

MY FIRST GRADUATE PHILOSOPHY COURSE

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Right on the first day, shamelessly  
unrestricted by our anxiety  
they talked about higher levels of confusion...

*Spot on!*

My ontological perspective, flipped  
on its side, gasping for renewed understanding  
of metaphysical reality. What reality?  
Is it Plato's idea of forms, perfectly moulded in God's workshop?  
Or Darwin's concept of natural selection in the struggle of life?  
I have since expanded, reconstructed, redeemed  
my epistemological grasp and agreed with Socrates that

*I know nothing!*

I booked an appointment to assess my sanity  
when I climbed to the top of the rabbit's hair  
and descended onto Sophie's World.

Meanwhile, struggling to master an A for my assignments,  
confused when my professor congratulates me on A-  
realizing, I am an undergraduate, no more.

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

As a new graduate student in the School of Nursing, I found myself discovering, questioning, and navigating, previously unexplored by me, the depth of philosophy and reality. This poem is a reflection of that experience—but also an emotional burst of wonder, exasperation, and awareness. It further highlights the slippery concept of liminality, introduced by ethnographer Arnold van Gennep and later applied by anthropologist Victor Turner, which describes a transitional period between two points (Bigger, 2009). Liminality stems from the Latin word *limen*, meaning threshold (Arya, 2013). One finds themselves in that transitional state when old beliefs and knowledge are no longer valid or upheld, and new ones are yet to become apparent. It is on the threshold of this novel perception that I found myself in most of my academic undertakings.

In the book, *The Rite of Passage*, Arnold van Gennep (1960) discusses his observations about tribal rituals associated with significant life transitions and progressions between the life stages (Arya, 2013). I experienced a similar “rite of passage” through my philosophical studies, traversing old concepts and new understandings. However, a full realization of my own perceptual shift occurred during one of my nurse-patient encounters. A young female cancer patient, who became newly admitted to the palliative care unit, struggled with her terminal prognosis—and in tandem with the unfortunate news experienced an existential crisis. Employing therapeutic relational engagement and my new understanding of reality, we explored the patient’s ontological knowledge, perceptual lenses, and beliefs. She engaged in storytelling and past memories, and through a newly emerging awareness, she plotted a meaningful life story. Reflecting on these experiences, I observed inward growth and a self-progression in my nursing practice towards becoming an Advanced Practice Nurse.

Since the poem considers philosophical underpinnings, it naturally fits with the subject. In the heart of every philosophical quest, there lies an inquiry about the nature of reality and self, and with each new probe, a sharply dialogical set of realizations can emerge about the ongoing transcendence of previously believed, immutable forms.

## REFERENCES

- Arya, Rina. 2013. Exploring liminality from an anthropological perspective. In *Digital Media and Technologies for Virtual Artistic Spaces*. Pp. 159-166. Hershey: IGI Global.
- Bigger, S. 2009. Victor Turner, liminality, and cultural performance. *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 30(2): 209-212.
- Gennep, Arnold van. 1960. *The rite of passage*. London: Routledge.