



THE MIDWAY REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND CULTURE

AARON GREENBERG *on* **THE LATIN AMERICAN REVOLUTION**
JESSICA HESTER *on* **FEMINISM AND THE CLASSICAL CANON**
BEN OREN *on* **THINK TANKS**
ROBERT PERLMAN *on* **SOCIOECONOMICS OF HEALTHCARE**
ELLIOT HASDAN *on* **SOVIET SATIRE**

and

AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR DONALD LEVINE

THE MIDWAY REVIEW

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The Midway Review is a nonpartisan magazine of political and cultural analysis and criticism, written and published by students at the University of Chicago. We are a forum for civil debate across the political spectrum and across the humanities and social science disciplines, and for serious reflection on current events, culture, politics, religion, and philosophy.

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COUNTERINDICATIONS

Bobby Zacharias

Overheard at a Federal Prison

Day 1—the first day

Bob: Why hello there, new prisoner. What caused you to become imprisoned?

Al: Actually, I was convicted of a federal crime.

Bob: Oh, I suppose that makes sense. I, too, was convicted of a federal crime, and thusly came to be incarcerated here, at a federal prison.

Al: Oh?

Bob: Quite. I was convicted of having murdered three itinerant workers who were without documentation and, I presumed, the full protection of the legal system. As it turns out, I was mistaken, and so I will be paying my penance to society here for a few decades.

Al: I see.

Bob: The first two or three years were probably the worst for me, I'd say, but then I got used to the monotony of the whole affair.

Al: So I can look forward to two or three terrible years, starting right now, after which things will get better?

Bob: Yes, I'd say that's about right.

Al: Oh, good.

Day 843—the grass is green in the prison yard.

Bob: Al, how are you today?

Al: I'm well, Bob. And you?

Bob: Equally well. I trust that our smuggling operation is going well, and producing significant profits?

Al: That it is. Also, I have just yesterday subjugated the recent arrivals so that they may serve as our pawns.

Bob: Your precision of execution boggles; your criminality inspires.

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Overheard at a TSA Station

Yancey: I wonder if there are bombs in any of these bags that we are checking for bombs?

Erryl: The chance is very small, but it's possible.

Yancey: What if we only check some of the bags, and we don't check the others?

Erryl: If a terrorist knows that their bag will not be checked, then they could put a bomb in it!

Yancey: But we will not tell them which ones we will check. They will not know.

Erryl: Your plan is very smart. I will tell our supervisor about it right now.

Yancey: You may take partial credit for it if you'd like, because you provided crucial support when I was uncertain about the plan.

Erryl: You're too kind.

Yancey: The terrorists, however, are very unkind. We must not tell them if we are not going to check their bags, or they will make their bags explode in the airplanes.

Back at Prison

Day 12,425—it's been a while.

Bob: Good morning, Al.

Al: Good morning. Today is important to me.

Bob: Why is that?

Al: Because I will be released today.

Bob: You've paid your debt to society. I don't think we've discussed it; what was your crime?

Al: I forged a 39 cent stamp because I only had a quarter on me at the time, and I thought that I'd pay for it later at a Post Office.

Bob: <disbelieving silence>

Al: I was arrested the next day on the way to the Post Office.

Bob: <further silence>

[exit Al, a free man]

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INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS AND THE LATIN AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Aaron Greenberg

“In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone...

that I vote in favor of free trade.”

—Marx, On the Question of Free Trade

The so-called “left-turn” in Latin America has a few major sources: mistrust of “American consensus” economic policy and Western financial institutions; aspirations of economic, political, and cultural autonomy; political reparation of historical injustice.

In short, much of the leftward turn is negative in character, and negative more specifically towards the United States. Anyone keen to news from the region has seen Hugo Chavez’s antics: calling George Bush “the devil,” and blaming America (almost alone) for the continent’s failings.

The positive message of the rebellion has often been obscured by this rhetoric. In Chavez’s case socialist reform (even anti-American economic policy) actually takes a back seat to anti-American rhetoric. The populist political reasons for the rhetoric seem clear: the post-Columbian age in Latin America has been defined by imperialism, political and economic. The history of American and European intervention (in the form of complicity with authoritarian elites or installation of such elites to protect economic interest) is still fresh in the minds of a continent that has rarely been left to make its own destiny.

In the so-called “Cold War,” Latin America was grounds for a proxy war between East and West. Tens of thousands of Latin American dissidents and civilians were victims in the conflict. Chavez’s

powerful rhetoric voices these frustrations with America’s historical hegemony in the region. Much of the contemporary rhetoric seems millenarian—at least in its ambition to undo five hundred of injustice. The most vocal leaders of the rebellion have adopted the indigenous victim as a metonym for Latin America. Much of the progressive legislation for which the left in Latin America, Europe, and North America hope will certainly concern indigenous land reform. In Chiapas, Mexico in 1994 one of the EZLN’s first political actions was to repossess ranches controlled by wealth landowners and return them to their “rightful” indigenous owners.

It seems obvious that indigenous people in the hemisphere deserve their ancestral land. It is not difficult to make the case that the economic success of European civilization in the Americas depended on a systematic, perhaps genocidal, removal of the indigenous population. Whether the decimation of Native American culture happened accidentally or by malevolence, the fact remains that even by conservative estimates millions of indigenous people were killed or died of disease during the four hundred year process of European colonization.

Not only was the population permanently crippled, but also systematic racism has kept indigenous people weak and disenfranchised. The places that their ancestors had called home for thousands of years (from New York State to Bolivia) were ceded to European colonialists by means of deception, both legal and illegal. The facts of indigenous plight should not be in question.

But while the history might be clear, what to do about it now that the left has control in the region is not so clear. Should indigenous lands

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be ceded to indigenous people? And who are these “indigenous” people? After generations of *mestizos*, the question of who is indigenous and who deserves land (in the case of redistribution) is a more difficult and more urgent one.

In 1972 the United Nations convened its Sub-Commission on the Protection of Human Rights to study “The Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations.” The committee distilled a useful definition of “indigenoussness” that considers geographical history in a specifically post-Columbian context:

“Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them, and, by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form part, under a State structure which incorporates mainly the national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant.”

The commission’s study is alive to problems of indigenous identity, the practical issues of *mestizo* people, and geographical scarcity. Importantly, the study also aligned its definition not with “original land rights,” but with a history of disenfranchisement and institutional racism.

But plans to give back indigenous land seem, like much of the rebellion, misguided and ultimately not good for indigenous people. This worry has two parts, the first of which was taken up by the American political philosopher David Lyons in a *Festschrift* to libertarian philosopher Robert Nozick.

The political milieu of the Native American movement in the United States is strikingly different than the one faced in Latin America now. Political power was an aspiration—not a reality. The demands for tribal lands were heard in court cases and not legislated by sympathetic governments.

Lyons’ arguments are still compelling and

resonate with the current situation. He finds in much of American Indians’ rhetoric invoking normative rights to land a rigid position on land rights that did not admit the extent to which such rights are “responsive [or relative] to circumstances.” He continues:

The original rights of Native Americans were no more sacrosanct than anyone else’s. From the fact that they had morally defensible claims two hundred or four hundred years ago it cannot be inferred that those claims persist. But the argument assumes just that; it assumes that circumstances had no effect on those rights.

So the “original land rights” argument that is so intuitive is a weak one, Lyons concludes. Not only is it weak, but it also relies on a conservative and impossible theory of land rights. American Indians, Lyons concludes, are owed a debt not because “their land” was systematically robbed from them over a period of four hundred years—such a line of argument assumes that land rights are far too firm. Instead, they are owed their land or reparative justice because they have inherited the injustices of their ancestors.

The current rebellion would create an asymmetry (or at least a grave contradiction) by supporting nationalization and collective uses of land while at the same time listening to claims about “original ownership.” To simply return lands because they were “owned” by Native Americans four hundred years ago would be asserting that land rights are essentially legitimate and stable—claims of which rebellions (like the Latin American one) should be immediately suspicious.

The second part of the worry is that simply returning indigenous lands is an anti-modern or even conservative move. While the rest of a country ought to be “modernizing” and moving forward, the left seems to want indigenous people to enjoy a distinctly unspoiled and traditional life. The way I have articulated this worry is likely to raise doubts among the ideologically sympathetic. But this worry bears only surface resemblances to the *laissez-faire* “philosophy of globalization” adopted by international banks and Tom Friedman.

Returning ancestral indigenous land to indigenous people so they might resume ancestral farming traditions would be cruel and economically unsustainable. The original damage of legislation like NAFTA—which made agriculturally rich and advanced countries even richer, but harmed working people in every liberalized market—is permanent. Though the United States has weakened its subsidies, American corn (for example) has already decimated the Mexican market for Mexican corn, commonly grown by indigenous people.

It would be thoughtless to return indigenous lands only to have indigenous people toil for an impossible profit in a virtually closed market. If anything positive has emerged from the liberalization of American markets, it is modernity's inevitable ascendancy now that rural farm life is no longer an economically viable option for South and Central American Indians. In the early years of liberalization this modernity appeared cruel and uncompromising: complexes of *malquiladoras*, factories of cheap labor near the border, employing Mexicans for substandard wages to assemble products—from microwaves to jeans—bearing the “Made in USA” tag. This was modernity for the sake of the United States, and not for that of workers.

Modernity is not some “bourgeois construction.” The price of modernity does not need to be humanity; the cost of progress does not have to be Stalinization. If the Latin American left wants to be truly progressive in treating indigenous people, it should endeavor to create a cosmopolitan and diverse proletariat without falling into the worst, most degrading traps of rival economic systems. Keeping indigenous populations, their numbers (in Mexico for instance) already dwindling, as a medieval Disneyland for Western political tourists (an “authentic,” unspoiled and exotic space) is not a legitimate solution. But right now, this is the *modus operandi*.

Another, more immediately appealing option is to establish cooperatives on a much larger scale. Indigenous people could sustain themselves by harvesting “fair trade” coffee, corn and rice (as well as creating artisan products) to sell in mar-

kets outside their respective countries—mostly in America and Europe, where economic liberalization has not driven down the price of foreign commodities. There are already working examples of such cooperative efforts, but they are autonomous and do not have the financial support of governments to make them truly sustainable. After the 2001 economic collapse in Argentina, mass firings were not met with acquiescence: workers who lost everything returned to their factories and restarted production, instituting a radically democratic power structure and producing for themselves and their cooperative—not for a robber-baron employer. In Chiapas, Mexico thousands of indigenous people create artisan products and grow coffee to export to the United States—the Mexican market has been obliterated by cheap imports. These are only two examples. Cooperative production *en masse* could match radical rhetoric with radical reality. Latin America could close their markets and trade only with neighbors (as some leaders, like Chavez, have threatened). Or the massive, cooperative effort could give capitalism a strong, univocal message: a human economy can still be a competitive economy.

It has yet to be seen if Latin American leaders (from Chavez to Ortega) can follow through with their promises of reform—not only through nationalizing industry, but by creating sustainable economies based on economic solidarity instead of crude competition. Their political will and commitment to indigenous people will not be revealed by how much land they can seize, but by how real they can make an alternative world against the medieval and confused consensus.

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RICHARD MCKEON: THE GREATEST PHILOSOPHER YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD OF

Will Selinger

While the problem of “relativism” has been with us since the Sophists of ancient Greece, it has acquired new force in the last century. Relativism is of course the contention that there is no “truth”; everything is a matter of the perspective of an individual or his community; no one perspective is better than any other. The political effects of relativism have been decried by both conservatives such as Allan Bloom and liberals such as Martha Nussbaum. Yet while many blame relativism for such atrocities as the Holocaust, others point to the fact that liberal democracies have managed to limp along even though most of us remain skeptical of a universal conception of *right* or *human rights*. Nor is it clear that our everyday life has suffered. Self-interest, ambition, friends, family, and empathy towards those who are suffering are natural human forces that have not been eradicated, and continue to give most of us meaning.

Yet if human life as a whole has survived the question of relativism for the time being, it is less clear how immune a university is. What exactly is the purpose of a university if there is no truth but rather an endless multiplicity of perspectives, no single one better than any other? Why are we studying Aristotle or DNA or Middle Eastern history if in the end our perspective will carry no more weight than it did before? Needless to say universities too have managed to survive, but where there once was a common purpose, there are now an infinite number of seemingly independent purposes coexisting in the same location. At first glance this too seems unproblematic. Yet the need for conversations that cut across boundaries remains clearer than ever, since nearly every

subject or problem overlaps multiple disciplines. Should Al-Qaeda, for instance, be analyzed by political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, or theologians? Every single one of these disciplines could make a powerful case that they are best suited for the task. One could even add Russian literature, since many argue that nobody has understood the mentality of terrorism as well as Dostoyevsky did. I hesitate to even begin to look *within* any of these departments. In political science, Al-Qaeda can and has been studied as a topic of Comparative Politics, International Relations, American Politics, and Political Theory. While all of these disciplines bring different perspectives to bear on it, one cannot help but feel that these perspectives are all intimately related. Al-Qaeda’s effect on international politics cannot be entirely disconnected from its effect on American politics, which cannot be entirely disconnected from its effect on American culture.

Along with the irritating fact that problems worthy of study correspond to multiple disciplines, is the astonishing way in which the same ideas and trends continue to find their way into every sort of inquiry. A graduate student in Geography tells me that Michel Foucault has had as great an influence on the field as any geographer of the last thirty years, and that very few geographers of the last 150 years have had as great an influence on the field as Karl Marx has. Indeed, what type of a work is *A History of Sexuality*? It has influenced nearly every single discipline in the humanities and social sciences. In the last analysis the authors that will be read far into the future are those who, like Foucault, challenge all of our understandings, regardless of our academic niche, by touching on questions that are universal.

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The fact that problems and ideas transcend disciplines points to the need for a universal method or criteria with which to approach and evaluate them. Surely all the possible ways to study terrorism, from the discipline one begins in to the theorists one draws upon, will give vastly different explanations of the phenomena and suggestions for what should be done. If there is no way to begin to evaluate these multiple perspectives, to decide which ones are right and which ones are wrong, it seems we will be left in complete confusion. If someone were to make a decision about how to think about or act upon an issue, it seems that that such a decision will be little more than a leap of faith.

While philosophers from Plato to Heidegger have attempted to guide intellectual and spiritual life beyond relativism, few have addressed this problem as profoundly as Richard McKeon, one of the most unappreciated philosophers of the twentieth century. He was a professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago from 1934-1974, the architect of the first Core, the author of multiple books, and the President of the American Philosophical Association. McKeon was also a great influence on such thinkers as Wayne Booth, Susan Sontag, and Richard Rorty.

Richard McKeon's great project was the "re-discovery" of rhetoric. For most of us, rhetoric continues to have the bad reputation lent to it by Plato, and in our everyday life we use it as another name for demagoguery. Yet the Aristotelian understanding of rhetoric is far different. For Aristotle, rhetoric is the tool we use when we confront questions that are not ultimately knowable. Rhetoric was originally associated with politics and law, subjects which deal with questions that are not ultimately knowable because they concern the future and the past, respectively. Should we withdraw from Iraq? Since a possible withdrawal is in the future, and we can only imperfectly construct what would happen, it is impossible for us to know for sure right now. Did Donald Rumsfeld commit war crimes while he was in office? Since Rumsfeld's actions were in the past, and we can only imperfectly construct what happened, it is impossible for us

to know for sure. It is also important that politics and law concern questions of values, which neither in Aristotle's time nor ours are universally agreed upon. Yet while politics and law, because they concern events in the past and future and values, are the most obvious instances of where we use rhetoric, Aristotle goes on to argue that rhetoric "is as universal as dialectic," thus "rhetoric we look upon as the power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject matter presented to us."

Rhetoric is not a denial of truth, but rather an affirmation of truths that are beyond our limited powers, and an attempt to see as great a picture of them as we can given these limited powers. McKeon's insight was that a re-discovery of rhetoric could help us reorganize intellectual life. Just as Aristotle identifies two forms of reasoning that are inescapably a part of political and legal rhetoric, *enthymemes* and reasoning by example, McKeon identifies four forms of argument that have been inescapably a part of philosophical discourse since classical times. While his actual arguments are obviously more complicated than space can allow here, he argues that in any theoretical inquiry one can attempt to illuminate the *unknown* by using *knowledge*, the *known*, the *knowable*, or the *knower*. McKeon characterizes these positions with Plato, Aristotle, Democritus, and the Sophists, respectively. In the course of any inquiry there are countless times in which an author encounters the *unknown*, and countless points at which they use one of the four possibilities mentioned above. McKeon emphasizes four such key points: there is an author's assumption or *principle* (i.e., where does his subject begin), his *method* (how he relates to his subject), his *interpretation* (where his subject ends, and what if anything is beyond it), and his *selection* (what type of a thing is his subject).

There are of course immediate and obvious objections that can be put forth, and which have contributed to the poor reception McKeon has received. Is he not simply encouraging us to put these writers, who are immeasurably complex and unique, into one of four categories? His method may lead to an understanding of these thinkers

among more people but at the price of obscuring what they are doing at the deepest level. Can the diversity of human thought really be simplified like this? Here we have no choice but to read McKeon as he reads other authors. What types of categories are these that he is creating? What is his *method*? They clearly are not ontological, that is, rooted in a *knowledge* of Being like Plato's Ideas are. Nor are they part of an underlying *knowable* structure of the human mind, as for instance Freud attempts to describe. Nor, finally, does each represent a *known* human capacity, as Aristotle distinguishes between theory, practice, and making. Rather, McKeon divides these authors with reference to himself, the *knower*. This matrix of categories he creates is a construct, a lens we can use to look at any piece of theoretical writing. It is certainly not the only lens one can use; there are arguably an infinite number of others. McKeon would question whether it is possible or desirable to approach an author without any lens at all, to read a book with one's mind a completely blank slate. Our university is currently organized around a lens (also not rooted in nature, Being, or the structure of our mind) that divides writers into philosophy, sociology, political science, psychology, literature, etc. Nobody would deny that this is a construct, yet despite the flaws noted above, it is clearly a construct that has been immeasurably useful for certain purposes, such as organizing universities.

Thus instead of rejecting McKeon for propounding one among an infinite number of lenses with which one could approach a book, we should rather ask: for what purpose did he construct this lens? For this question it is necessary to look at McKeon's *principle*: his assumption about where his subject (philosophy) begins. Here McKeon follows Aristotle in emphasizing the *known*:

"One of the assumptions that we shall make is that even though the way in which philosophy keeps its respectability today is to become as technical as any other subject...If you take any problem - a problem of the natural sciences, or of the social sciences, of aesthetic experience, or even a problem that you encounter when you deal with practical life...and push it far enough, it is a philosophic problem. 'Pushing it far enough' means

only that you push it to the point of at which the regular procedures you use in its solution no longer hold."

McKeon uses the example of math. As we move through school we continue to learn more: first how to add, then to subtract, then to multiply and to divide. At a certain point we learn to use variables instead of real numbers, then to apply these to shapes, then we learn calculus, and so on. Then, at a certain point, we turn around and ask, "What is it that I have even been doing all of this time? What exactly is a number?" McKeon's assumption is thus that all of the theoretical problems that we study, whatever the subject matter, are rooted in our experience, in what we all *know*, they are just pushed beyond it. Thus the purpose of the construct that McKeon has created, the lens of four boxes with which we can look at anything, is to enable us to make that leap. It is a lens that was specifically created to enable us to see the universal philosophical questions that underlie every subject, and to see that these questions arise naturally out of our experiences.

Perhaps it would be best to demonstrate how McKeon's analysis of rhetoric works. How, for instance, would Richard McKeon begin to read Machiavelli's *Prince* and Aristotle's *Politics*? Let us look only at the first three pages of each. McKeon would first note that Machiavelli begins the *Prince* with a description of himself. In his introductory Dedicatory Letter, Machiavelli appeals to his own "knowledge of ancient things" and his own "experience of modern things." This appeal to the *knower* continues when Machiavelli tells us that "to know the nature of a prince one must be of the people" and "to know the nature of the people one must be a prince," and further that he himself knows both of these perspectives, having lived formerly in the courts of princes, but having since fallen to a lowly common man. It becomes clear in Chapter I that politics is the art with which men who have knowledge, exceptional *knowers*, mold men and create states. In that chapter Machiavelli clearly distinguishes between principalities based on how they are made. There is the material: the people "are either accustomed to live under a prince or, used

to living in freedom”; there is the maker: either a new individual or a hereditary prince; and finally there is the instrument: “the arms of the prince himself, or of others, by fortune or by virtue.”

By contrast, one reading the first three pages of the *Politics* would have absolutely no idea who Aristotle is. Nor does that matter to his inquiry. He begins instead with things that are *known*. Everybody, regardless of origin, knows that people “form a community with a view to some good.” In order to explain the formation of governments, he distinguishes between man and other animals based on the fact that man alone has speech, and thus “is by nature a political animal.” This is again something that we all know. Whereas for Machiavelli a state is a construct created by a *knower*, for Aristotle man’s nature, as distinguished from the natures of other animals, is a *known* principle of growth, through which states grow. It must again be emphasized that examining the different rhetorical strategies that these authors use is only one among a multitude of ways to distinguish them. One could easily distinguish them historically, since Machiavelli lived nearly two thousand years after Aristotle, in a completely different world. Yet even in the first three pages, one can already see how McKeon’s lens enables us to see universal, underlying problems, and that one cannot evaluate the respective claims of Aristotle and Machiavelli without evaluating them.

In the end it is perhaps still unclear why McKeon, among twentieth century thinkers, provides the best way out of our intellectual confusion. What does he offer that Heidegger, Arendt, Strauss, Derrida, and Foucault do not? McKeon’s relevance consists precisely in the fact that so much has been written about these problems yet so little common ground has been found. Indeed, one often finds these brilliant thinkers, and their students, talking completely past each other. As Wayne Booth wrote about Derrida:

“McKeon could have taught...Jacques Derrida, to go one step deeper and recognize that to begin with *language*, pursuing epistemological deconstruction of linguistic ambiguities is only one of many legiti-

mate ways of beginning; that to think ‘dialectically’ about the various emptiness’s underlying linguistic ambiguity is only of many legitimate *methods* of thought; that to pursue as you *goal* a shocking undermining of misguided overconfidence is only one of many legitimate goals for thought. And so on...”

It is not progress if relativism is simply replaced by new dogmatisms, yet in too many instances that seems to be precisely what has happened. McKeon attempts to teach us not merely a new “truth” to believe in, but rather how to appreciate the many routes that lead to truths that are beyond us all. As he often said, “Just because there is one truth, doesn’t mean that there aren’t many ways to say it.”

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CALL ME HAGAR

Jessica Hester

In Sunday school, I munched on animal crackers, guzzled fruit juice, and spilled crumbs all over my patent-leather Mary-Janes. I also learned that it was bad to take more than one cube of Wonderbread during Communion, and that you shouldn't lick the little thimble cups of "wine" clean while the other parishioners stood up to sing. I was also taught that Eve was crafted from Adam's rib, and that we're all going to die a fiery death because that devious little slut couldn't keep her hands and mouth to herself. As a child, I was taught that women who fly by the seat of their hip-huggers are responsible for the fallen state of humanity. Today, at seventeen, as an impassioned feminist and voracious reader, I recognize that the poets I idolize believed that the world was perfect when it was a man's world; the uterus ruined everything.

It's hard to be a young feminist studying canonical literature. The ancient poets—Homer, Sophocles, Euripides—and the modern prophets—Hemingway, Dostoyevsky, Nabokov—are masters of their field whose talent is undeniable, but their subjects and themes are inherently patriarchal. The former category of authors portrayed their male protagonists as men whose togas could barely accommodate their rippling muscles and cover their gargantuan manhoods (and we are expected to believe that these demi-Gods all popped out of the womb looking like Adonises), while their loyal wives (or, in Oedipus's case, his uncomfortably sensual mother) wait for them to finish seducing voluptuous prisoners of war or parading around the countryside as marauders. Evidently, gender-stereotyping has been in existence since 800 B.C.

The feminist in me wonders if anything has changed since the days of Odysseus. I'm still expected to swoon over bulging biceps, and still considered a harlot if I refuse to remain chaste until my crusader returns from his twenty-year quest. As a feminist, I know I should be repulsed by the fact that had he the ability, Homer would probably take away my right to affordable, accessible birth control. After all, the poet seems to think that a slave girl is an appropriate battle prize for Achilles—I doubt he'd be too terribly supportive of my right to choose. Aeschylus, too, would likely be an opponent of women's rights: his Agamemnon, leader of the Greek forces at Troy, was prepared to sacrifice daughter Iphigenia to please Artemis, the virginal goddess of the hunt. Aeschylus' drama suggests what his contemporaries (and possibly even my own) knew: women are as disposable as livestock. I tell myself that I actively reject the notion that women can be made into sacrificial lambs and then am horrified when I find myself too fascinated by a story to be outraged by its content.

I find myself disregarding the great poet's blatant sexism; I am humbled by his awesome command of the written word. How is it possible, and is it wrong, I ask myself, to revel in the literary merit of men I would probably call "bastards" to their faces? I am a woman divided: I'm torn between my love for the old gang—these horribly sexist, wonderful writers—and my fierce allegiance to my gender. Crimson-faced, I'm ashamed to admit to my fellow "femi-nazis" that I love misogynistic literature, and embarrassed to tell the book-nuts that I spend my weekends campaigning for pro-choice legislation. I am reluctant to admit that it is impossible to reconcile feminist ideology with an appreciation for hearty, meaty prose. Apparently, I love the way testosterone looks in print.

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I've never been terribly religious (setting out non-genetically-engineered carrots for Rudolph and fat-free, organic Horizon milk for Santa is the extent of my Protestantism), so my already-passionate beliefs become even more intense in order to fill my spiritual void. The problem is, I believe in both the strength and wisdom of the female spirit and the powerful, masculine literary voice. When it's a damp, drizzly November in my soul, I turn to *Moby-Dick*. Melville's credo is more relevant to me than those of John, Peter, or Paul, and, at times, even more so than Ms. Friedan's doctrine. I'm a devout feminist, but I feel like a guilty Catholic: I feel the need to confess to reading all of these sacrilegious books, but, at the same time, I don't think that it's a sin to love good literature. It's not my fault that nearly every great piece of literature written pre-1920 happens to reek of musky masculinity.

I can't help but wonder if the reason that there are so few ancient writings attributed to the women of Greece and Rome is that a) there simply weren't any talented female writers at the time, b) the women were too busy withholding sex from their barbaric husbands to contemplate the Meaning of Life, or c) they had neither money nor a room of their own to nurture their ideas for the Great Roman Novel. It would be disheartening enough to have to admit that I'm not proud of my gender's literary accomplishments—it's devastating to have to add that my formal education has ignored the few pieces that have survived the centuries. Sappho was the most prominent female poet of the ancient world; in the worlds of my father, she was also "a raging lesbian." Perhaps her penchant for erotica is the reason why, despite my four years of accelerated and comprehensive study of the written word in high school, I had never read a single one of her poems. Clearly, proposing a unit on the lyric poetry of Sappho of the Isle of Lesbos would make the conservative school board—and my father—squirm in their seats. But I feel like an adopted child who decides to locate her birthparents: I've grown up with Homer and J.M. Barrie, but I know I'm not their daughter. With my birth mother inaccessible, I feel cast

adrift in an indifferent sea. Constructing a literary family tree tracing me back to my Fore Mothers would be like finding land.

The desolate landscape of American female-lit is even more upsetting than the estrogen-void in Greek literature because, frankly, we should have known better. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published in England in 1792; in 1848, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton inspired the women's rights movement on this side of the Atlantic through their Seneca Falls convention. While the Founding Mothers of the women's rights movement argued for our ability to cast a vote in the Presidential election, they neglected to mention the betrayal of our right to put pen to paper. Edith Wharton, the prolific author of the *House of Mirth* (1905) and countless other novels and short stories, wrote at the same time as Herman Melville and Mark Twain. Melville and Twain and staples in the average high school curriculum (judging by the fact that Borders is almost always sold out of CliffsNotes on *Moby-Dick* and *Huck Finn*), while Wharton is rarely examined. Kate Chopin (*The Awakening*) is widely considered the definitive Southern female writer of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, but she, too, is largely ignored in the classroom. As a reader and writer myself, how can I be proud of my gender when I'm not proud of our literary heritage?

I have tried to read books written by females, but all too often, the most widely-publicized books penned by women are the latest attempts to emulate *The Devil Wears Prada*, and such trite, deflated prose is markedly unsatisfying. I am placing a want ad: single white female, non-smoker, seeking same, with pen that spits fire. Not a single female writer I've encountered has rivaled Dostoevsky; no one else has been able to persuade me quite like this alpha-male that her characters can be so anguished, so filled with hate and contempt for one another, and yet very much in love. Mr. D.'s unromanticized, dirty, yellow realism makes him a dear friend: I always look forward to my meetings with the solipsistic saint/sinner Raskolnikov in the far corner of the library.

Call me a hindrance to the feminist movement, but I am unwilling to ignore my insatiable hunger for a nice bloody slab of a novel. An organic, afternoon-snack-sized novella isn't going to cut it; sometimes, I want a greasy, fast-food novel whose fat stays nestled in my belly for months. I like stories that stay with me like those pounds that I just can't shed. The haunting tale of the monomaniacal Captain Ahab and his fated crew is one that, like decadent chocolate cake, always leaves me licking my lips for more. Still, admitting that I'm a Melville-junkie sometimes feels like being at a meeting of "Traitors-To-Feminism Anonymous": "Hi, I'm Jessica, and I'm a closet lover of derogatory prose!" I lead a double life: by day, I crusade for equality, and at night, I go on secret dates—back alley, smoky bar, lie-through-your-teeth-the-next-day kind of dates—with books whose authors would probably prefer me to be in the kitchen, barefoot and pregnant, making them a roast-beef sandwich. And yet, I refuse to accept the seemingly-obviously possibility that the two loves of my life cannot attempt a reconciliation; I am convinced that the three of us can be in a happy and committed *ménage à trois*.

If Feminism and Male-Lit sat me down and demanded that I choose between them, I'm not sure that I could, nor do I think that I have to. My feminism certainly informs my attitude to prose, but likewise does prose alter my feminism. Some might view this as flip-flopping irresolution, but I think it's good. Engaging in an intellectual dialogue with myself—and with Friedan and Melville's prose—prevents me from becoming static and intellectually lazy, clinging to an impassioned ideology I can no longer justify. I have the privilege of constantly re-situating myself in both the academic and feminist realms, and the privilege of coming to understand that these need not necessarily be mutually exclusive. As a reader, I am moved by Sonya's redemptive love for Raskolnikov; as a woman, I am outraged by the motif of the godly prostitute and its implications that women are inherently one or another binary opposition: a virgin or a whore (and that the truly feminine ones are, miraculously, both!). As both

a reader and a woman, I am challenged and exhilarated by my two passions, and I feel that their co-existence endows me with a unique sensitivity both as a reader and a crusader for women's rights. When you get right down to it, it's a matter of my constitution: I've got two X chromosomes in my blood and words in my heart, and sometimes I curse Hemingway under my breath, but other times I sit in contended silence (knowing there will be time to argue later) and lose myself in prose.

FOREIGN POLICY FAUX PAS

Ben Oren

A laundry list of factors which resulted in the U.S. decision to go to war in Iraq has been building in the public consciousness. The individual personalities and world views of men who go by one-name monikers: Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Cheney; the military bureaucracy, especially at the Pentagon; the fealty of the mainstream media; impotence of world opinion in the face of U.S. hegemony; and the politics of war after 9/11 have all been dissected and considered as mechanisms which allowed the U.S. to send troops between the Tigris and Euphrates. However, there is one endemic aspect of the government that has largely gone unconsidered as a factor. It will continue to influence foreign policy through the end of the Bush administration, and only a Democratic presidency in 2008 will alter its effects. This large, shadowy manipulator of foreign policy goes by an almost child-like name: think tanks.

Think tanks are research institutions which generate analytic studies of public policy, and have undergone several different waves of characterization. In the build-up and aftermath of World War I, rich philanthropic organizations like the Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations gave lavish funds to the creation of organizations which housed policy experts. Several of the most renowned think tanks of today, such as the Brookings and Hoover Institutions, were created during that period, and offered policy analysis on everything from reforming health care to pursuing closer economic relations with Russia. After World War II, in which civilian analysis of defense strategies had proved crucial, government contracts were given out to ensure a permanent supply of

civilian analysts. The most famous of these, the RAND Corporation, was set up by the Air Force and is one of the largest think tanks today. Like their predecessors in the first wave, this group of think tanks, while sometimes employing individuals with vociferous political opinions, strove to maintain ideological neutrality at an institutional level, caring only that a measure of rationality and deliberateness was injected into the policy-making process. However, by the late 70's, a small group of think tanks had begun to carry a different tune than the chorus of rationality sung by their peers.

Called advocacy think tanks, these organizations have specific political and ideological agendas. Organized to maximize their political influence on the policy-making process instead of their intellectual pursuit of the truth, these think tanks devote the majority of their resources to persuading members of Congress and government institutions to share their ideological point of view. Originally ideologically neutral, the first advocacy think tanks were small, newly-formed institutions that didn't have the intellectual and monetary heft to compete for influence with the giant think tanks that were already established. Consequently, they decided to make the adoption of specific ideological agendas by governmental actors a priority, and started to target specific bastions of influence (namely, individual members of congress, specific agencies, specific personnel within a given administration) through a variety of methods. They were so successful that only the largest and most entrenched think tanks could avoid copying their methods and hope to remain influential; today, a majority of think tanks are advocacy think tanks. Throughout the rest of the discussion, "think tank" and "advocacy think tank" will be used synonymously.

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A think tank's purpose is to get its policy proposals adopted; studies and reports are made so that a bureaucrat or official can use the analysis as the basis for his own work and recommendations. But there is no guarantee that a report, once written, will be used. Think tanks therefore employ a variety of methods to create an intellectual climate in which their ideas can be more easily assimilated. Testifying before Congressional committees gives the impression that the testimony, cast from an ideological mold, represents an objective analysis which a majority of experts hold true. Holding conferences offering ideological analysis of an issue, and inviting members of Congress and departmental agencies to attend, accomplishes the same goal. Navigating the various tributaries of the media, whether authoring an op-ed in a paper or magazine or appearing as a panelist on a TV show, allows think tank scholars to influence public opinion, so that politicians are constrained by the choices they can make without fearing a backlash of negative poll numbers.

Think tank scholars can also influence public policy by crafting it. A large number of bureaucrats stationed in important foreign policy agencies, like the Department of State and the National Security Council, cut their teeth working in think tanks, and are both shaped by and likely to derive analysis from their former employers. During George W. Bush's first term, he staffed several top positions with conservative think tank veterans; he took Lawrence Lindsey from the American Enterprise Institute for his Director of the Economic Council and snatched up Condoleezza Rice from the Hoover Institute to be his national security advisor, to name but two. The recruitment of think tank scholars exists not only as an association between individuals, but also as an association between institutions. Several of these institutions, such as the Urban Institute, maintain a close relationship with specific governmental agencies and departments, receiving large policy contracts on a regular basis (72% of the Urban Institute's work is done at the government's request). Sometimes, the relationship is so close that the boundary becomes blurred as to which

institution employs the scholar. One example is the Department of State's Diplomat in Residence program, in which a State Department employee is farmed out to a think tank for three to five years, continuing to function as part of the bureaucratic apparatus but also producing policy analysis, and providing influence and clout, for a think tank.

Presidential administrations provide a huge amount of access for think tanks. Think tank scholars are involved in every step of a president's career, from providing blueprints of foreign policy initiatives during a campaign to being drafted into top agency positions within an administration. Carter recruited dozens of people from the likes of the Brookings Institution and Council of Foreign Relations; almost twenty years later, the next Democratic administration would farm the Progressive Policy Institute and the Economic Policy Institute, among others, to staff top positions. Once in positions of power, members of think tanks can acquire positions lower down within their department for their former colleagues. When Donald Rumsfeld assumed command of the Pentagon, he staffed key positions beneath him with the likes of Douglas Fife, Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, who all served with him on the board of a think tank called the Project for a New American Century.

On its face, the influence of think tanks is not a bad thing. The founding fathers expected the apparatus of government to be the battleground for a continual war among disparate interest groups vying for power. Think tanks, although maybe not envisioned in 1787, are merely newcomers to a great power game whose rules are designed to take advantage of competing ideologies. There is, of course, a snag in the current system. A preponderance of think tanks share a common ideology.

The first think tanks which put marketing and persuasion above scholarly analysis were conservative institutions (the American Enterprise Institute was the first, but the Heritage Foundation was the most successful). Consequently, the knowledge of how to cultivate influence has diffused quicker

along conservative channels than it has among liberal ones, with a predictable effect on status and power of think tanks. Today, over 40 percent of think tanks identify as conservative, less than 20 percent are liberal, and many of those who claim an ideologically neutral stance lean conservative (for instance, James Baker's think tank, the Baker Institute for Public Policy, claims neutrality despite employing, and accepting contracts for studies from, a majority of conservatives). Conservative think tanks also have the edge on resources; the conservative Heritage Foundation is the largest think tank which doesn't rely on government funding, with a staff and annual budget almost twice that of its highest competitor.

As a result, conservative think tanks influence policy discussions much more than liberal ones. Conservatives lead attempts at establishing the intellectual climate where ideas can take wing. The scholars at the conservative Center for Strategic and International Studies get their names most often in print and on radio; those getting paychecks from the American Enterprise Institute appear most often on TV. Scholars from conservative think tanks are also recruited into the governmental bureaucracy at higher rates. Because conservative administrations have been more numerous than liberal ones, more conservative think tank employees have been put in top positions than liberal ones have, which means they have gotten more of their conservative comrades jobs in the governmental bureaucracy. Conservatives have permeated the foreign policy establishment to the point where it's self-perpetuating; the State Department's Diplomat in Residence program loans employees out to five think tanks, all conservative.

Think tanks of a common ideology affect foreign policy disproportionately. Whereas other governmental sectors such as health care, agricultural policy and transportation are relatively non-ideological, foreign policy has been a battleground for different ideological strains since time immemorial. Consequently, foreign policy influence is a highly-sought prize of the ideologically motivated, and think tanks devote a significant

share of their resources to shaping the foreign policy debate. Partly as a result of this ideological atmosphere, top foreign policy jobs are unlikely to be held over from administration to administration; each president has a large swath of top foreign policy advisers to appoint each term, advisers which are usually culled from think tanks.

Thus, one factor in the U.S. invasion of Iraq was the preponderance of conservative thinkers in the foreign policy establishment. In such an environment, voices across the foreign policy spectrum are not heard in equal volume. While there may be contentious debate within foreign policy institutions, as there was over Iraq, enough of the participants share a conservative world view that the assumptions on which policies are based are not debated. Instead of arguing over whether attacking Iraq is necessary, the argument is over timing, or over troop levels, or strategy, or feasibility. Had there been an equal number of conservatives and liberals in foreign policy institutions haggling over the Iraq war, the world would be a very different place. It may have become apparent that attacking Iraq wasn't necessary; even if the attack were still carried out, more consideration would probably have been given to public works programs, or humanitarian assistance, or working with the assistance of allies.

Ultimately, though, the decisions are made by the people at the top of the institutions. Had Colin Powell, Richard Armitage, General Shinseki and others critical of the administration's eventual war plan won their bureaucratic knife fights, the war plan would have looked very different. But they lost. And when they did, those with a Wolfowitzian worldview were able to utilize the foreign policy establishment with little resistance, because it was already geared to accept policy based on conservative premises. When either ideology dominates the foreign policy discussion, poor results are inevitable. Fundamental assumptions about the world go unchallenged, and shaky policies are built on flawed foundations. An invasion whose main selling point was to establish empirical evidence for a theory about international relations made

it through the foreign policy establishment because enough people had an ideological stake in it.

The most sure way of getting a more diverse set of views would be a change in presidential parties. A Democratic administration would staff the top foreign policy positions from liberal think tanks, with people whose view of the world is based on a different set of assumptions than the majority of the foreign policy establishment. Conservative voices would still be heard; their hands still guide a majority of the foreign policy establishment. However, those working in foreign policy institutions with a liberal point of view would gain clout, working for bosses who share their fundamental assumptions. The two sides would be forced to confront each other. Assumptions would be challenged, and proposed policies would be subjected to a rigorous analysis from both sides. Whichever party wins in 2008, think tanks will continue to remain an integral part of the foreign policy landscape. The interplay of think tank ideologies can either extend our record of hapless flailing, or construct a blueprint for damming the flow of blood in Iraq.

THE SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXT OF HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE

Robert Perlman

Medicine is a wonderful and satisfying profession, largely because it focuses on caring for individual patients. The physician-patient relationship can be healing to patients, and making a difference in the lives of patients is rewarding for physicians. Medicine's concern for individual patients is part of our cultural focus on individual autonomy and individual rights. We rightly value our individual freedoms. At times, however, our preoccupation with individuals may cause us to lose sight of the fact that we are not isolated human beings but are embedded in families and larger communities, and we live in an environment that is increasingly shaped by human cultural practices. Our relationships with others and our interactions with our environment are critical determinants of health and disease; indeed, from a population perspective, they have far greater influence than do the actions of individual physicians caring for individual patients. With this in mind, I want to discuss some of the socioeconomic and cultural influences on health.

Of course we know that environmental factors influence health, but I don't think we always appreciate the extent to which our environment is shaped by cultural practices and by the products of human activity. Think for a moment about your own lives. You live in man-made buildings, you wear man-made clothes, you eat food that has been grown, harvested, and brought to market by other people—even the air you breathe and the water you drink has been modified, for better or worse, by human actions. Many cultural practices are health-promoting; we live longer and healthier lives than our ancestors did. Indeed, many cultural practices probably spread and have

been maintained because they improved health. But other cultural practices are pathogenic.

It is perhaps ironic that many of the most important health advances in the last two hundred years have consisted in undoing the deleterious effects of human activity, and many of our remaining challenges involve undoing the deleterious effects of other cultural practices. Because undoing the pathogenic effects of cultural practices entails confrontation with institutions that have political and economic power, this work takes personal courage as well as knowledge.

I want to illustrate these ideas by discussing three specific examples—fecal contamination of drinking water, a problem that was largely solved in the United States in the nineteenth century; childhood lead poisoning, a major health problem in the twentieth century that has been greatly ameliorated but that, unfortunately, is still with us; and health disparities, which I believe will be among our greatest challenges in the twenty-first century.

Sewage

Since the time of the agricultural revolution and the beginning of permanent human settlements, people ran the risk of contaminating their water supplies with their own feces. Fecal contamination of food and water was one of the reasons that infectious diseases became prominent at the time of the agricultural revolution. Even though many of us walk around with bottled spring water, we in the United States take the availability of pure water for granted. But it hasn't always been this way. In Chicago, our present sewage disposal and water supply systems date to the second half of the nineteenth century. Before about 1850, both sewage disposal and the water supply were hap-

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hazard and poorly organized. Most homes had outdoor privies, and many people got their water from backyard wells. This arrangement was conducive to the contamination of drinking water; Chicago, like other American cities, suffered from recurring epidemics of cholera and other diarrheal diseases. In the early 1850s, Chicago experienced several severe cholera epidemics. The worst occurred in 1854, when cholera killed more than 1,400 people in Chicago—and this was a time when the population of the city was about 100,000! Coincidentally, the same year John Snow demonstrated that cholera was caused by drinking contaminated water in London.

At that time, the two prominent theories of disease were the miasmatic and contagion theories. The miasmatic theory postulated that disease arose from the environment, from polluted air, water, and soil, while the contagion theory postulated that disease was transmitted from person to person by some unknown means. The miasmatic theory of disease led to efforts to purify urban water supplies, long before disease-causing bacteria were isolated and before the rise of the germ theory.

In the 1850s, the state created the Chicago Board of Sewerage Commissioners, and Chicago developed the first comprehensive sewer system in the country. At the same time, the Board of Water Commissioners began to build a public water supply system. Developing a sewer system was challenging, because Chicago is so flat. In many parts of the city, streets had to be raised so that sewers could be built under them. If you go to neighborhoods on the near North side, you can still see evidence of this—you can see nineteenth-century homes whose original entrances are now below street level. The sewer system emptied into the Chicago River, which at that time emptied into Lake Michigan. This was a start, but it was not an ideal solution, because the main intake of the water system was near what is now Navy Pier, very close to the mouth of the river. Around 1870, people dug a tunnel two miles out into the lake and built a water crib to bring in water that was uncontaminated by sewage. Off the Point,

you can see a second crib, built in the twentieth century to serve the South side; the original one is on the North side, East of the Water Tower.

As the population grew and sewage production increased, the flow of the Chicago River was reversed, so that, instead of flowing into Lake Michigan, it drained into the Des Plaines River, and then on to the Illinois River and the Mississippi. As you might imagine, communities downriver of us were not happy. In 1900, Missouri petitioned the Supreme Court to pass an injunction forbidding the State of Illinois and the Chicago Sanitary District from sending its sewage into the Mississippi River. The Court ruled in Chicago's favor; it argued that, since Missouri towns dumped their sewage into the Mississippi, they couldn't prevent Illinois towns from doing the same. Today, we have treatment plants to detoxify the sewage before we dump it into the Illinois River. The important point of this history is that by the mid- to late nineteenth century, Chicago had sewage and water supply systems that were conducive to good health and could support population growth, and were models for the rest of the country. Our last cholera epidemic occurred in 1866.

The next time you walk on Michigan Avenue and see the Water Tower and the Pumping Station, don't think of them simply as relics that survived the Chicago Fire. They symbolize what enabled Chicago to become a world-class city in the nineteenth century. It's hard to imagine that Chicago would have been a thriving metropolis in the 1890s, or that Rockefeller would have chosen to found his University here, if we didn't have this infrastructure. Separating feces from drinking water may not sound sexy, but it was probably the most important advance in health in the nineteenth century. Remember that there are still large portions of the world where people don't have access to reliably clean water, and where diarrheal diseases are still endemic. The burden of disease in underdeveloped countries is at least part of the reason why they remain underdeveloped.

Lead

Construction of sewage systems and a public water supply required persistence and determination to convince the city and state governments to spend the necessary money, but it was comparatively easy because the health benefits were clear and affected everyone, and there were no commercial interests opposed to it. Improving health in the twentieth century became more difficult, because many of the major health problems were the result of corporate activities; companies that created the problems denied that problems existed and then opposed solutions that might decrease their profits or increase their liability. Cigarettes and lead are two commercial products that have been major causes of disease; reductions in smoking and in the use of lead have been two of the most important health improvements in the second half of the twentieth century. Because you are probably more familiar with the problems of smoking than with lead, I will focus on lead poisoning, and especially childhood lead poisoning.

Lead is part of the earth's crust but until relatively recently, all of the lead in the world was sequestered in mineral deposits; for most of our evolutionary history, our ancestors were probably not exposed to lead. The earliest evidence for the use of lead is the finding of lead jewelry, dated to be about six or seven thousand years old, in Turkey. Lead mining probably began around the time that our ancestors began living in fixed settlements. Lead deposits are commonly contaminated with silver; when silver became desirable, people may have begun mining and smelting lead to obtain the silver. Once people began mining lead, however, they discovered that it was soft and malleable, and easy to work with, and they found a number of uses for it. The Romans used lead pipes for their water supply and for sewage; you probably know that our word *plumbing* is derived from *plumbum*, the Latin word for lead. I'm sure that the original water and sewage pipes in Chicago were made of lead. Lead was also used in paint and in ceramic glazes. Lead-based paints are quick drying and durable, and they resist cracking. Lead carbonate itself is white, and is a good base for other pigments. Lead also tastes sweet, and it was added to wine and other

foods as a sweetener. Lead turns out to be a very useful mineral. In the context of this discussion, though, it's perhaps symbolic that lead has been used since the middle ages as a lining for coffins.

Lead has been recognized as a toxin for thousands of years. The symptoms of lead poisoning include severe gastrointestinal cramping and pain, and a variety of neurological symptoms, ranging from headache and confusion to convulsions, coma, and death. By the time of the industrial revolution, lead was no longer being added to food or wine, and lead poisoning was considered an occupational disease, one that affected lead miners and workers in lead industries. Surprisingly, given that it must have been prevalent for centuries, childhood lead poisoning wasn't described until the end of the nineteenth century, and the first cases of lead poisoning in children in the United States weren't described until 1914. I think there are a couple of reasons for this delay in the recognition of childhood lead poisoning, and they're all worth thinking about.

First, the way we conceptualize dangers affects our response to them—physicians knew that lead was toxic, but because they thought of lead as an occupational toxin, they were blind to the possibility that it was also a hazard to the general population. In hindsight, this may seem shocking—but before we criticize physicians of a hundred years ago, we should acknowledge that we have blind spots, too. Just to give one example: AIDS was initially conceptualized as a disease of the gay population. It took us a long time—not centuries, but maybe a decade—before we recognized that it could also be acquired by heterosexual sex. We undoubtedly have other blind spots that will appear equally egregious to our children and grandchildren.

Another problem is that, before around the middle of the nineteenth century, physicians didn't focus their attention on children. I'm not sure why; perhaps it was because infant and childhood mortality was high, and there wasn't much that physicians could do about it. In any event, pediatrics didn't develop as a medical specialty in the United

States until the end of the nineteenth century.

A third reason for the delay in recognizing pediatric lead poisoning is that pediatrics developed as a specialty just at the heyday of the germ theory. Within a few decades at the end of the nineteenth century, Robert Koch and Louis Pasteur and their students had isolated the bacteria responsible for tuberculosis, cholera, plague, anthrax, and a number of other diseases. Perhaps not surprisingly, bacteria were thought to be the cause of all disease. People undoubtedly spent a lot of time trying to culture bacteria from children who displayed the symptoms of lead poisoning; when they weren't successful, they assumed that their failure was a technical failure rather than a conceptual problem. Again, our blind spots are not so different from theirs. The status of genes in the medical world today is reminiscent of the status of bacteria a century ago. We are so convinced of the importance of genes in causing disease that people are spending a lot of time trying to isolate genes for diseases that may well turn out not to have a genetic basis. And, as with unsuccessful searches for bacteria a century ago, people who fail to find genes that cause schizophrenia or autism, say, are likely to assume that the problem is a technical problem—perhaps they're studying the wrong populations, or they're not clearly defining the diseases—rather than accept that they are looking for the wrong causes.

In any event, by 1920 or so, lead poisoning was recognized to be a pediatric as well as an occupational disease. At that time, by far the largest use of lead was in paint. In the 1920s, most European countries banned the use of lead paint, or at least lead house paint; for whatever reason, the US didn't, and lead continued to be widely used in house paint in the United States. I said "for whatever reason," but the reason is clear—it was due to the political power and advertising acumen of the lead industry.

You may have seen pictures of "The Little Dutch Boy," which was the logo of the National Lead Company. Using children to advertise lead paint was not an accident; it was a strategy designed to make lead paint seem safe for children.

Advertising in hospital journals was another paint industry strategy to associate lead paint with health. We've been brought up to believe that a fresh coat of white paint makes homes sanitary as well as attractive, but this belief comes from the self-serving and hypocritical advertising of the paint industry rather than from science.

The use of lead house paint in the United States declined gradually after about 1925, first because of the Depression, and then, after World War II, because of rising public concern about the hazard of lead, but it wasn't finally banned until some time in the 1970s. But the 1920s saw the rise of another use of lead, as a gasoline additive. The story of leaded gasoline is a stunning story of corporate greed and abuse of power. Around 1920, Model T Fords were the best-selling cars in the United States. They ran fine on the gasoline that was then available. In an effort to increase their market share, General Motors began making cars with more powerful engines, cars that were larger, had better acceleration, and could go faster. But these more powerful engines wouldn't run properly on regular gasoline because of a problem called "knocking," and so G.M. began searching for a way to overcome the knocking problem. A scientist in the General Motors research laboratory found that tetraethyl lead prevented knocking. Tetraethyl lead had been synthesized in the nineteenth century but it wasn't used for anything because it was known to be a potent toxin. Nonetheless, General Motors formed a partnership with Standard Oil to create the Ethyl Corporation, which manufactured tetraethyl lead and sold it to oil companies as a gasoline additive. Right from the beginning, it was clear that tetraethyl lead was a problem. At least a dozen workers in lead plants died from lead poisoning, and many workers suffered neurological damage. For reasons that aren't well understood, these symptoms frequently included hallucinations and other manifestations of psychosis. So many workers became psychotic that workers dubbed one ethyl plant the "loony gas building"; and because their hallucinations commonly involved hallucinations of insects, workers called another ethyl plant the "house of butterflies."

The fact that the government allowed production and use of tetraethyl lead to continue seems almost inconceivable. Remember, though, that the Ethyl Corporation was owned by General Motors and Standard Oil, and at that time the DuPont Corporation was a major stockholder in G.M., so there were powerful corporate forces behind leaded gasoline. Tetraethyl lead was introduced and promoted in the 1920s, during the Harding and Coolidge administrations, which were as pro-business and against governmental regulation as is the current administration.

In what became a standard strategy, the Ethyl Corporation blamed the victims—workers didn't die because tetraethyl lead was toxic; they died because they were careless and didn't follow the company's safety instructions—and the company argued that the lead released from leaded gasoline wasn't a health hazard. Whereas the National Lead Company advertised the use of lead in its paints, the Ethyl Corporation referred to their product simply as "Ethyl" and never mentioned that it contained lead. And they, too, created ads that portrayed driving with "Ethyl" as romantic and beneficial.

After about 1950, leaded gas was the major source of lead released into the environment. The use of leaded gasoline began to decline in the 1970s, not because of health concerns but for business reasons. When people began to be concerned about automobile emissions, automobile manufacturers were required to install catalytic converters, to convert carbon monoxide to carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxides to nitrogen gas. It turned out that lead inactivated the catalytic converters, and so automobile manufacturers had to develop engines that didn't require leaded gasoline. The use of lead in gas declined and lost its political support, and around 1985 it was finally banned in the United States. It is astonishing, though, that the Ethyl Corporation still sells tetraethyl lead to third world countries that haven't yet abolished its use.

Between 1920, when childhood lead poisoning was recognized as a serious problem, and the

1980s, when the use of lead was finally banned, physicians and others repeatedly raised concerns about the health effects of lead paint and of leaded gasoline, but the lead industry was able to deflect these concerns. It claimed that since lead was a natural part of the environment, putting it back into the environment wasn't a problem. It argued that more research on the health effects of lead was needed before the government took any regulatory action. And since most of this research was supported by the lead industry, it isn't surprising that the industry could produce data showing that lead wasn't a hazard. Scientific understanding is always incomplete, and scientific data are always prone to refutation or reinterpretation. Our willingness to view scientific knowledge as tentative and subject to change is one of the virtues of science. But people can always take advantage of the tentative nature of scientific knowledge to sow confusion. The lead industry had the same strategy as the tobacco industry, which claimed, "Doubt is our product." As long as the industry could raise doubts about the health hazards of lead, it didn't really have to prove that lead was safe, and it could postpone government intervention. And it could always hire experts to voice these doubts. Again, as a tobacco industry spokesman said, "For every Ph.D. there is an equal and opposite Ph.D."

At that time, childhood lead poisoning was thought to result from eating lead paint. The Ethyl Corporation accepted that lead paint was dangerous but argued that lead from gasoline wasn't a problem; the paint companies blamed parents for letting their children eat paint; and since most cases of lead poisoning were in poor, black children who lived in old homes with flaking paint, few people cared very much. When all else failed, the lead industry attacked the scientists who reported harmful effects of lead, accused them of falsifying their research, and in some cases even threatened their academic appointments. Although charges of research fraud were never proven, this strategy had the chilling effect of discouraging young scientists from entering this field.

Initially, childhood lead poisoning was thought to

be an acute disease; children either died or they recovered, without, it was thought, any apparent sequelae. By the 1940s, physicians recognized that many children who recovered from acute episodes of lead poisoning had cognitive and behavioral problems; lead poisoning was then understood to be a chronic disease. In the 1970s, the conception of childhood lead poisoning changed again, because people found that children whose blood lead levels were not high enough to cause acute symptoms such as convulsions or coma suffered from more subtle but still serious problems. Low levels of lead cause a decrease in I.Q. and a decreased attention span, which leads to poor school performance. For reasons that are still not clear, lead seems specifically to affect social behavior; lead toxicity seems to predispose children to aggressive or antisocial behavior. Parents' and teachers' ratings of children's behavioral problems correlate well with the children's lead exposure.

Recognition of the toxic effects of low levels of lead exposure coincided with a period of urban gentrification, when middle-class families with young children began moving into older urban neighborhoods. Lead poisoning again became re-conceptualized; it was no longer a disease of ghetto children, but a disease of children. Political pressure from middle-class families led, finally, to a ban the use of lead in house paint and in gasoline, to increased efforts to remove lead from the environment, and to a great deal of progress in the prevention of lead poisoning.

Reductions in the use of leaded gasoline in the late 1970s were accompanied by a prompt reduction in blood lead levels. At present, 10 mg/dl (a deciliter is a tenth of a liter) is used as the criterion of "acceptable" lead levels in screening programs. Let's use this level as the upper limit of "normal" for the moment, although the best evidence is that even this level of lead can cause neurocognitive deficits. There appears to be no threshold for the toxic effects of lead. And that makes evolutionary sense; if our ancestors evolved in a lead-free environment, they would not have evolved mechanisms to protect themselves—or us—from lead. Average lead

levels in children have greatly decreased, to perhaps only 20 percent of what they were just a few decades ago. The percentage of pre-school children with elevated lead levels—levels greater than 10mg/dl—has declined from almost 90 percent in the 1970s to around 5 percent in the 1990s, and perhaps even less today. But that still means that somewhere on the order of one to two hundred thousand children per year are born into environments where they will suffer from lead poisoning.

It is difficult to quantify the deleterious effects of lead on mental functions. Blood lead is measured once, or perhaps at intervals, while neural development is an ongoing process; also I.Q. is an imperfect measure of cognitive ability. Elevated lead early in life, while synapses are forming and becoming stabilized, is probably more detrimental than later. The best evidence, though, is that each increase of 10mg/dl in blood lead is associated with an I.Q. loss of perhaps 4–5 points.

As childhood lead poisoning has become less prevalent, it has returned to being a disease of poverty; lead poisoning is most prevalent in blacks and in the poor. What is true nationwide is also true in Chicago. Even with the continuing decline in blood lead levels, more than 10 percent of the children in some Chicago communities suffer from lead poisoning. These are poor, largely black communities on the South and West sides. Children in these communities will have lower I.Q.'s and shorter attention spans than children in other communities; they will be less successful in school, and will be disadvantaged in becoming productive members of the society. Blaming them, or their families, or their schools, is missing the point. Of course schools with a high percentage of lead-poisoned children will not perform well. President Bush's education program, which penalizes under-performing schools and does nothing about lead abatement, should more properly be called, "No Child Left Unpoisoned."

We now face difficult choices. Lead removal is expensive, and creates a health hazard for the workers who are engaged in clean-up ef-

forts. At some point, we may have to decide to live with a little lead, the residue of our infatuation with white paint and fast cars.

Health Disparities

The problem of lead poisoning leads naturally into the last topic I want to discuss, socioeconomic disparities in health. There are disparities in health both between countries and within countries. Let's take life expectancy as a reasonable measure of health in general. Today, there are huge disparities in life expectancies between countries; in many developed countries, life expectancy is close to eighty years, while in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa it is less than forty. It isn't surprising that, at low levels of per-capita income, life expectancy is dependent on wealth. People in these poor countries suffer from material deprivation; they don't have access to clean water, they can't afford food, and so on. But above some cutoff, life expectancy isn't strongly dependent on wealth. Although the United States is by any measure one of the richest countries in the world, we are not one of the healthiest. In terms of per capita gross domestic product, we rank fifth, behind a handful of small countries such as Bermuda and Luxembourg. In terms of life expectancy, however, we rank forty eighth.

One of the main reasons for our relatively low life expectancy is a disparity in the life expectancies of blacks and whites. Blacks have higher infant mortality than whites, they have higher overall mortality rates, and they suffer from chronic health problems, such as hypertension, at earlier ages than do whites. Why should this be? While it is difficult to ignore the historic effects of racism and segregation in health care in the United States, I believe that the racial disparities in health have relatively little to do with differences in health care and more to do with socioeconomic disparities between blacks and whites. We in the United States focus on race, and are often reluctant to talk about social class. Our national myth is that we are a nation of immigrants, and that the descendants of immigrants have participated in the American Dream and have enjoyed upward so-

cioeconomic mobility. Talking about social class sounds unpatriotic and smacks of Marxism. The British, because of their very different history, are much more attuned to issues of social class, and so they have studied the relationship between class and health much more intensively than have we.

The British government classifies occupations on a five-point scale, from professionals in Class I to unskilled manual laborers in Class V. Data from Great Britain show a clear gradient in life expectancy as a function of occupational class. Remember that the United Kingdom has a national health service. While a few wealthy people may get their health care in the private sector, almost everyone has access to the same health care system. Also, it's not simply that those at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale do poorly. There is a gradient that runs through the whole society.

In the United States, we have fewer data about this, but the data we have support the idea of a socioeconomic gradient in health. Again, it's not simply that the poorest people in the population have the highest mortality rates; as in England, there is a gradient in mortality rates over a large economic range. While material deprivation might account for the high mortality rate in the lowest economic group, it can't explain the gradient in health.

Not only is there a socioeconomic gradient in health, but the steepness of the gradient appears to be related to the degree of economic inequality in a country. Among developed countries, life expectancy is highly correlated with income inequality. I think the evidence is strong that there is a real, causal relationship between socioeconomic inequality and health disparities. How should we understand this relationship? It's complicated. In comparison to rich people, people who are economically disadvantaged in general have poorer education, they may have poorer health habits, they live in unhealthy communities—lead-contaminated communities, for example—and their families and communities may provide less social support. All of these factors may contribute to health disparities but they're unlikely to explain them completely.

I think that the overriding explanation probably lies in the social stress that comes from living in a hierarchical and unequal society. Animals have evolved mechanisms to cope with stresses and threats. But these mechanisms evolved to help us cope with temporary emergencies and dangers. In the face of an acute emergency—the presence of a predator, for example—animals can devote their energy to a “fight or flight” reaction, even if this means diverting resources from the ongoing maintenance and repair of their bodies. Humans, like other primates, evolved as social animals, and we live in communities where other people make up a large part of our environment. The main challenges we face are not the presence of predators, but the stresses of living in hierarchical societies and coping with the competitive strivings of other people. Our physiological responses to these social stresses are similar to our responses to predators—but the social stresses are chronic, not acute. In the face of persistent stress, the continued diversion of resources away from bodily maintenance apparently leads to cellular damage, organ dysfunction, and disease.

The idea that social inequality itself is pathogenic, or disease inducing, is not a comfortable idea, but it seems to be true. I’m not suggesting that we should strive for some utopia—or dystopia—where everyone is exactly the same. I’m also not suggesting that we should hope to lead disease-free lives. What I am suggesting, though, is that there is something fundamentally wrong with a society that condemns some of its members to unnecessary disease and premature death. If it’s true, as I believe the data show, that the steepness of the socioeconomic gradient itself contributes to health disparities, we ought to consider ways to reduce this gradient and improve the health of people at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale. When we analyze public policy questions—changes in the tax laws, for example—we ought to think not only about how these changes may fuel economic growth, or how they may benefit us as individuals. We need to consider how they will affect the distribution of

wealth in the society, and how changes in the distribution of wealth will affect health. Today, few people are thinking in these terms. But if we care about health, and about people, we need to start.

So, where are we? We live in a society in which most people, at least in the United States, have access to clean water and sufficient food. We have identified environmental toxins such as lead and cigarettes, and have made significant progress in reducing our exposure to them. If history is a guide, however, many human practices that are currently deemed safe will be found to be pathogenic. It will be up to future generations of scientists and citizens to identify and correct these problems. Our society remains plagued by socioeconomic health disparities and has not yet been willing to face or ameliorate these disparities. There is a lot left to be done.

QUESTIONING RIDDLES AND RIDDLING QUESTIONS

Jon Kurinsky

“Philosophy’s all but unappeasable yearning for itself is bound to seem comic to those who have not felt it. To those that have felt it, it may next seem frightening, and they may well hate and fear it, for the step after that is to yield to the yearning, and then you are lost.”
—Stanley Cavell, “North by Northwest”

“Why is there something instead of nothing
And how is the asking built into the hunting?”
—David Berman, “Like Like The The The Death”

This essay is a reply to an idea presented in Garrett Rose’s recent essay “Riddles and Questions,” published in the last issue of this magazine: namely, that we can determine through comparing riddles and philosophical questions that philosophical questions do not have answers. Not unpredictably, this essay has two parts: one concerning riddles, and one concerning questions. The first is an attempt at a theory of riddling. The second contains the reply, but goes beyond reply into a bit of explicit criticism (in a few words: philosophical questions must have answers, or they would cease to be meaningful questions) and also some more explicit discussion of philosophy (perhaps involving later Wittgenstein, and certainly involving the tradition of philosophical analysis of ordinary language). So much then for the subject of this essay; let us begin essaying.

I.
Take two riddles—

Q: Greater than God, and more evil than the devil; the rich need me and the poor have me. What am I?

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A: Nothing.

Q: What is black, white, and red all over?

A: A newspaper.

—as members of a good-natured though quizzical family of riddles whose members have an affinity for wordplay, these are W-riddles (‘w’ standing for ‘wordplay’). These are quite different from their family of estranged neighbors, the Puzzle-Riddles, who resemble, say, “how many spaces are between the spokes in a ten-spoke wheel?”

What do the W-riddles look like? Here is a first point. Both of the W-riddles contain questions, and one plainly is a question: riddles, generally, ask or contain questions. Both of our examples give some conditions which the riddle-responses satisfy: ‘nothing’ is greater than God, and is also precisely what the poor have. It is in virtue of the fact that responses satisfy all of the appropriate conditions that responses are what they are, namely, correct answers. But ‘meeting all of the conditions’ is too broad to be the criterion for possible-answerhood. For, if I respond to the first riddle with, ‘everything,’ we might say my response is a bad or a wrong answer, without implying that it is actually not an answer. Put another way, a wrong answer is not the correct answer, but still a possible answer. What makes a response a possible answer? Possible responses must be words or phrases: potential answers to the second riddle include ‘a desert landscape’; possible correct answers include ‘an embarrassed penguin’ and ‘a sunburned zebra.’ Perhaps not so obviously, possible answers must lend themselves to being tested against the riddle’s conditions: though it is a word, ‘love’ is not even a wrong answer to the second riddle, because we can as much decide whether love is black or white as we can decide that any feeling is a color. We generalize that W-riddles have responses which are words or

descriptions, and have possible answers which are words or descriptions testable against conditions; good or correct answers must, additionally, pass the tests. Many words are an answer or possible answers; few are the answers or the correct answers. W-riddles are like locks, to which possible answers are keys: all will fit the lock, but few will turn in it. We have some conditions in view of which it seems W-riddles become well-formed W-riddles, responses become possible answers, and possible answers become the right ones. Well-formed W-riddles must contain a question (a lock) and certain conditions (tumblers) for testing answers (keys), otherwise they fail to be W-riddles and are some other kind of questions. Answers must be words or descriptions that can answer the question and be tested against conditions (turn in the lock).

Rose observes a feature of riddles: “the way to the solution is not clear.” What might this mean? If “the solution” means anything like “the right answers,” we have a little trouble: to find the right answer, clearly, we need simply to figure out the word that answers the question—‘what am I?’—and meets all of the necessary conditions—‘greater than God,’ ‘what the poor have,’ etc. But Rose could say that this is hardly the way to the answer, and more like a test which tells us whether our answer is the right one, once we’ve gotten there, and he’s correct. To understand the way to the answer, I have to know a lot more about what it is that I do in solving a riddle. To answer this question, I performed a thought-experiment by imagining that I had just put our two W-riddles to my imaginary friend Albert, who, for the purposes of thought-experimentation, is schooled in the philosophy of language (it would of course be silly to try and imagine putting the riddles to myself, as if I could ‘forget’ the answers, for in doing so I would really be thinking of someone else; hence, the utility of introducing an amiable hypothetical, Albert):

J: Albert, what is greater than God...etc.? What is black, white...etc.?

A: My first reaction to these preposterous conundrums is tantamount to Rose's, for I feel as if am casting about in a fog, without any method.

It seems I must produce words, as if at random, and test them against definitions until I light on one that meets them all; surely, this is utter folly! Solving these riddles in this way would take eons, more time than I've got to spare.

J: Don't give up so quickly, Albert. This can't be the whole story, for if guessing is all we've got to go on, how could we account for some people being better at riddle solving than others? Do we say they are better guessers? What does it mean to be a better guesser? The guesses have to come from somewhere; that's what I'm interested in.

A: Why, now that you say so, yes! I suppose it would be bad riddle-solving practice to test random words. Let me begin again: suppose I come up with a number of words described by one of the conditions, and examine them to see if any met the other conditions—that is, the rich need air, food, and friendship. But, these are not greater than God, or more evil than the devil, and cannot be the correct answers. This is most puzzling!

J: You are deep in thought, I can see. What are you thinking?

A: Well, I have used my uncannily acute imaginary intelligence to rapidly produce and test every possible need the poor have, and yet I have no answer. But wait! I have had a flash of insight. There is a sense in which the rich don't need anything, which is precisely to say that they need ‘nothing,’ which conveniently also happens to be what the poor have, what is greater than God, and what is more evil than the devil! The key fits; our lock is loosed!

J: Great, but that's my metaphor, Albert.

He went on to describe how, for the second riddle, he came up with words and phrases meeting one of the conditions (clouds, milk, blamelessness), stumbling upon some that met two conditions (newspapers, books, cows), and others that seemed to fit all of the conditions, though not decisively enough to be good answers (polychromatic light, spheres painted the relevant colors). Finally, he insightfully realized that he had been deceived by a homophone: ‘red’ was not ‘red’ but ‘read.’ He restarted his procedure, retesting words he had previously thrown out,

until he had his solutions: keys whose teeth fit all of the tumblers.

We mulled over the implication of the role of intuition in finally allowing him to answer as he did, when, as if by intuition, he came to a better way of explaining what he had been doing.

J: Albert, you look as if, by intuition, you have come to a better way of explaining what you have been doing. Care to relate?

A: Of course! In treating the \mathbb{W} -riddle conditions like definitions without described terms (much like Jeopardy questions, in which we are given definitions, and asked for the definiendum), I was employing the concept of a semantic extension: all of the words that meet the condition ‘what the rich need’ form a set (it so happens that my thought-experiment brain is endowed with knowledge of elementary set-theory and philosophical logic).

J: But whatever do you mean?

A: Only that the ‘extension’ of a definition consists of the set of those terms to a ‘condition’ can apply. Those answers which meet two conditions are the intersection of the sets extended by each condition, while correct answers are described by the set of the intersections of all of the sets extended by each condition. My prior intuitive insights were simply successive realizations that the sets of extensions I was generating were based on an incomplete understanding of the sense of each description-condition (taking ‘what the rich need’ as asking for an object, taking ‘read’ as ‘red’: this is precisely how riddles play with words).

J: I see. So, what you had called ‘intuition’ was just something like a ‘reinterpretation’ of the extension of each condition?

A: Quite! It seems that riddling is less like trying keys and more like picking locks, for we see which tumbler thwarts our key-turn and re-cut our keys accordingly. Further, though we navigate the extensions and intersections so quickly that we don’t realize what they’re actually doing, I suspect that rapid and selective re-generation, re-intersection, re-cutting, and re-trying of key-sets extending \mathbb{W} -riddle definition-conditions into mental word-space is one of several cognitive riddle-heuristics that we use to solve riddles, the

others of which we deduce——

J: Easy, Albert. Thanks, but I’m not very mathematically minded; I think I’ve got what I need. You can go back to not existing, now.

His explanation shows, I think, one sense in which the way to the answers of riddles is perfectly clear—in that there is a procedure to be followed in good riddling, even if the procedure is one among many—and that some people can get better at solving riddles by learning to follow it. If I am correct to ascribe significance to this business of examining how we actually respond to riddles, and, if I am furthermore at least on the right track with my analysis of how it is that we actually respond to riddles, then it seems that they have no mystery left: \mathbb{W} -riddles have a discrete form; the answers have properties which make them answers; and as we just saw, the process of testing for these is quite unfoggy. If the way to answers is clouded, it is only metaphorically so, for the fact that we can solve riddles, and can test answers for their rightness and wrongness, shows that the fogginess is hardly built into the riddles. Once we have seen this, it is not far to understanding that a riddle without an answer, or a riddle with a clouded answer, is really just a malformed riddle. To misappropriate Wittgenstein: “When the answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question be put into words. The riddle does not exist. If a question can be framed at all, it is also possible to answer it.” This is a good a transition as any from questioning riddles, to riddling questions.

II.

Q: How does one solve a riddle?

A: By giving its correct answer.

In a few words, this exchange does not say much, precisely because the answerer seems to have misunderstood the questioner’s meaning, whatever ‘meaning’ means: this is why the answer is frustrating. We say that it has ‘missed the point,’ but is it the question that is at fault, or the answer? I could have surely eliminated a lot of my confusion in answering my own question if I had worded the question so as to say more precisely what I

meant, such that I could not have gotten confused about my own meaning. If, in fact, what I really wanted to know was “how is it that giving its answer solves a riddle?” and not just “how is it that we solve riddles?” I might have said so, instead of relying on my own (apparently poor) ability to divine my own meaning. This way of speaking about questions—as having meaningful content other than what they literally say—could easily come back to haunt us. In thinking about riddles, we would hope to have already made a ghost of it, but that remains to be seen.

If it is true that “a comparison of riddles and any kind of question had better start from a clear understanding of how riddles work, if it is to be productive,” then this is true: “a comparison of riddles and philosophical questions has better to start from a very clear understanding of riddles, if it is to be productive,” given the precision usually demanded by the second subject of comparison. That is one reason why I made an analysis of riddles so as to produce a theory of riddling. The other reason was to get at the ghost of meaning something other than what you literally say, in asking a question. We have seen how, in playing at riddling, we implicitly accept certain rules as well as a certain sort of investigation. It seems that our acceptance of this investigation is ‘built into the question,’ at least for well-formed riddles, in that the well-formed riddle can be said to imply a demand for conformity to certain rules: answers must be words, right answers must meet conditions, etc. If Rose’s analogy between riddles and philosophical questions holds water, philosophical questions must likewise imply methods or rules, or risk being mal-formed. This is my complaint against Rose’s comparison: philosophical questions that have no answers are not questions, but mal-formed nonsense. Yet it seems philosophical questions must have answers. Rose writes: “Simply put, these [philosophical] questions are riddles that have no answer.” I have been arguing that this doesn’t make much sense given the way we have been speaking about answers to riddles (as ‘possible answers’ versus ‘right answers’), so either we must take Rose to mean

something slightly different from what he says (“these questions are riddles that have no right answer, or one answer”), or Rose and I are thinking past each other, for philosophical questions have all kinds of possible answers. The difficulty is in deciding between them, which of course depends on what we expect out of answers (exactly how do we conceive of philosophy as a discipline? this is part of what is at issue). But, the way Rose would conceive of philosophical questions, there are no conditions for good answering apart from those set by the answerer; that is to say, the questions do not imply any rules or recommend any method. That is their problem. I have shown how we call unanswerable *W*-riddles not riddles at all, but nonsense; why is this not true, by Rose’s analogy, for philosophical questions? This is what leads to the property Rose calls “unanswerability.”

Take, as an example of how to riddle a philosophical question literally, a well-worn revision of the yet more well-worn ‘what is justice?’ The question is almost as senseless as a non-well formed riddle, for “what is justice?” recommends no sort of investigation, implies no criteria for correctness, and does not even provide a means to seeing whether responses are possible answers, for, speaking plainly, there is no object justice. (Note well that this is quite different from the also well-worn ethical claim that there is no “objective ground” for justice, or that it is “relative”; rather, it is merely to deny, that ‘justice’ has substantive significance except as ‘justice,’ a word with a sense, a meaning, a reference, etc., depending on the theory of the hour.) If we claimed to have found justice, in responding to the question, how could we tell? We do not even know what we are looking for: what would it look like, if anything? How could we know that we have found it, in answering a question that implies no answer-conditions and suggests no method? Rough them how we may, there’s no way the best-cut of keys can turn in such a broken lock: if we, as Rose suggests, really have made no headway in 2,500 years of riddling at justice, then perhaps we should stop riddling, and start asking: “what is just?” instead of “what is justice?” How do we use the word? What properties

of our minds and institutions give rise to its use? What, at the end of the day, should we do about it? Following Wittgenstein: “The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to—the one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question.”

This is all not to say that comparing riddles and philosophy is without purpose. Only, it had better proceed by understanding itself not as argumentative analogy but as having all of the depth and humanistic multidimensionality of a good literary metaphor. Take, as concluding remarks, one of many possible ‘interpretations’ of this metaphor and its bearing on our thinking (which, as a bonus, has the property of being itself a literary metaphor). There is a certain reading of Hamlet that ascribes to its protagonist a psychosis resulting from indecision. Regardless of whether this reading is a sound one, it enunciates a characteristic tendency in responding to a certain kind of character, which analogizes the vulnerabilities in philosophy exposed by Rose’s metaphor. In subscribing to this interpretation of Hamlet, we react to the prince as to a caricature: here, of a man who we see as immobilized (we could say ‘riddled’) by certain questions—perhaps overly reflexive, and certainly skeptical—he asks of his world. Such a tendency motivates the mood which riddles at “philosophy’s yearning for itself” as a comic desire (or, a comically tragic desire) for what is unattainable (or untenable). When we become riddled by our questions, we run the risk of caricaturing ourselves: we exaggerate philosophical questioning into something it isn’t, and romanticize our own susceptibility to philosophical questioning into hubris, a foible. No matter which way the wind of thinking blows, we never stop knowing the difference between hawks and handsaws just as we never stop knowing the way to answer questions, whether they are things whereof we can or cannot speak: in asking unanswerable questions of the world, do we not admit to some implication, namely, that we already have in mind a way to a world of answers? That, so to say, is the question. Refusal to say what we know we know, and have

always known that we know: that is philosophy’s foible, for it is hubris masquerading as humility. In philosophizing against philosophy, we become, as Stanley Cavell says, “lost,” as much in a fog as between two mirrors: that is part of the Aristophenian charge against philosophy which was passed on to the Athenian senate and up through the centuries to our present condition. Rose’s thesis of unanswerability opens philosophy to the charge; Rose escapes it by making philosophy into an end-in-itself, a journey-over-a-destination, but in doing so defeats its claim to practical power. Perhaps, in this sense, he is right. This is a cold note to let ring last; though rightly understood it is a necessary one, given all that Rose has expressed. I have tried to close philosophy to the charge, by suggesting that its questions be recast (that is, ‘its locks recut’: perhaps we are still feeling the birth-pangs of the linguistic turn’s call to analytic rigor, and the division of all that is the case into sense, and nonsense—or was that a siren-song, already?). I wish I had a satisfying response to the charge itself, other than to say that the activity of responding, no matter whether it tends toward attack, apology, or both, is part and parcel of our native condition, inseparable from and indispensable to the adventure called thinking. Only experience can verify this article of faith; the rest—to conflate a literal Austrian with a fictional Dane—is silence.

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AESTHETIC OBJECTS AND INTERACTIVITY

Garett Rose and Meredith Filak

Aesthetic Interactivity is engaging with an aesthetic object in such a way that the audience finds itself immersed (to a greater or lesser degree) in the ‘point’ the object is attempting to convey (oftentimes, this is a story of some sort). This is to be differentiated from normal interactivity, which is simply being “reciprocally active; acting upon or influencing each other.” Under the normal definition, interactivity refers to any system in which engagement on the part of one actor leads to counter-engagement on the part of the other actor. Under the definition proposed here, interactivity refers to a system where engagement with an aesthetic object foments an immersion in the ‘point’ of the object. This definition is to be opposed to ‘colliding,’ which, for the purposes of this article, is a type of engagement that leads to no significant occurrence whatsoever.

Prima facie, some aesthetic objects are far more interactive than others. For instance, a modern video game like *The Legend of Zelda* seems to be more interactive than the Apollo Sauroktonos found in the Cleveland Museum of Art. However, a 90 year-old scholar of Praxiteles is most likely going to find the statue more interactive than the video game. The level of interactivity experience depends to a great degree on the particular expertise and psychological receptiveness of the audience. Some aesthetic objects, such as the video game, appeal to a wide audience. Others, such as obscure artworks, appeal to a much smaller audience. Most, if not all, aesthetic objects are interactive in some way, and all audiences of aesthetic objects have to deal with some level of interactivity. However, interactivity remains a slippery topic.

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The definition provided, while a useful starting place, is woefully vague. This article proposes to expand upon this definition by expanding upon the meaning and implications of immersion, and by exploring what is intended by “the ‘point’ of an object” and how this is controlled/manipulated. This article does not intend to provide an exhaustive study of aesthetic interactivity, or even explore a large portion of it. Rather, it intends to briefly sketch some of the key aspects of interactivity in order to promote further inquiry into the subject.

Clearly, original creative control rests in the hands of the creator. Furthermore, he is ostensibly in charge of the ‘points,’ i.e. what the aesthetic object is intended to get across (this could be an idea, a story, a value, a theme, etc.). These points will create interaction and immerse the audience. However, the creator ultimately controls *only* the kinds of stimuli (such as the words in *Ulysses* or the notes that constitute Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony*) and their arrangement. He generally does not directly dictate the nature of the interaction between the finished work and its audience, and if he tries there is very little guarantee of success. In linear works, the moment of immersion precipitates a transfer of narrative control. He can only indirectly guide the nature of the interaction through his authorial control over the stimuli. Once a linear work is completed by its creator and taken up by an audience, the narrative no longer belongs to the creator, but to the work itself. The audience now controls the interpretation and assignment of meaning to the narrative which it is experiencing. In other words, the audience is not necessarily interacting with the ‘points’ intended by the creator. True, the creator can guide the audience towards a certain set of ‘points’ with some degree of success. In interact-

ing with an aesthetic object, the ‘points’ that the audience is immersed in are the products of their own interests and values. In a way, interactivity is a circular process: an audience engages with an aesthetic object and then gets immersed in a series of ‘points’ not generated by the object, but rather ones that are motivated by the object and generated by the particular interests of the audience. However, this is *not* to say that the audience’s knowledge that the object has an author is not of the utmost importance. Interestingly, this process leaves open questions of authorial foresight and “over-reading” a text; the creator’s intention, when the narrative becomes its own property (and the meaning of that narrative becomes the audience’s) may or may not remain relevant.

However, what exactly it means to be immersed in these ‘points’ still remains unclear. First, immersion is not discrete. The choice is not between immersion and no immersion. Rather, there are different levels of immersion. *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* is more immersive than *Pong*, and *Pong* is generally more immersive than Andy Warhol’s Brillo Boxes. An audience can be more or less immersed in an aesthetic object. Furthermore, on a very basic level, immersion requires a suspension of the audience’s normal train of thought. In a fundamental way, it is a disruption. In other words, when immersed in the ‘points’ of an aesthetic object, an audience is prompted to engage with these ‘points’ in some fashion. The audience is not merely an observer of the aesthetic object (in so far as observer means a passive receptacle for information that it being transmitted from a stationary object). Instead, the audience becomes an active respondent to the ‘points’ prompted by the aesthetic object. The more immersed an audience is, the more involved it is in the process of responding. Since these ‘points’ are themselves creations of the audience, it seems right to say that in being immersed, the audience is responding to its own creations. Indeed, for an audience to be immersed in the ‘points’ of the aesthetic object is for it to be respondent to the entities that it created after engaging with the stimuli presented in the aesthetic object. Put simply, immersion is

an audience responding to itself (albeit in a way prompted and guided by the aesthetic object). The more respondent, the more immersed. This can be contrasted to other cases where it might be said that an audience is immersed in a situation. For instance, viewing a train wreck causes the viewer’s life to be disrupted. However, in this case, an audience is immersed in only the loosest sense of the word. It is involved with an object such that it is not able to immediately resume life normally. The audience is not prompted to respond (i.e., by reflecting upon the themes the train wreck is attempting to get across) but only to observe passively. Aesthetic objects do not merely disrupt the everyday paths of the audience, as a train wreck would. Rather, they disrupt, and in the process of disrupting, prompt a response.

Interactivity is one of the many facets of our relationship with aesthetic objects. While this brief exploration is not by any means meant to be exhaustive, it does illuminate important aspects of the structure of interaction. Specifically, it identifies the origin and function of the ‘point’ of an aesthetic object, and what it means to be immersed in such a point. In and of themselves, these issues may seem to be relatively minor. However, their exploration leads to interesting questions about the degree to which a creator has control over his own object, how and why meaning changes over the lifespan of an aesthetic object and the role of the audience in the creative process, among others. Furthermore, it suggests that video/computer games should be considered as more than mere entertainment and taken as a serious aesthetic medium where it is possible to create objects of enduring beauty and high artistic value. However, aside from the intellectual paths the exploration of interactivity opens, this exploration is also valuable because it enhances our understanding of how we relate to aesthetic objects. Even if we do not deal with ‘works of art’ on an everyday basis, it is difficult to avoid engaging with aesthetic objects. By understanding the role of interactivity, not only is our general knowledge of how we relate to the aesthetic enriched, but this everyday engagement with the aesthetic is also enriched.

GETTING THE JOKES: THE PROBLEM OF PARODY IN SOVIET SATIRE

Elliot Hasdan

Contemporary Russian Satire: A Genre Study
By Karen Ryan-Hayes.
Cambridge University Press. 304 pp.
\$45 (paperback).

“Let me warn you, if you start chasing after
views, you’ll be left without bread
and without views.”

—Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol (1809-1852)

Having been born in the final years of the Soviet Union and raised in the United States, I have faced a formidable cultural barrier for most of my life: I simply do not get the jokes. While bitter political humor is perfectly understandable—along with the less palatable Soviet reversal joke (“*library book checks out you!*”)—it is Soviet satire that is particularly difficult to grasp. Prankish, tongue-in-check, yet somehow evasive to a temperament unexposed to Soviet liturgy, it requires a unique sensitivity and self-contained, modal experience. Despite a semi-immersion in Russian culture, my upbringing reveals a lack of such knowledge.

The idea of Soviet satire is laughable. During such an oppressive period, it was impossible to experience the boisterous language and brutish parody of pre-Soviet works such as Gogol’s *The Overcoat*, which audaciously mocked political institutions: “There is nothing more irritable than departments, regiments, courts of justice, and, in a word, every branch of public service.” However, despite these political drawbacks, it is the wry sense of humor and “Aesopian language” of the satire of the Thaw that still permeates all aspects of Russian culture, and is difficult to understand as a young American.

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Its attack is barely noticeable, its rollicking spirit elusive, its object of ridicule often vague. Nonetheless Soviet satire is intimately bound up with a wild use of parody, and despite its submission to censorship, jest. In Karen Ryan-Hayes’s genre study *Contemporary Russian Satire*, it is this “critical and persuasive force” that comes under close scrutiny. With great emphasis on the parody of genre convention, Ryan-Hayes reveals buffoonery and exaggeration as key elements of contemporary Russian literature. Aware of the difficulty of investigating a literary mode so frivolous amongst critics of the time, she analyzes five seminal works of the glasnost period. Her texts are Fazil Iskander’s *Rabbits and Boa Constrictors*, Venedikt Erofeev’s *Moscow-Petushki*, Edward Limonov’s *It’s Me, Eddie*, Sergei Dovlatov’s *Ours*, and Vladimir Voinovich’s *Moscow 2042*.

Assessing each piece of prose in this order, she characterizes the development of satire in a historical-literary Russian context, investigating the text within the sphere political turmoil and each author’s respective career. Her study is unusual and well-balanced, her style precise and focused; she portrays a bustling, irresolute world of literary controversy. The satirist intends for the work to be reformative, yet it is quarantined into crowded corners of journals: an exceptionally poignant struggle between parody and censorship materializes.

For the Russian Formalists of the 1910s to 1930s, parody was a part of a dynamic exchange between struggling elements in literary history. Parody was seen to serve a rhetorical, artistic means in making satire accessible to the audience, allowing for strategy to develop amidst a political dilemma. Censorship, in suppressing the artist by penalty, was understood to force shrewdness and

a keen imagination upon the writer; a cultivation that might have been lost in a more relaxed political situation. From this perspective, the artist undertakes a secretive dialogue, that when decoded by the reader, connects the two through a sort of literary catharsis, sending both artist and subject reeling into hysterics upon eluding authority and rupturing normality. The buffoonery of Parody, under strict censorship, lampoons genre conventions and points to superficiality while asserting a need for literature to evolve.

Yet for certain artists, this parody is not catharsis; buffoonery remains buffoonery and, to be sure, it is an urgent problem. Fazil Iskander's short novel *Rabbits and Boa Constrictors*, published in the Soviet Union in 1987, is the first work of Ryan-Hayes's study, and forcefully objects to the romanticized notion of parody under censorship. Iskander's work is a comical, yet pressing denunciation of the pathetic impotence of the writer-censor relationship. He sees no underground artistic evolution, and brazenly rejects the need for shrewd, tinkering writers to suffuse their poems with hidden meanings or sly subterfuge, sidestepping about with no direct point to make. He examines the Aesopian tradition in Russian culture, seeking its roots and deriding its institutions.

Iskander's novel is the interaction between a kingdom of boa constrictors that subverts a kingdom of rabbits through outrageous speeches and even hypnosis. A rabbit uncovers that the hypnosis is merely a product of fear, yet liberation fails, as the boa constrictors discover that they can suffocate the rabbits instead. The power-struggle continuously evolves, as the boa constrictors begin a rigorous training of stomach muscles to repress their opponents. The power-struggle depicted is both physical and psychological, as the rabbits worship cauliflower, a comic symbol for Communism that decorates the rabbit state banners in rainbow hues, as the actual vegetable has never been seen. It becomes strikingly obvious, and quite hilarious, that the power relations between the two tribes serve to parody the Soviet regime.

However, as Ryan-Hayes explains immediately in her analysis, his brash, obvious parody "rebels against the need to be subtle and to provide screens." He junks the convention of the Aesopian obscurity, as its development of craftiness does not make up for the pitiable safety it provides for the artist. He sees this tradition as a product of "internal ills," and hopes to renew artistic life through his story. Ryan-Hayes calls his method a "transparent allegory"; his allegorical story creates a subtext that is extraordinarily clear, despite its ostensible desire for ambiguity. In a situation similar to George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Iskander parodies the convention of the "twice-told" quality to enhance persuasion. He tells his reader, "All of this happened long, long ago in a land quite far to the south. To be brief, Africa." As Ryan-Hayes points out, "that Iskander so quickly specifies Africa as the setting subverts the convention of abstraction associated with allegory." Allegory, often seen as an antithesis to satire, affirms a rejection of ineffectual parody.

An author working under the confines of censors is perhaps similar to a musician limited to one instrument. The musician, bounded by a few simple strings, must become intimately bound up with his instrument, understanding how to access the proper sound through subtle plucks and fine, meticulous hand motions. In this way, the Soviet satirist takes on a personal relationship with her work when bound by political impediments; she experiences this visceral self-exploration, cultivating sensitivity to language and style through a delicate intrusion of words. Or perhaps such a comparison completely outrageous—the expert musician should already know his instrument and the expert satirist should already be aware of her writing. Such a historical, romantic perspective of brilliance through suppression may be completely perverse, conflating intimacy with actual limitations, such as political authority. Our freedom of expression gives us the power to invent tasteless, stupid art, but a lack of freedom does not necessitate good art—only less stupidity.

While I am personally tempted to take the side of Iskander, the problem of parody is an issue that

the satirists of Ryan-Hayes's study struggle with intensely throughout their works. And so while I admit to an opinion, I feel that a resolution is missing the point of their dialogue; at the heart of Ryan-Hayes's book, as political times change, so does satire, and while the role of parody may be either buffoonery or shrewdness for any author at any time, there is always some sort of attempt to transcend circumstance and examine humanity.

Karen Ryan-Hayes superbly traces the dynamics of these Russian satirists, exploring a part of the "textual fabric of Russian literature" that, of course, no single study could exhaust. It is truly difficult to look at these writings as either "because of" or "in spite of" the political times, as satire is a mode constantly forcing itself into every genre and convention. Nevertheless, her analysis is captivating and curious as she investigates how these struggling authors coped with the moral illness of the Soviet experiment, and their paradoxical sincerity that life can be better. It is this undying authenticity that suggests a bit of jest in Gogol's phrase—we might, after all, attempt to chase views.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DONALD LEVINE

Powers of the Mind: The Reinvention of Liberal Learning in America

By Donald Levine.

University of Chicago Press. 256 pp.

\$39.

1. Where do you place yourself in the debate about higher education? To whom in particular are you responding in your book?

My point of departure for the book was the public's response to Allan Bloom's best-seller, *The Closing of the American Mind*. That was 1987. (Yes, my book was close to twenty years in the making.) Overjoyed at the time that the reading public appeared to be paying so much attention—at last—to questions of collegiate learning, I was dismayed to learn that such attention was being drowned out by the ideological overtones that the book aroused. *Closing* became the opening shot in what became known as the Culture Wars: the endless back and forth about whether or not non-whites, non-Westerners, and women were receiving enough consideration on prescribed reading lists and curricular offerings. Although the political dimension of curriculum can not be ignored, the monopolization of attention by those politicized issues left little room for what I would call genuinely *educational* issues.

Beyond that, I was even more irritated that Bloom's book came to be viewed, by friends and opponents alike, as a defense of the educational program of the so-called Hutchins College at Chicago. That prodded me to set the matter straight by telling the story as I knew it from the inside over a lifetime here, as student and teacher, and from a searching look at rarely known archival materials.

I was also intensely irritated as well by the intervention of my good and highly respected colleague, Martha Nussbaum, in our local disputes over curriculum touched off by the Sonnenschein presidency, when she decried any kind of core curriculum. Ironically, Martha's own fine book, *Cultivating Humanity*, went on precisely to prescribe her own vision of a core curriculum! The argument of *Powers* as it evolved found a way to make a place for her vision and any other.

Beyond those central concerns, I suppose my book is also aimed at countering those who presume to discourse about "teaching" by confining it to faddish concerns about teaching technologies. Here as elsewhere, the modern valuation of techniques and means over ends is galling. Similarly, there has recently been an upsurge of interest in examining the outcomes of educational programs—and that is swell—but again, what outcomes are all about and why they are important gets short shrift. We need, I felt, a more capacious sense of outcomes and, even more, a way to engage in discourse about those questions. If anything, I see my book as a forthright effort to rekindle conversations about such important questions.

2. The title of your book emphasizes the American aspect of liberal education. What do you think is a distinctively American contribution to the tradition of liberal education?

My book begins with an overview of millennia of cultural developments with attention to perennial reinventions of the theory and practice of liberal education. Its emphasis, however, is on developments since the early nineteenth century, developments in which, amazingly,

only in the US has there been continuous and radical experimentation. This was facilitated by the fact that the US educational system was not hidebound by the same conventional constraints that governed education in Europe, so American educators were freer to experiment with both the forms and content of liberal learning.

3. What do you mean when you say that the purpose of liberal education is to develop the “powers of the mind”? What is the nature of these powers—and what end do they serve?

That’s not quite what I say. I say there are several warranted approaches to reinventing liberal education in our time. Teaching “powers” is just one of the four principles around which a liberal curriculum can be organized, the principle that focuses on capacities of *knowing*; the others include the character of the *learner*, the world that is *knowable*, and the heritage of human *knowledge*. Notably, Chicago experimented with all four, but it has developed the teaching of powers most extensively. The bulk of my book concerns the brilliant innovations in the teaching of powers that were pursued at Chicago, my own experiments in attempting new ways of such teaching, and a framework for future developments in which the principle of powers is central. By powers I mean what historically were referred to as disciplines, that is, trained capacities of the mind, in contrast to the modern custom of thinking of disciplines in terms of subject matters. To my mind its time for a fresh look at the kinds of powers we need to cultivate. My book lists eight powers of the mind. The first four are the “powers of prehension”—audiovisual powers, kinesthetic powers, understanding verbal texts, and understanding worlds. The other four are “powers of expression”—forming a reflexive liberal self, inventing statements, problems, and actions; integrating knowledge; and powers of communication. Pointedly, I liken the distinction between prehension and expression to the somatic thought processes of inhaling and exhaling. There is not enough space to discuss my preference for the principle of powers, save to note that this is the principle developed so intensive-

ly in the Chicago tradition where I was formed and in which I have spent my professional life.

4. You devote significant space in your book to the development of the University of Chicago’s college curriculum, and particularly to Joseph Schwab’s vision of the College. What is important about Schwab, and why is he so often bypassed in discussions of the U of C in favor of more famous men like Harper, Hutchins, and McKeon?

Schwab never commanded the institutional position of those giants. He needs someone to bring out his importance, as do the editors of the collection on Schwab, Ian Westbury and Neil J. Wilkof, whom I quote in the epigraph to the chapter about him:

The ideal of liberal education does linger. It might be that a conception of education that associates itself with sociability, civility, and self can be restored. And, if such restoration comes to pass, Schwab’s essays and books will play an important part in the rediscovery of the meaning of these notions. He articulates a way of thinking that which lets us see more clearly than does the way of any other contemporary thinker what thought about education *might* be and how it *might* be possible to give visions meaning. The burden of his work is an invitation to the reader to participate in the search that he ventured.

In some ways I consider the Schwab chapter to be the high point of the book.

5. What is the University of Chicago’s contribution to the reinvention of liberal education?

Enormous, simply enormous. And it has been appreciated deeply for a long time by serious educators around the world. Here is what I say about the Chicago contribution in the Prologue:

At the University of Chicago, from time to time, a combination of special institutional structures (faculty charged with undergraduate teaching, college deans with their own budgets, the mechanism of the staff-taught course), exceptional presidential leadership and rhetoric (Burton, Hutchins, Levy), and traditions of intense faculty concern with education (Wilkins, McKeon, Faust, Coulter, Schwab, Redfield, Axelrod, McNeill, Riesman, Sally, Cochrane) have imbued the institution with a supply of brains and energy sufficient to

generate excellent educational thought and practice. Before it disappears, this work needs to be recorded and reconsidered. Whatever its local difficulties of circumstance—and they have been recurrent and often severe—the University of Chicago has long been distinguished by a relatively clear sense of its academic mission. This helps account for its longstanding reputation as “a teacher of teachers.” In the current shortage of moral and intellectual resources for energizing higher education, Chicago’s experience may be seen as exemplary in two senses - as a source of inspirational educational ideas and, no less important, as a model of ways in which local institutional traditions can be drawn on to inspire educational practice.

This is why I have struggled so hard - by editing two series of issues of what we called the *College Faculty Newsletter*; by issuing various public statements; by organizing a yearlong symposium on The Idea of the University (<http://iotu.uchicago.edu/>); and now through this book - to stem what I consider the decline and fall of serious sustained attention to the issues involved in liberal learning at the University. To my mind, that decline is a national tragedy.

6. You describe a course that used to be taught by McKeon and Schwab which explored the organization of knowledge. What do you think is the significance of such a course for thinking across disciplines, and do you think the College has lost anything by eliminating it?

You refer, I believe, to the course initially known as Observation, Interpretation, and Integration. It was an amazing course. I tried to resurrect it for a while in the 1970s, and Professors Herman Sinaiko and the late Wayne Booth offered a version of it in the Big Problems program. One of the eight general powers that I advocate in my book tries to re- evoke its goal, the power of integrating knowledge.

7. In your book, you describe a small number of classes you have taught that reflect your ideas for a liberal education. “Conflict Theory and Aikido” is one of these courses, unusual both for the material covered and for the methods of instruction. What prompted this unique structure? How would you expand this to other, more ‘traditional’ classes?

The most distinctive feature of that course is the

requirement that 50 percent of the required work takes the form of practice in the gym on the mat.

The idea for it came out of a Report of one of the eleven Task Forces that worked for a year under the rubric of what we called “Project 1984: Design Issues,” when teams of faculty, joined by a few staff and students, systematically investigated a wide range of features of the undergraduate experience. One task force, chaired by Prof. John MacAloon, recommended the use of “gym” classes in conjunction with academic subjects.

That was a revolutionary idea then and it remains pretty revolutionary today. Just in the past couple years, that course has finally inspired the creation of comparable courses in a number of schools, including Lehigh University, Furman, and Williams College. *Powers of the Mind* champions such an approach to liberal learning. The mind is actually embodied, after all. Or, to quote Joe Schwab: “the effect of a curriculum whose end was training of the intellect pure and simple would be a crippled intellect.”

8. Can you recall an experience during your undergraduate career at the University of Chicago that exemplified liberal education for you?

Here’s one that comes to mind—in a class taught by Joe Schwab. We were reading a selection by John Dewey on the methodology of science, and Schwab saunters into class, looks around, and fires one off at my friend Freddy Wranovic. “Mr. Wranovic,” he yells, “tell us about Dewey’s views about love.” From then on, it was non-stop intellectual excitement for fifty minutes.

Here’s another: when a science teacher led us in analyzing an experiment to figure out for ourselves the importance of making a distinction between necessary causality and sufficient causality, without even giving us the words we might use to represent them.

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