

virtues & vocations

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR
HUMAN FLOURISHING WINTER 2023

Should Universities Care about Virtue?

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SUZANNE SHANAHAN, EDITOR

Welcome

Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way. —JOHN STUART MILL

This magazine is an open invitation. *Virtues & Vocations: Higher Education for Human Flourishing* is an invitation to a conversation, a community, and a set of contested aspirations for both how we ought to live together in this world and how higher education might serve those aspirations. It is also animated by a highly contested, largely untested hypothesis that higher education can, in fact, promote human flourishing. In this magazine, when we talk about flourishing, we do so as Aristotle did, rooting it in the cultivation of character.

But we also understand the importance of integral human development as Pope Paul VI did in his 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* when he called for the formation of the whole human—mind, body, spirit—and for the development of all of humanity. We consider flourishing as Martin Seligman did in his 2011 book, *Flourish*, connecting it to happiness, meaning, and justice. We aspire to what Maya Angelou famously quipped, “My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.” Here we also understand human flourishing as Rosalyn Berne does in this issue. We recognize that we cannot flourish unless we understand how we are connected to all creation. Human flourishing acknowledges an interdependence and responsibility to the non-human world as well.

This magazine is a product of an initiative with the same name, *Virtues & Vocations*, supported by the Kern Family Foundation and hosted by the Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame. The initiative seeks to foster a community of thought and practice to integrate questions of character, meaning, and purpose into pre-professional and professional education. In this conversation, there is a temptation to move quickly to practical matters—how to develop habits and disposition or what this means for teaching and learning. There is a temptation to police education and professions with codes and rules of compliance rather than inspire vocation and nurture ways of being. We move quickly to the practical because so many things seem so broken or devoid of meaning. Our students, our families, our neighbors, our colleagues, and our friends are struggling as much as the world they inhabit is struggling. We work to fix a wounded world.

Virtues & Vocations cares about what is practical—that’s why, for example, we hosted an Engineering Education Workshop and will be hosting faculty from around the country through our Integrating Virtue Together initiative. It is why our monthly newsletter shares best practices and reviews the latest scholarship. But teaching tips and talk of habituation are empty if we lose the bigger vision, which is nothing less than the pursuit of human flourishing. As Hartmut Rosa (2019) tells us in his sociology of the good life, *Resonance*, we need to rethink our individual relationships to the world to flourish.

Decades ago as an aspiring academic sociologist, I was enthralled by Peter Berger’s *Invitation to Sociology* (1963) where sociology was not just an academic field, but a way of being in the world. I began to see and engage the world with what C. Wright Mills called the sociological imagination where, “Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a

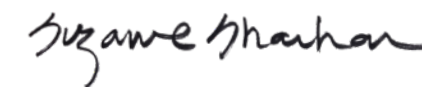
society can be understood without understanding both.” We hope this magazine shares a way of being, thinking, and doing in the world.

At the center of this effort then—the magazine and the broader initiative—is a community where different voices are encouraged, heard, and valued—across races, religious backgrounds, and the political spectrum, but also where voices from public and private institutions, small colleges, and large commuter campuses, are encouraged and welcomed. We need all these voices and perspectives as we pursue human flourishing through the institution of higher education.

And thus, in this inaugural issue, we have invited a diverse set of scholars to reflect on the question of whether universities ought to care about virtue. We also explore this theme through the art in this issue, which juxtaposes the natural world, cultivation within nature, and the built environment. We use art liberally in this publication as a reminder of the relationship between beauty and flourishing, and as a reminder that flourishing is not only, or even primarily, a cognitive enterprise.

A frustrated student once asked me at the end of a lecture on immigration policy and the common good why I cared if they were a good person or a happy person. Confused and flustered, I conjured a range of alternatively scholarly and sarcastic responses about the good life and the interdependence of human flourishing. I thought of Jericho Brown’s 2019 *Tradition* and the verse “There is the happiness you have. And the happiness you deserve.” But also realizing fully, perhaps for the first time, that I believed deeply that cultivating character was the telos of a university education, I simply said “Because it is my calling.”

Welcome to *Virtues & Vocations*.



Suzanne Shanahan is the
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ARTWORK BY CLAIR BREMNER

PART I

Cultivating Virtue

“The challenge isn’t whether universities should care about virtue, but rather whether they have chosen the correct moral goals and the most effective tactics, given their functions.”

MEGHAN SULLIVAN



MEGHAN SULLIVAN

The Moral Function of the University

In August 2017, just a few days after a white supremacist mob marched on the University of Virginia, one of their most eminent and committed professors, Chad Wellmon, wrote a provocative piece for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.¹ Wellmon found himself personally devastated by the events, while also deeply skeptical that his university could respond in any morally significant way to the moment. “Universities cannot impart comprehensive visions of the good. They cannot provide ultimate moral ends . . . most university leaders lack the language and moral imagination to confront evils such as white supremacy. They lack those things not because of who they are, but . . . because of what the modern research university has become. Such an acknowledgment is also part of the moral clarity that we can offer to ourselves and to our students.”



For Wellmon, it is up to churches, civic organizations, cultural groups and the like to direct us toward greater courage, love, and moral responsibility—virtues we will certainly need to confront racism. Universities are caretakers of other, far more limited virtues, namely the ones concerned with discovery and promulgation of knowledge. Universities are not built for moral functions. We might call this the “skeptical position” on virtue and higher education.

Wellmon is not the first faculty leader to argue that universities are unsuited to

be institutions of moral development. John Mearsheimer gave his famous (infamous?) “Aims of Education” speech at the University of Chicago twenty years earlier, making a similar point to his students: “the University also makes little effort to provide you with moral guidance. Indeed, it is a remarkably amoral institution. I would say the same thing, by the way, about all other major colleges and universities in this country.”² I remember stumbling upon Mearsheimer’s speech while still an undergraduate at Virginia. I was chairwoman of the university’s storied Honor Committee and I recall thinking, “that may be true of

Chicago, but Virginia definitely has a position on virtue.”

I’m now a faculty member myself, at Notre Dame. I continue to find the skeptical position puzzling. I think there are three different assumptions bubbling under the surface. Identifying and challenging these assumptions might help us see more clearly what it means for a modern university to have a moral function.

First, the skeptics might be assuming that if the university cannot serve a function well *on its own*, that function cannot be part of the mission of the university. Universities are transient places; students come and go in short cycles. More substantively, universities are committed to radical openness and following the arguments where they lead. We might think universities need to be free to study moral developments in surrounding society and therefore shouldn’t be in the business of also meddling in those developments.

But no institution, not even the Ivory Tower, is an island. It’s worth noting that even when it comes to the uncontroversial epistemic virtues like discovery, universities must collaborate with other institutions to promote these goods. We have to work alongside journalists and the courts to safeguard free expression and pursuit of the truth within our democracy. We have to work with industry, government,

and philanthropic organizations to propel research. Why not think that working alongside families, faith communities, and cultural and political organizations, we promote moral goods? The modern

But no institution, not even the Ivory Tower, is an island. It’s worth noting that even when it comes to the uncontroversial epistemic virtues like discovery, universities must collaborate with other institutions to promote these goods. . . . Why not think that working alongside families, faith communities, and cultural and political organizations, we promote moral goods?

university is not a telescope pointed at some distant planet, Society. It is, rather, a well-evolved reactor for energizing the ideas that power society. And it is a core where some of the key fuel elements—foundational ideas in math, science,



philosophy, literature, and the arts—are stored. I suspect this power is why universities are often the theaters in which major moral disagreements take place, sometimes in shocking ways, as the choice of the University of Virginia for the Unite the Right rally demonstrated.

Other skeptics might assume that the modern university is not amoral, but rather that it is morally corrupt, and therefore not in a position to support anyone's moral development. A cottage industry has emerged recently for scholars at elite research universities arguing that the educations they offer deform the young and corrupt the common good. It started with Bill Deresiewicz at Yale and his 2008 essay³—followed quickly by a book—arguing that the ivy league is an engine for producing “excellent sheep.” Following on this trend were Michael Sandel (Harvard)

Other skeptics might assume that the modern university is not amoral, but rather that it is morally corrupt, and therefore not in a position to support anyone's moral development. . . . The most vocal proponents of these corruption charges tend to come from backgrounds where they would enjoy high levels of privilege pretty much anywhere they'd go in American society.

and Daniel Markovits (also Yale) writing books arguing that the credentialing system at major universities serves primarily to prop up an elite increasingly divorced from the kind of practical wisdom necessary to a good society.

Faculty cynicism abounds. Some of it is justified. Much of it seems reactionary. It is telling that neither Sandel nor Markovits have sought to leave the institutions they consider to be morally troubled or renounce the benefits of their academic pedigrees. The most vocal proponents of

these corruption charges tend to come from backgrounds where they would enjoy high levels of privilege pretty much anywhere they'd go in American society. Meanwhile, some of the most optimistic folks I know about the power of the university to be morally transformative are precisely the people who decades ago would have been excluded on racial or gendered grounds from the ivy-covered social engines.

More fundamentally, the corruption charge only has its bite because we think universities *should* be promoting moral goods. The challenge isn't whether universities should care about virtue, but rather whether they have chosen the correct moral goals and the most effective tactics, given their functions. Which brings us to a final potential source of skepticism. Universities are committed to the relentless pursuit of knowledge. Skeptics might think there is no underlying knowledge to discover about what constitutes a better or worse kind of life or a better or worse kind of society. These are philosophical ideas that we negotiate; there are no right or wrong answers outside of the results of this negotiation.



Meghan Sullivan is the Wilsey Family Collegiate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame and the Director of the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study. She is the author of several articles and books, most recently *The Good Life Method* (with Paul Blaschko).

Is this view about the nature of moral virtue and powerful institutions true? Well, we've been studying and debating it since at least the 4th century BC, when the first serious historian in the Western world reported to us about the Athenians debating with the Melians about the nature of morality. Powerful Athens planned to overrun tiny Melos, arguing that the strong do whatever they will and the weak suffer whatever they must. Melos, in turn, argued that there is a moral logic that governs us all regardless of who happens to have the bully pulpit in any particular era. Who is right?

It is a question we try to answer—where else—but at universities. ❧❧❧

NOTES

1. Chad Wellmon, “For Moral Clarity, Don't Look to Universities,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 14, 2017, [chronicle.com/article/for-moral-clarity-dont-look-to-universities](https://www.chronicle.com/article/for-moral-clarity-dont-look-to-universities).
2. John Mearsheimer, Aims of Education Address 1997, The University of Chicago, college.uchicago.edu/student-life/aims-education-address-1997-john-j-mearsheimer.
3. William Deresiewicz, “The Disadvantages of an Elite Education,” *The American Scholar*, June 1, 2008, [theamericanscholar.org/the-disadvantages-of-an-elite-education](https://www.theamericanscholar.org/the-disadvantages-of-an-elite-education).

Higher Education Should Be Education in Intellectual Virtues

Until recently, it has been taken as self-evident that higher education is good for the students and for society at large, and that American colleges and universities do an excellent job of providing it. But lately, storm clouds have been gathering over colleges and universities. Commentators are expressing serious doubts, both about whether colleges are teaching what they should be teaching and about whether they are teaching it well. Demands for accountability are everywhere, spurred in part by the absurdly high cost of a college education and the almost two trillion dollars in collective college debt that students have amassed. What are students getting for all that money? And what *should* they be getting?



Universities that offer specialized training in specific professions have an answer: “We’re training the next generation of nurses, accountants, physical therapists, teachers, software engineers, etc., etc.” Whether they do it well or not may be a legitimate issue, but that they *should* be doing it is not much in dispute. But, for programs in the liberal arts, the answers are not so straightforward. You often hear defenders of liberal arts education suggest that their goal is less to teach the specifics of any discipline or profession than to teach students how to think. But what does it mean to “know how to think?” Is there one right way to think that applies to all the problems people will face in their professional and personal lives? If so, what is it? And is this sort of training also important for students for whom the liberal arts hold little appeal, but who aspire to professional excellence?

No doubt, knowing how to think demands a set of cognitive skills—quantitative ability, conceptual flexibility, analytical acumen, expressive clarity. And certain professions demand a set of technical skills. Universities have a role to play in developing these kinds of skills, but what makes a university education worthwhile is the marriage of this skill development to a set of intellectual virtues—virtues that will make people good students, good employees and professionals, and good citizens.

Universities are particularly well suited to cultivate intellectual virtues: love of truth, honesty, fair-mindedness, good listening, courage, and most importantly, wisdom. As Aristotle knew, all these traits have a fundamental moral dimension. This makes virtue language the right language for talking about them, even if they are “intellectual.”

Love of truth

Students need to love the truth to be good students. Without this intellectual virtue, they will only get things right because we are punishing them for getting them wrong. As Jonathan Rauch shows in his recent book, *The Constitution of Knowledge*, the desire to find the truth, rather than “truthiness,” cannot be taken for granted.

It has become intellectually fashionable in recent decades to attack the very notion of truth. You have your truth and I have mine. Everything is relative, a matter of perspective. People who claim to know “the truth,” it is argued, are really just using their positions of power and privilege in society to shove their version of things down other people’s throats.

This turn to relativism is in part a reflection of something good and important that has happened to higher education and intellectual inquiry in general. People have caught on to the fact that much of what the intellectual elite thought was the truth *was* distorted by limitations

of perspective. Slowly, the voices of the excluded have been welcomed into the conversation. And their perspectives have enriched our understanding enormously. But the reason they have enriched our understanding is that they have given the rest of us an important piece of the truth that was previously invisible to us. Not *their* truth, but *the* truth. It is troubling to see how quickly an appreciation that each of us can only attain a partial grasp of the truth degrades into a view that there really isn’t any truth out there to be grasped.

Finding the truth is hard. There are countless pitfalls along the way. Relativism makes intellectual life easier. When a fellow student says something in class with which you disagree, you needn’t worry about finding a way to challenge that view and make a case for your own. There is no need to struggle through disagreements to get to the bottom of things if there is no bottom of things. Everyone is entitled to an opinion—the great democratization of knowledge.

The love of truth is an intellectual virtue in part because its absence has serious moral consequences. Relativism chips away at our most fundamental respect for one another as human beings. When people have respect for the truth, they seek it and speak it in dialogue with one another. Once truth becomes suspect, relations between people become little more than efforts at manipulation. Instead of trying to enlighten or

persuade people by giving them reasons to see things as we do, we can use any form of influence we think will work, the “spin” that pervades our modern political discourse.

Honesty

Students need the intellectual virtue of honesty because honesty enables them to face the limits of what they themselves know; it encourages them to own up to their mistakes. And it enables them to acknowledge uncomfortable truths about the world. Most schools encourage a kind of honesty: don’t plagiarize and don’t cheat. But it is uncommon to see them encourage “face up to your ignorance and error,” or “accept this unpleasant truth and see how you can mitigate its effects instead of denying it.”

Fair-mindedness

Students need to be fair-minded in evaluating the arguments of others. There is a substantial literature in psychology on what is called “motivated reasoning,” our almost uncanny ability to emphasize evidence that is consistent with what we already believe, or want to believe, and ignore evidence that is inconsistent. As psychologist Jonathan Haidt has pointed out, we often use reason more as a lawyer who is making a case than as a judge who is deciding one.

Good listening

Students need to be good listeners because they can’t learn from others, or from us,

without it. And it takes courage to be a good listener because good listeners know that their own views of the world, along with their plans for how to live in it, may be at stake whenever they have a serious conversation.

Courage

Students need intellectual courage too. They need it to stand up for what they believe is true, sometimes in the face of mass disagreement from others, including people in authority, like their professors. And they need it to take intellectual risks, to pursue intellectual paths that might not pan out.

Wisdom

Finally, students need the virtue that Aristotle called practical wisdom. Any of the intellectual virtues I've mentioned can be carried to an extreme. Wisdom is what enables us to find the balance (Aristotle called it the "mean") between timidity and recklessness, between carelessness and obsessiveness, between flightiness and stubbornness, between speaking up and listening up, between trust and skepticism, between empathy and detachment. And wisdom is also what enables us to make difficult decisions among intellectual virtues that may conflict. Being empathetic, fair, and open-minded often rubs up against fidelity to the truth. In a book we wrote on the topic of practical wisdom, Kenneth Sharpe and I called it the "master virtue."

VIRTUE CULTIVATION & THE VALUE OF COLLEGE

In my view, the way to defend the value of a college education is to defend the importance of intellectual virtues like the ones on my list, and then show that the education we provide is successful at cultivating these virtues. Cultivation of intellectual virtues is not meant to be in contrast to training in specific occupations. On the contrary, cultivation of intellectual virtues will contribute to such training, helping to create a workforce that is flexible, willing to take initiatives, and able to admit to and learn from mistakes. People with intellectual virtues will persist when the going gets tough, ask for help when they need it, provide help when others need it, and not settle for expedient but inaccurate solutions to current problems. In Jeffrey Pfeffer's book, *The Human Equation*, he points to evidence that the right way to hire new people is to focus on the skills you don't know how to train and trust that you can teach the skills you do know how to train. Intellectual virtues fit this picture perfectly. Workplaces need people who have intellectual virtues, but are not in a good position to train them. Colleges and universities should be doing this training for them.

Are they? I think rather few colleges and universities think systematically about how to encourage the intellectual virtues.

Mostly, their cultivation is left to chance, not to institutional design. Aristotle argued (rightly in my view) that virtues are developed through practice, and by watching those who have already mastered the relevant virtues display them.

Most professors do not have the luxury of teaching small classes and seminars, and it is hard to model intellectual virtues when one is lecturing to 300 students. Nor do I envision a time when small classes will be commonplace at large institutions. Most lack the financial resources, and many research universities that may have the financial resources lack the will. But, at the very least, institutions and the people who teach in them should be willing to articulate clearly and publicly that nurturing intellectual virtues is a central part of their mission.

BUILDING A RESUME AND BUILDING CHARACTER

David Brooks, in his book, *The Road to Character*, distinguishes between what he

People with intellectual virtues will persist when the going gets tough . . . and not settle for expedient but inaccurate solutions to current problems.

calls "resume virtues" and "eulogy virtues." The former are not actually virtues in the Aristotelian sense; rather, they are skills that get you good grades, good jobs, nice houses, and hefty bank accounts. "Eulogy virtues" are what turn you into a good person. Though the distinction between skills and virtues is an important one, I think Brooks is wrong to imply that resume virtues are all that we need to produce excellence at work, or that eulogy virtues are for what comes after one's work has ceased. Eulogy virtues are just as important to becoming good doctors, good lawyers, good teachers, good nurses, good physical therapists, and even good bankers. And they are also important to becoming good children, parents, spouses, friends, and citizens. [↗](#)



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JOHANN N. NEEM

What Good Is a College Education?

In the fall term, I often teach an introductory, general education course called “Going to College in America.” Although grounded in my discipline—history—the assigned readings draw from economics, philosophy, sociology, and other fields. My goal is to allow students, often in their first term in college, to reflect on why they’re in college and what they want out of their four years on campus. Students have been told again and again—by parents, by teachers and counselors, by political and business leaders—that they must go to college. And my students have followed that advice. They have done what they’ve been asked to do. They are here. But they don’t know why.

I teach at a regional public comprehensive university, the workhorse of public four-year education. My students come from diverse backgrounds. Many are first generation. They've been told that a college degree is essential to succeed in today's workforce. Their goal is to get a degree, often in a major that is directly tied to a job. And yet they find themselves spending the bulk of their first two years taking general education courses in subjects like history, political science, geology, and biology. I hear them complain. I hear them wonder why they need humanities or science if they don't intend to do anything with them.

My goal in the class is not to brainwash my students into agreeing with me. I teach readings that I disagree with, and I do my best to help students understand authors' arguments on the authors' terms. I also make sure to assign readings that

I want my students to see that there are purposes to their education that are not just instrumental. I want them to at least be aware that there are internal goods to a college education if they choose to pursue them.



contradict each other. But both through the readings and by modeling intellectual curiosity in the classroom, I want my students to see that there are purposes to their education that are not just instrumental. I want them to at least be aware that there are *internal goods* to a college education if they choose to pursue them. I want to open them up to the idea that a good college education can matter on its own terms, and not just for the piece of paper at the end or the job that you get.

To me, a college education is distinguished from other kinds of education because it embodies ideals distinct from the rest of

students' lives. If we take college education seriously, we want students to emerge from college different than when they went in. The test of a good college education is not graduates' salaries but whether colleges have cultivated students' intellectual virtues. The philosopher Jason Baehr, in his recent book *Deep in Thought: A Practical Guide to Teaching for Intellectual Virtues*, writes that "intellectual character is one dimension of *personal* character." In this sense, virtues are not just about a person's skills or knowledge, but their motives, dispositions, values, and habits. In Baehr's words, a virtue "reflects who you are as a person."

Unlike other institutions that also care about moral and civic virtue, colleges alone are places devoted to intellectual goods—to learning as an end in itself. That is the public good that colleges offer to society.

Intellectual virtues complement students' moral and civic virtues. Colleges care that their graduates are ethical and public-minded, but that does not distinguish colleges from other kinds of educational institutions. Unlike other institutions that also care about moral and civic virtue, colleges alone are places devoted to intellectual goods—to learning as an end in itself. That is the public good that colleges offer to society. A good college education must consciously help students understand how intellectual virtues intersect with their moral and civic commitments.

From this perspective, a higher education institution that is dedicated to training people for jobs or to technical training does not offer a college education. This is not because what they do is not important or easier than what colleges do, but because the ends to which they are devoted are distinct from the ends that colleges should



prioritize. Both vocational and technical training fail the test of taking students out of their normal lives to dedicate them to the specific task of developing their intellectual virtues and the skills and knowledge required to practice them. Colleges must take seriously the specific goods that they offer.¹

This is why the liberal arts and sciences are at the heart of a college education. By studying subjects such as literature and history, political science and economics, biology and physics, mathematics and philosophy, students get to see the world from distinct perspectives. Because these disciplines exist primarily to seek knowledge about the world, engaging with them requires practicing intellectual virtues. The liberal arts and sciences offer three things essential to developing intellectual virtues. First, they

provide insight into how the human and natural worlds work. Second, they cultivate in students a habit of asking questions about the world. And third, they provide skills and knowledge to help students develop better answers to questions about the world.

Developing intellectual virtues takes time. Like any form of character education, it cannot be sped up. There is a reason why students need to spend several years on campuses taking classes. Both the campus and the classes are formative. Virtues cannot be learned just once; they must become habits, part of our underlying character. That requires practice and repetition. Online schools, or schools that promise cheap and fast degrees, do not account for the time it takes to foster intellectual virtues. If colleges take character education seriously, they must acknowledge that the formation of intellectual virtues requires students to spend time on campus.

The honest truth is that most of us do not naturally devote our time to thinking

There is a reason why students need to spend several years on campuses taking classes. Both the campus and the classes are formative.



about history or politics or cell replication. We have to develop the habit of seeing the world historically or sociologically or economically. We must learn to see what mathematicians or physicists or poets are able to see. And that means we have to study the subjects themselves. But the

goal is not passing tests or earning credits. These are external markers, but the aspiration is internal: the goal is to think *as* historians or sociologists or poets or physicists. And to do that, students must practice, just as a musician must practice, until what they do becomes a kind of second

nature. That kind of repetition will make being intellectually virtuous part of who we are, an aspect of ourselves that will be sustained after graduation.

Obviously, spending time on campuses takes money. It's a lot of money for traditionally-aged students. It's even more for students who are older and have other obligations: caring for children or aging parents,

paying rent or a mortgage. There is no way around it. Yet studies have shown that the biggest driver of student tuition increases is state defunding: states provide less funding per student than they did in the past, and colleges have responded by increasing what they charge students. These are policy questions; college can be affordable for more people. In addition, the student debt crisis is overstated. According to a 2019 Pew

study, the median student loan debt was only \$17,000, less than many car loans. Average student debt numbers are higher, but much of that debt is held by students with professional graduate degrees, such as MDs and JDs. In other words, it is possible to make college education affordable for more people if we choose to do so.

Cultivating intellectual virtues through the liberal arts and sciences, then, is the distinguishing feature that defines college education from not-college education. Colleges must teach students to think, provide them the knowledge and skills to think with, and enable them to have thoughts worth thinking. But most of all, they must graduate people who are not just morally and civically virtuous but intellectually virtuous. College graduates should leave college wanting to know more about the world, and they should carry that disposition with them into the workforce, their personal lives, and as democratic citizens.

A good education in the liberal arts and sciences should not just be for well-off elites

College graduates should leave college wanting to know more about the world, and they should carry that disposition with them into the workforce, their personal lives, and as democratic citizens.

at exclusive institutions. In a democracy, it should be accessible to all capable students. This is not just a belief—it is something that draws on my experience teaching at a public regional university. Students are open to liberal education when they understand what it is for and why it matters. Colleges should focus on their specific purposes, knowing that what they do can change lives. Students deserve it. [v&v](#)

NOTE

1. An extended version of this argument can be found in my essay "What Is College For?" in *Colleges at the Crossroads: Taking Sides on Contested Issues*, eds. Joseph L. DeVitis & Pietro A. Sasso (Peter Lang, 2018).



Johann N. Neem is author of *What's the Point of College?* and *Democracy's Schools: The Rise of Public Education in America*. He is Professor of History at Western Washington University.

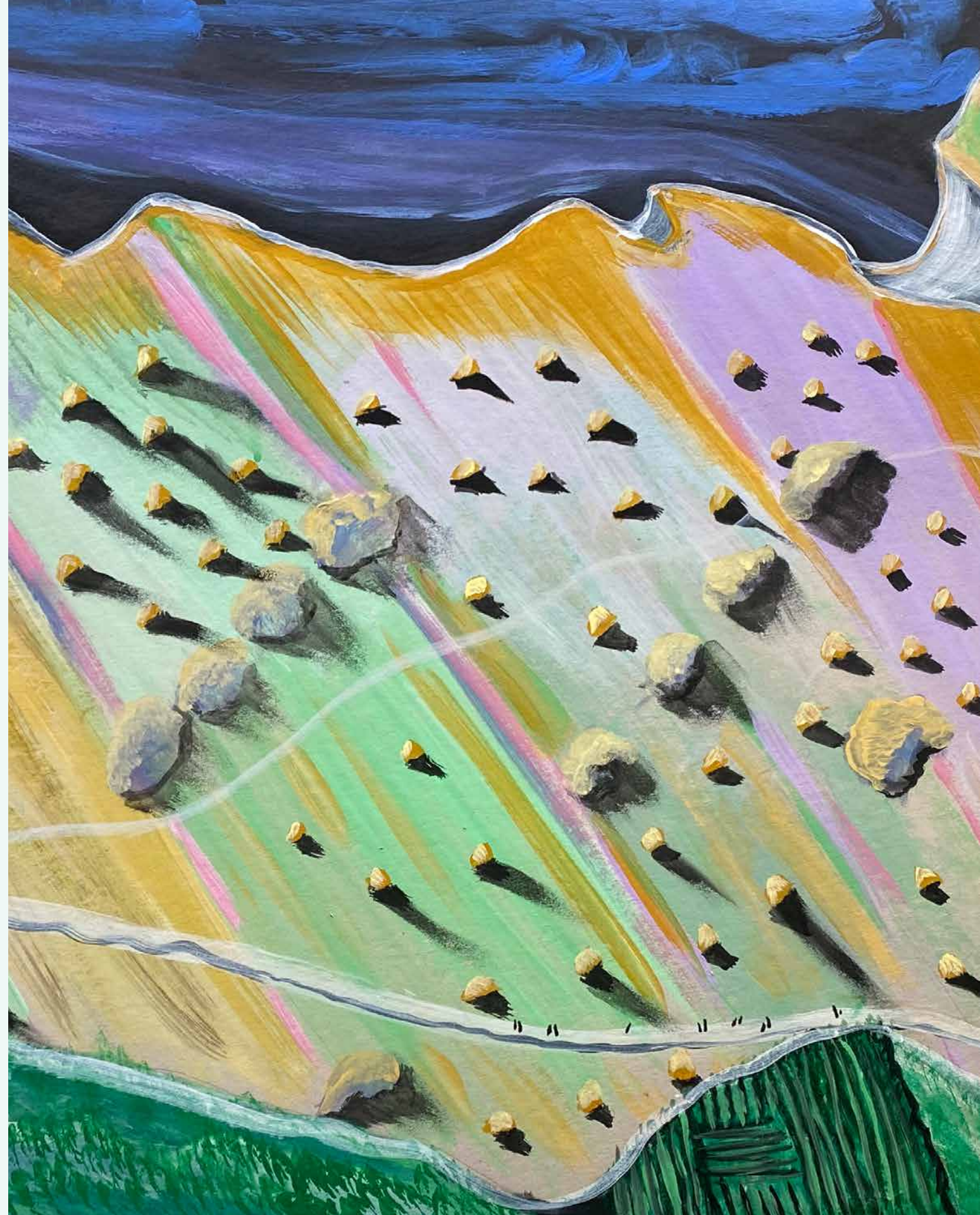


NANCY E. SNOW

Practical Challenges to Virtue Integration in Higher Education

For institutions of higher education that seek to integrate virtues into their curricula, there are numerous practical challenges. Reflecting on my own experiences directing the Institute for the Study of Human Flourishing at the University of Oklahoma (OU) from 2015–2022, I am convinced that anyone endeavoring to integrate virtue must not only understand philosophy, pedagogy, and faculty needs, but also reckon with practical realities such as institution size, mission, and administrative realities.

At OU, we were fortunate to receive two rounds of funding from the John Templeton Foundation to incentivize faculty to integrate virtues into their courses. During the first, we made calls to interested faculty and, with the assistance of the Office of Academic Assessment, worked with faculty one-on-one to select virtues from the list of nine then promoted by the





Institute (open-mindedness, intellectual humility, love of learning, honesty, perseverance, self-regulation, compassion, fairness, and civility).

We learned two main things from this experience. First, most faculty who are not in disciplines such as philosophy or religious studies do not know what a virtue is. Though they are familiar with the names of virtues, they are not aware of the complex structure of virtue. We worked with virtue as conceptualized in the Aristotelian tradition, where it is regarded as an entrenched

multi-track disposition of character. By “entrenched,” we mean that virtue is deeply embedded in a person’s character. Part of our aim, of course, was to begin or solidify this process in college students. By “multi-track,” we mean that virtue requires perceptual, cognitive, motivational, and affective capacities, as well as the capacity to act. The capacities to perceive when a virtuous response is called for, think through what an appropriate response would be, want to be virtuous for the right reasons, and feel the appropriate emotional response and act accordingly

are all components of a virtuous disposition. Secondly, we learned that assessing the progress of students in virtue is quite challenging, especially when one is dealing with a semester-long course.

We sought to address these issues in our second attempt at virtue integration. Entitled, “Teaching Intellectual Virtues,” this project focused on a suite of intellectual virtues, which addressed concerns that some faculty had about trying to integrate moral virtues into classroom study. We provided considerably more instruction and resources for participating faculty. We held a half-day mini-conference featuring speakers from OU and other universities, as well as four follow-up workshops, all on Zoom. We held a special workshop for participants and sought to create a “community of practice” of supportive faculty. In these efforts, the Institute partnered not only with the Office of Assessment, but also with the Center for Faculty Excellence.

Assessment remained a challenge, but we were able to focus on how both teachers and students perceived the value of the virtues for their ability to learn from the course, how incorporating those virtues changed students’ perceptions of the value of the material, and so on. Some of these efforts relied on self-report measures. Did students feel that they were more open-minded at the end of the semester than at

The success of these endeavors depends crucially on having a supportive higher administration that understands and appreciates the value of virtue and character.

the beginning? Did encountering religious texts from different traditions improve their empathy? Did empathy help them to understand and appreciate those texts? Many teachers indicated a willingness to continue to integrate virtues into their courses, even without being incentivized.

During my seven years at OU, other attempts at virtue integration included the OU Character Initiative, which was backed by the President and nominally headed by the Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students. This initiative consisted chiefly of integrating virtues into the experiences of first-year students through orientation activities and first-year classes. University College also pioneered an initiative in which many first-year students were enrolled. Faculty in their “Foundations for Learning” courses deliberately integrated the Institute’s nine virtues, created materials and events, and worked diligently to assess the virtues. Based on all these

Virtue integration is subject to the larger forces at work in academia. Concerns with numbers—retention rates, placement data, assessment data—can make people lose sight of the true value of virtue, its role in the formation of student character.

experiences, I would like to offer some reflections.

First, the size of the institution matters. In the fall of 2020, OU had 21,383 students, and the total campus size is 3,326 acres.¹ The large size of OU, both in numbers of students and in the sheer size of the campus, made large-scale efforts to promote virtue challenging. Smaller institutions could well be more amenable to creating the kinds of closely-knit communities in which virtue can best take root and thrive. That said, the Institute was able to create a core cadre of faculty from many disciplines who were interested in virtue.

Second, whether the institution is public or private, along with the institution's mission, makes a difference. Any college or university would be justified in promoting

intellectual virtues, because these virtues are essential for the success of academic endeavors. Private institutions, especially religious institutions, could have an advantage if their mission is explicitly to promote the values and virtues of a distinctive tradition. This provides a rationale and justification for seeking to integrate virtues into courses, orientation experiences, extracurricular activities, residence hall life, and so on. Making an argument for the creation of a “total community” that is infused with virtues is made easier, since the virtues can then be regarded as intrinsic goods that are integral to the DNA of the institution. Otherwise, one must fall back on arguments that virtues are add-ons or instrumental goods that enhance academic success and retention rates, and that employers seek when hiring.

This leads to my final point. The success of these endeavors depends crucially on having a supportive higher administration that understands and appreciates the value of virtue and character. Today, many administrators are concerned with numbers—retention rates, employment placement, and so on. With the appropriate data, these people can be convinced of the instrumental value of virtue for retention, graduation, and placement, but securing funding is an uphill battle. Another challenge is the high turnover rate among administrators. Some



administrators spend only a few years at an institution, then move to a higher position elsewhere. They often have their own agendas and lack a deep understanding of the institution as well as institutional memory. Unless virtue integration aligns with their immediate plans, they are likely to be uninterested.

In summary, the institutional context in which virtue integration is to take place will shape these efforts and can make it easier or harder to be successful. Virtue integration is subject to the larger forces at work

in academia. Concerns with numbers—retention rates, placement data, assessment data—can make people lose sight of the true value of virtue, its role in the formation of student character. Administrative turnover and the lack of stability it brings are also factors to be reckoned with. I am not suggesting that these challenges are insurmountable, but that knowledge is power. To navigate them successfully, they must be kept in mind. ❧❧

NOTE

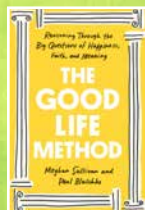
1. See “University of Oklahoma” at usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities.



Nancy E. Snow is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kansas and the author or co-author and editor or co-editor of twelve books and seventy articles on virtue ethics and other philosophical topics.

Good Reads

We asked our authors to recommend a book they had read over the past couple of years. Here is what they said:



The Good Life Method

Reasoning Through the Big Questions of Happiness, Faith, and Meaning

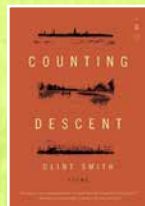
BY MEGHAN SULLIVAN AND PAUL BLASCHKO

This book has been very formative for me, especially because I spent so much time writing it! All joking aside, this book is an accessible entry point to those thinking about questions of virtue and purpose, along with how our answers to these questions inform our everyday lives.—**MEGHAN SULLIVAN**

After Virtue

BY ALASDAIR MACINTYRE

It is the best account I know of of what is missing from the liberal individualism that dominates the university.—**BARRY SCHWARTZ**



Counting Descent

BY CLINT SMITH

Written by *Atlantic* staff writer and bestselling author of the 2021 *How the Word is Passed*, Smith's first book is a powerful and poignant poetry collection exuding both sociological and moral imagination. It left me feeling hopeful.—**SUZANNE SHANAHAN**



Gold Diggers

A Novel

BY SANJENA SATHIAN

Gold Diggers situates the South Asian immigrant experience into the larger story of the American Dream. At a time when many argue that a diverse society cannot identify with older canonical works, Sathian instead grounds her story in America's literary heritage. She reminds us that we can tell new stories that draw on the old ones rather than reject them.—**JOHANN N. NEEM**

The New Tsar

The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin

BY STEVEN LEE MEYERS

Russia's aggression toward Ukraine has shocked the world, destabilized markets, and threatened famine and energy crises. Vladimir Putin is the man behind the war in Ukraine. This book offers an informed analysis of Putin's life, his thought, and his political *modus operandi*. It's invaluable for increasing our understanding of this puzzling and enigmatic man, and the trouble he is causing in the world today.—**NANCY E. SNOW**



Should universities care about virtue?

SOUNDBITES FROM PAST VIRTUES & VOCATIONS WEBINARS

“For character and for grit, not only does the expression of your character and your grit require that you are in a situation where that is possible, but you also are a product of your past, so **we need young people to grow up in circumstances where they can develop the mindsets and skillsets that undergird character development.**”

Angela Duckworth, Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and author of *Grit*

“HBCUs were founded on the premise that everybody should have a high-quality education and that that education should be about doing something good for your community and making your communities better. And I think that has to be the shift in higher education in general.”

Elwood L. Robinson, Chancellor of Winston-Salem State University



“**Higher education is about the development of citizens . . .** in a broad sense, meaning, a person who participates in an informed and responsible way in a democratic society. It seems to me that every college and university ought to consider that responsibility among its highest.”

Andrew Delbanco, Professor of American Studies at Columbia University and President of the Teagle Foundation

“**We also think about building character through having purpose and working on teams,** working collaboratively, thinking about what you are working on outside of yourself and how it is being used for others.”

Gilda Barabino, President of Olin College of Engineering

“Part of what liberal arts is for is to help people think about what work is and what community is in a way that is constructive and helpful and imaginative and creative and makes things better. . . . **The liberal arts are not content. There’s a lot of content and a lot of things you can learn, but the core of a liberal arts education are those habits and virtues.**”

Zena Hitz, Tutor at St. John’s College and author of *Lost in Thought*

virtues & vocations
virtuesvocations.org



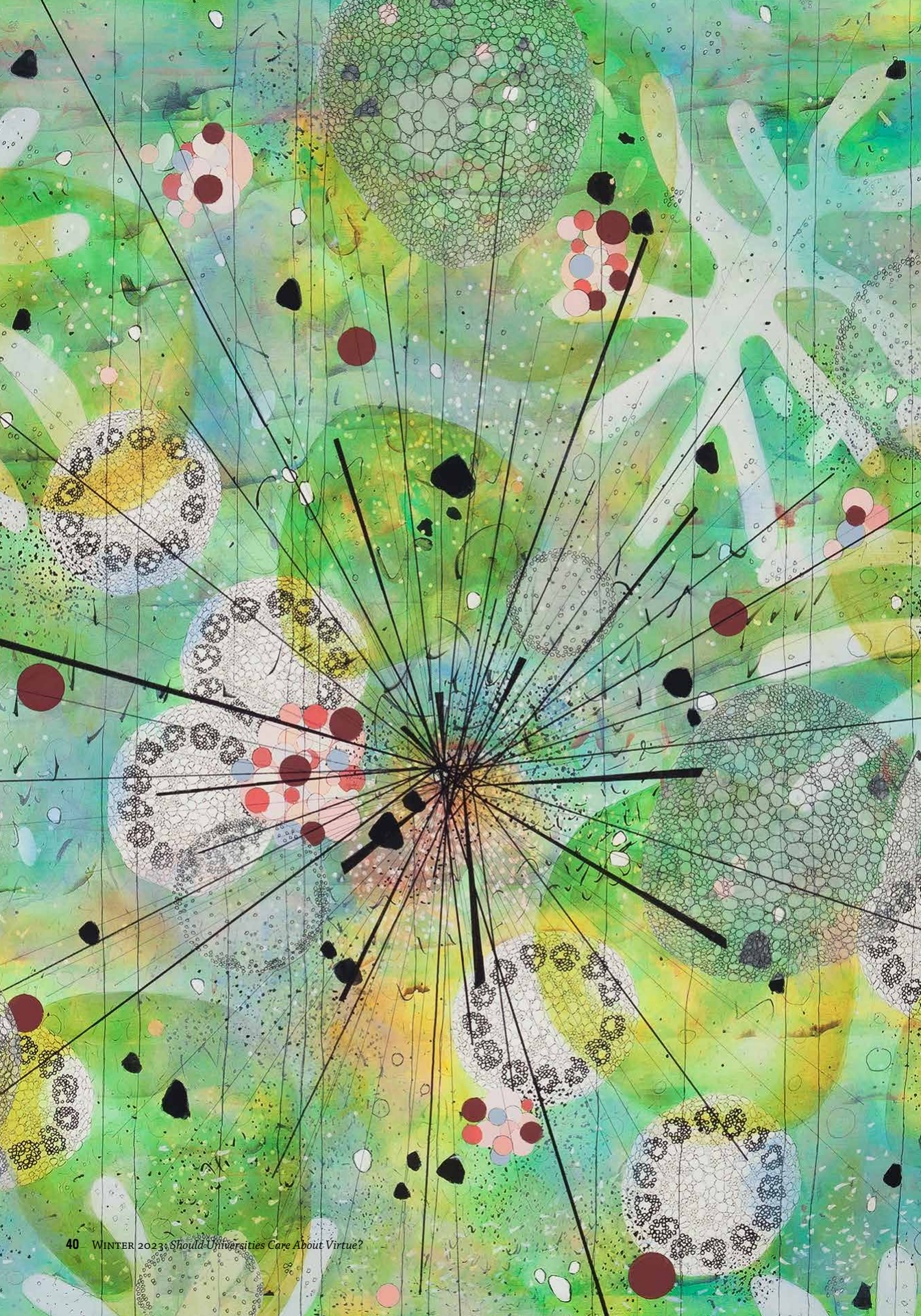
ARTWORK BY CLAIR BREMNER

PART II

Cultivating Vocation

“Vocations without the virtues will lack substance. Virtues without vocations will seem arbitrary.”

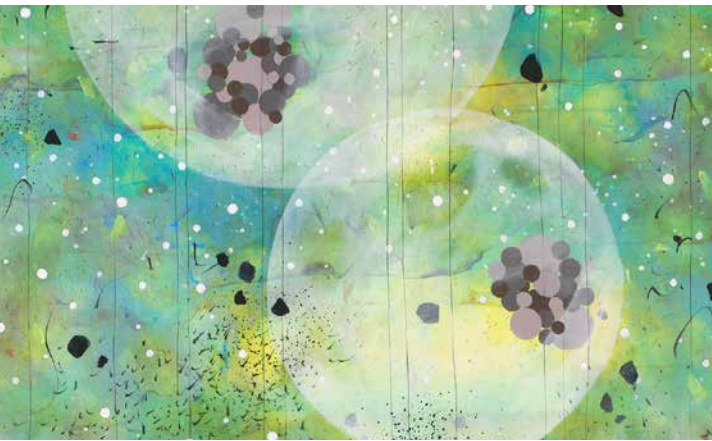
STANLEY HAUERWAS



STANLEY HAUERWAS

Callings

“Virtues and Vocations” is a good name for a magazine designed to explore the moral challenges associated with educational institutions. Virtues and vocations are classical moral concepts that invite fresh ways to think about how the educational process can make a difference for the moral life of their students. The formative effect of universities on students is often unacknowledged, and even denied, but there is no question that the way students conduct themselves after college is the result of the formation students receive in college. The current political divide between those who went to college and those who did not confirms the difference universities make.



The formative effect of universities on students is often unacknowledged, and even denied, but there is no question that the way students conduct themselves after college is the result of the formation students receive in college.

The recent focus on the virtues and vocations is both surprising yet astute. After being largely ignored by moral philosophers for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the virtues have become of central interest in recent philosophical and theological ethics. By contrast, “vocation” is seldom explored as significant for understanding moral

formation. As a result, students and faculties alike tend to lose any sense of the moral purpose of the university as an institution with a particular calling.

To be a student is to have that calling determine why you are in the university. This may seem too heady a thought for an eighteen year old who came to the university “just to get an education,” but it is the task of professors to help students discover that they now have a commitment that is crucial if we are to be people for whom ideas matter.

The notion of vocation originally gained its meaning in a religious context. In the Bible, the prophets and the disciples often were identified as responding to a call. It is not surprising that the concept was later used by Christians to describe members of religious orders. In particular, monks were thought

to not only have a vocation, but their very existence was a vocation that could be tested.

The later transformation of how vocation was and remains understood was a development that began in the Protestant Reformation. Luther’s attack on the hierarchy of Roman Catholic orders carried

with it a transformation in how vocations were understood by extending what it means to have a vocation to anyone. According to Luther, if the Pope had a vocation so could a milkmaid. This understanding of vocation was intensified by the Calvinist stress on the necessity of every Christian to contribute to the upbuilding of a Christian social order through love of neighbor. These developments changed the meaning of vocation by making it a term that draws its meaning from the public good of tasks to which anyone could be called.

The Calvinist understanding of vocation is often associated with the democratization of vocation, which was generally assumed to be a good thing. However, there was and is a downside to this understanding of vocation. Vocations became associated with certain offices or tasks that needed no justification. “I was just keeping the trains running on time—that they happened to be filled with Jews is not my problem.” It is increasingly the case that having a vocation is to assume one has a job.

Many in non-traditional positions—forest rangers, firemen and women, vets—often claim to have a vocation. With more justification, lawyers, doctors, and teachers claim their professions as vocations. They do so because they have internal standards that make it possible for them to be self-policing. Such oversight is necessary

because these professions have power over other people.

That students no longer can imagine that to go to a college or university is a calling results in universities being dominated by



To be educated is to have the responsibility to serve one’s neighbor by saying what you know to be true.



the hope of future employment. Students have lost a sense of the gift they have been given by having time to do nothing other than read books. To be educated is to have the responsibility to serve one's neighbor by saying what you know to be true.

Such a view seems widely idealistic given that most students would be surprised if told their education creates responsibilities they would not have except for the education they have received. Which means one of the tasks for faculty and administrators of universities is to articulate to students the responsibilities that come with being a student. Equally important, faculties must teach in a manner that students can share in the overriding commitment to say what is true.

The suggestions I have just made may seem unrealistic. To suggest that students should consider their work as a student, which should not end at graduation, may seem elitist. I think it not only sounds elitist, it is elitist. But I do not think that a bad result. Elitism is only a problem when elites fail to remember why they have been set aside. Universities are, after all, institutions of memory.

Some of what I have said may appear to be another typical professor from the humanities suggesting that the recovery of the moral purpose of the university depends on recovery of the liberal arts. While I certainly would welcome more courses in the humanities, students are just as likely to receive the kind of training I am

suggesting the university can provide in math or biology courses. Moral formation happens when a student submits to the disciplines necessary to learn how to see the difference the subject makes in the world.

To be a student is to have a vocation. There is in our time, however, a challenge to that project that is not easily overcome. Alasdair MacIntyre's haunting account of the fragmentary character of our lives captures well the problem. It is not that we are uniquely without some purpose. Rather, the fragmented character of our culture now determines the university curriculum, which in turns produces lives that are incoherent. There is no quick fix, but some way must be found to recover the habits we call virtues as necessary to prevent the perversions of the vocations suggested above.

Vocations without the virtues will lack substance. Virtues without vocations will seem arbitrary. In 1971, I wrote my first published article. I end summarizing the

passage from that article on the virtues because I still think it is on the right track. This is what I said: those entering the

Moral formation happens when a student submits to the disciplines necessary to learn how to see the difference the subject makes in the world.

university will need the virtue of integrity because we will be tempted to sell our wares at the cultural store; honesty is required because the work of learning requires recognition of our limitations; justice is needed, because we must learn to see the world as it is not as we wish it to be; humility is required that we might recognize that we can never be in control of the way things are; humor is a most necessary virtue, helping us guard against the most dangerous of intellectual sins, which is to take ourselves too seriously; and finally, kindness must be present because the truth can be harsh and destructive. ❧❧



Stanley Hauerwas is the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor Emeritus of Divinity and Law at Duke University. He is the author of numerous books and articles. His book, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*, was selected as one of the 100 most important books on religion of the 20th century.

SABENA Y. JAMEEL

Healing the Whole

How Phronesis and Asklepions Can Transform Health Professional Education

I am no linguist, but I love to contemplate language. Language is loaded with meaning. Some cultures have words that encapsulate an important essence, a feeling or value that other cultures have no words for. A fellow clinician was reflecting on how the nature of the presenting complaints changed when he moved to an area with a different population demographic. He suggested that his new population seemed to somatize more (manifest psychological distress through physical symptoms), astutely observing it may be because there was no word for depression in their mother tongue.



As a clinical academic, the last decade has engrossed me in the way contemporary medical practice relates to ancient Greek philosophy. These ancient thinkers had words that accurately depict feelings and values that are often experienced but rarely articulated in health care practice. As an affiliate PhD student at the University of Birmingham's Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, I looked at enacted phronesis (practical wisdom) in medical practitioners.¹ I currently work as a Clinical Associate Professor in Medical Professionalism and Academic Quality at Birmingham University Medical School (UK). I am also a family medicine practitioner in an inner-city practice. These roles align in the quest to understand and address the demoralisation and increasing distrust of the profession.² It is a privileged position, especially when it comes to resurrecting conversations on intangibles

like trust, morality, meaning, and purpose (spirituality).

Through my work and study, I have come to believe that the Greek words and concepts associated with phronesis and Asklepios have the potential to liberate medical practice by seamlessly connecting healthcare to a moral orientation. Professionalism, after all, is about the morality of Medicine.³ Professionalism is a trust-generating promise.⁴ Trust and morality are laden with values, feelings, and interpretations. These Greek terms give us virtue literacy, where positivist, technical-rationalist methods have failed. These are words that grasp holism by default.

Phronesis

Phronesis, commonly known as practical wisdom, is an intellectual virtue described by Aristotle. It is a meta-virtue that adjudicates value conflicts. It integrates all other moral and intellectual virtues, leading to practical action guided by a moral orientation towards good. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle suggested it was the route to eudaimonia (flourishing). In 1993, Pellegrino and Thomasma suggested that the term phronesis was well suited to the work of clinicians.⁵ Medicine has become ever more complex, and the need to find a way to deal with this complexity and uncertainty has become a priority.⁶ Since

the days of the Flexner report (1910), the study of medicine puts an even greater emphasis on bioscience and empirical certainty. These two diverse realities need reconciliation.

Medical education to date alludes to practical wisdom but does not really connect these areas with an overriding philosophy; rather, there are disparate modules like medical ethics, clinical decision-making, communications skills, and procedural competence. Learners who are taught in silos need an integrative heuristic with a moral orientation. If we add the development of self-knowledge (including mental habits) and character development (professional identity formation), phronesis has the potential to deliver deductive aspects combined comfortably with interpretive aspects of professional practice. Using phronesis as a heuristic equips us with tools to address those oft side-lined aspects of trust and morality. Phronesis reconciles.

Phronesis cannot happen in isolation. Environment matters: role models, the hidden curriculum, and organizational culture all play an important part in developing phronesis. Experiential learning and exploratory dialogue are essential in emergent phronesis. This is where another ancient Greek concept comes into its own in providing a nexus of ideals in which to locate medical care and healing. It has the potential to bring virtue literacy to



organizations. This terminology could incorporate flourishing into our health care systems by design. It is a secret, hidden in a symbol that exists in plain sight.

Asklepion Approach

The symbol is the rod of Asclepius—you will immediately recognize it; it is an almost universal medical branding mark, a singular staff with a snake wrapped around it. The staff belonged to Asclepius, an ancient Greek hero, deified. He represented the healing aspects of Medicine. I suspect many of us do not realize how the nexus of ideals conceived in Asclepius's healing centers (Asklepions) can help us integrate mind, body, and spirit, therefore truly aspiring to healing, holism and flourishing.

The concept of holism acted as the theoretical basis for the work of the asclepiads and iatromantis (medical healers) who worked in the Asklepiions. This is an integration sought after but never really mastered in current allopathic medical practice. There were over 300 Asklepiions in the ancient Mediterranean world. Hippocrates was thought to have received training in the Asklepiion in Kos, and Galen studied in the Asklepiion of Pergamon.

These retreat centers were in therapeutic locations, by the sea or near a forest. Beauty and inspiration were recognized as part of the healing process. It was a center where the wholeness of the soul and the health of the body were intimately connected with love.

A physician must be able to make the most hostile elements of the body friendly and loving to each other. It was by knowing how to create love and unanimity in these that Asclepius established this science of ours.

*Plato's Symposium*⁷

In addition to dormitories for treatment and recuperation, there was an area where sleep and dreams were analyzed, attending to the subconscious mind. Catharsis was an important part of healing. There was an amphitheater and racecourse where entertainment contributed to wellbeing; curative baths, gymnasium, and nutrition

consultations; and located within the Asklepiion was a temple. Not only did it function on a therapeutic level, the Asklepiion was an important social institution enabling cultural integration.

Can we envisage *healing the whole* by using phronesis and the ideals of Asklepiions? Reviving these terms provide a vocabulary that could enable morally mean-

We need to equip healthcare professionals with tools to deal with uncertainty and adjudicate when values conflict, to navigate the moral maze we find ourselves in. We need to genuinely put holism and eudaimonia at the center of what we do.

ingful conversation, informing how best to move forward in Medicine and Medical Education. These ideas may sound like an unattainable nirvana from a dreamer. I recognize this, but we must do something to improve the patient and healthcare provider experience. We need to equip healthcare professionals with tools to deal

with uncertainty and adjudicate when values conflict, to navigate the moral maze we find ourselves in. We need to genuinely put holism and eudaimonia (flourishing) at the center of what we do. [V&V](#)

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Sabena Y. Jameel is a General Practitioner and Associate Clinical Professor at the University of Birmingham Medical School. She received a PhD from the University of Birmingham as an affiliate of the Jubilee Centre for Character & Virtues with a research focus on enacted phronesis in general practitioners.

PATRICK E. LONGAN

Virtue as the Foundation of Professionalism

Lawyers serve important and challenging roles in any civilized society. For them to fulfill those roles, we need for lawyers to conduct themselves in certain ways, despite pressures and temptations to act otherwise. One way we try to achieve this is through rules, or at least guidelines, for lawyers to follow. After the Watergate scandal that led to the imprisonment of dozens of lawyers, bar associations adopted new rules of professional conduct, and law schools required students to take courses on those rules. When leaders of the bench and bar still perceived an ethical crisis in the profession a few years later, they wrote dozens of professionalism guidelines, standards, statements, and creeds. Those documents became the gospels of the modern professionalism movement and have been the focus of continuing legal education sermons ever since.

A lawyer who has a healthy professional identity is a person of a certain character, with deeply ingrained habits, traits, and capacities that dispose the lawyer to act with professionalism.

Rules and guidelines serve important purposes, but they inevitably fail as a foundation for professionalism for lawyers. Consider an example: One of the basic concepts of professional conduct is that a lawyer must generally keep confidential all information relating to the representation of a client. The confidentiality rule alerts lawyers to the general requirement and provides important guidance about circumstances under which a lawyer might be free to breach confidentiality without fear of professional discipline. The rules do not, however, dictate when a lawyer *must* do so (except in rare, narrow circumstances). To use a dramatic example, a lawyer *may* disclose confidential information to save a life. But what if the revelation of the confidential information will lead to the prosecution of a client? Many rules, like this one, do not dictate a course of action, but instead guide discretion. This is not the fault of the drafters of the rules. Rules could not hope to provide detailed instructions for every eventuality a lawyer may encounter. The work of a lawyer is far

too complex for an ethical cookbook. But something must guide that discretion.

Rules also fail as motivation for professional conduct. Discretionary rules by definition leave lawyers free to proceed as they see fit. For those rules that contain mandates or prohibitions,

the incentive for compliance presumably is fear of discipline. But much misconduct of lawyers occurs in private and is therefore unlikely to be detected. For example, lawyers are not permitted to assist clients in lying in court. Who's to know if a lawyer does so in the privacy of a lawyer's office? Fear as motivation for professional conduct will not suffice.

Professionalism guidelines serve some purposes, but they also have shortcomings. Some are written with more particularity than the rules, and so provide additional guidance about what conduct is expected of a professional. And many sets of guidelines concern behaviors, such as the rampant incivility that lawyers display to each other, that the rules mostly leave untouched. Guidelines do not, however, solve the motivation problem. They are purely aspirational. The guidelines, and those who proselytize them, urge lawyers to aspire to ethical conduct "at a higher level" than the rules require. Too often, such exhortations take the form of

unwanted and repetitive preaching. Law students and lawyers often are not receptive to preaching.

Moreover, professionalism guidelines and creeds do little to guide a lawyer in a specific moment of professional practice when aspirations conflict with each other. For example, if a lawyer is told by the guidelines to be courteous and cooperative with opposing counsel, but also told to expedite litigation, what should a lawyer do when opposing counsel asks for an extension of time?

If externally imposed rules and guidelines will not get the job done, what is left? How can the legal profession maximize the likelihood that its members will act with professionalism?

A recent amendment to the accreditation standards for law schools from the American Bar Association Section on Legal Education and Admission to the Bar now requires that, as a condition of accreditation, law schools must provide students opportunities for the development of "professional identity." A professional identity is a deep sense of self in the role of a lawyer. In other words, it consists of all the ways in which a lawyer would wish to complete a sentence that begins, "I am the kind of lawyer who . . ." A lawyer who has a healthy professional identity is a person of a certain character, with deeply ingrained

habits, traits, and capacities that dispose the lawyer to act with professionalism. They empower the lawyer in moments of uncertainty and temptation to do the right thing, in the right way.

Professional identity is virtue ethics by another name. Those deeply ingrained character habits, traits, and capacities that lawyers need are virtues. When they are deployed, they bring the lawyer closer to the ideal of the professional lawyer. The pivot to professional identity shifts the focus from externally-imposed rules and guidelines to the internal cultivation of the virtues that will help lawyers fulfill their public purposes and flourish in the profession. Virtue is, and should always have been, the foundation of professionalism for lawyers.

The necessary virtues for the professional lawyer are easy to identify. A lawyer must strive for professional excellence and cultivate a fiduciary disposition toward clients. At the same time, a lawyer must be respectful of the law and the institutions of the law. The professional lawyer will practice in a spirit of public service, which includes striving to provide access to legal services for all, to govern the profession in the public interest, and to work to improve the law. The best lawyers are courageous—not everything a professional lawyer should do is popular—and they also are disposed to be courteous, cooperative, and respectful of others, even





their adversaries. Being a professional lawyer also requires cognitive empathy, the ability to understand how others feel. Lawyers need tenacity in the face of obstacles. Honesty is essential. Lawyers are often in positions to take advantage of others, or corrupt the courts, and the virtue of honesty will prevent that from happening.

One additional virtue deserves special mention. Some of the professionalism codes and creeds call it “judgment,” or “prudential wisdom,” or “wise judgment.” Others give it its proper Aristotelian name: practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is not a special virtue of lawyers, but it is impossible to act with professionalism without it. Again, one problem with rules is that many of them give lawyers discretion. Something must guide that discretion, and that is where practical wisdom comes in. Discretion is allowed because virtues are in tension with each other. If I know someone is about to be executed for a crime they did not commit, but I know that because my client told me he committed the crime, what should I do? Confidentiality is important; so is human life; so is fidelity to the courts. Only wisdom can untie those knots of conflicting values. The same is true with respect to the professionalism guidelines. When I am asked to cooperate with opposing counsel to the detriment of my client, when do I deploy civility, and when do I stand firm in service of fidelity to my client? Again, practical wisdom is

needed to deal with the particulars of every professional dilemma.

Virtue as the foundation of professionalism also has the best potential to solve the problem of motivating lawyers to act appropriately. Many law schools that already have professional identity programs promote a self-interested motivation for developing the right kind of professional identity by telling students that doing so will help them land good jobs. All students want good jobs, and there is indeed evidence that a certain kind of professional identity can make law students better job candidates. The *Educating Tomorrow’s Lawyers* project of the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System conducted an extensive survey of lawyers and learned that many of the character traits, or virtues, associated with a healthy professional identity are the things that employers think new lawyers need right away.

But there is a subtler and ultimately more powerful and profound reason law students should pursue virtue: By cultivating the virtues, a lawyer becomes a certain kind of person and a certain kind of lawyer; being such a person and such a lawyer brings its own intrinsic rewards. With those rewards, the lawyer will be happier and more fulfilled in the profession.

This is not an original or new idea. In the 19th century, John Ruskin wrote, “The highest reward for a person’s toil is not what

they get for it, but what they become by it.” Alasdair MacIntyre wrote in *After Virtue* of his conception of “practices”—and the practice of law would meet his definition of a practice—describing how a practitioner would achieve the “internal goods” of the practice: “Someone who achieves excellence in a practice . . . characteristically enjoys his achievement and his activity in achieving.” In other words, enjoyment of the activity is an intrinsic reward of engaging in it with excellence. More recently, Yale Law School professor Anthony Kronman wrote in his article “Living in the Law” about a view of law practice that “sees the value of what lawyers do, for the lawyers themselves, not so much in the fruits of their work as in the excellences of character their work requires them to develop and permits them to display. Conceived in this way, the value of law practice is clearly something intrinsic to it . . .”

The connection between intrinsic motivation and happiness is not just philosophical speculation. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a branch of positive psychology, posits that a person’s sense of thriving is associated with acting from intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivations. Professors Larry Krieger and Kennon Sheldon have conducted a series of empirical studies of lawyers and law students testing the theories of SDT. Among their other findings, they found significant correlations between well-being and intrinsic motivation. Their research is strong evidence

for the proposition that lawyers should be motivated to cultivate the virtues of a healthy professional identity as a lawyer for the sake of the intrinsic rewards they will experience and their own happiness in the profession.

Ethical rules, professionalism guidelines, and the cultivation of professional identity all have the same purpose: to try to maximize the chances that lawyers will conduct themselves in appropriate ways and fulfill their societal responsibilities. Rules and guidelines, however, lack guidance for discretion in complex situations and the motivation necessary for lawyers to behave. The cultivation of professional identity, seen as an exercise in virtue ethics, solves those problems by the identification of the necessary virtues, the deployment of practical wisdom, and the promise of the intrinsic rewards of being a certain kind of person and lawyer. Virtue—not rules or guidelines—is the foundation of professionalism for lawyers. ❧❧



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ROSALYN W. BERNE

What's Humility Got to Do with It?



We've arrived. Human activity has brought us to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a confluence and convergence of multiple technological

innovations—nanotechnology, synthetic biology, biotechnology, digital twins, artificial intelligence, robotics, quantum computing, etc.—where the physical, digital and biological realms can no longer be so clearly distinguished. Meanwhile, planet Earth is becoming less and less inhabitable for humans and other forms of life.

It's been almost four decades since the philosopher Han Jonas wrote: *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. Given the date of its publication, this work might be considered by some to be an outmoded, irrelevant text. But the significance and importance of Jonas' imperative that "new kinds and dimensions of action require a commensurate ethic of foresight and responsibility which is as novel as the eventualities that arise out of the works of *homo faber* in the era of technology" (18) is now a matter of urgency.





Jonas feared “an apocalypse threatening from the nature of the unintended dynamics of technical civilization” (202), leading to the desolation of the planet. To the objects of technology, Jonas included man himself, having turned on himself and imposed himself on nature in such a way that “calls upon the utter resources of ethical thought, which never before has been faced with elective alternatives to what we considered the definite terms of the human condition” (18). Clearly, his fear was not unfounded as it appears to be that *homo faber*—we who through our tools (and our technologies) have created our world and determined our destiny—seem to be meeting our fate.

Only four years after Jonas’ call for an ethics for the era of technology, James Hansen’s 1988 Congressional testimony on climate change warned of global warming and advocated for action to avoid climate change. What was increasingly clear to Hansen and fellow researchers, was the dangers of “anthropogenic interference” with the climate system. If Katrina was not enough of a siren’s call for us here in this country, and Harvey still not enough, then perhaps Ian’s devastating effects on Florida in October 2022 will leave no doubt that the actions, habits, and choices of *homo faber* have caused a great deal of trouble.

This critical state of global affairs is not lost on our students. In fact, sustainability and

the compromised condition of the planet’s natural environment are foremost on their minds. The 2020 survey by the SOS (Students Organizing for Sustainability) disclosed findings that “Students are concerned about climate change and want to see this reflected in their education . . . Currently, climate and sustainability education isn’t yet reaching the classroom. We need an education system that will equip young people with the knowledge, skills, attributes, and values to create a more just and sustainable future for all.”¹ Similarly, in Deloitte’s pre-pandemic Global Millennial and GenZ survey, half of the respondents said, “they feared the environment had passed the point of no return and that it was too late to repair the damage caused by climate change.”²

Perhaps this concern and awareness among students and other young people are partly because it’s ultimately they who will be left with the responsibility for fixing the problems associated with our radically changing climate. Their concern may also be because, for better and for worse, their lives and futures are most directly impacted by the unintended consequences of our techno-created world, more so than for those of us who have rightly been accused of riding the waves of technological development with impunity.


Jonas posited that ethics for this age calls for a new kind of humility—“a humility

owed, not like the former humility, to the smallness of our power, but to the excessive magnitude of it, which is the excess of our power to act over our power to foresee and our power to evaluate and to judge” (22). In the face of growing and sustained student concern over the critical state of our planetary environment, we have the duty, it would seem, to provide ethics education that includes the cultivation of such humility as Jonas describes. But how?

Following Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, moral virtue is learned through habit and practice rather than through reasoning and instruction. This suggests that as a virtue, the humility to which Jonas referred cannot be a merely intellectual undertaking. Rather, it must be a process through which individuals participating in our institutions of learning—faculty, students, administrators, and staff—come to a shared awareness of our excessive power, and then practice and cultivate the responsibility of humility to foresee and anticipate and manage the effects of that power.

If we consider humility to be a liberation from the consciousness of the self as separate, then it becomes possible to consider the self as an interdependent collective. It’s the sense of self as an entitled, individual, self-seeking “I” that is partly to blame for our current condition of wielding excessive power over the natural world. But “we” educators won’t be able to teach that kind of

Before an awareness of our excessive power can be taught to students as a virtue to embrace in humility, it has to be demonstrated, modeled, and exhibited by those of us who do the teaching.

humility of to our students until we achieve it for ourselves. Before an awareness of our excessive power can be taught to students as a virtue to embrace in humility, it has to be demonstrated, modeled, and exhibited by those of us who do the teaching. 

NOTES

1. SOS. 2020 Survey: “Students, sustainability, and education.” Students Organizing for Sustainability International. Retrieved on 10.3.2022 from sos.earth/survey-2020.
2. Deloitte (2021). *A Call for Accountability and Action*. Retrieved from deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/2021-deloitte-global-millennial-survey-report.pdf.



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PATRICK T. SMITH

Healthy Ties

Reflections on the Virtue of Solidarity in Medicine

nequality is killing us—some of us more than others. David R. Williams, a professor at Harvard’s Chan School of Public Health and world-renowned researcher on the social determinants of health, studies just how racism and its intersection with class and gender have detrimental health effects. In a recent talk on “How Racism and Inequality Makes us Sick” at my home institution of Duke, he explained how racism impacts the health of people of color and the delivery of and access to quality care. As the discussion unfolded, Dr. Williams made reference to the 2003 Institute of Medicine Report, *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Healthcare*, on which he was a prominent committee member. Even though there is a greater awareness as to how racism is a public health problem, after 20 years not much has changed regarding its findings.¹

The cultivation of solidarity as virtue and a value in medicine and health care systems cannot be left to personal, familial, and communal contexts preparing individuals for that space. As a social practice also comprising of institutions, medicine should take seriously the responsibility to form its professionals in ways that promote solidarity, individually and communally.

Addressing racism in medicine and health disparities along racialized lines is a tall order, and even more so when placed in the context of larger social and systemic dynamics that directly and negatively impact health and human well-being. In the US, the prevailing fourth wave of public health introduced a focus on health as a social phenomenon.² Within this paradigm, public health policy and practice are driven by a focus on social determinants of health (e.g. education, transportation, housing, access to medical care, access to technology, access to recreation, proximity to pollution, etc.). A fifth wave is focusing on systemic and upstream drivers of the social conditions in which we live that

stifle health promotion and human flourishing, such as the role racism has played in shaping our common life. These, then, become the focus and targets for change.³ This paradigm recognizes that health can only be achieved through a *culture of health*—which emphasizes collective *action* in addressing these systemic drivers and a cultural reimagining of health, health equity, and our collective life together.⁴

So, what is the responsibility of medical schools and their hospital systems in the formation of professionals to address the negative effects of racism on their patients' health outcomes and their ability to deliver quality health care to communities of color? Some clinical health care professionals may think this question is misguided. Even if they lament these conditions, they think the responsibility of addressing them lies outside their purview and expertise. After all, how can they, with the specialized training they've received, address such large-scale upstream drivers that stifle health and human well-being? This simply asks too much of medical professionals. *Or maybe this asks too much of them alone.*

I actually think that healthcare professionals, schools, and systems can make a



contribution to addressing this colossal problem. It requires embracing and cultivating *solidarity*, a value and a virtue that is a hallmark of social ethics. As a firm commitment to the common good of all people, solidarity calls us to confront inequalities in health outcomes and advocate for the those on the margins.⁵

A commitment to solidarity requires both *individual* and *communal* introspection. Individually, solidarity “invites us to consider whether our own behaviors and mentalities demonstrate a concern with those on society’s margins.”⁶ Communally, “solidarity challenges us to ask whether the social organizations of which we are a part strengthen the bonds of human friendship,

especially the bonds between those with and those without sufficient resources.”⁷ If our medical schools, health care institutions, and associated organizations are not doing this well, then we must seek systemic changes that improve our capacity to enable such relationships, especially since so much data points to the deleterious effects of racism on health care and health outcomes.

The cultivation of solidarity as virtue and a value in medicine and health care systems cannot be left to personal, familial, and communal contexts. As a social practice, medicine should take seriously the responsibility to form its professionals in ways that promote solidarity individually and communally.

The Duke University School of Medicine, where I serve, has entered into this space. I reference our program not so that it can be held up as “the” model for such work; rather, I highlight it because it is the context where I work and am trying to make a contribution. We have sought to implement systemic changes to dismantle racism and advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in the school of medicine, identifying five major areas of priority:


1. Cultivate an anti-racist environment,
2. Nurture, reward, and attract outstanding talent,
3. Advance education and training to support an anti-racist workforce,

As a firm commitment to the common good of all people, solidarity calls us to confront inequalities in health outcomes and advocate for those on the margins. . . . Considering the systemic nature of the problem, ways forward require both individual and communal responses. The cultivation of the virtue of solidarity moves these efforts from being merely perfunctory gestures to fulfilling the ethical demands required of health justice.

4. Develop anti-racist equity centered and community engaged research practices, and
5. Ensure sustainability by strengthening leadership capacity and organizational accountability.⁸

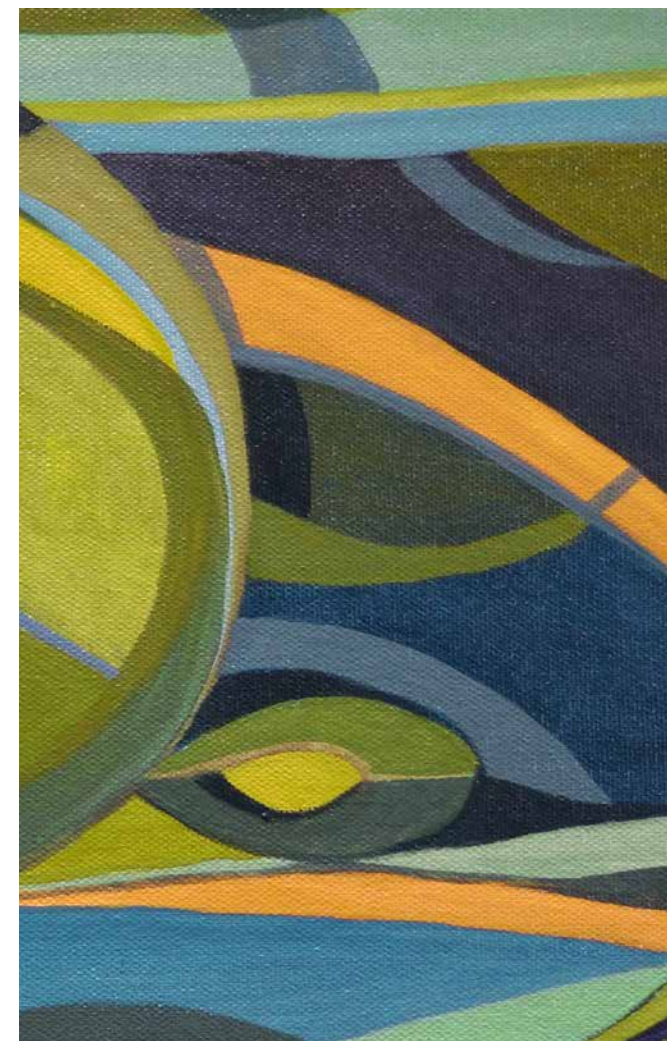
Each of these priorities have a number of action steps, guidelines, and dedicated committees to ensure the operationalization of these priorities.

Considering the systemic nature of the problem, ways forward require both individual and communal responses. The cultivation of the virtue of solidarity moves these efforts from being merely perfunctory gestures to fulfilling the ethical demands required of health justice. To be sure, this commitment requires leadership to incorporate these elements into its organizational structure and other processes related to its strategic initiatives. And it requires a level of reciprocity on the part of all working in these spaces to create and maintain a culture of health at the institutional level if we are to address upstream systemic drivers of health disparities. I think this can be done. These efforts are one medical school’s approach

to nurture and embrace solidarity as a value and a virtue to motivate collective action towards health justice. That kind of medicine might just move us to a kind of healing we all need. 

NOTES

1. Camila M. Mateo and David R. Williams, “Racism: A Fundamental Driver of Racial Disparities in Health-Care Equality,” *Nature Reviews*, (2021) 7:20, pp. 1–2.
2. Sean A. Valles, *Philosophy of population health: philosophy for a new public health era* (New York: Routledge, 2018).
3. S. C. Davies, E. Winpenny, S. Ball, T. Fowler, J. Rubin, and E. Nolte, “For debate: a new wave in public health improvement,” *The Lancet* (2014), 384(9957), 1889–1895.
4. Patrick T. Smith and Jill Sonke, “When Artists Go to Work: On the Ethics of Engaging the Arts in Public Health, *Hastings Center Report* (Forthcoming).
5. Brian Matz, *Introducing Protestant Social Ethics: Foundations in Scripture History, and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), p. 194.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Dismantling Racism and Advancing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the School of Medicine*, Duke University School of Medicine, June 2021. medschool.duke.edu/sites/default/files/2021-08/dismantling_racism_and_advancing_equity_diversity_and_inclusion_ADA.pdf.



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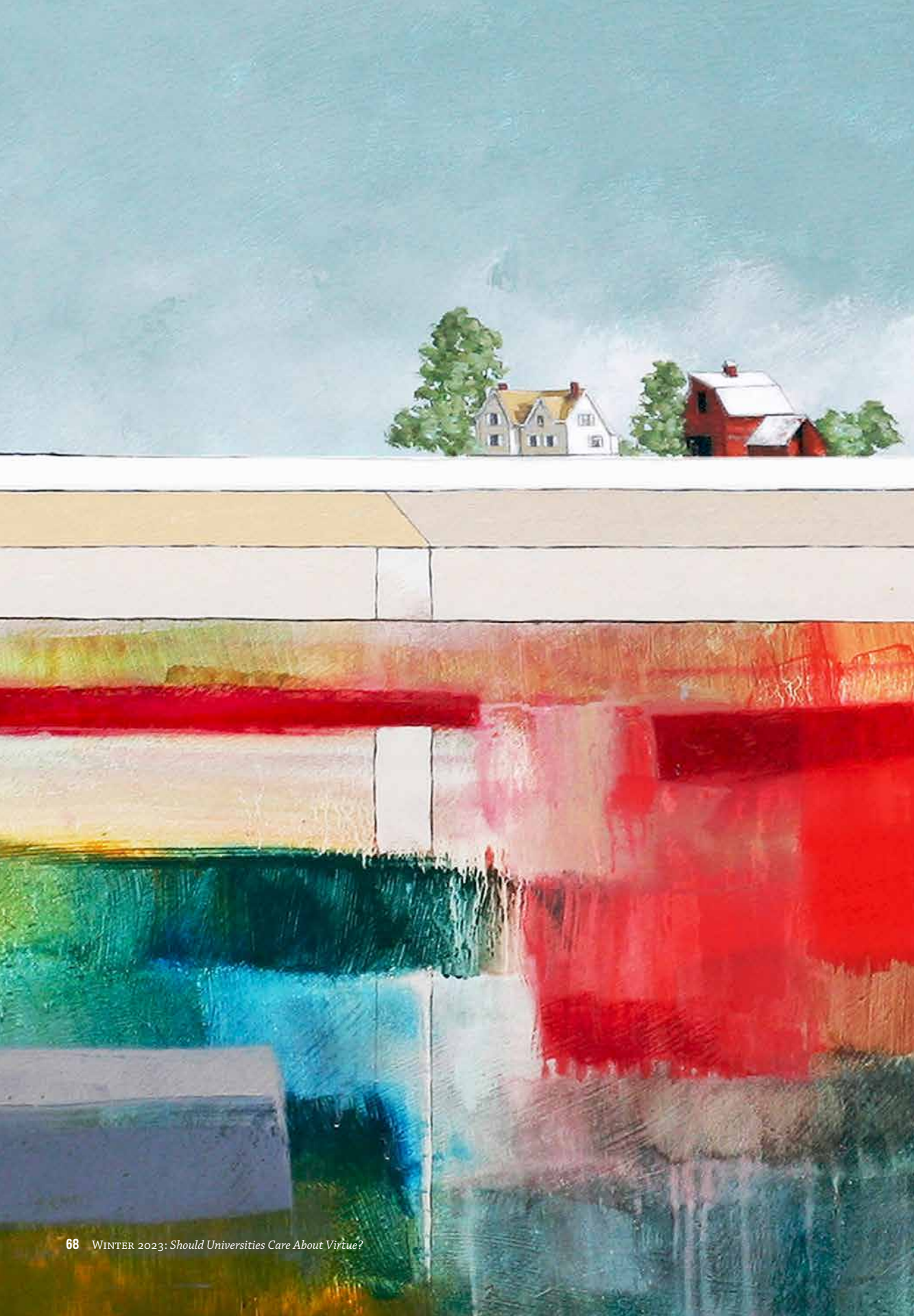
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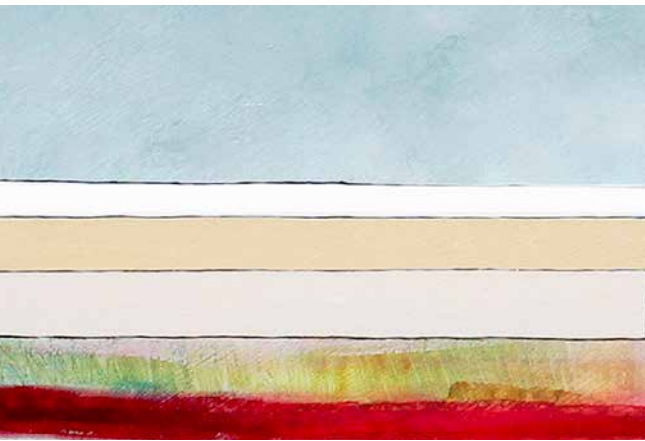
Character, Responsibility and Elite Education

The formation of elites has always been an uncomfortable subject for Americans because we think the whole idea of elites somehow violates our democratic ethos. In a society of equals, it feels wrong to speak of how a leadership class should be fostered.

But “elite” really just describes something inevitable: Whatever a society’s frameworks for ascension to influence, power, and wealth, some people will rise and some will not. Those who do rise are that society’s elite. Every society, therefore, has its elites. The question is how they are chosen, formed, empowered, and constrained. Who gets what privileges of power and status, and on what grounds?

Until recently, the United States had a genuine plurality of elites, which was good for our democracy. The people who ran major corporations were pretty different from the people who taught in universities, who were different from those who staffed federal agencies, acted in Hollywood movies, wrote





for major newspapers, or led labor unions. These groups of elites were likely to have meaningfully distinct kinds of education, religious affiliations, political tendencies, and cultural affinities. Today, all of those people are likely to be much more alike. They probably all think fairly similarly about religion, culture, politics, and much else. There is now a discernible American elite class with its own cultural character, and it is in charge of most major institutions—except for those to which you have to be elected, which it controls only about half the time.

The university is at the center of what defines this class. Its members not only all went to college, but mostly attended one of the top 5 percent or so (that is, the top 200 or so) of America's universities. Whether they like it or not, these top schools—which include public and private

institutions, large and small—are where our elites are formed, and so they have an obligation to think seriously about elite formation.

Our leading universities avoid thinking too hard about elite formation by pointing to the ideal of meritocracy, which implies that elites are selected, not made. This ideal was born of a noble desire for greater fairness and social mobility: It sought to admit people to institutions of higher learning not by virtue of their birth into the ranks of the WASP gentry but in accordance with some measure of aptitude that might be quantifiable through standardized testing. Able students could thus be plucked from a variety of backgrounds and given the opportunity to rise as high as their talents could take them.

The meritocracy succeeded in these terms, at least at first. Although family-legacy admissions continue, there is no doubt that today's American elite is far less narrowly drawn in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, and sex. This has opened opportunities for able Americans from many backgrounds, diversifying our elite dramatically and for the better.

These elites of different backgrounds nonetheless do have one thing in common: They all measure up by the standards that are now said to represent merit. Yet those standards are not by any means self-

evidently suited to supplying us with an able and legitimate leadership class. As graduates of leading universities have come to populate the leading ranks of many more institutions than the WASPs ever ran, the standards of admission to these schools are now made to bear much more weight than they can support.

And what is worse, this new elite is in some important respects less reticent about its own legitimacy than the old. Because each of its members must prove his or her merit in order to gain entry to the most exclusive schools, today's elites are more likely to believe they have earned their power and possess it by right rather than privilege. Such merit is demonstrated by test scores and a glittering resume and is then often used in various forms of management and administration. The sort of elite this produces implicitly substitutes a cold and sterile notion of intellect for a warm and spirited understanding of character as its measure of worth.

Our society, including some elites themselves, cannot escape the sense that this is an unjustifiable substitution. But rather than impose tests of character on themselves, our elites are inclined to respond to these concerns with increasingly intense displays of its ideal of social justice. It might adopt the language of privilege in its critiques of the larger society, yet without offering any means of persuasively



legitimizing privilege beyond pushing for more inclusive criteria of admission to elite institutions.

But these efforts miss a simple point. The claims to legitimacy of today's elite are met with skepticism not so much because it is too hard to enter the upper tier of American life (even if it is), but because those in that tier seem to be permitted to do whatever they want. Our elite is increasingly guilt-ridden, and the broader democratic public is increasingly cynical about its leaders, not so much because too few Americans can get into elite colleges as because those who do too often go on to exercise power in our society without enough restraints or standards.



In essence, the university needs a different approach to imbuing moral purpose into its graduates—an approach based not on the notion that the larger society is corrupt . . . but that to be its best self our society needs an elite that grasps its highest purposes.

We have implicitly mistaken an idea of merit meant to broaden the entry criteria into elite institutions for an idea of merit that could justify and legitimate authority. But authority is not legitimated merely by the ways it is obtained. Often more important in the end are the ways in which it is used.

And here there is a crucial role for the elite universities. They must see it as their task to shape leaders who grasp that their privileged position comes with obligations to the larger society, who respect and take seriously that larger society, and who are taught to understand themselves as agents

of their fellow citizens hemmed in by civic and professional constraints.

To begin with, this would need to involve an explicit emphasis on character formation and the inculcation of responsibility. Elite universities should not encourage the already prodigious self-regard of their students, but should rather seek to temper and direct it. They should see their students as rising leaders who require formation in a sense of gratitude, commitment to the fate of the country, and restraint in the use of power. They should work with their students' healthy discomfort with privilege, but in a way that points those students toward channeling their advantages into obligations rather than making them into permanent hypocrites who pretend to be powerless outsider critics while running all the country's major institutions.



This was the purpose of a great deal of the culture of our top universities prior to the last half century or so. It came to be dismissed as a mark of privilege, but it was frequently a constraint on the abuse of privilege. In essence, the university needs a different approach to imbuing moral purpose into its graduates—an approach based not on the notion that the larger society is corrupt (which is roughly now the moral teaching of the American academy) but that to be its best self our society needs an elite that grasps its highest purposes.

This also means that, beyond explicit character and civic education, traditional liberal education also has a crucial role to play in shaping our leaders. An elite worthy of the name requires an appreciation of the strengths and virtues of its society, and also some tools for grasping its weaknesses and vices—a way to see beyond the din of popular culture in both senses. That demands some exposure to the best of our traditions through the study of history, philosophy, religion, art, and literature. These aren't for everyone, but neither is the privilege to play a leading part in the life of our country. Our leading universities should at least make a serious effort to expose their students to liberal learning of a sort well suited to cultivating an appreciation of our culture along with a perception of its limits.

Needless to say, these suggestions describe an ethic that could hardly be further removed from the one that now dominates elite higher education in America. Our leading universities are nowhere near adopting it, and we should not expect that to change anytime soon. But seeing what

Rather than retreat from responsibility, our elite universities need to show rising generations how to embrace it. Rather than just rail against privilege, they should teach their students how to earn and deserve it.

they lack and what they are getting wrong can inform our criticism of them—which is now too often unfocused or misdirected—and can strengthen efforts to build virtuous pockets within them where there are opportunities to do so and to develop alternatives to them that might better serve to form American elites.

Rather than retreat from responsibility, our elite universities need to show rising generations how to embrace it. Rather than just rail against privilege, they should teach their students how to earn and deserve it.  



Yuval Levin is Senior Fellow; Beth and Ravenel Curry Chair in Public Policy; Director of Social, Cultural, and Constitutional Studies; and Editor in Chief, *National Affairs* at the American Enterprise Institute. He is the author of several books on political theory and public policy, most recently *A Time to Build: From Family and Community to Congress and the Campus*, *How Recommitting to Our Institutions Can Revive the American Dream*.

Good Reads

We asked our authors to recommend a book they had read over the past couple of years. Here is what they said:



Pushing Cool Big Tobacco, Racial Marketing, and the Untold Story of the Menthol Cigarette

BY KEITH WAILOO

I recently read Princeton University historian Keith Wailoo's *Pushing the Cool: Big Tobacco, Racial Marketing, and the Untold Story of the Menthol Cigarette*. I found this book to be a fascinating read. Wailoo makes

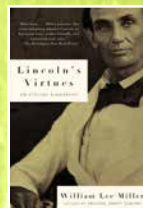
connections between Eric Garner, George Floyd, and the racial marketing of menthol cigarettes that begun in the 1960's. These events, according to Wailoo, are intimately connected. The historical journey Wailoo takes the reader on highlights the assaults on Black urban health and explains why many African-Americans are struggling to breathe. The time one takes to read the book is repaid with the gaining of significant insight.

—PATRICK T. SMITH

Lincoln's Virtues An Ethical Biography

BY WILLIAM LEE MILLER

As a case study in wisdom, there is no better subject than the life and career of Abraham Lincoln. I found Professor Miller's book to be the best in-depth analysis of how Lincoln resolved the profound ethical and moral dilemmas he faced.—PATRICK E. LONGAN

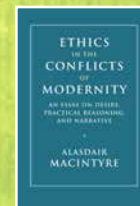


Why We Are Restless On the Modern Quest for Contentment

BY BENJAMIN STOREY AND JENNA SILBER STOREY

Drawing on the thought of Montaigne, Pascal, Rousseau, and Tocqueville, the Storeys explore the roots of the malaise they find rampant in the rising generation. This is a book for anyone who takes the aims of

education seriously.—YUVAL LEVIN



Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity

An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative

BY ALASDAIR MACINTYRE

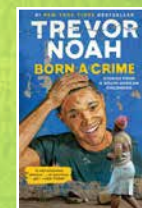
This book is a fitting climax to MacIntyre's project, which means it at once illuminates our moral alternatives and provides a robust account of how we should live.—STANLEY HAUERWAS

Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World

BY WILLIAM C. CHITTICK

I get really absorbed and engaged in books when I am on vacation. I read this one whilst exploring the beautiful rugged, expanse of sand dunes of Upton Towans in Cornwall. Surrounded by unspoilt nature, I was able to use the book to compare and contrast my scientific reality with my spiritual reality seen through a Sufi lens. Self-understanding is the beginning of greater worldly comprehensions. Ultimately Chittick identifies fragmented consciousness represented by scholarly and analytic ways, inviting us to contemplate evocative and mystic traditions as a path to wisdom. Reading this book offered a sublime stillness. A truly meditative read.

—SABENA Y. JAMEEL



Born a Crime Stories from a South African Childhood

BY TREVOR NOAH

I've just finished reading *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah. It's full of gritty details about the early life of this remarkable comedian, as a "colored" person who grew up in impoverished, post-apartheid black South Africa.

His writing offers an insightful reflection providing possible explanations of how his character might have developed under such extreme social duress and economic impoverishment. Clearly, "nurture" was a significant factor for Trevor, but there had to have been other character development influences, coming perhaps from "nature." This is an entertaining and captivating read about Trevor, but it is also a peek inside South African history and culture, as seen through his eyes.—ROSALYN W. BERNE

ADRIENNE RICH

Excerpt from

“An Atlas of the Difficult World”¹

those needed to teach, advise, persuade, weigh arguments
those urgently needed for the work of perception
work of the poet, the astronomer, the historian, architect of new streets
work of the speaker who also listens
meticulous delicate work of reaching the heart of the desperate woman,
the desperate man
—never-to-be-finished, still unbegun work of repair—it cannot be done
without them
and where are they now?

1. Adrienne Rich, *An Atlas of the Difficult World: Poems 1988–1991* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 11.



Art credits

COVER ARTIST: CLAIR BREMNER clairbremnerart.com

FRONT/BACK COVER: The Blue Pond ©2020, acrylic on canvas

PAGE 6: Sapphire Gully ©2022, acrylic on canvas

PAGE 8: Patchwork Land ©2020, acrylic on canvas

Clair Bremner is a contemporary Australian artist, living and working in the picturesque Yarra Valley, in Melbourne. Largely self taught, Clair has been developing her style of expressive abstract paintings for more than 10 years.

PETER BATCHELDER peterbatchelder.com

PAGE 46: Tobacco Rows ©2022, oil on canvas

PAGE 49: May Morning ©2021, oil on canvas

A native New Englander, Peter Batchelder has lived on Martha's Vineyard, Cape Cod, in Western Massachusetts, Vermont and now New Hampshire. About the works: "From an artist's perspective I am interested in the nature of architecture, how it sits within its landscape, how color and light interact with it. From a personal perspective, I find myself often curious about the story of the building: who built it and why; the many people who have lived or worked in the building; how the landscape may have changed around the structure over the course of years. I find that the curiosity I have about the building intertwines with the creative process in my interpretation of the architecture and landscape in one image."

MERYL BLINDER sitebrooklyn.com / merylblinder.com

PAGE 58: Empty City ©2020, oil on canvas, courtesy of Site:Brooklyn

"Empty City" commemorates the COVID pandemic years when city streets were empty and wildlife could reclaim habitats. Meryl Blinder's background includes drawing as a courtroom artist for TV and color rendering for the late architect Michael Graves. Among her other works of commemoration is a drawing in the aftermath of 9/11, in the Library of Congress, and installations at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts for World AIDS day in 2001 and 2002. She is currently an adjunct professor in the Design School of Wentworth Institute, Boston.

MARK BRYAN artofmarkbryan.com

PAGE 15: The Promised Land (detail) ©2003, oil on panel

Mark Bryan is a California-based artist known primarily for satirical paintings of social and political commentary and whimsical works symbolically depicting the human condition.

ANIKO HENCZ artual.com

PAGE 62: Summer Vibes ©2022, oil on canvas

PAGE 65: Living at the Ocean ©2021, oil on canvas

Aniko Hencz is a Hungarian artist living and working in Budapest. She says, "I have been drawing and painting ever since I could hold a pencil in my hand . . . I've had several exhibitions in Hungary and abroad and my artworks have reached many countries all over the world by now. There is no greater joy than satisfied customers' feedback, which gives me the strength to keep working, even in difficult times. Most of my works are inspired by nature and personal feelings, culminating in abstract or conceptual paintings and drawings. Nature inspires me the most. I have a passionate love for landscapes and trees, but I cannot hold myself back from painting houses, too. A group of trees, flowers or houses—their interesting shapes, angles and colors are also great inspiration for me."

TAMARA KETSKHOVELI [facebook @Tamara Ketskhoveli's works](https://www.facebook.com/TamaraKetskhoveli)

PAGE 29: Arkhoti ©2021, acrylic on board

PAGE 30: The Forest ©2020, acrylic on board

Tamara Ketskhoveli is a self-taught artist born in 1969 in Tbilisi, Georgia. Using the unique synthesis of East and West that reflects the culture of her hometown, she creates mesmerizing interiors in her paintings. She is often inspired by Georgian nature and her travels around the country. The landscapes she paints depict not only the actual representation of the given subject, but also her own deeply personal feelings toward it.

CATHERINE J. MARTZLOFF catherinejmartzloff.com

PAGE 52: Destination Freedom ©2018, oil on canvas

A resident of Cranbury, New Jersey for more than 25 years, Catherine J. Martzloff was born in Vancouver, BC. She has a small business selling and showing her oil paintings. When she's not busy with that she boards small dogs and enjoys caring for them while her clients travel. It's her heart's desire is to continue to develop paintings that keep the viewer engaged in something beyond the surface. From her artist statement: "I observe, and participate in, the change of hues. I stand alone in a perspective—influenced by the roads and detours that I've chosen. The subjects I interpret on canvas dance with tradition, but underneath exists an individual search for freedom and simplicity."

JUAN ALBERTO NEGRONI juanalbertonegroni.com

PAGE 77: Saudade ©2022, mixed media on paper

Puerto Rican native Juan Alberto Negroni holds an MFA in Studio Arts from Southern Methodist University, an MA Ed in Art History and Museum Studies from Caribbean University PR, and a BFA from Puerto Rico School of Fine Arts with a Major in Printmaking. Public and private art collections in Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom, Argentina, the United States, Canada, Australia, and Greece feature works by Negroni. He lives and works in Dallas, Texas.

DANNITA NOBLE dannitanoblefineart.com

PAGE 2: If There's a Will, There's a Way ©2022, acrylic and other mixed media

Dannita Noble is a Chattanooga native and a self-taught visual artist. Her creative passion lies in abstract painting, utilizing acrylics, textured media and other mixed media. She also enjoys painting on non-traditional surfaces such as furniture, clothing, purses, hats, and has made street murals. She balances being an artist, mother of two, and also working as a medical assistant full time at Lifestyle Medicine at Galen, where there are multiple works that she has created just for the office. You can find her creating at Clearstory Arts, Studio 19. You can also view some of her paintings in Chattanooga at The Aloft Hotel and Kinley Hotel.

DOUG SMITH dougsmithartist.com

PAGE 68: Old MacDonald's Place ©2021, diptych, acrylic on canvas

Doug Smith currently lives and works in Los Angeles. About the work: "I have always been fascinated with the agrarian patterns and textures of rural American farmland. A wonderful mosaic of hills, valleys punctuated by farm buildings, all accentuated by fields, roads, outcroppings, waterways and erosion, are the inspiration for my current body of work. My paintings evoke a sense of vast distance, space and nostalgia to celebrate the energy and beauty of the American farm."

BETSY STEWART betsystewart.com

PAGE 40: Microaquea No. 1 ©2013, acrylic and sumi ink on canvas

PAGE 43: Metascules No. 6 ©2011, acrylic and sumi ink on canvas

PAGE 44: Bioverse No. 3 ©2011, acrylic and sumi ink on canvas

Betsy Stewart's paintings dive deep below the horizon line. Luminous colors and dynamic patterns fluidly converge, expressing nature's captivating beauty and biodiversity hidden from the naked eye in pond water. Why the focus on pond water? "When the sun shines on shallow ponds," she noticed, "it illuminates detail in colors and shapes. You can imagine the microscopic world under the surface: a drama of teeming life and abundance of biodiversity within the pond ecosystem. What we cannot see is what is really important."

DONNA WALKER donna-walker.com

PAGE 20: Hot Pink Days ©2022, oil on canvas

PAGE 22: New Garden ©2022, oil on canvas

PAGE 25: Afternoon Blooms ©2022, oil on canvas

Growing up in the midwest, Donna Walker was influenced by the landscapes, farms and homesteads of rural America. She studied printmaking and painting at Illinois Wesleyan and earned her MFA at the University of Michigan. After years of working as an assistant art conservator, Donna turned to painting full time and has been a professional artist for over a dozen years. She recently moved to North Carolina with her husband. Donna Walker's paintings celebrate the rural landscape and coastal scenes, interpreted in her own way with simplified shapes, abstractions, and bright color. She paints a modern americana. Donna enjoys painting scenes from her memories and travels, capturing what defines a place, a home, a dwelling. Her work's bold, thick texture and shapes are created with palette knives.



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