

either to a brittle and unsympathetic elitism or to a lowering of commonality to the thinnest sentiment and even the basest vulgarity.

We seem to be rather far afield from our starting point—Arendt's unpacking of the question of authority in modernity. But we are not. For authority derives from the Latin for 'to augment,' *augere*, to build up, to enhance. The great books approach to liberal studies does not mean the handful of books, and none other, that speak in complex ways to the human condition. It does mean that one can distinguish between books that are nuanced and complex and those that are tendentious and simple-minded. One can distinguish between those that help us to realize our human capacities as creatures made "to serve God wittily in the tangle of our minds," in the wonderful words the playwright, Robert Bolt, puts into St. Thomas More's mouth in his play, "A Man for All Seasons." We lose wit—and perhaps even our wits—if we abandon the rich, the challenging, and the complex for that which aims at riling us up and dividing the world too simply into masters and slaves, oppressors and oppressed, and the like; that which reduces rather than enhances our vocabularies; that which treats as normative debased characterizations of the human condition in the name of a misguided 'realism.'

I am not making a plea for pious and 'positive' literature but for serious and nuanced literature that is real sustenance for bodies, souls, and minds. There are texts that fit this bill being created among us now and they should always find a place in a liberal education. But in order to figure out what that place is, we need to understand from whence we came; from what, and who, has gone before. The point is not filio piety but recognition of our indebtedness. Jane Addams liked to say that all of us one day go to the grave "with our errors thick upon us." These, too, are part of the inheritance we pass on. We cannot even secure our errors for the purpose of intergenerational transmission without authoritative institutions, traditions, and texts that convey these, and perhaps our rueful recognition of how frequently we have been wrong, to those who come after us.

#### *A world of Aprils.*

One of my favorite books is Willa Cather's *My Antonia*, in part because Cather limns so beautifully the character of Antonia Shimerda, the Bohemian immigrant child, and Antonia reminds me of my own immigrant grandmother. But the story I want to highlight in conclusion is filtered through the narrator, Paul Burden, Cather's protagonist. Burden, now a college student, has attended a play with Lena Lingard, one of the immigrant servant girls in the book who has left rural Red Cloud, as has Paul, for the metropolis of

Lincoln, Nebraska. This touring theater company's performance of "Camille" is wanting in some respects. The actress playing the heroine is a bit old for Marguerite. But Paul and Lena are caught up in the drama the characters bring to life. The play brings them into the heart of intimations of immortality and recognition of the fragile strands of a common humanity. These recognitions emanate from Cather's words. Anyone devoted to the humanities and to a liberal education strives to keep such moments alive, for without these we are all impoverished, stuck in our own little prisons of the self.

When we reached the door of the theater, the streets were shining with rain. I had prudently brought along Mrs. Harling's useful Commencement present, and I took Lena home under its shelter. After leaving her I walked slowly out into the country part of the town where I lived. The lilacs were all blooming in the yards, and the smell of them after the rain, of the new leaves and the blossoms together, blew into my face with a sort of bittersweetness. I tramped through the puddles and under the showery trees, mourning for Marguerite Gauthier, as if she had died only yesterday, sighing with the spirit of 1840, which had sighed so much, and which had reached me only that night, across long years and several languages, through the person of an infirm old actress. The idea is one that no circumstances can frustrate. Wherever and whenever that piece is put on, it is April.

That authority necessary to sustain the humanities and a democracy of everyday life aims to make possible many Aprils. It is not about ugly words like hegemony but about stirring and even gentle words like hope.

<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority?" in *Between Past and Future* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 434.

<sup>5</sup> "Preface to the Revelation of Saint John, 1522," in *Martin Luther*, ed., E.G. Rupp and Benjamin Drewery (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> Luther, "On Translating: A Letter," in Rupp and Drewery, p. 87.

<sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 474.

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies* (The Library of America, 1994). The great Fourth of July oration appears as an appendix to the first "Narrative" and can be found on pp. 431-5, from which all quotes were drawn.



Janice Peterson and Robert McNeill addressing the conference

# Presentations by PLS Graduates at the PLS Fiftieth Anniversary Conference April 4–5, 2001

## Robert G. Bowman

Robert Bowman graduated magna cum laude from the Program of Liberal Studies in 1958, winning a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to study philosophy at Yale University. After a year at Yale, he decided to pursue a career in medicine. After pre-med studies and medical school at Boston University, he received his M.D. in 1964. Upon completing his internship at Genessee Hospital, he spent three years in the military. He then returned to a residency in psychiatry and a fellowship in law and psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh, completing these by 1972. He then pursued psychoanalytical training. Beginning in 1972, he began part time teaching at University of Pittsburgh's Medical School Department of Psychiatry. His time over the last twenty years has been divided between private practice and running a forensic psychiatry unit for the state of Pennsylvania. In recent years, he has concentrated on private practice in an Appalachian community in Pennsylvania. His spare time is spent with the piano, reading, and learning Italian, German, Russian, and Greek. He and his wife have four children, one of whom graduated from the Program of Liberal Studies.

Thank you very much, Michael. I appreciate the opportunity to address this audience. I appreciate your introduction but I am not certain what it is that makes me distinguished. I thought I would talk a little bit about my own story—the story of a compulsive reader. I am from Sacramento. I started to read very early. I read my mother's books. I am a compulsive reader of novels, and I would read about anything. In the meantime I began to be interested in finding my own books. In Sacramento (any of you who know Sacramento and know it as it was a long time ago would recall) there was a famous used bookstore, the Jones Bookstore, run by Mr. and Mrs. Jones, a very austere and primitive American couple. They encouraged me to come to their store.

At that time I used to collect newspapers in the neighborhood and take them to the Jones Bookstore, sell them, and exchange them for books. I think it was about that time I developed a compulsive habit of having or reading everything by a certain author: children's books—the whole series. And I still do that, "mutatis mutandis," unfortunately, today, to my wife's great discouragement. We have books and books, complete sets of this and that and the other thing—not all of them read. I kept on reading, and I think I read better and better things. I reached the point that I read Dickens, *Great Expectations*; Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*; *The Life of Samuel Johnson* by Boswell; *The Education* by Henry Adams. Then my reading took a rather spiritual turn. I read Meister Eckhart, the life and works of St. Thérèse of Jesus, St. Augustine's *Confessions*, *The City of God*, and *On the Trinity*. In fact for awhile I worked as the teller at a bank. There is a Trinity River in Northern California. My supervisor thought I was reading a book about fishing. I read Augustine's commentary on the psalm "As the hart panteth after the running waters."

I began college in a small western Catholic college which had a foundation in what may have been called "the Great Books." After a year and a half there I decided to transfer to Notre Dame to enroll in their

"Great Books" Program. If my memory doesn't fail me I was accepted into that Program before I was accepted as a student at the university. It was a very fulfilling, wonderful program. There were wonderful fellow students among whom was Mike. I reminded Mike this morning that we used to engage in lengthy conversations in his room until late at night. Frankly I don't remember the topic of a single one of those conversations of which there were so many.

I began to study Greek. I had studied Latin in high school briefly and at St. Mary's College in California. I continued reading in Greek after coming to Notre Dame. I made a decision to go on in classical philosophy when I went to Yale. At Yale I read Xenophon. I read a lot of Xenophon and it is not very stirring stuff. After a year I knew that philosophy, with or without Greek, was not going to be the direction in which I would choose to go. I decided to go into medicine. Psychiatry was my initial interest. Actually it was psychology that was my initial interest but my fiancée, soon to be my wife, encouraged me to look at medicine and psychiatry. I think she was right and in any case that was the direction I chose. However, subsequently my inclination led me to internal medicine and neurology until my internship and my decision to return to psychiatry, a field that has been very, very satisfying to me. My friends consider me to be something of a "talker" and perhaps that was a further impetus into psychiatry.

I did not, however, stop reading. In fact, when I came to the usual medical school crisis in the second year, I survived by reading Gibbon. Gibbon got me through. In a later crisis I turned to reading things like Parkman's *History of France and England in North America*. It was very, very helpful. I strongly recommend it to you.

John Lafarge said at age nineteen he made a life-changing decision. After reading Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, he decided to read it again. I, too, made a life-changing decision shortly after I began my practice. One summer at the beach where my wife and our children were camping, I decided that I was going to

start reading *The Iliad* in Greek, although I had not read Greek since graduate school. It changed my life. I now read compulsively in Greek: Homer, both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*; Plato, and a number of other authors. While I was in my compulsory military service, I was stationed in Germany. I decided to learn German and a German woman was kind enough to teach me. I said to her, "Someday, I want to read Wilhelm Meister." She said, "Why not now?" Why not now? Instead of reading Wilhelm Meister, I read something else and something else and something else. I still read German quite regularly, and I'm just finishing a book by Max Frisch, called *Stiller*, which some of you may know. An important book I understand, however, he is Swiss rather than German. I am an opera buff. I think when my parents told me, "We don't mind you listening to all that music, but we absolutely don't want you to listen to any opera." That decided it for me. I became an opera lover after that. As you know, most opera is in Italian. Eventually I said to myself, "Why not read Dante in Italian?" I had read Dante at St. Mary College and then I had a course outside the program in Dante and St. John of the Cross here at Notre Dame. They were very fulfilling courses. Why not read Dante in Italian, indeed? I am still doing so. I have learned Italian and I've read a great deal now in Italian. Importantly, I have read Primo Levi's two books, *Se questo e un uomo*, which is translated *If this is a Man*, another title, *la Tregua*, which means literally *The Truce*. These books are available in English and would strongly recommend them in Italian if you can manage it, in English if you can't. I have also read *Ariosto*, one of those books that cracked poor Don Quixote's brain. Perhaps mine as well, but again, I would strongly recommend it to you.

I've essentially spent a life in reading and I still read. I would like to conclude by reading two very short passages. I would characterize myself as somewhere between these two passages. The first of these is from Jane Austin's book, *Northanger Abbey*. She is talking about the habit of reading novels which was popular among young women at that time although very few would acknowledge it. "I'm no novel reader." I tell them, 'Look into novels.' 'Do not imagine that I often read novels.' 'It is really very well for a novel.'" Then she says, "(such is the common cant) 'And what are you reading, Miss?' 'Oh, it's only a novel,' replied the young lady while she lays her book down with affected indifference or momentary shame. 'It's only *Emelia* or *Camilla* or *Belinda*.' Or only somewhere in which the great power of the mind is displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its variety, the liveliest diffusion that wit and humor can convey to the world in the best chosen language." In short, novels are treatises on psychology. The other passage is from a novel by Calvino, badly translated as *The Baron in the Trees*. The whole translation has that lifeless, literal quality that is nowhere to be found in Calvino. If you're not familiar with the story, the Baron, after a quarrel with his family when he is only sixteen spends his life in the trees. It is a family

quarrel at a meal over eating unattractive food. He becomes angry and he says "I'm going to just live in a tree." And he does in fact spend the rest of his life in a tree. He meets there one adventure after another among which is one with a successful criminal, Gian dei Brughi, a man who has the area terrified because of his alleged cruelties and thefts. But Cosimo, the Baron, introduces him to reading novels. And he discovers the novels of Richardson, especially *Clarissa Harlowe*. "Gian dei Brughi having finished one he immediately wanted another novel. While Cosimo was reading Plutarch's *Lives*, Gian dei Brughi was lying in his hiding place, his red hair full of dried leaves and hanging down, his green eyes growing red in the effort to see, reading and reading, his jaws moving in a frenzied motion, holding up a finger damped with saliva ready to turn the page. This reading of Richardson seemed to bring out a disposition in him, a yearning for the cozy habits of family life, for relations, for penitence, a sense of virtue and dislike for the wicked and the vicious. These good times had lasted a long time while he was robbing. Then gradually Gian dei Brughi could not live on borrowed income, and he withdrew more and more. It would go on like this forever he thought. However, his name no longer inspired the reverence it had before. And of what use was he now with him tucked away somewhere bleary-eyed, reading novels, never doing a job or getting any stuff. People could go about their business quietly and the police wouldn't always be hanging around looking for him and arresting everyone."

Eventually the thief is captured and hung at the end of this part of the novel. All the while one finds the Baron in the trees reading the last part of (I think *Clarissa Harlowe*) to him which has to do with the rape and the punishment of the rake. The thief is absolutely indifferent to his hanging and only wants to know how the novel comes out. The Baron in the trees is reading to this man who eventually destroys his life because of reading. I find myself somewhere in between Jane Austin's strictures about novels and poor Gian dei Brughi.

### From the Discussion Following This Presentation

Professor Henry Weinfield: This is not so much a question as an observation. I'm Henry Weinfield, and I teach in the Program of Liberal Studies. And I teach poetry—an observation not a question, and I invite the panel to comment on it. I thought this was a very, very interesting panel because we really had two antithetical points of views, I would say, about PLS and liberal education. The two speakers—Ms. Kersten and Mr. Schierl—were speaking really about what books can do in terms of—what knowledge can do in terms of conferring power, changing the world, fixing things. And of course that's very true because the world needs changing and fixing, as we all know. Dr. Bowman, however, had a different perspective and maybe I gravitate a little more to that perspective. Maybe it's a little more of a tragic perspective on life.

And I think Dr. Bowman is the first speaker who articulated that perspective. Essentially what you said to me—which really spoke to me—is that we read because we like it. And that's basically why I read books—because I like to. Not because it's going to do something else for life—for me in life. But because it's part of life. And I read because I love to read. And that's basically what you were saying to me. And I think somehow in the United States, because Americans are so practical and optimistic—and this may be a residual vestige of the Puritan ethic—we feel we ought to always be doing something for something else. Otherwise we're being lazy or self-indulgent or hedonistic, something of the kind, but you indicated that you read just because you enjoy it. That's why I read and you articulated this very beautifully. Thank you.

Bowman: I must comment that I'm probably just as practical down deep as my colleagues here on the panel. You know I practice medicine and I have not really practiced much of my time in affluent populations. I have worked in prisons. I have worked in courts and in Veteran Administration hospitals. I have worked in state hospitals particularly with the so-called criminally insane. But I think the Great Book that I am thinking about is relevant; it does tell me the practicality. Of course, it is the Bible where it says: Even "when I was in prison you visited me." I'm getting broken up. It is so important to me. "When I was sick, you cared for me." As a consequence, the Lord says to these people? "You did it to me."

Katherine Kersten: I would like to speak to that. I wanted to be a thinker and a doer of deeds. For me it's a question of choices as to how I use my time. You know we have a tremendous call for our time. And when I was at home with my kids for twelve years, I wouldn't clean my bathroom very often. I wouldn't mop the floors in the kitchen. I would read books. And my mother would come and say, "You know you really ought to clean the bathroom." And I struggled with it: why am I reading all these books, and really from certain people's perspective I'm neglecting some fundamentals. What I was able to begin to see was that all these things I had done simply because they were beautiful and enjoyable actually had tremendous implications for my ability to be effective as a journalist. This is also true of the novels I read. My mother always felt that novels were of secondary importance. But novels are the most wonderful window into human character—into psychological types—that we have. Our psychological vocabulary is poverty stricken I think without the Anna Kareninas and the Ebenezer Scrooges et al. So to me, having a very

practical family background, to see that all these ethereal things were tremendously practical was affirming.

Michael Schierl: I should say that I never said that it wasn't joyful. I thought it was the best of both worlds. I'm just saying to the graduates who are looking at what are you going to do, don't worry about it. Enjoy it. Read books and develop your philosophies here, because when you need them, they'll be there and you will be using them as you live. So it's not an either/or. It's the best of both worlds. You can enjoy it, and then later it will help you in the real world.

Bowman: I am myself, as I said, a compulsive reader. I don't have a choice. But I am lucky enough to enjoy reading, and every once in a while I also play the piano. If I am playing something—Beethoven or Bach—prelude or fugue—I think about how fortunate I am playing that great stuff.

Chris Michener: I am a graduate of PLS in 1985. I actually went to college with Dr. Nicgorski's daughter and Dr. Bowman's daughter. Once again I just wanted to say one thing and ask a very short question. The only thing I wanted to say is directed to current students in PLS and is that it matters what you are doing right now. It really really matters. I am a professor of English and creative writing, and this is the first conference I've ever been at where the presenters choke up, and I think that's a significant sign of how much what you're doing right now, what you're studying, matters. The question is very short, and I guess it is directed to Dr. Bowman but anyone can respond. Dr. Bowman said that it was *The Iliad* that changed your life. How? Why?

Bowman: If I can make it brief, precise. I don't know if I can. As you know I'm a psychiatrist. I have a strong belief in the unconscious. I think it changed the direction of my life. Much of my free time is spent working on problems in *The Iliad*. It's an actual change in my life. It's not easy reading. I did not read *The Iliad* in Greek in one summer. I suppose there are folks here who can do such a thing but I can't. It's a long tedious process. I'm reading Dante now in Italian, again, a long tedious process. Much of my time is spent thinking about what I am reading. Thinking about meaning. Thinking about sound. Thinking about how things hook together. How this relates to something else. I think that would be the focus of my life, and I don't want to say that I think it directly relevant to my work. I'm sure it is at some level not available to me to actually say to you, how it changed much of what I think about how to spend my time.

## John M. Breen

John M. Breen graduated with highest honors from the Program of Liberal Studies in 1985, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He then attended Harvard Law School, where he served as a member of the Board of Student Advisors, teaching research and writing to first year law students. After receiving his J. D., he clerked for Judge Boyce F. Martin, Jr., of the United State Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. He then practiced law at Sidley & Austin in Chicago, specializing in commercial litigation. He now teaches at Loyola University Chicago School of Law, where his courses include commercial law, legal ethics, and jurisprudence. His scholarly works include lengthy studies of the Uniform Commercial Code and its primary draftsman, Karl Llewellyn. He has also written on legal ethics and on the relationship between religious faith and the practice of law. He currently serves as Reporter to the Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Professional Responsibility and on the Board of Directors of the Arab-American Bar Association of Illinois. John lives with his wife, Susan Nelligan Breen, in Naperville, Illinois.

### The Law and Liberal Learning: What the Great Books Have to Offer the Legal Profession

My talk today is entitled "The Law and Liberal Learning: What the Great Books Have to Offer the Legal Profession." In the next few minutes I hope first to briefly describe how an education in the Program of Liberal Studies helped to prepare me and others for the rigors of law school and legal practice, and second to suggest how engaging the Great Books may yet provide a cure for some of the maladies that currently plague the legal profession.

Before I begin, however, I wish to offer a word of thanks to Father Nicholas Ayo and Professor Michael Crowe, the co-chairs of the Program of Liberal Studies Fiftieth Anniversary Conference, for their gracious invitation to participate in this event. Notre Dame is, of course, famous for the loyalty of her alumni and as a graduate of Our Lady's University I am always happy to have the chance to return to her beautiful campus. Still, I strongly suspect that, at least in my own case, the deep affection I have for Notre Dame would not be nearly as great as it is had I not been a student in the Program of Liberal Studies. The General Program, as it was then still commonly known, provided its students with an enormously rich educational experience, an experience that I continue to draw upon even today, not only as a lawyer and teacher but also, perhaps more importantly, as a citizen, a husband, as a family member and friend.

For someone who hopes to one day practice law, the practical benefits of an education in the Program are clear and manifold. Indeed, the connection between the Program and a future career in the law was so great when I was a student that fellow undergraduates often remarked that the initials "PLS" stood for "Probably Law School." Those Program graduates who fulfilled this half-joking prediction were not disappointed with the preparation they received.

The practice of law demands that its practitioners be adept at reading and understanding large amounts of written materials, materials that are often lengthy, complex, obtuse and difficult to comprehend. In order to advance a client's interests, however, an attorney must not only know the law. He or she must also be able to understand its application to the situation at hand and to share that understanding with lawyers and non-lawyers alike in a way that is clear and logical. Moreover this often requires the exercise of some

creativity. Whether negotiating a transaction over the phone or litigating a case in court, lawyers must be well-versed in the myriad ways in which parties debate issues and exchange ideas through the spoken and written word.

Given these demands, it is difficult to imagine an undergraduate course of study that would better prepare a person for the rigors of law school and legal practice than the Program of Liberal Studies. First, although the process of studying the Great Books is deeply satisfying, the Program reading load is quite heavy and the works assigned are sometimes lengthy and often dense.<sup>1</sup> Whether reading Herodotus' *Histories*, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, or Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the Program demands that its students devote careful attention to the text of the day. This discipline provides excellent training for future lawyers whose careers will similarly require the careful reading of many kinds of texts including judicial opinions, statutes and contracts.

Second, by means of a seminar format and the use of an informal Socratic method, the Program teaches its graduates to speak clearly and effectively. This, of course, is an essential skill for anyone who hopes to practice law, regardless of his or her specific area of expertise. Through the dialectic of the classroom students learn to fashion arguments and to think on their feet. This experience teaches them when it is appropriate to concede a point and when it is best to press on and demonstrate the inadequacies of an alternate point-of-view. Moreover, students are encouraged not to be content to merely skim along the surface of an argument but to insist upon a clear

<sup>1</sup>In this regard I am reminded of the PLS t-shirt popular when I was a student that described students' experience of the Program reading load by quoting from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*: "In short he so buried himself in his books that he spent the nights reading from twilight to daybreak and the days from dawn to dark; and so from little sleep and much reading, his brain dried up and he lost his wits." Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The Adventures of Don Quixote* 32 (J.M. Cohen trans., Penguin 1982) I am also reminded of Dr. David Schindler's remark that "anyone who claims to have carefully read Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* in its entirety is either a liar or a bore."

understanding of the first principles upon which the argument is founded.

Third, the heavy writing requirements of the Program, including a mandatory senior thesis, help students to develop their skills of exposition and argument in a more precise fashion. By regularly reflecting upon and writing about the great questions posed by the Great Books, students learn to structure complex arguments and to recognize and utilize to their advantage the subtleties of word and phrase. This experience is likewise invaluable for those who, as lawyers, will devote substantial amounts of time to drafting letters of opinion, wills, proxy statements and sales and license agreements as well as complaints, motions, briefs and other forms of written advocacy.

Without question, the Program provided and continues to provide an excellent education for those who hope to one day become members of the legal profession.

Sadly, however, this is a profession that is not at peace with itself. Although the Bar continues to attract to its ranks some of the best and brightest of each generation, many find themselves dissatisfied with the practice of law not long after their careers begin. Indeed, a number of commentators who study the legal profession have observed among its members a high degree of anxiety and depression with respect to their work, as well as widespread confusion and disappointment concerning the role of attorneys and the purpose behind a life spent in the law.

The problems that currently beset the legal profession have been variously diagnosed by practitioners and academics who have attributed them to a variety of causes. For example, Anthony Kronman, dean of the Yale Law School, has argued that the current disarray can be explained in terms of the loss of a normative model of what a lawyer is and should strive to be. Kronman calls this model "the ideal of the lawyer-statesman" by which he means the embodiment of certain qualities of character including prudence, even-temperedness and above all the habitual disposition toward deliberative judgment. The loss of this ideal has resulted in what he calls "a crisis of morale" for the profession, so much so that it "now stands in danger of losing its soul."<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Professor Joseph Allegretti of Creighton has written that "[a]t its core the legal profession faces not so much a crisis of ethics, or commercialization, or public relations but a spiritual crisis. Lawyers and the profession have lost their way."<sup>3</sup> To remedy this situation Allegretti suggests that lawyers explore their respective religious traditions, and he looks to his own Christian faith as a way of transforming the law and the lives of those who practice it.

Patrick Schiltz, until recently at Notre Dame and now at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, has

powerfully argued that this relatively new but widespread dissatisfaction with the practice of law is due to a seemingly insatiable desire for higher and higher levels of income, and with it an ever-increasing expectation of more and more billable hours.<sup>4</sup> Further, regardless of whatever adjustments can be made at the margins to accommodate the personal lives of attorneys, Schiltz is surely correct to insist that greater amounts of time devoted to professional matters will be time spent away from the company of spouse and children, family and friends. As such, the practice of law no longer possess a profound intrinsic value, but only a limited, external, utilitarian value. Thus, although the practice enables many lawyers to enjoy the substantial benefits of material success, it also often leads to a kind of alienation and ultimate dissatisfaction.

Although each of these several accounts has merit in its own right, I would argue that at their root they share a common theme which explains the palpable change that has taken place in the professional lives of attorneys. This change can be best described in terms of a loss of the connection between the ordinary day to day work of lawyers, and the virtue of justice, justice understood as both a matter of personal character or habit of conduct and as the goal or end of the legal system. Although I believe that Allegretti's and Kronman's description of the situation as "a spiritual crisis" captures this sense of the loss of connection, it also carries with it an unmistakably religious connotation. As a Christian, I certainly share the view that justice has a religious, and indeed, an eschatological dimension to it. Perhaps, however, to include the non-religious among us this loss of connection between justice and law should be more broadly described as a *crisis of meaning*.

I am sorry to say that this loss of connection begins early in the process of formation for new lawyers. From almost their first day of law school, most prospective lawyers are taught to separate their beliefs about justice and fairness from their understanding of the law. This separation is not soon remedied. Indeed, it is a sad comment on the Bar and the state of legal education to observe that most law students graduate from law school without devoting any substantial time to serious reflection on the meaning of justice and its place in the life of every attorney. Instead, many law graduates leave school and enter practice believing that "justice" is like so many other insoluble questions in life, something that is not easily subject to rational scrutiny let alone definition. As such, justice is thought to be something that cannot be known and understood but only intuited: "You just know it when you see it." Finally, to the extent that justice is the subject of some reflection among lawyers and law students, the reflection that occurs is piecemeal and ad hoc. That is, it takes the form of a preference for this judicial opinion over that one, without any

<sup>2</sup>Anthony T. Kronman, *The Lost Lawyer: Failing Ideals of the Legal Profession* 1-3 (Harvard Belknap 1993).

<sup>3</sup>Joseph G. Allegretti, *The Lawyer's Calling: Christian Faith and Legal Practice* 3 (Paulist Press, 1996).

<sup>4</sup>Patrick J. Schiltz, "On Being a Happy, Healthy, and Ethical Member of an Unhappy, Unhealthy, and Unethical Profession," 52 VAND.L.REV. 871 (1999).

attempt to state the general principles of justice in a comprehensive and coherent fashion. Given this state of affairs we should not be at all surprised to find in the law a crisis of meaning, a lost profession, a group of accidental sophists who, notwithstanding the rhetoric of justice practice craft without soul and technique without conviction.

Here is where an education in the Great Books has far more to offer lawyers and prospective lawyers than the mere acquisition of practical skills. Here is where critical reflection on the works of Plato and Milton, Sophocles and Locke, Aquinas, Dante and Dostoevsky can inform a lawyer's understanding of this most important virtue. Indeed, they can contribute to an understanding that is not merely intuitive, but one that can stand up to rigorous scrutiny as the product of both reason and experience. To cite but one brief but particularly dramatic example, in his history of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides shares with us an account of the negotiations that take place between the Athenians, and the Melians. The latter are a group of island colonists allied with Sparta, Athens' major adversary in the war. In order to avoid annihilation at the hands of the Athenians the Melians attempt to negotiate a truce. The Athenians respond with an uncommon frankness that conceives of justice in terms of power rather than in terms of right and dignity. They tell the Melians that "you know as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is in question only between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 351 (Modern Library, T. E. Wick ed. 1982).

The point of view expressed here, that "justice" is simply the term that the more powerful among us use to describe the state of affairs which they impose on the weaker among us is, I suspect, not a point of view to which many American lawyers would subscribe. Thus, it would be easy to dismiss this account of justice as purely academic (in the pejorative sense), as an idea that carries little if any currency outside the four walls of the seminar room where Thucydides is discussed.

It is not, however, at least plausible to suggest that this account of justice is in fact embodied in many aspects of our law today? Including, for example, the power of the state to execute a man like Timothy McVeigh, the constitutional right of women to have abortions, and the imposition of sanctions under international law on a country like Iraq? If not, then what view of justice does account for these aspects of our law?

Thucydides, not to mention Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Marx, the Federalists and others continue to challenge us, to ask us these questions. If the legal profession hopes to understand the connection between law and justice then lawyers and those who hope to be lawyers would do well to take these questions up. I am by no means suggesting that the Great Books can function as a sort of guidebook or manual for understanding justice, nor am I suggesting that they offer a panacea for all the ills that currently afflict the legal profession. What I am suggesting is that a conversation about justice is truly a conversation very much worth having, and that the Great Books are (in the true sense of the word) a wonderful place to begin.

## Martha Jiménez

Martha I. Jiménez graduated from the Program of Liberal Studies in 1983. She then attended the University of California's Boalt School of Law, where she served as co-editor of *La Raza Law Journal*. After a period as a law fellow at the Center for Law in the Public Interest in Los Angeles, she in 1987 joined the Washington, DC office of MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund) as a legislative attorney. In 1990, she began a three year period of working as a policy analyst for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, becoming in 1993 a staff attorney in the San Francisco office of MALDEF. She is now Assistant Director of the Working Communities Division of The Rockefeller Foundation. She has appeared on numerous television and radio broadcasts, is the recipient of many awards, including the San Francisco Bar Association's Award of Merit, and has served on an array of commissions and boards, including the Board of Directors of the Bar Association of San Francisco and the Advisory Council for Notre Dame's College of Arts and Letters.

I'd like to begin my talk this morning actually by reading a poem.

### Remembrances

It matters not how long it has been  
Nor how far I have come  
How great the accolades  
Nor how distinguished the audience  
Here, again among the teachers, mentors, and friends

Who knew me then

I am as I was, a young woman in my teens  
Hungry to learn, to belong, to speak the true word, to not embarrass myself  
To represent, to challenge, to embrace  
To know that at the end of this—my examined life—  
I found it worth living after all.



*Buenos dias* and good morning to all of you, my mentors, colleagues and friends, my fellow PLS graduates on this panel and soon-to-be-graduates in the audience. I would like to thank Professor Crowe, Father Ayo, and particularly Professor Sloan, my gracious host, and all of the PLS faculty past and present for the incredible honor and privilege of remembering and being remembered by a program and a university so critical to my formation, my thoughts, my values, my faith, and my very being.

*Recordar*, to remember, from the Latin, "*re cordis*," to pass back through the heart. *Recordar* for the heartfelt confidence that has engaged me in many months in reliving my PLS (and at that time General Program) and Notre Dame experience and reflecting upon how it had served and continues to serve me and my life and my work and the never ending process of my becoming.

Mindful of our time I've divided my presentation this morning into three areas or vignettes of reflection. The first, which I lovingly entitled "It's All Greek to Me," reflects on how a little *Chicana*, a Mexican-American from Texas, to the great despair of her parents decided that the Great Books—not the great bucks—were her true vocation. The second, entitled "PLS or Pre-Law Studies," reflects briefly on my experiences of the program as a student—its strengths, challenges, and possible opportunities for the future. And the last section, which I thought to entitle "Look, Ma, I Got A Job Anyway," I instead am calling "On Remembrance of Relevance and the Relevance of Remembrance." In it I will briefly touch upon the many ways in which my liberal studies education has remained not only relevant but also extremely present in my work, in my life today.

#### "It's All Greek to Me"

I don't know what possessed me to sign up for the General Program. I mean it was so general. I came to Notre Dame with the idea of being a doctor, because I couldn't stand the unfairness of having to wait all day at neighborhood clinics for my grandmother to spend five minutes with the only Spanish-speaking doctor in the area, and gosh darn it, I was going to fix it. By the second semester of freshman chemistry, however, I was praying to be delivered from Emil—Dean Hofman, of course. I enjoyed my high school reading of Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*—all those Greeks and all that tragedy. I was hooked. Or maybe it was the lure of becoming a Latina Renaissance woman which sounded so sophisticated. In truth there was no other program for me at this university but the General Program, because no other major could match my insatiable curiosity to learn something about everything—philosophy, theology, science, drama, poetry, music, etc.—and to learn a lot about some of the most important things. Of course my parents were crushed, but it's hard to be upset when your daughter is so happy. And my dad would say, "And who's this *blanco* [white man] anyway?" My grandmother would say "Educación es la fundación del

progreso"—"Education is the basis of all progress." They added that "They can take your money, *mija* [daughter], but your knowledge is yours forever." Somehow I know she was right.

#### PLS—Pre-Law Studies

I did not enter PLS to go to law school. Rather law school found me in PLS. Prior to Notre Dame I had never met a lawyer—much less a Latino lawyer and even much less a Latina—female lawyer. But it made sense. We read a lot. We wrote a lot. We definitely argued a lot. And we were certainly familiar with the Socratic method. You know what got me to law school was the simple unshakable belief in justice. Here the Great Books and the great ideas serve as a very important foundation for other equally formative experiences on campus. Through my involvement with the Farm Worker Labor Organizing Committee on campus, I came to know firsthand what Marx meant when he spoke about the exploitation of an alien nation of workers. Through my engagement in civil rights and social justice, I came to read Martin Luther King's eloquent defense of civil disobedience in his letter from Birmingham Jail, in which he refers to Socrates, Augustine, Aquinas, Martin Buber, and Paul Tillich to name a few. And through my research on *comunidades de base* or base communities I came to learn about Paulo Freire and his pedagogy of the oppressed which speaks to the transformational and healing power of truth when recognized and spoken by those who have been marginalized and dehumanized in society. According to Freire, and I quote, "To no longer be prey to its force of oppression, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis, reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it." For me then it became exceedingly clear that if I intended to work with people, to liberate them from the systems and structures that continue to oppress them through low-paying jobs and lack of educational opportunity, then I'd have to objectively and critically learn about the systems and structures themselves so that different and better systems could be created. I knew then that I had to learn about law and policy. I took the leap of faith secure in my belief that if I could write a paper on the fourth dimension and deduce a dinosaur's femur from a cat bone, I could pretty much do anything. In this case at least I'm happy to say I was right. Today my search for justice continues as I continue to expand the depth and breadth of my knowledge and experience. This time the concepts and the terminology to be learned are in the field of philanthropy, but the purpose is the same. How to improve the quality of life of those less fortunate. How to build individual and social capital to create jobs and develop learning communities. And how when amidst all this knowledge building and experimentation do we stop to acknowledge the essential quality of human dignity in each person and recognize the vital and intangible world of hope in any social transformation?

*On the Remembrance of Relevance  
and the Relevance of Remembrance*

A few years ago I had the great fortune of being selected as one of only twenty-four national next-generation leadership fellows by the Rockefeller Foundation. In preparation for our very first day of our first module together we were sent a series of readings on the idea of democracy. Imagine my surprise upon opening the packet and seeing my old friends—Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Hobbes, and others. To the Rockefeller Foundation these authors are the quartet of leadership. For me it was a reminder of the continuing relevance and inexhaustibility of the great ideas. Today I am applying Paulo Freire's pedagogical techniques to community education in the project that I am managing for the Rockefeller Foundation and the California Endowment.

Finally, in reflecting upon these fifty years of PLS I'm reminded of a story told by Eduardo Galliano in the *Book of Embraces*. Sixtus Martinez completed his military service at a barracks in Seville. In the middle of the courtyard of that barracks was a small bench. Next to the small bench a soldier stood guard. No one knew why the bench had to be guarded. The bench was guarded round the clock just because—every day, every night—and from one generation of officers to the next, the order was passed on and the soldiers obeyed it. No one expressed any doubts or ever asked why. If that's how it was done and that's how it always had been done, there had to be a reason. And so it continued until someone—some general or colonel—wanted to look at the original order. He had

to rummage through all the files. After a good deal of poking around he found the answer. Thirty-one years, two months, and four days ago an officer had ordered a guard to be stationed besides the small bench which had just been painted, so that no one would think of sitting on the wet paint.

The greatest gift we can give this program and this university and our society at large is the gift of our vigilance, our commitment to continue engaging with the great ideas of liberty, justice, democracy—not only on campus but in our lives and our work and to continue to critically and objectively accept the efficacy of the program—its curriculum, teaching methods, intended outcomes, not only in terms of the content but also in the diversity of the participants we are inviting to the table.

I would like to close with two final notes. The first, an Irish prayer, I offer in the great tradition of our beloved professor, Dr. Edward J. Cronin—for those in the wider world who would scoff at a Great Books curriculum. And the last is the quote from Cervantes, which served as the motto for the Class of 1983 and remains in my view one of the most relevant thoughts ever penned in modern history.

First the Irish prayer: "May those that love us love us and those who don't love us may God turn their hearts, and if he doesn't turn their hearts, may he turn their ankles, so we'll know them by their limping." And lastly, Cervantes, "and from little sleep and too much reading his brain dried up and he lost his wits."

Here's to PLS and fifty years of lost wits and gained wisdom. May they enjoy fifty times fifty more. Thank you.

## Katherine Kersten

Katherine Kersten graduated summa cum laude from the Program of Liberal Studies in 1973 and was selected for Phi Beta Kappa. She received a masters degree from Yale University's School of Organization and Management, and then worked for several years in banking and university administration. In 1982, she graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School, where she was selected for the Law Review, and subsequently practiced law for three years. After her second child was born, she decided to become a full-time mother. Kersten then began a "second career" as a writer and public policy analyst, working from her home. She became a columnist for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, and also worked for a time as a commentator for National Public Radio's "All Things Considered." She has also written for a variety of publications, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *Policy Review*, *First Things*, *Christianity Today*, and the *Weekly Standard*, and is co-author of *Close to Home*. Currently, she is a senior fellow for cultural studies at Center of the American Experiment, a public policy institution in Minneapolis, which she helped to found in 1990.

I have done a variety of things since graduating from PLS in 1973. After earning an MBA, I set off to discover what I wanted to be when I grew up.

I spent several years in banking and university administration. Not particularly enjoying either, I went to law school and then joined a law firm. When my second child was born, I became convinced that I couldn't be both the sort of lawyer I wanted to be and the sort of mother I wanted to be. So I decided stayed home with my children full-time, and quit my job. My husband and I had four children in five years. Today, they are ages 11 to 17.

During the last two decades, I've devoted myself to the two endeavors that have proven to be the most important and rewarding of my life. The first is motherhood. The second is my career as a writer and public policy analyst, a vocation that developed from volunteer work I did in my early years as a mother while my kids were taking naps. In both my life as a mother, and my career as a writer, the liberal education I received in PLS has been of seminal importance to my success.

Let me first describe what I gained here in this program, reading great books under the tutelage of great minds – people like Fred Crosson, Mike Crowe, Walter Nicgorski, Willis Nutting, Edward Cronin and Steve Rogers. I learned, first, that there is such a thing as truth, and that it is my highest calling as a human being to pursue it. I learned the questions central to human existence. In Kant's formulation, there are four: 1) what can I know? 2) what should I do? 3) What may I hope for? 4) What is man?

Now, while I learned these questions, I didn't necessarily learn the answers to them. I did learn, however, that for 4,000 years, human beings have carried on a great conversation about them – a conversation that connects all human beings, in which I could take part. In PLS, I learned about the men and women who have led the great conversation—what they thought, and how they lived. In the process, I found myself plunged into the intellectual disputes that fired Classical Greece, Renaissance Florence, and fin de siècle Vienna. And as I considered the meaning of words like “justice,” “honor,” and “freedom” in these far-away times and places, I gained insight into alternative ways that we might understand them today.

If I wished to summarize all this, I would say that PLS awakened in me a vision of greatness—what the Greeks called a paragon, or a character ideal. In addition, the program provided me with intellectual furniture. In the seminar rooms, and after class in the dining hall and dorm rooms, I gained a moral vocabulary, and categories of thought that guide me—to this day—in making sense of my experience.

When I left Notre Dame, I knew that, in my own limited way, I wanted to be, like Odysseus, both a thinker of thoughts and a doer of deeds. As a graduate student in Connecticut, a banker in Chicago and a university administrator in Madison, I faced choices in my personal and professional life, as everyone does. I saw right away that my PLS education had given me insights of real practical value. For example, I had a sense that much that initially attracted me – the trappings of material success, for example – was probably mere appearance: the dancing shadows of Plato's cave. I knew I would have to make a real effort, searching well beneath the surface, to find reality, and the sun of truth.

Now, insights of this sort are just what one would expect from a PLS grad. But as my responsibilities grew, both personally and professionally, I became aware that PLS had given me something else that we rarely associate with academic learning: it had given me power, of a very particular sort.

Obviously, I don't mean the kind of power that enables a person to force others to do his will. I mean the power one has, in a world where skepticism seems endemic, when one knows that the search for truth is possible. I mean the power one has, in a world deeply marked by moral relativism, when one knows that some human qualities are noble and others are base, and that we should strive to foster the former and discourage the latter.

Let me give an example of how this power has served me in my role as a parent.

For several years when my children were small, I participated in a parent discussion group. Each year, the discussion leader would ask, “What do you want most in life for your son or daughter?” The women in the group were good people and devoted mothers. But each year, they would greet this question with indecision. They would pause and look around, slightly embarrassed. For a moment, they were speechless. Then, without exception, they would say the same thing: “I just want her to be happy.” Everyone would nod, “Yes.” Occasionally, some particularly venturesome mother would add, “I want her to fulfill her potential.” But I could see that, for all their sympathetic nodding, they weren't satisfied with this response. They knew they wanted more, but they didn't know exactly how to say it.

When my turn came, I would say this: “I want her to be wise, kind, just, responsible, courageous, self-reliant, generous, honest and good. I want her to be a productive member of society, and to fulfill her responsibilities as a citizen.” “Yes, yes,” they would say. “That's what I want.”

Now, it's always difficult to help children develop into the sort of person I described. But it's next to impossible, when – like many parents today—you don't know what you're aiming at, when you have no paragon, no character ideal.

Every day, we parents hear, from one quarter or another, that the most we can hope for our children is that they grow up to be well-adjusted, well-liked, and materially well-off. I like to think that, by putting my own objectives into words, I helped to crystallize the other mothers' inchoate sense of what is truly good and right for human beings.

The power I gained in PLS has also served me as a writer and public policy analyst. I am a columnist for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* newspaper. I also do radio commentary, and write for magazines and journals on a variety of public policy questions.

Now, what I'm going to tell you about the world of journalism will not surprise you. It is very fast-paced, a constant deadline chase. It is addicted to sensation. Whatever is violent or shocking grabs headlines; you must look for a long time to find anything that is noble or uplifting. It is characterized by shifting fashions; trendy issues and buzzwords succeed one another with predictable regularity. It relies, too often, on anecdote, and encourages feeling, not thinking. In many cases, analysis is not perceived to be necessary, if proponents of a position express outrage or indignation loudly enough. Finally, it is a world where public memory is very short. Many journalists, like many citizens today, have a limited understanding of history. They have fallen prey to cultural narcissism – the belief that we exist at the pinnacle of history, to which all other ages were merely a prelude, and that those who lived in other times or places have little to teach us.

In this world, I find that my liberal education confers real power. It has given me a grasp of the importance of first principles and unspoken assumptions. It has also given me a sense of history, a rich context in which to understand the issues of the day. Finally, it has provided a grasp of what is enduring, and a sense of the complexity of most issues.

In writing about contemporary culture, I draw every day on the books and ideas I first encountered in PLS. Several years ago, for example, the *Goosebumps* kid-horror books were all the rage. Many parents were thrilled that their second-graders were reading the books: their argument was that it doesn't matter what kids read, so long as they read. Besides, they insisted, kids have always loved scary stories, such as *Grimm's Fairy Tales*.

Drawing on Aristotle, I wrote a piece that debunked this claim. The Greeks, I wrote, believed that tragedy – the most frightening of literary genres – is the highest human art form, because of its power to induce both fear and pity, the ability to “feel with” others' suffering and learn from it. *Goosebumps* books differ crucially from serious works of children's literature which are frightening or sad – like fairy tales, *Treasure Island* or *The Wizard of Oz* – because they induce fear, but drive out pity. Far from encouraging empathy, they lead children to objectify others, and to enjoy – with morbid fascination – the spectacle of their suffering.

More recently, a dispute arose in a Twin Cities high school when a principal banned tank tops, and

then rapidly rescinded her decision after students and parents protested. Kids, the argument ran, should be able to wear anything they want to school; the right of self-expression trumps all other considerations. As one parent insisted, “with teen-agers, it's really important that they make their own statement.”

In the piece I wrote about the dispute, I begged to differ. I pointed out the importance to the educational process of preserving the dignity of human persons in the classroom. And I explored the real meaning of “thinking independently,” suggesting that what the high school was witnessing was not free-thinking, but just the latest example of teen-age conformity.

Obviously, not everyone agrees with what I write. Frequently, however, people say to me, “In your article, you said just what I've always thought. But I never knew how to say it.” To the extent I am able to articulate ideas in this way, it is because of my PLS education.

Our society today is the most affluent in history. In one respect, however, we seem significantly poorer than our ancestors: as a people, we are much less aware of the debt we owe to those who came before us.

T. S. Eliot recorded an encounter with someone who said to him, “The dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did.” “Precisely,” Eliot responded, “and they are that which we know.” This is what I learned in Notre Dame's Program of Liberal Studies. And it's a truth that has aided me in all that I've done.

## James McDonald, C.S.C.

James E. McDonald graduated from Notre Dame in 1979 majoring in both the Program of Liberal Studies and in Modern Languages. He had already by that time begun studies that culminated in 1984 with his ordination as a Holy Cross priest. In the same year, he received his Master of Divinity degree from Notre Dame with High Honors, with a year of his training having been taken at the Institut Catholique in Paris. After a year of teaching and rectoring at Notre Dame, Fr. McDonald began advanced studies in modern languages (Spanish and French) at Cambridge University, receiving a Master of Arts degree with Honors in 1987. After serving as Vice-Principal of St. George's College in Santiago, Chile, he began legal studies at Catholic University of America, receiving his J.D. degree in 1994, specializing in international law. From 1994 to 1997, he served as Provincial Steward of the Indiana Province of the Holy Cross order. In 1997, he was named Assistant Dean of the Notre Dame Law School, becoming in 1999 Associate Dean. In January, 2001, he returned to Santiago, Chile to assume the position of Rector of St. George's College.

This morning John Breen respected one of the rules of the Cronin Checklist when he gave his reflections a title: it was one of Dr. Cronin's absolute rules to give every essay a title because, as he said, “even an unbaptized child deserves a name.” I neglected to give mine a title, although I would love to plagiarize the title of Malcolm Muggeridge's autobiography, “Chronicles of Wasted Time.” I fear these are random reflections of how the General Program shaped my life.

I want to thank Professor Crowe and Fr. Ayo for inviting me to talk about something that is very dear to me: my studies in the General Program, my classmates and above all, my professors. I entered the General Program largely through the advice and friendship of Professor Tillman and a friend of hers who

taught me Freshman Seminar (a wonderful course called, “The History of Women in American Literature”), without knowing—or frankly, without caring, whether I would end up with a job or not. So, again I am grateful to Mike and Nicholas for the opportunity to think and talk about the past, which is something one does at an anniversary; we are in great measure who we were, an insight that comes to us most strongly in the Eucharist, so forgive me if I reminisce a little during these reflections.

I have just become the rector (“headmaster”) of a private, Catholic school for boys and girls in Santiago, Chile. It is called St. George's College, a college in the European/French model of education, which reigned in Chile when the school was founded in 1941. Holy

Cross assumed the administration of the school in 1943 after a homily by its British headmaster forced him to resign: he preached against the genocide happening in Germany and caused such a division among the parents that he could not continue. (Chile was ostensibly neutral during World War II, but in reality there was much sympathy for the National Socialists.) At a breakfast during a Eucharistic congress, the archbishop of Santiago asked Cardinal O'Hara if he would intercede with some American community of priests to help him. Cardinal O'Hara contacted his own community and within two months three men left Notre Dame for Santiago on one of the first regular airplane flights to South America. We now have 2,700 boys and girls and have a reputation for being in the vanguard of educational initiatives in Chile.

Being the headmaster of a school like this is unlike anything I have done before—a complex village of 1,800 families, 200 teachers and 100 other personnel, and around 10,000 former students, all of whom know better than I do how to be headmaster, and willing to tell me at any and all hours of the day. I was quite good at one time at riding a unicycle and juggling (perhaps the only two skills one does not acquire in PLS); and I think those skills are what I need now: knowing how to balance and also do three things at the same time—without falling off!

I took the invitation to speak today to ask myself how I have been brought to this country, which was called in the Spanish empire, *Finnis Terrae*: the end of the earth. I returned, as I have always done at moments of transition in my life, to the great Quixote, a book that marked me the first time I read it and re-read it this Chilean summer in February. This time I was struck by the scene you all remember: when Mr. Quesada's housekeeper-niece and parish priest and barber set about what literary critics do: carry out triage in Mr. Quesada's library, saving all the books that do no harm and separating them from those that do: burning those that do harm and saving those that promote health: it was not from *reading* that Mr. Quesada's brain dried up, but from *reading the wrong books*.

This time I noticed that one book which those three critics spared was Don Alonso de Ercilla's *La Araucana*. This epic poem is from 1580 and tells in verse (in the monotonous meter of the *octava real*) the history of the conquest of the Indians in Chile. Unlike the Incas and Aztecs, who quickly fell to the conquistadores, the Araucanians fought valiantly—and for several centuries—the invasion of their land. And while academics debated at Salamanca whether the Indians in America had souls, Ercilla ennobled them in verse, attributing to them the same values as Spaniards gave themselves: valor, courage, independence, and heroism. The names of those who fought against the Spaniards are now part of the national Chilean lexicon: Colocolo, Lautaro, Galvarino, Caupolican.

I am a religious and a priest, vocations I discovered gradually. As I think back on my period as an undergraduate, I am aware that moving through the readings, exploring issues with the same people for

three years, I realize we were always involved in a discussion about moral choices, discriminating between what is good and what is bad, between what brings us closer to our purpose and what alienates us from it. I don't think it was conscious then, but I realize now that the deepest questions about transcendence and the reasons for living were not just conversations among friends after class, but part of our common studies. There are many Holy Cross priests who were part of this program and I think it is no surprise that the program fosters a serious reflection about vocation—about God's movement in time and in our hearts.

(I don't believe the PLS is the threshold to the seminary, but it does foster thinking deeply about God's plan for us. It also teaches us that we are made to know and to love God and that our hearts are restless until we do know and love God. This is a point made over and over in so many readings for the seminar each semester.)

My time in the program also enabled me to deepen my love for literature and poetry. The books that I come back to often are part of my mental store of images for my life, much as the books of chivalry were for Don Quixote—ways to interpret the world: *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Confessions*, *The Divine Comedy*, *Madam Bovary*.... I encountered George Steiner (*Bluebeard's Castle*) through a class with Professor Lyons, Intellectual and Cultural History, and have read I think everything he has written, although unlike St. Thomas I can't claim I have understood every page I read. It was in this course that Professor Lyon said something that still comes back to me with the extra power it had for someone like me who was torn between law school and continuing to explore a vocation to religious life: he said that there were many needs to be served, and that one needed to look around and see what most needed doing—and do it. That, he said, would make us happy, even if we would move through sorrow, as Jesus did.

When I left the program I had in mind that my vocation would include becoming an academic in comparative literature although I more loved the teaching part than the research. I had acquired a very good knowledge of Spanish and French language and literature through that one breath of freedom in the program: the elective each semester one had. I went to graduate school, choosing the one place I believed would free me from the totalitarianism of the then-fashionable literary critics, those that believed that texts refer only to themselves, and not to something real. (I believe it was in Professor Nicgorski's seminar and Professor Lyon's course in Intellectual and Cultural History that gave me a healthy distrust of any system of thought that pretends to answer every question one might have and which itself is capable of totally explaining or explaining away inconsistencies or contradictions.)

I learned (I am not sure this is what was intended) that any ideology that resists ending in contemplation of God and wonder at the mystery of our human existence in inhuman. For this reason I carefully chose

for graduate study a place known for its love of close reading of texts that reached for analysis and meaning. F. R. Leavis, though by the time I arrived at his college had died, was still very much alive in his students and I was taught by several of them. Gradually, I came to believe that I would never be free from the influence of them, and that they meant everything I could not believe. Fortunately, this conclusion came to me must at the time my Provincial came through London and asked me to go to Chile for the first time. Providence has seemed always to lead me to greater service, even if I wouldn't have asked to do it myself.

Although I did not become an academic as I thought I might, I did carry with me a deep love for literature and poetry that I still have today.

I was assigned to Chile to assist in the administration of St. George's College between 1987 and 1990. More than my work at the school, which was challenging, and which seemed far from what I had set out to do as an undergraduate, that period in the life of Chile brought me back to other books we had read, and which I returned to then. Chile lived a period of transition from a dictatorship to democracy beginning with a plebiscite in 1988 and ending with elections in 1989. During that period, all the readings we had done in political philosophy and history echoed in the public debate about the value of democracy: Plato's *Republic*, *The City of God*, *The Treatise on Law* by Thomas Aquinas, *The Prince*, and of course Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau were part of everyday discourse. It was a time when the rule of law was appreciated because of its absence for sixteen years. I don't think I appreciated as an undergraduate what we were learning, perhaps of my own limitations, perhaps because as an American we do not appreciate what we have as the foundation of our political and religious freedom.

I was stimulated by the discussion and returned to thinking about law, which as an undergraduate was my other choice, the path not taken when I went to the novitiate and encountered one of my greatest teachers, Fr. Ayo. (He learned from me what a supportive and challenging community exists in PLS and when he finished training me and my confreres how to be a religious of Holy Cross, himself went to PLS to teach.) I thought long and hard about my next choice, consulted friends, re-read books that I don't think I appreciated as an undergraduate, and went to law school.

Unlike most of my classmates, I loved law school. I found the methodology of learning law through the study of cases to be exhilarating. I found it used the skills we used so often in seminar: analysis, proposing a solution to a problem, looking for similarities and dissimilarities that would enable one to understand a new issue. Also unlike my classmates, my favorite courses were ones devoted to procedure. Justice Frankfurter wrote that fair procedure was the high mark of a democracy, something that resonated deeply with my intellectual training in PLS. It is something I think we were to learn, even if as so often

happened, we were not given in PLS what in law school is called "black letter law."

Throughout my period in law school, I lived with the Latino community of Washington, D.C., and worked with them as a priest and as an advocate. At the time the huge Salvadoran refugee population, which had arrived because the civil war promoted in part by the Reagan administration, and now that the war was over become the subjects of annual emergency legislation, letting them stay one more year in what is known as *temporary protected status*. I saw my study and work as a way to serve what for them what was most needed—and often it was the routine, but terrifying filing of papers in proper form, for one mistake could alter one's chances for remaining in the United States with one's own American-born children.

When I finished law school I was headed back to Chile forever I thought, to teach law and also to work in a firm. The Provincial had other plans for me, asking me to work as treasurer of the Province and assistant Provincial. I found that my conviction about fair procedure carried me quite far in my work there and subsequently as associate dean for administration at the Law School here. That is where I was when Professor Crowe and Fr. Ayo found me for this conference; I was to help their budget by walking from my room in Alumni to this conference, but they didn't know, nor did I, that I would have to come from Chile for this.

I can't end without pointing to something that may be obvious, but something I thought about for these days: how many of the people who spent these three years with me are with me still. I have married some of them, baptized some of their children, spent vacations with them—and it is a different kind of friendship. When we are together again we inevitably return to the teachers we had here, to the books we read (and sometimes skimmed), and to the topics we discussed then, now with the perspective of people with experience. I don't think I have ever had or will have again companions with whom I shared both intellectual and spiritual conversations, classmates and teachers, only one of whom has died, and to whom I owe so much, Professor Steve Rogers. He would have loved to hear these remarks by his former students.

I want to end where I began: in Chile as rector of an institution with a distinguished history and contribution to the life of the country. I have only been at this for a few months and everyone I meet wants to know what changes I will promote; immediately after arriving I was asked what my vision for the school is, who I hoped to dismiss, what budget priorities I would promote. And curiously, I have found myself more inclined to respect the great insight from the seminar: Asking the opening question. In my opening address to the 200 faculty members, I felt I had to initiate and promote evaluation of teaching, but I also knew that this is a threatening topic, especially in a country where labor laws favor the employer in almost every way. It is a topic that still provokes debate in many developed countries of the world: how to fairly evaluate teachers? So I asked a series of questions that I said I hoped began a conversation

between them and the administration, a quest that would end with a serious and rigorous evaluation of our teaching standards. I think it succeeded although as so often happens, I do not hear most of the complaints and I am still in the honeymoon part of my rectorship.

I have thought often about Don Quijote and through the thicken of literary critics in graduate school (when I read it in its original Spanish); it really is an amazing book; never the same, always with new insights. In returning to it for what I wanted to say here, I believe that in this program you are equipped for battle here: for adventure and for righting wrongs and for serving the master. You acquire, perhaps

unconsciously for most, or at least for me, a treasure house of references and framework for meeting every new situation, just as for Don Quijote the many books of chivalry served him to interpret and shape the world he encountered in his adventures. G. K. Chesterton said that the challenge for the believer is how to rise in the morning and treat the world both as our home and as a castle to be stormed. You learn to do that here, and you are equipped for discovering for yourself, in company of fellow-pilgrims, what God has in store for each of you.

## Robert McNeill

In 1963 Robert McNeill graduated summa cum laude from the Program of Liberal Studies, was the Valedictorian and was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship. He received an advanced degree in Economics (With Distinction) from the University of Oxford, England. From 1967 to date, he has been with Stein Roe & Farnham, one of the world's leading investment counseling firms, where he currently serves as Executive Vice President. At Stein Roe, his responsibilities have included: Senior Partner, Executive Committee; Chairman Emeritus, Investment Policy Committee; and Founder, Stein Roe International. He has been active in the Rhodes Scholarship selection process for the past 25 years, chairing the Illinois State and Great Lakes Regional Selection Committees. His civic affiliations include Board Membership with: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum, Hadley School for the Blind, Institute for the International Education of Students, Big Shoulders Fund, and Catholic Charities of Chicago. He served as "Principal For A Day" in four Chicago Inner City Schools. He is currently a member of the University of Notre Dame International Council. Bob lives in Winnetka, Illinois with his wife Martha, has five children (two Notre Dame graduates) and six grandchildren.

Let me begin by saying how delighted I am to be here. I have very positive memories of my experience in the Program of Liberal Studies. I welcome the opportunity to participate in its Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration. And it is a great honor for me to speak to this distinguished group.

Before continuing, I would like to pause for a moment to thank Nicholas Ayo and Michael Crowe and all of the many others who worked so hard to make this celebration a success. Great conferences don't just happen. There's a tremendous amount of organization, planning, time and work involved. On behalf of all of us who are present, we thank you.

Let me mention one other introductory observation. A week ago, as I was making plans to attend the Conference, a very important business conflict/emergency developed. It was presented to me as "urgent" and "critical" and I was under intense pressure to withdraw immediately, even though it was understood that pulling out on such short notice would be disruptive.

I said: no way! I have learned so much from my experience in the Program of Liberal Studies and my overall education at Notre Dame that it was my top priority to be here, to participate as a panelist and hopefully to contribute to the success of this wonderful undertaking. To actively take part in the Conference gives me a chance to say "thank you" to PLS and provides a small way for me to express a very large gratitude for the "liberating" education that has changed my life.

What I'd like to do now is attempt to answer the question which was posed to me when I was initially

invited to participate in the Program. I was asked to share some personal reflections on how I would assess the education I received in PLS and how it has served me since graduation. In responding to this daunting challenge, let me try to analyze what it was about PLS that made it so special for me. What was unique?

Without any doubt, the highlight for me—and the distinctive characteristic which continues to set PLS apart from all other programs—was the Great Books Seminar. What a marvelous interactive learning experience! This was the heart and soul of the teaching process where new ideas were born, nourished and tested. As we engaged the classic works that have been able to speak definitively to the minds and hearts of each generation, our discussions took on a new sense of purpose, of discovery and of vision. This was the place for me where growth, where passion and where creativity really occurred. In our search for the truth, we would discuss, argue, challenge, persuade, reformulate, and defend. Socrates would have been pleased, as a real dialogue existed among the students, the teachers, the authors and the ideas. The sessions themselves turned out to be intellectually demanding and emotionally exhausting, but also deeply rewarding and spiritually exhilarating. I knew my mind was being stretched, my skills sharpened and my values shaped. In retrospect, I now realize I was experiencing education at its very best, as a dynamic internal growth process where I could literally feel the acquisition of knowledge taking place within.

Another dimension which made these sessions so remarkable from my point of view was a unique

combination of great students, great professors, and, of course, the Great Books themselves.

In terms of the students, I believe our group was exceptional. As I recall, if you took the ten students who achieved the top grade-point averages in the entire graduating class of 1963, there were four participating in PLS, including the valedictorian and number three. If qualitative factors (like diversity of interests/abilities, character, generosity, loyalty, creativity, goodness, etc.) were added to the criteria, I am convinced our share of the finest human beings in our graduating class would have been even higher. What was especially unforgettable was the friendship, the bonding and the chemistry which developed within our class. As a learning community, we became connected in a very special way so that the whole was greater than the sum of the parts.

We were also blessed with an extraordinary faculty: fellow learners who provided the energy, discipline and wisdom to raise PLS to a splendid level of excellence. To name just a few, Fred Crosson, John Logan, Catesby Taliaferro, Michael Crowe, Otto Bird, Ed Cronin, Richard Thompson and Willis Nutting were all genuine world-class teachers. As a matter of fact, if Notre Dame developed an all-time, all-star best team of teachers, I've just named about four or five first-string all-Americans in my book.

To continue this analogy, we also benefited from having on our faculty the "Super Bowl Champ" authors of the Great Books themselves. We were able to learn from Plato, Toqueville and Dostoyevsky as if they were active participants in our seminars. Discussions were lively, provocative and enlightening. Let me highlight three of the sessions which were among the most memorable and inspiring: when we challenged Aristotle to speak to us about slavery and racism in America; when John Logan read us enchanting passages from Joyce's *Ulysses*; and when we asked Machiavelli to talk to us about ethical issues in modern-day politics, business and life.

Those sessions are just as alive and vivid for me today as they were forty years ago. The electricity sparked by our conversations and the images they reproduce and illuminate continue to shine like a radiant star in my memory. Looking back, I now understand that what was happening within me was clearly a life changing experience. There was a real igniting of my intellectual curiosity and I was learning to read, to think, to speak, and to write with much greater effectiveness. As these skills became more proficient, I began to realize and appreciate that I was getting a liberal education that truly liberated me to achieve my potential. So for me the education I received in PLS became a gift I will always be grateful for, a gift I will always cherish.

Now let's return to the original questions to be addressed. How has this education served me since graduation? How did it change my life? Let me highlight some of the most important ways, and I'll do this by going through key stages in my life and indicating how the education I received made a decisive difference.

First of all, it was crucial in my winning a *Rhodes Scholarship*. For a math major from New Trier High School who wrote a novel for his Notre Dame senior thesis to be able to analyze Aquinas, quote Shakespeare, defend Newman and confront Marx in a quick response interview session definitely made *the* (not just *a*) difference. I would not have won without PLS. The abilities I acquired in the Great Books seminar sessions were precisely the strengths I needed to succeed in the highly competitive Rhodes selection process.

Second, while being a Rhodes Scholar got me into *Oxford*, the education I received at Notre Dame was essential in helping me as a graduate student to compete with distinction at such an esteemed and eminent University. Since the method of education at Oxford is a one-on-one tutorial system, the connected sequences of tutorial courses which have always been a central part of the PLS Program provided me with an ideal foundation for this new educational endeavor. By way of contrast, while many of my fellow Rhodes Scholars from institutions like Harvard, Stanford and Princeton had mastered specific disciplines to levels well beyond my capabilities, no one was better prepared to take advantage of the overall educational experience offered at Oxford than I felt I was.

Third, it's also been a big help in my *career*. In my position as an investment counselor for 34 years, my job has been to work with clients to determine their goals and then to design a customized financial plan to best achieve each client's individual needs and performance requirements. The skills which have allowed me to serve and excel in that role can all be traced back to my learning experience in PLS and how it taught me to think and communicate clearly, productively and efficiently. Three specific examples of the kinds of abilities that originated for me in PLS which have been unusually beneficial in advancing and enhancing my career are the following: how to be a good listener, how to be a perceptive psychologist and how to draw lessons from the past to provide guidance for the future.

Fourth, it's also made a significant difference in terms of my *family*. In my role as a husband for 37 years, as a father of five children and as a grandfather of six grandchildren, my education at Notre Dame has definitely helped me to value the uniqueness of each family member, to support and encourage their different perspectives on life and to treasure the special family relationships that have evolved. In PLS I learned the importance of honesty, character and integrity and the need to honor personal commitments and responsibilities. These lessons have served the McNeill family well and motivated me to adopt the rule: family comes first. My top priority is to make sure I am always available to the family as a whole and to each individual member and that in our family "seminars" I will never forget to stress fairness, compassion and love.

Fifth, it has had a significant impact on my *religion*, the way I worship and in my personal



relationship to God. PLS has helped me to listen to and learn from theologians like John Dunne and Henry Nouwen. It's helped me to appreciate the magical beauty within a teacher like Frank O'Mally. It's helped me to better understand the mystery of "unconditional" love. It's helped me to believe in the power and majesty of prayer. And, it's helped me to experience the joy of serving others who are in need.

Lastly, next to my family and my faith, the most valuable asset I have are my friends. With *friendship* being so important for me, PLS provided an unexpected and wonderful windfall which would only become apparent some 25 years after graduation. It turns out many of my 1963 classmates have now become my best friends! The bonding and kinship forged 40 years ago continues to strengthen and our friendships continue to flourish. Approximately ten of us gather together once a year. We've met every year for the last twelve years and our reach has extended all over the world (Seattle, Jamaica, Martha's Vineyard, Dublin, etc.). Wherever we are or whatever we are discussing, the one thing that never changes is our desire to take advantage of any opportunity available to us to gather again for a "new" seminar session—each time creating another unique experience which we all recognize has been so crucial in deepening our friendship and enriching our lives.

In conclusion, let me shift from the past to the future. While my education has had a huge impact on my life as a student, on my career, family, friendships and beliefs, how will it help to prepare me for the future?

Without knowing exactly when I will retire or what I will be doing in the years ahead, the one thing I'm confident of is that my education has liberated me to strive for activities which will assist my abiding aspiration to grow and learn, feel challenged and stretched, be passionate and engaged, and make time to serve the community.

What is my personal goal in the years ahead? As I grow older and my body ages, I want to keep my mind young and vigorous and alive. I think Gandhi had it right with the profound thought,

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow;

Learn as if you were to live forever!"

I want to live the remainder of my life to the fullest. I agree with Thoreau when he proclaims,

"I want to learn what life has to teach, and not, when I come to die, discover that I had not lived."

On my journey into the future I hope I will continue to be nourished by my desire, with Dedalus, to

*"Press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world."*

Thank you.

## Janice Peterson

Janice Louise Mary Peterson is a Hoosier native. The fourth child of Virginia and Ronald Peterson of Plymouth, Indiana, Janice studied in Notre Dame's Program of Liberal Studies, graduating in 1981 with high honors and with election to Phi Beta Kappa. She served as a volunteer with the Holy Cross Sisters in Brazil from 1982 to 1983. She attended Indiana University Medical School, graduating in 1989. In January of 1989 she served with the Greencastle Winter Term in Mission in Iquitos, Peru. She was a founding member of the International Health Tract, a program to promote missionary work during Residency Training at St. Joseph's Medical Center in South Bend, Indiana. Doctor Peterson served at the Mercy Sisters Hospital in Georgetown, Guyana in November of 1990. She completed her Family Practice residency in 1992. She is currently a diplomate member of the American Board of Family Practice as well as a member of the American Academy of Family Practice. Doctor Peterson has served as a volunteer physician and missionary for the Catholic church in Ethiopia from 1994 to the present.

### **Reflection Upon the Education I Received in the PLS and How It Has Served Me After My Graduation. A Liberal Education in the PLS for a Catholic Missionary Physician**

Good afternoon ladies, gentlemen, distinguished Doctors, professors of the PLS, friends, guests: Please let us begin with this prayer which I have handed out:

O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, have mercy on me.

From the wish to be esteemed, deliver me O Jesus.

From the wish to be loved, deliver me.

From the wish to be honored, deliver me.

From the wish to be praised, deliver me.

From the wish to be preferred to others, deliver me.

From the wish to be asked for advice, deliver me.

From the fear to be humiliated, deliver me.

From the fear to be despised, deliver me.

From the fear to be rebuked, deliver me.

From the fear to be maligned, deliver me.

From the fear to be forgotten, deliver me.

From the fear to be ridiculed, deliver me.

From the fear to be treated unfairly, deliver me.

From the fear to be suspected, deliver me.

That others may be loved more than I, O Jesus give me the grace of this holy desire.

That others grow in the esteem of the world and I decrease, O Jesus.

That others be entrusted with work and I be put aside, O Jesus.

That others be praised and I neglected, O Jesus.

That others be preferred to me in all things, O Jesus.

That others be holier than I provided I also become as holy as I can, O Jesus, give me the grace of this holy desire.

(Cardinal Merry Del Val)

Let us reflect for a moment on what value we can give to the pursuit of humility. In her *Interior Castle*, St. Teresa of Avila notes that God loves the humble because humility is truth. As he lists the praises of God, St. Francis of Assisi writes: "You are humility." (Admonition I; Letter to the General Chapter, Praises of God; Writings, cit., pp. 78, 106, 125). How indeed can we think of God as humble? Jesus says "learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11:29). R. Cantalemessia notes in his book, *Life in Christ*, the history of God's involvement in mankind is a history of the humiliations of God, the story of God lowering Himself for love (p. 177). Jesus teaches clearly that he who wishes to be first must be last and the servant of all (Mark 9:35). Humility is an invitation to lower ourselves for love. To be humble is to serve, in imitation of Christ. Oh God, "You are humility!"

I am neither a theologian nor a philosopher. I am a Catholic missionary physician. I graduated from the PLS in 1981, and I must ask: "Of what use to me was a liberal education in a great books program?" Did the PLS prepare me to enter medical school? Did it prepare me further to serve as a missionary physician? "What is the point of reading *The Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, and *Apology*, *The Prince*, Thomas, Bacon or René Descartes? Was the only value simply delaying my leap into the fray of memory work, decision making and responsibility? Three beautiful years to read, to think, to discuss. Is the PLS simply the time I look back on with a sort of reverie?

It was a great program. Our three years in the PLS were busy, but there it was, a community of learners with whom we could freely discuss the great ideas. PLS first introduced me to the value of culture and leisure. I learned that my native sense of awe, wonder and discovery were at least as valuable as my capacity for memory or successful test taking. In the PLS, I learned that my life had to be ordered well so as to use this gift well. I stopped filling my mind with nonsense. I stopped distracting myself for pleasure. I read widely and increasingly more critically. I learned to write. I relished the opportunity to discuss the great books in the seminars. In the PLS, I acquired a discipline of the mind, "the arts and skills of the general intelligence," (Otto Bird) which has served me well in the past twenty years.

And while I was studying in the PLS, I can pinpoint precisely that moment in my education in which I moved from knowing to loving God. It was in the spring of my senior year exactly twenty years ago. We had been reading St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure. I believed that God existed. And I realized that God was incomprehensible to my mind. Through a friend, I discovered St. Teresa of Avila's

*Autobiography* and her *Interior Castle*, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Teresa of Liseaux's *The Story of a Soul*, and the works of St. John of the Cross. I was shocked. I realized that the world of prayer, the world of relationship to God was something I also could pursue. I hoped that through loving God, through prayer, I could know Him. We can know through loving. And even better yet, "If one loves God, one is known by him" (1 Cor. 8:3) (Prayer p. 168, Von Balthasar). There, in the PLS, in the end of my senior year, I came to really believe. And so I began to pray. And my life became consumed with this "Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, your whole mind and with all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself."

As I grew in my love of God and neighbor, I began to have a great desire to serve the poor as a missionary physician. I wanted to meet Christ in those who suffer and are least able to find relief for their suffering. This led me to pursue medical school and eventually to pursue a medical missionary call. "I was sick and you visited me" (Matt. 25:36). What does it mean to be a physician, a student of the human heart? In the PLS natural science class, we studied the flow of blood and dissected a heart. How beautifully we are created! Years later, I performed open chest heart massage on a young woman dying from blood loss. She died. Health care personnel have a privileged intimate confrontation with the human condition. Yesterday, at our mission, a 10 year old boy was crushed by a tree. I saw his body warm, supple, soft. The absence of a pulse confirmed his death. The neighbors crowded around the clinic gate and took the body for burial. I think of some of the great healers: St. Martin de Porres, Servant of God Brother Artemide Zatti, Blessed Brother Andre, Blessed Father Damien the Leper. Father Damien personally dug the grave and buried a leper every day for years. For years, by himself, he dressed their wounds. This is love. I was sick and you visited me. Do I make myself the servant of the sick? As a physician am I a student of the human heart, a cardiosopher?

Shortly after I finished my residency training, I went to Ethiopia to work as a missionary physician. There over the past 6 and 1/2 years, I have become well acquainted with the challenges of mission life: In Ethiopia, communication is always a challenge as more than 80 languages are spoken in the country. We regularly use four languages at our tiny clinic. Each day, we have to deal with the epidemics of tuberculosis and AIDS. There are many dying. We have to deal with ignorance, starvation, and abject poverty. For example, this week I treated a 5 year old who was starving to death: He weighs less than 20 lbs. I also treated a 10 year old girl's wounds. Her parents had treated her wounds with a local remedy—battery acid. Over these years, I have seen many, many people die after being given local 'herbal' medicines.

How has my education in the PLS helped me to deal with the challenges I face as a missionary physician? First and foremost, in the PLS my faith

was renewed, purified and informed. By training my mind in writing, reasoning, persuasion and reflection and by reading the Great Books, I was able to examine my faith and understand its meaning. This led me forward, with the adequate skills of the mind, to pursue a relationship with God through prayer and service. Faced daily with suffering and death, ignorance, shortages, and bureaucratic nonsense, I reflect prayerfully on the reality of mission life. I need constantly to retreat into the cell of my own

nothingness and sing the praise and glory of God. It is there that I find the patience, love, courage, faith and wisdom to continue to serve the poor. Only with humility can we truly love. The Incarnate Wisdom lived a life of humble service and self-sacrifice to the very end. You are humility! You, Incarnate Wisdom are love!

## Michael Schierl

Michael Schierl graduated summa cum laude from the Program of Liberal Studies in 1984, and became a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He received his J. D. from Harvard University in 1988. In 1987, he took a year off from his studies at Harvard to serve as the Assistant to the President for Fort Howard Paper Company, where he negotiated joint venture relationships and the potential sale of Fort Howard's Far East subsidiary located in Hong Kong. From 1988 until 1992, Michael was a corporate attorney in New York with the law firm Dewey Ballantine, where he specialized in merger and acquisitions and public market transactions. From 1993 until 1998, Michael served as the President of Julius Capital Partners, a Chicago-based private equity firm he founded. In 1999, Michael and his wife, Valerie, founded Who2Trust, Inc., a new type of business directory that helps Consumers find businesses recommended by people they know. After selling Who2Trust, Michael became a Senior Partner with EaglesNet, a fund raising consultancy, whose mission is to change the way non-profit organizations fund their visions. Michael lives in La Grange Park, Illinois with his wife, Valerie, daughter, Madeline, and new born son, Zachary.

I'd like to put a title on my comments. I'd like to say it was "How PLS Helped Me Become a Serial Entrepreneur." So I think that a lot of this concern about whether PLS or the Great Books program are practical or useful in the real world is a bunch of hogwash. I think it's one of the most practical and useful things that anyone can do, and I would have a hard time believing if someone really understood what the program was about, that they'd do anything else. Of course, that would spoil it for all of us, to have more people in the program. Smaller classes. So we have to try to keep this a secret.

If we were to do good marketing about this program we might say to those that are interested in business: what this is, is great studies on the world's most successful entrepreneurs through the ages. You'd probably have hundreds of people trying to join. If you are looking for people who wanted to change the world in the area of social policy, you might say, "Here's a practical handbook and guide for people who want to use ideas to change the world." You would have people signing up in droves. So I think it's better we just use PLS or GP or something no one else could really understand. Secret handshakes—all the rest. After I came here I actually had three other siblings who attended Notre Dame, and they all went in PLS, and they somehow all survived and managed to put food on the table after they graduated. So the biggest point is that it is really a joke that people are even concerned about whether this is practical or not. What I think PLS allows people to take away is a real strong framework for making life decisions. A feel for what paradigms are inside and the ability to compare ideas and make sure about companies they're going to join, companies they're going to found, companies they're going to fund. Just organizations they want to become a part of. Where to send your kids to school. All these

types of decisions usually require you to look at ideas in a place where you're really unsure about which way to go. And when it is obvious usually that means that you're stuck in a place where you don't know alternatives. So the real life decision shouldn't be obvious and the more difficult they are to choose means that you're actually doing the right thing. If you think it's hard to figure out where to go after you graduate, it means you've learned a lot.

Now to bring this down to practical terms of what I learned and how I used some of my teaching. At school here I really kind of found myself gravitating to two areas. One was in the sciences, and I was really mentored by Dr. Crowe and Dr. Sloan in this area. The second area was epistemology—or the study of how we come to know things. I have Dr. Tillman and Cardinal Newman to thank for my learning in this area.

Regarding the sciences, I kind of fell in love with the men of science and their stories and how they were able to create ideas that ended up changing the world. And just to give a reference to a book or a way of thinking, although it was not one of the "Great Books," Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* was a monumental book for me in putting an umbrella over trying to figure out which scientific ideas, which big decisions that we're facing—which theory should we choose. You know where you don't have evidence that can bear out, and I think I still remember to this day the Ptolemy-Copernicus debate and writing a paper at that time for me was a life-changing event. Here is the practical, life-changing thing I learned in this area of study: when you're trying to make a decision about which ideas to believe and you don't have a lot of evidence—there are three rules that you should follow. And I'll also show you that these three rules are the identical rules that a venture capitalist uses to pick which business ideas to fund. In

fact, you should use these three rules whenever you are making a major decision without the benefit of tangible evidence.

The first rule is this: you should always pick the simple idea over the complex. It's a common rule among Venture Capitalists: if an entrepreneur can't clearly explain his business idea in a one page executive summary, then he doesn't have it figured out himself. Go back when you can write it down in a sentence, what's your simple idea.

The second rule is this: if the idea is really true, if it is an important idea, if it's really a home run, then the idea should somehow change the way people see the world. It should involve some kind of a paradigm shift and you should be able to go to our third point about choosing an idea. That is, it should be predictive and not just explanatory. So in the case of Copernicus—just to go back to what I drew from that—obviously it is a simple idea. You remember Ptolemy had a bunch of very complicated ways, but it was a kind of large contraption that he used and it didn't really have any basis in reality. He used no simple way to explain that and Copernicus just had planets rotate around the sun. That's it. That's pretty simple; so Copernicus wins based on rule #1—simplicity. Copernicus also wins on rule #2, because his theory would certainly change the way people would perceive the world. So, Copernicus came up with a simple, world-changing idea. Big deal. Thousands of entrepreneurs have these big business ideas every day, but someone else ends up with the big company.

What makes Copernicus's theory famous today is rule #3: when you start to think in terms of that paradigm, you can start to do things by making it predictive. You can say: well if that's true, then certain things should happen and certain things should **not** happen. For example, you should eventually be able to see planets coming around the other side of the sun. So if we got to a big telescope we ought see something over there. It directs you about where you should look next. And that was fundamental to me. In the business world, predicting the practical implications of the big ideas is where the real money is made.

The three rules I described above relate to the nature of the idea itself. Another method of testing the truth of an idea is to look at how deeply the scientist or entrepreneur himself believes the idea. This is where Dr. Tillman, Cardinal Newman and epistemology come into play. As most Venture Capitalists know, there are lots of intelligent ideas and business plans that never get funded because the entrepreneur himself doesn't seem to believe in his own idea strongly enough. This notion has a strong basis in the teaching of Cardinal Newman. In his *Grammar of Assent*, Newman teaches that the most true and most solid knowledge that we can gain is something called real assent. And that book was a book that changed my life too, and I encourage everyone to look at that. But what it says is that—in simple terms—is that there's kind of notional assent where you believe an idea and then there's real assent where you not only believe in the idea but you're willing to go out and act as if it's true, risk your life

on the basis of it being true, and it tends also to be called faith—real faith in some ways—and this is actually the most solid form of knowledge that we have.

Now if you take these ideas together and you go back and look at the men of science—it's very funny but these guys were the greatest entrepreneurs ever in the history of the world. Of course, they were scientists whose ideas were simple, paradigm-shifting and predictive. But if you look at their lives, the unique thing about them is how they personally had so much FAITH in their ideas being true. And if you look at these guys, they all fit the mold of what I call founders or entrepreneurs,—they all had passionate, sometimes unrealistic belief in their ideas. And, in some cases—think of Darwin—and they spent their whole life working on a single premise. Imagine that: Copernicus says I believe the earth goes around the sun. I'm going to spend the rest of my life working on that idea.

So, whether you're funding a new business or testing a scientific theory—you should first look for an idea that has some real weight to it. You then make sure the entrepreneur has some real experience with the subject matter of the idea. Finally, you test it further by seeing how passionately the entrepreneur believes in the idea. Newman tells us it's possible for these great thinkers to obtain their belief far before they obtain their proof because they have come to the answer directly from their experience. And then they spend the rest of their life trying to prove that out. But they come to the answer directly so it's kind of a trust your guts kind of thing. So the second point is that it has to be born out of experience. And then the third part of this passionate belief idea is that these people are willing to risk everything for that idea. If you go out and look, they spent almost all their time on it, and almost all their money, and they would spot money from other people to somehow make it happen, and they usually lost most of their friends—poor or persecuted or killed. So these are things that I think made the men of science great. Sure, they have created the kind of ideas that at their core—especially in science—are simple, predictive, and that change the way people see the world. But, if you look at the people themselves, it's their passion about what they were doing that made them unique and their ideas succeed.

Now how do I use this information in my real life. How do I use it to make decisions about what company I join, what company I try to found, what company I would like to fund, what organizations I would like to be involved with. Where I will send my kids. I use these simple two elements.

The last two companies I founded reflected one of my passions: I developed a passion for using technology to leverage the vast untapped knowledge—real assent. The things people know because I believe we trust our gut and there's that knowledge out there and we can use technology to bring that to bear so that it can improve people's life and they can trust the recommendations and the knowledge of other people. So the first

company I created was called "Who2Trust." It was a real simple idea. It was an easier way to ask around for recommendations for your friends. And if you're going to select a doctor or a financial planner, or make some other important decision—wouldn't it be nice if you could at one point ask the question once and you would find the most recommended doctor by your neighbors, by your fellow PLS graduates, by your co-workers?

But I'm now in the process of selling that business and finding the next thing to do—and that's why I am very similar to probably a lot of graduates in three to four years wondering what to do now. And I'm looking to probably join a company whose vision is to change the world in which not-for-profits do business. The simple idea is to utilize web technology to enable large non-profit organizations with local chapters to share "best practices" about fundraising. It's a simple idea to impact the world by changing the way not-for-profits do business like in technology. And for me when I went to talk to people who were running it they were passionate about this. They'd been doing this for thirty years with no money and the rest of that. I encourage you to use similar criteria for making life decisions.

If they can't explain to you simply and they are not passionate about it, get out. One last little anecdote about how I used this in a recent decision regarding my son, and it's not about founding companies. My son was born with a physical deformity called club foot on each of his feet. They were badly turned in. It was scary to look at. The type of thing that in a Third World country has people walking around on the side of their feet. Much like Copernicus, my wife and I needed to make a treatment decision with little tangible evidence to help us make the decision. I was able to get some references to some doctors and we went and listened. And you're asking them about their treatments—you know—just tell it to me simply—what are you doing here? And it turns out that when you really look into it, it seems like there's more complicated ways to do it and there's more simple ways to do it. Traditionally surgery would result in a

very high probability of not having a very successful outcome or a lot of pain and other things. We were then able to get on the internet and similarly tapping into the common knowledge of other people who have treated this. We were able to find a specialist in Iowa who had a very simple way of doing this that didn't rely on medical surgery at all. I called him up, got him on the phone, got testimonials from other people who had used it, and we went to Iowa to see him. And he explained it to us very simply. It showed that they moved him with casts and then they did a simple procedure at the end. And in that situation I used the same learning. It's something I could understand. It's a paradigm I believed that made sense to me so the idea was good. And when I looked at the guy who was there—86 years old and still working on feet—for these babies, called Doctor Ponsetti, and he gave his home number and all the rest of this. He looked me right in the eye and said, "I will fix this for you. Don't worry about it." And that's a kind of important thing I think we should view when we go about making these life decisions. We should look at the idea and use the paradigm and then we should trust our gut. We should reach out and trust others, and that's the way we can go about making the right decisions. So that was the real way to bring home to me the importance of using technology to kind of let people get knowledge together so we can make these decisions. It kind of gave me a further validation that I should join this particular company.

So I encourage everyone not to disparage your education here as not being practical. It's the most practical thing you can do. Making the life decisions that you'll go through. Doing that well is what we should strive for as our top priority. And practical learning about specifics—you'll figure that out when the decisions come to face you. Go out and get experience. Trust your heart. And then follow your heart, and you'll find out that you'll end up where you should be.

## Kenneth Taylor

Ken Taylor graduated cum laude from the Program of Liberal Studies in 1977, having been selected for the Program's Willis Nutting Award. In 1984, he received his Ph. D. in philosophy from the University of Chicago. He is currently Associate Professor of Philosophy and Symbolic Systems at Stanford University and is the incoming chair of his department at Stanford. He has also taught philosophy at Middlebury College, Wesleyan University, University of Maryland (College Park), and Rutgers University. He is the author of a book titled *Truth and Meaning: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language* (Blackwell, 1998) and of *Referring to the World: An Introduction to the Theory of Reference* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming). He has also published numerous articles on the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language. Professor Taylor has held fellowships from the Lilly Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

### My Journey from Engineering to Philosophy via PLS

I want to start by going back 24 years ago—unbelievably—to when I was about to graduate from the General Program of Liberal Studies, as it was then called—aka the PLS. As an aside, let me say that

when they made that name change, it felt like part of my past had been taken away. But I understand why they did it. And I suppose that I can forgive them. Anyway, back to those months just before graduation.

Though I had a great experience in the program, by the beginning of my senior year, I still didn't know what I wanted to do with my life after PLS. You see, I had started out as a double major in electrical engineering and psychology. Back then—I don't know if it still exists—Notre Dame had this five year program which allowed you to get a BS in engineering and a BA in some Arts and Letters program. Arts and Letters Engineering, I think the program was called. I had always been aimed by everything in my background toward a technical, scientific or mathematical career. But I wanted at the same time to be a well-rounded sort of guy. So Arts and Letters Engineering seemed to me like a perfect combination. Indeed, this program was one of the main things that attracted me to Notre Dame. So I came to Notre Dame intending to double major in electrical engineering (with a computer engineering emphasis) and psychology. Now to complete an Arts and Letters Engineering degree in five years, you really had to get started right away, especially since the engineering part was so demanding. So my freshman year was mostly taken up with courses in engineering or the background science and math courses required of all engineers, plus a few psychology courses and some general education courses. The thing I remember most about that year was having the realization that psychology, at least as then practiced, was more about rats than about people. And it just wasn't for me. I now realize that although behaviorism was on its way out all around the world during the early 70's, the Notre Dame psychology department was still pretty much mired in behaviorism. One consequence of that was that we spent a lot of time studying rats. I had always thought psychology was about people. And I just didn't warm to the rats. So by the end of my freshman year, I decided to drop the psychology part of my Arts and Letters Engineering major.

But that left me still needing a second major, if I was to stick to my original plan. I went to this "major fest" in search of a second major. There were these guys talking about the Great Books program. And I thought, "Oh, that sounds cool. Maybe I'll major in that." But when I sat down with an advisor it looked impossible to fit in, even in five years, an EE degree and a degree in PLS since both majors were rather, shall we say, all consuming. But I thought, "Somehow, I'll do it. If I have to take seven courses every semester that's what I'll do." I remember talking to John Lyon, who was then the chair of the program, about how to do this and we worked out some plan. I think it involved my getting to substitute some of my engineering and/or science courses for some part of the Natural Science curriculum.

Now I'm telling you all this to give you a feel for my journey from would-be engineer to philosophy professor via a route that led through the Program of Liberal Studies. So here I was throughout my Sophomore year a double major in Electrical Engineering and the Program of Liberal studies. A pretty demanding combination. But I thought that I wanted to be an engineer. And I knew I wanted to be

well rounded. Unfortunately, by the end of my sophomore year, I had come to the realization that I really didn't want to be an engineer at all. It just seemed so boring to me, especially in comparison to what I was learning in the Program. So the beginning of my junior year, I dropped the engineering part of my double major. Now that may have been a very large mistake. You see, I was an electrical engineer with a computer engineering emphasis. That's how you did what would now be called a computer science major. You had to major in EE with an emphasis on Computer Engineering. I say that was probably a pretty big mistake, because I now live in Silicon Valley. If I had stayed in engineering, I would probably have a building named after me on this campus by now. I would have been a Silicon Valley pioneer, probably.

Now having dropped my engineering major, I really felt I had to pick up some other major. I mean I couldn't just be a PLS major. That just wouldn't do. So what else would I major in? Well, I had kind of a ready made answer. All along instead of taking the applied mathematics courses that most engineers took, I had been substituting the more theory oriented courses designed for math majors. So I thought I could easily pick up the required additional math courses, thereby keeping my hand in this technical scientific thing that I had been primed for, and still do PLS, and still satisfy my desire for a technical degree and a well rounded education.

Unfortunately, by the beginning of my senior year, I realized that I was never going to be a mathematician—and maybe I was a little tired of working so hard. It wasn't that I didn't love mathematics. I did and do. It's just that in order to become a professional mathematician one needs to have a peculiar gene. And I don't have that gene. I realized that I could be an observer of mathematics. I could watch it happen and understand what was going on. But I couldn't produce it in the way that professional mathematicians with that peculiar gene do.

There's a message in my journey as I have told it so far. Think about this. Some people think that an infinite life would be a very good thing. But think of how many disappointments one would have to endure in such a life. When I was young, I wanted to be a third baseman. I played third base for awhile in little league and in Babe Ruth. But by the time I was fourteen, I realized I was never going to be much of a third baseman. At Notre Dame, where I wrestled until injuries did me in, I realized that I was never going to go to the Olympics. I realized that I was never going to be an engineer, never going to be a mathematician. And I could go on. Well just think of how many realizations of this sort one would have to endure if one was doomed to live forever.

But back to the journey. By the start of my senior year, I really was at a loss as to what I was going to do with my life. I did form a provisional plan, mainly because my parents kept asking me, "Well, Ken, what do you plan to do with you life after you leave Notre Dame?" You see, when I had dropped out of engineering—which I had been saying I wanted

to do since at least my freshman year in high school—they were shocked. And when I had picked up a major in the Program of Liberal Studies, I had sold them the line that I was only doing that in order to be a well rounded engineer. So I really had to tell them something once PLS was my only major left standing. I told them that I had decided to go to law school. That was just about everybody's provisional plan for life after PLS.

But my heart was ever in that one. Pretty quickly, there came a moment of self-declaration when I realized I just didn't want to be a lawyer. It happened about the time I was scheduled to take the LSAT exam. They sent you this card, as I recall, that told you where the exam was scheduled and when. And I think you were supposed to take that card to that place in order to gain admittance to the test taking room. Well, I tore my card up the very morning of the exam.

So here I was. I wasn't going to be a lawyer either. I had thought about applying to the Peace Corps. I thought maybe after a couple of years of doing good works I might figure out what to do with my life. Also, just as a lark, I had applied to graduate school in philosophy at various places. I actually won a fellowship from the Danforth Foundation, which somehow seemed to ice my decision to go to graduate school. Without really intending it to happen, somewhere along the line it kind of dawned on me what I really wanted was to keep doing what I had been doing in the PLS. And I thought of that as being a philosopher, being an intellectual, being a thinking, inquiring person, a lover of wisdom. I realized that in the PLS I had really found my heart's desire. I had started out thinking of the PLS just as a sort of add on to my technical scientific education, but I had quite unexpectedly found something so engaging and thrilling that it literally kept me up nights.

Now it kept me up for two reasons. First, you need to know that the members of my cohort in the PLS had a nickname for me. They called me "The Extension King." That's because I got an extension on every single paper I wrote in the PLS. And I was often up pulling all-nighters, trying to finish one of those papers that Ed Cronin said the other day you can't write in a night. But I'm living proof that he's wrong about that. But the PLS also kept me up at night even on those rare occasions when I didn't have a paper to finish. It kept me up because I was utterly gripped by the books that we read. And not just by the books but also by the teaching of the books. Indeed, I still regard the teachers that I had then as guiding lights. I try to be to my students what my teachers in the program were to me. I often fail. To this day, I think of Stephen Rogers. He was and is one of my heroes. I try and try to measure up to him, to be for my students the kind of professor that he was to me. I fail over and over again. But I try. I still try to be like Katherine Tillman—who gave me so many of those extensions out of the kindness of her heart. I try to inspire my students the way that she inspired me. I am eternally grateful to them all.

You see the idea of becoming a philosopher was something utterly alien to me when I came to Notre Dame. Indeed, the idea of an academic career was alien to me. I come from a working class background. My father was born in the deep dark days of Jim Crow segregation in the South. He was the son of a sharecropper who received only an eighth grade education, as was normal for rural blacks of his age in those days. My mother was from a somewhat more privileged, but still working class background in the industrial Midwest. When you come from a background like that and you are the first child in your family to complete college, you're supposed to do something that makes money, that is visible. Academia was just not visible from where I came from. Being in the Program of Liberal Studies and finally owning up to my heart's desire was a revelation and an act of self-definition and self-ownership. I am eternally grateful to these teachers for opening up myself to me.

Okay. So I got into graduate school. And set out to become a professional philosopher, of all things, thinking that graduate school in philosophy would be like PLS only deeper—since I would be studying one thing and not everything. Boy was I in for a rude awakening. In many ways, I was totally unprepared for what I encountered in graduate school. At the University of Chicago, where I went to graduate school, there were a few professors interested in the main historical figures of philosophy and there were a few professors who were interested in broad issues that touched on the whole of intellectual culture, but mostly my professors were what some feminist philosophers call "logo-phallo-centric." They were deeply committed to contemporary analytic philosophy which, at the time, struck me as this utterly alien, ahistorical, isolated, narrow thing hardly worthy of attention. I derisively thought, "*This* is philosophy?" I had quite a hard time adjusting to it. But rather than admit defeat, and look for yet another thing to devote my life to, I plunged into it. I do have to admit that during that first year many of my teachers regarded me as some sort of oddity. "Who is this guy who keeps bringing up all these old dead guys?" I think they thought of me as suffering from a serious bout of monumentalism about the past. I'm now making a small philosophical point. By monumentalism about the past, I mean the view that all these Great Books and these great figures are great monuments and that we kind of sit at their feet, that our current concerns and our current capacities pale when measured against their monumental achievements. Monumentalism is not a good thing. Monumentalism is the enemy, I think, of unfettered inquiry. So perhaps my teachers were right to be wary of the monumentalism they perceived in me.

But if monumentalism about the past is not a good thing, neither is a triumphalism about the present moment. Triumphalism of the present moment is the view that we here and now are so much better, so much more advanced than our forebears, that they are really irrelevant. They may be interesting museum pieces and historical curiosities, perhaps beautiful to contemplate, but they have no essential role to play in the living

dialectical about our current intellectual and cultural concerns.

But let me go back a step. I've left one crucial thing out. Here I was off to pursue graduate school in philosophy. I hadn't told my parents any of this, though. They were still expecting me to be a lawyer. I actually held off telling them until August, just before school was scheduled to start. One day my dad says to me, "So, Ken what are you going to do in the fall. Are you going off to Law School." I said, "No Dad, I'm going to graduate school in philosophy." Quite startled, he says, "You're going to do what?" I said, "I'm going to go to graduate school in philosophy." "Wait a minute," he says, "I thought you were going to be an engineer." "Dad," I say, "I don't want to be an engineer. Don't you remember I dropped out of engineering in my junior year?" "I remember that," he says, "but you told me that you would go to law school, if you weren't going to be an engineer. And now that's what all this Great Books stuff has led you to? Philosophy?" "Yes Dad. That's right. That's what I really want to do," I said. And he says, "What am I going to tell my friends? My son the philosopher. How's that sound? My son, the philosopher." Well, my dad eventually became reconciled to my choice. He's even proud of me, I would dare say. Of course, he never says, "My son, the philosopher." He says, "My son, the professor." And when people ask, "Professor of what?" He kind of whispers in a barely audible voice, "Philosophy."

But back to monumentalism and triumphalism. I think of these as two permanent competing temptations, both of which must be resisted. Monumentalism tempts us to worship the past in a way that undercuts our current concerns. Triumphalism tempts us to ignore the past, to shut it out from our ongoing dialectic. My teachers in graduate school probably thought of me as a Monumentalist about the past and I thought of my teachers as suffering from a Triumphalism about the present moment. Since neither is a good thing—though something is right about each—I want to urge on you a middle way between triumphalism and monumentalism. Here we are now. We thinking, feeling beings, trying to understand the world we encounter, trying to build meaningful lives together in a just and inclusive

society. That's our going concern as thinking, feeling, social beings. As such, we must master the language and structures of contemporary intellectual and social life. But somehow we must manage to make those who have come before us living partners in that endeavor. For the surest way forward, I believe, and the only way forward that can fully resonate to all that we are and seek to be, is to invite the best of the past into our current and ongoing cultural discourse. We don't go to the figures of the past as mere worshipful students. We go as thinking, feeling, acting beings, engaged in intellectual, social and cultural projects of our own, in our own moment. And we say, "We want to have a conversation with you." And I think of myself as striving to do that in my own work. Phil Sloan mentioned my senior thesis on Kant and Darwin. I am still engaged in that dialog in a very real way. And PLS got me started on that. In my early graduate education, I took mostly historically oriented courses and resisted all those course on language and reference that later became my main area of expertise in philosophy. But gradually I realize that despite the different tenor and technical vocabulary it is really possible and fruitful to bring these seemingly disparate things into a dynamic engagement, to have that long conversation.

Now if some of you end up going to graduate school, especially in one of the disciplines of the humanities, you may have experiences like mine. The first year or two may be a rude awakening. Because so many contemporary intellectuals in so many disciplines suffer from triumphalism, you may find yourselves asking daily, "What *are* these people doing?" Triumphalism does get one thing right. We are condemned to live in the current moment. PLS, however, rightly teaches that the current moment can be made infinitely richer and more conducive to our deepest strivings if we invite the past in, if we have that ongoing conversation with the best that has been thought and written.

Finally, let me thank Michael Crowe and Father Ayo for inviting me back. I so love this program. It has meant so much to me. It astounds me to this day how deeply it has shaped my intellectual life. So thank you all so very much for the honor and pleasure of sharing this anniversary with you.





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