The Great Search: Rethinking the Liberal Arts and Sciences

Ann Charney Colmo
Editor

The Great Search: Rethinking the Liberal Arts and Sciences

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Ann Charney Colmo

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Introduction

The theme for the nineteenth annual conference of the ACTC in Gatineau, Quebec in 2013 is "Rethinking the Liberal Arts through Core Texts: Science, Poetry, Philosophy and History." "Rethinking" implies a diagnosis of our situation *and* a command. If we have stopped thinking, if we are asleep, we will lose what is best in the liberal arts and sciences. Therefore, rethinking will be a wakening, an acuity of hearing where we have become deaf, a new openness to the liberal arts and sciences.

Why do we sleep? For one thing, we become immersed in our disciplines and can no longer see beyond them, or take what is outside them seriously. We no longer understand the disciplinary power of the liberal arts themselves. We also focus on the Western tradition and are satisfied that all answers have been given, or at least that all questions have been raised. Finally, we take for granted modern natural (i.e., material) science as *the* source of the truth, or—following science to its logical conclusion—we take truth not only as not a given, but as not a possible aspiration. All is construct.

These causes are interconnected: we cannot pass judgment on one without passing judgment on the others.

This volume contains papers that cause us to rethink our prejudices, to wake up to the possibilities that we took to our slumber with us. They ask questions. They help us to begin to understand that there are problems in the commonplace answers that we have been resting on for so long.

We are asked about science. Is it really so objective? What are the consequences of seeing in science the truth about all things? Does scientific technology make us more, or less, free?

We are asked about beauty. Is it really so subjective? What is its role—not only in our academic work but also in our lives? Perhaps beauty frees us from constraints that the human condition puts upon us. Beauty can appear in nature, in speech, and when we look for it, in the doings of our own lives.

In what ways can we awaken to the insights of the liberal arts and sciences?

We can begin within our own disciplines by juxtaposing ideas within a discipline, only to be surprised that even here important questions arise. Two core texts in literature can surprise us if they are read simultaneously. Two core texts in the

sciences can confront profoundly different assumptions in each—or great obstacles to any unified theory of the sciences. It goes without saying that philosophy texts are going to argue with each other. Joining in on any of these arguments has a revivifying effect.

Transdisciplinary texts and discussions also give us new viewpoints. Philosophy and history texts both shine a light on each other, and raise serious questions about the historicity of philosophy. Can we ever understand the thoughts of a different historical epoch? Or does human nature transcend history? The most important result of going beyond our disciplines is to widen our own horizons and to help us stand outside a place where we might have been rooted. Poetry, in the wide sense that includes the epic, literature, and drama, may open our eyes to politics or the cosmos—especially when read together with political philosophy or religious texts—or to science; it may take us out of the confines of our own time.

One of the most interesting ways to approach core texts is to go beyond the text. Film, art, opera are in their own way core texts, or can be used to interpret and to raise core discussions of the texts we are accustomed to reading. Stay tuned for the media of the electronic age.

Nor should the role of the critic be ignored. Literary criticism can provide a means to bridge disciplines—science, poetry, philosophy, history. For example, the critic can point out that the term "nature" has widely different meanings across disciplines, and even within disciplines. Thus, access to criticism can be "an extension of the whole thrust of the core text movement—to guide students toward the best" (Hawkins, *infra*).

In this volume, a number of papers show the importance of opening ourselves up to other cultures. The West has not superseded these cultures, but has for varying reasons slighted them, and thus cut itself off from the insights that other cultures offer. For example, our customary opposition between self and society closes us off from the wholeness that is to be found only in our relationships, from family to cosmos. Transcultural studies are both a pathway to and a goal of knowledge. We can learn about our Western core texts from the texts of other cultures, as well as learning about other cultures from Western texts. Further, if other cultures provide an alternative way of life, we should be aware of these alternatives. We need to know if these are exclusive alternatives, or if there is a way to reconcile these alternatives with ours. In addition, learning alongside those from other cultures includes learning what we share with these cultures and what these cultures can offer us. We see that human beings everywhere share the desire for a life of reason. We have an awakened access not only to human nature but also to nature itself.

All of these ways of rethinking are, of course, devoted to a higher goal, to pursuing and answering the principal questions: what is the human good, what is the relation between the human good and the cosmos, how shall I live my life? We thirst for answers to these questions, and we believe our students do, too. This is why we join with them in the study of the liberal arts and sciences; we are their guides only because we are a little farther down the path.

The papers in this volume have been selected for their "awakening" qualities. They present new insights, and are meant to provoke discussion. In fact, we will con-

sider them most successful if they generate controversy, or at least lively discussion, and do help readers rethink the liberal arts and sciences, their own relation to them, the guidance of their students, and the principal questions.

Acknowledgments

My sincere thanks are offered to J. Scott Lee for inviting me to be the editor of these 2013 selected papers. I would like also to express the awe that we all feel about his great and unflagging work to make the ACTC so successful in promoting the liberal arts and sciences.

The work of preparing a book of selected papers from the Association for Core Texts and Courses must necessarily be a work of many hands. I am grateful to Robert Anderson and Patrick Flynn, former *Selections* editors, for their advice on how to proceed on the selection. The managing editor, Debra E. Soled, and the copy editor, Jean-Marie Kauth, have been invaluable. The readers for the papers made thoughtful decisions and insightful recommendations, which helped greatly toward the confident completion of the task. My warm gratitude goes to Kenneth Cardwell FSC, Christopher Colmo, Christopher Constas, Michael Cundall, Jr., Michael Dink, David Dolence, Will Geisler, William George, Marian Glenn, Gwenda-lin Grewal, Douglas Hadley, Ted Hadzi-Antich, Jr., Claudia Heuer, Michael Krom, Joseph McAlhanay, Kathleen Mullaney, John Ray, Joel Rodgers, Frank Rohmer, Brian Schwartz, and Tonia Triggiano. I would like to thank Robert Anderson also for his perceptive suggestions for this Introduction.

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Awareness

Augustine's View of Tragedy

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Science, Poetry, Philosophy, and History. This is certainly an appropriate theme for our conference, given that almost every core-text course contains works from each of these four genres on its syllabus. But the theme can also provoke a question: which one of these things is not like the others? In this case, Poetry appears to be the outlier. Texts that fall under the category of "Poetry" (a category I take to include *all* literature—poems, novels, short stories, and plays) differ from scientific, philosophical, and historical texts by, among other things, being *fictional*. Literary works are primarily about fictional characters, people who do not actually exist and who do, say and undergo things that do not actually happen.

When we consider our experience with fictional texts as both readers and teachers, something rather odd emerges. First of all we notice that in some cases we have what appear to be genuine emotional responses to fictional characters. We feel pity for Dido, or admiration for Jean Valjean, or contempt for Captain Ahab, or something similar. We have these emotions, sometimes quite strongly, even though we know full well that these fictional characters are not actually real people. Second, we also seem to take for granted (especially if we are teachers) that we can learn things about important features of the real, non-fictional world, like morality, psychology, God, beauty, and love, by reading works of fiction like *Moby Dick* or the *Aeneid*. We believe that fiction still has this cognitive value even though, again, we know full well that fictional texts concern people who do not actually exist and events that do not actually happen. The strangeness and inconsistency of our emotional and cognitive responses to fictional texts has been noted by philosophers of literature, who call it the "paradox of fiction."

Oddly, contemporary philosophical treatment of the paradox of fiction has

viewed it as a relatively new question in aesthetics. Most philosophers of literature consider a 1975 paper by Colin Radford, "How Can We be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?" to be the earliest treatment of the paradox of fiction. But here I will argue that the paradox of fiction is, in fact, much older than the 1970s. The earliest discussion of the paradox of fiction is found in that most classic of core texts, the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. Augustine's discussion of the paradox of fiction is found in the context of his remarks on tragedy. His discussion is brief, polemical, and very much tangential to the overall theme of the *Confessions*. It is easy to overlook. Nonetheless Augustine's criticisms of tragedy and our emotional engagement with it raise several provocative questions for both students and faculty in a core texts course.

Augustine's discussion of tragedy occurs at the beginning of Book III of the *Confessions*, which is primarily focused on his misspent youth in Carthage. When he was not out carousing, dabbling in Manichaeism, or bringing his mother to tears, Augustine enjoyed attending the theater. He was "captivated" by these shows, especially tragedies. The elder Augustine finds it troubling to recollect how much he used to enjoy watching fictional suffering on the stage. He finds this phenomenon both puzzling and disturbing, writing:

> Why is it that a person should wish to experience suffering by watching grievous and tragic events which he himself would not wish to endure? Nevertheless he wants to suffer the pain given by being a spectator of these sufferings, and the pain itself is his pleasure. What is this but amazing folly? (35–36)

In real life, Augustine points out, we normally go out of our way to avoid suffering. We do not wish to see other people suffer. If we do see another person suffer, then we typically feel fear or pity for him, but we do not enjoy having those feelings. But when we watch a tragedy, the opposite happens. We enjoy seeing fictional characters suffer. We feel fear and pity for those fictional characters, but we enjoy having these feelings. Augustine believes this response to tragedy is quite perverse and sinful.

Of course, Augustine was not the first person to note this peculiar aspect of tragedy—Aristotle was. One of the most famous passages of Aristotle's *Poetics* addresses tragedy and the emotional effects it has on audiences. According to Aristotle, a well-crafted tragedy will indeed evoke pity and fear in us, the audience. We will indeed take pleasure in viewing tragedy and suffering over the characters. This is because the purpose of tragedy is catharsis, a healthy purging of negative emotions like fear and pity (1449b20–31).

Now Aristotle is notoriously difficult to interpret on the subject of catharsis. It is not clear if catharsis is the same thing as the pleasure we feel when watching a tragedy, or if we feel that pleasure as an after-effect of the catharsis we have already undergone. It is not clear whether catharsis removes negative emotions from the soul or whether the emotions are retained but recalibrated in a healthy manner.[1] Nonetheless what is clear from Aristotle is that catharsis is a positive thing. There is nothing harmful, perverse, or unethical about taking pleasure from watching Antigone's downfall or some other such tragic scene.

But Augustine rejects the notion that any sort of positive catharsis could be accomplished by watching tragedy and feeling fear or pity for the characters. Quite

the opposite happens, says Augustine. "The more anyone is moved by these scenes, the less free he is from similar passions" (36). Tragedy does not free us from negative emotions; it enslaves us to those emotions. Augustine indicates that tragedy at least had this effect on him personally:

> I loved to suffer and sought out occasions for such suffering. So when an actor on stage gave a fictional imitation of someone else's misfortunes, I was the more pleased; and the more vehement the attraction for me, the more the actor compelled my tears to flow. (37)

Certainly Augustine's harsh assessment of tragedy is influenced by his personal experiences. But it would be a mistake to chalk up Augustine's criticism of tragedy to his rejection of catharsis and leave the matter at that. Augustine seems to indicate another reason—a more serious reason I believe—why it is wrong to take pleasure in tragedy.

Perhaps the reason why it is ultimately so perverse to revel in our pity and fear for Antigone is not just because doing so will inflame negative emotions we already have. Perhaps it is also perverse because the object of our pity and fear is a non-existent fictional character. Augustine suggests this when he writes, "When he feels compassion for others it is called mercy. But what quality of mercy is it in fictitious and theatrical inventions?" (36). Fictional characters and the things that happen to them within a story are not real, of course. Antigone is not an actual person, her brother's corpse is not an actual corpse that is actually desecrated, and she does not actually die. This unreal status of fictional characters undermines their claims to genuine emotions on our part. Augustine points out that although he felt pity for fictional characters in tragedies, it ultimately bore little resemblance to the pity he would have for a real person in tragic circumstances. He compares these emotional "wounds" from tragedy to fingernail scratches (37).

I believe what we have here in the *Confessions* is an early and overlooked example of what is now called the paradox of fiction. Like Augustine, the paradox of fiction asks us how we can possibly feel what appear to be genuine emotions—pity, fear, admiration, disgust, even lust—for fictional characters when we know full well that these characters do not exist. Since the 1970s, the paradox of fiction has become one of the most central and debated questions in contemporary aesthetics, inspiring many notable attempts to solve it, defuse it, or simply shed more light on our emotional engagement with art.[2]

Additionally, for many contemporary philosophers of literature, the paradox of fiction does not just involve questions about our emotional responses to fiction like our pity for Antigone or disgust with Creon. The paradox of fiction also raises serious epistemic issues—questions of how we can obtain knowledge of any sort from fictional works of literature. In other words, how can we truly learn things about the human condition, society, ethics, different cultures, different eras, and the like by reading about non-existent fictional people doing non-existent fictional things in non-existent fictional settings?[3]

For the classroom, Augustine's criticism of tragedy raises many questions. Few students in a core texts course will have read the *Poetics* before, so this tangent in *Confessions* will be their first, and probably only, exposure to the issue of catharsis.

Students are forced to confront the fact that we do indeed take pleasure in suffering over fictional characters. They are asked to consider whether Augustine is correct to condemn this pleasure or whether this phenomenon is benign. These sorts of considerations are obviously relevant in a core texts course that may have works by Shakespeare, Sophocles, or Euripides on the syllabus. But I have also found that my students quickly see the implications of catharsis and Augustine's critique of it for contemporary popular culture. Of course, very few of the novels, television shows, and movies enjoyed by my students are tragedies in the Aristotelian sense. Nonetheless, it is not difficult to draw some parallels here. Students recognize that in their engagement with contemporary fictions, they often take pleasure in scenes of horror, gore, and criminality—things they would never wish to undergo themselves in real life, and things that they consider to be morally wrong in real life. Augustine's reaction to the fiction of his own time forces students to consider whether their own reveling in the terror and gore of a zombie movie or the criminal antics of Walter White is harmless fun or a sign of deep spiritual sickness.

Augustine's early version of the paradox of fiction also raises questions for the classroom. Students are forced to consider whether we really can feel genuine pity, admiration, or disgust for fictional characters given that these characters do not exist. This is a fun exercise for students, but it is also an important question for us faculty to consider. While Augustine suggests that the fictional, non-existent status of a character like Antigone means she cannot lay claim to genuine emotions on our part, the paradox of fiction he raises goes beyond this. If we cannot truly pity Antigone because she does not exist, then how can we truly learn anything from non-existent her about things like law, religion, or the culture of ancient Greece? This is no small matter. Typically in core-text courses we teach fictional works like *Antigone*, the *Divine Comedy*, and *King Lear* alongside non-fictional works like the *Apology*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, and *The Prince*. The operating assumption is that we learn something—and we learn the same kinds of things—from all these texts, fictional and non-fictional alike. We can obtain knowledge about humanity, society, ethics, love, God, beauty, nature, and history from fiction and non-fiction alike. But the paradox of fiction challenges this assumption. For example, Socrates was a real person; Antigone was not. So why teach—as many of us do—both the *Apology* and *Antigone* alongside each other as if both are more or less equivalent sources of the same kind of knowledge?

In conclusion, while it is easy to skim over in the grand scheme of the *Confessions*, Augustine's tangential discussion of tragedy in Book III is well worth considering. It raises a host of fascinating questions for both students and faculty. The answers to these questions will reach into the very heart and soul of any core-text course.

Notes

1. This interpretation of catharsis is suggested by Nussbaum in *The Fragility of Goodness*, see pp. 389–91.
2. For further reading on the emotional side of the paradox of fiction see Carroll, Currie, Lamarque, Nussbaum, Stecker, and Walton.
3. For further reading on the epistemic or cognitive side of the paradox of fiction see Carroll, Gibson, John, Lamarque and Olsen, Levinson, Stolnitz, and Weitz.

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Shakespeare's Coriolanus and the Politics of Republics

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One of the difficulties of segregating academic disciplines in our colleges and universities is that it hides a longstanding argument between philosophy and poetry over the proper questions to ask of political regimes. Aristophanes and Plato both worried about the civic education being offered by the other: Socrates saw poetry reinforcing the prejudices of the regime and thereby enslaving citizens to a life of shadows; Aristophanes saw philosophy questioning the foundations of political life, thereby undermining the beliefs needed to maintain the city. The genius of William Shakespeare is his use of drama to ask fundamental questions of political philosophy in non-threatening ways. This relieves much of the old tension, but only insofar as Shakespeare can be read as a political thinker. By thinker I do not mean that he is a theorist with an ideal government in mind, but rather one who probes the purposes, potentials, and limits of politics. To this extent, by reading his plays, we can better see and assess our own political foundations.

Consider as an example what we can learn about life in a republic by carefully reading one of his Roman tragedies, Coriolanus. This play is difficult to interpret, a fact that is evident in the secondary literature. Much of the difficulty, however, can be alleviated when the play is approached from a political perspective. Shakespeare turns to the Roman Republic to examine the type of souls it shapes. Unless you can enter into that city and understand the principles that animate it, finding sympathy for its protagonist is nearly impossible. Unlike other tragic heroes, say Hamlet or Macbeth, many find it difficult to identify with Coriolanus and to weep at his death. But when attention is turned to the civic lessons of the story, his death is indeed

sorrowful, for he was sent to his grave by the mother he loved while she returned to Rome in triumph.

Coriolanus's mother Volumnia is therefore central to the play. She raised her son to be the embodiment of the revolution that brought down the Tarquins and began the Roman Republic. But in doing so, her son becomes a threat to the republic. The only way to save Rome is to moderate the principles that animate men like Coriolanus, and it is this that Volumnia does at the expense of her son's life. When given the choice between the city and her son, she saves the city and in so doing gains for herself what her son refused to accept—a good reputation. As is often the case in politics, Shakespearean plays are hardly ever wholly tragic or comedic; they are often a blend. In this play the tragedy of Coriolanus is the comedy of the Roman Republic. He dies, but the city has new life. What we can learn from the play, then, is this: the fervor that gives rise to republican government can become a threat to the republic; therefore, spiritedness must be moderated and provided positive outlets to protect it from becoming dangerous. Volumnia does just this: she moderates Roman valor by playing on the ambiguities of honor. For her being honorable must include accepting honors from the city, something her son will not do because he thinks public honors are dishonorable. Volumnia sees that Coriolanus's love of honor for its own sake is potentially dangerous when detached from the desire for fame. In winning over her son with words, she opens up the possibility of gaining honor by some means other than military might, namely through speech, logic, and rhetoric.

That Volumnia should play this role is prepared for us by Shakespeare in his account of the Roman Republic's beginning. The Rape of Lucrece has a vital scene in which prince Tarquin gives the wife of Collatine a choice—submit and their encounter will remain secret, or refuse and die unable to deny the scandalous tale he will spread about her (ll. 512–39). The second option would allow her to remain truly chaste, though she would lose the reputation for it. In choosing the first option, as she does, she hopes to maintain her good reputation but at the price of actual chastity. After the rape, she realizes that even the appearance of fidelity to her husband is at risk. Can she depend on young Tarquin to keep his word? Will he not boast to his comrades? Better to reveal the matter herself right away. Her reputation for chastity will be lost, but her honor can be restored if the men of Rome will agree to avenge her, which she makes them promise to do before killing herself in their presence (ll. 1184–90, 1716–22). What follows is a passionate revolution from monarchy to republic. The new regime is built upon Lucrece's decision to elevate honor over life itself. A woman set this revolutionary passion in motion, and it would take a woman finally to tame it.

But before taming the lust for honor, Volumnia cultivated it in her only son. She taught him that honor was gained through virtue, and that Roman virtue meant nothing other than valor. "Had I a dozen sons," she tells Coriolanus's wife Virgilia, "I had rather had eleven die nobly / for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action" (1.3.22–25). This was not idle talk, for she sent her only son while still in his youth off to battle to help repel Tarquin's last effort to regain his throne, and her admitted motive was to see him honored. This he gained, returning to Rome with an oaken crown, among the highest awards for Romans who have proven themselves

in war. From that point forward Coriolanus yearned for opportunities to prove his worth, and scoffed at those who cared for anything other than valor. He was in his element on the battlefield, and Rome was safe so long as he bore the sword in her defense.

Yet as valuable as Coriolanus was for Rome in its defense, he was domestically insufferable. The play opens with an angry mob of plebeians ready to kill Coriolanus for keeping the price of food high. They are calmed when the senate creates political offices, tribunes, to represent the lower class. Coriolanus does not approve of this decision, and he does not hide his displeasure from the newly elected tribunes Sicinius and Brutus. In his view of virtue, the tribunes' claim to leadership positions is ungrounded. They had not fought nobly to preserve the city in battle; they were not motivated by valor. Why should they expect the honor of a political station? Coriolanus predicts that in time the tribunes will increase their influence and authority on behalf of the plebeians, whom he regards as cowardly.

Coriolanus's abhorrence of the people is problematic on the basis of his own love of honor, though he lacks the self-knowledge to come to grips with the perennial problem of magnanimity. His military might, so ably displayed in his single-handed victory at Corioli, proves him to be worthy of honor from his fellow Romans. But how can Coriolanus accept the praise of those he does not regard his equals? He would rather have the regard of other valiant men, including the enemies of Rome. He all but coos for his great adversary Aufidius, imagining him closer to the Roman ideal of valor than all Romans save himself. "Were I any thing but what I am," Coriolanus says of his foe, "I would wish me only he" (1.1.232–233). Coriolanus is more attached to the ideal than to his native country.

It is hardly surprising then when Coriolanus dreads the custom of seeking the plebeians' approval prior to his receiving the office of consul, which entailed generalship of the Roman army. From a military perspective no man is more worthy of the post and all know it (2.2.1–4). Coriolanus does not see the point of standing for election when the people have no reason to deny him the post. How can they who love war only for the booty adequately pick a general to defend the city? Yet in speaking his mind to this effect he questions the foundations of republican government. Imprudently, he voices his disrespect for the custom that puts into the people's hands a position that should be his by right. He goes through the motions of the custom without enthusiasm. The people give and then, at the insistence of the tribunes, retract their votes. Predictably, Coriolanus reacts violently, giving the tribunes the opportunity to accuse him of treason. A trial is held, but Coriolanus has no regard for formal legal mechanisms and wishes to be acquitted on the basis of his virtue. He is prodded by friends to submit with mildness, which he does begrudgingly, that is until the tribunes again bait him to lose his temper. He is banished and retaliates by joining Aufidius's offensive against Rome.

As the Volscian army with Coriolanus at its head approaches the gates of Rome, several embassies are sent begging the one-time Roman to turn away his anger. But Coriolanus's wrath has petrified, and his heart is cold even toward his closest friends. As a final effort Rome sends Volumnia to calm her son's tirade. As she approaches, Coriolanus reaffirms his commitment not to be swayed by appeals

to justice, friendship, or even love. But these are not the arguments that Volumnia comes armed with. She knows better than anyone else that her son is committed above all else to honor and to refuse to attack Rome at this point would seem ignoble in his mind. She thus asks her son to take a broader perspective on nobility. If he burns Rome to the ground, he may enjoy the praises of Volscians for a time, but posterity will not remember him as valiant when he has killed his mother, wife, and child. "The man was noble," history will report, "But with his last attempt he wiped it out, / Destroyed his country, and his name remains / to th' ensuing age abhorred" (5.3.145–49). Coriolanus is silent in response. Justice, friendship, and love do not move him, but the judgment of history does. He agrees to make peace, and returns with Aufidius to Corioli, where he is murdered.

In contrast, Volumnia returns to Rome in triumph, like a general returned from a war. She is greeted with such praises as "Behold our patroness, the life of Rome!" (5.5.1). She receives the honor and fame that was denied to her son. From the perspective of Rome, she is praised for good reason. Coriolanus embodied the republic's revolutionary principle to its extreme. For Rome to survive as a republic, its revolutionary fervor would have to be moderated. Coriolanus represents that principle, and none are able to tame him but his mother. She does so with an argument. No longer is honor to be associated solely with valor, for this is dangerous. Reputation, including long-term reputation, is to be conjoined to honor. Lucrece's elevation of honor over reputation has served its purpose, it has established a republic, and it is now to be tempered. This entails opening up routes to honor other than military success. Disagreements between the patricians and the plebeians are to be expected, but violence cannot be the means of solving them. Instead, rhetoric is to be given a new pride of place in the city. Coriolanus's ignorance of this art needs to be corrected, and Volumnia does so by overcoming her son with words. Rome will only survive if its valiant hero is replaced with the lawyer-politician. Volumnia does what warriors could only dream of doing. She defeats Coriolanus.

Here as in his other plays, Shakespeare's poetry pushes us to ask questions usually associated with classical political philosophy. Republics often tell their histories in comedic fashion ending with everyone's happiness. They forget the tragic heroes who laid the groundwork for their happy endings. Shakespeare's play, however, does not end with Rome's celebration, but with the death of Rome's unsurpassed hero. Republics are rightly praised for their elevation of the rule of law and the privileging of free speech, but before these goods can be put in place, exceptional individuals are depended upon for survival, only to be discarded when they become a threat to the budding fruits of republicanism. The fervor of revolutions cannot maintain republics; someone like Volumnia is needed to domesticate honor so that it will build up rather than destroy its home. Noble generals have to be replaced by lawyer-politicians. The latter are less admirable, but far safer because their reputations are tied to the success of the regime and not to their independent virtue. Nobility may diminish, but it is traded for stability. The brilliance of Shakespeare's work is that it shows us from a poetic standpoint that Rome is right in singing praises for Volumnia, for she does indeed save Rome; but his poetry also captures the philosophic understanding that the republic was saved in an act of violence by a mother against her son, for which

she can hardly be praised. The difficulty of Volumnia, the requirements for a lasting Roman republic, and the knowledge of what is lost when stability is achieved help us better understand the questions we should be asking, with all due caution, of our own republican foundations.

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Hilary Putnam, *Brave New World,* and the Plurality of Human Goods

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Hilary Putnam in his 1987 book *The Many Faces of Realism* turns to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* for help when searching for an adequate account of what goods are important to human beings. Here we find a heavyweight philosopher using to good effect a poetical work that describes a sci-tech future history of human beings. Thus, here we also find the kind of thinking that crosses academic borders and hits squarely on this volume's theme.

Putnam argues that the nightmarish dystopia of *Brave New World* can be used to identify the content of the good life by reflecting on what is missing in the pale image of human life found in Huxley's imaginary World State. He also argues that since the technocratic, totalitarian World State of Mustapha Mond follows readily from common, modern starting points, something is wrong with those starting points. Putnam is right on both points and right in more ways than he elaborates.

With regard to the second point, Putnam begins his argument by stating that *Brave New World* can be read not only as a "criticism of them" but also as a "criticism of us" (57). By this he means that the Mustapha Monds of the world who want to rule over people with absolute power are not the only thing under attack in *Brave New World*. Also under attack, according to Putnam, are all modern people who are guided by either pleasure-based or preference-based utilitarianism. How so? It is not difficult to see. If that human activity is best which produces either maximal pleasant sensations or maximal preference satisfaction, then life in the new world order of Huxley's novel is best because life there (though perhaps not achieving the maximums) achieves far more pleasant sensations and preference satisfaction than

historical alternatives. In the World State, people are free from the unpleasantness and disappointments of war and murder because war and murder have been eradicated. People also live long, healthy, and vigorous lives thanks to technological advances in medicine. In addition, people are free to move about and do as they please in *Brave New World*. In fact, the futuristic society presented contains few laws to rein people in and chafe against their inclinations. Finally, people in *Brave New World* are satisfied. They have most everything that they want. Stability is found everywhere—in politics, economies, and personal relationships. The few minor disappointments people do experience can be coped with easily thanks to the safe, costless, and readily available narcotic hallucinogen soma.

But, of course, the world in Huxley's novel is appalling. It is appalling because it is totalitarian, and it is appalling even though people "get what they want, and they never want what they can't get" (226). A world of "mild, unexhausting labor, and then the soma ration and games and unrestricted copulation and the feelies" (230) is an impoverished world, and thus the starting points that entail such a world—such as either pleasure-based or preference-based utilitarianism—are also deficient.

We can expand Putnam's "criticism of us" by noting how totalitarian rule in the World State is justified not only on utilitarian assumptions but also by appeal to the Western ideal of basic, natural rights such as rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (where the first two are understood in a straightforward, uncomplicated way and the last is understood again in terms of pleasant sensations or preference satisfaction). If life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are the supreme values and if a totalitarian government like Mustapha Mond's is able to instantiate those values better than alternative forms of government, then totalitarianism is justified. Since the World State in *Brave New World* instantiates life, liberty, and happiness in abundance and better than alternative forms of government, it is justified. Once again, what is evidently wrong in the fully developed world of *Brave New World* is first found less evidently in the bad seeds of that world: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The problem with goods like pleasure, satisfaction, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is not that these goods are not good but that they are not complete. Besides them, there are many other goods worth valuing and pursuing. Thus, *Brave New World* provides a thin image of human goods that is manifestly inadequate. At the same time, however, it also provides a good opportunity to reflect on what a more adequate, thicker image of human goods would look like. The novel provides a good opportunity for this reflection precisely because the novel portrays well the horror of a world devoid of certain goods and because the traces of a thicker image of human goods are found in the novel.

The most obvious good frighteningly absent in the imaginary civilization of *Brave New World* is, as Hilary Putnam points out, autonomy or self-direction. As Putnam puts it, "a person who is capable of thinking for himself about how to live is better than a person who has lost or never developed the capacity to think for himself about how to live" (85). No doubt, a superficial freedom exists in *Brave New World,* but people in that new world order are in a deeper way unfree. While they are free to follow their preferences with few constraints, they are not free to create the preferences they have. Instead, their mental capacities have been prenatally crafted

by chemical engineering, and their thoughts and desires have been postnatally determined by conditioning. In short, they are not their own persons but rather the products of someone else's wishes.

A second good missing and also identified by Hilary Putnam is closely allied to the last. The man-made stratification of human capacities in the World State of *Brave New World* into Alpha Pluses through Betas, Gammas, Deltas, all the way down to Epsilon Minuses is arbitrary and thus unfair. While Epsilons may be too stupid and too perfectly conditioned to mind being Epsilons and Deltas to mind being Deltas and similarly for the rest, we recognize the injustice of the unequal treatment whereby different people are manufactured for different castes. So, besides the good of autonomy, a second missing good emerges: equality.

If we follow Putnam's lead and continue to examine the inadequacies of life in *Brave New World,* we can identify several more missing goods. For example, a third good missing is human community. Civilization in *Brave New World* is peaceful and cohesive but remarkably lacking in any strong connections between people. There are no lovers, no wives and husbands, no mothers and fathers, no families, no friendships, no business partners, no clubs, no political parties, nobody at all, in the words of Mustapha Mond, "to feel strongly about" (226). The rule of etiquette in *Brave New World,* "everyone belongs to everyone else" (that is, everybody is available to everybody else for casual sex), instead of bonding people together leaves people disconnected. John the Savage, for example, longs to become intimately acquainted with Lenina until he realizes Lenina, like everybody else, is all surface with no depth. There is no person inside her to grow close to. She is nothing but insipid sayings and canned responses. Again, Bernard and Helmholz are the closest thing to friends that one finds in the novel, but their acquaintance is remarkably shallow. Neither understands the other. Whenever one of them tries to talk about his innermost longings, the other one stops listening. They know they are misfits, and the fact that they are misfits is primarily what binds them together.

Late in the novel when Mustapha Mond interrogates John the Savage, Mustapha explicitly acknowledges that art, science, and religion have been sacrificed for human happiness (chapters 16 and 17). Thus, the goods of beauty, knowledge, and community with God are three more candidates for inclusion in a thicker image of human goods. Mustapha Mond admits that his world is aesthetically "stupid and horrible" (225) with its infantile song lyrics like "Hug me till you drug me, honey" (205) and with its feelies and scent organs supplying streams of "agreeable sensations" (227). But, as Mustapha explains, the stupid and horrible is "the price we have to pay for stability. You've got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art" (226). Likewise, he admits that knowledge, especially science, "is dangerous and has to be kept most carefully chained and muzzled" (231). "Truth's a menace," he says, and "science is a public danger" (234). Finally, while Mustapha admits that the God of the Abrahamic religions probably exists, he also maintains that "God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness" (240).

A final good conspicuously absent is the good of craftsmanship. In contrast to the ease, simplicity, and repetition that characterizes work in the World State,

compare how John the Savage's instruction in pottery by an Indian elder while still on a reservation in New Mexico is described: "to fashion, to give form, to feel his fingers gaining in skill and power—this gave him an extraordinary pleasure . . . they worked all day, and all day he was filled with an intense, absorbing happiness" (136). Compare work in the World State also with what the narrator says in the final chapter of the novel as John the Savage carves a bow from an ash branch and arrows from hazel saplings: "the work gave him an intense pleasure" and "it was pure delight to be doing something that demanded skill and patience" (254).

In the end, everywhere readers direct their attention to life in the World State of *Brave New World,* they find inadequate forms of contentment. Whether readers focus on the characters' daily employment, recreation, human relationships, development of talents and personality, or understanding of the bigger picture, they perceive only a pale image of human happiness. At the same time, however, readers can discover in the novel traces of what could be and should be but are not because they have been sacrificed for a new world order.

Hilary Putnam began his reflections on *Brave New World* with a lament and a value judgment. He lamented that among his friends and colleagues at Harvard and elsewhere he could find nobody to discuss *Brave New World* with. Most people had read the book so long ago when in high school that they did not remember it. That Huxley's novel is read by few college professors and students and that Putnam never found his way to places like ACTC where he would have found colleagues able and willing to discuss the novel with him are indeed lamentable. As for his value judgment, it is that *Brave New World* is a "profound novel" and "a philosophically very important book" (57). Whether readers agree with Putnam on this point entirely, partially, or not all, they at least should concede that Putnam in *The Many Faces of Realism* models the kind of intellectual openness to help (from whatever the academic discipline) that marks the liberally educated and that *Brave New World* is a good jumping-off point for all of us (whatever our academic stripe) to begin thinking seriously about the plurality of human goods and the future image of humankind.

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Rethinking Paul in Historical Context: Teaching Undergraduates Paul's Letter to the Galatians

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Frequently, students view the Bible as an exercise in theology whose intricacies are obscure to the average person. ACTC's Nineteenth Annual Conference, dedicated to "Rethinking the Liberal Arts through Core Texts: Science, Poetry, Philosophy and History," gives us the opportunity to scrutinize New Testament texts as a literary battleground over competing historical assertions rather than merely the iteration of theological principles. Relying on the interdisciplinarity of literature and history, we see that Paul's epistolary strategy reveals a man struggling in the moment to exercise authority over the nascent Gentile Christian movement and, perhaps even more importantly, to gain control over himself.

As one who has taught in university classrooms for over twenty-five years, I am accustomed to students regarding New Testament texts with either unabashed piety or an air of secular dismissal. The challenge to teaching religious literature—indeed, a seminal Pauline text—lies in showing students how the text is not of whole cloth but is rather rent with tensions within both the epistle and the New Testament corpus. I encourage students to read the text with a critical eye against the grain to discover the stresses, frictions, and hostilities between Paul and his interlocutors, including his "fellow" Apostles. For it is in the interstices of the text and between texts that we find a very human Paul—ambitious, egocentric, audacious—who simultaneously was the genius who shaped the Christianity that we know today.

Widely regarded as one of the earliest Christian texts, Paul's Letter to the

Galatians, written in the 50s C.E., is controversial from its very outset. His pugnacious salutation to the community of Galatian Christians, whom he had evangelized during the late 40s C.E., claims to speak with the authority of an Apostle, although he never met Jesus in the flesh. Indeed, he was not one of the original Twelve, nor was he present when, in the aftermath of the death of Judas, the tiny Christian community cast lots for his replacement, choosing Matthias (*New Oxford Annotated Bible,* Acts 1:26). Moreover, unlike these Thirteen, Paul was not baptized by John the Baptizer (Acts 1:22) but rather by a disciple of Jesus, Ananias, allegedly called upon by the resurrected Jesus to baptize Paul and restore his sight (Acts 9). As a zealous Pharisee, who strictly observed Jewish law, Paul had formerly persecuted Christians, even witnessing and approving the stoning of Jesus' disciple Stephen, the first Christian martyr, outside the city of Jerusalem (Acts 7:58–8:1).

Unlike the original Twelve Apostles, Paul claims to be chosen by the preternatural Jesus, the Risen Christ, alluding to his experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). "For I want you to know my brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11). Paul seems to suggest that not only his authority but also his knowledge exceeds that of others who knew the earthly Jesus, because his encounter was post-Resurrection. Therefore, Paul posits himself in a dominant position vis-à-vis a series of interlocutors, not only those to whom the letter is addressed (members of the Galatian churches), but also the tacit interlocutors who nonetheless speak volumes in the interstices of the text.

Hors de texte are the obscene purveyors of a "different gospel" (Gal. 1:6). Ostensibly disciples of the Jerusalem "circumcision faction" (Gal. 2:12), these rivals claim righteous authority to preach to Paul's converts, yet seduce them with what Paul considers perversions of his own "gospel of Christ." Exploding in anger, the text finds these rivals anathema, accursed by Paul (Gal. 1:8–9), just as the serpent in the Garden was accursed by the Lord (Gen. 3:14). Linking the condemnatory passage to his opening claim to authority, Paul asserts that their power, unlike his own, does not come directly from Christ, but instead is mediated by "human commission" or "human authorities," who could not be other than the Apostles themselves in Jerusalem. As misguided as these rivals are and as much damage as they threaten to do to Paul's Galatians, the presence of Paul's real antagonists, the leaders of the Jerusalem community (James, John, and especially Peter), bleeds through the palimpsest of the text.

To the reader, the unheard voices of the circumcision faction in Jerusalem suggest that Paul's authority itself is derived from and limited by a human commission, i.e., by James, "the Lord's brother," and Peter (otherwise known as Cephas) (Gal. 1:18–19), and accordingly Paul's gospel exceeds the authority mandated by the leaders of the Jerusalem church. Hence, Paul's claim to speak authoritatively on his own is unwarranted. Paul chastises his Galatians, who are "so quickly deserting" him (Gal. 1:6), and claims that "[i]n what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!" (Gal. 1:20). However, conflicting stories about his encounter with the leaders of the Jerusalem community contribute to speculation that Paul is being less than truthful.

Although his epistolary account postpones his contact with the Jerusalem

Church until three years after his epiphany (Gal. 1:18–19) and denies any direct contact with members of the Judean Christian communities other than Peter and James, the story given in Acts (traditionally regarded as written by Luke, author of the eponymous gospel) suggests otherwise. Acts recounts that Paul traveled to Jerusalem in the company of Barnabas shortly after his epiphany, met many Apostles, and "went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord" (Acts 9:27–28). If the latter passage in Acts is to be believed, then Paul appears to be lying in his Letter to the Galatians, and his authority to preach may have been circumscribed by the Apostles and disciples of Jesus. Are we (or the Galatians) to believe Paul's vociferous denial of lying and thereby discount what became the Lukan account of Paul's encounter with the Jerusalem Apostles? Or is the outsized disclaimer "I do not lie!" merely an unintentional confirmation of Paul's own self-deception? We clearly cannot know the answer, but we can understand the fear that underlies Paul's vituperation.

Predicated on his rejection of Jewish law, Paul's gospel of Christ threatens to implode unless freed from the "circumcision faction." As Paul undoubtedly perceived, the requirement of circumcision among Gentile "god-fearers" (*theosebeis*) (Acts 13:16 and 13:26) associated with the Jewish Diaspora's synagogues would be the death-knell of the nascent Gentile Christian movement. Attracted by Jewish monotheism, Greek Gentiles balked at circumcision, widely regarded in Hellenic culture as mutilation of the body. Moreover, the God-fearers' use of the baths, so prominent in Greek urban life, made conversion to Christianity via circumcision a public spectacle. The requirement of circumcision therefore altogether discouraged these Gentiles, many of whom played prominent financial or political roles in Greek cities, from conversion. In the Antiochene Christian community, Paul is beset by "false believers secretly brought in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us" (Gal. 2:4). In other words, members of this "circumcision faction" visited Antioch in the hopes of catching Paul disparaging circumcision as a necessary step for the conversion of the Gentiles. Acts 15 reports that "Paul and Barnabas and some of the others" from that community were assigned to journey up to Jerusalem to clarify the gospel's teaching on the requirement of circumcision. There they are confronted by Christian Pharisees who claim that "[i]t is necessary for [converts] to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). Peter, who claims to be "the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers," introduces Paul to the "Apostles and the elders" (Acts 15:2) as one who is carrying out Peter's work among the Gentiles (Acts 15:7). From the Lukan account, it is clear that Paul acts under Peter's authority and must make the case to suspend the requirement of circumcision for Gentiles who want to convert. Although in Acts Paul appeals to the assembled Apostles and disciples for support, James, as leader of the Jerusalem community, ultimately makes the decision that Gentile converts should not be obligated to undergo circumcision, but only be required to refrain from pagan sacrificial meals, fornication, and non-kosher meat (Acts 15:20). The Acts story claims that these instructions are included in a letter from James to the Antiochene, Syriac, and Cilician Christian communities. Judas/Barsabbas and Silas, who are to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return

to Antioch, will carry this letter from James. Paul apparently is either not to be trusted or of insufficient standing to deliver the letter himself. There is no question as to who wields authority here, and it is not Paul.

However, the epistolary Paul of Galatians speaks for himself and voices a very different dialogue with his tacit interlocutors. Here the power relationship between Paul, on the one hand, and Peter and James, on the other, is reversed. Paul denies that he suffered the humiliation of pleading his cause before the "Apostles and the elders" (Acts 15:2); instead, he has a "private meeting" with "those who were supposed to be the acknowledged leaders" (James, Cephas/Peter and John) (Gal. 2:6–8, emphasis added). Paul refrains from openly attacking James, the "Lord's brother"; however, he discredits Peter by suggesting that Peter observed non-kosher table fellowship with Gentiles until James admonished him (Gal. 2:12). Christian Pharisees then intimidated Peter, who allegedly shook in fear of the circumcision faction (Gal. 2:12). Paul claims that he "opposed [Peter] to his face" (Gal. 2:11), apparently upbraiding him for his lack of courage. Indeed, Paul does not acknowledge Peter as the apostle to the Gentiles at all, as the Acts narrative claims; instead, in Galatians Peter is to evangelize the circumcised (Gal. 2:7–8). If we are to believe Paul, James, Peter, and John recognize Paul as the true evangelist of the Gentiles and simply acknowledge his pre-existing authority, implying that the decision to suspend circumcision among Gentile converts was really Paul's, not James's (Gal. 2:9–10). In Paul's epistle, James's letter, described in Acts, apparently never was carried to Galatia or was ignored or perhaps, if we are to believe the epistolary Paul's silence regarding its very existence, never even written.

Paul's letter suggests that no one has the right to direct the Galatian community except Paul himself—not even James. The community erred by welcoming Christian Pharisees as pious Christians, perhaps as representatives of the revered "James the Just." Perhaps these Christian Pharisees were far more articulate or charismatic than the blunt and acerbic Paul. Perhaps Galatians had simply embraced and preserved Christian Pharisaic views long after they had departed. In any case, for Paul those who, like Christian Pharisees, "pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:7) and require acquiescence to the law of circumcision persist like wolves among the flock. In his audacious and very human anger, he claims that he—and no one else—has the only legitimate authority to determine the gospel of Christ. "Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you" (Gal. 5:2). For Paul, Christian Pharisees are hypocrites who demand obedience to Jewish law for their own egocentric ends, even though they disobey it frequently themselves (Gal. 6:13). His fury is far from the Christian gospel to "love thy enemies" (Matt. 5:44) of the earthly Jesus. Instead, says Paul, "I wish those who unsettle you [Galatians] would castrate themselves!" (Gal. 5:12)

I have found that undergraduates who make this journey with me through Galatians no longer see the letter as a flat, univocal text of the same cloth as Acts, but rather hear a cacophonous epistle with many voices that dramatize a turning point in the history of Christianity, indeed, in the history of Western culture. Taught as children that Peter and Paul are holy men who serve as exemplars of Christian piety and friendship, students are often shocked by the Galatians text, especially

when compared to the narrative in Acts. They begin to see Christianity as being "of the world" as well as being "in" it. The texts reveal the history of a power struggle between men who want to control and shape a human institution and are willing to engage in contentious rhetoric to achieve their ends, even going so far as to insult and denounce their opponents within the movement. I recall one student voicing her surprise that early Christianity was "so real!" and that the Bible was not simply a tedious exercise in piety. "You would think," said another, "that these saints were politicians." I granted that the struggle for power within the movement was an important dimension to New Testament texts, although I warned students that the political passions of early church leaders had a depth largely unknown to the cynicism of contemporary American politics. Nonetheless, "men of God" are far more human—with ambitions, fears, and antagonisms—than we frequently imagine. And in that respect, Galatians is as alive today as it was nearly 2,000 years ago.

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Comprehension

Saintsbury and the Heart of Criticism

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Perhaps more than anything, liberal education has taught me the value of a comprehensive outlook. The cognitive process is, after all, a comparative one: insight is triggered by metaphor and analogy, and my finest insights in literature have often come from cross-pollination with my readings in music, in art, in cinema, in science. And so I enjoy those critics—and they are rare—whose conversation enlightens me not only by the fineness and precision, but also by the amplitude, of its views. Of such literary critics the most impressive is also the most neglected: George Saintsbury (1845–1933), whose writings, though not cross-referential to other disciplines—for he insisted that literature should mind its own business[1]—reveal a prodigious command of literature unparalleled to this day, a salutary indictment of our insidious tendency to specialization, that sterilizing habit that has us knowing more and more about less and less. In reading Saintsbury—and re-reading him (the test of a great critic, as it is of a great writer), we see what good criticism is in every principle that informs his practice. The greatest of his virtues is that he treats literature as art, getting at once to the quiddity of a work, infallibly, precisely, and appraising it: if good, saying what makes it good, if bad, bringing into focus the nature of its faults.

No doubt this view of the critic's task was nurtured by his more than twenty-five years as a book reviewer, which must have trained him to read voluminously. It is a failing of our unfortunate dogmatism that we so regard hyper-documented research as the exclusive path to academic salvation that it is easy to dismiss Saintsbury's mode of personal appraisal as subjective. But "objectivity" has always seemed to me an illusion, obsession with it misconceived; we are always making judgments, whether we acknowledge it or not. For most readers, the so-called privileging of a work of art for its excellence might seem, if not impossible—what are the criteria of

excellence?—at the very least an exercise in elitism. Yet Saintsbury's undisguised admiration and censure are hardly capricious: he defends his views, and he does so in a conversational style free of jargon and stamped with the pungent individuality of a mind operating at a high level of critical acuity. Though he judges with fearless independence, his range of empathy is enormous. "The ideal critic," he says,

> undoubtedly does like everything in literature, provided that it is good of its kind. He likes the unsophisticated tentatives of the earliest minstrel poetry, and the cultivated perfection of form of Racine and Pope; he likes the massive vigor of the French and English sixteenth centuries, and the alembicated exquisiteness of Catullus and Carew; he does not dislike Webster because he is not Dryden, or Young because he is not Spenser; he does not quarrel with Sophocles because he is not Aeschylus, or with Hugo because he is not Heine. But at the same time it is impossible for him not to recognise that there are certain periods where inspiration and accomplishment meet in a fashion which may be sought for in vain at others. (*Elizabethan Literature* 457–8)

His judgments are accordingly empirical in nature, conditioned not by extrinsic factors, but by the qualities manifest in the work, not by a priori notions, but by effect and achievement, not by recipe or (even worse) a list of dietary nutrients, but by taste. In short, the virtues and blemishes of a work of art can be defined only in context of the individual work. In his monumental *A History of Criticism* (1,700 pages), Saintsbury blames the ancient Greeks for succumbing to

> that worst disease of criticism, so often manifested in its history, which leads men to ignore, or even blaspheme, great work, because it refuses to be classified, or to obey the arbitrary rules which have been foisted into, or encrusted upon, the classification. (1:196)

He sounds like his counterpart in music criticism, Donald Francis Tovey, who was convinced that most critics, when confronted with the new and unorthodox, can't distinguish between a blunder and a stroke of genius.

The most crippling liability for a critic, then, is what we might call aesthetic provincialism. Zola turns out to be no less flawed a critic than a novelist, proving himself "destitute of the primal and necessary organ of criticism—the organ which appreciates, which at any rate comprehends and admits the appreciation of, things that are different" (*Criticism* 3:457). By contrast, what Saintsbury praises in Coleridge is not only that, as a poet, he "could colour and harmonise language in such a way that, at his best, not Shakespeare himself is his superior, and hardly any one else his equal" (3:207), but that, as a critic, he "had read immensely" and that "The play of his intellect was marvellously subtle, flexible, and fine. He could take positions not his own with remarkable alacrity" (3:206). I find in Saintsbury what any artist hopes above all else to find in an audience: a willing receptivity, a predisposition to allow a work to be what it chooses to be and not be taken to task for failing to be what it never aspired to. Impelled by a voracity for excellence, Saintsbury welcomes innovation wherever it proves successful; and his enthusiasm for the English Romantic poets is due in no small measure to the invigorating life they bring to English verse with their metrical experiments. At the same time he praises the second century Longinus, his favorite critic, for rightly condemning the pursuit of novelty for its own sake, "that

'horror of the obvious,' which bad taste at all times has taken for a virtue" (*Criticism* 1:156). I would merely add to this that great artists never discard conventions which might be useful, if not stimulating, without having good reason to do so.

What keeps Saintsbury's views from being arbitrarily epideictic is the staggering breadth of his reading. Any bright mind can have insights; but accuracy of judgment—and authority—come only from a foundation of wide knowledge. Again like Tovey, who knew every major work of music and many of the minor ones from the sixteenth century to the twentieth and who could perform, from memory, any work for keyboard by Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and others, Saintsbury shows intimate knowledge of every major and almost every important minor work of European literature in every genre, from the Greeks and Romans to the novels of his day. "It . . . is almost invariable," he says, "to find that the mistakes which great critics make arise out of ignorance or forgetfulness of other literatures besides their own" (*Criticism* 1:36). He respects Aristotle; but he observes that the author of the Poetics would have come to very different conclusions had he enjoyed the benefit of comparative literature. It was the regrettable result of historical contingency that Aristotle "took the Greek and especially the Attic, literature which constituted his library, and treated this as if it were all literature" (*Criticism* 1:36).

The critic's knowledge must also be direct. "I have," he tells us,

> the greatest dislike to writing about anything at second hand. . . . I have never delivered . . . a judgment based on second-hand information, whether I may agree or not with that of some previous writer. . . . I will warrant every critical judgment and description, general and particular, . . . to be . . . based on original reading and thought. (*Criticism* 1:467, n1)

True, but with one qualification: Saintsbury admits to transgressing against his ideal in having to turn to translations of works outside the half dozen languages he commanded. He preferred French versions, wherever possible, of Russian works, but used English ones of Scandinavian literature, while the few pages devoted to Portuguese literature in *The Later Nineteenth Century* are not by him at all but by the scholar Edgar Prestage. Of the various Eastern European literatures—which proliferate in the nineteenth century, at the same time as the main stream of classical music begins to spread into the rills and rivulets of national types—he says hardly anything. But no one person can do everything; and to have commanded these areas as well would have required an inconceivable monster of erudition.

Understandably, it was his conviction that half an hour's reading of a work tells us more than an exhaustive perusal of criticism on its author. We might quibble with his hyperbole, but not with his point: that there is no substitute for knowing (to borrow Kant's term) the thing-in-itself. Recall that charming Buddhist koan: for him who has never known water, no description can equal the experience of being thrown into a lake.

Like all great critics, Saintsbury was an intuitive critic and, like all intuitive critics, he responded first and then investigated the reasons for his response. He shows in his own practice that the critic's temperament must always be positively tuned, as if, in taking up an unknown work, he might discover a new genius. T.S. Eliot thought his opinions almost always right. If additional examples are needed to

what I've already cited, let me note that among his most valuable and illuminating passages are those where he speaks comparatively—appraising a writer's distinctive peculiarities or virtues or weaknesses or innovations, his changes or contributions to established tendencies and traditions—by reference to the writer's predecessors, or contemporaries, or other works from his own hand. To furnish examples from his excellent *A History of Elizabethan Literature* would set me to quoting half the book. I don't always share his admiration; but let me cite, from various of his books, some of the many instances where I do: his sensitive discussion of Chaucer and the rhyme royal; of Milton and his flexibly varied verse paragraphs, by which Milton succeeded in avoiding the twin dangers of stiffness, posed by end-stopping, and unmetricality, posed by enjambment. Saintsbury agrees with Coleridge that, in his best poetry, Wordsworth ("the Apostle of the Ordinary," Saintsbury calls him) violates his own poetic credo—specifically the denial that any difference exists between the language of poetry and the prose uttered each day by the common man. In a flash of insight, he observes that Dante, in his brilliant opusculum "De Vulgari Eloquentia," by showing how the laborious artifices of diction and meter distinguish poetry from speech, had, in a kind of historical irony, demolished Wordsworth's arguments five hundred years in anticipation. Saintsbury's comments on Flaubert, including his encomiastic minority opinion of the marvelous *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine* and "La Légende de Saint-Julien l'Hospitalier," are spot-on, for all that he appears to miss what makes Flaubert's *L'Éducation Sentimentale* a work of the highest quality. Contemporary artists are always hard to appraise since we lack the perspective of time; and so, though Saintsbury seems to be at a loss with Strindberg, we can only admire his astute remarks on Ibsen and, even more, his judicious, balanced evaluation of the still-living John Ruskin.

Considering the acuity of such insights, Saintsbury's lapses are astonishing. He is determined to deny any merit to what is perhaps the finest of all epistolary novels, Laclos's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, and he consigns the book to a brief notice in *A History of the French Novel*, where, abandoned in a rare moment by his critical sobriety, he lavishes virulent invective on what he seems to find all the more perverse by virtue of its mastery. He rationalizes his moral repugnance as an aesthetic objection: there is, he insists, nothing artistic in the book's handling of "a disgusting subject" (*French Novel* 2:487) and even the villain is made-to-order by prescription. Perhaps Saintsbury believed this; but his vehemence—accusing Laclos of writing pornography for money (*French Novel* 1:453)—is so inordinate that, for once, I don't believe him. His remarks on Tolstoy are as preposterous as Tolstoy's on Shakespeare—which seems to me a case of karmic justice, as is the ironic resemblance of Tolstoy's ultimate homeless wandering to the fate of Shakespeare's Lear, whom he had found improbable and unconvincing. The fact is Tolstoy could never refrain from polluting his art with his Ideas; and Saintsbury, who found all obtrusion intolerable, cannot allow that Tolstoy's great works are great precisely at those moments where Tolstoy forgets his Ideas; they are certainly greater than the novels of Turgenev that Saintsbury much preferred. But a critic should never be judged by his weak moments; they do not diminish his best. And the same can be said of an artist.

Other critics of the past—Aristotle, Longinus, Kant, Coleridge—are still read; even Dante's treatise is something of a cult specialty. I can think of only two reasons why Saintsbury, in spite of the magnitude of his achievement, has lapsed into obscurity. In the first place, people generally assume that all things, including relevance, come with expiration dates. How many people who read Longinus do so for his merits and not for his place in history? The far from uncommon misconception that the humanities advance in the same way as the sciences leads to the false conclusion that the most recent criticism must ipso facto be more insightful than the benighted perspectives of past generations palpating their way to modernity. Saintsbury proves how wrong is this notion that good criticism (or good art, for that matter) ever becomes obsolete, is ever canceled by a tampering of the coefficients on the graph of space and time. Second, and this might be more pertinent, Saintsbury never performed what is taken to be the most defining function of a critic: he never concocted a theory to inflict on the literature. This should be seen as one of his strengths. Not by default, but by design, he eschews theory. "The critic does his best work," he insists,

> not in elaborating theories which will constantly break down or lead him wrong where they come into contact with the myriad-sided elusiveness of Art and Humanity, but in examining individual works or groups of work, and in letting his critical steel strike the fire of . . . aperçus from the flint of these. (*Criticism* 3:221)

Such a view can be held only by someone who commands a vast perspective of the failures of criticism over the centuries—that is, a knowledge of how critics, one generation after another, have been blinded by the tastes of the time and by their own axiomatic assumptions, often in reaction to a former generation—and by someone who rightly considers criticism to be ancillary to literature. Our current fashion is to play the critical game for its own sake, and to reverse the relationship by regarding the work of literature as documentary illustration of the theory and its imperatives. The hapless books are manhandled in Procrustean fashion, hijacked and held hostage to one theory or another, each one prone to what historian Marc Bloch styled "the fetishism of the single cause" (Gombrich 114). No wonder most critics sound interchangeably alike: they select their favorite template—new historicism, deconstructionism, feminism—and feed it bits of literature culled from their small turf of specialization; and from this process there issue more or less predictable results. It is all a kind of exegetical mechanics, a kind of intellectual paint-by-number.

The real fault of Saintsbury lies elsewhere: in his favorite form, the historical survey. It is a paradoxical defect. On the one hand, he treats some authors superficially in the need to make all the local stops in his itinerary. On the other hand, for all that he has exercised a degree of selectivity, his residual fussing with negligible writers who, he fears, must for the sake of thoroughness be mentioned becomes a little boring, as does the formula of his discussion: biographical tidbits followed by a chronological jog through the author's works. With rare exceptions (Ruskin, Tolstoy), he ignores living writers altogether, though he does so from principle, not oversight. This is regrettable; one would like to know what he thought of Proust, Joyce, Kafka, had he read them. But these weaknesses hardly diminish the value of his insights or the value of his major works (including his magisterial 1500-page *A History of English*

Prosody) for those seeking a shapely view of literary history.[2] Saintsbury is worth reading for the gems that his plow regularly turns up in its methodic trek across vast fields. As we get older we become ever more aware how impossible it is to read everything that clamors for attention. How then do we make good use of our brief commodity of time? A critic like Saintsbury is an incomparable guide in that he provides a map. Even more, by the example of his own practice he helps the reader become a self-reliant critic. If what we call liberal education is concerned with that endangered species, the educated common reader, and not just the specialist for whom most academic writing is rather incestuously performed, Saintsbury remains valuable. For, more important than his opinions—it is, after all, as impossible as it is undesirable to agree on all points even with those we admire—he bequeaths, as great teachers bequeath, the afterglow of his inspiration, the infection of his own enthusiasm, the urge, in others, to become acquainted, personally and directly, with those works that are the objects of his admiration and that promise unique flora, new specimens and varieties of untasted excellence.

Notes

1. Actually, Saintsbury means something different from what I mean. He observes that the "weak point of De Sanctis as a critic is that, in accordance with a very common tendency of modern criticism, he will not let literature keep to itself, and is always dragging in extraneous considerations." What Saintsbury means by "extraneous considerations" are wayward digressions from formal aesthetic matters to such things as social and political affiliations that obtrude themselves upon a work of art. He would despise most of our currently popular criticism. He himself strove for what he called an "achromatic" view of literature. See *The Later Nineteenth Century,* vii; 260–61.

2. I list below only his major works; he wrote much more besides—essays on various subjects, literary and non-literary, three "scrapbooks" of personal views and reflections, a book on wine, and so on. Not all of this is well written; a certain archness, where Saintsbury is enamored of (or at least enslaved to) his own wit, makes some of it unreadable. And some of his topics have become as obsolete as "topical" themes inevitably do. But the great works deserve reading.

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Rethinking the Liberal Arts in the Company of Miguel de Cervantes's Sancho Panza

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In articulating the conference theme "Rethinking the Liberal Arts: Science, Poetry, Philosophy and History," Scott Lee suggests that the liberal arts are born out of a "mutually educative" impulse among the ideas that constitute what we might otherwise take to be "separate disciplinary inquiries" (Lee). This got me wondering. Do disciplines get in the way of seeing the mutually educative impulse of ideas out of which the liberal arts are born? And if they do, what does this mean for the student of the liberal arts and for those of us committed to teaching them? These questions challenge us not least because we live in an age of specialization. Add to this the crush of information that bombards us daily, beckoning us to assimilate it in ever greater quantity. Who has time to think across disciplines, let alone to rethink the liberal arts? And does it even matter that we do so?

The questions I have raised speak to something just beneath the surface in the current conversation surrounding higher education. We would have to be oblivious not to know that the liberal arts, if not under attack, are perhaps even worse quietly being relegated to insignificance by the relative silence that surrounds them in the broadest public discourse about higher education. Disciplines are the coin of the realm, and not just any disciplines. STEM education, itself conceived narrowly by the public as the handmaiden that makes possible the competitive edge of nations within a global economy, has become synonymous with education itself in our current public discourse. Quite simply, alarmingly, this constitutes a shrinking of the

public imagination as to what education is and why it matters to human beings and to the nations they populate.

There is an irony in this shrinking of the public imagination that would be funny if its consequences weren't so serious, for individuals and for nations. For as we move deeper into the territory in which education is conceived wholly as a means to global competitiveness, it is precisely imagination that will distinguish those who innovate from those who lag behind, those who respond from those who react, those who lead from those who follow. Yet it is the imagination that gets squeezed out when disciplines are pursued not because they open up the possibility of uncovering the mutually educative ideas out of which the liberal arts (and more important, the liberal artist) are born, but because they serve a narrowly conceived understanding of education as job training.

The imagination is our point of contact with these ideas that transcend this narrow conception of disciplines. If they are where our rethinking of the liberal arts needs to focus, the relationship between the imagination and the liberal arts needs to be better understood and more forcefully articulated if even the current vision of education as a means to competition within the global economy is to have hope of being realized. I propose that this relationship is one concerned not with disciplines, but with disciplining. The liberal arts are essential to the disciplining of the human imagination, and this means that they are essential to any pragmatic conception of education that concerns itself with innovation, the ability to respond to a changing world, and leadership.

Perhaps no book in the Western tradition concerns itself in a more delightful way with the importance of the liberal arts to the disciplining of the human imagination than Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. Often cited as the first modern novel, *Don Quixote* stands out as a book that cannot be categorized among its predecessors, which include (in addition to plays) mostly scientific works, epic poems, philosophical treatises, and historical narratives. If we look at *Don Quixote* among these for a family resemblance, the epic poem would be closest to this "child" of Cervantes's imagination. But though Cervantes's book is an extended fictional narrative, it is written in prose rather than verse. This alone made it striking at the time of its publication in 1605, but Cervantes does not stop there. His work of fiction is presented by the narrator as a history. This so-called history, unlike the medieval chivalric romances that preoccupy its protagonist, is deeply concerned with the development of the inner life of its characters over time, specifically their imaginations. It is deeply concerned with how that inner life transforms and shapes them and the world in which they are situated.

It is within the context of these innovative characters that Cervantes offers a case for the liberal arts and their power to transform individuals toward their own freedom through a disciplining of their imaginations. This "case," as I am dubbing it, is somewhat hidden. It is worth uncovering on several counts, not least of which is the standpoint it offers from which to rethink the liberal arts in an age of specialization. The book *Don Quixote* is all about mutually educative ideas that pique the imagination and therefore influence the actions of those who take them seriously. Cervantes's main characters are not disciplinarians, and they do not approach the

ideas they encounter academically. Rather, they live in the world differently because of their encounter with ideas. How they engage these ideas, superficially or substantively, determines how things turn out for these characters. And for things to turn out well, Cervantes seems to suggest that none of the usual things matter: education, class, wealth, or even literacy. What matters is the influence of the liberal arts on the imaginative impulse that sees through appearances and that gives meaning to our world and the place we can envision for ourselves within it.

The primary narrative for exploring this imaginative impulse is concerned with Don Quixote himself. He is the man who sees the world as he imagines it to be, perhaps out of madness as most of his "contemporaries" believe, or perhaps out of willfulness as the writer of his "history" suggests in an otherwise private moment between Don Quixote and his squire.[1] In any case, Don Quixote's imagination is anything but disciplined. In spite of his place in the educated class, his status as a landowner, his ability to live without any apparent source of income, and his specialized literacy, Don Quixote enlists his imagination in the service of knight errantry in a way that brings him into violent contact with the world. He pays the price for his undisciplined imagination time and again.

Cervantes alerts us right away in the Prologue that Don Quixote is somehow not the figure on whom we should focus in this novel purporting to be a history. Cervantes does this both indirectly and directly, first by undermining our confidence that his main character is worthy of our attention, referring to him as "dry, withered, capricious, and filled with inconstant thoughts never imagined by anyone else" (Prologue, 3), and then by telling us outright "I do not want to charge you too much for the service I have performed in introducing you to so noble and honorable a knight; but I do want you to thank me for allowing you to make the acquaintance of the famous Sancho Panza, his squire" (Prologue, 9).

Cervantes's suggestion that the reader's attention be redirected to Don Quixote's servant Sancho Panza is curious. This curiosity is amplified by two further considerations. First, Cervantes goes to great lengths in the Prologue to stir up the self-consciousness of his readers as readers. The entire Prologue is addressed, in the first person to an "idle reader," whose indulgence Cervantes makes clear he will not solicit. On the contrary, Cervantes acknowledges his reader's will and sovereignty in determining what to do with the shortcomings of the book, even as he "exempts and excuses" the reader in advance from all "respect and obligation" when it comes to judging his work (Prologue, 3–4). Second, Cervantes goes to great lengths throughout the book to make sure that his readers remember, through frequent repetition, that Sancho Panza, whose acquaintance should inspire gratitude, is illiterate.[2]

Why then? Why should we as readers thank Cervantes for introducing us to the illiterate Sancho Panza? This question becomes even more pressing when we consider Panza's character. If Don Quixote himself merits our attention less because he is "dry, withered, and capricious," why should Panza merit it more when he is base in his habits, often cowardly in the face of danger, given to appetites that distract him from higher things, an incessant talker—not always to the point, one might add—and a complainer to boot?

Cervantes's odd claim that his novel is a history may be important here. Unlike

his master Don Quixote, who is arguably diminished by the end of the book, broken and disillusioned by the very ideas that have driven his imagination, Sancho Panza by the end of the book has become transformed into something more than he was. He has been transformed into someone who exercises his imagination effectively because he has somehow managed to do more with the ideas presented in Don Quixote's "inane books of chivalry" than graft them onto a world that wants nothing to do with them. Consistent with his name, Panza (which means stomach) has been able to digest those ideas and make them his own. In virtue of this, he discovers that he can act freely, thereby transcending his status as a servant to become not only the master of his own thoughts, but arguably of his circumstances as well.

The history of Sancho Panza is our point of access to Cervantes's hidden case for the liberal arts. For Cervantes presents Panza's transformation as somehow conditional upon the disciplining of his imagination by the liberal arts. In a book deeply about what is hidden from our sight but nevertheless real, it should come as no surprise that how the illiterate Sancho Panza comes to know the liberal arts never receives even close to full disclosure.[3] It should also be pointed out that Sancho is a comic figure. But these considerations should not deter us from recognizing the clues that Cervantes nevertheless leaves for us to make the case. That this modern novel, concerned as it is with the passing of the age of chivalry that Don Quixote so valiantly tries to resurrect, is also concerned with the liberal arts that would be threatened by modernity and its march toward greater and greater specialization seems prophetic. So too does Cervantes's focus on the importance of the liberal arts most especially for those among us who have yet to become literate. That I am resurrecting this thread in Cervantes's novel at a time when the liberal arts are threatened by the prevalent misunderstanding of education as training, which leaves little time for, or interest in, the development of the imagination, may put me in the company of madmen who go chasing windmills and you in the company of the fools who are willing to follow them. Let it be so. There is still a case to be made for rethinking the liberal arts in the company of Sancho Panza.

Now by the time the liberal arts are explicitly referred to in the novel in connection with Sancho, we have already seen ample evidence of his imagination. This evidence presents itself in distinct patterns, mentioned or repeated time and again. First, Sancho's imagination is strongest when directed toward what he cannot see. Whether it is the governorship that his master promises, which brings out the noblest expression of his imagination, or the sound of fulling hammers in the night, which marries his undisciplined imagination to his cowardice, Sancho's imagination is most at home with what is not immediately before him. Second, Sancho's imagination depends in its manifestations on what he hears from others. Don Quixote is the primary source of what Sancho imagines to be and to be possible, but his prodigious use of proverbs also suggests the influence of others in Sancho's ability to see the various possibilities for meaning in a given situation. Finally, Sancho's imagination primarily has as its object wealth and power. The island he means to govern, the giants he means for his master to slay, the damsels he agrees to aid along with his master—all matter for him because of what he will gain in wealth and power. These are the patterns of imagination that are transformed in Sancho Panza through the liberal arts.

The character Sanson Carrasco, learned bachelor of Salamanca, is the one who first calls our attention to the liberal arts in conjunction with Sancho Panza. It is in the context of a conversation about the publication of the *First Part of Don Quixote*, a book Sanson Carrasco says he has read. Responding to the point that the critics of the book might have liked to read less in the way of its violent encounters, Sancho remarks: "That's where the truth of the history comes in." Don Quixote replies in a way that shows his undisciplined imagination and his inability to distinguish fiction from reality that results. Surely Homer's Ulysses and Virgil's Aeneus had their own shortcomings, but the poets didn't include them in their descriptions. Sanson replies, essentially in agreement with Sancho, that still, "it is one thing to write as a poet and another to write as a historian: the poet can recount or sing about things not as they were, but as they should have been, and the historian must write about them not as they should have been, but as they were, without adding or subtracting anything from the truth" (Second Part, Chapter III, 476).

What fun Cervantes is having with his readers! In dubbing his novel a history, he clues us that he wants us to see what he has written—about fictional characters who have discovered that they are characters in a book—as a feature of the way things are rather than as a feature of the way things should be. Any transformation we witness in Sancho Panza must be considered not only in light of what is possible for this illiterate and pesky peasant, but in light of what is. If Sancho's imagination has been wholly focused on what is not before him, if its objects have been wholly dependent on his master and on what others have said, if its primary motivation has been material gain, any change that we see with respect to his imagination, and the conditions under which that change is revealed, must be considered as an expression not only of what is possible, but of what actually is. With this caveat in mind, let us return to the matter of Sancho's governorship.

Sanson Carrasco is equally amused and incredulous that Sancho Panza could possibly believe he might govern an island. Sancho sees no reason for incredulity. The trouble, he says, is that the insula is hidden, not that he won't be able to govern it (Second Part, Chapter III, 477). This is a moment of self-awareness. Sancho seems to understand that he doesn't have whatever it is that would allow him to get at what is hidden, to see the meaning of what exists only in his imagination through the instruction of Don Quixote. But he also knows that if he can penetrate to what is hidden, he will be capable of governing, better certainly than some governors he has seen. It is in this context that Sanson comments, "They aren't governors of insulas, but of other more tractable realms; those who govern insulas have to know grammar at the very least" (Second Part, Chapter III, 477). The learned Sanson is not so subtly pointing out to Sancho that what he, Sancho, takes to be a real possibility can really only be understood in a literary context. Governors of insulas occur in Don Quixote's books, and if Sancho were a reader, one who "at the very least" knew grammar, he'd know he was being made a fool in believing there really is some insula hidden away that he might govern. Sancho does not skip a beat in responding, demonstrating in the process that he knows how to parse a word even though he claims no knowledge of grammar. "I can accept the grama all right, but the tica I won't go near because I don't understand it" (Second Part, Chapter III, 477). The Spanish word for grammar

is gramatica. Grama means grass, but tica has no independent meaning. When Sancho says he can accept the grama, he is saying he can accept what makes sense—with sense being the key feature afforded to language by grammar. Cervantes's point, perhaps more demonstrated by our author than understood by his character, is that Sancho not only knows grammar, but he also knows that it is key to his ability to parse out sense from nonsense.

Sancho gets his chance to demonstrate this ability soon after, in the so-called "enchantment" of Dulcinea, who is the highly-idealized love object of Sancho's master. In order to appreciate what the enchantment of Dulcinea means for our understanding of the development of Sancho's imagination, we need to understand that it becomes necessary due to a lie Sancho has told to his master. Dulcinea is in fact a peasant girl by the name of Aldonza Lorenzo. Having been asked by his master during the second sally to deliver a letter from Don Quixote to his lady, Sancho's lie is that he has done so. But even knowing that in keeping with his books of chivalry, his master expects to hear tell of a beautiful lady, found in the splendor of her magnificent castle, Sancho somehow can't imagine a description of anything other than his present sense impression of a peasant girl—this despite the fact that Sancho is trying to convince his master that he has indeed done his bidding. Sancho instead reports to his master that he has found Dulcinea doing the things that peasant girls do and looking and smelling the way that peasant girls would. In short, she is winnowing buckwheat, loading sacks of wheat onto a donkey, standing tall and strong, and smelling rather "manly" for her labors (First Part, Chapter XXXI, 258–259).

A delightful bit of comedy ensues from Sancho's conversation with Don Quixote about Dulcinea. Its force comes from the clash between the ways each is able to envision what Sancho has "seen." Or to put it another way, it comes from the clash between two undisciplined imaginations. Sancho holds on to the particulars of Aldonza Lorenzo's peasant presentation, no matter how incongruous they are with the lie he means to tell and the conditions under which he might be successful in telling it. But in the end, what Don Quixote expects Sancho to have seen is what he believes Sancho to have seen, and so when in Don Quixote's third sally he announces that he wishes Sancho to take him to Dulcinea, Sancho finds himself with a problem: his lie has been a success, and his master now wishes to see Dulcinea for himself.

Sancho needs to find a way to satisfy his master's desire to see Dulcinea in all of her ladylike splendor, in spite of the fact that Aldonza Lorenzo is no lady! As he works through the bind he finds himself in, Sancho succeeds in parsing sense from nonsense. He does it by grasping the rhetoric and logic that his master has borrowed from books of chivalry and has imposed on a world far-removed from such literary constructs. That is, he succeeds in grasping what he didn't the first time he told his lie. He grasps that what we see right in front of us might be influenced by what we are capable of imagining. This leads to two further insights: he discovers that his potential for power might come from his own efforts rather than the good graces of his master, and he realizes that his own experience, or what he claims to be his experience, has no less status than his master's if it can manage to explain the world in the terms his master understands. Here is what Sancho says.

> Well now. . . . I've seen a thousand signs in this master of mine that he's crazy

> enough to be tied up, and I'm not far behind, I'm as much a fool as he is because I follow and serve him, if that old saying is true: "Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are," and that other one that says, "Birds of a feather flock together." Then, being crazy, which is what he is, with the kind of craziness that most of the time takes one thing for another, and thinks white is black and black is white, like the time he said that the windmills were giants . . . and many other things of that nature, it won't be very hard to make him believe that a peasant girl, the first one I run into here, is the lady Dulcinea; and if he doesn't believe it, I'll swear it's true; and if he swears it isn't, I'll swear again that it is; and if he insists, I'll insist more; and so I'll always have the last word, no matter what. Maybe I'll be so stubborn he won't send me out again carrying his messages, seeing the bad answers I bring back, or maybe he'll believe, which is what I think will happen, that one of those evil enchanters he says are his enemies changed her appearance to hurt him and do him harm. (Second Part, Chapter X, 515–516)

The enchantment of Dulcinea turns out to be no mere lie. It is a powerful expression of Sancho's imagination gaining the discipline that grammar, rhetoric, and logic hold out for it. By parsing out the sense as well as nonsense in his master's approach to his own experience and to the world, Sancho is able to shift his perspective on what is before him and express its meaning through a rhetoric and logic that remained beyond his grasp all through the First Part of the book—indeed, that remained beyond his grasp until Sanson Carrasco challenged him to see that his aspiration to govern an insula would require that Sancho become a liberal artist. Sancho seems to have penetrated what was hidden in his conundrum regarding the enchantment of Dulcinea by accessing something hidden in himself, the first three of the seven traditional liberal arts.

Sancho ends up finding three of the four remaining liberal arts—arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy—at his disposal following an elaborate hoax staged by two more of Sancho's would-be masters, the duke and duchess. If Don Quixote involves Sancho in his inane exploits because he wants to share the largesse of the imaginative world in which he dwells, the duke and duchess simply want to amuse themselves at Sancho's expense. Like Sanson Carrasco, they have read the First Part of Don Quixote's "history," and to amuse themselves, they act as agents to spur on Don Quixote's madness and his squire's gullibility. But what they don't count on is that Sancho, by the time he comes upon their castle, is already a changed and still changing man.

Among their tricks, the duke and duchess choreograph an adventure in which Don Quixote and Sancho Panza must ride the wooden horse Clavileño in order to satisfy the wrath of an enchanter. The aim of the duke's and duchess's trick is to convince Don Quixote and Sancho, who are blindfolded, that Clavileño has flown them into the highest heavens, while they themselves enjoy the amusement afforded by Don Quixote's and Sancho's gullibility as well as by the bruising they sustain when, the horse's belly filled with fireworks, they are thrown literally into the air as the horse's tail is lit on fire.

Sancho's account of what happens on his flight is certainly an act of imagination. But the interesting point here is that his account is not beholden to the orchestration of the duke and duchess. They do not succeed in mastering what his imagination makes of the circumstance into which they have placed him. Maybe more important,

it is not beholden to Don Quixote's stories of knight errantry and the enchantments that hold them together and that played into the enchantment of Dulcinea. What gives shape to Sancho's account, rather, are three of the seven traditional liberal arts, this time arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. As with the influence of the trivium before, these three arts from the quadrivium discipline Sancho's imagination by affording him a perspective that allows him to get one up on his would-be masters. Here is what happens.

Sancho reports that while he was on the back of Clavileño, he felt as though he and Don Quixote were flying through the region of fire. This much Sancho gets from the duke's and duchess's staging and from his master's account of the various regions of the celestial sphere. But then Sancho reports that though his master told him not to move his blindfold to have a look, he did move it. And when he moved his blindfold, he looked down upon the earth, which to him appeared no larger than a mustard seed, with men walking on it who were no larger than hazelnuts (Second Part, Chapter XLI, 725). Undeterred by the duchess' analysis that if the men were the size of hazelnuts and the earth the size of a mustard seed Sancho could not have seen the earth but only the men, Sancho continues, saying that at just the moment he lifted his blindfold, he and his master were passing by the constellation of the Pleiades. Having been a goatherd as a boy, Sancho was filled with a pressing desire to spend a little time with the "nanny goats" that make up that constellation, and so unbeknownst to anyone, not even his master, he dismounted Clavileño and played with the nanny goats, two of which were green, two red, two blue, and one a mix (Second Part, Chapter XLII, 726–727).

Now Don Quixote and Sancho have, of course, never left the ground. And we have no indication whether Sancho stopped shaking long enough to reach up and remove his blindfold! But Sancho's imagination is at play here, and once again its mode of operation is a shift in perspective—two shifts in perspective, actually. The first is one that we saw coming when Sancho got the upper hand on Don Quixote in the enchantment of Dulcinea; there, a reversal in the master-servant relationship was already taking place, though to be sure it was within the context of a servant trying to avoid the wrath of his master. But after the flight on Clavileño, Sancho is ready to embrace the reversal that began when he enchanted Dulcinea. Sancho reports frankly, in front of his master and everyone else, that he has disobeyed Don Quixote. This suggests that Sancho's flight of imagination has made possible not only his becoming his own master, as captured in that seemingly small gesture of lifting his blindfold against the wishes of Don Quixote; it has also made possible his being at home with himself in this newfound role. For in going on with his story about walking away from Clavileño to play with the nanny goats, Sancho is reminding his listeners not only that he has walked away from his master, Don Quixote; he has also walked away from the vehicle of the duke's and duchess's deception. In the latter, we have a foreshadowing of Sancho's autonomy in walking away from the governorship that the duke and duchess bestow; in the former, we have a foreshadowing of Sancho's being the one standing on his own two feet at the end of the novel, even as Don Quixote returns home a broken man (Second Part, Chapter. LXV, 892).

On the face of it, Sancho's second shift in perspective is merely a matter of

distance. He imagines the earth from above and at a great distance, and so the earth and its inhabitants become very small to him, like the nuts and seeds he has surely stooped to pick up and to plant in his farming. His experience with the night sky as a goat herd also finds a place in his imaginings, and this experience too is transformed as a function of distance, with the stars now close and looming large even as the earth and the men that inhabit it are far and very small. But this shift in perspective is not merely a matter of distance. It is predicated on a geometrical insight that grasps the importance of magnitudes and how they may be understood relative to one another. It is predicated on an appreciation for the stars and how they are situated with respect to one another and with respect to the world of men. It is predicated on Sancho's ability to count the "nanny goats" for himself, something he was unable to do earlier in the book, during the scene with the fulling hammers, when he relied on Don Quixote to count the goats in a story he was telling to his master, only to lose the thread of the story as soon as Don Quixote loses count (First Part, Chapter XX, 145–47).

Geometry, astronomy, and arithmetic have afforded Panza a new perspective. Even as he has gained distance from the earth in the vision he achieves imaginatively, so too does he gain distance from human beings and the affairs that before loomed so large to this humble squire. Our preview of this, in his subtle transcendence of the duke's and duchess's machinations, is carried through in Sancho's response to the duke's offer of the governorship on which Sancho has pinned his greatest hopes. Sancho says to the duke,

> After I came down from the sky, and after I looked at the earth from that great height and saw how small it was, the burning desire I had to be a governor cooled a little; where's the greatness in ruling a mustard seed, or the dignity or pride in governing half a dozen men the size of hazel nuts? It seemed to me that this was all there was on the whole earth. If your lordship would be kind enough to give me just a tiny part of the sky, something no bigger than half a league, I'd be happier to take that than the best ínsula in the world. (Second Part, Chapter XLII, 728)

The different possibilities that Sancho Panza now imagines include not only what he wishes to acquire, but the reasons for acquiring it as well. After the duke tells him that he cannot give any part of the sky, but only an ínsula, Panza responds "Well then . . . Let's have the ínsula, and I'll do my best to be so good a governor that in spite of rogues and rascals I'll go to heaven; it isn't greed that makes me want to leave my hut or rise to better things, but a desire I have to try it and see what it tastes like to be a governor" (Second Part, Chapter XLII, 728).

Both in his request for a piece of the sky and in his reasoning for accepting the governorship of the ínsula, Panza's sights and tastes are now for something higher than they had been before, something that had been hidden—and he knows it. Sancho is hungering for something loftier than the earthly goods of power and wealth. And he is hungering for something he has seen, the sky, which now has a different meaning even though it had been right there in front of him all along. The things he thought to be large now look small. The stars that seemed so far away are accessible. He is now able to tell his story without need of his master's counting and without need of the proverbs he has heard from others. This ability to see is acted out in the lifting of his blindfold, which marks independence from his would-be masters. Here

again, as in the enchantment of Dulcinea, the liberal arts have freed him from the limits of his imagination by disciplining and focusing it. They may even have freed him from being the butt of the duke's and duchess's jokes, for Sancho seems to know, as evidenced in what he says to the duke, that even though there is no power or wealth to be had through the ostensibly good graces of the duke—Sancho may as well ask for a piece of the sky—there is nonetheless something meaningful to experience in the governorship that has been his goal throughout the novel.

We could spend a great deal of time on Sancho's successes as governor. Indeed, these successes offer a compelling demonstration of the importance of Sancho's imaginative awakening for his ability to act freely and respectably in his erstwhile coveted position of leadership. But we have more novel than time with which to work and I will conclude Cervantes's case for the traditional liberal arts by mentioning Sancho's subtle turn with respect to music. The first time Sancho has an opportunity to hear a song is very early in his first sally into Don Quixote's world. The narrator remarks then, at our squire's expense, that Sancho "was readier for sleep than for hearing songs" (80). But Cervantes doesn't leave Sancho's relationship to music in this sleepy state. At the end of book, when Don Quixote must give up knight errantry and suggests that he and Sancho become shepherds, Don Quixote catalogues the musical instruments they will hear as part of their pastoral life. This time, Sancho is ready to hear the music. His curiosity is piqued by Don Quixote's account, and he asks specifically after an instrument that he has "never heard . . . or seen" in his life. Sancho is not only ready to hear the music by the end of the book, he is ready to learn something about it (Second Part, Chapter LXVII, 900).

This brief account will have to suffice as Cervantes's case for the liberal arts. What does it mean for our rethinking of them? In a very real way Cervantes has offered us a morality tale for our time. If we allow the liberal arts to be relegated in the popular imagination to the rarefied air of the academy, we may end up no better off than Don Quixote, with his wonderful library full of books but with no way to reconcile the world he inhabits there with the world he encounters outside its walls. Indeed, the violence that Sanson Carrasco mentions as distasteful to the readers of Don Quixote is arguably a product of that failed reconciliation. But if we are confident and unapologetic in the understanding that the liberal arts have a practical importance for individuals and for the nations they populate, precisely because they discipline the human imagination, which is the true source of freedom to innovate, to respond, and to lead, then we may find our time has been well spent in the company of Sancho Panza. The liberal arts may be born out of the ideas that ground disciplines even as they transcend them, but their value far surpasses the disciplines to which they give rise. It is the disciplining that they do, for the learned and the ignorant alike, which constitutes their remarkable value, one that is as practical as it is profound.

Cervantes shows us that it is the disciplined imagination that can successfully forge the link between ideas that are mutually educative. Sancho Panza manages to take the ideas from Don Quixote's books—foundational ideas about what is real and what is not, about the natural world and the transformations possible within it, about the forces that shape our experiences and thwart our efforts, about the divine and the context it gives to the world of men—and find meaning not only in their relations to

one another, but to Sancho and to the world he inhabits and envisions. He does this by grasping the relationship between language and being, between magnitudes and meaning, between counting and what counts, between the heavens and earth, and between our ability to hear music and our openness to paths we have yet to pursue. Cervantes seems to be telling us, in no uncertain terms, that the liberal arts have something to offer beyond learnedness, beyond the world of disciplinarians. They touch our lives and give shape to our quest for meaning. They form the sense we have of our place in the world and our relations to others. They make a difference—perhaps especially for those who are illiterate and therefore hungry to find meaning that takes them beyond their inherited lot.

This disciplining of the human imagination is certainly not incompatible with the good work being done by STEM educators. But if STEM education continues to be regarded as synonymous with job training and treated accordingly, there can be little room for the imagination to be cultivated by letting it reach across disciplines, into the depths of the ideas that ground them. If Cervantes's book is unwieldy and difficult in part because it is so long and so filled with seemingly unrelated elements—novels within novels, apocryphal chapters within a book whose author is from a nation of liars—it is also long because the transformation of Sancho Panza through the liberal arts takes time. Cervantes gives witness to the limits of Panza's imagination and then disciplines it before our eyes in the context of the seven traditional liberal arts. Whether Cervantes has enchanted us like the magicians who plague Sancho's master we cannot tell. Can Cervantes's case for the liberal arts, if there is one, be taken seriously if its key witness is a comic figure? Does it matter that even after Sancho's transformation into a credible governor, he is still very much himself, spouting too many proverbs to the irritation of his master, worrying too much about fame as a substitute for wealth and power, getting distracted by what he can't see in front of him? Or is it enough that this illiterate peasant has moments in which he is more than himself because his imagination reaches its heights in the same moments that it is most disciplined? I'm sure I don't know. But I do know that we could do worse than spend our time rethinking the liberal arts in the company of the Sancho Panzas of the world, those hungry enough to meet ideas with their imaginations and to live differently in the world because of it. The practical case for the liberal arts is in no way a capitulation to the impoverished version of education as a mere means to competition within a global economy. It is, rather, an expression of the power of the liberal arts to transform our experience in ways that change us and the world we end up inhabiting. We shouldn't lose sight of this, for our students or for ourselves, whenever we take the time to rethink the liberal arts. To do so would be a shrinking of the imagination the world certainly cannot afford.

Notes

1. After Sancho describes his experience with the nanny goats in the adventure with Clavileño, Don Quixote whispers "Sancho, just as you want people to believe what you have seen in the sky, I want you to believe what I saw in the Cave of Montesinos. And that is all I have to say" (Second Part, Chapter XLI, 727).

2. See, for example, First Part, Chapter X, 71, 73, 74; Chapter XXI, 263; Second part, Chapter XXXVI, 698; Chapter XLIII, 735.

3. We do know he was a goatherd and so knows something about the stars, and we know he has experience with arithmetic, though he depends on Don Quixote to count for him. See First Part, Chapter XX, 145–47.

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Who's on First? Order in the Appeal to Achilles

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The liberal arts, those arts considered essential for free people, for those who take part in civic government, have fallen on hard times, likely due to the difficulty of connecting them directly to one's future employment. Rhetoric, the study of persuasive speech, might seem esoteric and useless, best left to experts. Why waste time on such things? In the *Iliad*, we see the disaster that can happen if we don't think on such things. In Book I, Achilles refuses to fight for Agamemnon after he is dishonored. Desiring honor above all else, he is unable to gain it because he won't fight; he has been offended, and has chosen to make his stand on principle. His rage is really a mania, an unbending commitment to his honor. The epic takes a tragic turn when Achilles refuses to return to the battle after the embassy sent by Agamemnon, in Book IX, which sets the stage for the stratagem of Patroclus, his subsequent death at the hands of Hector, and Achilles' own descent into despair. Patroclus has to die in order for Achilles to fight. If he had agreed to fight in book IX, Patroclus might not have died. Thus, the blame for death of Patroclus can be placed squarely at the feet of Achilles. So the story goes.

But perhaps this interpretation is mistaken. The embassy as it occurs, with Odysseus, then Phoenix, then Ajax speaking, is not effective, and only serves to firm up Achilles' resolve. Yet, the embassy does not occur as it was planned. Originally, Phoenix was to speak first. Perhaps the error, and the impetus for the tragic events of the second half of the book, is not Achilles', who is only acting according to his nature, but Odysseus', who is not. Tactful Odysseus thrusts himself forward, and does great damage, as he does in the affair of the Cyclops. His actions make everything worse.

Agamemnon in Book IX is a broken man, having had his army beaten back by the Trojans. His best men are injured, and doom is close at hand. He finally admits his error, and gives a list of priceless treasures that he would give to Achilles, if only he will return to the fight. "All this—I would extend to him if he will end his anger. Let him submit to me! Only the god of death is so relentless" (*Iliad* IX.188–190 [IX.158–161]).[1] Nestor agrees, and proposes that they send a group of men to relay the message to Achilles.

"Quick, whomever my eye will light on in review, the mission's theirs" (IX.199 [IX.167]). It appears that Nestor is randomly choosing people, but that cannot be the case, since he gives reasons for the people he chooses. "And old Phoenix first—Zeus loves the man, so let him lead the way" (IX.200 [IX.168]). Phoenix is to be first, perhaps not merely because Zeus loves him, but because Achilles loves him. He is specifically told to lead the way.

Note from the text: Phoenix is to go first, ἠγέομαι, which according to Liddell and Scott *means* "go before, lead the way." He isn't just to go, he is to lead. "Then giant Ajax," for whom no reason is given, and finally "tactful royal Odysseus," who, it seems, will be the closer, the one to seal the deal. In line IX:180 of the Greek text, Nestor looks especially at Odysseus when commanding that Achilles be persuaded, but this cannot mean that he is to go first, given the earlier instruction to Phoenix. Rather I think it is that Odysseus is to close the deal, to make sure that it all gets accomplished. He is described as "tactful," and this is the reason he is chosen, to see the proper way to proceed, and to make the deal happen after the others have spoken. He is also "royal," and that will appeal to Achilles, as king comes to visit king.

In IX:192 of the Greek text, however, we see Odysseus leading the way, using the same verb ἠγέομαι as applied to Phoenix before. Something is wrong. Even the verbs are in the dual number, even though there are three people, as if Phoenix has been forgotten, and only Ajax and Odysseus are going to visit Achilles. Perhaps this is an error by Homer, as Bernard Knox argues (22), an artifact of the dawn of writing, or perhaps Homer is not "nodding," but rather subtly pointing out that Phoenix has been forgotten. It is odd that the verbs could be left dual by mistake, and not fixed. Presume, for the sake of argument, that the text is correct, and that Homer knows what he is doing. It could be to point out that Phoenix, who was to open the embassy, has been completely shunted aside as an afterthought, by the arrogance of Odysseus. It's as if he's not even there.

Achilles welcomes them graciously, gives them wine, and then in line 267 of Fagles' translation, IX:224 in the Greek: "Ajax nodded to Phoenix. Odysseus caught the signal, filled his cup, and lifted it toward Achilles." See that Ajax wants Phoenix to do it, but Odysseus jumps the gun. "νεῦσ' Αἴας Φοίνικι· νόησε δὲ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,": Ajax nods to Phoenix, but Odysseus takes notice. He begins to talk, interrupting Phoenix before he can begin. The "δὲ" is adversative, presenting a contrary or different thought. Phoenix was supposed to talk, but Odysseus did it first. This mistake is crucial. Elizabeth Minchin notices this interruption, and says "By this device Homer, with extraordinary economy, displays Odysseus' characteristic opportunism" (234). This is true, but it is also a blunder by Odysseus, probably more severe than bragging to the Cyclops.

Odysseus talks first. First, he toasts Achilles, comparing the feast they are offered with Agamemnon's, which, given Achilles' state of mind, is probably a regrettable beginning. The first thing thus brought to mind is the man with whom Achilles has the quarrel. Perhaps the mention of Agamemnon should have waited until he was softened up, or even have been omitted altogether? Odysseus follows up the greeting with a recounting of the disaster facing the Achaeans. If Achilles doesn't fight, says Odysseus, then the Trojans will likely rout the Achaeans, burn their ships, and "it will be our fate to die in Troy, far from the stallion-land of Argos" (IX.297 [IX.245–46]). The first selling-point is the doom of the Achaeans, yet how will this be convincing? Achilles himself prays for their deaths in book I, asking his mother to "persuade [Zeus], somehow, to help the Trojan cause, to pin the Achaeans back against their ships, trap them round the bay and mow them down. So all can reap the benefits of their king—so even the mighty son of Atreides can see how mad he was to disgrace Achilles, the best of the Achaeans!" (1.484–490 [I.407–412]). So, the death of the Achaeans is, as they say in software engineering, a feature, not a bug. Achilles has gotten exactly what he wants, and now merely needs to wait for the upcoming slaughter for his prayer to be answered.

But, if Achilles wants to save the Achaeans, which he explicitly didn't, then, says Odysseus, now is the time to act. Victory is a good thing, as is friendship. "'Your Achaean comrades, young and old, will exalt you all the more.' That was your aged father's parting advice. It must have slipped your mind" (IX.312–315 [IX.257–259]). Friendship and victory are good things, as his father must have said to him, but at this point Achilles is not thinking of his father. He is still thinking of his own honor, and has already made clear that he is ready to sacrifice the lives of the other Achaeans in order to achieve his goal. Consider whether Odysseus' speech here, appealing to father and friendship, might have worked better if he had waited for Phoenix's speech recalling Peleus' hospitality to the fugitive, Achilles' childhood, or Ajax's blunt words of a friend calling for love. Then, perhaps, Odysseus might have had a more willing listener.

Odysseus continues by reciting nearly verbatim the list of gifts promised by Agamemnon. Some of the treasures that Agamemnon offers were originally captured by Achilles, so these are not likely to convince, but it is a princely list. Odysseus closes with an appeal to friendship, to the troops that will give glory to Achilles should he fight, and holds out the carrot that he could kill Hector. This final proposal does not go over well.

Achilles answers with an outright rejection. "Will Agamemnon win me over? Not for all the world" (IX.381 [IX.315]). His response is full of the sins of Agamemnon, the arrogance, the contradiction of stealing the wife of a soldier who traveled to Troy to recover a wife. Any honors that Agamemnon may give him are pointless, since death comes for all. He has no desire to battle Hector, he says, and plans to go home. The appeal to friendship only receives the answer that they should "sail home now!" (IX.506 [IX.418]). He declares that he is going to leave the next day. It is hard to see how the appeal could have gone more poorly. By starting with Agamemnon and the gifts, he has reminded Achilles of the cause of his anger. He has poured salt into the wound.

Could it have gone better? Aristotle, in the *Rhetoric*, I.2, speaks of three kinds of persuasion: "The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself" (*Rhetoric* 1356a1–4). Aristotle postdates Homer by a number of centuries, but this framework can help us to understand an alternative mode of persuasion. If the members of the embassy had gone in the order proposed by Nestor, consider how it might have gone.

First, Phoenix would speak, presenting himself as being like a father to Achilles, deputized by Peleus to act in such a way. This would recall to Achilles Phoenix's own good character, known first-hand as the one to take care of him, to clean him up as he made childish messes (*Iliad* IX.595 [IX.490)]. It would also remind Achilles of the character of his own father, Peleus, which would make Odysseus' later appeal to his father's memory more convincing, and perhaps might sway him from his doomed path, as we see it finally does in book XXIV, only too late for Achilles to save Patroclus. The stories of Phoenix's troubled past with his own father would remind Achilles of his own quarrel with Agamemnon, and the tale of Meleager would serve as a warning that Patroclus is in danger.[2] Both would be made more palatable because they came from the man who had raised him, Phoenix. As it is, Phoenix speaks second, after Odysseus' attempt to buy Achilles off, and it doesn't go nearly so well. "It degrades you to curry favor with that man, and I will hate you for it, I who love you" (*Iliad* IX.749 [IX.614–615]). Imagine Achilles well disposed by the character of Phoenix, as indeed he is to some extent, inviting Phoenix to stay the night "in a soft bed," before deciding whether to go home. If he hadn't already been angered by Odysseus' bumbling speech, Phoenix might have won the day.

Then, Ajax would speak, to appeal to the friendship between them: "Achilles, put some human kindness in your heart. Show respect for your own house. . . . Past all other men, all other Achaean comrades, we long to be your closest, dearest friends" (IX.782–785 [IX.640–642]). His speech is effective even in its actual order, as Achilles decides not to leave, but not to fight until the Trojans burn the ships. He won't fight now, since "my heart still heaves with rage whenever I call to mind that arrogance of his [Agamemnon's]" (IX.790 [IX.647–648]). But he does agree to fight, moved either by pity or friendship. Is it possible that this speech would have gone over better if Odysseus had gone last, instead of first? In the order of the book, Ajax causes Achilles to stay and promise to fight once the ships are burned. Without the presumption of Odysseus, he might have been more pliant. Perhaps Achilles would even have been ready to accept a price. When Odysseus finally spoke, if the order suggested by Nestor were followed, Achilles would find an Achilles somewhat mellowed, inclined more to help his comrades. Then, finally, Odysseus could have spoken of Agamemnon, his willingness to have Achilles back, and the princely price he wants to pay. We don't like to think that we would sacrifice principle for money. But, if we are to act out of friendship and pity, the money becomes a nice bonus. In this alternate version of the *Iliad*, Achilles would return to fight, and Patroclus would not need to undertake his doomed expedition against the Trojans.

The inflection point of the *Iliad*, the point where we see that it will necessarily end badly for Achilles, is when he refuses to fight despite the entreaty of his comrades

in book IX. What my analysis shows is that the error, the tragic flaw, is not Achilles'. He is who he is, and is acting according to his character. It is tactful Odysseus who screws up, who has no tact. I do not know the significance of this. Why would Homer show Odysseus to have jumped the gun, to have spoiled the deal? Perhaps he is not the mastermind that he has become in myth. Perhaps, also, the *Odyssey* needs to be read with the understanding that it is a comedy, and Odysseus is the fool, not the hero. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* could be re-read as the story of Odysseus' failures. If he were more attentive to the mode of presentation, to the way in which his appeal was to be made, and less attentive to his own pre-eminence, much trouble could have been avoided. The students working through this core text can see that the details of language, the order of presentation, and the emotional state of the listener must all be considered, and personal considerations of the speaker may need to be set aside. The failure of the embassy to Achilles can show the use of beautiful speech. The students, seeing the use, may even move further and consider beauty for its own sake.

Notes

1. The first numbers refer to Fagles's translation. The numbers in brackets refer to the Greek text.
2. The weeping wife of Meleager, Cleopatra, has the same name as Patroclus, according to Seth Benardete (100).

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Lao Tzu, Wittgenstein, and a Pragmatic Reading of the *Tao Te Ching*

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The attempt to "globalize" teaching of the core texts has been for me, and for many I suspect, challenging. It has no doubt been challenging, in my own case at least, due to certain linguistic, cultural, and historical assumptions and limitations, some of which I have been aware of only faintly. But I believe it has just as much been challenging, again in my own case at least, due to the disciplinary categorizations and their interrelationships, or lack thereof, that form the theme of this conference. What texts belong together based upon time and place and genre, as well as what methods should be used to understand and interpret such texts, has often been taken for granted by me since the time of my own formal education inside a single discipline. And it is the very fact I took them for granted that, I believe, has hampered my ability at times to successfully "go global." This was especially so when I attempted to take on and teach one of the truly global great works, the *Tao Te Ching*.

As a philosophical-religious text of the ancient East it seemed to me obvious that the *Tao* should be interpreted in conjunction with similar texts like the *Analects* or the *Bhagavad Gita*, interpreted in such a way that it remained within the spiritual, metaphysical, epistemological, and other modes of thought embodied in those times and places. But after working with the *Tao* via these assumptions, what I discovered, and what I hope to show in this paper, is that a willingness to juxtapose the *Tao* with texts from an entirely different time, place, genre, and disciplinary setting, has given me a way to understand and teach the *Tao* that I believe I could not have developed otherwise. By seeing the *Tao* in relation to certain parts of the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, and in turn both of these in relation to the uniquely American

philosophical school of pragmatism, the Tao opened up to me as a profoundly "practical" text about doing rather than knowing, or better yet knowing as doing, a text that could play a central role in my own class and for my students only when assumptions about time, place, genre, and discipline are overcome.

Upon first reading the *Tao Te Ching* several years ago, in preparation for including it in my core-text course for the coming semester, I was immediately confronted by the metaphysical tone of the work. References to the Tao or the Way, to being and non-being, to infinity and the eternal, as well as other categories found traditionally in metaphysical works, appeared throughout. So too did the skeptical attitude, also found commonly in metaphysical texts, about the ability of language to render such categories clear. It was this point about language that struck me the most, in fact even more than the often metaphysical sound and content of the Tao, as on some level it is such skepticism that makes many of the most challenging works of philosophy and religion even more challenging. It always seems that the meaning of such texts transcends the language used to convey their meaning, making the reading of such texts, and even more the teaching of them, beyond challenging to the point of frustrating. Given the inadequacy of words to come to grips with the profundity of the thought—clearly one of the reasons some religions have an injunction against representing the divine in any form including the linguistic—adding more words to the words of the text as we all do when we teach can be a recipe for disaster, and it seemed especially so with the *Tao*. If I were to teach this text, and do so as soon as the coming semester, this issue seemed particularly daunting as I was no expert in Chinese language—I didn't know any Chinese at all, in fact—as well as Chinese philosophy and religion. It was then that I was struck by something.

Remembering back to my graduate education, before my area of specialization and therefore disciplinary assumptions had hardened, one of its central themes had been the obsession of twentieth-century philosophy with the relation between metaphysics and language. Heidegger, for one, had maintained that language did some sort of "violence" to Reality, rendering it unknowable. As such, language could not capture a deeper understanding of Reality—just the opposite. Derrida, for another, made famous the claim that there was "nothing outside the text" (Derrida 158) and in turn was made famous by it, which seemed to suggest we could not speak at all of a Reality independent of language. And then there were the Vienna Circle and later Anglo-American logical positivists, both inspired by Wittgenstein's *Tractatus-Logico Philosophicus*, which simply sought to dismiss all metaphysics as a mistake of language based upon a misunderstanding of what made utterance meaningful. Ironically, of all these schools of thought, it was the work both of and in response to this last one, a school of thought fully embracing the disciplines of natural science—a school of thought so dismissive of the metaphysics throughout the *Tao* that it would claim it all to be literally meaningless babble—where I found the most help in coming to grips with the *Tao*.

What if we looked at the text of the *Tao*, as Wittgenstein started to look at all language in his later work (especially mathematical language), not as a vehicle either capable or incapable of communicating a deeper meaning about Reality? What if we looked at the *Tao* as simply a way to point out that linguistic meaning is nothing

more than linguistic use, and hence language is but one type of behavior or practice alongside other types of behavior and practice, with the behavior or practice that is language having no special philosophical role (such as that given it by the definition-obsessed Plato), and one not terribly helpful with that other form of behavior or practice we call living well? There is even interesting textual evidence to suggest an overlapping reading between these two philosophers and their texts, two philosophers and texts separated by thousands of years of history, thousands of miles of geography, worlds of culture and disparate disciplinary treatment.

The *Tao* concludes its collection of aphorisms on number 81, which opens with the typically cryptic "True words aren't eloquent; eloquent words aren't true. Wise men don't need to prove their point; men who need to prove their point aren't wise" (Lao Tzu, 81), Prima facie challenging, maybe undermining, the entire text in its very last passages—are we supposed to think the author of the *Tao* wise or not?—this passage jumped out at me as strikingly similar to Wittgenstein's famous ending of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*:

> My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it). (*Tractatus*, 90)

Pointing towards his later rejection of this very text and what he calls his "grave mistakes" (*Investigations* vi), Wittgenstein seems to be ending the *Tractatus* with something as equally subversive to his text as Lao Tzu's ending is subversive of the *Tao*, equally subversive not just in relation to part of the text but to the entire work that preceded it. In fact, both authors feel the need, on an initial reading at least, to conclude their work with more than subversion. They conclude with paradox, paradox meant to destabilize us in regards to what then becomes a jeopardized text. But, and here was the important moment for me, in both cases, the authors' subversion and paradox does not seem to be beyond relief. Rather, it appears, on further reading, meant to aid clarity, not foster insoluble confusion. Indeed, on such a further, may I say deeper, reading, it appeared to me that neither text may end in subversion or paradox at all if we are willing to adopt a certain view of language. The message here could be that if we adopt a certain view of language, not only the concluding passages but the entirety of each text could be fruitfully read or re-read. If we understand the meaning of language as its use, as simply one form of behavior and not as something standing, or not, in relation either to itself or something "beyond," then it seems the subversive, paradoxical concluding part of the *Tao* and the *Tractatus* might fade away. So too might many of the other seeming subversions and paradoxes found throughout the *Tao* that give it such a "metaphysical feel." It might even be the case that the metaphysics that can cause such difficulty in reading and hence teaching the *Tao* can be grappled with.

Take the last paradoxes found in the *Tao* and the *Tractatus*. In both cases, the authors seem to be telling us that if we have understood the point of their texts, then we have also understood that the texts themselves did not produce that understanding. In the case of Wittgenstein, this is because the text itself is "senseless," and in the case of Lao Tzu it is because the text has not been out to convince us of, or prove to us, any point. Truly, these would be bizarre ways to end their respective texts,

but only if we look at language as a telling and not as a showing, or, to put this in other terms, if we look at language as a vehicle for "knowledge that," not a variety of "knowledge how." If language is a vehicle for "knowledge that," where language allows the propositional expression of beliefs in order to then permit us to attempt to prove those beliefs true or false (the Platonic image of language and its relation to knowledge discussed in his *Theaetetus*), then to end a text filled with language doubtful about meaning and proving truth or falsity would be deeply, logically troubling. If language is a variety of "knowledge how," however, a practice that is and is not connected with an endless set of others practices (a practice more akin to dancing or playing a sport where the point is definitely not about propositional belief, proof, justification, and the like), then there is nothing troubling, logically or otherwise, about concluding with the story that the linguistic practice of the text was there to tell us linguistic practice has a limited or even non-existent role in aiding our philosophical understanding or with life generally.

But this distinction between "knowledge that" and "knowledge how"—between a theoretical knowledge propositionally expressed and a practical knowledge physically embodied and performed—if brought to bear on other seeming paradoxes of the *Tao*, does even more than it does with the last part of either the Tao or the *Tractatus*. A few lines from aphorism 38 form a fair representation of many similar passages, conveying a similar sense of paradox, in the *Tao*:

> When the Tao is lost, there is goodness.
> When goodness is lost, there is morality.
> When morality is lost, there is ritual. (Lao Tzu, 38)

Given that the text has been seeking to go beyond enlightening us about the Tao, and it has even been recommending it, the fact that loss of the Tao yields something that to uninitiated ears sounds equally valuable, namely goodness, leads us to wonder why Lao Tzu is telling us that goodness is the result of loss. How can goodness ever be less than adequate, how can it ever be less than our real goal? And this puzzlement, even tension, becomes greater when we are told in turn that the loss of goodness yields something that again we think we should seek, morality. Morality, in the view of most, an honorific applied to what many strive for but few can fully achieve, is for Lao Tzu twice removed from the genuine ideal of the Tao. It is only when we get to the third remove that we finally find some sympathy with this part of aphorism 38, as ritual carries the negative connotation that goodness and morality do not, but that just brings us back to the initial discomfort of thinking about goodness and morality both being a variety of loss.

And this discomfort lingers, but if we apply the distinction between "knowledge how" and "knowledge that," it doesn't linger for long. Think of the Tao as a practice or variety of knowing how, and goodness, more so morality, as the pretense to a theory or a variety of knowing that, and we can see instantly how the loss Lao Tzu is pointing out makes perfect sense. The recommended behavior of the Tao can be understood as detracted from by talk, and it is just such talk that occupies those seeking to be good, and more so those seeking to be moral. Endless questions about

the meaning of "the good" and "the right," and the self-conscious adherence to each, to "following the rule," takes away from the doing, the practice. This is why we are told in aphorism 17 "The Master doesn't talk, he acts" (Lao Tzu, 17), in aphorism 56 "Those who know don't talk, those who talk don't know" (Lao Tzu, 56), and to jump to the very opening lines of the *Tao Te Ching* in aphorism 1 "The tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name" (Lao Tzu 1). In talk, understood as the aspiration to "knowledge that," understood as the attempt to name, we have something we typically think of as a starting point to most practices, among them behavior in relation to self and others captured under terms like "goodness" and "morality." It is a starting point as it provides the general theory, the rule, then governing specific practice or action. That is why we think of such talk as both necessary and worthwhile, maybe even the centerpiece of behaving well and living well (the Socratic adage that the "unexamined life is not worth living" assumes theoretical reflection on living well is a necessary pre-condition for living well). But if Lao Tzu is correct such talk is neither necessary nor ultimately worthwhile. Or better yet, while talk may play a role for a student learning the *Tao*, a first step on Wittgenstein's ladder so to speak, to be the Taoist Master is to transcend talk. And, bringing us back to the point about language, talk might actually itself simply be just another variety of practice, practice that is about other practice (language as meta-practice) and thus often takes away from or distracts from what is important: the initial practice. Kicking around noises and symbols in an effort to define what is "good" or "right," one variety of practice, not only has an unclear relation with doing what we should, it also occupies our time and hence keeps us from becoming the Taoist Master. It keeps us from doing what we should.

It is here that pragmatism becomes relevant to reading the *Tao*, relevant in two ways. The first is clear in that the distinction between "knowledge how" and "knowledge that" can be seen as capturing what it is to be a pragmatist. Were we to define pragmatism, a school of thought considered by most a product exclusively of nineteenth and twentieth-century America, we could do worse than say simply that it, on some level, undercuts the pretense to "knowledge that"; pushed to the limit, we might even say it denies there is such a thing (for this reason we might want to call pragmatism an anti-philosophy, not a philosophy). Using the "practical" arts as a model of knowing, the doing involved in such mundane activities as laying bricks, hitting forehand volleys, baking strudel, or twirling dance partners, pragmatism is profitably understood as saying this model of knowing, where all those who have ever learned the "how" of such activities simultaneously learned the inadequacy of self-consciously memorized written or spoken instructions for performing the "how," exhausts what is valuable to say about knowing. The obsession with "knowledge that," particularly the Western obsession, can be blamed for the nearly inexhaustible logical eddies, myriad conundrums, endless problems, and countless paradoxes that have been the sum total of much philosophy in the West. However, adopt a pragmatic view of the *Tao* and the Tao, and what might come to light is not only how to read the *Tao,* how to come to grips with its many seeming puzzles, but also how what was a late comer to philosophy in the West was actually with, and at the foundation of, philosophy in the East.

Which brings me to the second way in which pragmatism is relevant to the *Tao*. Much of the later tradition of Taoism takes an entirely different path in reading and interpreting the *Tao* than I am offering here. Indeed, it takes the opposite path, one where it is the metaphysical that is embraced, where the message of the *Tao* is seen to be some deeper secret about Reality and, in fact, where much of Taoist practice becomes a form of ritual. One famous example is the Taoism stemming from the first Celestial Master Zhang Daoling and his revelation of the Tao in 142 C.E. This is the form of Taoism that played an important role in the Tang and Song Dynasties and is still widely practiced in China today. Now, knowing this, we might be led to ask: which interpretation is right? Well, appealing to pragmatism, now not about interpreting the *Tao* but about taking a stand on the act of interpretation itself, I would simply say: neither . . . or both. Why not allow the readers themselves to use the interpretation of the text in whatever form bears for them the most fruit? Let the readers be pragmatic about the pragmatism, which of course may seem paradoxical in itself, but that would be the topic of another paper . . . and is the topic of many a student essay in my class, bringing me now full circle as this gives some sense of how I not only ended my unease about teaching this great text by transcending my own disciplinary and other assumptions, but how I brought it fully to the center of my core-texts syllabus.

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Reading Nonsequentially: Teaching Great Books in Conversation with One Another

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The theme of ACTC's nineteenth annual conference was "Rethinking the Liberal Arts through Core Texts." Some of the meeting's most interesting papers explored the western tradition of linking narratives across time and disciplines, or analyzed how texts speak to one another differently, depending on the audience addressed. This paper considers a different type of re-thinking the liberal arts. Rather than discussing a single book to appreciate a core question, or comparing two core works, we will see what happens when books are read together, what issues emerge from such a side-by-side reading. I will argue that by reading two or more works together (in this case, *Huckleberry Finn* and *Great Expectations*), faculty can build active dialogue into students' learning experience from the very outset of their college careers. Such dialogic reading not only makes texts more interesting, but deepens students' understanding of them, and, as an added benefit, demonstrates how the questions and problems that emerge from a careful reading of one work can be answered—or perhaps made more complicated and interesting in unexpected ways—by reading a different work at the same time. In short, rather than presenting startling new interpretations of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, this essay proceeds with a new way to approach them, and by extension other, perhaps similar, works in the classroom.

Perhaps this experiment requires some explanation. In most literature and history classes, faculty assign readings, both primary and secondary works, serially. Students read a book or article, master its content and/or working hypothesis, and move to the next piece. Although it is not unusual to assign two articles to compare and contrast

in a given session, we expect our students to use their memories to refer back to an earlier reading when discussing a new text. In other words, a student or I might say something along the lines of, 'Two classes ago, author x stated the following, which is different from what I am encountering today in author y." Certainly there is a place for this; it is what most of us do in our professional lives. It is worth considering, however, that students in certain kinds of classes might be able to make better, more interesting comparisons if they read several texts at the same time, without being expected or even permitted to read ahead, and thus without knowing how these texts will end. This also makes it easier for faculty to teach students about concepts like intertextuality, shared themes, and new historicism in a straightforward manner.

In Spring Semester, 2013, I developed this approach in an experimental new course, a First-Year Seminar entitled, "Heroes and Heroism in Western Culture." In brief, the course presented the students with a rather large number of texts, some canonical, some drawn from popular culture, some written, some aural, some visual. I assigned these texts in pairs or in groups rather than individually—providing students with the opportunity to compare the texts and put them into conversation. One of the central influences for this was Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans.* In this collection, Plutarch paired Greek and Roman biographies so that the reader could use each to better understand the other.

"Heroes" met three days a week for 50 minutes per session. The Monday/Wednesday texts were thematically linked. Students discussed *Huckleberry Finn* and *Great Expectations* every Friday. I chose these two novels to give students the experience of reading long works over an extended period and serial works in a serial fashion. The design was meant to provide them a chance to "live with" the books and their characters, follow their lives, and remain ignorant of how their tales would turn out.

I will begin by briefly sketching what students read on Mondays and Wednesdays to better illustrate how the Twain/Dickens pairing worked. For the first few weeks, students read Stanley Lombardo's abridged translations of the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*. These epics presented students with foundational stories, showing them how the idea of a "classical world" is in many ways a creation of later generations. In addition, they demonstrate radically different notions of heroism centering on glory and duty. The class then turned to *Perceval*, Bernard Malamud's *The Natural*, and Terry Gilliam's film, *The Fisher King*. If the theme of the course's first section was glory versus duty, this section's theme encompassed the grail's many meanings, the question of happy endings (or lack thereof), and the question of multiple uses of the same basic tale. The course's third section examined the cowboy, an American archetype. Here students began to think more deeply about the construction of gender, cowboys as "knights of the plains," justice, and the ways that a single cultural icon (the cowboy) can function in many different ways. To accomplish this, they read short stories, listened to radio westerns written for adults (*Gunsmoke* and *Fort Laramie*) and viewed a film (*Stagecoach*). Following this theme, the course turned to the super hero in American culture. Different interpretations of *Batman*, coupled with *Watchmen* introduced questions of Deontology and Utilitarianism, and showed the dark, morally problematic aspects of so-called super heroes.

As students worked through all of the above, they read weekly installments of *Great Expectations* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The questions and approaches that students developed on Mondays and Wednesdays encouraged students to develop an ever-more sophisticated reading of Twain and Dickens. These two texts paired well. They are rough contemporaries. Dickens published *Great Expectations* from 1860 to 1861. Twain first published *Huckleberry Finn* in the U.S. in 1885. *Great Expectations*, like all of Dickens's novels, was serialized, while a publisher tried to convince Twain to publish serially (to no avail). The books start in similar ways. Readers encounter Pip and Huck, two young boys of dubious moral stature. Each book tells the story of a boy's moral development (a Bildungsroman) while addressing similar themes. Students focused on these similarities. At the tales' outsets students thought about who these boys were and what their environments were like. The class considered the kinds of homes and towns in which they lived. Schooling (and what "school" meant in the context of each novel) was a key issue for the boys. Pip and Huck both attended school to be different from their fathers (real or surrogate). They each, especially at the books' outsets, had to decide whether they were civilized, and what civilizing meant to them. Each had a mentor to whom he felt a kind of intellectual and class or racial superiority. Nevertheless, each mentor taught the boy significant moral lessons. In addition, each boy had a significant woman (or girl) in his life.

As the class moved to the middles of the books, students began to ask serious moral questions. Both boys broke the law. Students thought about laws versus higher morality. Indeed, over the course of each work, the students could see the protagonists' views of law and justice change. Students wrestled with questions of "malignant" characters encountered, pseudo or false nobility (Mrs. Pocket and Bentley Drummle in Dickens; the King and the Duke in Twain). Students saw and had the opportunity to think about the role that Shakespearean drama had in the books' respective societies. Each work had significant stretches about rivers, and, indeed, rivers played major roles in the stories' developments.

Before thinking about the novels' rivers, though, let us think about the flow of the class; what worked, what did not, and how the experience could be improved. Most students had not read *Great Expectations* before taking this class. This allowed them to theorize about the choices that Pip would make, the moral structure of the characters whom he encountered, and to assess their predictions as the book moved forward. Students enjoyed pitting their own set of expectations against one another and against the twists and turns that the novel would take. This discussion gambit allowed them to exercise their literary imaginations and to think about internal "evidence" in the book for what would or could follow. Students also used the skills that they acquired in reading the works assigned for Mondays and Wednesdays to better analyze the semester-long reading for Friday.

Within the context of a generally successful approach, though, I need to address several issues before re-teaching the course. The first three of these are technical and should be easily fixed. I assigned episodes from two radio dramas to the students, and found out that they lacked the skills necessary to follow a dramatic story that they could hear but not see. The next time I teach this, I will build in a class "listening

session" in which they learn how to follow a radio play. Second, two of the reading assignments were graphic novels. A sizeable minority of the students did not know how to move from one panel to another, or in which order balloons should be read. In the future, I will provide explanatory guides. Third, most students were familiar with *Huckleberry Finn*, which meant that they knew how the book would end. The next time I teach this course, I will substitute a different work to parallel with *Great Expectations*, perhaps Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, serialized in *The Century* in 1894. Indeed, students would be able to read the work in its original context, as Cornell University has made e-texts of *The Century* available. This could be paired with Stanford University's publication of an e-text of the serialized *Great Expectations*.

A more significant issue I encountered was student silence. In subsequent core curriculum courses, I have had students write a series of short response papers requiring them to address issues in the works that they want to discuss, and to choose passages to discuss with their classmates. I will add this set of assignments to the "Heroes" course to help discussion on the quieter days.

In conclusion, let us consider the metaphor of the river. Just as each river meandered to its sea, so did each tale reach its conclusion, as did the semester. Just as Magwitch in Great *Expectations*'s chapter 54 compared life to a river with a murky and uncontrollable tides, so semesters take on their own dynamic.

> "Ay, I s'pose I think so, dear boy. We'd be puzzled to be more quiet and easy-going than we are at present. But—it's a flowing so soft and pleasant through the water, p'raps, as makes me think it—I was a-thinking through my smoke just then, that we can no more see to the bottom of the next few hours than we can see to the bottom of this river what I catches hold of. Nor yet we can't no more hold their tide than I can hold this. And it's run through my fingers and gone, you see!" holding up his dripping hand. (Dickens, Gutenberg Chap. 54)

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Freedom

Reading *Hamlet* with Virgil

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Situating a work of literature within its proper historical context is, of course, very important; it is nearly impossible to think about literature without history, or outside of history. However, modern English studies have become obsessed with the historicization of literary texts. Literary critics and academic journals seem increasingly to view literary works as tools only useful for revealing truths about economic history or the conditions of textual production. To put it in Aristotelian terms, the study of literature is in danger of becoming a subordinate science, useful only insofar as it serves the ends of history—and, indeed, a particular interpretation of history. We have been asked to "rethink" the liberal arts through core texts, and particularly to think about how different disciplines or modes of discourse might be "mutually educative." What I want to do here is posit a different way of thinking about the relationship between literature and history. By tracking and explicating allusions to Virgil's *Aeneid* in Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* I want to illustrate how literary texts can speak not only to historical events, but also to the nature of history itself, both the activity of writing history, and the human experience of living within a chain of political, economic, and social consequences. Essentially, I am trying to reclaim an out-of-fashion approach to literature. My contention is that there are other, potentially more profitable ways of asking the question "What can literature tell us about history?"

I arrived at this reading of *Hamlet* while teaching a third-year course called "Philosophy and Art" as part of St. Thomas University's Great Books program. In that class I was able to discuss Shakespeare's engagement with Virgil because almost all of my students had been through our Great Books program and had read Virgil's *Aeneid* in their first year. Such a pedagogical technique would have fallen flat in a

typical English class, since most modern-day English majors have little experience of Greek and Roman literature. The experience brought home to me again the value of core text programs. Precisely because they tend to situate works within a much broader historical context, core text programs help students recognize that literary texts are not only symptoms of particular cultural moments, but also deliberate engagements with the past and present. More and more scholars seem only to be asking what texts can tell us about their immediate surroundings, but clearly, some texts have broader scopes. Some texts are commentaries on the relationship between the present and the distant past, and some even evidence a kind of self-consciousness about the influence of history on speech, action, and thought.

In this essay, I will demonstrate how prior knowledge of the *Aeneid* deepens and expands our understanding of Shakespeare's most famous tragedy. Specifically, I will show how recognizing allusions to Virgil in *Hamlet* illuminates the text's focus on the Prince of Denmark's political condition, his fate, or his necessary human relationship to history. Robert Miola has identified a wide variety of Virgilian allusions in *Hamlet*, with references to books I, II, IV, and VI. He notes, for example, that Hamlet's ghostly father resembles the ghost of Anchises, as both paternal spirits guide their sons toward their respective destinies (279–83). In Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia, Miola finds echoes of Aeneas' relationship with Dido. Both are, in his words, "doomed love affair[s]" that "assess the cost of destiny in terms excruciatingly personal" (286). While Miola's arguments are convincing, my contention is that Hamlet is particularly concerned with the second book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the one about the fall of Troy.

Shakespeare points to this section of Virgil's epic directly in Act 2, Scene 2 of *Hamlet* when Hamlet calls for the First Player to deliver a speech: "'twas Aeneas' tale to Dido," he says, "and thereabout of it especially where he speaks of Priam's slaughter" (2.2.437–9). The speech is a retelling of a recollection: Aeneas tells the tale to Dido in Carthage; now Hamlet wants the Player to tell it to him in Denmark. At first glance, the sudden appearance of the Troy story here might seem like an interruption in the plot of Shakespeare's tragedy. But upon reflection there are several obvious reasons for Hamlet to request this particular speech.

The most notable reason is its depiction of Hecuba, "The mobled queen" running "barefoot up and down . . . a robe, / About her lank and all o'er-teemèd loins" (493–99). The player tells us that

> if the gods themselves did see her then,
> When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
> In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,
> The instant burst of clamour that she made –
> Unless things mortal move them not at all –
> Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven
> And passion in the gods. (2.2.503–9)

Hecuba is an image of spousal grief. Her sorrow and outrage can be heard in heaven. Hamlet finds in her an image of the kind of grief he thinks his mother, Gertrude, should be feeling. The image of Priam, the good and just king impiously cut down, slaughtered in his home, likewise reminds the prince of Old Hamlet. In Virgil, Aeneas

says the sight of Priam's murder caused his own "father's image" to fill his "pious mind" (2.739). Surely Hamlet experiences something similar here.

The figure of Pyrrhus, however, is more conflicted. On the one hand, Pyrrhus alludes to Claudius, another king-killer. But Pyrrhus is also an aspirational image for Hamlet. Hamlet, after all, wants to kill a king too. There is a part of him that wants to be as savage as Pyrrhus, as violent and unthinking, but he cannot bring himself to do it. While Pyrrhus kills Priam on an altar, Hamlet cannot kill Claudius while he prays. The Pyrrhus image only helps to further differentiate Hamlet from the wrathful Laertes, who seems genuine when he claims that, were he to encounter his father's killer, he would "cut his throat i'th' church" (4.7.102).

Now perhaps the Player's speech could stand on its own. Maybe even without first-hand knowledge of Virgil, a student could sort out why this speech matters to Hamlet at this moment. But the allusions to Book II of Virgil's *Aeneid* do not end here. They carry on after the players leave the stage. However, they are submerged, and much less explicit. And unless we know Virgil's account of the fall of Troy well we are likely to miss them, and miss the play's argument about the human experience of history.

Recall that in the *Aeneid*, immediately after Aeneas witnesses Priam's death, and just before he goes to find his family, he spies Helen and is distracted by murderous thoughts: "Trembling with rage, the strumpet I regard, / Resolv'd to give her guilt the due reward" (2.755–6). But Aeneas is prevented by the appearance of his mother, Venus: "My mother stood reveal'd before my sight / . . . / She held my hand, the destin'd blow to break" (2.773–777). In Shakespeare's play immediately after Hamlet hears the tale of Priam's slaughter, he meets Ophelia and accuses her of being a whore, in the famous nunnery scene:

> I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another. You jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. (3.1.143–7)

Just a couple of scenes later, Hamlet accosts his mother in similar fashion, turning on her much as Aeneas turns on Helen. That is, until his verbal assault is interrupted by the appearance of his father's ghost, who arrives to "whet [Hamlet's] almost blunted purpose" (3.4.103). Thus, both Aeneas and Hamlet are admonished by supernatural parents to turn their attention away from the problems of infidelity and inconstancy and towards their respective political destinies.

Miola argues that the specter of Aeneas in Hamlet is meant to draw a distinction between the purposeful action of the Trojan hero and the "metaphysical confusion and epistemological uncertainty" of Shakespeare's Danish Prince (290). But if we recognize that it is primarily, if not exclusively, the second book of Virgil's *Aeneid* that Shakespeare is referencing, we must acknowledge that in this instance Shakespeare is emphasizing the similarity between Hamlet and Aeneas, not their difference: both the founder of Rome and the Prince of Denmark struggle desperately to overcome a traumatic past. For example, consider that early in Book II, Aeneas is awakened by the ghost of Hector and told to flee the city. Aeneas responds by grabbing his weapons and embarking on a futile suicide mission against the Greeks. He forgets his duty to his family completely. It takes two ghosts, a priest, and a god to convince

Aeneas to finally leave burning Ilium. Hamlet likewise receives instructions from a ghost in the dead of night, and he too struggles to follow orders. Instead of fulfilling his promise to avenge his father, Hamlet sulks, fights with his girlfriend and his mother, puts on plays, kills Polonius, and goes on a pirate adventure.

Heather James in her book *Shakespeare's Troy* consistently reads Shakespearean allusions to the Troy story as "contaminations," radical artistic attempts to undermine the political appropriation of Rome's imperial myth (33). In the case of *Hamlet* though, it does not seem that Shakespeare is actively disrupting the source text. Denmark, betrayed from within and about to be invaded, is like Troy. And like Troy, its central problems are caused by an illicit sexual relationship. Both works end with revenge killings: Hamlet kills Claudius, and Aeneas kills Turnus. More broadly, though, both works are invested in the nature of political fate. They are concerned with the struggle of individuals to assert their wills in the face of powerful political imperatives. In Virgil, politics is pervasive: even Aphrodite, destroyer of civilizations and civility in Homer's account, has been translated into a dutiful agent of the empire. Aeneas sacrifices the desirable Dido for the nondescript (but politically expedient) Lavinia. In doing so, Aeneas arguably learns to subordinate his desire to the Roman imperial project, but he struggles with this lesson all the way to the end. Hamlet also finds his political condition oppressive. He wants Ophelia. He wants to be king. But as Laertes says, "his will is not his own, / For he himself is subject to his birth" (1.3.17–18). That is why, for Hamlet, "Denmark's a prison" (2.2.242).

If we introduce students to Virgil before we teach them Hamlet, they come away with a better understanding of the scope of Shakespeare's tragedy. Moreover, by drawing attention to Hamlet's allusions to the *Aeneid,* both works are illuminated. Read through a Virgilian lens, *Hamlet* is revealed not only as a text about mortality and identity, desire and theatricality, but also as a play about duty or piety. Hamlet is called, just as Aeneas is, to violate some imperatives in order to satisfy others. And *Hamlet* is also a commentary on Virgil; through *Hamlet*, students are prompted to reconsider the *Aeneid*. Juxtaposed to the drama in Denmark, Aeneas' quest takes on a different character: his limitations are more obvious. Though Aeneas has more certain knowledge of his destiny and his obligations than Hamlet does, the Trojan hero still procrastinates, hesitates, and doubts. Hamlet is labeled "inactive" because he wants to verify the testimony of a ghost, but Aeneas is the one who gets waylaid for months in Carthage.

We can read both Aeneas and Hamlet as individuals struggling to overcome their traumatic pasts. Aeneas is defined by his history, and he cannot achieve his destiny until he overcomes that history. It is in Book II of the *Aeneid* that Virgil makes this point most explicitly. Though Hector's spirit, Panthus, and Venus all tell Aeneas to leave Troy behind, Virgil's hero continually gets bogged down fighting battles that have already been lost. Even after escaping the city, Aeneas is drawn back in to search for his wife Creusa. This sense of being tethered or bound to one's birth, one's home, and one's past also permeates *Hamlet*. The Prince of Denmark is haunted, literally and figuratively, by ghosts. In the center of the play, Ophelia returns his "remembrances" (3.1.94), and he restages the death of his father. At the beginning of the play *Hamlet* is prevented from leaving Denmark for Wittenberg; Claudius

eventually does send his nephew to England, but then the Prince returns. Both *Hamlet* and the *Aeneid* show us characters struggling to respond to their pasts, and both texts illustrate how history places limits on human life; but significantly, both texts also suggest that history's power over us is not ultimately tyrannical. Though political fate is a powerful force, it is not irresistible.

In this way, Virgil and Shakespeare demonstrate the mistake we make when we imagine literary texts as slavishly speaking only to their particular historical moments. Works of literature, not unlike their human authors, exist in a dynamic relationship to history—both shaped and shaping. So, while works of literature can be useful as pieces of historical evidence, through their own techniques and methods literary texts can also tell us something about the limits and limitations of history. Literature can help us think outside of, around, or through our own history, and it can remind us that it is possible to do so.

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Schiller: Beauty after Beauty

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It seems that certain eras call most insistently for a rethinking of tradition, a new assessment not only of how the past and its legacies bear upon the living present, but, perhaps more important, of what may hold promise for the future. This is especially apparent in the times following a trauma, marked as these are by a sense of the incapacity to live securely in accordance with the foregone ways and means. Whether it is Greek culture in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian upheaval or the blasted society of Europe after the great war, one often finds reconfiguration at work amid the ruins, a new formatting of what will be capable of being thought, and indeed a new horizon of capability altogether. Our own era is perhaps defined by a great many indistinct but no less profound disturbances of our equilibrium. This may help explain why we are now living through a peculiar intensification of this dynamic of reassessment: not only are we called by today's rapid changes to constantly reconsider our conception of the world and our place in it, but, somewhat paradoxically, we also find that thought itself seems to suffer from an instability that calls its own powers into doubt. This is obviously less apparent in the technologically-oriented realms of discourse and knowledge, and more evident in what we usually term the humanistic discourses, particularly those that aim toward contributing to a quite different kind of vision. We are told that the era of grand narratives is over, yet we find that we cannot evade an uncanny necessity of making meaning out of a world that nevertheless seems to slip from our grasp. New forms of nihilism or rehashed fundamentalisms cannot supply the resources for the understanding required, yet our storied discursive traditions have so often proven to have feet of clay that the temptation to find either very firm ground or no ground at all can be surprisingly strong. That is why to rethink the liberal arts tradition, as this conference theme asks us to do, is to commit ourselves

to a certain encounter of thought in the face of shifting uncertainties. It is not only to assume the task of evaluating the use of our intellectual inheritance today, but also to espy, braving the hazards of speculation, how these might be able to shape the culture yet to come. In doing so, we gamble that some degree of theoretical insight is to be found, and that a vision of our past's relation to our future is indeed thinkable. Perhaps it is ultimately to have a kind of faith that traditional texts—discourses that by all rights should have been sucked dry of significance—are and will remain yet vital. In the following, I would like to argue for how one of these texts, Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man,* may yet have a future not only in the canon of great works about art, but, more important, as a fundamental part of our most progressive thinking about what art is and what it can mean for us. More particularly, I wish to point to how an incisive consideration of his conception of beauty in that text opens up possibilities for a consideration of how artworks relate to our experience of a world, possibilities that would otherwise seem to remain closed by much of the current discourse on the matter. Perhaps it is true that we are called to reconsider our past in order to better discover our future; if so, we may occasionally find that a thoughtful coalescence of yesterday and tomorrow might offer something much more significant than our present vistas would seem to promise.

As contemporary culture is continually roiled by the spirit of reassessment, many past certainties, some quite sacred, find themselves unceremoniously discarded. In our day, not the least of these has been the vaunted concept of beauty, most particularly the relation of that concept to the work of art. For some time, in fact, the significance of beauty in art has been quite vigorously challenged; so much so that some today would even say that it has no place there at all. Among other reasons for this, such antagonism is no doubt evidence of two centuries of growing recognition of beauty's hidden reverse. Today, it would be difficult to assert that our taste for beauty hasn't served unworthy ends, or that positioning art's mirror so as to reflect the pleasant isn't problematic when the real is so often grotesque. Yet beyond such concerns, one simple observation very clearly contests art's subservience to the concept of the beautiful: art itself seems much broader than any articulation of beauty can encompass. A preponderance of critics who otherwise might hold vastly different views of art from the famously prickly champion of modernist aesthetics, Theodor Adorno, might nevertheless agree when he concludes that "the formal character of the concept of beauty . . . slips away from . . . the full content of the aesthetic" (Adorno 50–51). Yet how many also consider that the problem might rest in the questionable forms that prior concepts of beauty have taken, and not necessarily possibilities inherent in the concept altogether? History has shown that, unlike the concept of color, for example, the actual content comprising various concepts of beauty has varied quite dramatically. In short, must "beauty" mean what is most proximate to our contemporary understanding of it? Affirming this effectively denies the possibility of rethinking the meaning of beauty, a renunciation that only appears plausible if past or present formal articulations of that concept cannot be shown to be separable from a core of more fundamental significance. To test this possibility, one would need to attend to the manner in which concepts of beauty are formed, supported, and maintained within the various discourses in which they are embedded. This would allow

us to ascertain if such a core indeed exists. But where to begin? The contexts of the concept of beauty are as forbiddingly complex as the temptation to simply abandon beauty as a paradigm for art is powerful.

I suggest that the foundational texts of early aesthetics often present a worthwhile inroad for coming to terms with the ongoing discourse about beauty, primarily because their unapologetic reliance on that very concept makes the contexts in which they deploy it stand out all the more clearly, for good or for ill. One of the more interesting of these is the work of Friedrich Schiller, particularly what he argues in his *Kallias* letters and in his renowned *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Of course, because Schiller very unfashionably grounds art in the experience of beauty, it is not surprising that his theory appears as not much more than a historical artifact to those for whom the creation of art is always an opening of future possibilities. Yet we also see in his work a place where an interrogation of the concept of beauty seems to open up thinking not only about beauty itself, but also about the relation of aesthetic experience to the existential position of the human being. For that reason, it is better for us—and for all those vitally interested in art—to refrain from immediately consigning Schiller's theory to the merely historical, but rather to seek to disengage it from that which is historically defunct so as to make better use of what remains living and productive.

In what follows, I will sketch a broad characterization of Schiller's position on artistic beauty, concentrating on the later *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, with the intention of bringing what appear to be the primary determining factors of his theory into higher relief. My goal in doing so, however, is neither to explicate Schiller in order to defend this conception against today's critiques, nor to present a developed view of either his position or the means by which he develops it. Rather, I'd simply like to call attention to particular aspects of his theory so as to make a case for opening the field for thinking of different possibilities through a re-centering of his vision. In short, this requires winnowing Schiller, as it were: separating what is unique in his theory from the Kantian framework used for its articulation. The feasibility and value of disengaging Schiller's paradigm of beauty from a Kantian metaphysical position is certainly worth consideration if, as I argue, it opens up the chance of thinking about beauty quite differently than some formalistic paradigms might suggest. It may also point toward breaking the impasse of trying to deal with the impossibility of jettisoning beauty from the thinking of art. Notwithstanding what is perhaps our unease with the concept, we cannot seem to bring ourselves to consider art without it. There may be a different reason for that than what we would expect.

Many are at least familiar with Schiller's conception of the cultural and political role of aesthetic experience. As Plato and so many others argue, he claims that the experience of art can accustom human beings to the virtues of a proper civic life, and indeed shape the character in that regard extremely effectively. But the key to that claim is Schiller's conception of beauty, for the essence of aesthetic experience for him is grounded in that concept. Yet because his framing is also within the lineage of Kant, Schiller is somewhat hobbled by the consequences of Kant's vision of the relation between nature and reason, one which pulls his conception of beauty away from what seems to be its essential claims. As a consequence of this fact, our first

step in extricating Schiller's conception of beauty from its Kantian scaffolding will be to delineate that frame so as to be able to more effectively remove it.

One can readily see how Kant's differentiation between the "Law of Nature" and the "Law of Freedom" in works such as the *Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals* is determinative for a certain part of Schiller's thinking about beauty. Recall that Kant's moral philosophy is built upon the assumption of two equally rational, yet phenomenally differing laws. The law of nature refers to the regularity of the system in which the world of appearances comes to appear, the world as it is or as it appears to be. We discover this law through rationally directed empirical study. Corresponding to this, Kant also posits a moral law derivable from reason: the normative system of the world as it should be. This we discover through ethical reasoning, exemplified in Kant's well-known categorical imperative where we ask ourselves if we can will that the maxim of a particular action—say, telling a lie—be universal, i.e., always and everywhere in effect. Key to this schema is the relative equality of both laws: while both are rational, and thus essentially universal, one orders things as they are while the other orders how things ought to be. In the "kingdom of ends," Kant sees an eventual "resolution" of this dichotomy, yet it is one that no human being, straddling the natural and rational realms, can ever be expected actually to experience. Because human beings partake in both worlds, as phenomenal appearance and as rational being, they are susceptible to both forms of determination, and are indeed always in a tension between them. But because for Kant the essence of the human will is to be determined by rational moral law, he defines freedom only in terms of the will's determination by that law. This definition claims that we are most properly human when we require of ourselves such a determination and live in accordance with the law of reason.

Schiller maintains significant parts of this schema, yet ultimately differs from Kant in his own understanding of freedom. As he says in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, "whenever I speak of freedom I do not mean the sort which necessarily attaches to Man in his capacity as intelligent being . . . but the sort which is based upon his composite nature" (97). The key term is "composite." That is to say that if Kant presents freedom as determination by rational moral law alone, Schiller tends to focus on the possibility of a humanity in which both the law of freedom and the law of nature receive their due—which is to say that neither one exclusively determines the human being, that the human being is not a fully determined entity, but that the human being remains "freely" suspended between them.

Schiller sees that, for all its vaunted culture, his own era lacks the essential human characteristics necessary for genuine political freedom. It is important to pay attention to the fact that Schiller especially mistrusts the kind of reason that leads to a rationalization of the so-called "natural" aims of the human being. He sees this as a sophistical justification for sensuous materialism. But unlike Kant, he does not see an unproblematic way out of this situation in the pure rational autonomy of the moral subject. That leads him to the necessity of thinking not only of a passage between nature and reason, but of a middle position of the proper kind: one in which a genuine freedom from determination by either is effected, not one in which the passage into rationality eventuates in a formalistic rationalism. This is the place in which beauty

enters the picture. For Schiller, not only does beauty "exist" in an intermediate space between nature and rational form, the experience of it accustoms the human being to remove himself from the dangerous exclusive determination of either nature or reason.

Thus for Schiller the experience of beauty is a manner in which the human being is not only in the proper condition for political life, resolving the one-sidedness of the realms of freedom and necessity, reason and sensuality, but indeed in the proper condition for the appearance of a human world altogether. As he says:

> So long as Man in his first physical condition accepts the world of sense merely passively, merely perceives, he is still completely identified with it, and just because he himself is simply world, there is no world yet for him. Not until he sets it outside himself or contemplates it, in his aesthetic status, does his personality become distinct from it, and a world appears to him because he has ceased to identify himself with it. (*Aesthetic Education* 119)

This realization happens in stages. Earlier, in his *Kallias* letters, Schiller defined beauty as "freedom in appearance" (152), a conception which necessarily rests on a strict delimitation between the realm of nature and the realm of (rational) freedom. There, he claimed that an object appears beautiful to us if it can appear to owe its form to its own inner determination. But because nothing in nature is free in this way—only human beings can give themselves form from out of their essential nature—it is indeed the simple appearance of this freedom through artistic technique that makes the difference between beauty and non-beauty. So there, the Kantian conception of human freedom as self-determination through reason over against the heteronomy of determination by nature is substantially still the paradigm of thinking such artistic beauty. As Schiller says,

> Just as freedom of the will can only be thought with the help of causal and material determinations of the will, freedom can only be exhibited sensually with the help of technique. In other words: the negative concept of freedom is only conceivable through the positive concept of its opposite, and just as a representation of natural causality is necessary to lead us to a representation of freedom of the will, a representation of technique is necessary to lift us from the realm of appearances to freedom. (*Kallias* 162)

But we must recognize that while Schiller is quite Kantian there, his theory introduces something that exceeds the frame Kant provides. Rather than simply affirming beauty as appearance to be emblematic of a specifically Kantian conception of freedom, he emphasizes the way in which the artistically beautiful object also seems to suspend the determination of both Nature and Form. Effectively, he makes beauty a reminder of humanity's possible freedom from both laws. As we will see, this is placed particularly in the context of political freedom.

In these earlier *Kallias* letters, Schiller clearly evidences his political concerns. Nevertheless, his focus is primarily on working out the aesthetic consequences of the idea of freedom in appearance. In *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, however, we see that his care is more broadly diffused over the entire field in which beauty can be thought of as significant. This means that he can address political life within the context of speaking of a means of cultural education, and yet still make claims about

what would seemingly be more closely related to the sphere of aesthetics. It is not surprising, then, that although his paradigm of beauty as freedom in appearance is more or less transported into this new, much broader context, it undergoes a number of modifications so as to better adapt it to its fuller sphere.

The most important of these modifications is that instead of being simply an appearance that indicates a possible human state, beauty is now thought of as both an object and a form of human comportment. "It is then certainly form, because we contemplate it; but at the same time life, because we feel it" (*Aesthetic Education* 122). It is indeed a "state of our personality" (122). Thus, Schiller is calling attention to the fact that the beauty of the object is both "in" the thing itself as well as "in" us. No longer, as was the case in the *Kallias* letters, do we see beauty as primarily a sign; rather, here we see that Schiller intends it to be understood as kind of situated-ness, perhaps even the normal one, of full humanity.

Furthermore, if Schiller had previously also defined beauty as freedom in appearance, he now reconfigures this definition and casts appearance in the form of "living shape" (*Aesthetic Education* 76), a kind of transposition of the elements of temporal nature and eternal reason:

> The sense impulse requires variation, requires time to have a content; the form impulse requires the extinction of time, and no variation. Therefore, the impulse in which both are combined, this play impulse would aim at the extinction of time in time and the reconciliation of becoming with absolute being, of variation with identity (74). The object of the sense impulse . . . may be called life. . . . The object of the form impulse . . . may be called shape. . . . The object of the play impulse, conceived in a general notion, can therefore be called living shape, a concept which serves to denote all aesthetic qualities of phenomena and—in a word—what we call Beauty in the widest sense of the term. (76)

Without the aesthetic, "world" is threatened even in an apparent age of reason. The key term here is indeed "aesthetic"; in this way, Schiller indicates that world, properly speaking, is a function of the kind of distance from determination—this play of beauty—that the aesthetic bearing makes possible. To come into oneself wholly as a human being, this "playful" suspension between sense and reason is necessary, because only in this way will the subject be in a position of "determinability," a state of freedom prior to any self-chosen determination.

The significance of this for Schiller's political thinking is clear: the experience of beauty as play is a sine qua non for genuine freedom. But, more germane to our own perspective, it also points to something essentially overlooked if we reduce Schiller's view to our own usual readings of the meaning of beauty: rather than being a paradigmatic accommodation of sense to reason, we should see that this conception of beauty presents instead a deeper model of the manner in which a human being takes a stance in and toward a world. That this condition also seemingly evinces (at least for Schiller) that what Kant was required to claim was un-provable—that human freedom exists—is a boon for a style of political thinking that would see, beyond both natural man and merely ethical man, the possibility of a real social man, a participant in the kind of organic unity of individualistic society and the communal state that hitherto had been but a dream. And it is in this conception of an organic

state—that is to say, a state of an unforced harmony of diversities—that we should finally understand Schiller's famous characterization of the experience of beauty as a kind of "play." For Schiller, "play" means nothing other than a mutable suspension between competing determinations. If in play, in such a desirably "natural" political form, we see necessity and freedom resolve into one another, we have yet another manner of thinking of how beauty—as this play—can have a politically educative purpose. Human beings need no longer choose, as Schiller claims is done in his contemporary culture bound by the strict natural/moral separation, between the "lawless impulses" of the lower classes and the civilized classes' "still more repugnant spectacle of indolence and . . . depravity of character which is all the more shocking since culture itself is the source of it" (*Aesthetic Education*, 35–37).

This more fundamental stratum of Schiller's aesthetics, while not exactly secreted away, is much less visible if we attend only to the surface-effect of the nature or sense vs. reason juxtaposition that he inherits from Kant. His conception of beauty, as both a characteristic of things and an experiential mode of human comportment that makes the experience of world possible, certainly allows for a reconsideration of the formal concept of beauty. The manner in which Schiller conceives beauty as a kind of positioning that puts the human face-to-face with world allows us to think of beauty more in terms of the conditions under which meaning happens, and less in simple terms of an interplay between the sensual and the intellectual.

Of course, this manner of thinking about beauty can and does in fact also encompass the formal concept based on the sense/intellect dichotomy. But it is important to recognize that it is not limited by that formality. An example may make this clearer. If Schiller can famously describe the experience of the beauty of the Juno Ludovisi in the *Aesthetic Education* as feeling oneself at the highest rest and in the highest degree of movement because of the dialectic between sensual attraction and rational distancing in the work (81), this is because of the manner in which, despite his apparently Kantian frame of reference, the twin determinants of sense and reason are resolved. But the kinaesthetic metaphor is indicative of something more. Reference to the highest (*höchste*) levels of rest and movement should be seen as a dialectical articulation of pure place, and thus a kind of prior situated-ness. The experience of freedom must precede the opening of such a genuinely human world.

There would be much more to be articulated to begin to sketch such a conception of beauty; my goal here is to simply indicate the grounds for its possibility. Yet that very possibility calls any wholesale rejection of Schiller's aesthetic theory into question. If the concept of beauty he articulates has within it a more fundamental structure that indicates less a suspension between sense and reason but rather a "free" or "playful" stance toward world, the concept of beauty might not be limited in the ways suspected by those who have feared that beauty in art is a screen for the underbelly of human life and culture. Rather, it may open out into a broader vision of what happens in art in those circumstances when its material and ideational elements align in that unusual constellation that perhaps should be called the beautiful.

And while this expanded concept of beauty might not need to be feared, that is not to say that the experience of beauty it describes, "playful" or not, might not also be fearsome in a quite other way. We well know that for the ancients, the appearance

of a god—however this may come to pass, in art or otherwise—is both beautiful and terrifying. What the ancients sought to capture in the word deinos might also be seen as the seizure of the human being by the call for an explicit recognition of world and the order thereof, one part of which is the condition of mortality and the challenge it presents to meaning. Such an understanding of beauty exceeds the parameters set by expectations of harmony and pleasantness, and indeed may more closely align with what Adorno himself deemed the "aesthetical." If by art, we mean the practice through which the human being comes to reflect a world that only appears through his or her own eyes, we mean by it as well a concatenation of world into a metonym that also comes to stand before us as such. The correlation of that metonym with our own existential position toward our world, in some or many of its various articulations, may correspond to something of the determinability that Schiller sees in the experience of beauty. If with beauty we encounter the advent of the terrifying fear of non-existence, we perhaps also gain with it the chance of a tenuous—but freely-exercised and indeed "playful"—bulwark against that very oblivion. These reflections are fundamental to the aims of the liberal arts and sciences. If Schiller's theory of beauty opens the possibility of better thinking along those lines, it remains vital even today.

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Glaucon's and Satan's Proposals

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"What then hath Athens in common with Jerusalem?" Tertullian asked rhetorically, around 200 CE (45). One response, thanks to Hobbes and Spinoza, has been the isolation of Biblical science from philosophy. Leo Strauss reinvigorated the question ("Jerusalem and Athens") by rejecting the premises of Biblical science and the thought of his contemporaries while sustaining the question. Strauss claims there are many differences between Athens and Jerusalem, the fundamental one being the division between reason and revelation. This paper questions that division by exploring Plato's *Republic* and the most philosophic text in the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Job, with respect to one of their most straightforward but unnoticed commonalities. It indicates how a combined reading of these two core texts from two different cultures normally studied in two different disciplines can help to expose more hidden strands in the two texts.

In the *Republic*, Glaucon argues that Socrates can prove that the just life is preferable to the unjust life only if the just man is subjected to a horrible fate while the unjust man prospers and yet the just man still prefers to be just. The horrible fate has two main components. First, everyone will believe that he is unjust: "Doing no injustice, let him have the greatest reputation for injustice" (Plato 39; 361c). Secondly, the just man will suffer terribly: "whipped . . . racked . . . bound . . . both his eyes burned out . . . and . . . crucified" (Plato 39; 361e). The Book of Job begins with a very similar challenge to God by Satan. God had said of Job: "there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil" (*Oxford Annotated Bible*, Job 1.8). Satan says that Job can be proven to be such a man only if all that he has is taken from him (1.11), he suffers terribly (2.5), and yet he remains true to God. While the *Republic* has both Glaucon and Adeimantus

emphasize the importance of reputation, Satan doesn't mention it. However, the bulk of the Book of Job consists of Job's friends attacking his reputation, and this, I think, is part of Satan's torture of Job.[1] It is more easily recognized as such with the *Republic* in mind, but Job himself complains about its loss in detail, for example in chapter 30. After all, one's reputation for justice is a type of possession and therefore it makes sense that Satan would take this part of "all that he has."

The two books then proceed to work on the test. Whereas the *Republic* appears to try to find out what justice is in order to do the test, the Book of Job spends most of its time enacting the test. First, Job's wealth, children, and health are taken. Then Job's friends begin on his character. They start with several explanations for why Job is suffering. They settle, however, on the opinion that Job has been unjust and hence deserves his fate. One young man, Elihu, even says that Job should be suffering more than he is because Job is so blasphemous. So the Book of Job focuses on the first part of Glaucon's test—that the just man be thought to be unjust—while the *Republic* spends most of its time trying to build a just city in order to see what justice is. The idea of studying justice in a city rather than in a man is Socrates' idea. The quiet implication is that the city might then suffer the fate prescribed for the just man by Glaucon; that is, the fate of Job.

Glaucon's proposal faces an apparently insurmountable problem, one that Socrates does not bother to point out. Glaucon requires that everyone believe that the just man is unjust. But if this were really the case, then only God and his angels could know that the test had occurred. No human beings could know that a just man had been tortured to death and hence that in spite of his horrific fate the just man still preferred to be just. So, in practice, Glaucon's test is apparently impossible to perform. The Book of Job solves Glaucon's problem. First, it reports the event from the perspective of someone who has observed God, Job, Satan and Job's friends, or at least from the perspective of someone who has heard what happened. Second, it keeps Job's friends in the dark. They do not know what God knows, namely that Job is a blameless and upright man.

But how the Book of Job solves the problem of everyone believing that the just man is unjust is paradoxical. Job's friends are pious men who fear God. God, they say, is all-powerful. Therefore He must have done what has happened to Job. But because God is just, Job must deserve it. Their implicit argument is that everyone can know that an unjust man is unjust because that man has ended up in a horrible condition. Job's friends even say that the deaths of all ten of his children in a tornado were just because they must have done something bad (Job 4.7, 4.19–20, 5.4, 8.4, 8.22, 20.10, 36.13–14). Now one of the unjust things of which Job's friends accuse him is not caring for those who suffer a terrible fate, specifically widows, orphans, and the very poor. Job denies that he has not taken care of the less fortunate. But why should someone alleviate the condition of those who are suffering a terrible fate, if they are being justly punished? To do so would be to challenge the justice of God, and such a challenge could lead on to atheism. Thus, for a modern example, Strauss (*Natural Right* 216) accuses Locke of atheism for advocating the relief of the pain of childbirth, which he alleges was God's punishment in Genesis. Similarly, Glaucon seems oblivious of the legions of people in and around Athens who were

also suffering a terrible fate. By saying that his special test is required, he seems to imply that somehow all the slaves and starving people of Athens deserve their fate (not just some of them). Readers are painfully aware of Glaucon's oblivion because they know that Socrates will suffer a fate similar to that which Glaucon has designed. But Job argues against his friends (and in a sense for all of the wretched of the earth) by saying that he is innocent. For Job's friends, however, Job is blaspheming because the general problem of the suffering of the apparently innocent has a quick and pious answer. Job teaches that there is suffering of the innocent. He teaches the precondition of any action in law: that someone has been harmed without cause.

Insofar as Glaucon's test is seen as the beginning of one of the main political inquiries of the Republic, Job too may be a foundational political inquiry (Hobbes 71; Sacks 135). We find that line of thought more specifically implied in God's description in Job of Leviathan as though Leviathan was a political entity: "Upon earth there is not his like. . . . He is king over all the sons of pride" (Job 41.15, 41.34). Similarly, Job compares himself to a besieged city (19.12) and God compares Job to Leviathan by stating of each of them that there is no one else like him on the earth. Job's comparison of himself to a besieged city anticipates a further linkage between the Book of Job and the *Republic*. Socrates and Glaucon had designed a city in order to find justice "writ large" because it would be easier to see justice in this large structure than in an individual. The movement in the *Republic* from an individual to a city suggests that there may be a similar but contrary movement in Job. Could Job be a city writ small? The third chapter of Lamentations verses 1–18 implies this by its use of a lengthy series of common phrases, quotations or allusions to Job.[2]

The Book of Lamentations vividly describes the destruction of the inhabitants of Jerusalem under siege and eventually their enslavement. It does so directly, for example, in describing Jerusalem after a two-year siege:

> Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger,
> who pined away, stricken by want of the fruits of the field.
> The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children;
> They became their food in the destruction of the daughter of my people.
> (4.9–10)

It also does this by a series of metaphors and similes for Jerusalem drawn from the suffering of individuals (a lonely person, a widow, a daughter). Here are two examples of Lamentations 3's allusions to Job. First, it begins with an analogy to the suffering of a man: "I am the man who has seen affliction." Job begins "There was a man . . ." and the story of that man is about his affliction. A Midrash on Lamentations 3 very succinctly draws the conclusion that Job is referred to by Lamentations 3: "R. Joshua b. Levi said, 'I am the man. I am Job'" (Neusner 250; 79.2.2.B). Secondly, as one of the many allusions to Job, Lamentations 3 echoes Job 7.5, 19.20 and 30.30 in verse 4: "He has made my flesh and my skin waste away, and broken my bones." Job 30.30 says, "My skin turns black and falls from me, and my bones burn with heat."

Socrates' quiet implication was that when the perfectly just city is established, it should also be utterly destroyed to see if it is better to be a just city than an unjust one. Something like this is implied in the second Book of Kings as it describes the

events leading to the destruction of Jerusalem described in Lamentations. King Josiah, of whom the Bible says there has never been a better king before or since, ruled Jerusalem shortly before its fall.[3] Now, the extremely quiet implication of the references to Job in Lamentations 3 runs counter to the rest of Lamentations. It runs counter to all of the Biblical accounts of the fall of Jerusalem. Everyone believes that the fall of Jerusalem was because "All Israel have transgressed God's law from A to Z."[4] While they, like Job's friends, say it was just punishment, the echo of Job in Lamentations 3 implies that Israel was innocent. The Babylonian Talmud is almost explicit that Israel was innocent by referring to Job's three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar) who had accused him of being unjust: "Eliphaz the Themanite, and Bildad the Shuchite, and Zophar the Na'amathite may say of all Israel that they have observed all the Laws" (4). This argues that Job's friends will testify that Israel is innocent, which also implies, like the Midrash on Lamentations, that Job is an allegory of Israel. Job's friends learn at the end of the Book that Job was innocent.

With this in mind, we find hiding in the *Republic* at 568b3[5] in a tiny nugget, a reference to a similar moment in Greek history: the destruction of Troy. The reference is in a discussion of Euripides' play, *The Trojan Women.* In the play, Troy has been destroyed after a ten-year siege. We see this terrible event from the perspective of the defeated women, just as in Lamentations we see things from the perspective of the defeated inhabitants of Jerusalem. Odysseus hurls Hecuba's little grandson to his death from the smoking ruins. The women are enslaved and are to be raped. Hecuba says while embracing her mangled and dead grandchild: "Dear child what an unlucky death was yours! If you had attained manhood and marriage and godlike kingship and been killed defending the city, you would have been blessed, if blessedness lies in any of these things" (125; 1169). In Glaucon's and Adeimantus' city, the play would be banned because "godlike kingship" glorifies tyranny. Adeimantus implies that Troy deserved its fate because it was tyrannical. Socrates appears to agree with him. It would appear that Job in combination with Lamentations 3 would be banned in Adeimantus' city. No one must know that those they thought were unjust were actually just. But this entire segment of the Republic is laden with irony—most obviously because what is banned is described. But also because everyone knows that Plato had consorted with tyrants, and Euripides, who was banished from Athens, had been a friend of Socrates. Moreover Troy had done nothing to warrant the war. Thus in the same quiet way as Lamentations 3, including the use of a subtle allusion, the Republic contemplates the unjust destruction of an innocent city as Socrates had originally implied.

This comparison of Job and the Republic has shown that the two books study the destruction of an innocent and just individual interchangeably with the destruction of an innocent and just city. The pathos of that destruction seeps into the tiniest details of both texts, but those details and the interchangeability of which they are a part are illuminated by reading them together. Job, the preeminent book about providence, is much like the preeminent book on political philosophy, the *Republic*.

Notes

1. Joseph Caryl (272–287) discusses Job's wife as Satan's instrument when she speaks to Job. Thomas Aquinas similarly (246 on Job 16.11) views Satan as the source of Job's friends'

speeches. This is contrary to Robert Gordis: "It seems less than kind of Augustine to describe Job's wife as adiutrix diaboli, 'the assistant of Satan.' Actually, as the Midrash recognizes, her reaction is dictated by her love and loyalty to her husband" (*The Book* 11). But Gordis fails to make sense of Job's response to his wife. Maimonides and his understanding of the Talmud would also seem to disagree with Gordis: "They said in the Talmud as follows: R. Simeon, son of Lakish, says: 'The adversary (satan), evil inclination (yezer ha-ra'), and the angel of death, are one and the same being'" (298; pt. 3, ch. 27).

2. R.B.Y. Scott's annotations on Lamentations 3.1–24 show this in some detail (Oxford Annotated Bible 995). Gordis explains the movement from individual as allegory of the nation and back to nation as allegory of the individual as a common literary feature of the Bible (The Song 170–175).

3. 2 Kings 23.25 also at 2 Chron. 35.20–24. An account of the fall of Jerusalem is briefly at 2 Kings 25 but also is in Jeremiah, 2 Chronicles 36, Lamentations and Ezekiel.

4. Neusner 75; 24.2.3.T quoting Dan 9.11. I have translated the letters alef tav as they appear in this verse as "A to Z" to conform with the sense of the reading of the Midrash. This Midrashic reading is an explanation not only for the fall of Jerusalem but also for the acrostic poetic structure of Lamentations.

5. Adeimantus says: "And he and the other poets [he said] extol tyranny as a condition 'equal to that of a god' [this is the reference to *The Trojan Women*] and add much else too." Socrates adds: "Therefore [I said], because the tragic poets are wise, they pardon us, and all those who have regimes resembling ours, for not admitting them into the regime on the ground that they make hymns to tyranny" (Plato 247; 568b).

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An Introduction to the Quran through a Close Reading of Sūra 12 (Yūsuf)

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Science, poetry, philosophy, and history are widely regarded as separate and even opposed intellectual pursuits, but the rigid opposition implied in this division may not accurately be reflected in many of the great works of the Western and world traditions. While many core texts surely fall into a clearly discernible discipline, others do not fit so neatly into a distinct category. Core texts that belie such easy categorization may even enable or compel us to rethink the way that the liberal arts have traditionally been divided into academic disciplines. A book that presents itself as the book, or the authoritative core text, could thus facilitate a revaluation of the traditional division of the liberal arts. In many ways, scriptures—books that claim to be revealed or holy—present themselves as transcending traditional academic disciplines. The Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Quran are each richly poetic (parts are even written in verse), they recount historical deeds or events, and they claim to contain the deepest knowledge or wisdom available to human beings. Reading scriptures can be an invaluable tool for evaluating critically the traditional division of the liberal arts, and scriptures from other, non-Western sources, can be uniquely valuable in this quest. Accordingly, reading the Quran can offer a unique opportunity for Western students to reassess their conventional understanding of the proper division of the liberal arts.

It should be easy to fit the study of the Quran into the existing curriculum, since there is no lack of interest in learning about Islam. Increasingly, college students in the West have come to be curious about all things Arabic and Islamic; the proliferation of Arabic, Middle East, and Islamic studies programs attests to greater student

demand for understanding of these matters. In the best cases, this curiosity is wedded to an awareness of one's ignorance about Islam, an awareness that second-hand stories about Islam are insufficient for understanding it. Accordingly, such students desire to go directly to the source, but what is the source? But this is an easy question, since every college student recognizes that the ultimate source for Islam, its Core Text, is the Quran. Indeed, "The impartial observer of the Arab Middle East cannot help being struck by the importance of the Koran in daily life and speech" (Butterworth, "Islam as a Civilization" 94). Thus, in order to gain a better understanding of the Arabic and Islamic world, the proper beginning point is the study of the Quran. But then a second question emerges, how does one begin to study the Quran? Undoubtedly, there are many ways to begin to study the Quran.[1] Because reading the Quran can be a challenge for students, some thought should go into choosing the best introduction.

Introducing students to the Quran faces certain difficulties. "Reading the Qur'an," relates Walter H. Wagner, "can be a bewildering experience" (viii). One used to reading only the Bible, for example, will be struck by how different the two texts are. The Quran truly is "terra incognita for the non-Muslim reader," as Alan Mittleman says (Wagner, back cover). Moreover, students can approach the Quran with preconceived notions or misunderstandings, and more often than not these notions or misunderstandings are quite hostile to Islam and the Quran. So one confronts at least the following two impediments when trying to introduce non-Muslim students to the Quran: the Quran is unlike other scriptures they are likely to have read, and some students, even those who may be curious about it, may hold prejudices against the Quran. So a proper introduction to the Quran would seek to avoid tripping over these impediments. It should be stressed that this is only an introduction to the Quran; I am merely offering one possible starting point for a more general inquiry into the Quran or Islam itself. I would like to suggest that a close reading of a particular chapter would avoid both of the pitfalls mentioned above and would thus provide an excellent introduction to the Quran for non-Muslim students. The Quran is divided into 114 such chapters, called Sūras, similar to the division of the Bible into books, although Sūras tend to lack the thematic or chronological unity of a book of the Bible. The Sūras of the Quran are arranged, more or less, in order of decreasing length, with Sūra 1 (The Opening) standing out as an important exception. Typically the name of a Sūra comes from the first word of that chapter or from a distinctive word that occurs later in the chapter, though some titles are more descriptive of the chapter's contents.

The Sūra that I propose to use to introduce students to the Quran is Sūra 12, named Yūsuf, after the hero of the chapter, Yūsuf, or more commonly, Joseph. Beginning with Sūra 12 would decrease some of the bewilderment that reading the Quran tends to engender in non-Muslim students, because Sūra 12 offers an easier transition from other scriptures to the Quran. (This presupposes that if students have read any scriptures, which they may not have, they are likely to have read the Hebrew Bible or New Testament.) Yūsuf is the Sūra of the Quran that is probably most similar in structure and style to something students would have encountered in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. Unlike other Sūras, it is a narrative, and it proceeds

in chronological order. Moreover, it relates a story with which many students may be familiar already, the story of Joseph. Thus, there is already a natural point of comparison for students familiar with Joseph's story. The fact that the story of Joseph occurs in both holy books might incline students to approach the text sympathetically, or at least reduce the temptation to approach the text contemptuously. One should approach any great text in a sympathetic spirit, and one should attempt to understand a great, core text on its own terms. One should remain open to the possibility that the book contains some wisdom, or even the highest wisdom. This is especially the case with a text that claims to be revealed by God.

In any event, while the stories of Joseph in the Quran and the Bible are very similar—which should not be surprising given that the Quran self-consciously and repeatedly presents its account of Joseph as a reminder—there are significant differences between the two accounts. First, and perhaps most significantly, Yūsuf stands alone as an independent Sūra while the story of Joseph occupies only a part of the book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible (Chapters 37–50), suggesting that the Quran elevates Joseph to a higher status among the prophets in Islam than he occupies in Judaism. The Genesis story is much longer that the one found in the Quran, which means the Quran omits much that is found in the Genesis story, focusing more exclusively on Joseph. For example, the Genesis story contains what appears to be merely a digression about one of Joseph's brothers, Judah, that is absent from the Quranic version. Jacob, Joseph's father, also receives greater attention in the Genesis story, and his death is recounted more fully in Genesis than in the Quran. In both the Quran and Genesis, Joseph interprets dreams on three occasions. In Genesis, however, Joseph's dreams all come in pairs, while in the Quran only in the central case does Joseph interpret a pair of dreams, the dreams of the two criminals. In the other two instances, Joseph interprets a single dream. There are a host of other minor variations that I will mention in the course of this essay, but one more matter should be noted from the start. The most significant differences between the biblical and the Quranic Joseph stories occur within the respective accounts of the so-called "seduction story"—when the wife of Joseph's Egyptian master attempts to seduce him. Indeed, the differences in the account of the seduction story may provide a clue as to why Joseph occupies such a privileged status in Islam.

Let us turn, then, to the text. The proper beginning point in reading a book is to reflect upon its title.[2] While Sūra 12 makes for an excellent introduction to the Quran, the title indicates that it is actually a unique Sūra. In the first place, it is one of only a handful of Sūras to have as its title simply the proper name of a particular human being.[3] Of those, however, only Sūra 12 is devoted exclusively to a narrative of its eponym. Thus, Joseph alone is accorded an entire Sūra of the Quran (Butterworth, "Islam as a Civilization" 96). Unlike the Bible, many books of which are devoted to individual prophets, the Quran spreads its accounts of other prophets throughout the Sūras. The Quran seems, then, to hold Joseph up as singularly worthy of admiration, exemplary of some quality or qualities particularly to be imitated, admired, and praised. If this inference is sound, one of the guiding tasks in interpreting this Sūra is to try to discern what quality or qualities set him apart.

Next, one should seek to identify, if possible, the author and the audience of the

text. Muhammad, of course, is held to be the author of the text, but perhaps it is more precise to say that he is the one who has received this prophecy (vv. 2–3, 102–11). Perhaps someone else has written it down. Allah, or God, has revealed the story of Joseph to Muhammad; Muhammad was not, then, a first-hand witness to this story, but rather God's messenger (v. 102). The frequent call to remember or recall the story of Joseph stresses that this is a familiar story, one that has already been told and with which the audience is presumed to be familiar. This Sūra was revealed in Arabic, "in order that ye may learn wisdom" (v. 2), so it was sent down for an Arabic speaking audience. This is in general true of the Quran: there are other revelations for other people, and while the Quran is certainly for all people, it is, first and foremost, a revelation for Arabs.[4] Moreover, it was intended to encourage reflection or learning: "[Verses 1–2] are meant to impress upon everyone who listens to or reads the Qur'ān that its appeal is directed, primarily, to man's reason" (Asad 337). This, as well, is a frequent refrain in the Quran.

At this point, it would be useful briefly to summarize the story of Joseph. The Sūra begins with Joseph's first instance of dream interpretation, and in this case he interprets his own dream regarding heavenly objects. As in the Genesis story, there will be two other instances of Joseph interpreting dreams: Joseph interprets the dreams of his fellow prisoners and later, while still a prisoner himself, he interprets the king's dream. In Joseph's first dream, he dreams that eleven stars, and the sun and the moon, all prostrate themselves before him. The dream—the meaning of which perhaps escapes Joseph's understanding, though his father, Jacob, clearly understands it—foretells that Joseph's brothers will someday serve him. This first dream causes Joseph's father to fear for his son, and so he exhorts Joseph to refrain from telling his brothers about the dream. Nevertheless, the brothers do in fact plot to do evil to Joseph, and, just as in the biblical story, they refrain from killing him but leave him for dead in the bottom of a well. Joseph is rescued by a caravan and subsequently bought by an Egyptian, a man who may have occupied some high or official position (v. 30), and whose wife subsequently attempts to seduce Joseph and then tries to pin the attempt on him. Here is where the Quranic story departs most significantly from the biblical one. In the Quran, Joseph is tempted to sleep with his master's wife, but, because he sees evidence of his Lord, he is able to control himself (vv. 21–24). The Bible makes no such mention of Joseph's temptation. To continue with the Quranic version, the women in the community chastise the wife, until they see Joseph for themselves, at which point Joseph, despite his master's belief in Joseph's innocence on the charge, is sent off to prison in what seems to be a precautionary measure (Joseph also beseeched the Lord to allow him to go to jail in order to avoid temptation [v. 33]). In the biblical account, Joseph's master does not believe in his innocence, nor are there additional women who are also tempted by Joseph's beauty. While in prison, Joseph interprets dreams for two fellow prisoners. In exchange for interpreting their dreams, Joseph asks only that one of the prisoners, the one who is to be released, remember him before the king. Satan, however, makes the prisoner forget about Joseph, until, at a later date, he suddenly remembers Joseph when the king has need of someone to interpret his dreams. After Joseph successfully interprets the king's dream, the king rewards Joseph with his freedom and a firmly established official position as

an advisor to the king. The final part of the story has to do with Joseph at the height of his power and the reunification with his family. The story completed, Muhammad concludes by stressing the importance of revelation in general and the revelation of this Sūra in particular.

The reader of Sūra 12 faces many interpretive challenges; I will limit myself to raising three. First, the Sūra encourages the reader to reflect on Joseph's judgment or wisdom and its relation to his practical virtue. Next, related to the first, Joseph's self-control amazes the reader and invites reflection. Finally, I will address a theme that permeates the Sūra: to what extent does God guide human affairs?

The Quran, in harmony with the Bible, tells us repeatedly that Joseph is virtuous, or wise, or that he understands things, and it tells us that others recognize these qualities in Joseph (vv. 36, 54). Joseph's wisdom or virtue is related to his ability to see the way things are, as well as to his ability to interpret dreams. His virtue seems to be either synonymous with his understanding or one is the result of the other. Perhaps as a result of his interpretive abilities, Joseph can successfully guide human affairs; he also possesses the political skill, or perhaps more precisely the skill of political economy. Indeed, the third time Joseph interprets a dream, the king's, his interpretation enables him to guide Egypt through dreadful harvests. That is, through his ability to interpret dreams, Joseph foresees that many years of bad harvest are in store (one is amazed at how Joseph arrived at this interpretation of the king's dream). Guided by this foresight, Joseph places a large portion of the harvest from the plentiful years in storage for later consumption during the dreadful years. Joseph's station in Egypt rises greatly, in large part due to the fact that he is one of the few sources of grain during the lean years. As a result, those who lacked such foresight, including Joseph's brothers, are compelled to turn to Joseph for grain. Joseph's wisdom, and his ability to interpret dreams, enables him to govern others; it also enables him to rule himself.

Related to Joseph's virtue, then, if not central to it, is his amazing self-control. Indeed, the main instance where we see Joseph exhibit moral virtue is when he holds himself back from giving in to sexual impropriety—to repeat, this is the greatest departure from or, from the Quranic perspective, correction of, the biblical Joseph story. That is, the Quran insists that Joseph desires to sleep with his Egyptian master's wife (v. 24). He also recognizes that the temptation is great, and that he does not entirely trust himself in the face of the advances of so many women. Joseph believes that he is marked by an internal struggle, a struggle between his base desire and what he sees or knows to be morally upright. Joseph believes that "the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil" (v. 53); what sets Joseph apart from other human beings is his ability to resist the temptation of evil. If Joseph is indeed held to be paradigmatic of the virtue or excellence of a believer, we are led to the view that the Quran praises, above all, self-control in a believer. That is, a self-controlled human being, one who does what is right because it is right even while simultaneously desiring what is base, is superior both to the individual who gives in to his base desires as well as to the individual who is free of such desires. Even or precisely the best human beings, according to this interpretation, are marked by base desires.[5] The righteousness of the biblical Joseph is not connected to his self-control as it is in the Quran. By singling out Joseph among the prophets (save, to be sure, Muhammad), the Quran thus points,

in contrast with the Bible, to the singular importance of the virtue of self-control.

While the seduction story shows Joseph's capacity for self-control, one cannot help but be struck by the many instances that insist upon God's ultimate control or guidance of human affairs. Joseph may indeed be wise, but God granted his wisdom and his ability to interpret dreams (vv. 21, 68, 101); when the Egyptian's wife attempts to seduce Joseph, we are told that God delivered him (v. 23); God also worked the stratagem that was key to Joseph's reuniting his family (v. 75). Equally problematic, if not even more so, is Satan's power to control human affairs—Satan is responsible for Joseph's extended period in jail, because he made the prisoner whose dream Joseph interpreted forget about Joseph (v. 42). Moreover, we are told that God has been watching over Joseph throughout his trials, and that, although the humans were unaware of when or how, God ultimately delivered Joseph and established him in his official position. God, not Joseph, is responsible for those qualities that make Joseph worthy of our praise and admiration. But this means that the reader is faced with a very serious problem: Joseph is held up as an example to be imitated or at least admired, but to what extent can one imitate one whom God has privileged? Would one not have to be similarly favored by God? There is no indication that Joseph did anything in particular that warranted God's favor. Indeed, the Quran stresses God's freedom in this regard: "My Lord is gracious to whom He will. He alone is all-knowing and wise" (v. 100, Asad translation).

The issues raised in Sūra12 must impress the honest, sympathetic reader of the Quran, and they ought to demand the reader's reflection. One wonders what quality or qualities so set Joseph—a non-Arab no less—apart for such high praise. Serious questions about the nature of moral virtue, its relation to wisdom, and the merit or worth of self-control are raised, as are very serious questions about God's providential rule over human affairs. These are meaningful questions for any thoughtful person—Muslim and non-Muslim alike. The Quran may provide answers to these questions, but the answers are not immediately clear. Reflection and introspection are required for the reader to reach such understanding, and indeed the Quran continuously encourages such reflection. Great or core texts address fundamental questions such as those raised in the Quran, and many such texts promise wisdom or at least progress in understanding if read with the appropriate care. To the degree that the Quran urges reflection, and promises wisdom or understanding for those who have reflected on its meaning (v. 2), it ought to be included among the Core Texts that are studied and taught in our colleges and universities.

Notes

1. I have relied principally upon Yūsuf Ali's *An English Interpretation of the Holy Quran*, the one used by most English-speaking Muslims (Wagner xii), but I have also consulted N.J. Dawood's *Koran* (Penguin, 2004), Muhammad Asad's *The Message of the Qur'an* (The Book Foundation, 2003), and Tarif Khalidi's *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (Penguin Classics, 2008).

2. The title of the Quran itself is also important. Quran means something like "recitation," as in Muhammad's recitation of God's prophecy.

3. The others are Yūnus (Sura 10), Hūd (Sura 11), Ibrāhīm (Sura 14), Al Maryam (Sura 19),

Luqmān (Sura 31), Muhammad (Sura 47), and Nūh (Sura 71). One should also mention Āli ʻImrān (Sura 3), which includes a proper name, but not a proper name simply (The family of ʻImrān).

4. Indeed, many believe that the Quran cannot, properly speaking, be translated; it must be preserved in Arabic (Wagner xii). Attempts to represent the Quran in other languages are thus often called "interpretations" instead of translations. With regard to revelations for people other than Arabs, see, for example, Quran 2:62, 2:87–96, and 5:44–50. Of course, the intended community did not always receive the prophets and their prophecies; see Quran 7:59–99.

5. Consider, however, Alfarabi, Selected Aphorisms, aphs. 12–18 (Butterworth 2001).

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The Virtuous Householder: Self-Exile as a Test of Virtue in the *Thirty-Two Tales of the Throne of Vikramaditya*

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The "liberal arts" are not so airtight a set of categories, methods, or disciplines as we might imagine by looking at the artificial divisions of the modern academy. Rather, there are significant areas of interdisciplinary overlap between seemingly discrete areas of study like poetry, philosophy, history, and the cultural sciences. These interdisciplinary connections are often revealed by the study of core texts, which defy any simple identification with a single category or discipline. This paper will explore how the poetic art of story-telling, specifically from ancient India, demonstrates the insight that "our texts speak best when they examine what might be, rather than what is." The "imaginary" worlds of poetry and story-telling help us transgress and transcend narrow disciplinary boundaries and reconfigure ideas in the liberal arts. I want to explore three insights here. First, the study of a poet's story, however imaginary, will be of interdisciplinary interest to the liberal arts because such stories are always repositories of insight into the cultural paradigm and bedrock assumptions of the poet. These bedrock assumptions, even if originally implicit, can be articulated and retrieved by the philosopher, historian, and cultural scientist for deeper analysis. Second, the imaginative nature of story-telling is often seen as a safe space to challenge and subvert received norms and to explore cultural novelties which push established boundaries. If a story survives the processes of cultural evolution by being significantly retold, it can be said to have been a successful subversion or rearticulation of perceived cultural tensions. The power of storytellers to safely

reimagine aspects of a cultural paradigm will also transgress any rigid disciplinary boundaries of the liberal arts by being subject to many overlapping modes of inquiry. Third, the study of stories from other parts of the world can help us reimagine received conceptions of the liberal arts by helping us to articulate implicit tensions within our own cultural paradigms that are relatively muted for some reason. If good ideas have been worked out more fully elsewhere, then we will want to benefit from those struggles and that received wisdom. With these insights in mind, our attention turns to a collection of Indian stories and texts that explore the ultimate tension between the practical demands of worldly life and the rigorous demands of spiritual holiness. Regarding this tension, it would be hard to imagine a more inexplicable figure than the Indian deity, Shiva. As the god of holiness, he is an absolute paragon of chaste purity, and yet, he is also known as a fertility god who is married with children. Texts associated with Shiva, like the *Thirty-Two Tales of Vikramaditya,* frequently reflect the duality and putative confusion of Shiva's nature. A specifically Indian reconciliation between the worldly and the spiritual is the paradigmatic tension to which our attention now turns.

Shiva is known as the destroyer of evil, and as such, he has powerful associations with chastity and utter renunciation of worldly appetites, especially lust. He is the all-knowing God of spiritual enlightenment, and no secret can be hidden from his inscrutable third eye. By contrast, he is also one of the few Indian deities who is specifically polygamous, having a number of remarkable consorts in Indian myth. Though without passion or worldly taint, he is famous for his adulterous liaisons with divine and mortal women, liaisons that provoke his primary wife, Parvati, to fits of jealous vengeance. The poets of India go to extraordinary lengths to demonstrate that Shiva is never fully responsible for his erotic entanglements. In one famous story, he is struck by the irresistible arrow of Kama, the god of sexual desire. His two children, Ganesha and Skandha are both born to Shiva and Parvati without sexual taint, probably in an ad hoc effort to minimize Shiva's inevitable associations with sexual passion (O'Flaherty, Śiva). According to the poet Vatsyayana, even the *Kama Sutra*, a third-century CE sex manual, is associated with Shiva, since it was written by Shiva's groomsman and mount, the bull-god Nandi, as Shiva and Parvati made love for 10,000 years on their honeymoon night (Vatsyayana 13). To put the enigma in stark terms, how can the god of chastity be associated so intimately with the *Kama Sutra*? It turns out that the association is revelatory of one of the deepest ideological schisms in ancient India, the contrast between the "householder" and the "renouncer."

The householder is married with children, essentially living an earthly life including all the duties and pleasures of the marriage bed. By contrast, the renouncer is one who constantly disciplines the natural but lowly attachments to worldly appetites for violence, food, wealth, and sex. For renouncers of the Indian traditions, there are renunciatory disciplines which lead to mastery over desire, including pacifism, hunger-fasting, and vows of poverty and chastity. Shiva makes all of these vows, but again and again, he is found in myth to be violating one or the other of them.

Hindu theodicy allows for the gods to perform merely apparent sins, so long as they are done without authentic passion, for the purpose of instructing humanity in how to handle its own sins (O'Flaherty, *Origins of Evil* 139–73). While there is

always the possibility of a God merely pretending to sin for some spiritual purpose, there also appear to be cases where gods have been essentially demoted because of their illicit and sinful associations. For example, a body of adulterous myths also surrounds the head of the Hindu pantheon, the storm god, Indra. Once one of the most important Indian deities, he has far fewer devotees today than, say, Shiva or Vishnu. Sullied by a reputation for imprudence, Indra seems to have been demoted!

So far, Shiva has avoided the fate of Indra, and he is the second most popular deity in the Hindu pantheon today. Still, the stories about his infidelities and other enigmatic behavior present a fundamental theological problem. Should Shiva's followers be householders, getting married and having children as Shiva does? Or, should Shiva's followers become renouncers, giving up worldly life and attachment as the cost of spiritual enlightenment and release?

Indian religion is the perfect soil for breeding reflection on the issue of householders and renouncers, and it has explored many, and sometimes schismatic, attempts to bring the issue to full resolution. One solution that seems to have crystallized in the 2nd century BCE in the dharma texts, like the famous Laws of Manu, is the notion that life should be lived in separate householder and renouncer "stages." While this has a certain logic, it is not without problems. First, the dharmic law codes do not have the same status as other scripture. They are not as well-known, especially among the lower castes, nor do they have the appeal of other texts. Second, finding the sudden will-power to completely renounce the world at the end of one's life is something of a psychological shock for most, and despite the undesirable karmic consequences, many Hindus are simply not able to make the full transition. The requirement of renunciation is extraordinarily idealistic, and Hinduism would continue to explore the complexities and demands of that idealism for many centuries. It is into this exploration of idealistic answers to the householder/renouncer antinomy that we can best insert a classic text like the *Thirty-Two Tales of the Throne of Vikramaditya.*

King Vikramaditya is a ruler of Solomonic proportions in Indian lore, and there are a number of texts associated with his famous name. As it happens, this text is also to be associated with Shiva and Parvati, since the prologue states that Parvati asks her husband to tell her stories that will fill all minds with wonder. Shiva obliges by telling her the thirty-two tales associated with Vikramaditya's marvelous throne. According to Shiva, Vikramaditya's story begins with the prince's disgraceful exile (a familiar starting point in Indian lore). The reason for his exile is not explained in the text, but his older brother sits on the throne of Avanti. Meanwhile an old Brahmin performs sacrifices that earn a boon from a goddess, and he asks for eternal youth and immortality as his reward. The goddess responds by handing the Brahmin the fruit of eternal life. It is only then that the old Brahmin realizes his mistake. If he eats the fruit, he will live in eternal poverty, since he is very poor. He decides that the virtuous thing to do is give the fruit to the king, who could enjoy such a gift as a rich man. The king worries about having to watch his beloved queen grow old and die, so he gives the precious fruit to her. As it turns out, the queen is secretly in love with her stablehand, and gives the priceless gift to him. The stablehand gives the fruit to his sweetheart, and she gives the fruit to a cowherd who is her lover. Then, the

cowherd gives the fruit to his lover, who shovels cow-dung for a living. The irony is that the most precious of all gifts has now found its way caste by caste from Brahmin, to king, to worker, to slave, and no one eats the fruit! One day the king goes out to hunt and perchance sees the precious fruit in the shoveler's bucket of cow-dung. The furious king retrieves the fruit and interrogates the queen who is forced to reveal her love for the stablehand. Betrayed by his beloved, the angry king unleashes a tirade of misogynistic reflections before renouncing his entire kingdom and exiling himself to the forest. The message is clear: even "true love" is an illusion laced with pain, and the proper response is to leave the householder's attachment behind. With the brother now exiled, Vikramaditya's exile comes to an end, and he ascends to the throne of Avanti. Can he match his brother's demonstrated righteousness? Certainly so.

Vikramaditya's virtue is such that the King of the gods, Indra, gives him a magic throne with thirty-two steps. Each step is protected by a statue that forbids anyone but Vikramaditya to ascend. When Vikramaditya dies in battle, the celestial throne is buried and hidden, only to be rediscovered centuries later by a new king, named Bhoja. When King Bhoja tries to ascend each step, a magic statue tells him a story about the heroic virtues of King Vikramaditya. Only if he can match these virtues can King Bhoja continue to climb the throne and master its powerful magic.

Each of the thirty-two stories is a morality tale of heroic virtue. Self-exile is a common theme in the tales, since Vikramaditya often leaves his throne in the hands of ministers so that he can perform meritorious pilgrimages and attain a wider learning. The Hindu religion contains an ancient tradition that identifies three householder appetites that are obstacles to enlightenment and release. They are often co-associated and called the "three things all people want." These three obstacles are called kama (i.e. sexual desire), artha (money and power), and dharma (merit-based religion leading to better rebirths). Many of the tales especially emphasize Vikramaditya's mastery of these three paradigmatic obstacles, which also serve as an implicit organizational element in the text. In a tale about kama, one of the king's ministers travels to Varanasi on pilgrimage where he pays homage to Shiva and Parvati and falls under the spell of an irresistible heavenly nymph. Cursed by magic, the nymph can only be freed by someone courageous enough to throw himself alive into a cauldron of boiling oil. Hearing of the mystery, Vikramaditya sets forth and throws himself into the cauldron. The nymph rescues him from death with magic and becomes his slave, but realizing his minister is in love with her, Vikramaditya commands her to marry him instead. What is most interesting about this story is that Vikramaditya enjoys the company of a courtesan in another story (Tale #9), and so the perspective of the text is not to say that all kama is forbidden. The controlling concern in this tale is that Vikramaditya's friend is already in love with the incomparable nymph, and so the gracious king gives her away. (The story is titled "A Friend Indeed," Tale #15.)

Numerous stories demonstrate the king's victory over artha (i.e. money and power). Acquiring gold and gems, he gives them away freely (Tales #5 and #16). He gives away kingdoms to strangers (Tale #7). Defeating ogres with hordes of treasures, he gives their fortunes away (Tale #9). Gaining a priceless or magical item, he donates it where it will do most good. These stories also reveal a message

about caste. Vikramaditya is from the second caste, the Kshatriyas (i.e., warriors and rulers). Numerous stories relate, in a very general way, that the king makes offerings to the poor and cares for the kingdom with alms (Tale #1). However, all of his individual acts of self-sacrifice involve kindness to Brahmins. (This is a perfect example of a conserved bedrock assumption that cannot be challenged, even in an otherwise progressive text.) In an especially poignant story, Vikramaditya has his own encounter with the aforementioned fruit of eternal youth and immortality. From a wise sage, he learns the sacrificial ritual by which the fruit is gained and performs it. It requires a year of celibacy and fasting in the forest, while performing daily offerings and incantations. After gaining the fruit, Vikramaditya encounters a Brahmin afflicted with leprosy and asking only for medicine. Realizing the purity of the request and the emergency of the situation, Vikramaditya gives the precious fruit to the Brahmin (Tale #10).

Finally, Vikramaditya demonstrates his mastery over dharma, or religious merit leading to better rebirth. During a period of self-exile from the throne, Vikramaditya makes pilgrimages in search of insight and merit in the guise of a yogi. He happens upon a Brahmin couple who are being swept away in a stream, and while a large crowd looks on, no one helps for fear of the tempestuous waters. At considerable risk, Vikramaditya saves the couple. The man has spent twelve years accumulating merit through reciting a rosary, and he offers the merit to the king. King Vikramaditya states that it is the duty of Kshatriyas to protect Brahmins, and he tries to refuse the gift of merit, but the Brahmin insists it is his right to have the king receive his gift. Taking the gift of karmic merit, the king immediately encounters a Brahmin who has been reborn as a tortured demon who inhabits a fig tree. The king gives the store of merit to the demon, releasing him from his karmic torment (Tale #13). Again, his self-exile and generosity are extolled as positively salvific.

Hearing these stories, King Bhoja himself eventually ascends the throne and proves himself worthy. The statues are revealed as heavenly nymphs who were cursed and turned to statues by Parvati for desiring her husband, Shiva. The nymphs offer Bhoja a boon for their release, and he asks that anyone who hears the tales of Vikramaditya be protected from ghosts, ghouls, sirens, witches, ogres, and snakes. In addition, he asks that hearers be filled with heroic virtue.

Interestingly, Vikramaditya does not go off to the forest as a renouncer, as his brother did. Perhaps it is significant that so great a king does not live to perform this obligation. I do not think Vikramaditya's death in war is the message. After all, the perspective of the text is that death is inevitable for all, and eternal life is a gift that Vikramaditya gave away, just as his brother did. Rather, what is significant is that the poet of these stories never imagined so great and virtuous a householder as Vikramaditya being a self-exile, going off into the forest, as is required by dharma. It seems that the forest itself was never the real point. Heroic virtue is the point this storyteller emphasizes. If so, then actual exile is lesser than the inner exile, charity, and magnanimity that lead to perfect character, and householders can have that in the midst of a robust and apparently worldly life. If for Shiva, the dipolarity of the householder and renouncer tension is never fully resolved, for Vikramaditya it becomes possible to become a perfected householder through the practices, like

self-exile, that demonstrate a perfected character, and the *Thirty-Two Tales* are a vindication of the possibility of the fully virtuous householder. In the end, the author has successfully reimagined a reconciled relationship between a merely apparent and even royal worldliness and the spiritual demands of renunciation through an appeal to heroic virtue.

A final point might be made regarding what these stories might mean to a non-Indian student of the liberal arts. I think stories like these provide, from a religious studies perspective, another lens from which to look at philosophical and existential themes in the West that may be somewhat invisible because of the familiarity of their Western presentation. The tendency for many undergraduates to see the Western traditions as a seamless harmony obscures for them the differences between, say, Solomon the Householder and Jesus the Renouncer. In my experience, learning to confront an unfamiliar theme in another context, like Indian poetry, can bring into further relief the tensions lying at the heart of Western poetry and philosophy, too.

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Wholeness

Dante, Aerial Bodies, and Personal Identity: How Poetry Enriches Philosophy

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Let me begin by noting that I am a philosopher, not a poet. Yet I am married to a poet, and I suppose that is one of the reasons why I like Dante so much. He is a poet who is also something of a philosopher. That makes Dante a worthy guide for helping us rethink the connections between two of the liberal arts, as this ACTC conference invites us to do. He shows how the integration of poetry and philosophy can reveal deeper truths than either can alone. In *The Divine Comedy,* Dante imagines himself as a traveler through the afterlife, where he encounters what he calls shades. They are souls with aerial bodies, or bodies made only of air. By introducing them into his poem, Dante raises philosophical questions about whether and to what extent our bodies are a necessary part of who we are—whether I am still me if I don't have a body.

Dante agrees with St. Thomas Aquinas that body is necessary for personal identity. A disembodied soul is not the person, not the self. In his *Commentary on First Corinthians*, Aquinas states: "But soul is not the whole human being, only part of one: my soul is not me. So that even if soul achieves well-being in another life, that doesn't mean I do or any other human being does" (192–93). For Aquinas, the self, the person, is identical to a particular human being. But human beings consist of both soul and body. Absent one and there is no human being, no person, no self.

In this brief paper, I hope to show how Dante's concept of the aerial body enriches Aquinas's views on personal identity by suggesting further reasons for why embodiment might be important to personal identity. I do this first by exploring what aerial bodies have that disembodied souls lack and then by exploring what our bodies of flesh have that aerial bodies lack. Then I suggest that juxtaposing Aquinas and

Dante in the classroom is worthwhile both because it encourages students to think about personal identity and embodiment in new ways and gives them a model for how narrative poetry can enrich a philosophical idea. A film that gives rise to the same question adds another dimension to this relationship.

Dante, in a move that has both repelled and attracted critics, uses the science and philosophy of his time to explain the aerial body. This move, if anything, informs the reader that his invention of the aerial body, whether intended to be purely fictive or not, is meant to be taken seriously as a crucial feature of what he wants to tell us about who we are. Using Aristotelian science and philosophy, he argues that the soul's organizing power, the same power that shaped the embryo as it developed in the womb, immediately starts to organize the air around it once the soul is severed from the body at death. It gives that air a shape that resembles its original body.

The resulting aerial body provides the eyes, ears, nose, and skin that the soul needs to see, hear, smell, and touch. This makes it possible for the soul to interact with both its environment and other souls and further underscores Aquinas's belief that sense perception is necessary for being a human person (*Summa Theologica* I.75.4).

But the aerial body also makes it possible for souls to have desires and affections. Aquinas believes that disembodied souls have purely intellectual, or unfelt, desires. We can't feel without bodies—without the burning and churning of our hearts. But Aquinas doesn't tell us that the burning and churning are necessary for being persons. Dante shows us this, for example, in the repeated desires that shades have to embrace the pilgrim Dante and each other.[1] The poet Statius's love for Virgil "burns" (*scalda*) within him, giving him the desire to kiss Virgil's feet (*Purgatorio* 21.130–6). What is such love if it is not felt? And who is Statius if he can't feel it?

Finally, as Dante and Statius climb Mount Purgatory, Statius tells Dante: "this airy body lets us speak and laugh; with it we form the tears and sigh the sighs that you, perhaps, have heard around this mountain" (*Purgatorio* 25.103–5). We, as readers, have also heard the speech, laughter, and sighing of these shades and are left to wonder whether these shades, and thus also we ourselves, could have even the semblance of being human without them. And Dante here tells us that we need bodies to have them. After encountering hundreds of shades throughout the poem, we are left feeling that a speechless voiceless faceless disembodied soul that can only think abstract thoughts and have purely intellectual desires cannot even seem to be a self at all.

Yet even the aerial body isn't enough to make Dante's point about the importance of embodiment for persons. At the very beginning of the poem, Dante asks the shade of Virgil whether he is a human. Virgil answers: "Not man; I once was man" (*Inferno* 1.67).[2] Dante scholar Manuele Gragnolati argues that this statement echoes and confirms Aquinas's statement, quoted earlier in my paper, that "my soul is not me" (141). In Paradise, the shade of Solomon tells Dante: "when glorified and sanctified, the flesh is once again our dress, our persons (persona) shall, in being all complete, please all the more" (*Paradiso* 14.43–5). Solomon here refers to the future resurrection, when souls will be rejoined with their bodies of flesh. Until then, our personhood is incomplete.

But if aerial bodies can do all that Dante says they can, then why does our full personal identity require the resurrection of our fleshly bodies? What do those bodies add that the aerial bodies lack?

As Dante shows what Aquinas can't, so too does modern film show what Dante can't. Philosophy provides the idea, poetry adds the story, and film adds the image. Like Dante's shades, the ghosts of Hogwarts in the Harry Potter films have aerial-like bodies and are mere shadows of their former selves. But what exactly is it that the ghost of Nearly Headless Nick lacks that true persons have? He sees, hears, desires, feels, laughs, and speaks. But he, like Dante's shades, doesn't tread on the ground, cast shadows, or breathe.[3] His body, like the aerial body, is, as Dante puts it, "insubstantial" or empty (*vane*).[4]

The difference, for Dante, is that such aerial and ghostly bodies are not fleshly bodies. But why should that matter? He hints at a reason just after the shade of King Solomon praised the resurrection of the flesh that "earth now covers up" (*Paradiso* 14.57). His audience, whose aerial bodies are aglow like flames, immediately responded with an "Amen" that showed "how they longed for their dead bodies—not only for themselves, perhaps, but for their mothers, fathers, and for others dear to them before they were eternal flames" (*Paradiso* 14.63–66). Medieval theologians often taught that we will love all equally in Heaven, thus downplaying or denying in Heaven our particular affections for those we knew and loved in this life (McDannell and Lang, 90–94). But Dante carries our particular affections into Heaven, which he highlights again near the end of the *Divine Comedy* when the resurrected St. Anne stares lovingly at her resurrected daughter (Par. 32.133–5). It is such a St. Anne moment that the shades at Solomon's side long for when they think of why they want their bodies back. For it is in these earthly bodies, not the aerial bodies, that we come to love each other—in the bodies of the mothers that birthed and nurtured us and the fathers and friends who have embraced us. Perhaps Dante is suggesting that our present earthly bodies are important to our identities because they bear the histories of our earthly affections and because it is only through them that we can fully love each other.[5]

Dante doesn't spell out why our aerial bodies can't bear the histories of our earthly affections. But perhaps we can. The shades may feel, love, desire, and remember in a way similar to how the person with an earthly body felt, loved, desired, and remembered. The shade of Statius admires the shade of Virgil. The shade of Statius remembers the first time he read Virgil. But the shade doesn't have exactly the same feelings, loves, desires, and memories as the person with the earthly body. Its aerial body offers hazy insubstantial versions of them, but not them themselves. Statius's shade's admiration of Virgil is a hazy version of the earthly Statius's admiration of Virgil—like a grainy photocopy of the original. So too are his memories of reading Virgil. Only the substantial earthly body can re-instate exactly the same feelings, loves, desires, and memories. Why? Because such affections and memories cannot be exactly the same affections and memories when they are not in exactly the same body, and the earthly body, not the aerial body, is exactly the same body.

Our bodies connect us to each other and the world around us. The aerial body loosens the connection. Neither Dante's shades nor Hogwarts's ghosts can fully interact

with the physical world. Nor can they fully interact with each other. Dante may also be suggesting that personal identity is tangled up with our relationships to the world and each other, especially to those dear to us. Full personal identity requires full interaction. Anything less is only a partial person. Only flesh can restore full interaction, thus suggesting another reason why we may need full bodies to be full selves.

Both Dante and Aquinas believed that the very body that is in the grave must be raised. If its atoms have dispersed, then God will collect them to resurrect the original earthly body. We today are more skeptical. But Thomists of Dante's time were developing another understanding of how the resurrected body could be fundamentally the same as the original earthly body.[6] They claimed that, at the resurrection, the soul could gather whatever matter is at hand and shape it into fundamentally the same body. Soul can do this because it is the form of the body and thus responsible for its continuing fundamental identity. Thus, Dante's belief in the importance of getting our original bodies back does not depend on the controversial belief in the resurrection of our corpses or their dispersed atoms.

The progression from Aquinas's concept of the disembodied soul to Dante's concepts of the aerial and resurrected bodies to the ghosts of Hogwarts is useful for raising a series of questions that can guide a class discussion on the connection between embodiment and personal identity. What do disembodied souls lack? What do shades add? What do shades lack? What do Hogwarts's ghosts lack? What do fleshly bodies add? What do such deficiencies and additions suggest to us about what we consider to be necessary for full personhood? The last question is genuinely open since neither Aquinas nor Dante nor J.K. Rowling fully answer it. As a result, the ensuing classroom discussion can go in different directions depending on the insights and offerings of the students involved in it. Regardless of the direction the discussion takes, the class will have gained further insights into why one might think that our bodies are important for full personhood whether or not one shares any of Dante's specific beliefs about the afterlife.

The class will also have discovered a way in which poetry enriches philosophy. Aquinas tells us that body is important for personal identity. Dante shows it and makes us feel it. Philosophy provides abstract notions of the essence of being human. But narrative poetry provides philosophy in the flesh.

Perhaps that is why Dante chose Solomon to be the spokesperson for the shades' intense desires to reunite with their earthly bodies. He is both philosopher and poet—the reputed author of both the Wisdom and the Song of Solomon—the one who wrote erotic love poetry that delights in the body of one's beloved. While Dante, in keeping with his time, likely viewed the Song as an allegory for Christ's love for the Church or God's love for the Virgin Mary, he still would not have missed the erotic body-loving imagery of the poem. Through Solomon, Dante points to what he himself is doing—giving body to philosophy in the very act of showing why body may be a crucial component of personal identity.

The class will also have a discovered a way that film enriches both poetry and philosophy. If poetry is to philosophy as the aerial body is to the soul, so film is to poetry as the earthly body is to the aerial body. Poetry lets us feel the importance of having a body. Film lets us see the importance of having an earthly body. We can

see the difference between the bodies of Harry Potter and Nearly Headless Nick in a way that we might miss if we had only read Rowling's books. But the enrichment goes both ways. Poetry can explain more than film. And philosophy can explain even more than poetry.

As teachers, we strive to educate the whole person, mind and body, intellect and emotion. We wish our students to not only gain new insights, but to also feel their significance as something real to their everyday existence. What better way to do this than to teach philosophy, poetry, and film together. I think students will find that they make a happy marriage.

Notes

1. Cf. *Purgatorio* 2.76–8; 6.75.
2. Also see *Inferno* 6.36, where Dante refers to shades as "empty images that seem like persons" and *Paradiso* 22.46–7, where he says that the shades, called "flames" in Heaven, were human.
3. *Inferno* 12. 80–2; *Purgatorio* 2.67–8; *Purgatorio* 3.25–30, 88–96; *Purgatorio* 5.9; *Purgatorio* 26.23–4.
4. *Inferno* 6.36; *Purgatorio* 2.79–81; 21.135–6.
5. See Barolini, 138: "These souls are happily celebrating the future resurrection of their flesh, that most irreducible husk of selfhood, because only in the flesh will they fully experience their love for 'those who were dear to them before they were eternal flames.'"
6. See Bynum, 259–6.

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Rethinking the Liberal Arts: A Chinese Perspective

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In this paper, we call for a rethinking of the liberal arts tradition based on an ancient Chinese text, *The Western Inscription*, for a new model of liberal arts education. Can the philosophical underpinnings of Zhang Zai's (1020–1077 CE) *The Western Inscription* serve as the basis for cultivating global citizens and whole persons for the twenty-first century? Some may argue that they are too idealistic to be achievable, or they are too specific to Chinese culture. Others, however, may opine that the outlook in *The Western Inscription* is compatible with both science and Christianity. Therefore, the discussions in the following pages are particularly relevant to the themes of the conference: that core texts of liberal arts are often a "particular mix of history, literature, philosophy or religion, and science" and that "there are specific civilizational traditions which should be acknowledged and examined in their own right."

Historically, the liberal arts (*artes liberales* in Latin) referred to the following seven subjects: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music (the Quadrivium); and grammar, logic, and rhetoric (the Trivium). They constituted the curriculum of medieval universities and were considered essential for cultivating a free person, or a citizen in ancient Greece. About the same period of time in ancient China, Confucian thought was developed based on the teachings of Confucius (551–479 BCE). The main concern of Confucian thought is learning to be fully human, with moral

education at its core. According to the Confucian perspective, the human self is not an isolated individuality, but a center of relationships. Self-cultivation is an ever-expanding process of developing harmonious relationships with family, community, nature, and heaven. Therefore, an elaborate program of education called the Six Arts (rites, music, archery, chariot racing, calligraphy, and mathematics) was instituted to train students to become *jun zi*, or gentlemen, who should carry themselves with grace and demonstrate integrity in all things and all relationships. The *jun zi* should not be "a particular utensil" (Confucius).

Besides music and mathematics that were common to both ancient Greece and ancient China, Confucius placed emphasis on rites, archery, chariot racing, and calligraphy. This training is not merely physical, but also includes mental and spiritual disciplines. Rites consist of a comprehensive system of norms guiding the propriety of one's behavior in the community and society. The ultimate goal of the art of archery is to train one's mind to be constantly tranquil. The archer is required to act properly by following strictly defined procedures, which guide the roles of all participants. It also gives training in self-examination. The archer who misses the mark should turn to himself to search for the fault within. Chariot racing is a military as well as physical training. Calligraphy deals with the aesthetics of writing and character cultivation. According to Chinese tradition, the highest knowledge can only be tested through use (Hayhoe 11–12). The goal is to become human through the emulation of "the way" (Dao) and it can only be acquired through experience and practice. Dao is a balanced development of yin (body) and yang (mind), which reflects the core concept of Confucianism. A person is an open, dynamic, and transformative entity embodying "the way" rather than simply a static being with a set of attributes to be developed. Learning for the sake of self-cultivation is learning to become fully human, which entails the ability to fully embody all forms of relationships and to fully actualize all dimensions of human potentialities.

On the other hand, ancient Greece placed emphasis on geometry, astronomy, grammar, logic, and rhetoric, besides music and mathematics. This might reflect the ancient Greeks' interest in discovering the arches that govern nature and in the training of a free man, who should be virtuous, knowledgeable, and articulate in order to contribute meaningfully to a democratic society (Tu). By contrast, ancient China paid more attention to moral education and human relationships that were considered crucial for survival in "hydraulic civilizations" such as imperial China, which placed collective needs over those of the individual due to the exacting demands of rice cultivation (Wittfogel p. xiv in Ropp Preface). Humanity is considered the most important virtue in Confucianism and the character for humanity, *ren*, consists of two persons, emphasizing communication, collaboration, and interaction between human beings as the proper ways of learning to be human.

By the mid-1860s, curricula based on the original seven liberal arts were found to be inadequate to meet the challenges of a changing society in America. Universities began to offer more and more specialized subjects in different disciplines, and the spirit of liberal arts education was largely retained through a general education curriculum only (Craft). General Education is labeled as "the public face of liberal education" ("General Education Task Force of Harvard University"). Today, a liberal

arts education usually includes "a general education curriculum that provides broad learning in multiple disciplines and ways of knowing, along with more in-depth study in a major" (Association of American Colleges and Universities).

With advances in technological innovations and rapid economic globalization, the world has become more interconnected and interdependent, more complex and more uncertain. At the same time, the crisis of modernity has become more obvious, more serious and global. The challenges we are facing now include social alienation and fragmentation, environmental and ecological crises, and the lack of meaning and spiritual values in life. A new kind of liberal arts education is needed for the global age and to address these challenges. It requires an integration of the best ideas and practices of the West and the East.

First, it has to consist of learning to be a "whole person." Teaching and learning should develop not only the students' cognitive (intellectual) potential and their economic capability, but also their physical, emotional, aesthetic, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions. The balanced development of one's body, heart, mind, and spirit lies in the core of Chinese *taiji yin-yang* philosophy recorded in the *Book of Changes*. Whole person education is, however, not a new educational theory and is an ideal also shared by the West in the thought of Aristotle (Benson).

Second, it should include learning through activity-based, experiential learning. Learning to become a whole person must be experiential and participatory. Education should pay attention not only to the learning of conceptual knowledge, but also experiential or embodied knowledge. Wang Yangming (1472–1529), the most influential Confucian thinker in the Ming dynasty, advocated the precept of uniting thought and action. Wang himself was both a man of great words and great deeds. In an experiential teaching and learning context, the role of teacher should also change from an instructor to that of a companion, a facilitator, and an exemplar of the embodied knowledge.

Third, and most important, it has to include learning how to form harmonious, meaningful I-Thou relationships to oneself, to others, to the earth, and to heaven. For Confucians, personal growth is to seek harmony with others, with nature, and with the heavenly way. We learn to become fully human through developing relationships to form a series of bigger wholes: self, family, community, society, nation, world, earth, and cosmos (the biggest whole). The highest Confucian ideal is the "forming of one body with heaven, earth, and myriad things" and the "unity of human and heaven" (Buber). Zhang Zai's *The Western Inscription* provides a glimpse of the Confucian perception of this concept:

> Heaven (yang) is my father, and Earth (yin) is my mother. Even I, such a tiny thing, find a place in their midst. Therefore, what fills between Heaven and Earth, I consider as my body; what directs Heaven and Earth, I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, all creatures are my companions.
>
> The Great Ruler is the eldest son of my parents, and his great ministers are the household retainers of the eldest son. To respect those who are great in years is the way to respect my aged ones. To be kind to the orphaned and the weak is the way to be kind to my young. The sage is the one who embodies the virtue of Heaven and Earth; and the wise man receives the finest from them [Heaven and Earth]. All

> persons under Heaven who are tired, crippled, exhausted, sick, brotherless, childless, widows, or widowers are my siblings who are helpless and have no one else to appeal to.
>
> To maintain our awe of Heaven is to show the respect of a son; to feel our joy in what Heaven allots without anxiety is the purest filial piety. Deviation from the will of Heaven is called a "perverse disposition"; doing injury to humanity (Ren) is called "villainous." One who promotes evil is lacking in moral capacity, he who fulfills his bodily design by doing good resembles Heaven and Earth.
>
> Understanding the transformations of the universe is being skillful in carrying forward their [Heaven's and Earth's] activities; plumbing the spiritual exhaustively is being good at perpetuating their intentions. . . .
>
> Wealth, honor, good fortune, and abundance have as their aim the enrichment of our lives. Poverty, meanness, grief, and sorrow serve to discipline us as to make us complete.
>
> Living, I serve Them compliantly; dead, I shall be at peace. (Zhang)

Zhang Zai is recognized for his contributions primarily in metaphysics with a new theory of *qi*, largely based on the *Classic of Changes*. According to Zhang, *qi* is the primordial substance that all things (including human beings) are made of. It governs interaction between yin and yang. In its dispersed state, *qi* is invisible and insubstantial, but when it condenses, it becomes a solid or liquid and takes on new properties. Condensation is due to the yin force of *qi,* and dispersion is caused by the yang force. In its wholly dispersed state, Zhang refers to *qi* as the "Great Void." *qi*, in its dispersed state, is undifferentiated in the "Great Void" and, through condensation, forms material things. When these material things pass away, their *qi* disperses and rejoins the "Great Void," wherein the above process will begin again. Therefore, one cannot say that *qi* is temporary when it is in condensed form. Nor can one say that it is non-existent when it is in the dispersed form. As such, Zhang tried to steer away from the Taoist and Buddhist idea of *wu*, non-being (Fung 279).

The Western Inscription is part of a larger work of Zhang, *Cheng Meng,* and is so called because it is inscribed on the western wall of Zhang's study. In response to the debate over whether human nature is good or bad, Zhang posited two forms of nature: (1) original nature, the undifferentiated *qi* in the "Great Void"; and (2) physical nature, the condensed form of *qi*. Original nature is good, but physical nature could be bad. Therefore, physical nature may obscure the goodness of original nature and prevent it from being fulfilled. Zhang, like other Confucian scholars, believed that moral development is a matter of effort. Overcoming the desires of physical nature, one can progress toward original nature, or the heavenly within, as Zhang also put it. In *The Western Inscription,* Zhang illustrated this ideal state: By overcoming selfishness, one comes to understand the essential unity of all things: humans and the natural world; humans with each other; with ourselves; and with the Divine (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). That is to say, we can realize our original nature of goodness through developing a harmonious, meaningful I-Thou relationship to oneself, to others, to the earth, and to cosmos.

Although *The Western Inscription* was written in 1076, some scholars propose that it is still relevant today as it can solve the problems in the following four sets of relationships: human-nature, human-human, human-self, and human-God (or

Heaven, Cosmos, Dao, *Tian*). Following the teachings in *The Western Inscription*, one will "respect Heaven, love nature, be benevolent to others, and live your true self" (Guo and McDaniel).

Can the philosophical underpinnings of *The Western Inscription* serve as the basis for this new model of liberal arts education? Are they too idealistic to be achievable? Or are they too specific to Chinese culture? Some scholars opine that there are irreconcilable differences between China and the West in terms of the rights and obligations of citizens and the role of intellectuals versus the political system. While societies in the West are comprised of two potentially antagonistic spheres of human concern and activity (one private and the other public), no comparable polarization of private and public realms has existed in China. Therefore, whereas "Western thinkers have struggled with the question of how humanity's selfish nature might be reconciled with life in society, Confucianists in China have concerned themselves with the best means of refining and strengthening an age-old ethos of inter-personal deference and social cooperation" (Vittoz 344–5). The concept of democracy/citizenship rights in China is also different from that in the West. The Western natural rights tradition simply does not translate in the Chinese context. The concept of democracy is best translated as *minzhu*, or people's rule. The problem is, in practice it is difficult to differentiate *minzhu* from another Chinese term, *minben*, or people-as-the-basis, which in the Confucian context means "to 'rule benevolently' (or, 'for the people'), but not on the basis of the people's formal consent" (Vittoz 346). Furthermore, the traditional role of the intellectuals and reformers as "remonstrators" and "servants of the imperial bureaucracy" may explain that they more often than not will not challenge the political system so much as to enlist support from within (Nathan, qtd. in Vittoz 346).

There are scholars, however, who opine that the philosophical outlook in *The Western Inscription* is compatible with both science and Christianity. For example, the need to pursue sustainable development in terms of using natural resources is recognized in the West as much as elsewhere. And the appeal in *The Western Inscription* to care for the weak and the old can be found in Buddhist beliefs as much as in Christian faiths (Guo and McDaniel). If so, can we locate texts in the West to complement the teachings in *The Western Inscription*?

In this paper, we call for a rethinking of the liberal arts tradition through a Chinese perspective. We propose a new model of liberal arts education for cultivating global citizens and whole persons for the twenty-first century. At the core of our proposal is the idea of an ecological civilization, that is, a civilization that lives in creative, differentiated harmony with the earth, and that promotes creative and sustainable communities that are compassionate, participatory, equitable, diverse, and spiritually satisfying. However, in order to achieve that, there are undoubtedly questions that need to be further explored by scholars from both the East and the West.

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Hogarth and Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*: Negotiating Individual Freedom in the Liberal Arts

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In the fall of 2012, the faculty of Paideia, our first-year common course at Luther College, moved intentionally to include works of visual art and music as primary texts in the cross-disciplinary exploration of our "enduring questions" for first semester: "What makes individuals free? What guides our choices?" Drawing on suggestions from across the college, we chose William Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress*. This eighteenth-century artwork tells the story of Tom Rakewell, a young man whose choices lead to self-destruction. From there, we progressed directly to Igor Stravinsky's, W.H. Auden's, and Chester Kallman's twentieth-century opera based on Hogarth's paintings. We found that in this context, the paintings and the opera provide rich material for examination of individual freedom and social constraints, both because of their narrative content and because of the nature of visual art and opera as "texts." Here we have two tellings of the same story in two different media, created two hundred years apart; not only do they offer different interpretations of the story, but they impel us to rethink our central question using different tools. Approaching questions through different disciplinary means of inquiry enhanced our consideration of the complex interplay between individual responsibility and societal forces.

Initially, *A Rake's Progress* was a series of eight oil paintings completed in 1733. Hogarth then engraved and printed the images; because of their wider distribution,

the Rake series is best known by these prints. In some ways, the visual arts may be "read" like any text: with attention to detail and inference to understand the artist's message. With the help of our art historian, we model how to see visual elements like light and composition as part of the narrative. We then ask students to spend time in a prolonged study of *A Rake's Progress* and note what draws their attention in each print. We also guide them to consider what symbolic meanings may be attributed to objects in Hogarth's prints. The longer we look at these highly detailed and action-packed panels, the more there is to contemplate, and the more potential there is to feel the sense of impending doom as the consequences of Tom's choices unfold.

In the first plate, Tom Rakewell's destruction begins with the death of his miserly father, whose hoarding is seen as the primary cause of Tom's spendthrift nature. We see coins—hidden in the crown molding—fall out when the workman tacks the mourning drapes to the rotting wood. As he's fitted for a more fashionable future, he waves aside any obligation to the loyal Sarah Young. In the second print as Tom joins a new social set, the polite society of London, he epitomizes "the rake." From the prototype Don Juan to the opera "Don Giovanni," from Samuel Richardson's Lovelace to Jane Austen's Wickham, the motif of the rake has been associated with the seductive but dangerous ladies' man: the man with a libertine past and an unremorseful future. In Hogarth's England, a rake was an irresistible rogue, given to drinking, womanizing, and gambling.

The second print shows the Rake becoming a man of polished taste; even the furniture of the room depicts his emerging character. He falls for the glossy surface presented by high society, but social success comes at the expense of his integrity. He's not equipped to see the moral or practical consequences of a life of limitless pleasure; he lives only for today. The growth of industry in London brought a new possibility for mobility, and the middle class aspired to this rise in status. Unfortunately, Tom missed the emphasis on self-improvement in the new middle class ethic. Instead of practicing the thrift, responsibility, and self-reliance that lead to success, Tom's lavish attire and lifestyle demonstrate that he follows the worst inclinations of the aristocrats.

However, the satire is not entirely about Tom's temptations to the exclusion of societal failings. In Hogarth's world, the English class system shares responsibility for the formation of the individual. Hogarth is actually parodying the aristocratic hangers-on: see the dance instructor and the jockey trying to secure positions in Tom's estate. Hogarth is satirizing the way that these profiteers exploit Tom and encourage him in his foolish desire for social position. As a result of his gullibility, Tom ends up in the Red Light District of Covent Garden, cavorting in the Rose Tavern. Having squandered his fortune, he marries a wealthy old hag only to fall deeper into debt. And from there, Tom descends to two historic London institutions: Fleet Prison for debtors and Bedlam, Bethlehem Hospital, the insane asylum.

Satire by definition has a moral point to convey. Here, it's a protest against social injustice and cruelty. Clearly, the rake is a faulty, blameworthy creature as well as a victim of his environment, of the follies and cruelties of high society—it is against these that Hogarth directs his satire. In the final scene, like the real Bethlehem Hospital, Hogarth's madhouse is open to the public. In a ridiculous fashion, two high-

society ladies have come to observe the poor suffering lunatics as one of the sights of the town. Hogarth sympathized with his downtrodden characters; from the start of his career, Hogarth spoke for the vulnerable masses against those who would exploit them. It would be hard to capture in words the atmosphere of utter degradation and absurdity conveyed in Hogarth's depiction of wealthy socialites visiting Bedlam for entertainment. At the same time, Hogarth's art conveys the potential for reform—for change. It suggests what might be, rather than what is. In our discussion, we submit that Hogarth's work may be best understood as reform journalism because his primary intention is to convey a moral message through distribution of his satirical prints. We also make connections to the Age of Satire in Europe, including connections to Voltaire, Swift, and Pope: satirists who took it upon themselves to ridicule the follies and vices of society.

Hogarth's prints raise questions about our individual choices, but also about our moral obligations in community. We ask questions like, "How does Tom's credulity contribute to his demise? Or is his failing more a matter of ambition and selfishness?" But we also guide students to identify details in the prints that depict the economic and moral extremes of Hogarth's London. We ask, "Would it be possible to reform Tom Rakewell? To what extent is Tom Rakewell responsible for his own fate, and to what extent is he the victim of others? Is Tom's nature formed by his upbringing or does he have the freedom to choose his actions?" Finally, as we prepare to study Stravinsky's opera, we leave an open question: "Is fate a matter of individual will?"

It was the English poet W.H. Auden and his collaborator, the American poet Chester Kallman, who took on the task of adapting the Rake's story depicted by Hogarth's artwork into a full-length drama for Igor Stravinsky to set to music. In shaping the story, they dramatized the question of individual freedom by introducing a new character, Nick Shadow, who is Tom's dark side incarnate. In a Faustian deal, Tom accepts Shadow's gift of a fortune and mentorship in exchange for wages yet to be named:

> RAKEWELL: Tell me, good Shadow, since, born and bred in indigence, I am unacquainted with such matters, what wages you are accustomed to receive.
>
> SHADOW: Let us not speak of that, master, till you know better what my services are worth. A year and a day hence, we will settle our account, and then, I promise you, you shall pay me no more and no less than what you yourself acknowledge to be just. (Stravinsky, 11)

The counterpoint that Stravinsky composed for the bassoon in this passage provides a musical commentary on the ominous deal that has been struck.

In the Auden/Kallman version of the drama, Nick Shadow helps lead Tom down the garden path to the tragic outcome of his desire for superficial pleasure and wealth, employing all of the power of the social forces preying upon him. In Act II, Scene I, Tom has already yielded to the social temptations of the London brothel and found himself broke, dissolute, and empty. Notice the masterful job that Stravinsky did of portraying the disharmonious state of Tom's soul:

> RAKEWELL: Vary the song, O London, change!
> Disband your notes and let them range;

> Let rumour scream, let folly purr,
> Let Tone desert the flatterer.
> Let Harmony no more obey
> The strident chorister of prey:
> Yet all your music cannot fill
> The gap that in my heart—is still. (Stravinsky, 20)

In an absurd (and ethnically insensitive) touch, instead of marrying a rich old woman, in the opera Tom yields to Shadow's twisted logic and marries "Baba the Turk," a bearded lady from a sideshow. Here is Shadow's wise counsel on freedom:

> SHADOW: Come, master, observe the host of mankind. How are they? Wretched. Why? Because they are not free. Why? Because the giddy multitude are driven by the unpredictable Must of their pleasures and the sober few are bound by the inflexible Ought of their duty, between which slaveries there is nothing to choose. Would you be happy? Then learn to act freely. Would you act freely? Then learn to ignore those twin tyrants of appetite and conscience. Therefore, I counsel you, master—Take Baba the Turk to wife. (Stravinsky, 22)

If Shadow is to be believed, individuals are doomed to be free neither from their appetites nor from their consciences, unless they act in ways that satisfy neither. The opera, created in the aftermath of World War II by an American, an English expatriate, and a Russian immigrant, presents a pessimistic view of the chances for individual will to overcome its own dark side and withstand insidious social forces.

Yet, the very act of creating and "reading" great works of art and music demonstrates a transcendent level of human will and freedom. For the creators of the opera, Stravinsky, Auden, and Kallman, the collaboration led to a creative "euphoria," a free exploration of "the nature of the Beautiful and the Good" (Stravinsky, qtd. in Griffith, 3). Stravinsky, in particular, found in *The Rake's Progress* a vehicle to compose an opera not in an artistically fashionable Wagnerian or Puccini-esque idiom, but rather, in his own neo-classical and angular version of Mozart. Stravinsky provides a fine example of the artist exercising individual will in the face of opposing social forces.

For the majority of the thirty faculty members and 650 students studying these works together in Paideia at Luther College, our first go around on *The Rake's Progress* presented uncharted and risky territory. Only one of the faculty members was from the music department, and none were from the art department. But despite the discomfort, and indeed, in part because of it, the works provided material for rich and varied discussions of individual freedom and social constraints. Interpretations can be aimed at many levels—both general impressions and details of the art, of the text in the opera libretto, of the musical style—all of which leaves a lot of room for subjectivity, and a freedom to learn together without any illusion of getting it exactly right. Indeed, the music students are perhaps the most constrained because of their expectations of what opera "should" be. In being forced to think anew about how we read different kinds of texts, we have the opportunity to focus explicitly on the skills and processes of reading and interpreting. Finally, in bringing together various disciplines—visual arts, drama, and music—in narratives of the prototypical "Rake" story, we explore a colorful and nuanced set of answers to the enduring questions

that frame our course. Hogarth's ruthlessly-detailed prints together with Stravinsky's rich and unflinching musical tale of Tom Rakewell's "progress" invite a discussion in counterpoint about the tension and interplay between individual choice and societal forces.

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Can a Liberal Arts Education Really Make Us Better?

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This is the first time that I have been to Ottawa, Canada's stately capital. This is also the first time that ACTC has held its annual conference meeting at a hotel with a golf course. No doubt some of our members brought their own clubs. Perhaps a few of them are teeing off even as I speak. I, on the other hand, will not be playing golf this weekend—or any other weekend. My abstinence from golf is rooted in a misspent childhood and a book that left its mark on my intellectual development. I grew up in the seaside resort of Asbury Park, New Jersey. This was before Bruce Springsteen, who hailed from Freehold, began singing at the Stone Pony. My hometown contemporary was Danny DeVito. And, like the young Mr. DeVito, I spent a lot of time fooling around on the boardwalk.

During my freshman year at Asbury Park High School, I read Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. I was thrilled by the Savage's bitter contempt for the sterility of a society engineered to insulate people from high passions, self-determination, and free inquiry. I hadn't read much Shakespeare yet, but I was fascinated by the reasons given for banning Shakespeare's work. The Resident World Controller for Western Europe, His Fordship Mustapha Mond, tells the Savage:

> "Because it's old," he says, "that's the chief reason. We haven't any use for old things here." "Even when they're beautiful?" the Savage asks.
>
> "Particularly when they're beautiful. Beauty's attractive, and we don't want people to be attracted by old things. We want them to like new things."

> The Savage balks. "But the new ones are stupid and horrible. Those plays, where there's nothing but helicopters flying about." (225)

Mond goes on to explain that the abandonment of high art and the virtues it celebrates is the price that a society has had to pay for stability and contentment. He tells the Savage: "In a properly organized society like ours, nobody has any opportunity for being noble or heroic" (243). Even the upper castes of this society have no need for education beyond the essential requirements for engineers, technicians, and mechanics. The humanities are banned, but so too is basic scientific research. There is no place in this society for the discovery of inconvenient truths.

Although it had never occurred to me that contentment and fulfillment could be at odds, I was sold on Huxley's point. Only one particular in the novel troubled me. The denizens of Brave New World are obliged to fill their weekends with infantile amusement, and the most popular forms of amusement are high-tech versions of miniature golf. Apparently, Huxley could think of nothing more conspicuously infantile than miniature golf—or, as the British say, "mini-golf." I found this troubling because playing mini-golf was precisely what my friends and I did every weekend.

Chastened by Huxley, I gradually gave up miniature golf and never acquired a taste for the real game. Then about ten years ago my nephew Bill became engaged to the daughter of a prominent businessman in St. Joseph, Missouri. The wedding invitation included a request to participate in a golf tournament at a local country club. Naturally, I declined the invitation, since I didn't want to embarrass myself. But my genial brother-in-law persuaded me that the golf tournament was just an outing for family and friends: a day in the country where no one cared how well or badly anyone played. And just to make sure it wasn't competitive, the scoring was based on scramble rules. For those of you who have not been humiliated in this particular way, let me explain how scramble rules work. Players are divided into teams. Then each member of a team tees off on each hole. The best of the tee shots is selected, and all members of the team play their second shots from that spot. Then the best second shot is determined, and everyone plays his or her third shot from that spot, and so on until the ball is holed.

The makeup of teams was determined by lot. As luck would have it, I was assigned to a foursome that included three of the finest golfers in the State of Missouri. To make matters worse, we were playing for money. Every player had to put $20 in the pot. On the first hole each of my teammates teed-off with a 250+-yard drive straight down the fairway. My fifty-yard drive hooked into the woods. I then had the privilege of rooting through the woods to find my ball and bring to it the spot where the best drive had landed. At first my teammates were politely amused with my incompetence since it didn't affect our collective score, but gradually their amusement hardened into disgust. Under their withering gaze, my miserable strokes became even worse. For seventeen holes I walked the walk of shame. At the end of that hole, we learned that our team was tied for first place. Now everything depended on the last hole. Our team's best shot onto the green dropped fifteen feet from the cup. Each of my teammates tried to sink that long putt, but none succeeded. Then it was my turn. I struck the ball with a firm, measured stroke that sent it directly into the center of the cup. Though I was wretched at golf, I was quite good at miniature golf.

We won the tournament by a single stroke. At a colossal wedding party that evening in the St. Joseph Civic Center our team was called to the podium to receive the prize money and the recognition we so richly deserved. As I stood shoulder-to-shoulder with my teammates under the spotlights, I swore to myself that I would retire a champion. I intend to keep that promise.

The topic of my talk today is "Can Liberal Arts Education Really Make Us Better?" I broach this risky subject because "making people better" is a benefit often claimed for liberal arts education. Of course, much depends on what one means by "better" and what counts as "a liberal arts education." I count as a "liberal arts education" an education that includes broad exposure to the humanities, arts, and sciences with attention to the best that has been thought and said—a phrase, by the way, that was coined by Aldous Huxley's great uncle, Matthew Arnold. But the curricular content of a liberal arts education is not easily divorced from instructional practices. Liberal arts education at its best is delivered through small classes (or tutorials) where students actively participate in inquiry under the guidance of seasoned faculty. This system of instruction is typical of, though not confined to, liberal arts colleges.

The relevant sense of "better" is harder to pin down. At a minimum, it concerns personal as well as professional development. Studies show that a liberal arts education helps to develop skills that corporate leaders say are indispensable for a twenty-first-century workforce: skills in communication, critical thinking, and problem solving.[3] In a recent survey of 318 employers, 93% judged these skills "more important than [a job candidate's] undergraduate major" (Hart Research Associates 2). But many liberal arts teachers believe that coming to grips with authors like Aristotle, Shakespeare, and Darwin can help students improve who they are in addition to what they know and know how to do. In other words, these teachers aspire to make their students better people.

In today's brave new world, where self-anointed experts measure student learning by short-term outcomes and calculate the value of a college education by estimating lifelong earnings, this aspiration may sound quaint. A few politicians in the United States have called for the withdrawal of funding for liberal arts majors at state-supported institutions. One U.S. governor brags about instructing his staff to find a funding formula "not based on butts in seats but on how many of those butts can get jobs." "Right now," he says, "I'm looking for engineers, I'm looking for technicians, I'm looking for mechanics." This "vo-tech" approach to higher education is a far cry from character development. Yet character development was a distinctive goal of American higher education for most of its history. Even Daniel Coit Gilman, the first president of Johns Hopkins University—an institution dedicated to research and medicine—argued that a university must never be "merely a place for the advancement of knowledge or the acquisition of learning; it will be always be a place for the development of character" (qtd. in Delbanco 42).

Quaint or not, development of character seems a desirable goal. What sane person would not prefer that students graduate with superior rather than inferior character? If liberal arts education can really make a difference of this kind, we have every right to demand that it be generously supported. But how do we know

that it makes a difference? Is there demonstrable evidence that liberal arts education contributes to superior character? I believe that the answer to this question depends in large measure on the kind of superiority we are looking for. If we are looking for the high virtues Mustapha Mond mentions, heroism and nobility, the evidence is disappointing.

Let me begin by focusing on the professionals I know best, philosophers. Although relatively few in number, philosophers since antiquity have been among the most liberally educated people in the world. If there is a causal relationship between liberal arts education and moral excellence, if being liberally educated increases the likelihood of living a life marked by high virtues like heroism and nobility, then those good effects should be detectable in the collective record of philosophical lives. In fact, few philosophers give us much to jeer or cheer about. Religions rejoice in celebrating prophets, saints, and martyrs who suffered or died heroically rather than betray their beliefs. The list of Christian martyrs may run into the millions. But martyrdom in philosophy is rare. Western philosophy got a magnificent martyr early in its history. The trial and execution of Socrates in 399 BC have inspired philosophers for over two thousand years, but very few have followed his example. One who did was the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno. After a trial that dragged on for seven years, he was convicted of theological, scientific, and philosophical "errors." He refused to recant and was burned at the stake in Rome. On the other side of the balance sheet are eminent philosophers who chose to be prudent rather than risk martyrdom. Aristotle fled Athens in 323 BC rather than face charges of impiety and growing resentment against his former student Alexander the Great. He is alleged to have said (with Socrates in mind) that he would not let Athens sin against philosophy twice. Descartes, though French and Catholic, spent most of his adult life in the tolerant and predominantly Protestant Dutch Republic. He also cancelled the publication of his major scientific treatise *The World* (*Le Monde*) in 1633 after learning that Galileo had been condemned in Rome as "vehemently suspected of heresy."

Aristotle's and Descartes's aversion to martyrdom notwithstanding, it might be objected that this tepid record has more to do with opportunity than character. Since philosophers lead contemplative lives, they have fewer occasions than people engaged in the rough and tumble of worldly affairs to leave a mark on history with acts of heroism or saintliness. But Nazi Germany was a notable exception. In the early years of the Third Reich, Germany's intellectual elites (physicians, lawyers, clergy, teachers, etc.) were faced with the challenge of setting an example for the German people by publicly condemning the Nazi worldview. Sadly, Germany's philosophers, eminent and otherwise, behaved pretty much like other elites.

For some, there was little choice about what to do. As Jews, spouses of Jews, or well-known leftists they had to flee or live in seclusion. As for the rest, only a handful of German philosophers who had some freedom of choice took even modest steps to oppose the regime. Intellectually, Nazism was a soft target for philosophical criticism. It was a crude patchwork of totalitarian autocracy, belligerent nationalism, and racial pseudoscience. It was a vulgar banner emblazoned with vituperation against Jews, Communists, and free-thinking intellectuals, and fringed with völkisch

sentimentality and "Greco-German" athleticism. The Nazi worldview had been pieced together to appeal to the least reflective members of the German nation. It offered nothing to citizens looking for intellectual coherence.

Some German philosophers sought to make peace with Nazism by bowing without complaint to the persecution of colleagues, book burnings, abridgement of academic freedom, and other indignities. But an appreciable number, including prominent academics like Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) and would-be leaders of German culture like Alfred Baeumler (1887–1968), welcomed the new regime.[3] They greeted Hitler's consolidation of power and crushing of individual liberties with enthusiasm. They vied with one another to contrive philosophical justifications for the Nazi worldview.

During the same period, Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944), one of Italy's two most distinguished philosophers,[4] dubbed himself "the philosopher of fascism" and served as the ghostwriter for Mussolini's *A Doctrine of Fascism* (1932). So loyal was Gentile to the fascist cause that he left Rome after Mussolini was deposed in 1943 and joined him in the puppet state (the Salò Republic) that the Nazis imposed on the northern half of Italy.

If Martin Heidegger stands apart from this shameful lot of Nazi and fascist enthusiasts, it is only by virtue of his subsequent fame and enigmatic motivation. It is disheartening to acknowledge that the most influential German philosopher of the twentieth century supported the Nazis when they first came to power and never fully repudiated his decision to do so. Even after the worst crimes of the Nazi regime had became public knowledge, he could still speak of the "inner truth and greatness" of the Nazi movement.[5] Some scholars have suggested that Heidegger failed to recognize the abject evil of Nazism because he was obsessed with ontology and neglected ethics. This is not implausible. When Socrates extolled the examined life, he meant that we should examine our beliefs about the virtues and how they can be acquired. He did not claim that a life spent contemplating being would make us more virtuous. So perhaps we can salvage something from philosophers' lackluster history as moral agents, by lowering our sights and narrowing our focus. Rather than looking for the high nobility of heroes and saints, let us ask simply whether philosophical moral reflection has a positive influence on one's real-world moral behavior.

The experimental philosopher Eric Schwitzgebel has addressed this question in a series of ingenious studies. In one pair of studies, "Do Ethicists Steal More Books?," he examines the online records of philosophy books missing from thirty-two academic library systems. Here are the results: "Study 1 found that relatively obscure, contemporary ethics books of the sort likely to be borrowed mainly by professors and advanced students of philosophy were actually about 50% more likely to be missing than non-ethics books. Study 2 found that classic (pre-1900) ethics books were about twice as likely to be missing" (711). Other studies conducted with Joshua Rust found that ethicists were no more likely than non-ethicists to pay their registration fees or behave courteously at professional meetings (Schwitzgebel et al., *Ethicists' Courtesy*), vote in public elections (Schwitzgebel and Rust, *Do Ethicists*), stay in touch with their mothers, respond to student emails, donate blood, register to donate organs in the event of death, refrain from eating the meat of mammals,

or to be strictly honest in answering survey questions (Schwitzgebel and Rust, *Do Ethicists*). Schwitzgebel and Rust's 2011 paper, "The Self-Reported Moral Behavior of Ethics Professors," closes with this observation: "It remains to be shown that even a lifetime's worth of philosophical moral reflection has any influence upon one's real-world moral behavior."

This sad conclusion may sound like a lament of postmodern pessimism, but I hear in it a confirmation of ancient wisdom. In the last chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle observes that "arguments . . . themselves . . . are not able to encourage the many to nobility and goodness" (X.9, 1179b4–14, 1108). "It is hard if not impossible," he says, "to remove by argument the traits that have long been incorporated in the character; perhaps we must be content if, when all the influences by which we are thought to become good are present [namely, nature, habituation, and teaching], we get some tincture of virtue" (1179b16–19, 1109). Philosophers, including ethicists, traffic in arguments, and arguments alone do not ensure excellence in real-world moral behavior even among those who craft them. The same—mutatis mutandis—applies to other specialists in the liberal arts. The annals of virtue are not swollen with the deeds of art historians and English professors.

Despite these hard lessons, I believe that there are important respects in which a liberal arts education can be said to make us better. The most obvious is that it tends to make people more learned and contemplative. According to Aristotle, contemplation (theoria) is the highest and most godlike use of human reason and the self-sufficient form of human happiness (Book X, Chapter 7–8, 1176a12–78a32, 1104–8). Although few people have the combination of aptitude, opportunity, and inclination for the vita contemplativa, nearly all can enrich their lives by cultivating the arts of learning and critical thinking that are sown by liberal arts education. These arts do not guarantee that one will be a better person, but they do empower one to carry out moral tasks that otherwise might not be possible. Consider the following pair of examples.

One of the finest hours in American history was the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Over the summer of 1787, fifty-five delegates framed a new form of government for a federation of former colonies that had neither monarch nor hereditary aristocracy. They were not just wise; they were succinct. They wrote a four-page Constitution (followed as promised by a one-page Bill of Rights) that has served for over 200 years as a durable framework for popular government, a template for the expansion of personal liberty, and a model for aspiring democracies around the world. By the standards of the day, the framers were a remarkably well-educated group. It has been estimated that as of 1775 "perhaps one out of every thousand colonists . . . had been to college at some time or other" (Greene, qtd. in Rudolph 22). Yet about half of the framers of the U.S. Constitution had attended college, and a few had received college-level tutoring at home.[6] The curricula taught in colonial colleges in the eighteenth century was anchored in classical languages and texts, and the influence of that background is reflected in the references to Greek and Roman history that punctuated the framers' debates.

Sadly, the framers of the U.S. Constitutions failed to confront what John Jay Chapman called "the sleeping serpent . . . coiled up under the table" (Chapman 9).

They failed to abolish slavery. That task was left to coalitions of private citizens who fought for the next seventy-six years to sway the conscience of a nation and then deal with the social and economic hardships of liberated slaves. Who were these abolitionists? Some names are familiar: John Brown and Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott. But there were many others as well. In *The Abolitionist Legacy*, James McPherson identifies 284 "active and important" individuals. He notes: "Of the 248 for whom I found information regarding education, an extraordinary 139 (57 percent) had graduated from college and another 21 (9 percent) had attended college without graduating—and this at a time when fewer than 3 percent of the population attended college and fewer than 2 percent graduated" (McPherson 7). College curricula at that time were still anchored in the classics.

Admittedly, both of these examples concern small groups of people—303 in all. Moreover, it is obvious that many factors—not just a liberal art education—motivated them to craft a constitution or lead the emancipation of a people. That, however, is precisely my point. A liberal education does not cause us to be good; it empowers us to do good. More precisely, it empowers us to carry out moral tasks that call for a long view of history and proficiency at envisioning alternative futures; tasks that require insight into the complexities of human nature and practice at reasoning about what is morally desirable and politically feasible.

Yes, it is possible for exceptional individuals—a Benjamin Franklin or a Frederick Douglass—to educate themselves for the execution of such tasks. But most people need the help of caring and knowledgeable teachers to prepare for challenges and opportunities that require good habits of mind as well as good habits of the heart. Contrary to what my two examples may have suggested, challenges and opportunities of this kind are not historical rarities. Indeed, they are all around us. A liberal arts education can help us to act more wisely in exercising our responsibilities as citizens and voters, as parents and volunteers, and as leaders in communities and congregations.

If moral empowerment of this kind and job-applicable skills in communication, critical thinking, and problem solving were all that a liberal arts education afforded, that would be quite sufficient to prove its worth. But there is more. Recent surveys in Canada, the U.K., and the United States show significant correlations between levels of education (of all kinds) and current satisfaction with one's life as a whole. Differences in income are part of the equation but not the only factor. Richard Florida's studies of the relative happiness of American cities find "a close association between human capital (measured as the percentage of adults with a college degree or higher) and city happiness (.69)—considerably higher than that for income" (Florida). In other words, there is evidence that the quality of life in a community rises with the educational level of its inhabitants.

This point brings me back to Huxley. Is satisfaction with one's life distinguishable from contentment? Is contentment distinguishable from fulfillment? Does it matter whether one's subjective well-being is derived from a life enriched by a liberal arts education rather than a life narrowly tailored to one's occupation with the reward of miniature golf on weekends? If we follow Aristotle in understanding happiness

as the fulfillment of our capabilities as rational animals, then these considerations matter a great deal. Even in a democratic society, people are blessed with different talents and opportunities and burdened with different misfortunes. What we make of talents and opportunities and how we deal with misfortune seem to me the substance of happiness.

How can we prepare students to lead good lives despite the contingencies of luck and the inevitability of death? There is a passage in Andrew Delbanco's book *College* that speaks eloquently to this question.

> [C]ertain books—old and not so old—speak to us in a subversive whisper that makes us wonder whether the idea of progress might be a sham. They tell us that the questions we face under the shadow of death are not new, and that no new technology will help us answer them. As much as the questions posed by science, these are hard and serious questions, and should be part of every college education. Does Achilles's concept of honor in *The Iliad* retain any force for us today? What would it truly mean to live according to Thoreau's ethic of minimal exploitation, or by Kant's categorical imperative? Is there a basis in experience for the Augustinian idea of original sin? Such questions do not admit of verifiable or replicable answers because the experiment to which we must subject them is the experiment of our own lives. (Delbanco 101)

Can a liberal arts education really make us better? I believe the answer is "yes," if by "better" we mean "better prepared to help ourselves and others lead more fulfilling lives." There remains, however, the question of instructional practices. Some pundits argue that the system of education typified by liberal arts colleges, where students work in small groups with seasoned faculty is outmoded and overpriced. "Why," they ask, "should students pay hefty tuition to study with teacher-scholars at residential colleges, when they can sit at home and take cost-free MOOCs (massive open online courses) delivered by distinguished faculty at elite universities?" Even if authors like Aristotle, Shakespeare, and Darwin should figure in the curriculum, why not a MOOC or two to tell their stories?

My response is twofold. On the one hand, I am delighted that the students in my philosophy classes have cheap and easy access to the lectures of leading philosophers. On the other hand, I don't think that MOOCs are the novelty and panacea that their champions claim. Before there were MOOCs, there were "BOO—ks" or books as I prefer to say. Some of these books were textbooks written to provide instruction for students. Others were lectures by eminent thinkers and scholars. Many of the books of Aristotle in their present form may be lecture notes. Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history and the history of philosophy are to my mind the most accessible introduction to his commanding worldview. Some of William James's most influential papers, including *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, were first given as lectures. To be sure, MOOCs have online interactive components—like student blogs and computer-graded exams—that Aristotle, Hegel, and James never dreamt of. But having worked with online courses, I know that it takes as many instructional hours to provide appropriate guidance to students online as it does in the classroom.

If MOOCs prove to be money-savers, it will be primarily because they succeed in replacing some of the talking heads who lecture to hundreds of students with

talking heads who lecture to thousands of students.[7] They will not replace the liberal arts classroom. Artful teachers in small classrooms model learning in ways that go well beyond the presentation of content. They share their curiosity and enthusiasm. They tap into the interests and insights of students to help make learning personal. They display their own struggles with hard-to-solve problems, puzzling texts, and competing theories. They demonstrate how to use scholarly resources, whether online or off a shelf, with scrupulous respect for intellectual ownership. Above all, they personify a commitment all too rare outside the academy—to strive for truth, however troublesome that truth may be.[25]

Notes

1. "Specifically, employers find that students lack the ability to transfer their knowledge to new situations. A 2011 study by the Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges and Schools surveyed more than 1,000 employers in various industries. Hard skills, such as math capabilities, are regarded as least important. Furthermore, when asked what type of education better serves students, 55 percent of hiring decision-makers chose 'a broad-based education' rather than 'an education focused a specific set of skills,' showing that a liberal arts education enables students to gain a wide knowledge-base on a diverse range of subjects. Another study, led by New York University sociologist Richard Arum, followed several thousand undergraduates from 24 U.S. colleges and universities through four years of college. The study found that students who majored in traditional liberal arts—including the social sciences and humanities—gained significantly higher abilities in terms of complex reasoning and writing skills, whereas students majoring in business showed the least gain in these skills. . . . . [S]urveys show that the abilities liberal arts students acquire from their educations seem to be exactly what employers are looking for. . . . [H]umanities and social science undergraduates have been increasingly accepted into technical or medical programs. For example, at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York, as many as 25 percent of medical students accepted in the past 20 years hold humanities and social science undergraduate degrees. Mt. Sinai explains that traditional premedical curriculum tends to limit students' innovative thinking, whereas humanities students can engage in more effective doctor-patient relationships" (*Wellesley News*).
2. Pat McCrory, Governor of North Carolina (*Inside Higher Ed*).
3. Christian Tilitzki provides a detailed account of German philosophers during the Third Reich. Hans Sluga's *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* examines about a dozen philosophers who supported the Nazis. Hugo Ott's *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* sheds light on a number of cases not covered by Sluga.
4. Arguably, the most distinguished philosopher in Italy was the idealist Benedetto Croce (1866–1952). After a brief flirtation with fascism, Croce became a staunch opponent. His works and words were banned by the regime. The Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was arrested in 1926 along with other Marxists. He spent the remainder of his life in prison or under police guard in hospitals. In 1932, university professors in Italy were ordered to swear an oath of allegiance to fascism (as well as to the king). Only fourteen refused. In 1938, Italian intellectuals were ordered to complete a government questionnaire on their racial backgrounds. Croce was the only non-Jewish intellectual who refused. See Noether 630–48.
5. In the 1953 edition of his 1935 lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger writes: "In particular what is peddled about nowadays as the philosophy of National Socialism, but which has not the least thing to do with inner truth and greatness of this

movement [namely, the encounter between global technology and modern humanity], is fishing in these troubled waters of 'values' and 'totalities'" (152).

6. "The educational background of the Founding Fathers was diverse. Some, like Franklin, were largely self-taught and had received scant formal training. Others had obtained instruction from private tutors or at academies. About half of the individuals had attended or graduated from college in the British North American colonies or abroad. Some men held advanced and honorary degrees" (*Government Archives*).

7. In 2011 Sebastian Thurn and Peter Norvig taught a MOOC on "Artificial Intelligence" at Stanford that enrolled 160,000 students.

8. Some of these points are reflected in *The Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education*. A key finding of this study is: "Even when student background characteristics and college academic major were taken into account, liberal arts colleges tended to expose students to higher levels of both clear and organized instruction and deep-learning experiences than did research universities or regional institutions. It was this distinctive teaching/learning environment that transmitted most of the cognitive benefits of attending a liberal arts college. However, these instructional approaches can have just as positive an influence at other types of institutions as well" (Pascarella and Blaich).

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Communal Living and Independent Thinking: A Reading of Plato's *Republic*

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Teaching at a liberal arts and sciences college in the Netherlands, I got to thinking about the extent to which the residential aspect of a college is an integral part of the academic learning experience. Although in Amsterdam the choice for a residential college is largely motivated by the need to provide adequate housing for the students, there is also an aspect of community building associated with the dorms. In a college with a large percentage of international students, the expectation is that living together promotes mutual understanding and appreciation that transcend cultural boundaries. The choice of a residential college is motivated by the possibility of offering students a cross-cultural learning experience.

Still, there is not much reflection on the question of how the benefits of a residential college are related to its intellectual goals. By offering communal housing, the college may seek to educate the student as a whole person, that is, someone with knowledge of physics, economics, politics, etc. and an appreciation of who we are as human beings that spans cultural differences. But how does the shaping of such a common identity in the residences relate to the liberal ideal of students capable of independent and critical thinking?

In this paper I want to reflect on the relationship between the communal aspects, on the one hand, and the intellectual aspects, on the other hand, of a liberal education. I do this by turning to an important core text about education, namely, Plato's *Republic*. In the *Republic*, Socrates constructs a perfectly just city in which the guardian class is educated in a rigorous program that involves music, poetry, physical education, and communal living and dining. Socrates proposes at the end of Book III that the ruler of the just city be selected from the guardian class, and he

elaborates upon the ruler's intellectual education in Books VI and VII. My question in this paper is about the relationship between these two kinds of education. How does the collective education in the arts, gymnastics, and communal living, proposed by Socrates for the young elite, relate to the goal of a philosophical education?

The connection between this question and the theme of the Nineteenth Annual Conference of ACTC, Rethinking the Liberal Arts through Core Texts: Science, Poetry, Philosophy and History, is an interesting one. According to my argument, there is substantive continuation rather than a disruption between the moral education of the guardians, consisting of poetry and so forth, and the intellectual education of the philosopher, consisting of the higher studies of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy. These disciplines, on my reading of Plato's *Republic*, can be considered complementary. Moreover, bringing out their commonality helps us to think about the possible coherence between the different disciplines in the liberal arts and sciences today.

Now, some of the scholarly literature emphasizes a real tension or even opposition between the two kinds of education in the *Republic*, that is, what is perceived as a political kind of education of the guardians and the genuinely philosophical education of the ruler. Mary Nichols, for example, in Socrates and the Political Community (1987) argues that the tension between the two kinds of education is evident from the start:

> The discussions about justice in Book I of the *Republic* reveal various tensions or conflicts in human life that stand in the way of the unity or perfection that men seek. Even the setting itself, the activities taking place in the Piraeus, intimates the decline of a political community and a disjunction between man's intellectual development and his political life. . . . The activities relating to life do not seem conducive to thought. (Nichols 53–54)

As to the education of the guardians, Nichols argues that the program of music and poetry consists of public tales that are ultimately at odds with the philosophical endeavor. The guardian's education is part of "the city's politics" and is coercive, leaving little room for what she calls "the complexity of nature" (81). On Nichols' account, the educational program of the guardians is meant to indoctrinate and to subdue the guardians who, on account of their physical power and their irrationality, pose a crucial threat for the life of philosophy in the city. The philosopher himself develops an understanding of truth outside of, or in separation from, the collective.

My impression is that this kind of dualist reading is too dismissive of the possible compatibility of the guardian's education with the rationalism of the philosopher's education and, by extension, does not offer a good explanation of how the philosopher is prepared to participate in the intellectual program that leads up to knowledge of the Good (503e). I do not deny that there is a significant amount of censorship applied to the guardian's education, but I would argue that Socrates designs the guardian's educational program from a philosophical as well as a political perspective. Furthermore, I would like to propose that there are parallels between the education of the guardian in Book III and the education of the philosopher in Books VI and VII. These educational journeys are not in opposition to one another

but instead are designed to function in harmony with one another even though they operate on different levels.

Turning first to the education of the guardians in Book III of the *Republic*, Socrates argues that their education is established principally for the benefit of the soul (410c). He explains that the fierce part of the soul and the gentle or "wisdom-loving or philosophical" part have to be brought into harmony with one another (410d–e). In order to achieve this harmony, the fierce part of the soul—the spirited part—has to become soft. This is to be accomplished through an intensive training in the arts, namely music and poetry. Socrates argues that together the arts soften the fierce part of the soul, "making it malleable instead of brittle and unworkable" (411b).

More specifically, the arts are meant to make the guardians' souls amenable to reason by presenting them with morally good models to imitate. The guardians are shown the right kind of models in music and poetry, meaning gods, heroes, and people of virtuous character: "the appropriate models to imitate—[are] people who are brave, self-disciplined, god-fearing, free, that sort of thing" (395c). The assumption is that by admiring the right models, the guardian becomes predisposed to imitate the right models. The process of imitation (mimesis) is a notion that is central to the moral education of the guardians and—as we will see—it is a notion that returns in the discussion of the philosopher's education as well.

The guardians experience and enjoy the arts and practice their gymnastics communally. Furthermore, they "should live a communal life, eating together like soldiers in a camp" (416e), a reference to the way soldiers were trained in Sparta. Living together, owning very little private property and, infamously, sharing wives and children (424a), is meant to ensure the complete loyalty of the guardian to the city by precluding the experience and enjoyment of the private. Living and eating together is meant to have a bonding effect and to direct the emotions towards the public, not towards private interests or ties of affection. Ultimately, the goal of communal living is the unity of the city, not just in outward ties of loyalty but also in terms of sharing the same emotions.

In short, not only are the guardians to experience the right kind of emotions, they are to develop and experience these collectively. In effect, it may be that by requiring students to live together, residential liberal arts and sciences colleges are retrieving some of what may be called the ancient desires for unity, harmony, and cohesion. Not only are students in Amsterdam meant to develop empathy towards each other as culturally different students, they are to develop and experience such emotions together. The sharing of meals, physical space, intellectual activities such as studying, and social activities such as watching movies and listening to music promotes emotional bonding. As such, the residential community provides students with an experience where culturally diverse students create community together, developing their attitudes and dispositions in physical proximity with one another and in shared activities.

One may ask what is philosophical about Socrates' educational program in the arts. Here, I would like to make three suggestions. First of all, at the end of Book III, Socrates proposes that the ruler of the city be selected from the guardian class:

"What is the next question we have to decide? Isn't it which of these people is to rule, and which be ruled?" (412b). The ruler, as we find out in Book V, is the philosopher (473d). As such, Socrates implies that the music education of the guardians prepares the best guardian for a philosophical education. Even though this does not indicate full coherence between the two kinds of education, it does make it more difficult to say they are in opposition to one another.

Second, in Book VI, Socrates suggests that the philosopher, who possesses knowledge of justice and beauty, becomes the craftsman of popular virtue (500d; 506b). Popular virtue consists of good habits without knowledge, and this is how Socrates defines the virtue of the guardians (cf. 522a). The guardian typically does not intellectually comprehend the rightness of the models that he is seeing and imitating. Rather, he internalizes these models unreflectively. As such, the virtues of courage and moderation that he develops are possessed in a political way, requiring rule from the outside. The guardian does not rule himself based on his own prudential insight into the right thing to do; only the philosopher possesses the virtues in an autonomous way. However, this does not prevent the guardian's moral character from being good. The philosopher is meant to shape the character of the people in the city according to the divine and ordered models that he comprehends as the result of his philosophical journey. Socrates asks the rhetorical question "And if there were some compulsion on him [the philosopher] to put what he sees there into effect in human behavior, both in private and public, instead of simply molding himself, do you think there will be anything wrong with him as the craftsman of self-discipline, justice, and the whole of popular virtue?" (500d). In other words, the development of the guardian's character in the just city is predicated on the philosopher's understanding of the divine order that, in some way or other, serves to shape the system of the guardian's education.

Third, besides the connections between the two kinds of education, Socrates explicitly assumes that there is a relationship between the education in the arts and the development of rationality. Socrates' argument is that by imitating the good man in musical performances, both harmony and rhythm penetrate the guardian's soul. This is presented as a kind of early education that trains the emotional part of the soul before the guardian is old enough for rational thought (402a). However, "when rationality does make its appearance, won't the person who has been brought up in this way recognize it because of its familiarity, and be particularly delighted with it?" (402a). In other words, by listening to music that is harmonious and that has the right rhythm, the desiring and spirited parts of the soul become attuned to reason, so that when the soul's rational part is developed, the desiring and spirited parts welcome it. Education in the arts is meant to prepare the soul for rational thought.

Summarizing, we can say that the guardian's education prepares the best guardian for the philosophical life and that, in turn, the philosopher's knowledge is necessary for the development of the guardian's education. The two kinds of education adjoin, rather than conflict with one another.

Turning to the education of the philosopher, we see that the notions of imitation and of harmony that are important to the guardian's education also play a role in the philosopher's education. Socrates understands the philosopher's wisdom as a "pattern or model in the soul" (484c). The form of the Good is the greatest pattern

or model to be imitated (505a). Leading up to the comprehension of the Good is a curriculum for the philosopher that consists of studying number and calculation, geometry, astronomy, and as the final part, dialectics. Just as the guardian is meant to internalize patterns of harmony and rhythm in music, so the philosopher is meant to internalize the patterns of harmony and proportion in the sciences:

> "[The philosopher] fixes his view and his gaze on those things which are properly arranged, which are always the same, which neither wrong one another nor are wronged by one another, and which are all ordered according to a rational plan. These are what he imitates, and tries, as far as possible, to resemble. Do you think it is at all possible to admire something, and spend time with it, without wanting to imitate it?"
>
> "No, that's impossible," he [Adeimantus] said.
>
> "So the philosopher, spending his time with what is divine and ordered, in fact becomes as ordered and divine as it is possible for a human being to be." (500c–d)

In other words, the philosopher becomes like the Good by imitating the divine order in mathematics and astronomy to the point that their order saturates his soul. Whereas Book III presents the good man whose soul is in harmony as the right model to imitate in music and poetry, Books VI and VII present mathematical ratios and the harmonious movement of celestial bodies as right models to imitate in the intellectual pursuit of wisdom. Furthermore, Socrates explicitly links harmony in music to mathematical proportion in Book VI (486d) and this affinity is affirmed in Book VII, when Socrates calls music and astronomy "sister sciences" (530d) and argues that they have a certain "kinship" with one another (531d).

The final argument leads me to conclude that participating in the right kind of musical education is unlikely to be in opposition to philosophy and, much rather—albeit on a different level—operates in a way that *enhances* the philosophical quest for wisdom. Whereas music penetrates the soul by means of the senses, mathematics—which is an important part of the philosopher's education—penetrates the soul by means of reason. We may say that the guardian's education is emotional, whereas the philosopher's education is intellectual. These two kinds of education develop different parts of the soul *and complement rather oppose* one another.

Returning to the residential aspect of a liberal education, one may say that it makes a difference whether or not students share a communal life and develop common likes and dislikes during the years that they are growing intellectually. Based on my reading of Plato's *Republic*, the dispositions that the students develop in common by living together may hinder or promote their intellectual development. Cross-cultural living may be an important part of this, although it should be noted that Plato proposes a curriculum of moral education that is very Greek. Still, one may conclude that the habits that students develop in community, and the arts that they enjoy and in which they participate together, are important not merely for moral but also for intellectual reasons.although it should be noted that Plato proposes a curriculum of moral education that is very Greek. Still, one may conclude that the habits that students develop in community, and the arts that they enjoy and in which they participate together, are important, not merely for moral but also for intellectual reasons.

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Truth

Plato's *Phaedo* and the Limits of Naturalism

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As the disciplines of the natural sciences have increased our understanding of the natural world, the acceptance of metaphysical naturalism seems also to have increased. By "metaphysical naturalism" I mean the belief that the facts of physics fix all the facts, that all reality can be reduced to the interaction of subatomic particles distributed in accordance with the second law of thermodynamics.[1] On this understanding, physics is a complete description of reality. For this reason, what I am calling metaphysical (or ontological) naturalism can also be called "physicalism." From an epistemological point of view, the perspective I am describing is sometimes called "scientism" (Rosenberg 6).

The reasons for increased acceptance of metaphysical naturalism are not altogether clear, but it may have something to do with the extraordinary success of the natural sciences in discovering the truth about physical reality. The natural sciences proceed from a methodological commitment to seek only natural, physical causes. In terms of the human quest to gain technological mastery of nature, the results of this methodological commitment in the natural sciences have been nothing short of spectacular. In the context of philosophy and culture, however, the results have been mixed, inasmuch as the methodological commitment to naturalism has sometimes been taken to entail not only metaphysical naturalism, but a nihilistic metaphysical naturalism that denies value and purpose to the universe. Interestingly, it is this aspect of naturalism, and not its materialism, that most seems to bother Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo*, a dialogue in which Socrates discusses, and finds wanting, investigations that appear to assume the truth of metaphysical naturalism.

The *Phaedo* is Plato's admittedly second-hand account of Socrates's last day. The main topic of the discussion is the immortality of the soul and, specifically, the fear of death. Socrates was much admired in antiquity for the tranquility with which he accepted death. There is some difference of opinion as to why he was so tranquil: Xenophon, for instance, points to Socrates's weariness with a reasonably long life that had recently taken a bad turn. Plato, for his part, situates Socrates's tranquility in the face of death in relation to beliefs about the immortality of the soul.

Consequently, throughout the course of the discussion recounted in the *Phaedo*, many arguments for the immortality of the soul are offered and examined. That naturalism should come up in such a discussion is not surprising: as it is generally understood, the idea that there is nothing except matter—that we are nothing but matter—does little to reassure us that we will survive the death of our bodies. But neither do any of the arguments offered in the *Phaedo* reassure Socrates's friends or, presumably, us. Yet Socrates nonetheless faces his death with tranquility, assuring his companions that he believes that that he will somehow survive the death of his body. Does Plato's dialogue offer us any of the assurance that its protagonist enjoys?

At the midway point of the dialogue it becomes apparent that none of the arguments for the immortality of the soul are persuading anybody. After a little regrouping, during which Socrates warns his friends against misology, that is, hatred of philosophical argument born of frustration, the arguments begin anew. After a long pause, during which Socrates is deep in thought, he begins again:

> This is no unimportant problem that you raise, Cebes, for it requires a thorough investigation of the cause of generation and destruction. I will, if you wish, give you an account of my experience in these matters. . . . When I was a young man I was wonderfully keen on that wisdom which they call natural science (physeos historian), for I thought it splendid to know the causes of everything, why it comes to be, why it perishes and why it exists. I was often changing my mind in the investigation, in the first instance, of questions such as these: Are living creatures nurtured when heat and cold produce a kind of putrefaction, as some say? Do we think with our blood, or air, or fire, or none of these, and does the brain provide our senses of hearing and sight and smell, from which comes memory and opinion, and from memory and opinion, which has become stable, comes knowledge? . . . Then again, as I investigated how these things perish and what happens to things in the sky and on the earth, finally I became convinced that I had no natural aptitude for that kind of investigation. (Plato 95e–96c)

What Socrates calls "natural science" here is "phuseos historian," which may be more literally rendered as "inquiry into nature." But given that the materialism of the inquiry is clear from the passage, calling this mode of inquiry "natural science" is not terribly misleading.

Socrates says that he found himself to have no aptitude for such investigations because they made him blind to things that he once clearly knew. What he means by this is explained by the next entry on his curriculum vitae, his encounter with Anaxagoras:

> One day I heard someone reading, as he said, from a book of Anaxagoras, and saying that it is Mind that directs and is the cause of everything. I was delighted with

> this cause and it seemed to me good, in a way, that Mind should be the cause of all. I thought that if this were so, the directing Mind would direct everything and arrange each thing in the way that was best. If then one wished to know the cause of each thing, why it comes to be or perishes or exists, one had to find what was the best way for it to be, or to be acted upon, or to act. On these premises then it befitted a man to investigate only, about this and other things, what is best. (97b–c)

Socrates is eventually disappointed by Anaxagoras, for what he finds is the same approach that he found in natural science: naturalist explanations that attribute physical events to physical causes (98b–e). But what he was looking for was a different kind of cause, the Mind that causes things to be the best they can be.

The key idea here, and the one that I think can explain Socrates's tranquility in the face of death, is not so much the idea that there is a Mind arranging things; rather, it is the idea that the Mind is arranging things to be the best. This belief that things are, and are supposed to be, for the best grounds Socrates's confidence that his soul is immortal.

The argument is largely implicit, but earlier in the *Phaedo* he tells his friends that he is actually looking forward to death because he is confident that after death he will finally gain the knowledge that he is unable to acquire in this life, due to the constraints of the body:

> [I]f we are ever to have pure knowledge, we must escape from the body and observe matters in themselves with the soul by itself. It seems likely that we shall, only then, when we are dead, attain that which we desire and of which we claim to be lovers, that is, wisdom, as our argument shows, not while we live; for if it is impossible to attain any pure knowledge with the body, then one of two things is true: either we can never attain knowledge or we can do so only after death. (66d–e)

Our natural desire for knowledge points, he believes, to a future state in which the desire will be satisfied. Since it cannot be satisfied in this life, there must be another life in which it is satisfied. A version of this same argument in favor of an afterlife is found in Aquinas (*Summa Contra Gentiles* III.48.11) and Montaigne ("Of Experience" line 180).

Note that Socrates does not even seem to entertain the possibility that we never attain knowledge. Why? Because that strikes him as far from the best, and it is his belief that everything is for the best that allows him to be serene in the face of death.

But what supports the belief that everything is for the best? It's hard to say, exactly, but one thing is clear: it's not an empirical question of natural science. It wasn't in Socrates's day, and it's still not today, though some act as if it is. As it is currently constituted, natural science does not investigate whether and in what sense a particular distribution of matter is for the best. That would require some thesis about the purpose of the distribution of matter—that is, a teleological thesis—and teleology has been banished from the study of nature since the early modern period.

But why? Socrates wants to know why the universe is the way it is, not in the sense of the physical mechanisms underlying the distribution of subatomic particles, but in the sense of why the particles were distributed in such a way that in 399 BC an Athenian man would be talking with his friends in a prison cell on the day of his execution. What's it all for? What does it mean? The natural sciences of his day won't tell him.

We should be so lucky. Because today it's not just that the natural sciences refrain from seeking to answer such questions. Increasingly, naturalism is taken as providing an a priori answer to the question of whether or not the universe has a purpose, and of affirming the fundamentally accidental and purposeless nature of the current distribution of matter and energy in the universe. But what is the basis of this nihilistic claim? That there are natural laws governing the distribution of matter and energy seem clear. But that these natural laws serve no purpose, that the distribution is not aiming at anything, seems to be a brute metaphysical assertion.

And yet there is nothing in principle that prevents a natural law from being teleological. One can be a naturalist and still have a teleological view of nature, because a natural law can have a teleological component and still be a natural law. We know this is the case because the methodological revolution in natural science knowingly and explicitly removed final causality as a way to explain natural events. This would not have been necessary if people were not able to formulate teleological natural laws in the past. Indeed, it is still possible to formulate teleological natural laws (Hawthorne and Nolan 275–77).

Methodological naturalism pays no attention to final causality. But it pays no attention to it not because teleological explanations are impossible or self-contradictory or have been proven false, but because such explanations are no help in gaining technical mastery over natural events. Nihilistic metaphysical naturalism, by contrast, pays no attention to final causality because it denies that final causality exists.

But what is the basis of this denial that the universe has value or purpose? Final causality has no role to play in the production of technological knowledge. Does this mean that final causality does not exist? One can, if one chooses, never give a thought to the purpose of anything in the cosmos, or to the purpose of the cosmos itself. One can eschew metaphysics entirely. One can also accept the metaphysical hypothesis that there is no purpose to the universe, that there is nothing that it is "for." It is true that, from the perspective of physics, there is no essential difference between, say, a cosmos in which consciousness (that is, "mind") arises and a cosmos in which it doesn't. The cosmos would work in the same way whether there is consciousness or not.

But what are we to make of the fact that the way the cosmos works, the natural laws of the universe identified by physics, was sufficient to produce consciousness? Are we in any way entitled to the hypothesis that this fact is special? Am I obliged to experience the world according to the non-teleological naturalist hypotheses of physics? After all, there is no a posteriori reason to reject the possibility of final causes operating in the material universe, and nothing incoherent or paradoxical about the idea that, for example, the universe works in the way it does for the express purpose of the emergence of consciousness (Nagel 6–12; Robinson 44, 63). To believe that the universe is a purposeless, meaningless and indifferent system of matter is a metaphysical prejudice.

To be sure, it is not an unreasonable position. Nihilism is a "workable" hypothesis. As noted, giving up final causality is the gateway to gaining technical mastery over nature. But giving up final causality also means giving up a way to determine what to do with the technical mastery one has attained. We are fortunate, therefore, that the belief that the universe has a purpose is also not unreasonable. To believe anything, as Au-

gustine tells us, is to "think with assent," that is, to choose to believe something while continuing to think about it. Nihilism is in no way forced upon us by a commitment to either methodological naturalism or metaphysical naturalism: it is a choice.

Socrates didn't choose it, and it's because he didn't that he was able to face his death with such tranquility. That, at least, is what Plato implies in this dialogue. Plato's Socrates is reassured about his death because he has a teleological view of nature, one that is fully compatible with metaphysical naturalism. One does not have to subscribe to a Platonic metaphysical view to believe that the universe has a purpose.

Socrates did not fear death, but not because he was convinced that the soul was immortal. Or, to put it more exactly, he did believe that his soul was immortal, after a fashion, but he understood that this belief was a pale, inadequate representation of what for him was the more fundamental belief, namely, that everything is arranged in the way that is for the best.

To say that the purpose of the universe is to be the best is, of course, a platitude. But we can't really charge Socrates with having his head in the clouds. He spent his life trying to determine what was best, so that he could act accordingly. He took the idea of final causality seriously, and tried to live his life with some definite goals in mind. Because he believed that the universe was for the best, Socrates was always trying to be the best and always trying to understand why the things that happened to him were for the best. This teleological optimism shapes the way he approaches questions about the fact of his condemnation, the fact of his impending death and, by extension, the fact of physical death itself and, indeed, the fact of the second law of thermodynamics and the eventual heat death of the universe. The question for him is how a universe ordered to be the best might dispose of personhood after the death of the body that seems to cause the personhood. It may be that, in fact, personal annihilation is for the best. Such a cosmos didn't seem as good to Socrates as one in which he gets to survive. I suppose we can understand why his friends did not wish to be argumentative on the point, given the circumstances.

Scientistic nihilism is not unreasonable; it may even be true. But Socrates, for one, seems to have thought that it was unwise, because it ruled out any inquiry into the purpose of the universe and, one might say, the purpose of one's life. It made an unexamined life, an unreflective life, as good—which is to say, as indifferent—as an examined and reflective life, thereby rendering disciplines outside the natural sciences—especially philosophy—as, at best, inessential and, at worst, pointless. It also made our lives seem absurd, plagued by vain, unfulfillable desires for truth and beauty and meaning. This was something that Socrates apparently wouldn't even consider.

Even if we accept that the universe is nothing but matter and energy, we cannot know whether the universe has any purpose; we also cannot know that it doesn't. Both beliefs are reasonable. We have to choose. Why choose nihilism?

Note

1. The subatomic particles in question are fermions (from which matter is composed) and bosons (from which fields of force are composed).

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Dreams: Poetry, Theology, History, and Science in Chaucer

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In the case of dreams, as in other matters within Chaucer's ken, poetry sheds light on a scientific and philosophical question, one that retains some of its mystery to this day. Chaucer's dream theory brings up the validity of literary truths more generally—do they rise to the level of real truth, philosophical truth, divine truth? Doubt about the accuracy and reality of dreams seems akin to Chaucer's doubt about literary truths, his constant undermining of his own certainties. And yet this doubt, though perhaps real, does not dismiss the value of the insights gained in dreaming, or when indulging in the beautiful lies of poetry. This paper will examine how Science, Poetry, Religion, and History overlap and commingle in Chaucer's comments on dreams. Furthermore, it will show how the character of Chaucer's dream and literary theory is analogous to the character of medieval epistemology and cosmos, in contrast to modern paradigms.

What does Chaucer say about dreams, and what does that have to do with the question of disciplines articulated in the conference theme? Chaucer wrote three separate dream visions, plus narratives that are constructed around a revelatory dream, and incorporated dreams prominently in his *Canterbury Tales* and elsewhere, most notably the chicken dreams of *The Nun's Priest's Tale*. Let us take first *The Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer's earliest dream vision, commemorating the death of Blanche of Lancaster, John of Gaunt's wife. In the beginning, the unnamed Narrator's inability to sleep threatens his life: "For nature will not allow / any earthly creature / to long endure / To go without sleep and to be in sorrow. / And I could not, either by night or in the morning, / Sleep; and thus melancholy / And dread I have that I

will die" (*Duchess* 18–24).[1] This explanation is rooted in natural science, key words being "nature" and "melancholy," which was not just a feeling, as with us, but a physiologically important body fluid, black bile, which also often accumulated in lovers like the narrator. The tale the narrator reads to lull himself to rest is the story of Alcyone and Seys, which also prominently features dreams. Alcyone begs Juno for a dream that will predict the future for her, a *viseo*, one of the two major types of dream, classed as *somnium coeleste*, or heavenly dream, versus the more common *somnium naturale* or *somnium animale*. As in many dream visions, Morpheus, the god of sleep, is invoked by Juno. Even though the narrator says he never knew any God but one, he offers to give Juno, Morpheus, or *whomever* a fancy bed, tapestries, and all that belongs to a chamber (*Duchess* 257–8) if they will bestow sleep upon him, as they had upon Alcyone. After the narrator sleeps, he dreams a dream that neither Joseph of Egypt nor Macrobeus, the commentator on Scipio, could interpret.

It's commonly known that Chaucer, like Dante, knew his astronomy well enough, most notably, to have written the *Treatise of the Astrolabe* for his son, little Lewis. Similarly, Chaucer's summary of the science of dream theory, a science in its time, provides a pretty thorough recapitulation of the history and current state of knowledge on dreams. In *Scipio's Dream*, cited and described most prominently in Chaucer's discourse on dreams, Scipio Africanus appears to his grandson in a dream and elaborates on the Ptolemaic universe and the music of the celestial spheres, among other things; early on in literary dream theories, dreams are tied to the cosmos. In *The Parliament of Fowls,* a second early dream vision by Chaucer, Scipio stands by Chaucer's bed to reward his attention by guiding him into dreamland; evidently, Scipio was a very personal text for Chaucer. Chaucer attributes the dream that follows, in a way modern psychology would recognize, to his previous reading experience.

The last lines of *The Book of the Duchess* describe how "This is so quaint a dream / That I will, by process of time, / Work to put this dream (sweven) into rhyme / As I know best, and that anon. / This was my dream (sweven); now it is done" (*Duchess* 1330–4).[2] Here, the dream that began with reading about a dream becomes further entangled with poetry; it is the poetry, and the poetry is it. Perhaps the difficulty of understanding why it is logical to commingle and conflate human history, dream theory, literary theory, religious belief, and astronomy has to do with an epistemological question: in Chaucer, as in Scipio, knowledge is not so divided up into disciplines. Dream visions are compatible with astronomy and history because both are accounts of what is, of what is true. We are more accustomed to consider what is true for a particular area: scientific truths, literary truths, philosophical or religious truths. We think in different registers, or to use Stephen Jay Gould's words, we separate experience into "nonoverlapping magisteria," or "science in the empirical constitution of the universe, and religion in the search for proper ethical values and the spiritual meaning of our lives" (18). In the Middle Ages, however, there is not such a divide between "study[ing] how the heavens go, and . . . determin[ing] how to get into heaven." In Dante, for instance, the two are virtually inseparable. It is therefore essential in studying medieval literature in particular and the liberal arts more generally to make vivid for students the important differences between these

foundational paradigms; it is also difficult because doing so asks them to question their ontologies, the very basic assumptions of their realities.

In the *Book of the Duchess*, sorting out what part of the narrator's dream is *somnium coeleste* and which part is *somnium naturale* is a real puzzle. It makes a great crux for discussion with students. On the one hand, the dream embodies the *somnium naturale*, because the narrator's melancholy is reflected in the color symbolism of the black knight. On the other hand, and only as a very brief example, the dream is prophetic of the fate of John of Gaunt, whose wife is the eponymous Duchess.

The case is somewhat clearer in the chicken dreams of the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, an Aesopic fable featuring fowls. Pertelote is convinced that Chauntecleer's dream, a nightmare that seems to predict imminent danger, stems from natural causes, though some argue that her prescription of choleric laxatives, though based in the best scientific texts of the time, would have been likely to kill Chauntecleer within the medieval humoral system of medicine:[3] "And in our yard those herbs shall I find / which have of their properties by nature / To purge you beneath and also above. / You are very choleric of complexion; / Beware the sun in his ascension / Nor find yourself full of hot humors" (*Nun's Priest's* 2751–57).[4] Notice that not only herbs and natural laws are invoked. In the same breath, the declination of the sun is brought to bear on the diagnosis, a common move for physicians of the time, who were sometimes portrayed as being more likely to consult sun and stars than patient symptoms in determining the outcome of disease. Famously, however, Pertelote, though learned, is wrong, and Chauntecleer ignores his own hunch that the dream is prophetic to his harm. Chauntecleer tries to convince Pertelote of the importance of his dream not so much through science as through literature—authoritative, affective stories of people who did not heed prophetic dreams, ending with a historical list: Macrobius on Scipio the African, Daniel, Joseph, Croesus of Lydia, "Andromacha, Ectores wyf" (*Nun's Priest's* 3140). We see that there is a general alignment between *somnium naturale* and astronomy and natural sciences, the domain of the quadrivium, and *somnium coeleste* and poetry, history, philosophy, religion, more the claims of the trivium. But which does Chaucer prioritize? Even though Pertelote is wrong, it is not clear that Chaucer "believes" the one over the other. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, he justifies use of old books by saying that "Out of old books, in good faith / Comes all this new science that men learn" (*Parliament* 24–5).[5] It's not clear that he is justifying experience over authority, or vice versa, either. And in any case, there are authorities on both sides.

The root of this question is buried in the *House of Fame*, the third early dream vision under discussion, where dream theory is elaborated and then peremptorily dismissed. From the beginning, Chaucer expresses an ambivalence about dreams:

> God turn for us every dream (drem) to good.
> For it is a wonder, by the cross,
> To my understanding, what causes dreams (swevenes) . . .
> And why the effect follows from some, but not others . . .
> Why this one is a vision
> And why this one is a revelation
> Why this one is a dream (drem), why that one is a dream (sweven). . . .

> Why this one is a phantom, why these are oracles
> I do not know; but whoever of these miracles
> The causes knows better than I,
> Let him divine, for I certainly
> Do not understand them, nor ever think
> To busy my wit to work
> To know of their significance,
> The kinds, nor the distance
> Of times of them, nor the causes,
> Or why this more than that a cause of dreams is –
>
> (*House of Fame* 1–20)[6]

In the rest of this passage, Chaucer, though doubting initially whether he should even speculate, wonders if the difference in people's dreams is caused by humoral complexions; natural causes, including sickness; excess study; love; supernatural inspiration; or—"if the soul from its nature itself / Is so perfect, as men find, / That it foreknows what is to come, and that it warns all and some / Of everything of their adventures (risks) / By visions or by figures, / But that our flesh has no might / To understand it aright, / For it is warned too darkly" (*House of Fame* 43–51).[7] Notice here the combination of spirit and flesh. The spirit of humans is perfect enough to understand things beyond our ken, but our flesh is only able to understand things "through a glass, darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Most notable is Chaucer's response to this dilemma, to this duality, this dichotomy: "But why the cause is, I don't know at all. / Great clerks are well worthy of this thing / Those who treat of this and other matters, / For I of no opinion / will as now make mention, / But only that the holy cross / Turn every dream to good for us!" (*House of Fame* 52–58).[8] Notice how this long passage begins and ends with God turning dreams to good. Only in the divine are dreams resolvable. Beneath this divine dimension, clerks are left to slug it out among the seven liberal arts, with their *auctoritees* and exempla. Chaucer refuses to choose; he leaves the choice to clerks, the authorities, the reader. But only God can resolve the dilemma.

So when Chaucer casts doubt on the truth value of dreams, as he does, he does not just doubt the science of dreams, or the philosophy of dreams, or the literary truths of dream visions. He doubts something larger, perhaps human inquisition into any question that could be deemed, to use the term most often quoted from *The Miller's Tale*, "Goddes privetees" (God's privates or private things, pun intended). Not everything is meant for human exploration and understanding. In the end, only God is left to judge these questions, and leaving this vale unexplored, Chaucer leaves whole the world in which it occurs. In the world, this "middle earth" in which we live, we must do our best to integrate the disciplines, to believe both alternatives, and to live both flesh and spirit, both high and low, both comedy and tragedy, the *Divine Comedy*, in effect. There are some things we cannot explain.

Other critics have noted Chaucer's seeming ambivalence about "auctoritee" (authority), about the role of poetry more generally. As A.C. Spearing says, "Chaucer comes more and more to use the dream-poem as a means of meditating on his own situation as a courtly poet of love. . . . In late dream-poems . . . , the focus comes to

be explicitly on the role and worth of the poet himself" (6). I would argue with others another claim: that Chaucer's dream theory questions the nature of literary truth more fundamentally.[9] Dream theory parallels exegesis, and holding it in doubt, as Chaucer does, also calls into question the level of truth in the very texts he writes. In many places, Chaucer is reluctant to pry too deeply into mysteries: besides the injunction against prying into "Goddes privitees" and the sly offer to "turn over the leaf" if *The Miller's Tale* is too dirty for a reader's taste, in the *Retraction*, he seems really to regret his baser moments and hope that the good he has written will outweigh the bad. But I would go further and say that this seeming coy playfulness is not just about undermining the role of the poet. This weaving back and forth, this dream vision as betweenness (Kruger 129–30) or festive liminality (Andreas) is about a doubleness[10] that is essential and recurrent in Chaucer and in other medieval literature and that actually has more to do with an incarnational view of the world than anything else. This "both . . . and" mentality results from a spirituality and a world view that can rationalize and syncretize the mystery of seemingly contradictory truths, of a Christ who is both man and God, of dreams that are both *somnium coeleste* and *somnium naturale* to varying degrees and that the cross can turn to good for all, of literature that both unduly probes into "Goddes privitees" and renders fabliaux into matter "that is written for our benefit." The created world is subject to laws like astronomy, geometry, and natural science; filled with literary insights; grounded in human history; and infused with an inexplicable spirit of the Divine.

In teaching Chaucer, then, while teaching literary analysis and historical context, it is important not to neglect the "other" disciplines, theology, philosophy, history, and science among them, because for Chaucer, the dividing lines among the Liberal Arts meant something very different. All the Liberal Arts, after all, are subsumed under something bigger—Theology—just as all the world and everything in it—Natural Science, History, Philosophy, Providence, and Fortune—are subsumed under something bigger—God. The difference between this overarching framework enclosed by God and our "non-overlapping magisteria" is, in many ways, parallel to the difference between a Ptolemaic universe, where all is contained within the sphere of the fixed stars and surrounded by God, and our own universe, where all matter expands out infinitely from an unknown center into nothingness. In the first case, all parts, however seemingly disparate, are parts of a whole.[11] In our case, the disciplines are different and somewhat incompatible ways of explaining reality. In the first case, there is one truth. In our case, there are many different truths, none of them ultimately stable.

Notes

1. Throughout, where exact words are important, I present my own very literal translation in the text and the original from the *Riverside Chaucer* in footnotes. "For nature wolde nat suffyse / To noon earthly creature / Nat longe tyme to endure / Withoute slep and be in sorwe. / And I ne may, ne nyght ne morwe, / Slepe; and thus melancolye / And drede I have for to dye" (*Duchess* 18–24). For more on the Narrator, see Arthur Bahr's article on the Narrator and narrative construction.

2. "This ys so queynt a sweven / That I wol, be processe of tyme, / Fonde to put this sweven

in ryme / As I kan best, and that anoon. / This was my sweven; now hit ys doon" (*Duchess* 1330–4).

3. See Pauline Aiken and Corinne Kauffman.

4. "And in oure yeerd tho herbes shal I fynde / the which han of hire propretee by kynde / To purge yow bynethe and eek above. / Ye been ful coleryk of complecciou; / Ware the sonne in his ascencioun / Ne fynde yow nat replete of humours hoote" (*Nun's Priest's* 2751–57).

5. "Out of olde bokes, in good feyth / Cometh al this newe science that men lere" (*Nun's Priest's* 24–5).

6. God turne us every drem to goode / For hyt is wonder, be the roode, / To my wyt, what causethe swevenes . . . / And why th'effect folweth of somme, . . . / Why this is an avision / And why this a revelacion / Why this a drem, why that a sweven . . . / Why this a fantome, why these oracles / I not; but whoso of these miracles / The causes knoweth bet then I, / Devyne he, for I certainly / Ne kan hem nought, ne never thinke / To besily my wyt to swinke / To knowe of hir signifiaunce / The gendres, neyther the distaunce / Of tymes of hem, ne the causes, / Or why this more then that cause is—" (*House of Fame* 1–20). Note that "drems" and "swevens" are distinct here, though both translate to dream in Modern English. Swevens appear to be less credible as visions than dreams, but use is not consistent.

7. "yf the soule of proper kynde / Be so parfit, as men fynde, / That yt forwot what ys to come, and that hyt warneth alle and some / Of everych of her aventures / Be avisions or be figures, / But that oure flesh ne hath no might / To understonde hyt aright, / For hyt is warned to darkly" (*House of Fame* 43–51).

8. "But why the cause is, noght wot I. / Wel worthe of this thing grete clerkys / That trete of this and other werkes, / For I of noon opinion / Nyl as now make mensyon, / But oonly that the holy roode / Turne us every drem to goode!" (*House of Fame* 52–58).

9. Cf. T.S. Miller and Peter Brown: "I would argue, then, that the three dream visions in question together dramatize a variety of failures of reading, even as they finally maintain that some transactional process of rereading remains the only way to derive meaning from texts" (Miller 529). "Authors, it might be thought, have a vested interest in suggesting that 'their' dream was authentic and significant. . . . Chaucer . . . can leave his audience more room for manoeuvre—reminding it of various theories but leaving to them an assessment of the dream in the light of those possibilities of interpretation" (Brown 42).

10. In the Parliament of Fowls, dreamland itself is portrayed as a doubled, and opposite, set of alternatives.

11. See Alexandre Koyré, Thomas Kuhn, and Jean-Marie Kauth.

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Knowing and Being: Myself and the Cosmos

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Let me begin with a reminder from the oldest text in any Indo-European language, namely the Rig Veda:

> na vijānāmi yadivedamasmi *niṇyaḥ saṁnaddho* manasā carāmi
> I know not whether I am the same as this cosmos: a mystery am I, yet
> burdened by mind I wander. (Rig Veda 1.164.37)[1]

There are two great mysteries: *idam* and *aham*, all this (cosmos) and myself. What indeed is the person in this vast cosmos? The same question is raised in Psalm 8.

> When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers
> The moon and the stars which thou hast ordained;
> What is man, that thou art mindful of him?

The only thing searchers of Truth need is to take themselves seriously. Then one wonders, "Who am I?" or "What am I?" The Sanskrit equivalent, *koham*, is regarded as the fundamental existential question in the whole of the Indian tradition. The associated question "Why am I here?" naturally arises. All of myself together is the instrument of knowing anything about the Truth. If I do not know the instrument, its possibilities and its limitations, I cannot be clear about the sort of knowledge this instrument can have.

There is a resounding affirmation from all the sages in India, from the Vedic times to the present, that the source of both idam and aham is *Tada Ekam*, That One,

and that the sages with a clear mind can know this when connected with the realm of *Satyam, Ritam, Brihat*, the realm of Truth, Order and Vastness.

A whole human being is naturally interested in both the cosmos and the person, nature and consciousness, flesh and spirit.

Truth and Love

There are two needs of the human soul: knowledge and meaning. The entire academic world is occupied with knowledge, as a community and shared enterprise, but the domain of meaning always remains individual. At whatever level of existence one is, there can be no serious consideration of meaning without relationship with all the levels of reality. And there can hardly be any profound and satisfying relationship without love.

The needs of knowledge and meaning are expressed as yearnings for Truth and Love. Separated from each other, they lead either to some rational and logical knowledge which is barren of spirit, or to sentimentality. Spiritual disciplines are all concerned with integration and wholeness, and with the integration of Truth and Love above all. Love is required to know Truth, and knowledge of Truth is expressed by Love. "The knower of truth loves me ardently," says Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita (7.17), and also "Only through constant love can I be known and seen as I really am, and entered into" (11.54). Of course, the search for Love can become merely a personal wish for my comfort and security, just as the search for Truth can become largely a technological manipulation of nature in the service of the military or of industry. Whenever truth and love are separated from each other, the result is either sentimentality or dry intellectualism, in which power is divorced from compassion. Partiality always carries seeds of violence and fear in it.

The concern of the sciences has been with knowledge and with a study of the external world, with *idam*. For the past four centuries, Physics, whose essential concern is to study matter in motion, has been considered the queen of the sciences, and every other science, including Psychology when it tries to be scientific, has attempted to model itself after the procedures and style of Physics. Science, as it is now practiced, searches for truth in a limited and partial manner with many assumptions about the nature of reality, including a very reductionist and materialist perspective.[2]

There was a time when Theology—it is better to use the expression Autology (adhyātma vidyā, ātma jñāna) in the context of the spiritual traditions of India—was regarded as the queen of the sciences. But not the sort of Theology that is an exclusively mental discipline. Using various modes of expression, it was regarded as a matter of loving God, coming face to face with God, becoming one with God, or entering the Kingdom of Heaven. And all that requires a radical transformation of the whole of one's being—body, mind and feelings. As was said by Christ to Nicodemus, "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again, begotten from Above" (John 3.3). This spiritual science was a science of being with an understanding of the different levels of being in the cosmos.

Levels of Reality and Cleansing of Perceptions

It is a universal testimony of all the sages and all spiritual traditions that that there are many levels of reality—corresponding to different levels of consciousness—from

the Highest Spirit to dead matter. These levels are outside us as well as inside us. And there is a correspondence between the interior and exterior levels. In the spirit of St. Paul, with a slight paraphrase of Romans 8.5, we can say that "the eyes of the flesh see the things of the flesh; the eyes of the spirit see the things of the spirit." Also a reminder from Plotinus: "To any vision must be brought an eye adapted to what is to be seen, and having some likeness to it. Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sun-like, and never can the soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful" (*Enneads* I.6.9).

The project of spiritual disciplines is to develop the eyes of the spirit. It is useful to recall that there are very few remarks of Christ that can be found in all the four canonical gospels; among those few statements is "You have eyes but you do not see; you have ears but you do not hear." Furthermore, this remark can be found in Isaiah as well as in a letter of St. Paul. It is clearly important for us to take it seriously and wonder how the eyes of the spirit can be opened. This requires a radical transformation of a person's entire being—mind, body, and heart.

The program of all spiritual disciplines—as distinct from religions—is to assist in cleansing our perceptions so that we can move towards opening the eyes of the spirit and be able to see what cannot be seen by the eyes of the flesh. A felicitous reminder by William Blake: "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, Infinite."

Cosmology and Autology

Cosmology is a study of the whole of the Cosmos, not only the physical cosmos that occupies our sciences. Because of the correspondence between the levels inside and outside, as long as we are looking at the cosmos with bio-physical eyes and ultimately in terms of matter in motion, all we can discover are the bio-physical aspects of the universe. If we look with spiritual eyes, we can see the spiritual aspects of the cosmos. Even at the level of the bio-physical forces and laws, it is good to remember the commonsensical remark of Augustine, namely, "What we know of nature is not all there is to nature." Almost everything we now teach in Physics was unknown until a hundred and twenty years ago. We can surely count on discovering something startlingly new in the next hundred and twenty years.

With the general traditional suggestion of the correspondence of various levels of reality inside and outside ourselves, in other words the isomorphism between the microcosmic human being and the vast macrocosmos, it is clear that a deeper and deeper study of oneself and a study of the cosmos go hand in hand. There are physical aspects to ourselves as there are to the cosmos; but there are also spiritual aspects to the cosmos as there are to ourselves. All the great teachers of humanity—including the Buddha, Christ, and Lao Zi—have said that the subtler the truth, the deeper the part of ourselves is needed in order to comprehend it. Therefore, a transformation of our consciousness is needed in order to be more and more deeply ourselves; only then we can be more and more deeply aware of the subtler and subtler aspects of the cosmos.

In the mystical strands of all religious traditions, there has been a great deal of emphasis placed on self-study (*svādhyāya*) or self-knowledge. Even in Christianity,

where the merging of secular and ecclesiastical authorities over long periods has militated against encouraging self-knowledge—so much so that there is not a single entry under 'self-knowledge' in the concordance of the entire Bible—we can find a strong emphasis on it in the mystical, often non-canonical, sources. Here is one example from the Gospel of Thomas "Jesus said: 'The Kingdom is inside you, and it is outside you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will realize that it is you who are the children of the living Father. But if you will not know yourselves, you live in poverty, and you are the poverty'" (II, 2:3).

We are addicted to the superficial out of fear and a wish to control. We have institutionalized this tendency in the sciences where we are likely to say that we understand something only when we can predict it and control it. What modern scientists aim at is the prediction, control, and manipulation of what they investigate. Here is a statement by a Yale biophysicist, E.C. Pollard, discussing the adequacy of the laws of physics to explain the behavior of living organisms:

> The biophysicist approaches this problem by assuming that the laws of physics do work in the living cell and by putting together what information he has to try to predict how a given system should work. If the prediction proves correct, then presumably the present physical laws are adequate. If not, then perhaps new things will have to be found.

After noting some of the difficulties in investigating these matters, he adds:

> Eventually, of course, we'll surmount these obstacles, and then we'll know whether the cold laws of inanimate nature are enough to explain the nature of the living cell. If such should be the case, it will give us a control over the living cell which we have never had before. (6-8)

Notice how easily words like "prediction" and "control" enter here as a matter of course. This is what "knowing" means in the scientific context. A question immediately arises concerning the reductionism involved in using the laws of physics to study living organisms, particularly human beings. Yet what is more pertinent here is something different, namely, the deep-rooted anthropocentric view of modern science, a view that, in the light of its own discoveries, could be considered absurd. It is certainly questionable that our relationship to the entire universe—in which we occupy a small place on an ordinary planet of an ordinary and peripheral star in an average galaxy—should be primarily one of control. The spatial shift in the center of the cosmos, brought about by the Copernican revolution, appears to have been accompanied by a reverse epistemological shift toward a collectivized egocentricity in which human beings become the measure and end of all things.

What does this insistence on control and manipulation amount to in knowing something? Does it not guarantee that we cannot know, by these methods, anything that is higher than us, anything more subtle or more intelligent than us, if such a thing, or being, or force is not susceptible to our control? If scientists speak of lacking evidence of anything higher than human beings, such as angels, that is to be expected, for their procedures specifically preclude the possibility of such evidence. William Blake had no problem seeing angels. How and where can we cultivate that sort of perception?

The Vastness—which is exactly what Brahman, the Ultimately Eternal and Real, means in Sanskrit—cannot be controlled. There is an obvious need to be open to the Mystery of both ourselves and the external universe, of both *aham* and *idam*. Spiritual mysteries, unlike scientific ones, cannot even in principle be solved. But if the mind can be quiet in contemplation and wonder, these mysteries can be dissolved. Then there is no need to deny these mysteries or to be afraid of them. The overwhelming response throughout human history has been that of celebration: musicians like Bach make music; poets like Dante write poetry; dancers like Uday Shankar dance; philosophers like Nagarjuna philosophize; and physicists like Newton or Einstein do physics.

Knowledge that Transforms

What kind of learning do we need? Is there any point to having knowledge if it does not transform the quality of being of the knower? In the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, the God incarnate Krishna speaks about the whole of nature as the field and says that he himself is the knower of the field in all fields. Then he goes on to say that real knowledge consists of knowing the field as well as the knower of the field. In other words, real knowledge consists of knowing the cosmos as well as the Spirit—science and theology, not in the limited manner we have come to understand them but in a way that inevitably involves a radical transformation of the person of the knower.

This knowing is by intimacy and identity and not by distancing, therefore requiring a sense of oneness, a feeling of love between the knower and the object of knowledge. A classical example is from the Mundaka Upanishad where it is said that "one who knows Brahman becomes Brahman." For Parmenides (Diels, Fr. 185) and Plotinus (*Enneads* 1.6.9), to be and to know are one and the same. Plotinus asserts that to know the One, by a kind of super-rational insight, means to become one with it. The soul can accomplish this by becoming as simple or as alone as the One. In the moment of such union, the soul has become God, or rather, is God (*Enneads* 1.6.9). Patañjali in the Yoga Sutras (1.41) refers to it as *samāpatti*—a fusion of seer, seen, and seeing. However, the state of oneness and identity is full of order (*ritam*) and is not a matter of chaotic lumping together; a helpful reminder from Meister Eckhart when he speaks of fusion but not confusion.

Krishna, continuing in the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita mentioned above, proceeds to say what real knowledge is, then immediately describes the qualities of the knower—including selflessness, humility, compassion, and love. The important point is that there can be no real knowledge unless it results in the transformation of the quality of the being of the knower.

Learning—including its concomitants such as "knowledge," "information," and the like—is a double-edged sword. We need knowledge, but we also need freedom from knowledge. We need measurements and experience, but we also need freedom from those—so that we can come to the Mystery beyond all knowledge and measurements. It seems that according to the famous physicist Max Planck what cannot be measured cannot be real. That assumes a certain kind of reality. It is good to remember by contrast a remark of Shankara, perhaps the most highly regarded philosopher in India, to the effect that what can be measured cannot possibly be real.

The endless cycle of idea and action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,
But nearness to death no nearer to GOD.
Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

—T.S. Eliot, *The Rock*

Pilgrim on a Journey

We are—each one of us—on a journey, a journey without end, with a longing for the Infinite and the Eternal. Some of us wish to speak from a pilgrim soul to another pilgrim soul. What is a pilgrim soul? It is a soul that says "not yet." There is a certain restlessness, a willingness to put up with some discomfort, a hunger for the unknown, an inquiry, no fixed positions, a reverence for the journey, a willingness to be surprised. A pilgrim is a student, a searcher, a sojourner here below, a wanderer, not quite satisfied with anything except the Infinite.[3]

What our core texts and courses need to do is to assist us in engaging in inter-pilgrim dialogues. If we are going to speak as Westerners to Easterners, Americans to Indians, Hindus to Christians, it is doubtful that we can speak as a person to a person. So much of our thinking, feeling, and even brain structure is conditioned by our culture, religion, language, country, and circumstances. Are the core texts and courses meant to make us more conditioned or less? Does being cultured and educated mean being more prejudiced? Or does it mean more open-hearted and willing to be surprised? We need periodically to contemplate the vastness of the cosmos. And there I am; there you are. . . . Galaxies are appearing and disappearing even during this talk. Why is a little chunk of matter for a few decades made coherent enough to think or feel, speak or hear? Why? What am I? Why am I here? In approaching such subtle and important questions, why should we exclude the reflections of the great sages from all lands and cultures? We are in an especially propitious moment in history. Now it is easier for all of us to be heirs to the wisdom of great thinkers, poets and writers of the whole globe.

We need to search for the best of the East—receptivity, non-violence, and spiritual search—and of the West—exploration, chutzpa and scientific research. We need to be careful in order to avoid catching the wrong end of the stick: passivity and indifference on the one side; aggression and manipulation on the other. The razor's edge needs to be searched for and lived. How can we be a centered self without being self-centered? How can we assist in the sacred marriage of the East and the West, ancient and the modern, feminine and masculine, self and Self, ego and God?

As we journey, learn, and teach, we need to keep coming back to the greatest mystery, that of our own existence in the vast universe. Who or what am I? And why am I here? This mystery, like all spiritual mysteries, cannot be solved. But it

can sometimes be dissolved. Only thirteen days before his death, the celebrated poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote a short poem in Bengali, his native language, which in an English translation would read:

In the beginning of my life,
With the first rays of the rising sun,
I asked, 'Who am I?'
Now at the end of my life,
With the last rays of the setting sun,
I ask, 'Who am I?'

Notes

1. All translations of texts originally in Sanskrit and Bengali are by the author.
2. In this connection, the reader's attention is drawn to Ravi Ravindra, *Science and the Sacred: Eternal Wisdom in a Changing World*.
3. See again Ravi Ravindra.

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Teaching Robertson Davies's Fifth Business through Oscar Wilde's "The Decay of Lying"

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Discussion of criticism belongs in a conference dedicated to re-thinking the liberal arts through core texts. If we are looking to bridge disciplines—science, poetry, philosophy, history—perhaps criticism is one such bridge. When reading and teaching books from other disciplines, we become their critic, facilitating their communication with our students. The core critic—broadly knowledgeable, broadly cultivated, non-specialist—can be a model for the core text teacher. But who are the core critics? Who has shaped or ought to be shaping our thinking about core texts? Which literary artists merit inclusion in the core not only for their primary works of literature but also for their critical writings or their critical principles? Among great works of criticism, criticism that can be read as primary text, I nominate Oscar Wilde's "The Decay of Lying."

"Enjoy Nature!" Vivian protests to Cyril at the opening of the dialogue:

> I am glad to say that I have entirely lost that faculty. People tell us that Art makes us love Nature more than we loved her before. . . . What art reveals to us is Nature's lack of design. . . . Nature has good intentions, of course, but . . . she cannot carry them out. . . . Art is our spirited protest, our gallant attempt to teach Nature her proper place. As for the infinite variety of nature. . . . It is not to be found in Nature herself. It resides in the imagination, or fancy, or cultivated blindness of the man who looks at her. (290–1)

As M.H. Abrams teaches us (positing for literary criticism four distinct points of

focus: on the world that literature represents, on the artist, on the artwork, and on the audience), literary theory up to the end of the eighteenth century was dominated by the first relation, expressed of course as mimesis. The Romantics initiated the transition between the idea of art as mirror to art as lamp, product of the light of the artist's imagination illuminating the natural world (Abrams 3). Wilde both extends the Romantic conception and also prefigures the twentieth-century focus on the artwork itself and on the audience, the reader. And as the dialogue's opening quoted above also suggests, while of his time and of our time, Wilde is surely also the wittiest companion to the reading of literature.

I teach Wilde's essay in a unit of a team-taught course exploring the theme, "Digging Up the Truth?" I first decided to teach Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. How does literature dig up the truth? Through the imagination. And I would pair Blake with Robertson Davies's *Fifth Business*, the imagined autobiography of a private school history teacher, Dunstan Ramsay, with a lifelong interest in magic, myth, and the lives of saints. Imagination, myth, and magic connect the two works.

And then, fortuitously, I read Northrop Frye's *Creation and Recreation*, which explores two main approaches to the metaphor of creation in Western literature—as something God does vs. as something humans do—with Romanticism the dividing line between the dominance of the first and second idea. Early in, Frye cites Wilde's "The Decay of Lying" as source of one of Frye's own central ideas: "man does not live directly and nakedly in nature . . . but within an envelope . . . called culture and civilization" (5), the verbal part of this envelope being mythology (7). Mythology, the insulating envelope, is what Wilde means by lying, "or turning away from the external world" (8). I decided to add "The Decay of Lying" to my syllabus, in between Blake and Davies. Then in the third chapter, the book, having opened with Wilde, reaches its climax with a discussion of Blake's *Innocence and Experience*:

> The first person in the modern world who understood that the older mythological construct [the top-down universe built around the idea of God as creator] had collapsed was William Blake. He also, though without direct influence, set up the model for all the nineteenth century constructs [of Rimbaud, Marx, Schopenhauer, and Freud] . . . where cultural values float on a perilous sea. (55)

For Frye, Blake initiates the change to Romanticism in which the fundamental creative force is now in the repressed human imagination, the world of Innocence, struggling to break free, working its way up from the bottom to remake fallen reality, the world of Experience. In refusing to accept the external world as is, Blake's Imagination is identical to Wilde's Lying. Further, if Blake's Innocence and Experience dialectic essentially creates all of post-Romantic modernity, as Frye suggests, Wilde develops the same insight, making him a fundamental modern critic. Indeed, Frye comments, Wilde "is consistently writing from a point of view at least a half century later than his actual time"; "'The Decay of Lying'" specifically says "a great deal of what modern theories of criticism have been annotating in more garbled language ever since" (5). In particular, Wilde anticipates the twentieth-century preoccupation with the forms that structure consciousness and knowledge: we can never go straight to life or nature

for knowledge or inspiration—as if we have unmediated and transparent access to the real—because we always take our culture and conditioning with us. Wilde's key example is Wordsworth, who claimed to be deriving his inspiration freshly from nature, but who in fact "found in stones the sermons he had already hidden there" (301). What is especially exciting in the classroom is that Wilde's turning of his back on Nature, mimesis, and realism mirrors Blake's rejection of the Enlightenment—to dwell in Nature as objective given is to be enmeshed in fallen Experience in Blake's terms, and to follow Nature is the death of art in Wilde's. Finally, it's refreshing in its irreverence that what Blake has called Innocence and Imagination beautifully corresponds to what Wilde playfully and insouciantly celebrates as Lying.

Wilde's essay seamlessly develops five interrelated points, which I'd like to overview briefly with illustrative quotations. In fact, it's either in asking students to select representative quotations for each stage of Wilde's argument or in presenting them a selection of my own that I structure discussion on the essay. First, the essay's thesis, in the words of Vivian: "My own experience is that the more we study Art, the less we care for Nature" (290). As Vivian introduces his latest article, "The Decay of Lying: A Protest," the reading of which occupies much of Wilde's essay, and launches into his central argument that the health of art demands the development of the faculty of lying, he asks rhetorically, "After all, what is a fine lie? Simply that which is its own evidence. If a man is sufficiently unimaginative to produce evidence in support of a lie, he might as well speak the truth at once" (290–2).

Second, how the decay of lying has led to the decline of literature (Wilde's attack on realism): "Lying and poetry are arts—arts . . . not unconnected to each other" (294); "The ancient historians give us delightful fiction in the form of fact; the modern novelist presents us with dull facts under the guise of fiction" (294). Sadly, in Wilde's present day, a young man with a gift for lying "either falls into careless habits of accuracy, or takes to frequenting the society of the aged and well-informed. Both things are equally fatal to the imagination" (294). After the young man has developed the "morbid and unhealthy faculty of truth-telling," he "often ends by writing novels which are so like life that no one can believe in their probability" (294). Frequently in Wilde we encounter the striking paradox. Rather than mere imitation of reality, "In literature, we require distinction, charm, beauty, and imaginative power" (296). "The only beautiful things . . . are the things that do not concern us. . . . [T]o art's subject matter we should be more or less indifferent. We should, at any rate, have no preferences, no prejudices, no partisan feeling of any kind" (299). Not that we can always adhere to Wilde's (or Vivian's) strictures, but Wilde's point—that we shouldn't demand of art and the artist mere imitation of reality, and so we also shouldn't ask art to take as her subject matter what is immediately interesting or familiar to us—often leads to a good discussion, challenging as it does any automatic preference for the narrowly "relevant."

Third, how life destroys art: "Nature is always behind the age. And as for life, she is the solvent that breaks up Art, the enemy that lays waste her house" (301); "Facts are not merely finding a footing place in history, but they are usurping the domain of Fancy, and have invaded the kingdom of romance" (304); "Society sooner or later must return to its lost leader, the cultured and fascinating liar" (305). On

Hamlet's comment that Art holds a mirror up to Nature: "this unfortunate aphorism is deliberately said by Hamlet in order to convince the bystanders of his absolute insanity in all art-matters" (306).

The fourth and fifth sections are the most brilliant, outlandish, and crucial: "Paradox though it may seem . . . it is none the less true that Life imitates art far more than Art imitates life. . . . A great artist invents a type, and Life tries to copy it" (307). Wilde's discussion of the effect of Mr. Stevenson's story on a friend of his, Mr Hyde, is superb; after inadvertently trampling a child, and so duplicating the opening incident of the story, Wilde's friend is pursued by a crowd and takes refuge in a surgery: "As he passed out, the name on the brass door-plate of the surgery caught his eye. It was 'Jekyll.' At least it should have been" (310). His subsequent example of a woman friend imitating the tragic choices of a character in a serial story is equally brilliant, and culminates in the central passage: "the basis of life—the energy of life . . . is simply the desire for expression, and Art is always presenting various forms through which this expression can be attained. Life seizes on them and uses them, even if they be to her own hurt" (311). This section inspires discussion of how we can learn about ourselves and our own desires from the stories we most admire; and indeed, we may find ourselves having imitated the happy choices of characters we love or identify with, or the unhappy ones. Wilde goes on to claim that even Nature imitates Art: "Where, if not from the Impressionists, do we get those wonderful brown fogs that come creeping down our streets, blurring the gas-lamps and changing the houses into monstrous shadows. . . . The extraordinary change that has taken place in the climate of London during the last ten years is entirely due to this particular school of Art" (312). I usually feel that I am going to have to defend the lunacy of Wilde's claims, but invariably a student makes the sensible point: what Wilde is suggesting is that we only see what Art has encouraged or enabled us to see. As Wilde says, "Nature is no great mother who has borne us. She is our creation. It is in our brain that she quickens to life" (312).

Blake's *Innocence and Experience* and Wilde's *Lying* establish a context for our discussion of *Fifth Business*: the small-town Deptford of the boyhood of Dunstan (originally "Dunstable") Ramsay is a study in Blake's world of Experience, with repressive mores and religion and little place for the arts or the imagination. Dunstan's initiation into imagination, myth, and magic coincides with his unusual childhood friendship with a Blakean innocent, the wife of the Baptist minister, Mary Dempster, turned simple after giving birth prematurely when struck hard by a snowball thrown at Dunstan by his "lifelong friend and enemy" Percy (later "Boy") Staunton—in the novel's striking opening event; Dunstan remains forever guilty about all that his last-second dodge sets in motion. Charged by his mother with helping to look after the Dempster family, Dunstan becomes the first teacher in magic of the prematurely-born Paul (who returns later in the novel as another reborn and renamed character, the accomplished magician Magnus Eisengrim). After Mary Dempster has sex with a tramp in the town's gravel pit (you can't say canonical Canadian novels are no fun), she earns the reputation of being not just simple but perverse, and crazy. But to Dunstan, "She knew she was in disgrace with the world but did not feel disgrace. . . . She lived by a light that arose from within" (47). Add to this the three miracles

Dunstan witnesses Mary perform, and she becomes for him a saint, inspiring his lifelong research in hagiology. Crucially, Dunstan's journey leads him to discover the intersection between his own life and certain mythic stories; his quest is to discover how he fits into myth as the non-heroic character type *Fifth Business*—a character "neither . . . Hero nor Heroine, Confidante nor Villain, but . . . nonetheless essential to bring about the Recognition or the denouement" (epigraph)—and as a history teacher he draws his students' attention to the impact of myth on history. Dunstan's investments in imagination redeem his life, while pursuit of money, worldly power, and eternal youthfulness limit Boy's (shades of Dorian Gray). Essay questions enable students to reflect on different connections among Blake, Wilde, and Davies. One question asks students to consider Dunstan's journey as an instance of life imitating art, and whether Davies's novel is sufficiently a "lie," in Wilde's terms, and would withstand Wilde's attack on realism.

Further, Wilde is a crucial influence on contemporary criticism. I have already noted Northrop Frye's discussion of this point and of Wilde's centrality to his own fundamental ideas. Indeed, Wilde's "all art is quite useless" inspires Frye's whole project, the uselessness of art precisely its importance as recreation of reality. Further, the utopian cast of Frye's thinking suggests Wilde's "a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at." Lastly, Frye sounds a note apposite to Wilde's discussion of Life seizing on the energy of Art quoted above when he says, "the artist demonstrates a certain way of life. His aim is not to be admired but to transfer to others the imaginative habit and energy of mind" (SS 161).

Finally, in our rethinking the liberal arts, we may ask is criticism core text, or is criticism always secondary, or even ephemeral? Certain classical critics—including Aristotle, Horace, Longinus—are presumably taught as core text within many programs alongside literature. In college, I took a first-year literary survey (for all students) paired with a survey of literary criticism (for prospective English majors): after the classical critics just mentioned, critics studied included Sidney, Dryden, Johnson, Wordsworth, Shelley, Arnold, and T.S. Eliot. Reading these English poet-critics alongside their own poetry and the core literary texts they discuss introduced me to criticism as a genre of literature, and persuaded me that criticism can rise to greatness. Reading and discussing Dryden's and Johnson's comments on Shakespeare alongside Macbeth that semester was an intellectual awakening, beginning my conceiving of literary study as a possible vocation. These critics show all the mind-expanding properties and crystallization of insight in aphorism (for instance, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world") that I associate with core texts of literature.

But alongside this conviction that some criticism is core text exists one practical consideration: much as we may encourage students to construe the primary texts for themselves in our programs, students do read criticism when writing their essays. Since this is the context in which I teach, shouldn't we guide students towards the best in criticism—the criticism that transforms our conception of literature itself even as it illuminates particular texts—the criticism that becomes primary text? Is this not simply an extension of the whole thrust of the core text movement—to guide students toward the best?

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