having Jesus announce that he is Yahweh.

John further enriches the symbol of water in chapter seven. This story tells of the feast of Booths and Jesus' announcement on the last day of the feast. The feast of Booths lasts for seven days. On each day the priest and the congregation go from the temple to the Pool of Siloe where the priest fills a golden pitcher with water from the pool. All form a procession and return to the temple singing: "With joy you will draw water at the foundation of salvation." (Isaiah 12:3) On return to the temple, the priest sprinkles the water on the altar and afterwards other rituals of the feast are performed.

The sprinkling of the altar with water is symbolic of the messianic age which is characterized by an abundance of rain and an end to the ever present thirst. John uses the symbolic reference of the coming of the messianic age as a backdrop to introduce another theme. John tells his readers that Jesus is the fulfillment of Jewish expectations. If they are waiting for the messianic age and the coming of the rains, what better time than at the end of the ceremonies for Jesus to stand up and announce that he is the anticipated rain.

If anyone thirsts, let him come to
me;
let him drink who believes in me.
Scripture has it:
"From within him rivers of living
water shall flow" (Jn 7:37-38)

If from within a person rivers of living water shall flow, then the way of Jesus is true salvation. Jesus' water is internal and everlasting. It quenches thirst forever. Thirst, a human limitation, is overcome by Jesus' water. When we accept his

gift, we too become a little less limited by our human restrictions.

John adds a gloss which gives living water its final definition. The living water is the Holy Spirit that will ascend onto mankind when Jesus completes his mission. The Holy Spirit, like Jesus' living water, will be internal, everlasting, and fulfilling.

The cycle is complete. John traces the idea of water from the beginning. Building on the ancient universal interpretations of water, John then relates Jesus to the Jewish concept of living water as opposed to stored water. He adds layers of meaning to the symbol of water until it becomes a spiritual water fulfilling man's spiritual needs. Finally John gives this living water of Jesus a name. He calls it the Holy Spirit.

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Theology

¹ Monika Hellwig, The Meaning of the Sacraments, (Dayton, 1972), p. 6.

² Mircea Eliade, Images and Symbols (New York, 1969), p. 151.

³ Hellwig, p. 8.

⁴ John Marsh, Saint John (Harmondsworth, 1979), p. 212.

