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## Kiss Kiss, Stake Stake: Storytelling and the Philosophical Pleasures of Season Seven

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## *Kiss Kiss, Stake Stake: Storytelling and the Philosophical Pleasures of Season Seven*

JAMES B. SOUTH

"Storyteller," an episode from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* seventh season written by Jane Espenson, provides the viewer with a story about storytelling in which the show explicitly confronts its own practice of telling stories, and in telling the story of this episode, it suggests, I hope to show, that stories can point to what stands behind the story; call it, for the moment anyway, an experience. The episode opens with the narrative voice of one of the odder characters in the series, Andrew. We are provided with parody of *Masterpiece Theatre*. We see a mishmash of leather books, antique furniture, and pop cultural ephemera (*Star Wars* action figures). And then Andrew speaks.

Oh, hello, there, gentle viewers. You caught me catching up on an old favorite. It's wonderful to get lost in a story, isn't it? Adventure and heroics and discovery — don't they just take you away? Come with me now, if you will, gentle viewers. Join me on a new voyage of the mind. A little tale I like to call: *Buffy, Slayer of the Vampyrs*, ["Storyteller," 7.16].<sup>1</sup>

In having Andrew provide us with a characterization of the series' thematics — adventure and heroics and discovery — this particular episode provides us with a curious perspective from which to view the entire series, but, perhaps even more so, a perspective from which to view the last two seasons of the series.<sup>2</sup> It is this perspective that I want to trace out in what follows. In using the slightly ludicrous, childlike, hero-worshipping, and, indeed, parroting Andrew, the episode draws our attention to the dangers

of certain ways of relating to it.<sup>3</sup> These dangers are also ones that philosophy warns us against, and in setting these dangers out, I want to alert the reader to an intriguing connection between the way this episode asks us to think about the series and certain impulses that have typically motivated philosophers.

The title of my essay refers, obviously enough, to the famous collection of Pauline Kael essays, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, which are words she once saw on an Italian movie poster. In remarking on these words, she tells us that they "are perhaps the briefest statement imaginable of the basic appeal of movies." In agreement with Kael, I suspect the basic appeal of *Buffy* is all the kissing and staking that goes on, as well as adventure, heroics and discovery. It is sometimes forgotten, though, that Kael goes on to caution, "This appeal is what attracts us, and ultimately what makes us despair when we begin to understand how seldom movies are more than this." The challenge of this caution is what I want to address in what follows. Is there more to *BtVS* than the kissing and staking, or, more specifically, is there anything philosophical in all the kissing and staking?

I am grateful to find myself with this opportunity to reflect on a connection between philosophy and *BtVS*. The timing may seem odd, since I previously edited a collection of essays on the topic and published a couple of other articles on the show. It would seem that I have already addressed the caution. Thus, I can understand the reader's criticism that I have this sequence of events a bit backwards; surely, some general reflection on this challenge should have occurred prior to the writing of papers on particular topics. But this paper is not a general reflection on the philosophical value of *BtVS*, or what claim the series might have on the discipline of philosophy. Others have done some nice work on this topic—I think particularly of Andrew Aberdein's fine reflection in an unpublished paper on philosophy and *BtVS*, and I do not want to rework his remarks (Aberdein). Instead, in what follows, I simply want to try to open up a bit more space for the interaction of two apparently radically disparate areas of activity that I confess to finding pleasurable.

Robert Warshow has written tellingly about the need to find a connection between his enjoyment of a Bogart movie and his enjoyment of a novel by Henry James, although he admits that he has no idea what that connection might be. He does not want to say that they are simply both pieces of art since that is too simple an answer. Any search for a connection, he argues, must be through self-reflection or self-knowledge since, in his words, "A man watches a movie and the critic must acknowledge that he is a man" (Warshow, xli). Following Warshow, then, I am the same

person who watches *BtVS* and the person who reads Plato, Aquinas, Suárez, and so many other philosophers. I want to try to tease out basic connections between these two activities. I do not want to beg the question and claim that watching *BtVS* is identical to doing philosophy. At the same time, though, I do not want to cordon off my watching of *BtVS* from my activity of reading, writing, and teaching philosophy.

The most important objection the reader of this essay is likely to have, I suppose, is to the suggestion that there is any connection between *BtVS* and philosophy as anything more than a topic philosophy can address, as it typically and magisterially addresses any topic. But my essay is not about the philosophy of *BtVS*, whatever that might be, and I am not going to be discussing *BtVS* in the way that a philosopher might talk about mind or knowledge. Also, I am not addressing *BtVS* from some sub-discipline of philosophy, for example, aesthetics. Nor am I going to use *BtVS* to illustrate or augment a topic within philosophy, for example, the metaphysical status of fictional characters. In sum, I am not going to argue that we can learn philosophically from *BtVS* in the way that we can learn from some body of theory or set of facts. There is no direct route from watching *BtVS* to developing a substantive ethical theory.

After so many negations, here is a positive assertion: there is something valuable philosophically about *BtVS*, but for my purposes here, that value has more to do with the impulse to philosophy and its practice than with some version of philosophy or philosophical theory. Following Warshaw, then, I want to show that there is a sense in which watching *BtVS* can provoke and nourish a philosophical attitude.

I still remember a class I took in the first semester of my Ph.D. program. The professor spoke of the danger of presentism — the privileging of present ways of doing philosophy over alternative ways. An awareness of this danger was supposed to be one of the virtues of studying the history of philosophy. Of course, doing history of philosophy within a philosophy department heavily invested in present ways of doing philosophy can be a dicey affair. Certainly, one of the lessons I learned from studying the history of philosophy as the history of *philosophy*, and not a catalog of errors, is that any present conception of philosophy is likely to look both cramped and contingent. At the same time, though, I recognize that there is an ideological use of the term presentism available that would allow us to ignore that which is current practice. My use of presentism in this paper, then, should be seen not as a way to exclude contemporary insights, but as a reminder that we can learn today from the past, or, indeed, from alternative currents of today's practiced philosophy.

Let me juxtapose that warning to a neophyte student about presentism with a remark by a contemporary philosopher. In his "Epilogue" to the collection of essays by Warshaw, Stanley Cavell laments the unfortunate sense of the phrase "ordinary language philosophy." He states: "What it [ordinary language philosophy] contrasts with, rather, is a *fixated* philosophical language which precisely would preempt the extraordinary from disturbing customary experience" (Cavell, "Epilogue," 293).

In this description, Cavell has given us a nice account of a danger attendant on presentism — the cultivation of an attitude that preempts the disturbing of customary experience. So, as a historian of philosophy, let me just raise the possibility that one origin for the impulse to do history of philosophy is precisely some experience of the extraordinary coupled with a suspicion that one task of contemporary philosophy is to preempt such experiences. Of course, I can only speak for myself, but it is worth considering just what the sources are that motivate those of us who do history of philosophy, assuming it is not some mere attachment to dogmatism of some sort or a merely antiquarian pursuit. There must be both an attraction to a fixated language, since we do learn our history within philosophy departments, and at the same time some sort of non-conformist thinking, since we turn our backs at least partially from that fixated language. But the impulse cannot be merely aversive; rather there must be something about that philosophy occurring *then* that we historians find extraordinary. And those of us who wend our way through that most neglected (by philosophers) of periods, the Renaissance, must be drawn to something there that cannot be captured by the fixated language of philosophy today.

Earlier, I quoted Andrew's invitation to the viewer at the beginning of "Storyteller." After the invitation, he proceeds to describe an encounter between Buffy and some vampires from the previous night: "Ouch! My goodness! Things look bad for the Slayer, don't they? She didn't see that second vampire, concealed by cover of darkness, ready — (there's a knock at the door; Andrew ignores it) ready to attack and make her his own vampirical spawn." The knock on the door disturbs Andrew, causing him momentary confusion before trying to talk over it, but also warns the viewer that there is another perspective from which to view what Andrew recounts. Indeed, point of view changes with a cut to Andrew, sitting on a closed toilet seat, camera in front of him. The viewer now realizes Andrew is not in charge of the story we will be watching. Anya opens the door and asks Andrew what he has been doing in the bathroom for thirty minutes. "Entertaining and educating," is his response. To which Anya says: "Why can't you just masturbate like the rest of us?"

Andrew's answer and Anya's response get to the central issue of this essay: can telling a story entertain and educate? The fact that the episode so clearly brings this issue up for our consideration in turn suggests that there is not an obvious affirmative answer. If there is to be an affirmative answer, though, we have been put on warning to resist a certain kind of story, the sort with which Andrew began and which is effectively equivalent to masturbation. The remainder of the episode, then, might provide us with an alternative story, one in which Andrew is educated into a different perspective. Thus, one philosophical task of this episode is to provide Andrew, and by extension, any viewer, a counter-story to some standard story in much the same way that some venues of doing philosophy provide a counter to presentism. It is this concern about a fixated philosophical language that encourages me to think about *BtVS* as providing us with some philosophical work to do. I want to worry about this work in two ways. The first issue I want to worry about is the issue of experience. Warshow is concerned to explore the ways that experience is blocked by "customary experience." The point is that customary experience is not real experience after all, and what we must do is fight against the ways that the customary forms of thought militate against what Warshow calls "the immediate experience."

Consider the following passage from John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*:

In our times, from the highest class of society down to the lowest every one lives as under the eye of a hostile and dreaded censorship. Not only in what concerns others, but in what concerns only themselves, the individual, or the family, do not ask themselves—what do I prefer? or, what would suit my character and disposition? or, what would allow the best and highest in me to have fair play, and enable it to grow and thrive? They ask themselves, what is suitable to my position? what is usually done by persons of my station and pecuniary circumstances? or (worse still) what is usually done by persons of a station and circumstances superior to mine? I do not mean that they choose what is customary, in preference to what suits their own inclination. It does not occur to them to have any inclination, except for what is customary. Thus the mind itself is bowed to the yoke: even in what people do for pleasure, conformity is the first thing thought of; they like in crowds; they exercise choice only among things commonly done: peculiarity of taste, eccentricity of conduct, are shunned equally with crimes: until by dint of not following their own nature, they have no nature to follow: their human capacities are withered and starved: they become incapable of any strong wishes or native pleasures, and are generally without either opinions or feelings of home growth, or properly their own. Now is this, or is it not, the desirable condition of human nature? [Mill, 61–62].

In choosing the customary, in conforming to what is commonly done, we block ourselves from experience as Warshow talks of it. In Mill's terms, we lose peculiarity of taste and eccentricity of conduct. In short, we lose

a sense of ourselves as manifested in our capacities and talents. Anya's accusation against Andrew's *Masterpiece Theatre* version of *Buffy, Slayer of the Vampyres* (both entertaining and educational!) is that it is masturbatory — a nice gloss on Mill's claim that conformity renders us "incapable of any strong wishes or native pleasures."

The problem with "immediate experience," though, is that words typically fail to capture it. Warshow talks of the writer having to invent his own audience for describing experience and adds that there is simply no vocabulary available in which to discuss such experience (p. xlii). This strikes me as an extreme version of the complaint alleged against presentism, but it seems true of my experience of many things relating to *BtVS*. And that leads me to the second issue: how can I show that *BtVS* is worth the effort? Again, a quote from Cavell (we historians stand behind our quotations in both obvious senses of "stand behind" — what we quote, who we quote, says more than we think we can say directly — an analogous concern to Warshow's lack of a vocabulary): "Nothing can show this value to you unless it is discovered in your own experience, in the persistent exercise of your own taste" (*Conditions*, 10–11). And now we're at the thorny question of taste and its objects. In the words of Chris Lehmann, "Taste [is] a function of subjectivity; cultural hierarchy is a gauge of that subjectivity's erosion" (63). In Mill's terms, then, there is no peculiarity of taste without resistance to conformity, and taste as typically exercised subsumes the individual's taste under some group's taste. Often, indeed, as Mill points out, that taste is the taste of "persons of a station and circumstances superior" to the one who exercises a judgment of taste. Taking my cues then, from Mill, "Storyteller," and Warshow, I will resist one way of conforming. While I can recognize that *BtVS* is not Plato, there is no reason why I should not bring my philosophically trained taste to bear on it as I do Plato. Of course, if my taste is legitimately mine, and not one belonging to some other group, it is not therefore baseless. At the same time, though, I cannot assume anyone else will share that taste unless I show them its basis. My approach to *BtVS* might be idiosyncratic, but no less philosophical, unless we consider only the fixated philosophy current among us.

Barry Stroud put his finger on one good reason to be wary of conforming to today's philosophical atmosphere when he wrote: "But I think the professionalized, scientistic conception that many people now have of how to proceed in philosophy is unfortunate.... I would say that it is compatible at a certain point with the absence of philosophy. It has led to what I think is a certain complacency, even a certain blindness, in the face of

what remains philosophically important," (Stroud, 38–39). Now, I juxtapose Stroud's comment with a passage from Montaigne's *Of physiognomy*:

Almost all the opinions we have are taken on authority and on credit. There is no harm in this: we could not make a worse choice than our own in so feeble an age. The version of the sayings of Socrates that his friends have left us we approve only out of respect for the universal approval these sayings enjoy, not by our own knowledge. They are beyond our experience. If anything of the kind were brought forth at this time, there are few men who would prize it.

We perceive no charms that are not sharpened, puffed out, and inflated by artifice. Those which glide along naturally and simply easily escape a sight so gross as ours. They have a delicate and hidden beauty; we need a clear and well-purged sight to discover their secret light. Is not naturalness, according to us, akin to stupidity and a matter for reproach? [792].

The "blindness" that Stroud speaks of echoes Montaigne's claim that some charms, which are not inflated by artifice, "escape our sight." Stroud's "complacency" parallels Montaigne's "universal approval," and both are in the same conceptual territory as Mill's "conformity." Both Stroud and Montaigne are clearly inhabiting a world in which judgments ought not be subsumed under some other group's judgment. Thus, there is an interesting congruence in their respective complaints about the practice of philosophy current in their times, one that is captured nicely by Mill's concern about the "hostile and dreaded censorship" of conformity. Both Stroud and Montaigne offer an anchoring point from which to bring peculiarity back to philosophy. For Stroud, "There must be something we are involved in that is not philosophy. In reflecting on such things philosophically we have to have the strength to recognize and hold on to such things, and not to distort or deny them, in the face of philosophical reflection" (43–44). For Montaigne, it is those charms that "glide along naturally and simply." Both authors, then, contrast what is natural to the damage that philosophical artifice can do to our experience. They both point to a reality that is apparently available to experience and that is pre-philosophical. But here's the thing: Montaigne is nothing if not an artful writer, a thinker who uses multiple rhetorical tricks to drive home the lesson that the best we can do is remain within our powers and follow nature. Stroud, in turn, is a well-respected contemporary philosopher. There's something suspiciously paradoxical here. The construction of Warshow's hoped-for vocabulary is a philosophical, or at least theoretical task, but if philosophy itself blocks the possibility of that vocabulary, what are we to do?

"Storyteller" has a comparable set of concerns to those found in Warshow, Cavell, Mill, Montaigne, and Stroud: the ways that artifice blocks experience, thereby promoting blindness and an avoidance of the

natural, or, perhaps better, the pre-theoretical. "Storyteller" begins by entertaining and educating in the *Masterpiece Theatre* manner. Andrew's narration of Buffy's actions are accurately characterized by Montaigne's terms: sharpened, puffed out, and inflated by artifice. Anya's subsequent deflating of Andrew's artifice as masturbatory is unsettling. Haven't viewers been watching the show for six and a half seasons precisely for "adventure and heroics and discovery?" Surely, the kissing and the staking have been essential to the pleasures viewers have taken from the series, but the higher pleasures of educational television have been present as well. Viewers have applauded the moral complexity of the show, and have seen various characters as role models.

Anya's deflation of pretension sets the stage for the theme of the episode: a self-reflective, highly critical account of the way the stories we tell, call them fixated ideas, are worth less than something simple and natural. It also seems to have a big idea present in it as we see Andrew's quest for redemption. Accordingly, for all its apparent criticism of stories, the episode also tells a story. As the episode progresses, we continue to see Andrew inflating his own story and the story of the other characters. Thus, we see Andrew the supervillain, the Andrew who once defeated Dark Willow. So, too, we see Spike being filmed by Andrew. Spike's response, which seems consistent with a standard story about his character, "I thought I told you to piss off with this bloody camera, yet here you are again with that thing in my face. Would you sod off (flicks the cigarette at Andrew) before I rip your throat out and eat —" is cut off when Andrew explains that the lighting was wrong. We see that Spike is as invested in an artificial image as Andrew.

We, the loyal viewers, recognize these fabrications as we see them, thus thinking that we are in on the joke. On that level, the story is simply funny. We go on, though, to find out that in the "real" world of the show, students at Sunnydale High are acting bizarrely, but bizarrely in a recognizable way. It turns out that they are behaving in ways that students behaved in earlier seasons of the show. In those earlier episodes, Buffy and her friends were victorious. Now, we are being asked to call into question those earlier stories. Did they end as neatly as we thought they did? The joke we thought we were in on is suddenly a little less funny, and we are made a bit uncomfortable in our ready acceptance of those prior stories.

The narrative of "Storyteller" includes an additional confrontation with storytelling in dealing with the relationship between Xander and Anya. In their taped conversation with Andrew on the one year anniversary of Xander's decision to leave Anya at the altar, Xander keeps dodg-

ing the question of whether he still loves Anya. In frustration, Anya states, "And here's where we hop on the merry-go-round of rotating knives. I blame you, and you blame me, and we both end up all cut to shreds. Please just tell — Do you still love me?" Xander replies that he does, but that he does not "know if that means anything for us anymore." Anya confirms that she still loves Xander, but concludes: "I don't know if that means anything either." Even with an attestation of their unique love for one another, there is no story to be told of their relationship. Andrew, who both accepts and tells stories re-watches the conversation on tape, crying all the while. Yet later in the episode, when we see Xander and Anya in bed after "one more time sex," we understand that there will be no happy ending for them. Within the overall theme of the episode, what we get in this sub-plot is a reminder that happy endings are the stuff of stories. More tellingly, perhaps, they are patterns of conformity. If one loves someone and that love is returned, surely the "happily ever after follows." Yet Xander and Anya represent a more natural, less artificial, experience of love. Anya's final line in this scene is especially striking: "I think maybe we're really over. Which is — it's good, right? I mean, now we can move on." Despite her experience of "one more time" sex with Xander, she insists on subsuming the experience under a story — their experience is good because it means they can move on. Yet, as we know, that's not what happens. Within a few episodes, Anya is killed, which makes the poignancy of her inability to appreciate the experience for what it was all the more painful in rewatching.

The main story of this episode about storytelling, though, remains. It is the story of Andrew's "redemption." In an attempt to close the "seal of Danzalthar," the conduit for the evil causing the mayhem at the high school, Buffy and her friends discover that Andrew himself was responsible for opening the seal. Under the influence of another story told by the First Evil, he had killed his friend Jonathan at the seal and Jonathan's blood was the mechanism by which the seal was opened. The promise of the story told to Andrew was that once Jonathan was sacrificed, Andrew, Jonathan, and their friend Warren would "live as gods." Buffy takes Andrew back to the seal where she tells him, "Yeah, Willow did a little research. Turns out, the blood of the person that awoke it — you — different kind of deal. It reverses the whole thing." Andrew replies "So, this is my redemption at last? I buy back my bruised soul with the blood of my heart. But-but not enough to kill."

Here we have Andrew telling himself a story about the notion of redemption. Buffy calls him on it: "You always do this. You make every-

thing into a story so no one's responsible for anything because they're just following a script."

The warning is clear: telling a story about our life can be a matter of following a script and, thus, a way of avoiding responsibility, denying experience. Indeed, Andrew goes on to try to displace responsibility for his actions. He claims that he was told Jonathan would be OK and that Jonathan's death would be temporary. And in listening to that story, he "lost his friend." Notice that he continues to avoid responsibility: he was deceived, and by that deception, he lost his friend. Buffy rightly points out in response that Andrew murdered his friend, and he admits it. He then points out that he also believes Buffy's stories that she has been telling those she was training to fight with her. Buffy's response is pointed: "This isn't some story where good triumphs because good triumphs. Good people are going to die! Girls. Maybe me. Probably you. Probably right now." Buffy tells stories and she knows that those stories are false, that they conceal the reality of the situation. In this exchange, it becomes clear that Buffy's storytelling is a counterpart to the storytelling of the First Evil. How are we to decide between the stories? How is Buffy's storytelling any less culpable than that of the First Evil? Presumably, there is a question of intent. The First wanted Andrew to murder Jonathan while Buffy does not want to murder those under her command. It is refreshing, though, to know that Buffy does not believe her stories, but unsettling to see that she uses stories knowingly even though "life is not a story."

Andrew's "redemption" is now at hand, but it does not take the form he expects. "When your blood pours out, it might save the world. What do you think about that? Does it buy it all back? Are you redeemed?" Buffy asks him. "No," he replies, "because I killed him. Because I listened to Warren, and I pretended I thought it was him, but I knew—I knew it wasn't. And I killed Jonathan. And now you're gonna kill me. And I'm scared, and I'm going to die. And this—this is what Jonathan felt." Again, we see Andrew cry, but this time it is not under the influence of a story. It turns out, in a neat bit of storytelling, that the seal needed to be closed by tears, not blood. It was the genuineness of the tears Andrew shed that closed the seal. Even more, though, there is here an implicit commentary on a pervasive *BtVS* theme. Repeatedly throughout the series, as is befitting a show that features vampires, we have heard story after story about blood. Indeed, a season finale hinged around the recognition that "it's always gotta be blood" ("The Gift," 5.22). Yet here, no blood is shed, only tears. Note, also, that Andrew does not tell a story. He does not try to describe what Jonathan felt, he simply experiences it. His "this" points to that which

is unspeakable because our vocabulary cannot do it justice. Our fixated concepts would betray the experience. While the strict dichotomy between thought and feeling implied in Andrew's "redemption" is a bit too neat, nonetheless, the episode makes it clear that there is no story to be told about redemption.

The episode concludes the same as it began, with Andrew sitting in front of his video camera telling a story — but a very different one Andrew states: "Here's the thing. I killed my best friend. There's a big fight coming, and I don't know what's going to happen. I don't even think I'm going to live through it. That's, uh, probably the way it should be. I guess I'm —" And then he turns off the camera. One aspect of this final sequence worth remarking is that Andrew has not yet given up on stories. He thinks that dying is probably the scripted result of redemption. Again, the viewer who knows how Season Seven concludes will recognize the foreshadowing here and realize that Andrew does survive the big fight, thus putting a lie to even this residual commitment to categorizing experience according to stories much. Notice that this is the same failure that befell Anya. The series puts a lie to her story that she could finally "move on," just as it puts a lie to Andrew's story that he should probably die due to his past actions. He has begun to learn Montaigne's lessons — do what is within your power, do not be charmed by false stories, and, that most famous of Socrates charms, know thyself. Andrew turns off the camera leaving us to fill in the blank after the "I guess I'm...." The mid-sentence ending of the episode challenges us to fill in the blank, but how can we trust ourselves to do so? The promise the episode holds out here, I take it, is that through stories we can learn the inadequacy of stories, just as Montaigne tells us his task: "I do not portray being; I portray passing. Not the passing from one age to another, or, as people say, from seven years to seven years, but from day to day, from minute to minute" (Montaigne, "Of repentance," 610–11). If we were to fill in the blank, we would be playing the part of the gods, a stance explicitly mocked in the episode.

In conclusion, then, let me return to a distinctively philosophical pleasure I take in *BtVS*. First, all the kissing and staking is fun, and the stories the series tells are entertaining. But, fortuitously, *BtVS* is more than entertaining kissing and staking. In this essay, I have explicated this "more" in terms of the series' refusal to conform to certain expectations related to storytelling. In its refusal, for example, to conform to a standard theory of true love or redemption, the episode "Storyteller" points to a particular aspiration of philosophy. And the abrupt ending of this episode foreshadows the conclusion of Season Seven: Dawn's asking Buffy "What are

we gonna do now?" and Buffy's response of an enigmatic smile. I do not want to claim that the theme I have traced in Montaigne, Mill, Warshow, Cavell, and Stroud are the only aspirations available to a philosopher. But it is a persistent theme in the Western philosophical tradition, and it is present in "Storyteller."

In a famous interview before the beginning of Season Six, Joss Whedon notoriously claimed that his mandate as a storyteller was, "Don't give people what they want, give them what they need" (Whedon). That statement has been a focal point of fan debate ever since. While one can argue with particular writing decisions, this essay has shown that there is a good philosophical impulse behind this mandate as such. Giving people what they want can support conformity. Thus, *BtVS* appeals to me for much the same reason that doing history of philosophy does. *BtVS* prompts me to question my categorization of experiences and it helps to provide me with a new vocabulary for dealing with experience. It does both these tasks not by making a claim but by pointing to its inability to make claims that warrant our conformity. *BtVS* may be, in Andrew's words "educating and entertaining," but in "Storyteller," it is not so in the sense that we can learn from it—instead we can learn through it. That is an unusual goal to ascribe to a TV show, but, honestly, as Warshow, Cavell, and Stroud point out, it is also an unusual goal for philosophy today.

## Notes

1. All subsequent quoted dialogue is from this same episode unless otherwise noted.
2. In what follows, I will resist making general claims about Seasons Six and Seven, though the very presence of this volume is an argument that something changes in these two seasons. The essays by Adams, Edwards, Rambo, and Wilcox are particularly concerned to trace those differences in more detail than I could hope to achieve. I will return to the question of the unity of these two seasons in the final paragraphs of this essay.
3. The essay by Ira Shull and Anne Shull in this volume provides a very good overview of the uses of Andrew's character. Among the many uses, my focus is on a variation of their discussion of Andrew as *Candide*. Their quoting of Voltaire from his article on ignorance nicely supplements the rather different sources I draw upon in this essay.

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