

2013

Full Issue, Number 37, Spring 2013

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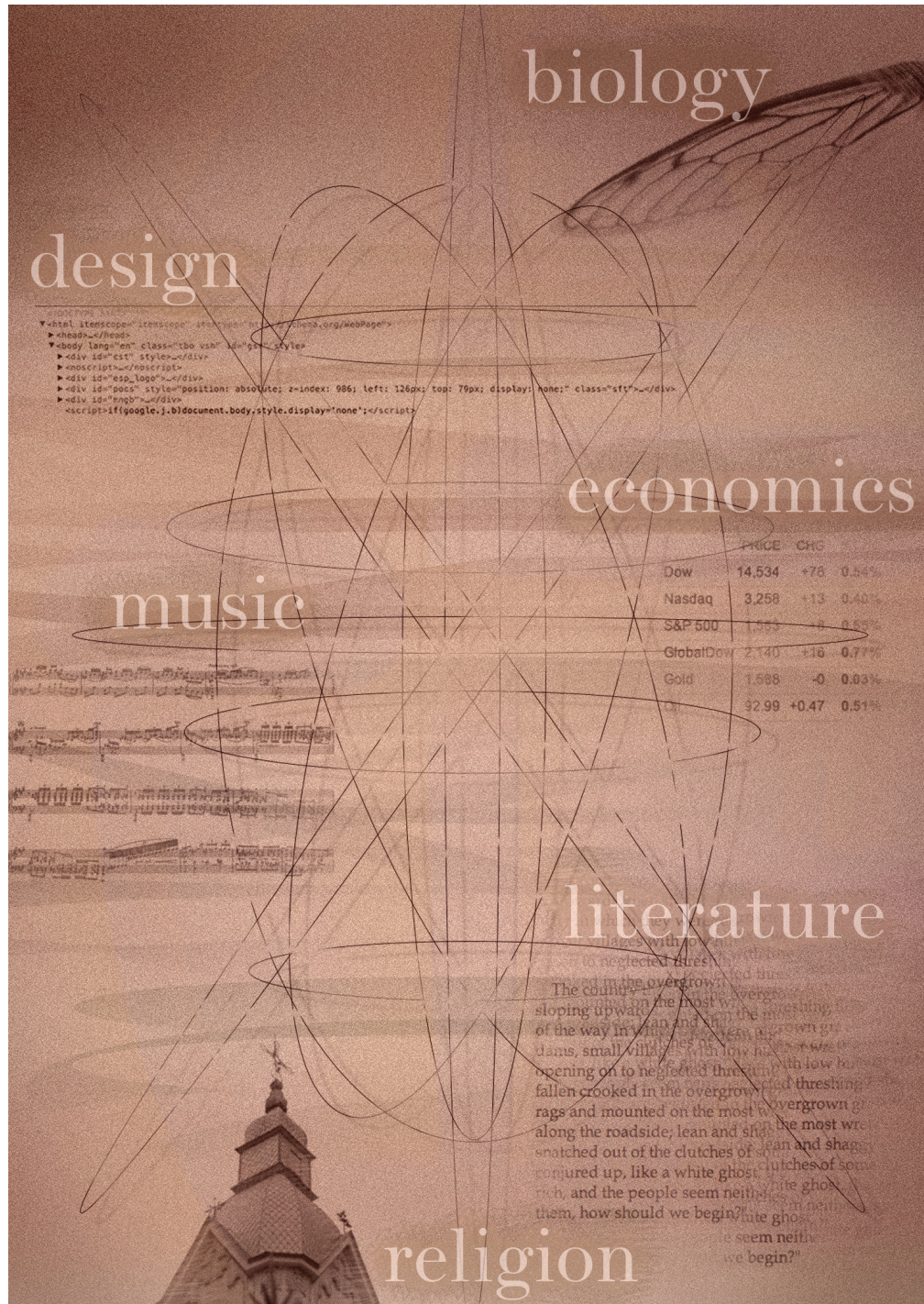
(2013) "Full Issue, Number 37, Spring 2013," *Intersections*: Vol. 2013: No. 37, Article 1.

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intersections

Spring 2013



in this issue

Faith and Meaning in the Disciplines

Purpose Statement

| This publication is by and largely for the academic communities of the twenty-six colleges and universities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is published by the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit of the ELCA. The publication has its home at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, which has generously offered leadership and physical and financial support as an institutional sponsor for the publication.

The ELCA has frequently sponsored conferences for faculty and administrators that have addressed the church-college/university partnership. The ELCA has sponsored an annual Vocation of the Lutheran College Conference. The primary purpose of *Intersections* is to enhance and continue such dialogue. It will do so by:

- Lifting up the vocation of Lutheran colleges and universities
- Encouraging thoughtful dialogue about the partnership of colleges and universities with the church
- Offering a forum for concerns and interests of faculty at the intersection of faith, learning, and teaching
- Raising for debate issues about institutional missions, goals, objectives, and learning priorities
- Encouraging critical and productive discussion on our campuses of issues focal to the life of the church
- Serving as a bulletin board for communications among institutions and faculties
- Publishing papers presented at conferences sponsored by the ELCA and its institutions
- Raising the level of awareness among faculty about the Lutheran heritage and connectedness of their institutions, realizing a sense of being part of a larger family with common interests and concerns.

From the Publisher

| The presidents of ELCA colleges and universities meet each February in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Lutheran Educational Conference of North America. LECNA is officially an association of all Lutheran colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. In practice, it is now an association of ELCA colleges/universities and the schools of the Concordia University System of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, although an occasional Canadian college and a few other Lutheran-related schools in the United States participate. It is not unfair to say that the annual meetings have often been perfunctory and sometimes aimless affairs, albeit spiced with the convivial pleasures and networking opportunities born of time together with good colleagues. Conviviality and networking will certainly remain a part of future presidential gatherings, but the perfunctory part is—I hope—about to be history.

Decisions made at the February 2013 meetings of LECNA and our ELCA presidents should allow the annual meeting of our presidents to claim in the future a more substantive role in directing the shared identity and common mission of ELCA colleges and universities. First, the meetings authorized reviews of the funding and organizational practices of both LECNA and our ELCA network. The review of our ELCA network—in addition to feeding into the LECNA review—represents a consensus that ELCA colleges and universities should take the lead in organizing our network, with the churchwide organization serving as a partner instead of the network's leader. Second, our ELCA presidents' meeting appointed a working group to draft a presidential statement on what it means to be a college or university of the ELCA. When finalized, all presidents will be asked to consider signing the statement. Both the organizational practices and presidential statement working groups are to report their progress on August 14th to a meeting of the presidents during the churchwide assembly in Pittsburgh. Recommendations for the future of LECNA will come to the annual meeting in February 2014.

I could offer a long recitation of the possibilities inherent in these outcomes of the February 2013 meetings for strengthening the identity and common mission of ELCA schools, but space does not allow it. Let me simply note for the readers of this journal, who care deeply about the vocation of our colleges and universities, that the potential of a more vital common life lies ahead.

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intersections

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PUBLISHED BY
The Congregational and Synodical
Mission Unit | THE EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

ON THE WEB
[www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/
Education/Colleges-and-Universities/
Resources/Intersections.aspx](http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Education/Colleges-and-Universities/Resources/Intersections.aspx)

PUBLISHED AT
Augustana College
639 38th Street
Rock Island, Illinois USA 61204-2296

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Contents Number 37 | Spring 2013

4

From the Editor | JASON A. MAHN

6

Valuing Poetry | ALLISON WEE

12

Calling Economists | LYNN HUNNICUTT

16

Singing Faith | ADAM LUEBKE

19

Living Biology | STEPHANIE FUHR

22

Professing Religion | JOHN D. BARBOUR

27

A Lutheran Dialectical Model for Higher Education |
ERNEST SIMMONS

From the Editor

In the last essay of this issue of *Intersections*, Ernest Simmons traces the way in which Luther's refusal to separate the life of faith from life in the world leads to a particular stance on education. Luther's both/and approach may appear increasingly *peculiar* as well as particular—especially on this side of the Enlightenment's quest to clearly distinguish indubitable, sure-footed knowledge from the all the relativities of history, culture, and faith. Our dominant North American culture and our educational institutions thus can pull in opposing directions: One divides fact from value, objective truth from subjective opinion, science from religion. The other believes, first, that no knowledge should be wholly divorced from matters of ultimate concern and, second, that concern for the Ultimate frees rather than constrains one for free and open inquiry into “the world.”

Certainly, Lutheran colleges and universities are particularly (and peculiarly) posed to resist and maybe even mend our culture's fact-value split. I was stuck by this soon after arriving at my current position. Kai Swanson, Augustana's Executive Assistant to the President, was leading some of us newcomers on a tour of the campus when we passed the skeletons of an Apatosaurus and Tyrannosaurus Rex in our Fryxell Geology Museum. Kai mentioned that the museum was named after Dr. Fritiof Fryxell, who graduated from Augustana in 1922 with majors in biology and English before returning to teach here in 1924. “What's so significant about this period of time?” Kai asked us. The answer, of course, is that this was the time of the so-called Scopes Monkey Trial (1925) that so painfully pitted modern science against biblical religion. Just as that culture war ignited, a graduate in biology and English was quietly starting his second year investigating and teaching about that natural world on its own terms—not despite but because he found himself at a church-related college.

As their parallel titles suggest, the first five essays in this issue think through overlapping matters of value, vocation,

faith, meaning, and commitment from the perspective of different disciplines. I hope there is something here for everyone and that together they help move us past the fact-value split. Those who assume that the “hard” and social sciences have no time for “softer” issues of meaning and value might begin with Stephanie Fuhr's reflections on her “Becoming Biologists” course or with Lynn Hunnicutt's account of why economists should—but often don't—talk about vocation. Those who assume that disciplines such as literature or religion may be nice or personally meaningful but don't much matter in “the real world” might begin with Allison Wee's account of the value of poetry or with John Barbour's willingness to model the deep connections between intellectual and religious convictions. Those who assume that religious witness and testimony only take place after hours in the dorms might be surprised—as I was—to read Adam Luebke's account of the choir as a community of faith.

In light of these essays and our ongoing conversations about the identity of Lutheran colleges, I am convinced that “education for vocation” should characterize not only those who, like Simmons, write elegantly about the namesake of our institutions, or those who find themselves in centers for vocational reflection or institutes for faith and public life. Education for vocation characterizes our daily work with students, spreadsheets, beakers, food preparation, and lesson plans.

Let me end by sharing my excitement about this summer's Vocation of a Lutheran College conference (see the announcement on the opposing page). In an economic climate where job earnings and what students will “do” with their degree increasingly overshadow questions about *who* they are and what they (and we) are called to *be*, what better time to discuss the broader value of Lutheran education, even if it is harder to assess? I look forward to continuing our conversation.

JASON A. MAHN | Associate Professor of Religion,
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Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference

The 19th annual Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference
will convene at Augsburg College in Minneapolis

Monday, July 22-Wednesday, July 24, 2013

The conference will begin with dinner at 5 pm on July 22 and conclude by 1:30 pm on July 24

Registrations are due by June 21

The theme of this year's conference is *Vocation: A Challenge to the Commodification of Education*.

We will explore the uniqueness and value of education for/as vocation in a climate where profitability, careerism, and the commodification of education increasingly dictate expectations of students, pedagogical practices, and institutional decisions. We will also offer opportunities for participants to orient themselves to the idea of "the vocation of a Lutheran college" if they are new to this ongoing conversation.

For registration information, see your campus contact or email Mark Wilhelm (mark.wilhelm@elca.org).

Conference on Orienting New Faculty and Staff to Lutheran Higher Education

A conference on introducing faculty and staff to core elements in Lutheran higher education will be held at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington

The conference will convene

Monday through Thursday, July 8-11, 2013

This interactive, working conference is designed to help a representative from each ELCA college and university initiate or improve existing practices for orienting new faculty and staff to the origins, core elements, and vision of Lutheran higher education in North America.

The conference will begin with dinner on the 8th and conclude on the evening of the 10th, with the 11th as a travel day. Each college and university may send one person to attend the conference at no cost to the individual or your institution.

A second person may attend at the school's expense, if space is available.

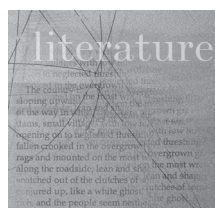
**Contact your president or chief academic officer for further information,
or email Mark Wilhelm (mark.wilhelm@elca.org).**

ALLISON WEE

Valuing Poetry

It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.

—William Carlos Williams,
from “Asphodel, That Greeny Flower”



Here at California Lutheran University, 'tis the season of departmental reviews and pre-accreditation preparation. As we collectively reflect on our institutional mission and evaluate our curricula, including core requirements and

student learning outcomes, our constant question is whether or not we are offering our students what they will need to be successful in a rapidly changing world. Almost a quarter of our students are first-generation college students, hoping a California Lutheran degree will net them a job better than what their parents could find, and thus enable their families' lives to improve. On our campus, providing pathways that might allow students to graduate in three years instead of four so as to lessen their student loan burden is framed as a justice issue. No doubt it is. And yet I worry about an undercurrent noticeable in many of our conversations about these issues, both formal and informal. As external voices increasingly call into question the value of a college education, it seems that “value” has come to mean “can it get you a job?” and “how much money will it make you?”

By these measures, even I, an English professor, must admit that poetry is not of much value. But market forces are not my concern when I step into a literature classroom. This is not naïveté: I understand that higher education is an increasingly expensive endeavor, and I agree that we have an enormous responsibility to provide our students with meaningful tools to survive in the increasingly challenging environment that awaits them. Yet if we let our students graduate thinking that even we—faculty, staff, and administrators of Lutheran colleges and universities—believe that a good job is the best measure of a good education, we will have failed them. Our stated University mission is “to educate leaders for a global society who are strong in character and judgment, confident in their identity and vocation, and committed to service and justice.” I do want our students to get good jobs. But more than this, I want them to find ways to make meaningful contributions through work they feel called to do. I want them to be able to think carefully, feel deeply, reflect honestly, know themselves, and listen and respond to the voices and needs of others. Perhaps most of all, I want them to seek, know, and value the immaterial,

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ineffable, and transcendent dimensions of their one sweet, brief, beautiful human life.

This is why I teach poetry. It really can help us not “die miserably.”

Introducing typical undergraduates to poetry is a fascinating and challenging task. I have discovered, as no doubt many others have before me, that by age 18 or 20 students have accrued a strange array of preconceived notions about the genre that I must work against every day. One common idea is that poems “can mean whatever you want them to mean.” While good poems are open to interpretation, the options are not endless. If the activity of interpretation were truly so open that meaning was contingent only on readers and not on the poem itself, we would have to assume that poets have nothing in particular to say, no specific impact they wish to make on readers, and no ability to create or communicate meanings of their own. In this view, there is no value in reading a poem; they have nothing to offer but pretty words. A second common belief is that poems are “puzzles” or “tricks” that must be figured out. In this view, poems are intended to be difficult, poets want you to feel stupid so they can feel superior, and the whole business is therefore to be avoided at all cost. No one wants to feel stupid, after all, and students who assume they won’t understand poems usually don’t even want to try. This type of student sees no value in poetry either, and usually adopts an attitude of dismissal or ridicule; it is much more comfortable than risking taking it seriously.

“From the epic narratives that shaped ancient cultures to ecstatic or prayerful expressions of religious devotees to elegies of deep grief to the simple or subtle insights of personal lyrics, poems speak to us about the human condition and the miraculous world we inhabit.”

The truth is that poets have a lot of specific and valuable things to say, and they actually want readers to listen and consider and understand. Indeed, some of the most significant and memorable things human beings have ever said, felt, thought, or believed have been expressed in poems. From the epic narratives that shaped ancient cultures to ecstatic or prayerful expressions of religious devotees to elegies of deep grief to the simple or subtle insights of personal lyrics, poems speak to us about the human condition and the miraculous world we inhabit. Reading

poetry allows us to have a relationship with people from past times and other places; it allows us to see and feel, even briefly, what others have seen and felt; it helps teach us what we hold in common with others, and invites us to appreciate what is unique to each individual. To dismiss the genre outright is to seriously limit our opportunity to encounter and be challenged by all the big questions humans have asked about life and the universe, and to benefit from all the rich and multifarious ways people have explored and attempted to answer those questions.

In the lines I selected to open this essay, William Carlos Williams suggests that poetry is far from superfluous, a mere nicety, just a pretty little thing that people who are comfortable or nostalgic jot down for the fun of it to show their friends. Poetry is not practical, not newsy; yet, he argues, “men die miserably every day / for lack of what is found there.” One might easily question this claim. I once had a skeptical student say, eyes narrowed at me, well, if the person I love has a heart attack, the paramedics had better not pull out the sonnets of Shakespeare and start reading! Of course not. But imagine yourself in this same situation, and consider the next several hours or days: when you are sent home from the hospital without your loved one and you cannot sleep, and you lie there in the dark—or perhaps you sit up all night with every light on, hoping to keep darkness at bay—and you wonder if your beloved is still alive, if he or she is in pain, if there really is a just and loving God in this world full of suffering—marketable job skills will be of no value at all. Yet the sonnets of Shakespeare might bring you some real, even life-saving, comfort now.

You might steady yourself, for example, by remembering the profound strength of your love, turning to some lines perhaps read at the ceremony that bound the two of you together:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come:
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

(Shakespeare, Sonnet 116)

Or those who value the Bible might turn to the poems sung by the psalmist:

The Lord is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)

Though I walk through the valley of death
I will fear no evil... (Psalm 23:4)

The hard truth is that there are endless things we must survive out there in the real world that money and job skills can't touch. We must survive, for example, all the ways in which our lives don't turn out like we'd hoped or planned, or like what anyone prepared us for. We must survive worry, fear, and lack of security due to a troubled economic climate, a divisive political climate, and our suffering planet's physical climate. We must survive long dark nights of the soul filled with loneliness and betrayal, anger and sadness, defeat and despair. We must survive illness, our own and others'. We must even survive death. For until our own death embraces us, each one of us will live to watch many others die: people we know, people we love, people we work with, people we admire; good people, young people, our parents and children, friends and lovers; cultural and political icons from our youth and from our own communities. It will be a long list. And yet poetry, I tell my students, really can help us live, and live well, in the face of death. It can offer much comfort. It can remind us of everything good and beautiful in the world. It can reassure us that we are not alone in our pain and suffering, even in times when no one else can be present with us. It can help give voice to our voiceless longings; it can give shape to our deepest and most complex feelings and give us means to reach out to others when otherwise we might be left mute and isolate.

In a frequently-cited essay on poets and poetry entitled "The Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*," first published in 1800, the Romantic poet William Wordsworth defines a poet as "a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind... [and] from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels" (300). This power of expression, what I often describe as the poet's skill of translation, is invaluable. We need poets' eyes, we need their knowledge, and we need their expansive word-hoards. We need the

unique witness they bear to the world. We need their imaginations to stretch our own. Poets look at the world in uncommon ways, and see things there the common eye does not always see. In the same essay Wordsworth wrote that his "principle object" was "to choose incidents and situations from common life, and ... to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way" (289). In other words, the poet's task is to defamiliarize the world the reader thinks he or she knows, to give us a fresh view of the things we see, and perhaps through this sense of newness, this fresh attention, we might gain new insights and a new sense of appreciation for things to which we have grown desensitized. The gift of fresh perspective is of untold value; it keeps our minds and hearts limber and helps us resist complacency. Poets look carefully at the world around them, and the poems they write both invite us and teach us to look and see and pay careful attention in turn.

"The gift of fresh perspective is of untold value; it keeps our minds and hearts limber and helps us resist complacency."

To my mind, the skill of paying close attention might be what our students need most; they seem in remarkably short supply. In my Environmental Literature course, the assignment I give over the first weekend is simply to find a natural outdoor environment and spend an hour sitting still and paying attention. I ask them to leave their phones and electronic devices behind, find someplace with as little evidence of humanity as possible, sit down for one hour, and look around and notice things. Their brows immediately furrow. I don't get it, they always say. *What* are we supposed to do? My earnest students are desperate for more information than this. They are used to teachers spelling out exactly what to do (and often exactly what to think). We would do well to remember that our incoming students have been schooled by the policies of No Child Left Behind ever since kindergarten, which means their instructors have been trained to teach toward tests; those students who are able to get into a liberal arts college have most likely achieved their success by keeping their heads down and following instructions well. They are unprepared to be asked to look around, and to notice what they notice.

I offer them guidance by way of questions. When you sit still and look around, what do you see? Grass, flowers, trees? What are their names? What are their colors and shapes? Are

there many or few? In what season of growth? What color is the sky? What quality the light? What shape the horizon? Are there clouds? Still or in motion, skidding fast or oozing and morphing slowly like amoebas at low temperatures? Do creatures appear as you wait and watch? Do they notice you? Do they interact with you? Do you know their names as well? Tune in to the rest of your physical senses: what can you smell? What does the air feel like on your skin? What do you imagine or know to be making the sounds you can hear? Notice, too, what happens in your body and in your mind as you sit. Stay still. Don't look at your watch. Just take it all in.

I also give them a few literary texts to prepare them for this activity. I assign readings from three esteemed American nature writers: an excerpt from Henry David Thoreau's essay "Walking," Annie Dillard's essay "Living Like Weasels," and Pattiann Rogers' poem "Knot":

Watching the close forest this afternoon
and the riverland beyond, I delineate
quail down from the dandelion's shiver
from the blowsy silver of the cobweb
in which both are tangled. I am skillful
at tracing the white egret within the white
branches of the dead willow where it roosts
and at separating the heron's graceful neck
from the leaning stems of the blue-green
lilies surrounding. I know how to unravel
sawgrasses knitted to iris leaves knitted
to sweet vernalis. I can unwind sunlight
from the switches of the water in the slough
and divide the grey sumac's hazy hedge
from the hazy grey of the sky, the red vein
of the hibiscus from its red blossom.

All afternoon I part, I isolate, I untie,
I undo, while all the while the oak
shadows, easing forward, slowly ensnare me,
and the calls of the peewees catch
and latch in my gestures, and the spicebush
swallowtails weave their attachments
into my attitude, and the damp sedge
fragrances hook and secure, and the swaying
Spanish mosses loop my coming sleep,
And I am marsh-shackled, forest-twined,
Even as the new stars, showing now
through the night-spaces of the sweet gum

And beech, squeeze into the dark
Bone of my breast, take their perfectly
Secured stitches up and down, pull
All of their thousand threads tight
And fasten, fasten.

I ask them to read these texts thoughtfully, to underline details that stand out or seem interesting, and then to draw on these three models of observation and reflection as they sit. I also instruct them to bring pen and paper, but they are not to use these for at least the first 30 minutes. After that, I suggest that they jot down some notes about their surroundings and thoughts, anything that will help them remember the experience and return in their imaginations to that place and that hour after they have left it physically behind.

The results of this modest task are remarkable. The students return to the classroom completely wired, wanting to talk and talk about their experiences, where they went and what happened in their heads and bodies and hearts. Many freely admit they haven't gone anywhere without their phones in years, and being unplugged causes a range of reactions, from relief and pleasure at an unfamiliar sense of freedom to temporarily increased anxiety. Most of them report experiencing a deep calm after a time and say they can actually hear themselves think. Is that rare? I ask. Yes, they all nod vigorously. What are the implications for that, I ask, given the fact that you are students, and your primary work is presumably to think? Do you know what your mind really needs in order to learn well and to do its best work? The questions give them pause. Two years ago, out of 30 students, two didn't think they had spent a single hour outside alone in their entire lives. Several hadn't done so since childhood, and reported being rushed with a profound and simple happiness they hadn't experienced since then. Two women, too afraid of the possibility of rape or violence to risk being away from other humans alone, had decided to go together, and, once they found a quiet place, separated just far enough to get out of sight of each other behind trees, so they could hear one another call out if they needed to. For these two, being able to be alone and even semi-relaxed outdoors felt like a great gift. This seemed bittersweet to me. I asked all of us to reflect on the implications of a culture of violence that prevents people from accessing all the dimensions of deep rejuvenation we had just collectively described.

After the primary experience of immersion and reflection, we turn to literature again in order to study the strategies poets employ to translate into words their experiences in the natural world. We notice how poets attend to concrete detail,

avoid clichéd language in favor of more fresh and striking words, and how they use the rhythms and sounds of language to try to recreate for their readers not only physical details and ideas, but also the subtleties of feeling and mood. Then, much to my students' surprise and worry, I ask them to turn their own notes into poems. Environmental Science majors always outnumber the English majors in this course, and creative writing is not familiar to them. Yet most report that the process of reading poetry and then trying to produce it themselves helps them to grasp on a deep and organic level, not just intellectually, how to look carefully at their surroundings, appreciate even the smallest of details they might normally overlook, and not just reflect on but really take responsibility for their relationship to the environment. At the end of the semester, many cite this exercise as one of the best things they've done in college, because it helps remind them of valuable things their current choices and lifestyles simply don't allow them to access: the spirit-renewing beauty of the natural world; the body-renewing pleasure of stillness; the mind-renewing gift of quiet and solitude.

Poetry is, most simply, language put together in a form that differs from regular speech or prose. And the differences are important. At a glance, we see that lines do not simply start on the left side of the page and march in a row all the way to the right like the prose sentences of an essay. Instead, poets use line breaks in order to produce certain effects. The placement of words and ideas outside the confines of a conventional sentence causes our minds to encounter them more slowly and in less linear ways, and allows for a range of associations to flow in ways that the form of prose does not invite. Sometimes, in poems with a traditional or closed form, such as a sonnet, there are fixed rules of rhyme and meter the poet must follow, and line breaks occur at regular intervals; in what is called open form or "free" verse, an author need not follow any set pattern, but may rely on instinct and purpose as guides. Line breaks organize the content of a poem, and play an important role in establishing the pace and mood of a work. Line breaks produce pauses within sentences, slow the reader down, and give special emphasis to certain words or phrases due to their placement. Consider, for example, the lines from William Carlos Williams that opened this essay. The units of words our brains encounter are not complete sentences, but shorter bits. In the space it takes for our eyes to move back and forth, our minds have time to consider the relationship between each unit and the next, and the next: "difficult," "news," "poem"; "die miserably every day"... each phrase increases in importance and weight, and we cannot just skim past on autopilot.

The words "for lack" stand apart as the shortest line in the excerpt, and they are also inset, suddenly lining up with the beginning of the statement. Our eye is drawn to them, and as we read, especially if we read aloud, our voice lands on "lack," leaving the word and its meaning hanging sparse and lonely in the air while we must pause briefly to swing our eyes back to the new line. While our eyes and mind moves, the question lingers: lack of what? We come to the final phrase of the sentence with a sense of seriousness, though the answer given is not like the answer to a math equation. The poet is not trying

“...readers are invited to engage with the question, taking on the responsibility of approaching each new poem with specific attention, on the alert, actively seeking an answer for ourselves: *what of value can you offer me?*”

to “trick” us, or make us feel stupid, but is rather trying to open up our linear minds and the assumptions we carry around in order to take in a challenging and serious claim: poetry is important. A matter of life and death. The fact that we might have hoped for a clearer answer is part of the poet's purpose; if we go away with the question nagging at us—*what is it, then, in a poem that matters? what could it be?*—then Williams has done his job well. Rather than passively take his explanation, whatever it might have been, as “fact,” readers are invited to engage with the question, taking on the responsibility of approaching each new poem with specific attention, on the alert, actively seeking an answer for ourselves: *what of value can you offer me?*

Williams entices us, with just five brief lines of poetry, to approach poetry itself with an earnest question as to its value and its capacity to do meaningful, life-saving, misery-diminishing work in you and in those around you. If you do this, I tell my students, I promise you will not be disappointed. Poetry reveals to us the great big world, everything extraordinary and everything mundane. Poets speak for us, offering us good strong memorable words to express the depths and heights of feeling and ideas that often expand beyond the rational dimension of language. The special construction of poems stretches how we think, how we see relationships and make associations, and ultimately how we make meaning. For all these reasons, poetry is perhaps our best tool to give voice to those aspects of the human

experience that are most meaningful, most necessary, and sometimes most difficult to express.

I leave you with two favorites. I hope they speak to you.

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees

for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body

love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain

are moving across the landscapes,

over the prairies and the deep trees,

the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,

are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,

the world offers itself to your imagination,

calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –

over and over announcing your place

in the family of things.

(Mary Oliver, “Wild Geese”)

Listen to the voice
of each dead poet
as if it were your own.
It is.

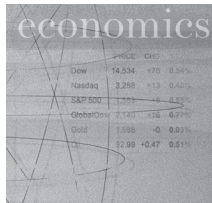
(Philip Dacey, from “Notes of an Ancient Chinese Poet”)

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LYNN HUNNICUTT

Calling Economists



In his pamphlet entitled, *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*, Luther addresses the question of calling and whether some callings are false. The cover letter to the honorable Assa von Kram notes that “...you and several

others asked me to put my opinion into writing and publish it because many soldiers are offended by their occupation itself” (Luther 93). This and a related question—what sort of work can be properly classified as a vocation?—deserve reflection to reach a deeper understanding.

Like Luther, I have reached the conclusion that economists, too, can be saved and that my vocation as a professor of economics and my students’ careers as learners (and eventual practitioners) of the discipline can be proper vocational callings from God. This essay will give a brief description of how these questions have arisen in my life and work and consider where vocation does (and where it could) intersect with the discipline of economics. I will touch on the question of defining a “proper” vocation as it relates to how one characterizes preferences in economics. However, a full comparison of vocation and preferences will have to be the subject of another essay.

In Fall 2002, I was in my fifth year as an assistant professor of economics at Utah State University. My research was proceeding at a reasonable pace and I was meeting my teaching and service obligations, so tenure (while not guaranteed) seemed likely. Yet I had the distinct and nagging sense that Utah State was not the place for me to make a career. Part of

this was for personal reasons—but the sense of mis-fit was deeper than that, and had to do with the separation I felt of faith from work. Professors at public universities must take care to separate religious faith from what is taught in the classroom, and I believe that this separation is important at any university. But in Utah, where it is impossible to live without bumping up against religious faith and its effects on everyday life, this seemingly artificial separation bothered me. If Luther was right, and every person has a vocation (a calling from God to a particular kind of work in the world) then it ought to be possible to live out this calling as part of a life of faith, instead of separate from it. I longed for a workplace where I could more overtly talk about and live my life of faith.

Not surprisingly, an opening at Pacific Lutheran University that Fall struck me as a calling. The background sense of searching I had been experiencing made the listing (in my field and at a university owned by my church) seem to be exactly what I’d been waiting for. God was calling me—what else could I do but apply?

As it turns out, I was right in ways I could not have imagined. Since arriving at Pacific Lutheran, I have been drawn into the University’s Wild Hope Center for Vocation. This work has given direction to my own sense of calling, and more importantly to my work with students, both inside and out of the classroom. It has also afforded me the opportunity to think deeply about vocation and its relationship to my role as a faculty member.

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Whether Economists, Too, Can be Saved

Luther begins his essay by noting that there is a distinction between the occupation of soldier, and the soldier (man) himself. He then notes that ultimate salvation depends not on the occupation one holds, but on the grace that comes through faith in Christ. Since acts do not save, no war (no matter how justified) will earn salvation. The remainder of Luther's essay is divided into three parts. In the first part, he argues that the occupation of soldier can be godly, for a number of reasons. He then goes on to conclude that some wars are justified and therefore godly. Finally, Luther argues that the person who holds the occupation of soldier can be godly, and that soldiers may work for pay. Interestingly, Luther sketches out a simple model of the feudal economy, in which soldiers provide protection for farmers, who (in turn) feed soldiers. He writes,

The farmers feed us and the soldiers defend us. Those who have the responsibility of defending are to receive their income and their food from those who have the responsibility of feeding, so that they will be able to defend. Those who have the responsibility of feeding are to be defended by those who have the responsibility of defending, so that they will be able to provide food. (128)

This is a rudimentary version of the circular flow diagram taught in economics courses today, with the soldiers purchasing inputs (food) from farmers, and providing an output (protection services) to those same farmers.

“Is the call to economics as a field a proper vocation?”

Now an economist is not a soldier. We are not called to take up arms against others. And yet, our policy prescriptions affect human lives and can, on occasion, lead to human suffering and even death.¹ We are seen, by some, as promoters of greed—as facilitators of acquisitiveness. Of course, self-interest, which is assumed in the standard modeling framework (Walsh 401-405), and greed are not the same, but the confusion of the two is common. And so the question arises: Can an economist, too, be saved? Is the call to economics as a field a proper vocation?

As with soldiers, one may distinguish between the person and the occupation. As Luther notes, a man sometimes “takes a work that is good in itself and makes it bad for himself by not being very concerned about serving out of obedience and duty” (129). What matters is the reason the role is undertaken. Thus, one who “seek[s] only his own profit” is not right or good, even when the work is justifiable (129). Motivation matters. Yet the question remains whether

a person may be saved even as they serve in an “unjustified” occupation (if such a thing exists).

Luther himself was a professor, and remained so even after he began the reform movement within the Catholic church. Thus, it seems clear that Luther would agree the role of professor is a proper vocational calling, as long as one does not use it to seek money or favors. But what about economics as a calling? Can one legitimately profess economics? Perhaps a distinction can be made between the field and the occupation. As a professor of economics, I am called, first and foremost, to *profess*. Economics is the discipline I am trained in, and the topic I profess most regularly, but it is through this *profession* that I serve both my students and colleagues. This is my vocation.

Self-Interest and Being-Called

Is the profession of economics, then, an unethical thing? After all, doesn't economics promote self-interest above all and help devise ways for firms and individuals to obtain more at the expense of other people (including unborn future generations), non-human creatures, and the earth? Am I not training little self-interested (greedy) creatures to build empires and exploit the world around them? You will not be surprised to learn that my answer to this question is “no”—with some qualification. For one thing, “study of” is not the same as “advocacy for.” While it is true that rational self-interest is a foundational assumption in almost all economic modeling, this is a statement of the human condition, not *necessarily* an assessment of its desirability.

Adam Smith, the founder of modern economic theory, defends the distinction between self-interest and mere greed. In both of his two major works, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776),² Smith assumes that self-interest is not in-and-of-itself morally objectionable. He writes:

We are not ready to suspect any person of being defective in selfishness. This is by no means the weak side of human nature, or the failing of which we are apt to be suspicious... Carelessness and want of economy are universally disapproved of, not...as proceeding from a want of benevolence, but from a want of the proper attention to the objects of self-interest. (*Moral Sentiments* XII.II.87)

And yet, what Smith here describes as mere human nature and neutral motivation for economic action was for Luther the root of sin. Indeed, closely related to self-interest is Luther's view that people are “curved in on themselves.” Yet notice that, for Luther, the condition of being curved in

on oneself is morally objectionable; it closes us off from God and the needy neighbor. It is the duty of the Christian to live life in service to the common good. What is this life lived in service to the common good? Luther's answer: Vocation.

Unlike Luther, then, economists take self-interest as a starting point and use the assumption to better understand human action, not its motivation. *This* is the point of departure, and also where economics ceases to consider vocation as it is understood in other disciplines. Thus, to ask a mainstream economist to consider vocation is tantamount to asking her to move into some distant and slightly uncomfortable vacation rental home, with its coffee maker that doesn't work in the way she's used to and the neighbors who speak a dialect that she has trouble understanding. It might be possible, even pleasurable, but it is not quite like home where she knows which drawer holds the apple slicer.

In short, the economist takes no position on this fundamental aspect of the human condition. Instead, she considers the world as it exists, through the lens of self-interest. Indeed, most economists would say this is not properly a part of our discipline. It is a foundational assumption that is rarely noticed, and even less commonly questioned.

In other words, if being self-interested is morally neutral, then no claims regarding who should be served can be made. The economic agent is left alone, to serve who he wills in his self-interested way. This is not to say that each person has the capacity to fulfill all of his needs, but rather that by invoking the self-interest of others, his own needs are also satisfied. Self-interest, not direct attention to the neighbor's need, becomes the root of true benevolence. As Smith writes in his later work:

But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. . . . It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages. (*Wealth of Nations* 13)

Smith further notes that as long as markets are free and information is easily available, self-interested is guided, as if by an invisible hand, to improve society's general level of welfare and therefore the welfare of others. It is possible to go even further and explain altruistic behavior while remaining within the realm of self-interest, so that people are concerned with the welfare of others and the common good *due* to their self-interested nature (Andreoni; Becker). But this concern

for the welfare of others is not the same thing as vocation. Economics has no sense of responding to a call to serve the common good in the way that Luther describes vocation. Instead, because the discipline assumes self-interest, serving the common good is a result which must be shown to come from a reinterpretation of self-interest.

“This concern for the welfare of others is not the same thing as vocation. Economics has no sense of responding to a call to serve the common good in the way that Luther describes vocation.”

Now, this setting aside of moral questions regarding human nature has enabled economics to make great strides in describing the world around us. Metaphors like Smith's invisible hand or Marshall's scissors of supply and demand (Marshall V.III.7) help us understand the nature and advantages of markets as a way to organize economic activity. Advances like David Ricardo's description of gains from trade (ch. 7)—the idea that engaging in trade can make both trading partners better off—suggest that individuals and countries are better off with open economies than with closed. Cournot's use of mathematical models to describe competition between firms has enabled new discoveries and relatively accurate accounts of outcomes in many industries (ch. 4-8). In all of these cases, self-interested behavior was assumed, never questioned. Vocation simply doesn't arise in this work. Furthermore, many of these ideas would be difficult, if not impossible, to describe if the writer had to justify the use of self-interested behavior before presenting his theory. What McCloskey calls “prudence only”—at the exclusion of the other virtues—has gotten us a long way (“Bourgeois Virtue” 297-317).

Accounting for Vocation

Since the question of who should be served does not arise in mainstream economics, the discipline is left without obvious tools to address questions of vocation. This is not seen as a problem, as mainstream economics does not often see a need to consider vocation. That said, the work of two economists (among many others whose deserving work is not mentioned here) questions both the assumptions of the mainstream economic model and the desirability of the discipline's so-called neutrality on ethical issues. This work might provide a way to consider vocation while remaining within the discipline of economics, at least as broadly construed.

First, Deirdre McCloskey has written a number of works in which she questions the assumptions economists make. Starting with *The Rhetoric of Economics*, and through *The Bourgeois Virtues*, McCloskey points out that mainstream economic analysis relies on only one of the seven classical virtues, that of prudence. She notes that this limited view leaves us unable to address many questions of interest (which, I would say, includes questions of vocation), and causes some of our claims to be silly, at best, and harmful, at worst. This idea that the discipline might properly address other virtues, while still remaining recognizably economics, could provide a way to incorporate questions of vocation and the common good into economics. It could also lead us to more sensible conclusions and away from what McCloskey calls the “the unexamined rhetoric of economic quantification” and “the rhetoric of significance tests” (*Rhetoric of Economics*, ch. 7-8).

“This idea that the discipline might properly address other virtues, while still remaining recognizably economics, could provide a way to incorporate questions of vocation and the common good into economics.”

Second, George DeMartino has called for the discipline of economics to address questions of ethics in a more rigorous way. The consideration of who is harmed by the actions of economists is an ethical question that DeMartino suggests needs to be addressed. *Who should be served* is a closely related topic that will naturally arise as DeMartino’s challenge is addressed. And this question leads directly to what I define here as vocation. Economic ethics does not necessarily (or only) imply an economic understanding of vocation. It might also provide an avenue into the question of what *should* occur. “Should” is not a word that mainstream economics is well-equipped to address, although it is a necessary word for thinking about vocation.

As it stands, mainstream economics does not, and for many cannot, address vocation. Because we take self-interest as given, questions of calling and serving the common good cannot be completely or perhaps even adequately addressed. This, I believe, is a loss for the discipline. While it seems safe to conclude that economists, too, can be saved—even those who have no interest in virtues other than prudence or in questions of ethics—our discipline would be enriched by the addition of those who work outside the standard paradigm. So, then, I issue this call to action: Let us go forth and find ways to talk about vocation, even as we remain economists.

End Notes

1. An example of the way the decisions of economists affect human lives can be found in the causes of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Many economists conclude that government actions taken at the behest of economic policymakers either caused or contributed to the duration and severity of the depression. See “Symposia: The Great Depression” in *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 7:2 (Spring 1993). Among the causes considered are government monetary and fiscal policies as well as nations’ adherence to the gold standard.

2. While self-interest is generally assumed in *The Wealth of Nations*, it is one of many human characteristics addressed in Smith’s other major work, the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. This work, then, is necessary background reading for *The Wealth of Nations*, and it is unfortunate that some consider only Smith’s second book without the context given in the first.

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ADAM LUEBKE

Singing Faith



The scruffy bass sits in the back row. His long, thick, curly brown hair and unkempt beard stand out among the neatly cut blonds in this Midwestern college choir at a Norwegian Lutheran liberal arts school. Each day he brings a new temperament to the room, ranging from anger to unbridled joy. When I pass Oscar¹ in the halls of the music building it's likely I'll catch a foul four letter word and the saccharin whiff of an energy drink. But each day he is present—on time and on task. Whenever it's his turn for daily devotion I hold my breath. Will he evoke the absurdist in us all, forcing a return to decorum? Or will his observation find a profound nugget of truth?

That Tuesday was a tired day. Our Christmas program preparation was behind where it ought to be. Illness was creeping through the ranks, striking singers mute and extracting our collective energy. When Oscar lumbers to take his place in front of the ensemble, his peers are distracted and disquieted. A brief moment of silence washes over the room and the air shifts instantly. All are suddenly aware Oscar can barely speak, his voice breaking as he scrambles for the right words. “I’ve never been so moved as when I’m singing with you guys,” he manages to say. “The only time I’ve felt the power of something greater than me is when we are singing.” With his final Christmas concert imminent, Oscar has faced the realization that a valuable part of his life is nearly completed. An emotional tap, a certain transcendence that comes from singing in choir, singing in *this* choir, will be gone. Oscar is weeping.

At Waldorf College, the choir has been a spiritual buttress for its members for nearly 100 years. Grown from the seeds

planted by F. Melius Christiansen in 1912 at St. Olaf College, the Waldorf Choir is a representative of the American Lutheran choral tradition that links choral singing with an expression of one’s faith through primarily a cappella sacred repertoire. The Waldorf Choir’s longest tenured director, Odvin Hagen, built the choir into a stalwart representative of the faith whose primary mission remains the spreading of the Gospel of Christ through music. At the core of this mission is devotion to the students’ learning and spiritual transformation through music.

Hagen prayed for each student daily and so dedicated his life to them that it was while on a choir tour that he passed away (Farndale). To this day the choir still operates according to five directives he laid out, engraved inside the front cover of the choir Bible:

1. Be tactful.
2. Be helpful.
3. Be hopeful.
4. Be cheerful.
5. Be constant in prayer.

A chief exercise of these edicts is the choir’s daily devotional. Students mine scripture, quotations, and their own experience for a meaningful nugget of Truth. Recently, for Valentine’s Day a student began rehearsal by reading the famous love passage from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. Kelly asked the choir to reflect on love—who we love, how we love, and why we love. She asked us if we truly loved one another in this group and challenged us to find significant means to demonstrate it. She reminded us of the “ultimate,

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sacrificial love given by our Savior,” and then she supported us by saying, “I want you all to know that I love this choir, I love all of you.”

Another memorable devotion also came from 1 Corinthians. Sarah began with an enthusiastic reading of chapter 12 when Paul recounts the necessity and unique function of each member of the body, generating laughter when the eye says to the hand, “I do not need you.” She then beautifully equated each member of the choir as a member of a larger body. Each person has a gift that is so significant that it is fundamentally needed. She told us we were all needed, in terms of the ensemble and its ability to make music well, but also as individuals who mold one another’s lives.

Often times it is the non-scriptural devotions that impress on the students most. Once, a choir member recalled the time she was in line at the pharmacy and an elderly couple in front of her engaged her in conversation. Jenny reported that the topic of the Waldorf Choir came up and the couple gushed to her about how special the group was to them. They attended all our concerts and felt so blessed that they were able to witness young people create overwhelming beauty and share such moving, wonderful music. Jenny shared that she felt that a part of her life had meaning. Her devotion illustrated the way that even chance encounters can force us to scrutinize the spiritual issues that challenge us daily as we determine who we are, how we treat others, and how we carry ourselves in the world.

My students are profoundly touched by music because, as they toil through each piece, they must constantly wrestle with multiple strands of meaning. Choral music has the gift of text which adds a distinct communicative layer on top of notes, rhythms, and intonation. As a choir formed to serve a spiritual mission, we seek to communicate human emotions and the human condition through singing great texts of faith and experience.

Indeed, the bulk of our repertoire is inextricably linked to sacred theology and philosophy. Western choral music grew up under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church, an institution that nurtured and shaped the genre throughout history. But, in addition to mass settings and psalms of David, we seek to represent other faith traditions, including the great spirituals from the African-American tradition, ancient Hebrew hymns, and most importantly, the chorales of the Lutheran church to which we are wed.

This diverse history of choral music allows my choristers to explore sacred and spiritual ideas within a range of contexts. This year alone, the Waldorf Choir will sing pieces by F. Melius Christiansen from the American Midwest Lutheran tradition, spirituals and gospel works from the African-American

traditions, a setting of the Roman Catholic *Requiem* liturgy by Gabriel Fauré, and settings of sacred texts by composers from the sixteenth through the twenty-first centuries. Each distinct piece offers the students insight into the work’s genesis and its overall meaning.

During our course of study, my students learn that scholars speculate Fauré may have been moved to compose a *Requiem* in the years following both his parents’ deaths (Buchanan). They discover that Thomas Tallis was riven between two competing faiths, composing music in English for Henry VIII’s Church of England and in Latin for the Roman Catholic faith of his successor, Queen Mary. They also learn about how the elements of musical composition can convey meaning. By singing Mozart, they experience how an exploration in increased harmonic complexity heightens musical and emotional tension, and how, in a piece by the contemporary American composer Eric Whitacre, clusters of notes in a chord of sound can evoke the image of eternal light.

“The message of sacred music forces my students to unearth the profundity of spiritual ideas and the implications of these ideas on themselves and on humankind.”

Our primary function, though, is to explore the personal meaning of the music we sing as a choir. After a tough rehearsal recently, when energy seemed low and students were making simple mistakes, I returned to a piece we had performed with some regularity, a setting of the hymn *Abide with Me*. As we worked through each verse, the passion that had been evident in previous performances was not present. I stopped and asked each member to reflect on what this song means to him or her and to share responses with one another. After a few moments of chatter, I then went around the choir arbitrarily eliciting their individual responses. The students’ insights were full of depth and self-reflection; they used words such as “hope,” “commitment,” “strength,” “sadness.” Upon restarting the piece, the choir sang more expressively and more musically than when we had started. Each student had made a conscious connection between the notes and words of the music with an embodiment of their spirit.

The message of sacred music forces my students to unearth the profundity of spiritual ideas and the implications of these ideas on themselves and on humankind. For example, few of my choir members, because they are still young adults, have

had to confront death and the questions that surround it. Yet, with motivation and self-reflection, they can begin to grasp the anguish of the cries for mercy in the first movement of Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem*. They can begin to understand the turmoil faced by someone who has lost a loved one—someone caught between his fearful, timid pleas to the Lord for eternal rest and his angry, frustrated demands for the Lord to listen to his pain. In the end, my students' musical portrayal of the eternal light of paradise becomes clearer and brighter after they've wrestled to express the sorrow, fear, and torment of damnation.

“It is when my students fully grasp what it is they are singing that they develop a sense of why they are singing. This deep understanding of the music, of its context and meaning, brings about transformation.”

We've also been learning an African-American spiritual that has challenged the students to contemplate a profound faith in God. The experience of the slave teaches them that despite being horribly treated, humans who were debased, whipped, and tortured based on their skin color could have faith in a better life. For the slave, no matter how awful life on earth could be, there was always hope for a better life in the end. The question then turns to my students: how is it that such devotion can impact their own lives? What does it mean, in the hymn “Praise to the Lord,” for “all that hath life and breath” to come and praise the Lord? By contemplating these questions, they come to comprehend the idea that it is not just me or them but the entirety of creation that can find hope and thanksgiving in a greater power.

It is when my students fully grasp what it is they are singing that they develop a sense of why they are singing. This deep understanding of the music, of its context and meaning, brings about transformation. At times they least often expect it, my students are made aware of the power of the message they communicate. They see something about themselves they haven't experienced before. And they see in the eyes of the audience the hearts of strangers forever touched.

From the stage, my singers witness tears, smiles, and applause of gratitude. I remind them prior to every concert that we don't know for whom we are singing. Perhaps the little old lady in the front row has recently lost her mate of fifty years; or the family in the back has just learned that their child is ill;

or the young couple off to the side is celebrating their first anniversary. Regardless of how large or how small, each audience is composed of unique individuals whose lives need spiritual nourishment, healing, and celebration. My students' faith becomes stronger as they stir the audience in this way because they understand the power of the message of the Gospel and how compelling its foundation is to all of human experience. And every night they don their velvet robes, the students will change the life of someone who hears them by sharing the love, hope, and peace found in Christ.

As realization of this power grows, my students find it difficult to reach the end. When their time in choir comes to a close they share with their peers the difference that singing has made in their lives. Through choral music, music of the spirit, my students find their true expressive beings. They learn that they can reach out and transform the lives of their listeners, of those around them, and of themselves through a message of faith. And they discover that singing in such a manner brings great reward and fulfillment and provides meaning to their own lives.

The final song in our concerts actually occurs after the applause has died and the audience makes its way to the exits. As the choir members file off stage after a performance they return in silence to the dressing room, form a circle, and clasp hands. Closing their eyes they sing:

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

The students affirm that their talent, their work, and their joy are in the service of God. This is a tradition that was implemented within the last ten years. It is a tradition that illustrates that the Waldorf Choir is not a staid institution. Rather, its spiritual life endures through each generation of individuals who stand in its ranks.

End Notes

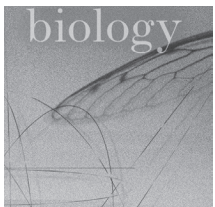
1. The names of the students in this essay have been changed.

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STEPHANIE FUHR

Living Biology



Five years ago I began teaching a one credit course for our biology majors entitled *Becoming Biologists: Understanding our Place as Life Scientists*. The story of the development of this course has been the story of my development as a

teacher as well as the story of how I have come to understand the importance of discussing values in the development of a scientist. Creating an introductory course such as this one in any major presents an interesting challenge in backward curriculum design. Knowing the skills, abilities, and dispositions we would like to see in our graduating seniors, the question becomes: which conversations, lessons, and assignments are most relevant to have at the beginning of their development? As a biology teacher, I was asked to step back from the content of my discipline (the sweet comfort zone for many, including myself) and to view the discipline at large in an effort to piece together a story of how “biology” is conducted and what it involves.

Trained as scientists, biology professors instinctively begin with intellectual skills: How can we begin proposing hypotheses? How can we talk about the basics of experimental design? How can we connect learning to theory and physical elements of the brain to encourage metacognition? How can we apply scientific thinking to scientific arguments in order to test claims? But more difficult questions follow: How can we teach students to develop their own questions? How can we prepare them to speak articulately about themselves as learners and biologists? When we think about training our students to emerge as skillful scientists and thinkers, these are the sorts of intellectual acts we want them to practice

throughout our curriculum, beginning in the *Becoming Biologists* course. However, the challenge in a course built from skills alone is that you still have to choose content or stories in order to test the skills.

The introductory course sounds absolutely brilliant from a curriculum design perspective. Yet, the story of the development of this course and my own teaching begins with student distaste for—and kick-back against—“skill lessons” and my subsequent desperate search for meaningful stories and conversations that might engage them. Frustrated by student resistance, I found myself in a state that Robert Pirsig articulates well in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* as drifting laterally for a while to expand the roots of what I already knew, even though I was determined to expand the branches and move forward (169). I knew what I wanted to teach them, but I didn’t how to get them to embrace this particular kind of learning. The lateral drift sent me in two directions—toward conversations with students and to the college library. I needed to learn which stories the students perceived as missing in their understanding of how “biology” is conducted. I also needed to read more stories from biologists across the many subdisciplines of biology.

The first story I happened upon was an obvious choice given the title of the course I was stumped by, *On Becoming a Biologist*, by John Janovy Jr. The author, a well-known parasitologist and educator at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, intertwines stories from philosophers, scientists, and educators about the ideals and practical matters of pursuing a professional academic life in the biological sciences. I recommend this book to every student I meet in the classroom. I include readings from it in my course, and have loaned my copy to

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several students to gather their thoughts about it. The roots of what I have known about biology and biologists have expanded greatly thanks to this small book. I hope a book like it exists in every discipline.

In the Spring of 2012, I was fortunate to have an ambitious, capable, and insightful student in my senior inquiry course with a natural curiosity for understanding disease in living systems. He had great potential to thrive as a graduate student and researcher. I loaned him Janovy's book so that he might consider a vocational calling to organismal biology as a researcher and educator. He also agreed to meet again and discuss his thoughts about the book and his own undergraduate experience in biology as a recent alumnus. Returning the book, the student had flagged this passage:

In one critical area—the *reason* biologists study living organisms our whole lives through—education is left largely to chance, and the responsibility for those lessons falls on student shoulders. The idea that science classes must, from bell to bell, deal only with observations, interpretations, and experimental design is a delusion. (Janovy 7)

The student suggested that this passage might guide me in my efforts to generate better purpose and buy-in from students in the *Becoming Biologists* course. Janovy's discussion of values in determining biological research interests and vocational choices had intrigued him. He couldn't recall being asked to consider the values of biologists in our curriculum.

One of Janovy's central arguments is that values are legitimate tools in biology because they allow us to work in areas of thought into which we would otherwise not have access (Janovy 7). Janovy describes a beloved teacher and mentor who often drew upon poetry and art as teaching devices in biology courses to explore abstractions and perceptions in the study of biology. By examining the values and meanings expressed by others in their work, whether of art or science, we can better express the realities conveyed in our observations and interpretations. By being exposed to the values of his teacher and mentor as well as being asked to consider his own values as a student, Janovy was able to expand his intellectual skills and find direction and legitimacy for his own biological interests. Through his personal experiences and story, Janovy challenges biology educators to integrate the life choices of scientists into our teaching of biology so that we might guide students toward answering some fundamental questions about vocational goals: "Should I become a biologist?" Or even: "Am I a biologist without knowing it?" (Janovy 8).

I took away two fundamental lessons from the student's perceptions. First, perhaps the best approach in an introductory biology course with learning goals centered on intellectual skill development is to choose the biological worldview as the overarching theme. Skills, while necessary, are not actually the inspiration for a life's work. Visions and values may very well be. Second, when integrating the stories and content of the introductory course I should always remember to talk about the fundamental curiosities, ideas, and values that have shaped scientists. These lessons helped me envision how I might completely deconstruct my course and rebuild it. I needed to meet students where they are—with their own values and goals—and to scaffold the intellectual skills into their own context. The lessons also made me think more critically and read more extensively about the scientists, philosophers, and educators I was teaching in order to be sure that curiosities and values were always brought to the forefront in our discussions on learning, thinking, and biology.

“Skills, while necessary, are not actually the inspiration for a life’s work. Visions and values may very well be.”

The course now begins with discussions and assignments about why students are interested in biology as a discipline of study and the many directions that a professional career within the life sciences may take. We then transition into stories about scientists and science. Before we begin looking at the work of any one scientist, I now spend more time developing the person behind the work. I explain his or her motivations, values, and the ideas and organisms that he or she has been most curious about.

For example, in one case study that we use in the course, we evaluate one of the arguments that Stephen Jay Gould makes in *The Mismeasure of Man*, a widely read popular science book that examines the argument that intelligence can be abstracted as a single number capable of ranking people by intrinsic mental worth (20). In the revised edition of his book, Gould explains his reasons for originally writing *The Mismeasure of Man*, including his family's participation in campaigns for social justice, his own participation, and his strong feelings about fallacious arguments of biological determinism. Gould argues that the best form of objectivity lies in identifying preferences so that their influence can be recognized in the work of a scientist. He acknowledges that preferences often must be identified in order to be eliminated. But such preferences also help us decide what subjects we wish to

pursue in our limited lifespan. Gould claims that “we have a much better chance of accomplishing something significant when we follow our passionate interests and work in areas of deepest personal meaning” (37). He thus advocates the use of values to guide biological research interests in combination with the scrutiny of personal biases to uphold the overall goal of objectivity in science. By presenting both Gould’s motivations and his science through the case study in my course, I now enable students to practice the *skills* of skepticism and critical evaluation while also opening the discussion to the *values* and *worldviews* that shape the lives and contributions of biologists.

Over the past five years, my many conversations with students have led to insights of two general forms. First, they would like to have more conversations about career possibilities in the biological sciences and receive immediate practical advice about the right experiences to prepare them for future work (internships, research experiences, resumes, etc.). Second (and in some tension with the first), students would like to have more philosophical discussions about the nature of science itself. But whether our conversations are philosophical or practical, students (and alumni) and I almost always end up talking about the stories of biologists, about science as a way of knowing the world, and about vocational possibilities in the life sciences. The former student who

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directed my attention to Janovy’s quotation as a guiding idea for the *Becoming Biologists* course is only one example. Most of my personal conversations with students could very easily transfer into formal discussions as the theme of my course: the biological worldview. Furthermore, this theme might be often overlooked by science teachers focused on developing students’ intellectual skills and abilities insofar as those skills and abilities direct us away from passions and stories.

What I have come to realize in rebuilding my course is how discussions of the biological worldview and values were

the obvious thread connecting our students to the study of biology and, potentially, to engagement with the intellectual skills involved in this type of work. My department had designed a course to teach students *how* to study biology, but perhaps we hadn’t given enough thought to the reasons *why* one might study biology. We also needed to train students to make their own choices based on their own values and preferences among the many subdisciplines and career paths

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extending from the study of biology. If our goal in the introductory course was to begin to prepare students in the skills, abilities, and dispositions that would best serve them in the future, we had overlooked some important parts of the *dispositions*. And while values lead to bias in the process of science, they also lead toward the questions we are most interested in asking about the natural world. Values provide the foundation for lifetime engagement in the work of science.

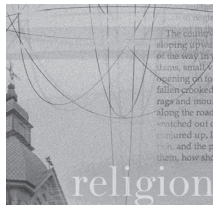
The changes to my course are new enough that I can’t make any grand claims about significant gains, but I can say that this year I have learned more about my students’ personal interests sooner on in the course. They also talked more openly in discussions, and many of them left the course with stronger responses about their understanding of the work of biology than they were able to provide at the beginning. I haven’t had the same level of kick-back that I’d previously experienced. I am hopeful that my students have left the course with some practice at the intellectual skills involved in science as well as an enlarged understanding of *why* they might study biology and what it might offer to their lives.

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JOHN D. BARBOUR

Professing Religion



Professing religion is for me at once a matter of teaching a subject matter and making an autobiographical statement. I'm a Professor of Religion and I sometimes profess my own beliefs, that is, I openly declare or affirm my reli-

gious views and explain why I have these convictions, often by telling a story. In my experience, these two aspects of my role at St. Olaf College do not always harmonize. I am often uncertain about whether or not to describe my own religious experiences and convictions. I will describe why this issue is controversial and, in the second part of this essay, offer some reflections on how my understanding of my vocation shapes my thinking about the role of personal narrative in teaching religious studies.

Speaking of Faith and the Study of Religion

According to many theories of religious studies and many views of religious commitment, academic study and personal faith are utterly distinct, if not irreconcilable. At St. Olaf and other ELCA schools, in contrast, I think these perspectives on religion are recognized as different yet often related. Our identities as colleges of the church means that we encourage explicit discussions of how learning and faith have influenced each other in our own lives. In practice, however, this is often not easy to do, and it is sometimes wise for a teacher to withhold information about his or her personal faith. There may be good reasons to conceal or “bracket” one’s views, especially in

a Religion class, where students need to learn to think critically about religion, and not simply confess their faith. What kind of autobiographical statements are appropriate and helpful in a theology or religious studies course?

It can be pedagogically valuable for a professor to speak of his personal faith, just as it can be illuminating for a political scientist to explain her political opinions, an art historian to justify his assessments of works of art, or a scientist to espouse a particular energy or environmental policy. In most academic fields, teachers must learn to balance critical distance and passionate engagement with their subject matter.

There are peculiar challenges inherent in teaching Religious Studies that complicate matters. Very few students have any prior experience of studying religion in an academic context. Nonetheless, some of them think they already know all about the subject, or all they need to know, and some students think that all other views are wrong. Still others think that all views are equally valid. That is, they think that faith is a subjective, irrational experience, and there is therefore no way to reason about or assess claims about religious matters. For these students, all religious assertions are equally arbitrary; in the name of tolerance and being open minded, they dismiss normative arguments about the adequacy of various claims.

Students differ greatly in the degree to which they are willing and able to profess their own religious convictions. Some people feel confident about their faith and qualified to speak with authority about the Bible or their experiences in church or prayer meetings. Other students are tentative and

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uncertain, and some are alienated by what they see as false piety or attempts to convert them. We all bring a lot of baggage to the study of religion, but we are not equally willing to open our suitcases for inspection. It is a challenge for a Professor of Religion to establish a classroom environment where all students feel empowered to speak and write about their personal response to the subject matter, and all students are led to question their prior beliefs, doubts, and evasions of critical thinking.

“We all bring a lot of baggage to the study of religion, but we are not equally willing to open our suitcases for inspection.”

Most professors of religious studies in the United States consider personal references to faith (or lack of faith) to be out of place in an academic context. At public universities, professors must honor the separation of church and state. At private institutions, too, teachers may not want to open the door to proselytizers and those who only accept one religious position as valid. Furthermore, practitioners of religious studies have been anxious to prove that we can be as tough-minded and academically rigorous as our colleagues in other disciplines. The history of this field, which grew out of biblical and theological studies in Christian seminaries, has made many scholars cautious about revealing their personal convictions. Some teachers try to be as detached, scientific, impersonal, or value-neutral as possible. Or they may relentlessly analyze the problems in various patterns of belief without revealing their own position. At St. Olaf College, teachers rightly stress the need to bracket or hold in suspension one’s own beliefs in order to understand the worldview of ancient Israel, a medieval mystic, a Muslim theologian, or a Buddhist monk. Although the Religion Department was located in the basement of Boe Chapel for sixty years, until 2012, we have made it clear that we do not teach Sunday school. We don’t use religious language in the same way as those worshiping in the sanctuary.

I’m not worried about converting anyone, a highly improbable event. The issue is rather that when students know my views, some of them might stop thinking, either because they share those views and think the professor’s approval is sufficient justification, or because disagreement or fear of criticism makes them withdraw. It is also possible that some students might be swayed into parroting my ideas or beliefs in hopes of a higher grade. In all of these cases, what is at stake in a

professor’s choices about self-disclosure is the consequences for students in terms of their academic engagement with the study of religion and their learning to become more thoughtful and articulate about their own deepest convictions.

Although I share these several concerns about the pedagogical dangers of a professor’s personal remarks about religion, I also think that something important is lost when a teacher is not able to articulate an individual response to the religious issues at stake. We would miss the chance to show our students how our intellectual and religious convictions are deeply connected to who we are as individuals. Students don’t care for self-indulgence, proselytizing, or bias in the classroom. They do welcome candid statements about what a professor thinks, including what he believes about some matter of faith, if he compares his position with other possibilities and invites discussion and contrasting views. This kind of teaching can stimulate students to think about how their own experiences shape and are shaped by their religious beliefs and practices.

Many of my most vivid memories of my teachers are when I got a rare glimpse of what made them tick, what personal concerns motivated their teaching a particular subject matter or book. My graduate school advisor, Anthony C. Yu, labored for decades on a four-volume English translation of the Chinese classic *The Journey to the West*, a sixteenth-century narrative about a monk who brings Buddhist scriptures from India to China. One day Tony told me that, when he was a young boy, his grandfather had read him this narrative as his family sojourned through China during the Second World War. My teacher’s bond with his grandfather and the circumstances of this harrowing journey helped me understand his devotion to this travel narrative and his desire to make it accessible to today’s “West.” Such self-disclosure was an infrequent event, I suppose partly because I didn’t ask for it. In dozens of religious courses in college and graduate school, I almost never learned what my professors believed or how they worshipped. A rare exception was Langdon Gilkey, who recounted vivid stories, both orally and in his memoir *Shantung Compound* (which I frequently teach), about how he came to appreciate theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich because of Gilkey’s experiences in a Japanese internment camp in China during the Second World War. I saw how my teacher made sense of his life with these ideas, and why theology matters.

As I’ve gotten older, I’ve become more comfortable about revealing my views, which I used to conceal as much as possible. It’s easier for me than for some other professors to get autobiographical. The subject matter of my primary field, Religion and Literature, lends itself to comparisons with one’s own experience more easily than some other disciplines. Being

tenured makes it less risky for me to reveal my own beliefs and experiences. Yet the power dynamics of the classroom and students' vulnerability mean that a professor's self-disclosure about matters of religious faith is always a questionable enterprise.

My scruples and uncertainty about waxing personal as I profess religion may reflect preoccupations of my generation. Recently I sat in on a class in a younger colleague's course, "What is Religion?" He brings in visiting colleagues to introduce the department faculty to Religion majors. After I explained my interest in the question of how autobiographical concerns

"The power dynamics of the classroom and students' vulnerability mean that a professor's self-disclosure about matters of religious faith is always a questionable enterprise."

influence the scholarly study of religion, my colleague said, "Of course everything is autobiographical." Well, yes, I thought, but there are better and worse ways of being autobiographical. Perhaps the next generation isn't wrestling with my question, at least not in the same way. After several decades of post-modern theory, the ideals of objectivity and disinterestedness appear to many to be discredited Enlightenment myths that disguise power moves. There has been a huge change in academic culture during the time of my career, so that scholars are now free to "own" their location and perspective. Indeed, if they are not forthright about their "positionality," they may be suspected of naïveté. But owning a location is not the same as disclosing autobiographical narrative; describing a position is not telling a story.

The tensions between disinterestedness and commitment, and between critical distance and transparency about one's own position, will remain both controversial and crucial in pedagogy and scholarship. In class today, should I have said less or more about what I think about a particular religious topic? In discussing apocalyptic themes in biblical times and the contemporary world, should I reveal my dismay at the dualistic, world-denying, and judgmental attitudes that are often fostered by this worldview? Perhaps, but I must also try to show students why eschatological ideas can appeal to people in certain cultures and situations, especially those suffering persecution. In teaching a seminar on conversion, I've shown Robert Duvall's fine film *The Apostle*. We explore how this movie evokes convictions about the ambiguous role of intense emotion in religious worship. How much should students and I go into the experiences that have led each of us to our views?

How autobiographical should we get when, in my course on conscience, we explore rationalization, self-deception, and paralyzing guilt?

There is no simple answer to the question of when autobiographical statements are appropriate and helpful. Two convictions shape my ongoing thinking about this issue: beliefs about the value of the subject matter I most love to teach, and about my vocation as a professor.

Teaching Autobiography and Teaching Autobiographically

Most of my teaching and scholarship has focused on Religion and Literature, and I've been especially interested in autobiography. The great autobiographers—such as Augustine, Dorothy Day, and Malcolm X—reveal how what they think about God and faith grows out of their suffering, searching, and discernment of how God worked in their lives. Martin Luther claimed, in his usual dramatic way: "One becomes a theologian not by understanding, reading, or speculating, but by living, no rather by dying and being damned" (5/163:28-29). Luther's example shows that "living and dying" can be integrated with understanding and reading, so this is not an either/or choice. I interpret certain autobiographers as theologians who model helpfully some of the ways in which personal narratives shape and are shaped by ideas about God. The attempt to understand one's own life is not a narcissistic, self-absorbed endeavor, but a search for history, culture, and God. Experience is personal, but not merely personal; understanding oneself discloses all that shapes the self. And autobiography is not only about the past; it is often an attempt to find meaning that will orient the writer's future living.

"Experience is personal, but not merely personal; understanding oneself discloses all that shapes the self."

In addition to studying theories, doctrines, and systems of ideas, college students need to hear individual voices speak about a search for faith. My course "God and Faith in Autobiography" offers this approach to the study of Christian thought. C. S. Lewis, Langdon Gilkey, and Kathleen Norris, for instance, try to show the truth of their Christian convictions in ways that may persuade, provoke, or invite dialogue, and in any case give rise to thinking about fundamental theological questions. Is there a God? How can one know? What is God like? How should humans live together? How do we go astray or, in Christian terms, sin? What kind of redemption

or grace can we hope for? What forms of solidarity or community are possible, including the church?

When we study religious autobiography, we ought also to practice self-scrutiny and narrative self-reconstruction, both to appreciate the skill and integrity of the great life writers, and to follow their example of “faith seeking understanding.” Teaching autobiography, I ought to teach autobiographically—once in a while. I sometimes suggest how these texts engender my own reflections or self-scrutiny in relation to religious questions. This is a helpful, if indirect, way to encourage students to think about the connections between their own lived experience and religious beliefs. I hope to encourage them to be creative readers of both texts and their own lives, by giving them an example that they can react to in various ways. I may suggest that Augustine’s account of stealing pears prompts memories of one’s own first awareness of wrongdoing. Kathleen Norris’s ideas about spiritual geography make us think about what spaces are sacred for each of us. (For me, growing up as a faculty brat across the street from Carleton

“We learn to read ourselves by reading how others have written their selves, their lives.”

College, it was the climbing trees, hiding places, skateboard sidewalks, and Frisbee fields of a college campus, which formed an enormous and intricate playground.) I try to connect the texts we read with our own lives, starting with my own. These autobiographical or confessional moments are only a small part of what goes on in my classroom, and usually pass in a minute or two, but they often seem to me highly significant. Students’ eyes seem to turn inwards, and I think they are reflecting on their lives, making comparisons, and probing dark recesses of memory. I hope the autobiographies my students read give them, too, touchstones that they may remember later, as they try to understand their own experiences. We learn to read ourselves by reading how others have written their selves, their lives.

Augustine’s *Confessions* has always been the first text studied in my class “God and Faith in Autobiography,” for it is a compelling example of a search for God through understanding one’s history. Students do not always respond with enthusiasm to Augustine’s ideas, and they find some of his beliefs troubling—for instance, his understanding of sin as the bondage of the will. Sometimes I’ve tried to show them the value of Augustine’s views by sharing a personal experience. Once I described a situation involving my relationship to my brother. When he was about 25, he decided he wanted to be called by

his first name rather than the middle name he had always used until then. For several years I resisted this change and continued to call him by his childhood name, which I loved. One day I was visiting a twelve-step group with him and was struck by the way in which Augustine’s ideas about habits both illuminated and were confirmed by this group’s dynamics. The essential method of twelve-step groups involves admitting that one is in the grip of a destructive addiction, that one is unable to change compulsive behavior by relying on sheer will power, and that only by relying on God (or one’s “higher power”) can one be freed from dependence on alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, or whatever is controlling one’s life.

Augustine asserts that “the rule of sin is the force of habit, by which the mind is swept along and held fast even against its will, yet deservedly, because it fell into the habit of its own accord” (165). He portrays a loss of freedom in his failed struggle for chastity, his mother’s drinking problem, and his friend Alypius’s addiction to watching gladiator fights. In Augustine’s theology and anthropology, God’s grace helps a person to recover freedom by leaving behind old habits. The terrible thing about habits is that, although we form them freely, they may eventually cause us to lose our freedom. Augustine speaks of this paradoxical situation as the bondage of the will by itself. I choose to take those first drinks, but eventually I may be unfree to stop drinking. I will have freely lost my own freedom. We are then unable to change ourselves; a bad habit has bound our will. And yet in a mysterious way, just when one’s own will power has failed, a person may suddenly feel enabled to change by something beyond his will. It is as if an outside power has taken hold, and he is freed from the old habit and can respond to life in a fresh way. His will is enabled to assert itself and to form better habits. A psychologist has one way of explaining this change, but for the Christian, it is ultimately God’s grace that frees me from compulsive habits and allows me to embrace new possibilities.

I suddenly realized, in that twelve-step meeting, that my clinging to my brother’s old name was trapping him in a past from which he wanted to escape. And it was trapping me in a dead past that I had to move beyond not only for his sake but for my sake. Something moved and something melted inside me and I decided I must now call him by his new name. God’s grace allowed me to break out of a habit that was preventing new growth for me. For a while I still forgot and slipped into my old habit; it’s not as if grace had forever freed me from having to exert my will or from mistakes. But there was a turning point that day, and something more than my will was involved in deciding to try to break that habit. I realized the truth of Augustine’s insight into the bondage of the will

in the form of habit. I understood how God's grace releases a person from enslavement to habit and restores his freedom. After telling this story to the students, I asked them: Are there other situations you know of that might be illuminated by Augustine's view of sin as the bondage of the will?

Many significant references to one's own faith come at unpredictable moments in the course of teaching, rather than being planned. I've often found off-putting the kind of ritualized confessions of "social location" that many academics rehearse as, with the best intentions, they acknowledge their particular point of view: "I say this as a white, male, middle-class, Protestant, Midwestern, educated....etc." Perhaps it is my scruples about too much self-disclosure, or a conflict between more flamboyant and more reserved parts of myself, that explain why many of my personal remarks come out in a spontaneous way that sometimes surprises me. I suspect that there is more going on psychologically than I fully understand in my fascination with both autobiographical texts and the issue of a professor's personal disclosures. I'm struggling with the role of ego in teaching, as ambiguous, inevitable, and worth watching carefully. I am drawn to greater openness, even intimacy, with my students, yet suspicious of teachers who make themselves the center of attention instead of the subject matter. A guideline for autobiographical moments is the principle that an instructor's reference to his own views or life should never be an end in itself, but is rather a matter of pedagogy, a strategy to explain the significance of a text or topic or to show students how one's perspective influences one's interpretation.

“One component of my own vocation is to nurture my students’ developing sense of vocation. That role includes helping them learn to respond to callings to explain their deepest beliefs in a thoughtful and articulate way”

An understanding of vocation shapes my thinking about expressions of personal faith in the classroom. I understand my work as a professor to include helping students to become more thoughtful and articulate about their own religious convictions. In our society there are many kinds of "calling" for each of us to do this, whatever our faith or ultimate concerns. I may want to explain how my beliefs or religious values influence how I cast my vote, assess a book or movie, or think that my work situation should be organized or reformed. A liberal arts education should prepare students for these demands and

opportunities, which require one to be at once personal and engaged with a pluralistic audience holding other values. One component of my own vocation is to nurture my students' developing sense of vocation. That role includes helping them learn to respond to callings to explain their deepest beliefs in a thoughtful and articulate way.

Professing religion isn't simply a matter of declaring *what* I believe; it's also demonstrating *how* I believe. Professing is performative action, a way of engaging with ideas and other people. It may or may not involve moral integrity and rhetorical persuasiveness, as one brings one's convictions to bear on some controversial aspect of life. The way in which I avow my beliefs may reveal a capacity for self-criticism or the lack of this virtue. When I profess my own views, I may demonstrate imagination and empathy for other perspectives, or else lack of interest or disregard for alternatives. I espouse what I believe with some distinctive combination of epistemological humility and assertive advocacy. I may profess while acknowledging ambiguity and overarching mystery, and/or with a confident claim that "here I stand," depending upon some fundamental conviction without which I could not think or evaluate with integrity. I may explain the reasons for what I believe yet also acknowledge the limits of reason. I may demonstrate the value of encountering ancient traditions and difficult texts, and of allowing myself to be transformed by them even when I argue or disagree. In all of these ways, the manner in which I profess my beliefs is often as significant as the substance or content of what I believe.

Most people have core convictions and values without which their lives would not make sense, and without which they would lack a coherent identity. Even if a person does not belong to an organized religious community, she needs to learn how to explain to others how she brings values to bear in personal decisions, and why these values are relevant to the world. One distinctive aspect of Lutheran colleges, at least in the ELCA tradition, is that we encourage explicit discussions of faith and belief in the classroom and in many other contexts. We share a common vocation to seek increased clarity and articulateness about our beliefs and their expression in our lives. In this sense each of us is a professor of religion.

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ERNEST SIMMONS

A Lutheran Dialectical Model for Higher Education

Luther was a relational thinker. For him one relates to God through faith and to the neighbor through love. This is the inner and the outer person referred to in “The Freedom of a Christian.” The Lutheran sensibility is that life is a paradox, a dialectical tension, in the midst of which one must act and live. Life need not be simple and clear in order to be livable and intelligible. Drawing upon Luther’s model of simultaneity for the Christian life (e.g., *simul justus et peccator*), such a dialectic, a movement between contrasting positions, can offer both affirmation and critique as it supports dialog involving multiple points of view, contributing to mutual understanding and constructive change. Such a theology can inform a dynamic interaction between Christian freedom and academic freedom and assist in constructively critiquing the emerging global society in which we find ourselves immersed. We must argue neither for a faith so detached from the surrounding culture as to lack intellectual credibility nor for a faith so accommodated to a particular culture as to sanctify its idolatry and hubris.

My thesis is that the Lutheran tradition informs an open and dialectical educational model that encourages the dynamic interaction of faith and learning supporting a vocational understanding of leadership. I will turn first to a brief discussion of legacy and then to leadership, considering particularly the Lutheran dialectical model of higher education and its usefulness for preparing leaders for our time.

Legacy

Valuing the liberal arts, Luther thought the fundamental purpose of Christian education was to preserve the evangelical message and to equip the priesthood of all believers for service in the church and the world. For Luther and his colleague, Philip Melancthon, one of the direct results of the theological doctrine of justification by grace through faith was public education. In his treatise of 1524, “To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools,” Luther states this in a very practical manner:

Now the welfare of a city does not consist solely in accumulating vast treasures, building mighty walls and magnificent buildings, and producing a goodly supply of guns and armor. Indeed, where such things are plentiful, and reckless fools get control of them, it is so much the worse and the city suffers even greater loss. A city’s best and greatest welfare, safety, and strength consist rather in its having many able, learned, wise, honorable, and well-educated citizens. They can then readily gather, protect, and properly use treasure and all manner of property.” (355)

For Lutheran higher education that purpose has not changed but the context has. The task now is to bring into

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creative interaction relationships of faith and learning in an increasingly global and multicultural society. In her recent book *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Martha Nussbaum argues forcefully for the value of liberal arts education to prepare future leaders to think critically and creatively for our time of global transition. She says there is a “silent crisis” at hand in education because so much of the arts and humanities is being dropped in American higher education in favor of emphasizing quantitative and technical skills (Nussbaum 1-12). At a time when critical thinking is needed the most, a time of rapid global change and adaptation, we are deemphasizing it in many of our educational institutions. For Nussbaum, nothing less than the survival of a democratic society is at stake (121-44). Lutheran higher education has retained the arts and humanities, actually relished in them such as in our music programs, while not neglecting the applied sciences and practical skills. Nussbaum’s “manifesto,” as she calls it, would support exactly what we are about at most of our colleges and universities in the United States. But the pressures are upon us as well. The challenge is to preserve this legacy of liberal arts education at our institutions so that it can continue to provide critical thinkers for our time. If liberal arts education is to remain true to its roots it must not lose its originating purpose of cultivating informed, civil leaders but rather find creative ways to express it today. Joseph Sittler put it so well: “The purpose of liberal arts education is to complicate a person open” (Sittler).

Leadership

Dialectic stands at the heart of the Lutheran tradition precisely because Luther refused to separate the life of faith from life in the world. Luther insisted on the Christian life being lived right in the midst of the world so that the resources of faith must be brought to bear on daily work and life, not in some separated, ostensibly more holy or religious sphere such as a monastery. This simultaneity gives rise to two realms in Luther’s thought. The realm of today, the natural world, governed by the civil use of the law in society and guided by reason, and the realm to come, the kingdom of God, governed by grace and guided by faith. The Christian lives in the interface, the overlap, by being in the world but mindful of a world to come. The Christian lives in both worlds simultaneously. Richard Hughes summarizes:

The authentic Lutheran vision, therefore, never calls for Lutherans to superimpose the kingdom of God on the world as the Reformed tradition seeks to do. Nor does

it call for Lutherans to separate from the world as the heirs of the Anabaptists often seek to do. Instead, the Christian must reside in two worlds at one and the same time: the world of nature and of grace. The Christian in Luther’s view, therefore, is free to take seriously *both* the world *and* the Kingdom of God. (“Mission” 6)

This dynamic “withness” sustains dialogue and does not fear a slippery slope into secularity. Rather, it encompasses all of life, including that which is labeled secular. For the secular, too, is part of God’s creation, which must be brought into dynamic relationship with faith and the potentially transforming grace of God.

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This very dynamic sustains openness and academic freedom in higher education while at the same time insisting on bringing this world of knowledge into dynamic relationship with the Christian faith and Christian freedom. The result can often be messy, paradoxical, and ambiguous—but that is where faith gives one the strength to continue on. Faith frees the mind for open inquiry and creative reflection, for we are not saved by our own understanding but by the grace of God. Hughes observes, “The task of the Christian scholar, therefore, is not to impose on the world—or on the material that he

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or she studies—a distinctly ‘Christian worldview.’ Rather, the Christian scholar’s task is to study the world as it is and then to bring that world into dialogue with the Christian vision of redemption and grace” (“Models” 6). To conduct open reflection in dialog with transcendence is clearly one of the most important contributions Lutheran colleges and universities

can make to the church's mission of enlightened understanding of the faith, which empowers educational service to society. In a culture where public discourse, especially about matters of religion, is not encouraged or even welcome, colleges of the church may offer one of the most effective venues for such deliberations. Our students, our society, and our religious institutions need such reflection for we live in a time of significant spiritual searching.

From the beginning of the Enlightenment through the middle of the twentieth century, it had become common to speak of a separation between fact and value, science and religion, nature and history. Nature, as object, had no intrinsic development but was rather to be understood through scientific analysis in a value free inquiry where both human and religious purposes were considered to be irrelevant. History, on the other hand, was the realm of human purpose and religious value. History was that in which civilizations rose and fell, charting their course in dominating an impersonal world. I have come to understand this split as a false duality. History would not exist without nature and nature itself has a history. I agree with Parker Palmer that epistemologies have moral trajectories; ways of knowing are not morally neutral but morally directive (Schwehn 25). Ways of knowing necessarily include ways of valuing, so a complete separation of fact and value is not possible. All facts are value-laden for it is precisely the values imbedded in interpretive systems that permit the conversion of raw data into meaningful fact. That is the function of theories, models, and paradigms, whether they be in the sciences or the humanities. This condition of the presumed separation of fact and value combined with flux, impermanence, and mass media merchandizing has led to a collapse of traditional, cultural frameworks of meaning. Today this condition is not only local and national; it is increasingly global.

Historically, individuals found personal meaning through the received religious and cultural explanations of their time—but no longer. Renate Schacht, speaking from a German Christian perspective, refers to the formation of what she calls a “collage identity” among many persons, especially the young, today. She observes:

Modern man [*sic.*] has no fixed roots. Mobility, flexibility, plurality of standpoints, and freedom of opinion development are key characteristics of modern life. These truly positive characteristics, however, bring a dark side of insecurity and disorientation with them, which can retreat behind fundamentally secured walls

or vegetate into a “nothing matters” position. The task of education then is to make other paths visible and accessible. (Schacht 68)

It seems to me that the role of a Lutheran college is exactly this—to offer such alternatives to identity formation (see Simmons ch. 1). Identity is a process not a possession and environment forms identity. Lutheran as well as other Christian colleges and universities may assist this meaning-seeking, identity-forming process by cultivating an environment in which faith and learning can be kept in dynamic relationship, which in turn cultivates the possibility of vocation.

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The Lutheran tradition's emphasis upon vocation is one way to give theological grounding for responsible leadership. It centers upon one basic question that has two fundamental dimensions. The question is: *Why are you here?* The first dimension is the practical, why are you *here*? Namely, why are you working at the place you are currently employed? What are you doing now and why are you doing it there? This is the realm of practical engagement with life on a daily basis. This first dimension of the question is of the here and now variety. The second dimension cuts more deeply, however: *Why are you here?* That is, why do you exist? This is the existential dimension of the question, the dimension that focuses on the nature and challenges of human life. Why are *you* here and not someone else? Why did you come into life or existence at all? Where did you come from and to where are you going? The practical is composed of the necessary factors of place, history, resources (both physical and human), and structure. The existential is composed of the philosophical and theological dimensions of human existence.

In a rather simplified manner, one could say that the practical dimension addresses instrumental questions of value (means), while the existential dimension addresses questions of intrinsic value (ends) for human life. The point is this: *Vocation occurs at the intersection of these two dimensions of the why question.* Vocation, in the Lutheran understanding,

addresses the practical from the context of the existential. It seeks to connect purposes and practices, ends and means, and not allow them to fall apart into separate realms. Why are we here? Luther's answer was vocation. It is through our work in the world that we incarnate faith and by doing so help sustain the creation. Vocation rejects the separation of the material from the spiritual, of nature from grace. It insists that they be kept together.

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The Lutheran understanding of vocation empowering for public service can serve the common good. Certainly Luther's proposal of the “common chest” is a clear sixteenth century example of such a pursuit (Lindberg 141). He was concerned to provide for the poor and needy since monasteries and convents, the historic source for such care, were being closed. Not only public education but also social service organizations were a direct result of the Lutheran Reformation. Our educational systems, accordingly, were organized to offer instruction for leadership in such programs and institutions. It is education for the common good. But the common good for any given situation must be discerned through dialog and mutual participation by all parties involved. Vocationally-inspired leadership will seek such dialogue.

Always Reforming

The human question of why always hangs suspended between the finite and the infinite. Juxtaposed between time and eternity, humanity seeks meaning before its own beginnings and after its demise. Part of the grandeur of being created in the image of God, of humus (soil) becoming spirit-breathed and self-conscious, is the ability to ask why. Human beings are meaning-seeking creatures. We are a form of incarnation where the spiritual is made manifest in the material precisely in the transcending of self-interest. Nicholas Berdyaev once observed, “To eat bread is a material act, to break and share it is a spiritual one” (Gilkey 229, Cobb ch. 10). Spirituality is opening up to the needs of the other, to transcendence of the self, and to possibilities of meaning beyond materialistic consumption alone. The study of the liberal arts assists one in opening up to the transcendent dimensions of life and, in so doing, equips faith for meaningful expression in service to the other.

That is why there has always been a close connection between liberal arts education and the Christian faith.

The Lutheran model of such an education is particularly helpful here because of its dialectical openness to alternative viewpoints and their dynamic interaction. It critiques contemporary society by bringing it into dialectical engagement with Christ and the Gospel. Such a model avoids what Tom Christenson has termed the “fallacy of exclusive disjunction” (Christenson 12). There are middle positions between exclusion and accommodation in higher education and the Lutheran dialectical model is one. The theology of the cross encourages humility both in terms of one's own thought and also in the claims of others. Such a theological perspective can and should confront any claim to absoluteness or finality (Tillich's “Protestant Principle”), especially in its secular expressions.

The great challenge facing mainline religious institutions and faith traditions is to communicate their religious reflection in a way that is accessible to persons living in a technologically socialized, mass media driven, popular culture dominated society. I think the social media that have emerged in the last few years demonstrate how younger

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people have come to live in the virtual world as authentically as in the so-called “real” world. They move seamlessly and effortlessly between what used to be called “virtual” and “real” reality, a distinction becoming increasingly one without a difference. Work-a-day reality is not going to disappear but the interface between these realms has become diaphanous for the “digital native.” Social organization has undergone a sea change. It has been developing for a long time but we have now reached a tipping point in how social (or political) movements, such as the “Arab spring,” are formed and motivated. We have witnessed Facebook and Twitter revolutions. We are in the beginnings of what can only be called the birth pangs of an emerging new world of global social structures. It is a technologically mediated

social revolution but then again, wasn't the Reformation? Education for leadership today must involve critical and creative thinking as well as dynamic social interaction.

Conclusion

The model of education at a Lutheran institution is ultimately education for self-transcendence, education that draws the student out of her/himself to acknowledge the needs of their neighbor. It is interactive education that always holds in tension academic and Christian freedom, reason, and faith without forcing a premature closure of thought in either direction. It is education for vocational leadership expressed in public life. It is preparation for leadership *Soli Deo Gloria*.

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