



Re-Envisioning Classics As a Liberal Art

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Argument: Collegiate classics, under the sway of too severe a concept of professional philology, has drastically underplayed its educational hand in such a way that it has diminished its vitality, impact, and usefulness; yet this damage can be reversed — and liberal education transformed to a new level of effectiveness — by revising the concept of undergraduate programs in classical studies and by following a few key maxims.

Quoniam, ut voluisti, morem gessi tibi, nunc ipse dicam mihi quod dicturum esse te video: latrunculis ludimus. In supervacuis subtilitas teritur; non faciunt bonos ista, sed doctos. Apertior res est sapere, immo **simpliciter satius est ad mentem bonam uti litteris**, sed nos ut cetera in supervacuum diffundimus, ita philosophiam ipsam. Quemadmodum omnium rerum, sic litterarum quoque intemperantia laboramus; non vitae sed scholae discimus. — Seneca, *Epistulae*, CVI

Okay, I've humored you the way you wanted. Now I'll say for myself what I see you're going to say: We're playing at tiddlywinks! Our mental acuity is being frittered away on trifles. They don't make for good people, just "well-trained" ones. The path to wisdom is not all that hidden. No, in fact, **it**

is plainly better to make use of texts to shape the mind well,
but just as we waste everything else on extras, so we squander
intellectual culture itself. The way we fall into excess in all
areas is the same way we fall into it in our studies: we learn
not for life but for the classroom! — Seneca, *Letters*, 106

Self-criticism is an ally in the life of a healthy discipline, though its mere existence is no proof that the discipline is healthy. If the discipline of classics accepts the self-critical premise that we need to make the college dimensions of classics programs more obviously essential to the intellectual and cultural health of our next generation and therefore of our society, then it will be most useful for us to develop a set of basic guiding principles and strategies for such a transformation. I offer here some of the best that I can divine on the basis of forty-five years of involvement.

Although what I say should be of interest to anyone who wishes to think broadly about liberal arts programs today, I am particularly eager to engage classics teachers at the collegiate level who are disposed to contemplate a re-invention of their self-concept. As a classical languages teacher, I will be using the collegial "we," but I do so knowing that no discipline can create itself in isolation and apart from a larger collectivity: there is a wider *collegium* that will also be essential in any reshaping of the classical liberal arts project. I am not going to be undertaking, however, any root-level controversies with those who are all too resigned to or comfortable with the status quo; or with those who think that, for whatever practical considerations, the existing structures cannot really be changed much; or with those who think of collegiate classics programs primarily as professional preparation for philological careers, and who may assert that any liberal educational value in such studies lies mainly in the display and imitation of professional praxis. To such, what follows will be an error, an irritation, or merely an irrelevancy. However, even for professionalized anti- or non-humanists who reject the persona and task of educator, there should be some profit in reading position papers such as this, for this kind of reflection lays the groundwork for disciplinary differentiation, self-understanding, and collegiality. Without a distracting display of learning embedded in extensive footnotes, this kind of thinking ultimately serves both the profession and the college students who entrust us with some of their prime time.

Of course some classical scholars will have already shaken their heads and turned away, claiming in effect that "the Renaissance is over," that

humanism has fallen to professional classical philology, that Wilamowitz the scientific scholar has trounced Nietzsche the humanist, and that members of the contemporary classics establishment are essentially post-Enlightenment, positivist technicians using and teaching very advanced technical skills for the edification of other technicians, without any direct large-scale educational concern for aesthetics, ethics, personal meaning, or the larger issues of contemporary society, politics, and culture. The total scientific knowledge of antiquity, *Alttertumwissenschaft* in all its glory, is alpha and omega. Such a view seems rather an utterly narrow and self-defeating one, even at the purely professional level: any graduate program that does not prepare its students to teach what they in fact often get hired to teach (i.e., liberal arts courses such as mythology, literary appreciation of ancient arts and culture, larger historical overviews of the ancient world, humanistic interpretations of cultural phenomena, basic mastery of the languages) is quite a defective program indeed.

But other reasons also suggest that classical philologists should not turn away: Many people (including specialists) invest time in the study of Greece and Rome directly or indirectly because of a larger cultural meaning, relevance, history, and impact that cannot be matched in fields like Assyriology or Egyptology. That larger cultural meaning, relevance, history, and impact give classicists both a certain academic aura and a certain type of *fiduciary responsibility*. They have been entrusted as the primary agents of direct access to a part of antiquity that has made a huge difference in our own cultural identity and self-understanding (not just today, but for many centuries), a part of antiquity in which there inheres a vast, unparalleled, and irreplaceable educational potential. Failing to leverage the liberal-arts power of classical studies and retreating into the relatively defined, professional, scientific "silo" of classical philology will likely result not only in a less well-educated, less competent, less successful citizenry, but also in fewer people who find this entire academic direction worth pursuing as a career — to the virtual extinction of classical scholarship altogether. There has been an undeniably staggering attrition of classics in our society over the last century; if the high academicism of Wilamowitz has conquered, then the numbers suggest that the victory was worse than Pyrrhic.

Now there is a certain sense in which my reflections do not address and are not addressed by any thinking about the upper reaches of classical philology. What Wolf, Herder, Boeckh, Wilamowitz, and Nietzsche believed about the scope and practices of professional, post-Gymnasium programs in philology has little to do with what college teachers might

best today do in America for the many undergraduates who seek and need not professional training for a career but rather an education that builds upon classical dimensions in a liberal arts program. I would rather not, however, go as far as Nietzsche's statement: "We learn nothing from what philologists say about philology: it is all mere tittle-tattle" (*Wir Philologen*, 69; trans. J.M. Kennedy). Since we do not yet have separate "Departments of Classical Humanism" whose focus is college liberal arts education, we are still to some extent dependent on the direction of professionally trained classical scholars to shape undergraduate programs that incorporate classical studies.

It will be useful, then, to set the broader context by asking, "Where have we been as a discipline?" or "How have the practices and purposes of classics teachers evolved over time in the West?" Several generations ago, Jaime Castiello (1936, reprinted 1990) left us an excellent epitome of the history of classical studies that will be worth encapsulating here.¹ The medieval era, according to Castiello, focused most insistently on *grammatica* to be able to read and interpret important texts for its own purposes, which tended to have a theological horizon. The Renaissance humanists looked to *retorica*, to the shaping of style and character, less for theological than for "cultural" purposes. In Germany, the New Humanism of the 18th and 19th centuries gave special attention to the *philosophica* of antiquity and made of it a powerfully informative factor in the shaping of modernity. Then, as idealism waned and positivism waxed, classical studies became especially concerned with the presentation of the "cultural totality" of Greece and Rome, with an attention to the *realia* and to a systematic absorption and unification of material and linguistic data.

There was therefore a large shift of emphasis in the uses of classical antiquity: from the analytical and technical towards the personal, ethical, and existential, and finally towards the the analytical and the materially specific. A reasonable reader will not assume that I am postulating any air-tight dichotomies here: later times have been able to keep alive at some level —and sometimes to intensify — the older practices and interests, even as the earlier ones never really lacked completely what their successors decided to highlight and develop. Feeling for the existential relevance of antiquity reached a peak with intellectuals like Goethe,

¹ Jaime Castiello, "The Psychology of Classical Training," *Thought* 65, No. 258 (1990) 249-264. Originally published in March, 1936, in the same journal.

Hegel, and Nietzsche, who at times seemed to want to *be* Greek, but even in the Carolingian era, Alcuin's literary circle took delight in addressing each other by classical aliases. Nowadays there may be many "born-again classical pagans" (to modify a phrase of the philosopher Erazim Kohak's), but the dominant mood is more one of ironic detachment. Debunking is more popular than enshrinement, low culture than high. We follow Nietzsche in our suspicion that the ideals of the Greeks were far less widely actualized or perhaps rather different from what we previously imagined them to be. And yet Greece is still occasionally used for an implicit critique of our own culture, and thereby given a kind of privileged position. How interesting, for example, that Michel Foucault should have turned back to the Greeks at the end of his career, while the former idealization of the spirit of classical antiquity lives on through the currency of Edith Hamilton's works and in popular cinematic representations of Alexander the Great, Achilles, Caesar, Spartan warriors, and Roman gladiators.

Even unnuanced as it is here, this sketch of classical studies does help to situate the paideutic reflections that I would like to offer, because the larger history of classics has left an imprint on teachers and curricular design and textbooks and disciplinary expectations and ways of cultural thinking at large. Our consciousness is necessarily stratified. The rich history of our discipline also serves to make our undertaking much more interesting, much more complex, and much harder to bring to satisfying fullness in the context of our sponsorship of liberal arts collegiate classical programs. How then do we give our younger students the range of benefits that classical studies promises, including those that each of the historical phases highlights?

That range includes at least the following: (1) an understanding of the elements and nature of language and of the demands of translation; (2) a sense of style, expression, and the aesthetic dimension; (3) an existential inspiration and an intellectual keenness that is promoted by an engagement with the most valuable reflections of the greatest works of antiquity; (4) a feeling for the importance of an ethical vision; (5) a sensitivity to the concrete complex of cultural data that emerges from a careful study of the best documented ancient civilizations we know; (6) a developing historical consciousness of one extremely important strand of the story of humanity; and (7) the sharpening of a critical socio-cultural awareness that passes far beyond information-absorption and the idealistic re-creation of the totality of ancient Mediterranean worlds towards some training in political and social *judgment* that might be serve well in the

creative *transformation and stabilization* of society today (— and I would hold that these two efforts not only can but *must* be undertaken together). These seven elements simply derive from standard classical liberal arts practices, i.e., the study of language, letters (in the broad sense), aesthetics, ethics, philosophy, anthropology, *realia*, history, and political-social-cultural reflection. Imagine, for example, what must be included in a thorough study of Plato's *Republic* alone if it is appreciated holistically (in the humanistic manner) and not simply under the filter of a single discipline that might merely look at one particular element in it, like the doctrine of forms. Of course, we could go on to add to our list other elements like the range of understanding and experience involved in fables and folklore and popular wisdom, religion, and theology. These dimensions define an extraordinarily worthwhile undergraduate menu.

But can any program actually be expected to do all this? Are we setting ourselves up for inevitable disappointment by the very contemplation of such ambitious ends for an all-too-limited course of studies, over and against the well-known professional specializing dynamics that tend to force teachers, for the sake of publishable research, into a philological nook here or an archaeological cranny there? As educators, as those partially entrusted with the formation of the next generation, we cannot be satisfied with the nook or the cranny. The profession must be able to differentiate itself to fulfill different kinds of tasks, and the educational task is without any doubt the most far-reaching and important one of all, and yet I am not suggesting that we try to accomplish any kind of "totalistic" management of the expansive potential of our field. *In medio stat virtus*: between these two directions, we can at least attempt to realize the importance of clarifying a realistic set of expectations and of maintaining a certain integrated balance as we conscientiously try to contribute what we can. That is, we can attempt to keep the full range of the greatest values of classical studies in mind as we critique, reshape, refine, and administer our programs. This conception of the enterprise presupposes a certain discipline of mind and soul on the part of college teachers of classics. It is a fully professional askesis, but the profession involved is not philology *per se* so much as it is that of liberal *paideia*. This distinction should not ever be lost on classical philologists — the classical world invented it. Out of a liberal arts classical program can come fine and scientific philologists, but the program should be constructed so as to produce so much more.

My second suggestion is based on the fact that the historical framework I have given above (relying on Jaime Castiello) offers some

help in the structuring of our efforts. First, let me specify our problem as the same one that is perhaps the greatest problem facing humanistic education today, the problem of establishing and practicing an *order of learning*. It would seem hard to deny that a program in which the fourth year builds on the third which builds on the second which builds on the first is *prima facie* superior to one in which there is no ordering of parts beyond, say, courses of the "lower and upper divisions" that can be taken in many different orders. What might we do to organize? Let me tentatively present just one example of a possible line of thought, with full awareness that some "complete" discrimination and arrangement of elements is not only impossible but undesirable: The history of our discipline might suggest to us that there is an advantage gained by putting *grammatica* and *realia* (which would include art history and archaeology) at the beginning; *retorica*, *poetica*, and *historica* in the middle; and *philosophica* at the end of the program. The apparent passage from the concrete to the abstract, or from the common-sense to the theoretical, might connote a Platonism to some, but the goal is a certain fullness of vision, that is, an expansive, dialectical cultural horizon. Ancient *philosophia* also aimed not just at theory or a refined understanding of arguments but at a certain existential stance and practice.

The order as outlined here also has the advantage of supporting the passage from the foundational linguistic level of culture to the sensory aspects of it, on towards that part of it which speaks far more directly to us in our particular personal and corporate circumstances today. Listening well precedes interpretation, evaluation, appropriation, and action. The general structure also makes formational sense, since it puts the most complex and subtle and far-reaching undertakings at the end of the program rather than at its beginning. Within such an arrangement, we might try to preserve that most valuable idealizing moment (in which one gets a sense of the possible positive worth of the object of study) as well as the critical moment (in which one realizes the limits of what has been done and can be done), without losing the concreteness that should be present from the beginning. It is easy to imagine another approach that would have all elements worked on at progressively difficult levels in each year. There will have to be some art and artificiality to any such plan, some pedagogical construction and artifice, of course. That is simply unavoidable in any curricular design. But the important thing is that we think in terms of the whole, that we ask about what we are deciding to cover and when we try to cover it in each student's program.

Many will say that all attempts at any such ordering are doomed, given the relevant range of material, complexities that arise with transfer students, professors' varied research interests and schedules of leaves, and the like. The typical "rationale" in the major seems to be something like: "Simply work on the available materials and courses; progressively gain proficiencies in various techniques and areas; figure out what you might need to know for a comprehensive exam if there is one. Start anywhere and extend your experience in any way that is possible for you, observing how professionals go about their chosen tasks." According to this approach, classics will imitate the sciences in learning how to produce positive, provable results that derive from methodologies that are shown to be theoretically well-grounded. But I would propose that this is a misleading path that has now and again been exposed as thoroughly inappropriate for the humanities. It would be far better to "imitate the sciences" by following their fine sense for the order of learning. Consider the range and order of courses that pre-med students are required to take, no matter what their ultimate area of expertise. Mathematics also provides an example of how various studies like algebra and geometry are necessary at the beginning of the course of studies in order for the student to begin the calculus and more advanced types of specialties.

If others, then, can create such well-structured curricular systems, this kind of program is conceivable for classics as well, *mutatis mutandis*. Classicists too can define essentials and proportion their inclusion in an organized, internally coherent curriculum. They can try to eliminate any egregious lacunae, even though they are not seeking the same kinds of measurable, accumulative "scientific" results in the humanistic aspects of such efforts. If well conceived, stable, and competently delivered year after year, some careful ordering of a classics major will better support those who want to be professional classicists by giving them a wide-ranging multi-leveled introduction to the field, with some guaranteed credentials in the range of courses that they may well be expected to teach in college programs (e.g., Greek tragedy, classical mythology, Roman history, Greek philosophy). Best of all, it will accomplish this without marginalizing the humanists who look to classical programs for foundations and scope and essential skills and backgrounds but not for their own particular professional life-commitments.

I do not claim that widespread practices are not already enacting liberal arts ideals after a fashion. Indeed, classicists have tried to adapt, offering courses in translation and appealing to the general educational thinking here and there, putting in subjects more likely to draw a crowd,

like mythology. My point is rather that, when it comes *not* to a core-curricular course here or there to subsidize smaller classes at higher levels, but to *the structuring of the college major or minor*, a more thoughtful and systematic corporate approach could enhance, or even transform, the value of our enterprise. In the short term, after it becomes known that classics programs typically give their students a substantial, compelling, and uniquely comprehensive liberal arts experience, the marketing of classics will acquire a decided advantage. (Yes, the "humanities market" — now *there* is an inescapable practical reality that it would be naïve of classicists to disregard!) But we first need the teachers who have the vision and the background and the desire to create such programs, as well as the colleges that enable such teachers to thrive and multiply. This project may require some diversion of effort from more specialized concerns in any given department, of course, but the potential long-term benefits (to the student, to the professor, to the discipline, to the academy, and to the larger society) are clear to those who have a sense of them. In the long run, by connecting with and relating to other disciplines in a regular way, we can contribute to greater faculty collaboration and *less* of a spirit of competitive territoriality. We will "share the same market," as it were, rather than compete against one another.

Of course, we can go nowhere unless institutional and departmental support are available for such a vision. But the institutional support often depends upon departmental consensus, clarity, and initiative. What then must we do in this individualistic age in which rampant pluralism seems to exclude consensus *a priori* and in which our previous specialized training makes us feel downright "unprofessional" if not incompetent when we talk about taking any active role in a wide-ranging liberal arts program? I offer two suggestions here: First, set up a departmental (or college) structure for discerning the logic of the program, for reviewing the faculty's ongoing experience, for discussing the relative merits of different courses, books, topics, etc. We must all be realistic about our situation, and we must allow time for evolution to occur. But the kind of evolution we should want will not occur at all without some type of corporate process of discernment, planning, and review. That process needs a wise and empowered "command and control center." Secondly, define a minimum consensus on the nature and proximate intentions of the liberal arts program. Do this by working out and affirming a well-informed and well-deliberated expression of (1) a broad rationale for the liberal arts major, and (2) the corresponding directive maxims or principles that the department will be following in its educational

practices and in its shaping of the program as a whole. I have in mind maxims like the following:

1. Capitalize on the best, most influential primary material.

There is no absolutely closed canon, of course, nor a single canonical hermeneutic for that matter, but it is simply foolish of classics, if it wants to be a liberal art, not to expect its students to engage Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Vergil, and Augustine at the very minimum. We must develop and offer courses that can give students a first-class introduction to these personalities, their works, and the cultures that they represent. The figures that I have mentioned stand to Western literary history as Latin stands to English. We simply can not know the latter well without knowing the former to some degree. And of course there are many other writers that, if we learned to teach them well, would be a tremendous attraction to all those seeking a liberal arts education. Sophocles, Cicero, Thucydides, Aeschylus, Euripides would all have to be rated very near the top in influence, and so would those who were more popular in earlier times, like Herodotus, Seneca, Plutarch, Horace, Ovid, Lucian, Horace, and Pindar. We must communicate a lively sense of the *value* of reading such authors: the liberal arts student wants to read the works of course, but not without knowing *why* they have been considered "great" in some respect. If we have no sense of this "why?" and if we can not communicate it to our students, we must resign ourselves to marginal status in the liberal arts today or even renounce the idea that we are educators. Knowing the latest critical methodology does not compensate for such a loss. Our larger goal is not so much *Wissenschaft* as it is the orientation of the person to a larger *Weisheit*. Even those who simplistically and anachronistically decry the study of the "dead white European males" — a distortive profiling of the lowest order — must first read them well to be able to make an informed critique that might itself deserve to be heard. The default position in education is always *with* the heritage, not with its elimination. Anyway our apparently overriding principles of pluralism and tolerance should suffice to guarantee a place for such a curriculum, for how could a pluralistic approach logically exclude it? This criticism is not new, but since many of us have not surmounted it, it needs to be made again.

2. Incorporate the best, most engaging, far-sighted, lively, value-oriented secondary material.

There are reflections on antiquity that are as worth reading as the ancients themselves, from Petrarch to Montaigne to Goethe to Burckhardt to Nietzsche to Cornford to Jaeger to Weil to Voegelin to Hadot. What is sought here is what expands the classical students' horizons and what raises questions of greatest value. Questions of human spirituality and cultural meaning ought to be posed, at the very least. But there should also be place for the reading of exemplary pieces by contemporary art historians, cultural theorists, literary scholars, economic and intellectual historians, anthropologists, *et alii*. Thus our students will not be kept from learning the discourses of modernity by turning their gaze to the ancient world. We must be very wary of presuming that the students have a predominantly antiquarian interest. It would be better to keep as our default assumption the idea that our students are in search and in need of a liberal education.

3. Claim and use the texts and traditions of the entire range of Latin and Greek literature and culture.

We have one of the few disciplines in which one might justifiably and coherently open upon the study not only of all the works and genres of the classical eras of Greece and Rome, but also, say, the patristic writings (East and West); the political and linguistic essays of Dante; the letters of Petrarch; the *Utopia* of Thomas More; the *Meditations* of Descartes; the philosophical and theological works of Thomas Aquinas and the schoolmen; the Roman legal codifications; the *Principia Mathematica* of Isaac Newton; the botanical writings of Linnaeus; the epochal documents of Vatican II; and what are by far the most influential works in Western cultural history, the Vulgate and the Septuagint. If Roman culture can be elided with that of Greece as the super-philologists have long contended and have established in the institutional practices of classics, what then should stop us from exploiting for liberal arts purposes the other elisions that have *de facto* occurred? We might be expected to give some attention to how the classics have directly shaped the modern world, from Augustine, Cassiodorus, Isidore, and Alcuin to the Renaissance to classically-educated cultural celebrities like Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Jung, G.M. Hopkins, and T.S. Eliot. The career of philology itself is not lacking

in high interest either: it played a major role in the development of modern anthropology and psychology and sociology, so the genealogy of the rise of such disciplines can also find a place within our purview. And of course we should not neglect classical studies' importance in the arts and in the various national literatures. Many a European nation has some equivalent of Ronsard or Shakespeare or Dante. We will enhance our liberal arts status if we try to communicate something of scope of the histories of the genres pioneered or brilliantly realized by the Greeks and Romans, like epic and history and lyric and satire and drama and biography and ethnography and scientific treatise and philosophy, including philosophical dialogue, and the various types of oratory and rhetoric. The same holds true for non-literary inventions that have an important place in the history of the classical cultures, like democracy and coinage. Such rich relevance seems to call for some type of regular, ordered overview. Otherwise, it may remain all too fuzzy to those who should be most keenly aware of it. The educational impact will be blunted.

After such a soaring flight, I must repeat: I am not suggesting that we all feel responsible for teaching all of these items, but the fact is that classical studies will be more of a liberal art the more it can confidently show some intelligent consciousness of the range of the entire classical matrix and somehow make it vividly present. It is preferable that this happen in a way that impresses the learners as ordered rather than as arbitrary and ad hoc, but a certain amount of play is also important: that momentary digression, reference, or allusion can give surprising depth and sparkle to the educational moment. The norms of *advanced academic professionalism* should not, at the college level, be allowed to override *introductory paideutic professionalism*. These are both professionalisms, and both necessary for disciplinary health. Some departments should feel entitled to work out an entire cycle in the History of Classical Humanism, and even to offer it as a special track for their classical majors, one that might well be taught through an institute or by an interdisciplinary faculty. After all the talk about the dangers of specialization, departmentalization, and fragmentation, it would be refreshing to see some structures that have a good chance of effectively opposing them. Of course, this means we must be interested in hiring, cultivating, promoting, and working with those who receive training in different relevant areas. The effort by definition is one that is open to interdisciplinary thinking and corporate participation across a wide spectrum.

4. Accommodate those whose major interest lies in related liberal arts and professions.

No liberal arts department should be an island. If we can serve other literary humanists, theologians, and philosophers, and all those who could come to us with special or general interests, we should be able to expect more support and academic fulfillment. This means we might include in our curricular plans some philosophical, New Testament, and patristic Greek, the Vulgate, scholastic and Renaissance Latin, and so on, but it also means that we might offer other courses and programs with the interests of these special sub-groups in mind. No doubt the teachers themselves will often be put in the position of learners; they will also probably end up as far stronger and wiser guides than they would have otherwise ever had the chance to be. Such a prospect may be intimidating at first, especially to those who have known the confidence that comes with being the world's greatest (and perhaps only) expert on a particular area. But if an institution is really interested in showing that it values the broadening of its college professors for the sake of the students' education, no doubt the right incentives can be found to overcome these hesitations.

5. Spend quality time and effort on overviews.

One very important aim of undergraduate education as a whole is the building up of various *frameworks of understanding through particulars*. These frameworks can be of various types (for example, disciplinary, philosophical, linguistic, literary, chronological, historical, political, social, cultural, religious). Classical studies can contribute in special ways to this project because of their extensive range: students can learn about the cardinal virtues, or various philosophical positions, or types of government, or social stratification, or major genres of literature, or types of rhetorical expression, or technological breakthroughs, or the complex cultural dynamics resulting from the interplay of many such elements. Certainly classics is not itself philosophy as such, or economics as such, or history as such, or linguistics as such, even while it is perfectly positioned to open onto these various pursuits. It can helpfully draw from what has had the greatest impact on our larger cultural history and from what seems most instructive even by way of contrast with our manner of life today. The discipline should therefore work out and deliver

propaedeutic and integrative overviews that are of value to all college students and that are at the same time most relevant to its domain. For example, the rise of Greek historical writing is important to consider in itself and by comparison with what was done in other cultures. But then there needs to be some time devoted to the concrete carriers of this achievement. Students should have some sense of the who and the when as well as the what: they should know about Herodotus and Thucydides and also about Polybius and Ammianus Marcellinus, even if there is no time for them to read all such writers. Even with individual writers like Aristotle, there needs to be a summary presentation of the thinker's achievement, not just an in-depth analysis of a single work or part of a work. What is appropriate for graduate courses is not necessarily so for undergraduate ones.

Now of course the objection will arise that encyclopedic overviews are boring, shallow, and easily attained by anyone with access to Wikipedia. In reply, I would say first that anything in excess and anything presented in a spiritless way can be boring. Excessive attention to particulars can be equally jejune. In any good pedagogy there needs to be an appropriate balancing of the general and the concrete. The encyclopedic aspect of the endeavor need not consume a huge portion of the class-time, but it is essential. Even that ultra-rigorous tradition of German philology worked hard to attain a kind of encyclopedic consciousness, in the visionary plans of Friedrich Wolf, in the introductory graduate-level *Encyclopädie* courses like those taught by Nietzsche and Gottfried Bernhardt, and in the ponderous summary achievement of the Pauly-Wissowa *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. One might say that the very concept of *Altertumswissenschaft* is itself by definition an encyclopedic kind of knowledge. This is therefore one way in which the liberal arts program in classics can provide a smoother entrée to higher studies without attempting precisely the same thing: the project of developing broad and deep and integrated views exists at both levels, but the liberal arts presentation is more firmly oriented to the life-world and the developing intellectual and personal consciousness of the student.

Furthermore, one of the reasons for having standing academic structures and credentialing programs in the first place is to guarantee a certain level of competence that implies the coverage of certain fundamentals. Students have a right to expect that major dimensions of the field will not be entirely left out or merely left to the whim of the individual students or teachers and to the chances of circumstance in yearly shake-out of courses. (Imagine a pre-medical student who studies

the nervous but not the muscular system.) In addition, we have many well-written overviews available to us today. We should use them judiciously. They give greater meaning and scope to our programs.

6. Substantially revise the teaching of Greek and Latin to accomplish more in a shorter amount of time and in a more enjoyable way.

The language-learning that has been such a dominant feature of our programs must in many cases be revised to better accommodate the liberal arts major who has a limited amount of time but who still needs language study for an adequate understanding of the civilizations as well as for its intrinsic value. Those who come to us from other academic majors will also appreciate a first-rate program of language-instruction that produces solid results without absorbing them into a heavy life-long commitment. We need (1) an *obviously interested intention* to establish a certain linguistic fluency, and (2) the *sustained means* to that end, supported strongly and available year after year. We must set limits to how much we should reasonably ask the students to accomplish in Latin and Greek, but of some core achievement there should be no doubt. We must also subordinate (not eliminate) that philologically-inspired type of language pedagogy that does not lead to the same kind of deep appropriation that a humanistically-inspired language pedagogy does. The difference is essentially that difference between *learning about* a language and simply *learning* a language. Of course, there is no absolute dichotomy here: the point is that the former approach can lead in a very different direction than the second does, and the second, when successful, will most likely produce the better results in the long run. The humanistic approach can ground the philological approach better than vice versa. No department can afford to give its students the impression that fluency is not really a very important issue or that no specific "appropriational" work needs to be done to attain it in order to acquire the credential, just as no department should give students the impression that there is no essential core to the major that they should all have, even if not everything can be pinned down and covered in the same detail. In short: *it matters how well and how fast the students read*. We are not dealing with the slow deciphering of primeval hieroglyphs of a barely understood linguistic code but with languages used continuously for living (though mostly written) communication for most of Western cultural history.

I fully realize that this is a very contestable point. Language abilities, interests, and professional investments vary to such an extent among professors and students in classics that some departments have judged it wiser to take a less pointed approach when it comes to language-learning. But it rather seems to me that the study of the languages should be a bedrock foundation for the discipline, and that such language study in itself carries a liberal arts value. Furthermore it provides an activity that can help bring unity, stability, and focus to a program in which the student can easily get lost in the overwhelming profusion of relevant data, particularly if there seems to be no special rationale in the order of presentation. I therefore promote a major investment in language pedagogy and practice. If departments can do nothing else for college students but give them a solid competency in one of the languages, they will have more than justified their existence. On the other hand, if this point is underplayed, and if language-mastery is relegated to an elementary or relatively marginal status, we will be undercutting the profession in the long run and making it far less useful than it can be.

Given the vastness of any language-learning project that aims at substantial mastery (— not to mention mastery within four years), we might consider creating semi-autonomous but still linked Latin and Greek divisions. We could thus achieve more focus and integration in the respective programs; and we could better cover a larger swathe of the extended literary and cultural traditions for each language, opening more directly onto the post-classical eras (and therefore onto the cross-departmental collaboration that we can easily imagine having with medievalists, or byzantinists or Renaissance scholars or others). Classics majors in the older mould (Greek plus Latin, with an overriding focus on the ancient world) could still have a program that built upon these two subdivisions; that is, they could get certification in both languages and take courses specific to the classics program as well. This may add a year or two to the program, but that addition would only be sheer realism in the face of the range of competencies being expected. Perhaps the daunting nature of the four-year program has deterred more than a few souls over the past decades.

7. Distinguish in thought and practice the graduate and undergraduate levels of classical studies.

This is an essential principle that is so widely violated today throughout the Academy that suggesting it might be taken as far too revolutionary; and yet it is only prudent to admit that there are different teleologies in college and graduate programs, and only fair to respect that division with particular and adequate academic arrangements. Practically, this means that just as graduates usually cannot count above a certain number of college courses towards a graduate degree, so undergraduates will not for the most part be sitting in class with graduate students in the advanced seminars. The academic integrity of each program ought to be maintained. Thus, whereas an undergraduate may need an overview of Ovid as an author, or of several poets in Roman Love Elegy, a graduate may take the option of joining a focused semester-long investigation of a single book of Propertius's love poems. The distinction at issue here was well indicated in 1828 in a report on education at Yale:

By a liberal education, it is believed, has been generally understood, such a course of discipline in the arts and sciences, as is best calculated, at the same time, both to strengthen and enlarge the faculties of the mind, and to familiarize it with the leading principles of the great objects of human investigation and knowledge. A liberal, is obviously distinct from a professional, education. The former is conversant with those topics, an acquaintance with which is necessary or convenient, in any situation of life, the latter, with those which qualify the individual for a particular station, business or employment. **The former is antecedent in time, the latter rests upon the former as its most appropriate foundation.** A liberal education is fitted to occupy the mind, while its powers are opening and enlarging; a professional education requires an understanding already cultivated by study, and prepared by exercise for methodical and persevering efforts. (*Reports on the Course of Instruction in Yale College; by a Committee of the Corporation, and the Academical Faculty.* New Haven. 1828. Page 30, Part II. Bolding added.)

We should recover this insight and develop this differentiation better than we sometimes do in our programs today. With this point, I am giving an

idea of what I mean by one of my suggestions above, about establishing a broad rationale for the liberal arts major.

Conclusion

"But you are telling us to follow a well-rounded diet in a time of famine!" I realize that many will say that I am not explaining how to actually achieve what I am calling for, given the existing limitations of funding, positions, faculty members' abilities, conflicts of scheduling, various student situations, pedagogical challenges and theoretical differences, and so on. That is quite true. Much more needs to be said. But to have the right maxims, the right directions, the right intentions, the right vision, the right understanding — or at least to feel that one has begun to make and to articulate some progress on all of these — that is something that is most necessary and most valuable and, yes, most *practical*. Even in a famine, one should know the kinds of food one most needs, despite the fact that one may have to take what one can get at the moment.

My large-scale systemic reflections here are the fruit of my own long experience, observation, reading, thinking, and discussions with others, but I will not be offended if someone says that there is none that has not been stated somewhere else before. The first two maxims given above are merely implicit in the intelligent practice of classics from the start: some texts, some cultures can be, or have been, especially rewarding, valuable, influential, powerful, helpful, etc., and they deserve to be cultivated because they somehow cultivate us in the process. We should not be worried that these principles seem to fly in the face of the preaching of some academic activists. They themselves are usually influenced heavily by figures who attained their status precisely through the reading of the most valuable and influential figures. (Who did Derrida read intensively? Heidegger. Who did Heidegger read intensively? Nietzsche. Who did Nietzsche read? A huge swathe of the tradition, including the Greek and Latin classics, Montaigne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and many like them.) The third and fourth principles simply allow classical studies to recover and update the general integrative educational function that it has held for many generations of many different nations. The fifth, sixth, and seventh principles are simple pragmatism and responsibility: if we are to use our time in cultural and language studies, let us use it in the best possible way,

trying to optimize achievement, enjoyment, and meaning, with goals appropriate to the level of the undertaking.

In these seven directives, we can find what *should* be a largely non-controversial basis for an evolution that is long overdue in our classical world. Following them will lead not only to a better-educated citizenry but also to more competent philologists who will have been better prepared for jobs that have a liberal arts component and who as scholars will be able to build upon a more systematically conceived professional basis and to operate within a larger humanistic horizon. Despite having outlined what may appear to be an overly expansive vision, I do not think that collegiate classics includes the whole extent of a contemporary liberal education. Mathematics and the natural and the social sciences must be given an important place too, for they are not only valuable inventions of the human spirit, but they treat vital subject matter and they shape the modern world-view. A classical approach to the liberal arts quite easily incorporates them: why should it not, once you have within your purview the likes of Herodotus, Pythagoras, Democritus, Euclid, Archimedes, Eratosthenes, Hippocrates, Galen, Aristotle, Xenophon, Strabo, Plutarch, Lucretius, Pliny the Elder, Columella, Vitruvius, the Seneca of the *Naturales Quaestiones*, Aratus, Manilius, and many others? My argument is rather that we must admit that classical studies can mediate unique resources to our society and that it also has the obligation and the joy to use those resources as intelligently and as profitably as possible.

Important as it is to refashion collegiate classical studies as a liberal art, it nevertheless need not be, and in light of the range of the traditional contents and practices of our discipline, it really *ought* not be, just one humanities subject among many others. In a way paralleled by no other major humanities program in our colleges today, the classical curriculum came closest to being the substance, the core, the very foundations of the college curriculum for a considerable part of the modern history of liberal education. We have radical genealogical and historical links with the other humanistic disciplines that those disciplines do not have in a precisely reciprocal way with us or with one another. For example, to be a competent professor in English literature you must know a good bit about the classical world, but competent classicists need not know English literature.

If one were to ask if there might possibly ever be some "architectonic discipline" for liberal arts education, one might seriously propose philosophy, or history, or "letters" in the broad sense. Then there is classics, which includes the beginnings of Western philosophy and history

and letters and can open up, in the standard mode of the traditional humanistic canon, to all the later writings and cultures and voices of the world: Greek elides with Roman, Greco-Roman with Judaeo-Christian, Mediterranean with European, European with Western, Western with World. Certainly classics offers extraordinary promise of educative collaboration. At several levels, it is full of a diversity that is made all the more meaningful by a non-Balkanizing underlying unity. It can now play a role, a truly *significant* one, in the rehabilitation of liberal education today. Perhaps classical humanists can use this revised self-concept to take up an educational leadership that others hesitate to assume. I know for certain that we can never fashion an adequate program for liberal education if we renounce at the start what classical studies can give us in a uniquely powerful way: *the possibility of a deep and broad cultural-historical self-appropriation by which we learn to know, to affirm, to critique, to transcend ourselves.*

Perhaps the issue before us can best be put in terms of a practical decision: Should the Academy position collegiate classics closer to specialties like Assyriology, or should it rather make of classics a major part of one very rich, even invaluable approach to a liberal arts education? If we choose the former option, we must accept the marginalization, diminution, and virtual disappearance of classical studies — not at all but at many institutions. This is in fact what has been happening. If we choose the latter option, we open the door to a better-educated populace, to a profounder realization of liberal arts ideals, and to the greater flourishing of classical humanistic studies at all levels.

Yes, indeed the Renaissance is over. But the renaissance *dynamic* lives on. And it can once again serve our highest purposes.