

Between the Lines: How and Why Truth Is Implied

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Introduction

What is the highest and most basic aim of the writing process? What does the process of writing reveal to the writer and how does what's revealed come across to the reader? In this paper I will work to answer these questions as well as discuss how a writer creates that which s/he is discovering: truth.

I will show how the most effective means to reveal and impart truth is through implication. At the heart of implication there must be paradox, a missing link between explicitly stated ideas. I will examine this link—the space in which truth can be inferred—by looking at the writing process and various forms of implication. In order to clarify this, in turn, I will look to a few ancient Greek philosophers and their takes on truth—which, they agree, can only be revealed through implication. From there, I will examine a critical work by E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, which discusses modern novels and how they are or are not effective in conveying truth and beauty.

As we follow this road toward our own discovery, I will use, specifically, the Greek philosophers Zeno, Plato, and Aristotle as my compass. The critical work by E.M. Forster will be my roadmap. The destination? Truth, by means of the writing process: the act of discovering truth is also the art of revealing truth.

Implication: The Best Means of Revealing Truth

Writing is an act of discovery. No matter what we write about, one thought or idea leads to another thought or idea, and so on. Each thought is established as a truth, so that we can say each truth leads to another truth. My first name is Richard. My last name is Beckham. So my full name is Richard Beckham. Years and years ago, when I learned to write my name, I discovered

that the letters I combined on a piece of paper created my name. I could then infer that each time I saw my name, those particular letters in that order, referred to me. That's the truth.

I had to create a sense of my name, the truth, by implication. There was no way that I could understand that those letters were actually me on a piece of paper—that through some kindergarten magic a part of my soul or the atoms in my finger became part of the page. I had to imply a representation of myself on the page. And vice-versa: the words I write on the page are an extension of me, of my thoughts. (I'll get into this more in the next section.) What's important, however, is that at the most basic level of all understanding there is an implication. Something must be implied in order for truth to be revealed.

I'll use quick example. Let's say you need some items from the grocery store. You decide to write a list: "eggs," "milk," and then you pause and discover you also need juice, so you write down "juice." What is implied by doing this? You need to go to the store, or, you need to get ready for a brunch party. But if you were to write a list of food items while you were backpacking in Mongolia for a month then there might be a different implication. The point is by writing a grocery list you imply the fact that you need to go to the store and get some items. That's the truth, right?

From writing our names to jotting down a grocery list, we'll make the leap to writing a work of art. The leap shouldn't be as far as one might imagine. "Richard Beckham woke up on Friday the thirteenth to find that the grocery list he wrote the night before was tattooed on his chest." We have moved from a name on a page, as a representation of a person, to a representation of an utterly tragic character of a story. But, depending on how this character is portrayed, the reader will infer the truth about his nature. I implied he was tragic, as a joke, but

really the character is portrayed as comic. The joke is implied. If I were to say: “Richard Beckham, a comic character, woke up...,” would you, in truth, find him funny?

Richard goes Greek. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote *Poetics* to break down the fundamentals of Greek tragedy—which he refers to as “poetry.” He claims that the most important element of drama is plot, formed from the action and events which the characters take part in (11). In other words, plot must be an implication. We follow the characters and what they do, as well as the events that they are in. “Richard woke up and then found the grocery list on his chest...” What’s implied here, in terms of the plot, is that somehow he was able to see the list on his chest. He looked down, he looked in the mirror, or he felt it with his fingers? That is what’s implied, the action that fills in between what we know and what we are given.

And what does Aristotle have to say about character? “Character is the kind of thing which discloses the nature of a choice” (12). Even the way Aristotle words his definition shows that character is implied. Don’t we use the phrase, “the kind of thing,” when we’re trying to be really vague about something we can’t explain? “Love is the kind of thing that makes you weak in the knees.” The truth of love, in that sentence, is implied. “The kind of thing” is a phrase that can only point us toward something, toward an idea. That’s implication.

Aristotle goes on to say that through reasoning/decisions and speech, character is constructed so that a choice can be made that pushes along the plot of a story. Richard decides to wake up. Then he finds a list tattooed on his chest. His choice to wake up and find a tattoo pushes the story along—first this, then that. The idea of character is implied; it’s the same as with plot. How so? If we have a character that is the product of reasoning/decisions and those decisions lead to actions and speech that, in turn, make up the plot, then the plot must be implied.

Those actions and those words spoken by characters show the “kind of thing” that makes up the plot. If the plot was not implied then we would have no story, no characters, and no events. What Richard does when he wakes up is both event and character. When he finds the grocery list, we have a plot. So the plot is the product of both the character and the events created by the actions of character. We can begin to see how ideas of character and plot are implied. But what does this have to do with truth?

Juice with your eggs. Now we can say that character and plot are implied, that they must be implied to exist at all. But how do we get from these modes of writing to demonstrating how implication is related to truth? Back to Aristotle, who says that drama is primarily created through plot and the most important way that emotion is swayed is through plot (12). And since we know that characters are used to help create plot, we can safely say that these devices are used to create an emotional response in the reader. When we found out that Richard woke up with a grocery list on his chest, we were probably tickled with laughter (an emotional/somatic response in the body). In other words, the body becomes aware of the truth even though the mind may not acknowledge it. With Richard, the new truth, the knowledge, that he has a grocery list on his chest registers with our bodies first. Then the mind can interpret this truth, accepting it or dismissing it. The implied truth isn't that Richard has a grocery list on his chest; we were given that information. What's implied is how it got there and how it's even possible to be there in the first place, let alone stay there. And the implications are funny.

If a truth were imparted in a more straightforward manner, then that truth would only register with the mind; the body's emotional response would be bypassed. “When Richard saw the grocery list he was startled...” Wow, you really feel for the guy, don't you? A description

that fully explains Richard's response makes the reader feel distanced from it. The truth becomes farther away; there is very little implied about how Richard feels. Now if the description were phrased differently: "Richard went over to the mirror and felt a plastic tack on his chest...." then there is more implied. The reader has more room to generate his/her own somatic response. What I'm getting at is that an emotional response is achieved through drama by means of implication; the body fills in the blanks, so to speak.

Comparing the two descriptions above we can guess at which one is more powerful. When we know which description is more powerful, then it's safe to say that the more powerful resonates better and imparts truth more effectively. Then when we know how and what imparts truth more effectively, as a reader, we can raise a magnifying glass to the writer and look at how s/he both creates and discovers truth. Since we know that the process of writing is an act of discovery (as shown by adding "juice" to our grocery list), then we know that a writer must use character and plot as a process toward discovery, by creating a narrative work. And since character and plot are implications, then we know that the truth of a narrative work is an implication. It is a discovery. If we were *told* the truth, then it wouldn't feel true.

Plato does drama. Now, for a work of writing that is better known than Richard's plight with the grocery list. When Plato wrote the *Protagoras*, he created a work of drama to emphasize the importance of the truth he was exploring: virtue. The story begins simply enough: "Socrates meets an unnamed friend" (*Protagoras* 38). This friend asks the character of Socrates where he has been. A dramatic urgency is at work, and this continues as Socrates himself tells Mr. X about his talk with Protagoras. There are two layers of narrative, and the distance between them gives the story the space necessary for implication to arise. The first layer is the narrator telling the

story about an unnamed friend and Socrates (this is the “Once upon a time” layer, if you will); the second layer is the character of Socrates telling his story (Once upon a time...this old wise man told a friend a story).

What I’m getting at is that the character of Socrates, and his retelling of the events and conversation with Protagoras, must be the implied truth of *Protagoras*—all experience and knowledge are filtered through the character of Socrates. We must either believe what he says or not believe what he says, and whatever we believe we must infer. But either way, the story has a plot where one thing leads to another. Since the story has a plot, then the truth isn’t presented merely as a reasoned argument. There’s more to it. The truth, then, becomes implied by the actions of the characters (the events, or plot, according to Aristotle) as well as by the point of view (Socrates, as narrator), and the use of narrative distance.

I’ll talk more about *Protagoras* in the next section. But what I want to make clear with this example is how character and plot are implied. The same goes for the framework of a dramatic piece of writing. The fact that the story is being told from the perspective of someone who supposedly “lived” the story shows that the story is implied *through* the narrator’s character. So when Plato wrote the *Protagoras* and worked to discover truth, he must have used character and plot to imply his truth about virtue. The dramatic devices used in *Protagoras*—plot, character, narrative distance—helped to create a somatic/bodily response in the reader, as truth. If this truth were spelled out and handed to you there would hardly be a connection; it wouldn’t feel true.

To extend this discussion even further, I wish to point out that the very act of using words to represent a truth or a thing creates a never-closing distance, a contradiction. A word can never take the place of an experience.

Contradiction: The Foundation of Implying Truth

This is the process of writing: as a writer I am taking my thoughts and putting them onto a page, a record of my thoughts. These words are in motion in my mind, as part of my experience of myself, and they rest here on the page, to be rediscovered by me, the writer, or to be discovered by you, the reader. These are words at rest on the page and in motion in my mind; when you read them, the words become in motion in your mind.

Just now, as I write these words, I go back and read them. I change them, I rearrange them. The record of my previous thoughts, my previous experience, changes from being at rest to being in motion once more. I discover something about my writing that I didn't see before. This means that writing is a process, a discovery, a reaffirmation. A writer seeks an idea, a truth. Back to the shopping list, even then we have an idea in mind; there is a goal. We write down "milk" and "eggs" then we discover that we also need juice, so we write down "juice." The idea is to get everything that we need from the store. Even though we are only writing a grocery list, the list becomes those items from the store and they end up in the refrigerator. So the truth of writing can be seen easily here. We need juice from the store—that's the truth we discovered by writing.

In other words, we create the means to discovery through the process of writing. Big deal, right? *It is* a big deal when we realize that this simple process is a paradox, a contradiction. When we write, we are creating that which we are discovering. How can this be? It's like looking for a secret treasure. We have no idea where it is, but when we find it we know that we were the ones who put it there. The secret treasure is the truth. When we write, we create *and* discover the truth, so that what we write almost creates itself. The shopping list we created led to

the discovery of the need for juice. Inspiration tapped on our shoulder and showed us a chilled plastic bottle of juice. Eureka! We now know the truth. We now know that we need juice.

The paradox in creating that which we are discovering can be further shown by the example of chiseling a sculpture. When you start out you only have a slab of stone and maybe an idea of what you'll create. Let's say we're sculpting a bottle of juice. You chisel away, for a long time, and you start to give it shape. You get closer to discovering the idea, the truth, of a juice bottle. But as your sculpture gets closer and closer to a real bottle's likeness, you begin to notice perforations in the bottle, the size of the label, and the narrowness of the neck. These aspects of the bottle are different than what you imagined, yet they seem to be the only way the bottle could be chiseled out of the stone. Then when you are done you have something that looks different than what you originally thought, but the kicker is that it looks better. The idea, the truth, is different than what you imagined; the discovery of the stone bottle is also your creation. You created that which you discovered, and you discovered that which you created. This shouldn't be possible, but it is. That's a contradiction and that's the truth.

Writing as sculpture. Another way to phrase the sculpture example is to say that you find what you construct. But how can you *find* something that you're building yourself? You're finding something that you didn't know existed when you started. This is the process of discovery, of inspiration. The act of discovery is the act of revealing truth. We know about the process to chisel a sculpture from a piece of stone and we know the process works. The same goes for writing.

When we sit down to write something, a grocery list, a story, etc., we start with a blank page, a blank screen. This is the solid piece of stone, out of which we are going to chisel an idea.

If we intend to write a story, for example, we write word after word, idea after idea. We work toward a discovery, a truth, and when we find it, we can polish the writing so that the truth hangs suspended and all signs point to it. When we chisel a piece of stone, we work chip by chip until we find/discover the idea/truth inside the stone. Then, when we can begin to see this idea, we can polish the stone so that the idea is all anyone who looks at it can see. The blank page is the stone; the finished draft is the sculpture, and the truth that was found has always been there, hidden in the artist's soul.

Truth is always there. Plato proposes the notion that all knowledge, which I will equate with truth, has always been known to the soul. He says this because the soul is immortal and has experienced and learned everything in existence, so that any “new” knowledge is merely the soul's recognition or remembrance of that knowledge (*Meno* 129-30). In other words, learning something new, or any act of discovery for that matter, is a contradiction. When we chisel at the stone or write on a blank screen, we are in the process of discovering something new. But when we find what we sought, and created, we discover that the truth has always been there. We find the likeness of a bottle of juice made in stone. We find that we need juice from the store, that we needed juice before we even thought to write a grocery list. So I'll ask this now (but examine the concept of contradiction in the next section): is creating that which one discovers the same as discovering something that one already knew, since it is one's very own creation?

If we consider Plato's notion about knowledge always being known, then knowledge/truth is eternal. Thus, all writers tap into this knowledge, since truth is found in the process of writing. Writing is a process of discovery—a way of revealing truth which has been there all along. And with the right frame of mind, a writer will tap into the eternal truth. As E.M.

Forster put it: imagine writers “seated together in a room, a circular room, a sort of British Museum reading-room—all writing their novels simultaneously” (9). I’ll talk about Forster’s work in great detail later on in this discussion. The point here is that if all writers are writing simultaneously then they all are discovering truth, which is eternal—and this would mean that truth is discovered simultaneously by all writers, tapping into eternal knowledge.

The implication of truth being eternal is that it always exists, has always existed, and will continue to exist. As for the writing process, the truth is in the blank page as much as it is in the slab of stone. Before we even set out to discover the truth, on the page or in the stone, we know that the road will be a daunting one, so much so that we may abandon our efforts, because the truth seems to slip farther and farther out of reach the more we write or chisel, trying to name it, to place our fingers upon it. But when we have a glimpse, a somatic recognition—just the feeling that the truth exists—we can become inspired. If we let the chisel or the pen work on its own, then the truth may reveal itself. When we let go of this control over the page, or the stone, we can realize that this is the truth *inside* the page, or the stone, speaking to us. Since the truth was there before we even worked to discover it, the truth in the page was always there to be revealed, was revealed, and will continue to be revealed. In order to do this we must let the eternal truth that is inside us reveal itself through the page; the truth inside the page is the truth in ourselves.

Contradiction: where words get their power. A name, according to Plato, is “an instrument of teaching and of distinguishing natures,” so that when we name things we do so in order to “give information to one another, and distinguish things according to their natures” (*Cratylus* 56). So a name must signify something else besides its letters, and by doing so the name creates a separation from the thing that is signified. My written name, Richard Beckham, signifies me, but

it is not me; hence, there is a separation. The separation is between me and my name, and in that space is the creation of the idea of me.

This separation goes for every name or word. It's the basis of communication. There's that thing over there. It's made of wood and has four legs; people sit on it. I don't want to name it (isn't "it" a name also?), but you know what I'm talking about. You can imply the meaning, the thing that's being described. I hope. But there's no quick relation, no easy reference. To illustrate my meaning I must describe the thing and what it does. The thing nonetheless exists, but when we give it a name, "chair," then it becomes an idea. Chair is a thing and a word, and both at once, at two places at the same time—written and in existence underneath Martha over there.

So the chair that Martha's sitting on is not the chair I'm sitting on, but they both are chairs and they both are referred to with the same word. This is a contradiction, but it's also the truth. Martha's chair and my chair are not the same chair. This is implied, because we both have *a* chair. And the idea of a chair has evolved over time. In *The Cratylus*, Plato shows how different names have changed in meaning throughout the ages. This means that language itself is forever in a process of change, since language takes a written form—meaning that it is at rest—yet the minds of humanity are forever in motion.

We can say that language is constantly in an evolving state, right? Yet, the names stay the same; only the meanings of those names change. The meaning, in other words, is what's implied. We use the contradictory nature of language to create an implication, a meaning—"truth" in which we can relate the experience of our lives. "Martha and Richard were sitting. A chair caught fire. Yet only Richard burned his bottom." What truth is implied? Were there two chairs? Only "a chair" was mentioned, but since only Richard was burned there must have been two

chairs and each person was sitting on a chair. The details that were omitted were the implied truth.

The way Plato iterates the idea that language is constantly changing and yet remains the same goes like this: “For at the moment that the observer approaches, they [things] become other and of another nature, so that you cannot get any further in knowing their nature or state, for you cannot know that which has no state” (*Cratylus* 100). If there is any truth to words then that truth slips further away the more precisely we articulate it, but this does not mean that truth cannot be experienced somatically. When words imply truth in such a way that truth can be felt in the body, then the truth can become known and we have touched eternal truth.

So again, we have words that are contradictory by nature (my name is not me, yet it is; and the word “chair” is my idea of a chair and also everyone else’s idea of a chair throughout time). These words are constantly changing in the meaning they imply but have also always been the same, essentially—another contradiction. Yet we can still understand the meaning of words across time by what the words imply. When Plato concludes his discussion in *Cratylus*, he leaves the inquiry about language open, letting the reader infer what s/he may. So the truth hangs like an implied balloon, in the space between what he says and what we understand.

Contradictions of Writing Craft

Writers of fiction use characters and plot in their narratives to help reveal truth. But how do we get character? From actions—interconnected with plot—and also speech, which interconnects characters with each other. So, speech cannot stand alone, just as a block of stone cannot simply be polished and then be called a sculpture. The same goes for character. We cannot have Richard merely standing on a blank page, as in a cartoon when the illustrator quits. The stone must have

something sculpted from it; the character must be in relation to something/someone else. People and situations are presented to characters and the characters perform actions, thereby “disclos[ing] the nature of choice” in order to further complicate or simplify those situations. Yet, when writers and critics attempt to break down the craft of writing they tend to separate character from speech. This is an attempt to separate the stone from the sculpture. Character and dialogue, two separate things, require each other to exist and therefore cannot be separated. And what glues them together? The narrative, the process of discovery: writing, itself.

So we have another contradiction when we try to separate character from speech. But together, with character *and* speech, the author implies a message. The author implies truth. Thus the reader infers truth through a contradiction—the same as is the case with the very notion of words (see page 12). Plato was aware of the power of this technique, so much so that he crafted *Protagoras* as a dramatic work, heightening its scope and extending its reach to a larger audience. Through the power of narrative and its inherent implied truth, he could connect with almost anybody, somatically, and in order to do so he had to use the inseparable duo of character and speech.

From the very beginning of *Protagoras*, the characters of Socrates and Protagoras differ in opinions about the nature of virtue. They stand opposite each other; their characters are nearly contradictions, in this respect. But somewhere between these two intellectual giants is the slippery idea called “truth,” which the two of them try to grasp. By the end of *Protagoras* they have switched opinions: “What an absurd pair you are Socrates and Protagoras,” Plato writes. “One of you, having said at the beginning that virtue is not teachable, now is bent upon contradicting himself....” Plato goes on to conclude, “Protagoras on the other hand, who at the beginning supposed it to be teachable, now on the contrary...” (99).

Note how Plato uses the words “contradict” and “contrary” in reference to discovering the truth he seeks. These contradictory ideas of virtue are like two people on a teeter-totter. Only when the contradiction is equal will the teeter-totter balance. The two people must discover the truth of their weight. In *Protagoras*, the contradiction is between the main characters and what they say to each other, firstly; then secondly, through the plot. The main characters cannot escape each other and end up contradicting themselves. And when the contradictors switch positions—in other words, when the reader catches on to the meaning of the contradiction—that’s when the truth is implied by Plato. It’s like a game of Three-Card Monte. At the moment when the ace of spades (the truth) is moved, the observer (the reader) intuits where the ace is, until it’s time to guess. When it’s time to guess, the hustler (the author) can imply the truth of where the ace is, but cannot speak it, and the observer/reader must do the same by inferring; but it’s only “the truth” when they both realize the same idea—when the teeter-totter finds the balance between them and the ace is revealed.

All this is to say that Plato could not separate the character of Socrates from the character of Protagoras in their battle of wits. Their characters are dependent upon their speech and the plot has placed those characters together, in order for them to speak to each other. The characters need each other in order for the story to exist at all. But like two negatively charged magnets, the characters of Socrates and Protagoras repel each other, only to switch their charges to positive and repel each other again. The plot of *The Protagoras*, the battle of wits over the notion of virtue, cannot be separated from the main characters and their speech, and none of these can be separated from the discovery of Plato’s truth. When these characters go back and forth in pursuit of truth (the dialectic method), the process of contradiction (their opposing viewpoints) works to imply and discover that truth. The characters’ ideas are driven by the plot, and the characters’

speech and actions, in turn, move the plot along. So character and plot imply the truth of the story, just as two contradictory characters can also imply the truth of the story. When someone approaches the craft of writing and works to separate character from plot, or speech from character, to break it all down, we can say that there must be a paradox (more on this shortly in discussion of Zeno).

In *Meno*, Plato uses the dialectic method differently than he did in *Protagoras*. There are still contradictions to the dialectic, but they are more subtle. Instead of having the majority of the discussion between two intellectual equals, in *Meno* Plato pairs Socrates with a sidekick—almost a yapping little pup to accompany a bulldog throughout the back alleys of town. This sidekick is the title character, Meno, who begins the discussion with the opening line: “Can you tell me Socrates—is virtue something that can be taught?” (115). From the start, we have a sidekick who appears to know nothing, and this sidekick’s duty is to cheer for Socrates, keep him discovering, and agree with his profoundly clear reasoning. The contradiction between these two is that one appears ignorant while the other claims to be ignorant, but is not. Plato admits that he has “no knowledge about virtue at all” (115). Yet both must know something of virtue—and truth—since the soul is eternal and knows all.

From the character of Meno, Plato moves to a character more like Protagoras and less like a sidekick. The character of Anytus disagrees with Socrates through and through and at the end of *Meno* walks away angrily from the discussion (149). But Anytus plays an important role, just as Meno does. Instead of a subtler, more implied contradiction, Anytus’ contradiction is obvious—he outright contradicts everything Socrates suggests. This contradiction helps Plato discover his truth by negating/criticizing certain arguments; the energy of contradiction keeps the process of discovery in motion, in much the same way as Meno’s character does when cheering

on Socrates. On one sideline we have Meno cheering, “You’re right, Socrates. You must be some sort of wizard. Tell me more.” And on the other sideline we have Anytus grumbling, booing, “You don’t know what you’re talking about, Socrates. Why don’t you stop and listen to reason, for a change.” From both sides, Socrates is propelled toward the goal of discovering truth. The cheering contradicts the criticism, and both help to imply that Socrates, the character, is a representation of truth.

Talking during half-time. Maybe it’s more like intermission after the second period of a hockey game. Whatever the case, I want to touch on the difference (if there fundamentally is one) between dialogue, as we view it today, and the dialectic method. First off, both the dialectic method and dialogue are forms of speech. That’s easy. When we think of how Plato uses his characters in the previous examples, we can see how an author constructs characters with different sentiments/perspectives so that s/he can discover and reveal truth. The characters that Plato uses are pretty flat characters. Meno is a sidekick, Anytus is an opponent, and neither is much more than that. Flat characters serve their purpose in the plot, in the process of discovery, but are not meant to complicate things in intricate ways. We, as readers, learn about these characters and their “nature of choice” based partly on what they say—their dialogue. When Richard wakes up he says, “I don’t remember this grocery list being stuck to my chest when I went to bed last night.” From this speech we learn that Richard has a hard time reading between the lines. His character is flat. If the story continues along this line he will serve the plot as a function and not as a variable that may change a variety of things.

In other words, the implied existence of character is dependent upon dialogue (or monologue, in the example of Richard), which is a more refined version of the dialectic

method—this means any form of speaking will reveal character. Richard admits to his shag carpet of a dog, “At the time, I didn’t know I needed juice.” The dog hacks on a hairball in response. “It was like magic how I found out!” Richard’s a quick one, huh? But we learn about his character through this dialogue (if we can be so bold as to call it that). The notion that characters represent certain perspectives to aid in the discovery of truth is easily seen with flat characters. These characters can have a great impact on the reader, because of their simplicity. E. M. Forster has this to say, in *Aspects of the Novel*, about flat characters: “One great advantage of flat characters is that they are easily recognized whenever they come in—recognized by the reader’s emotional eye, not by the visual eye” (68). Again, here, truth (the idea that the flat characters represent) is a somatic response. It is registered in the body. So the importance of flat characters is understood; but what about rounder characters?

If a flat character can represent a certain perspective for an author, a rounder character can represent a certain other kind of person or perspective (i.e., an idea), and his or her place and role in society—an idea that may be more complicated than a dimwit, or a narcissist, or any other characters from *The Smurfs*. Characters that are round can represent complex ideas, complex truths, those that can be more readily found in real life. These complex characters/ideas would of course also be implied through speech and action, just as is the case with flat characters. And the characters, being complex themselves, can serve as vehicles for discovering truths that are more complex—truths that are based on more fundamental truths, like those discovered by Plato. So through dialogue, by means of character, the dialectic method is used toward discovering and revealing truth.

Intermission ends, now one last period. This final period of my game will show how it is possible for contradiction or paradox to imply truth in narrative. From the basis that characters and their speech can be used dialectically to discover and reveal truth—through implication, since the very act of using words displaces truth—we can understand, in more modern terms, that dialogue—spoken words that are passed between two characters—is used for the same purpose. These characters have to be put in situations to speak to each other and reveal who they are. This is the plot. What if Richard were a mute, except when he talks to his shaggy dog? Then we have something, hopefully—a story about who Richard really is and who he might become. So these three aspects of writing—character, plot, and speech—are inseparable. Even if somebody writes a grocery list, because s/he has to go to the store, we still have character, plot, and speech—character and plot are easy enough, but the aspect of speech would be between the character and the grocery list (almost like a journal entry) or between the character and the dog; plus, soliloquies and monologues are also forms of speech.

Character, speech, and plot are all part of the narrative. By narrative, I mean words told by a narrator who is discovering and revealing truth. Now let's say that we have a narrative of a hundred pages. The narrative can be divided into character, speech, and plot. Let's think of this narrative as a thing of itself, i.e., a world unto itself. The narrative is singular—the whole thing is one. So far, this is the basic assumption about existence for Zeno of Elea, whose influence on philosophical thought still makes ripples today. Zeno believed that all is one indivisible, unchanging reality (Huggett et al.). He wrote a number of paradoxes to disprove (show the absurdity of) the belief that other people had in plurality, i.e., that reality can be divided and existence is composed of parts.

If we equate the hundred-page narrative with our world, then we have a place to start. I'll use Zeno's paradox of plurality, rather than his paradoxes of motion and place, to illustrate my point. Let's say we have an orange and we cut it in half, then we cut it in half again and again, until we need a laser beam to cut the orange smaller. We get help from NASA to cut this thing so small, and smaller still, ad infinitum. So if we cut the orange into endless parts, then there are an infinite number of parts, but if there are an infinite number of parts then there cannot be a singular orange to start with. How can a sky of vapor become water in a glass and still not be the sky? What I mean is if the parts of the orange are so small that we only have floating atoms of orange juice, which we continue to divide—indefinitely—then we'll only have points, not parts. So these points must be so small that they are pretty much only for reference. Basically, the points are nothing, so the orange is nothing. And that which is made of nothing *is* nothing.

If we look at a hundred-page narrative and we divide it into character, speech, and plot, then we divide character into characters, then the characters' character into the character as presented in each scene (somehow separated from speech), we can also divide the character of the narrative—if the narrative fits more with the character of one character than another at any plot-point in the narrative. This can go on and on, applied to speech and then plot, or page, or paragraph, sentence, word, letter, font, language, translation, etc. It's as if the more one tries to divide a narrative, the more the narrative expands. The choice of a word becomes the history of the word (see Plato's *Cratylus*), but as soon as we have the grand scope of history, we are faced with the next word and its history in the scope of the narrative.

The point I'm making is that yes, we have one orange and yes, we can slice it just fine to get at what's inside. The same with a hundred-page narrative. We can divide it up to better understand its parts. But we must realize that there is a contradiction. The parts are not separate.

And what's implied by this contradiction? What's implied is that contradiction is necessary for truth to be revealed. The narrative can be divided into parts, but it can't be divided into parts if it is still one whole narrative. The orange can be cut up into pieces, but it can't be cut up into pieces and still be one whole orange. Character is necessary for plot and speech; so too are plot and speech necessary for character, but if you take one of these out of the narrative then the narrative is a cut-up orange. On the other hand, if you don't cut up the orange of the narrative you won't be able to discover character.

Implication: The Foundation of Truth in Contemporary Fiction

In his critical book about writing, *Aspects of the Novel*, E.M. Forster asks his readers to envision all writers as writing at the same time in a large room. I mentioned this earlier, suggesting that this idea implies that truth is eternal. I will now further explore the means to truth through the writing process. The compass is calibrated and now the roadmap is unfolding.

For Forster, story is “a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence” (86). The plot requires more of the reader. To get at the plot we must ask “why?” We can take the story, the arranged events, and understand them, but in order to move beyond that we must infer “why”—by using our intelligence and memory. We must understand what the order means and remember what happened earlier in the story and how it led up to a more current event. Forster views plot in a way similar to the way Aristotle does, if we look through the lens of implication. Character and speech, with action, will help imply plot according to Aristotle. According to Forster, the actions and speech of characters and the order in which they are revealed imply the “why” of a story. For both, the plot is implied.

When we talk about character, we might look at Forster's discussion of "People." In this aspect of the novel, he mentions how one of the joys in reading fiction is the way a reader can know fictional people better than people in real life; in fiction, we can know them perfectly. In real life "perfect knowledge is an illusion" (63), but in fiction we can find truth better than in history because, Forster says, fiction "goes beyond the evidence, and each of us knows from his own experience that there is something beyond evidence" (63). Everyone might not know what it's like to wake up with a grocery list tattooed on his or her chest, but we all know what it's like to forget something or to not realize the obvious. There is a somatic response when we find some truth of our own in a fictitious character and it's this truth that goes beyond the evidence—it's implied. We can know Richard perfectly in his little fictive tragi-comedy because we get to see him in his private moments, as well as his dramatic or comedic moments.

Into the beyond. From these basic aspects of the novel we'll move to two aspects that grip truth with both hands. These aspects come as close to the implication of truth as is possible; they touch on the eternal and the universal. Forster refers to them as "Fantasy" and "Prophecy." He says, "[Fantasy] implies the supernatural, but need not express it" (112). The best example he gives that relies on the aspect of "Fantasy" is Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Forster offers this example as the greatest because the fantastical is not expressed, it is implied: "The supernatural is absent from the Shandy ménage, yet a thousand incidents suggest that it is not far off" (111). He further goes on to say how it's not difficult for a reader to believe that Shandy's furniture could come alive. The supernaturalism in the novel is created by an army of "unutterable muddle" (112). The language, the characters in their action and inaction, all imply a fantastic dimension to *Tristram Shandy*.

Through the aspect of fantasy a writer can create a place or situation in which s/he can then work at revealing truth. A place or situation is implied off the more basic aspects of the novel. “Richard awakes in his room in his bed and finds a grocery list on his chest. The grocery list is stuck to his chest like flypaper and as Richard looks at it in the mirror he sees that the words morph from one handwriting to another.” Other examples that Forster touched on introduce the supernatural similarly, but through a ghost, a witch, etc. He even mentions the book, *Flecker’s Magic*, in which the narrative “proceeds with growing tension, a series of shocks. The method is Socratic” (113). So a connection to Plato is obvious. There must be a similar dialectic process of discovery, and the series of shocks are somatic jolts of truth that touch the reader.

The way that fantasy grabs truth with both hands is through its connection with common sense. We all have common sense—I hope, though it’s hard to tell sometimes. So common sense is the common starting ground for the reader and the writer. Then the writer introduces the supernatural, through implication and/or expression. Whichever the case is not as important as the destination, for both means are a catapult to the beyond. By equating the place of discovery to a place that cannot exist (the realm of fantasy), truth can become more brightly illuminated. We see Richard with a grocery list that’s come alive on his chest; we know this isn’t possible, but we accept it and take the ride. Then Richard talks to his dog, but his dog doesn’t help much. He is left with having to go to the grocery store, with no shirt on, holding a mirror so he can read the list on his chest. The common sense is if he hadn’t waited so long to go to the store then he might not have been embarrassed when he finally did go. What’s implied is the moral, the truth. Don’t procrastinate.

For “Prophecy” to be operative, Forster says, the reader and the writer must suspend certain emotions, because the writer “is in a remoter emotional state while he composes” (136). And one key difference between fantasy and prophecy is that prophecy faces toward unity, while fantasy glances about. According to Forster, prophecy is a tone of voice that implies through its stories the theme of something universal (125). In other words, this aspect of the novel works to imply how the parts of an orange are still the whole orange; Forster uses a quote from St. Catherine of Siena, saying, “The sea is in the fish and the fish is in the sea” (133).

Things, characters, or speeches may seem to be separate from each other, but they are inseparable in the hundred-page narrative. All we have to work with, then, is an orange. Whereas Zeno worked to show the contradiction of division, “Prophecy” works back the other way—by multiplication. The end result is another contradiction. The reader can smash together all the infinite pieces and make a whole. So the contradiction contradicts itself, and we can infer the truth. That is, we can cut an orange into infinite pieces so that we have nothing, and we can take nothing and multiply it enough times to get one whole orange. The truth is that there is and is not an orange. A narrative is at rest and is also in motion. What is implied cannot be stated. And all these truths must be outside of time; they are eternal.

Forster talks of the prophetic sense in Dostoevsky: “[His] characters and situations always stand for more than themselves; infinity attends them....Every sentence he writes implies this extension, and the implication is the dominant aspect of his work” (132-3). This means that Dostoevsky’s narratives point to the beyond; they direct all movement toward the highest implied truth. The prophetic tone of voice is implied in every word: “The extension, the melting, the unity through love and pity occur in a region which can only be implied” (134). The writer

who works in the realm of prophecy works in a place beyond time and division. This place can only be gotten to on the wings of implication—where the juice is the orange is the sculpture.

When we find Richard, shirtless, at the grocery store we see people laugh. He holds the mirror and tries to read the handwriting, but can't. So he begins to ask strangers if they can help. They do their best. He walks on, but can't put his finger on the one thing that keeps slipping from his mind. And so Forster concludes his discussion on prophecy with a remark about the necessity of viewing prophetic writing by "lay[ing] aside the single vision which we bring to most of literature and life..." (146). I understand this non-"single vision" as the way to see truth on multiple levels. A simple level in time and space and a universal level that extends beyond—for the prophetic tone must be implied through all levels, if it is to be universal and eternal. Every slice of orange must be seen as both a slice and a whole orange. The prophet's narrative must be ordinary, realistic, and jolt the very fabric of the reader's soul, as if to say, "Remember this truth in your heart? It's always been there. Plato told me about it."

Conclusion

Every bit of truth, no matter how small, must be identical to the whole truth. Every writer, when s/he taps into the discovery of truth, does so outside of time, since truth is eternal, and so every writer from every time writes at once in Forster's vast museum. Now these are contradictions. Truth is written at a certain time in a certain place, but if it is true then it extends beyond time and place. Truth as a grocery list is the same as truth about virtue through the writings of Plato; truth via the meaning of words is implied somewhere around the object *and* beyond the symbols on a page.

So we can safely say that truth must be an implied contradiction, though sometimes the contradiction is less important and obvious; nonetheless the truth must be implied. A writer can never clearly state the truth, for the very act of stating the truth causes the truth to slip away a little farther, as E.M. Forster puts so well:

...like a shadow from an ascending bird. The bird is all right—it climbs, it is consistent and eminent. The shadow is all right—it has flickered across roads and gardens. But the two things resemble one another less and less, they do not touch as they did when the bird rested its toes on the ground. (106)

The bird can see its shadow perfectly when on the ground. This is like a somatic response, the well-chiseled and polished sculpture, where and when the truth almost feels tangible—a hologram. When the truth sits there like a dream it is implied in the mind and felt in the body. The shadow touches the bird's talons. But when the bird pecks at the ground to pluck the shadow and take it with it, the shadow moves. The truth cannot be moved, nor can it be touched, because the truth is implied as a dream, in a shadow, like an idea, between the lines: pure inspiration.

To bring the idea back to the beginning I'll say again that philosophical writing and fictional writing are both means to discover truth. Both methods of writing use implication to point toward truth. The writer discovers truth by writing and can then calibrate his or her compass. S/He feels the discovered truth in the body and the mind chases it like a donkey to a carrot. The writer intuits where the truth is and what needs to be said, but the writer can only point to/imply where this place is. The reader must then infer, following the signs, in order to discover that truth from a different perspective. The reader must pin the tail on the donkey, while the donkey eats the carrot.

Plato proposes that the soul is eternal and all knowledge is merely the soul's recognition of that already-known knowledge, so the strongest connections to the soul must register in the body *and* the mind powerfully and effectively. Characters and plots provide adequate means for these strong connections—they register in the soul through story because characters and plots are created in life also. Characters and plots must be implied because they rely on each other but are viewed separately—a contradiction. We think of people as separate from the events of their lives, until we learn of those events. But a person is more than what s/he looks like or how s/he acts; we must imply the whole truth of that person as more than the sum of a lifetime's worth of events or a lifetime's worth of wrinkles.

On the page, a character can be known perfectly. A character is implied through action and speech so that the character is more than these things put together. When the orange is cut, a small part of the orange is stuck to the knife—this is what's implied. The part stuck to the knife is what we get to keep. An orange can be made whole again, but only if we infer the part stuck to the knife *back* onto the orange. This is the give-and-take between the writer and reader. The endless cycle that has always been, in which both have a hand on the knife.

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