



PROGRAMMA

A Newsletter for Graduates of the Program of Liberal Studies
The University of Notre Dame

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THE VIEW FROM 318

Greetings to all alumni and friends of the Program of Liberal Studies. The first weeks of this new year have brought the usual challenges of winter in Northern Indiana, but this time also brings an opportunity to share with you news in and about the Program from the last half-year. There is much encouraging news.

First, there are some new faculty with us helping to provide the distinctive education of the Program to the more than 190 students currently enrolled. Dr. Susan Youens with a background in musicology and literature joined us in the fall; she has a book forthcoming on the music of Franz Schubert. Rejoining the Program where he taught some of you in his first year after graduate study (1977-1978), is Dr. Mark Jordan. Dr. Jordan is a philosopher and medievalist whose book on the philosophical discourses of Thomas Aquinas will also appear in months ahead.

And then there is the very special news concerning the John J. Cavanaugh Chair in the Humanities. The past Spring saw the completion of a process of search for the occupant of this first endowed chair in the Program of Liberal Studies; the search went all around the world and came home to settle on one of the Program's outstanding teachers and former chairmen. All the senior faculty had participated in the search, and all rejoiced in early summer when Frederick Crosson accepted the invitation to return to the Program. As we start this new term Professor Crosson is back with full presence in the life of the Program, teaching with us and heavily involved with committee responsibilities affecting the development of the Program. Many of you whose lives have been touched by Professor Crosson will recall that after teaching in the Program from 1953 to 1968, he became the first lay dean of the College of Arts and Letters and served in that post until 1975; then in 1976, he was named the first holder of the John Cardinal O'Hara Chair in Philosophy. Welcome now to the initial occupant of the Cavanaugh Chair in the Humanities!

And yet more special news. This past October Dean Michael Loux, with the approval of Provost O'Meara and Father Hesburgh, announced the appointment of Professor Phillip Sloan as chairman of the Program for a term beginning with the next academic year. Professor Sloan came to the Program in 1974; broadly trained in the natural sciences along with a Ph.D. in philosophy,

Professor Sloan has manifested his special excellences in forming and teaching in the Program's science tutorials over the last decade. Recently, he has undertaken special responsibilities for the second half of the year-long course sequence in Intellectual and Cultural History in the Program's senior year. He is world renown for his scholarship on the development of thought of Charles Darwin, and its relationship to Christian thought, devoted to the Great Books approach to liberal education, and is notably trusted by his colleagues for thoroughness and judiciousness in all matters. In our next issue, I will still have the chance to wish him well and you farewell from this chairman's perch.

A reminder to all on Reunion Weekend (June 6-9). The call remains out for volunteers among you who would help plan and coordinate a Great Books seminar for your class during the Reunion. My apologies to the class of 1980 for not including Mary Schmidtlein's current address as promised in the last *Programma*. Mary will be contacting you, but if there's any slip up at finding you, you can reach her at 7769B Charing Street, St. Louis, MO. 63119 for Reunion seminar details for the 1980 class.

One last bit of encouraging news: there seems to be a rising national concern with substance and quality in undergraduate education. Reports within the past year based on studies supported by the Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities have stressed both the importance of a structured curriculum that leads undergraduates to repossess critically their own Western heritage and the necessity of conditions that bring regular faculty into close and constant contact with undergraduates in the course of their development. You will be hearing in the press in the months ahead of a couple more reports that are likely to be sounding these themes among others. Even as we here work at improving the Program of Liberal Studies, those who have been involved with it and the University that has encouraged and supported it might take some satisfaction from the Program's steady effort over thirty-five years to provide a very special kind of alternative in American higher education. All best wishes in the new year.

Walter Nicgorski
Chairman

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Faculty Editor: Phillip Sloan
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EDITOR'S DESK

The end of the holiday season means that *Programma* is also due, and we have a full issue this time. Professor Nicgorski, retiring next Fall from the Chairmanship, leads us off with the publication of his annual opening "charge" to the students, a particularly welcome contribution which opened this last year in the Chair. Several issues are posed here for reflection, particularly on the good and bad uses of the ancient art of rhetoric, and its power for good and evil in an age of mass communication. We also have an opportunity to publish some reflections from our two new faculty members already introduced by Professor Nicgorski, Susan Youens and Mark Jordan. Each gives us a short introduction and develops some of their views on education.

In response to my appeal for contributions on the new computer age in the last issue, I have received two articles which are printed herein. I hope that this round-table will generate more suggestions from alumni for contributions on topics of interest for our next editor.

---Phillip Sloan

THE LIBERAL ARTS AND THE POWER OF POWERS

It is with some uneasiness that I begin a speech that is offered as the "charge" or "keynote" for the year. This has been, after all, a summer of high-flying oratory. Is there any Walter who would want to speak after such fervent oratory as that of Mario Cuomo and Jesse Jackson, and then this Walter appears so shortly after the likes of Jeane Kirkpatrick, Kathryn Ortega and Ronald Reagan himself have made their appeals. If I am not totally daunted or paralyzed by fear, it is because I know that at least partly in my control are certain rules for success, maxims of the art of rhetoric or public speaking. There is that rule of modern public speaking that is quite easy to carry out - especially the last two of the three parts of this rule for success. Not only is it easy to effect, but it usually brings immediate acclaim and popularity, especially with tired audiences. The rule in its three parts is Be Sincere, Be Brief and Be Seated.

Unfortunately perhaps, I lean to the side of classical wisdom in most instances and in the use of rhetoric, the overarching classical rule was formulated best by Cicero and is captured in his phrase *dicere apte*-- to speak aptly or befittingly or appropriately. That simple rule means

something like - "Say the right thing to the right audience at the right time." It is clear that this rule of "speaking appropriately" is more general than the previous rule about being brief and being seated. It encompasses or comprehends and thus supercedes the rule about being brief and being seated. There may, in other words, be occasions when being brief and being seated is not the right thing; being brief and being seated will not work in those cases even though it is in general a sound maxim or guideline. In fact, according to Cicero and the best of the classical rhetorical tradition, this overarching rule of speaking aptly is just that, a rule of rules; it is the principle that may require one to alter in certain circumstances all the other accumulated rules of the art of rhetoric.

Now, of course, I am implying that this audience and this occasion require more than brevity and a departure. Be assured that this is not to say that brevity will be cast to the wind, for this audience too is human, and it would be shameful as well as self-defeating to expend too soon the new levels of energy and patience that the summer has allowed all of us to repossess.

But these introductory remarks have, I trust, done something more than make a perhaps quite obvious point about the character of this audience. It happens that our attention is now focused on the art of rhetoric and specifically rhetoric of the spoken word. This occasion and the summer's campaign oratory remind us that the art of rhetoric is alive and with us however faultily one or another speaker may employ it. The art of rhetoric once flourished simultaneous with one of the great periods of our Western intellectual tradition. The philosophical awakening represented in the efforts of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle occurred at first in tension with and then in tandem with what is regarded as the Golden Age of rhetorical achievement. This is a period roughly extending from the oratorical achievements of Pericles, which the seniors shortly will be reading as they study Thucydides, and to those of Demosthenes. It is a period when teachers of the art of rhetoric abounded, were well known and sought to sell their knowledge above all in the most powerful democracy of the time, the city-state of Athens. Once one recalls that the object of the art of rhetoric, then as well as now, is to persuade the audience, one understands why such teachers of the art gravitated to Athens and why talented young men of the likes of Pericles were drawn to the practice of rhetoric. Rhetoric, to be sure, pervades human life, for human life is necessarily social and political. Rhetoric, subject always to that rule of appropriateness, is present in one-to-one relationships and is operable in councils of oligarchs. But when a people, a nation, is free, when they set their own destiny by choosing their leaders and marking out preferred directions of policy, then we would call such a people democratic and then we have a situation where the art of rhetoric, the power of persuasion, becomes the primary tool for gaining power and hence for gaining the very direction of the state. So it is understandable that teachers of rhetoric, venal and self-serving ones as well as those with noble goals, would be drawn to a democratic society, and that ambitious persons in that society, ambitious for good or ill purposes, would be drawn to such teachers.

I alluded above to the fact that the philosophical efforts of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle arose initially in tension with the flourishing art and practice of rhetoric in their time. The tension consisted chiefly in the difference between the tendency of the teachers of rhetoric to emphasize the goal of gaining the power of persuasion and the emphasis of the Socratic tradition on the goal of achieving wisdom including the capacity to live a virtuous and thereby happy life. This argument of classical philosophy with certain teachers of rhetoric, called the Sophists, is worked

out most elaborately in Plato's *Gorgias*, but it echoes through most Platonic works as this year's sophomores will see in their encounter with the *Apology* and the *Republic*, and it is fundamental to the conception of ethics and macro-ethics or politics which Aristotle develops.

In fixing our attention on the art and power of rhetoric and the critique of it by the Socratic tradition, we are in fact looking directly at a paradigm instance of a persistent and persuasive human problem. It is this central problem, perhaps the most important of our Western tradition, that I wish above all to bring before you. I then will endeavor to show you how we who love, teach and practice the liberal arts are deeply implicated with the problem, and finally, I will suggest a direction and some of the conditions for working our way through the problem.

One way, an easy way, to make clear the problem posed by the art of rhetoric is to look at its contemporary form, posed by a true, modern descendant, a natural extension of the ancient art of rhetoric. It takes no great imagination to see that the technologies of advertising and public relations, aspects of the overall technology of marketing, constitute the art of persuasion in our free society. Nothing essential has changed. No candidate or campaign of any note today can have reasonable hope of success without reliance on professional advertising agencies, media consultants and public relations firms. When a candidate gives a speech, that public appearance and what is said is likely to be coordinated with an overall effort to sell the candidate, and of course the speech will have to be right for the media audience as well as for the live audience if there is one. Political analysts have become so sensitive to these dimensions of modern democratic politics that there seems at times to be more talk of what image this or that candidate is seeking to project than there is of issues and evidences of character. But all of the elaborate new technologies of persuasion, the advertising, media coordination, and so on, all of this is really o.k. and understandable. That this is so, is clear when we reflect how we think about a particularly effective piece of advertising or, let us say, a superbly produced campaign film for our side, that is, for the candidate or party that we think is right. If such advertising makes emotional appeals like those to compassion or to patriotism, we are apt to say that's as it should be. We are likely to approve if it helps get the right vote or the right action out of the people. When such technologies work against what we regard as right, we are inclined to protest against them as "slick," emotional, and dangerous. Even when we find ourselves approving, however, we are uneasy with the new level of sophistication of the technologies of rhetoric or persuasion; we are haunted by the fear that these tools, these instruments, might be used for wicked purposes or goals. We are concerned that these new powers which human ingenuity and intelligence have given might corrupt our democracy and advance evil. We want power to be subordinated to virtue. Like the ancient Socratic critique of the art of rhetoric, we fear and fight arts or technologies that enlarge human capacities to do evil as long as they are not subordinated to virtue.

This problem of enlarged power seemingly unrelated to good or noble ends extends throughout modern life, and in fact most often it is not discussed in terms of the technologies of persuasion which we have emphasized, but in terms of the progress of natural science and the related technological explosion of modern times. This is a nuclear age, a computer age, an age of genetic engineering--to mention only some of our new possibilities that most often both excite and distress us. It has been a commonplace of social commentary in the Western world throughout this century to observe that the human race has made great scientific and technological progress but has

not progressed at all or proportionately in terms of moral development. The same old Adam who once held the javelin and the crossbow is at the controls, and this fact is the source of considerable anxiety and commentary even as we marvel at man's modern pyramidal achievements. With the developments of technology, power after power have been added to the now impressive and daily growing human repertoire of powers. At the same time there is a notable lack or deficiency in the repertoire that concerns what might be called *the power of powers*, namely the power of using well and rightly all the other capacities of the repertoire. In our best moments, we yearn for the ways and means to add this decisive power of powers to the human repertoire. We criticize power without virtue, like the Socratics criticized the pretensions and activities of those Sophistic teachers of rhetoric, yet like the Socratics of old we puzzle over how one comes to possess virtue.

Those of us who love, study, teach and practice the liberal arts are, however, inclined to think that somehow we have chosen the path of virtue, that we are tending to the much needed power of powers. This is often a dangerous and short-sighted pretension. Consider, however, what may make us think that ours is the path of virtue. The great powers like nuclear energy and genetic engineering appear to be the creations of those who have taken other courses of study. So too with the technology of marketing that encompasses advertising and public relations. Before these new powers were applied to democratic politics they were developed and perfected, and they continue to be, in the service of business and profit. In our experience, these awesome new powers belong to other people and other colleges around here. We are not implicated. Or are we?

One way to shake this faulty analysis loose is to remember what was said earlier about the ancestry of present-day political marketing and advertising. We saw these technologies of persuasion as direct descendants of the art of rhetoric. And the art of rhetoric, we must now recall, is one of those seven traditional liberal arts, the arts of language and thought - the trivium of logic, rhetoric and grammar and the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. We liberal artists of the Twentieth century may find new ways to enumerate those arts; one might speak of them as the arts of thought, argument and communication; another like Professor Rogers speaks of them as the arts of analysis, discovery, proof and persuasion. None of these formulations deny or distract from the fact that these are the arts of thought and language; these are the distinctively human arts; these are, let us note and appreciate, the primary human powers, the basis for the vast repertoire of modern powers. We liberal artists, one might say, are implicated at the creation, the creation of modern technology. We are at the root of the problem which these remarks have sought to highlight.

Aristotle has an incisive, colorful and unforgettable way of describing the problem. In his book on *Politics*, he wrote:

The human being, when perfected, is the best of animals; but if he be isolated from law and justice he is the worst of all. Injustice is all the graver when it is *armed* injustice; and the human being is furnished from birth with *arms* which are intended to serve the purposes of moral prudence and virtue, but

which may be used in preference for opposite ends. That is why, if the human be without virtue, he is a most unholy and savage being, and worse than all the others. . . .*

So wrote Aristotle. Another sort of authority puts the point this way: it is the human's "arms" or powers that make him potentially, in the words of Smokey the Bear, "the most dangerous animal in the forest."

What are these human "arms"? They do not seem to consist primarily in physical attributes like brute strength or swiftness of foot because Aristotle wrote that the human is potentially better or more dangerous than the other animals, and it is common knowledge that some animals are stronger and swifter than the human. The power of the human being, for Aristotle, is somehow greater than the other animals whether he uses it for good or ill. It seems that the "arms" of the human are themselves a differentiating characteristic of man.

And in fact, just a little earlier in the *Politics*, Aristotle did write that the human being alone possesses *logos*, the well known Greek word for reason and language. This is the way Aristotle said it:

The mere making of sounds serves to indicate pleasure and pain and is thus a faculty that belongs to animals in general: their nature enables them to attain the point at which they have perceptions of pleasure and pain, and can signify those perceptions to one another. But language [*logos*] serves to declare what is advantageous and what is the reverse, and it therefore serves to declare what is just and what is unjust.**

So it is the power of *logos*, the powers of reason and language that are the "arms of the human. These arms are the primal or basic powers from which all his powers derive. *Human* development is then the development of the potential for *logos*; it is the development of the arts of humanity or the liberal arts. These fundamental arts are the basis of the impressive and growing repertoire of powers that distinguish and yet at times threaten contemporary mankind. The technologies at which we marvel and tremble are just that--literally in the Greek, *technai logou*, arts of *logos*, arts of language and reason.

The statement last read from Aristotle contained an important claim which has not been considered so far. Aristotle observed that our distinguishing "logos-potential" allowed us humans to find and to say what is just and unjust. Perhaps then our "logos-potential" has some role in achieving the power of powers, the power to direct all other powers to a good end.

Just how this logos-potential is related to the power of powers is not as clear or as simple as we might like. After all, the art of rhetoric that flourished in their time was severely criticized by Aristotle and Plato for lack of moral direction and that art was a direct offspring of our logos-potential. In fact, some see the Sophists as the founders of education in the liberal arts,

*The passages from Aristotle's *Politics* used in this address are found at 1253a 11 and following. The translation here is slightly adapted from that of Ernest Barker. The italics are mine.

** *Ibid*

and we all know that development of the mind can, after all, amount to mere cleverness and that the facile tongue and felicitous pen can be instruments of evil. We may, in fact, find ourselves boasting at times that a liberal arts education ultimately makes for a more effective advertising or public relations agent, because the basic human skills will be stronger.

Neither Plato nor Aristotle thought that the power of powers or virtue could simply be taught, if by "taught" we mean passed on from teacher to student like other arts or powers. They both noted the failure of prominent and good fathers to be able to make their sons virtuous. They evidently thought that our logos-potential could be exercised in ways that would not bring us to justice or virtue, that one could, in other words, be a liberally educated rat like some of the Nazi leaders in a later era.

If we marvel at the fact that this natural human gift of logos-potential can be greatly developed and fall short of what is most important, we will be even more surprised to notice St. Paul's suggestion that spiritual gifts, gifts of faith might also come up short. Paul says this in the moving passage from the *First Corinthians*, the passage that is read in the liturgy of Christian marriage of the Catholic Church. Paul tells his readers that they must cultivate the higher endowments. He writes,

If I can speak the languages of men and even of angels, but have no love, I am only a noisy gong or a clashing cymbal. If I am inspired to preach and know all the secret truths and possess all knowledges and if I have such perfect faith that I can move mountains, but have no love, I am nothing. Even if I give away everything I own, and give myself up, but do it in pride, not love, it does me no good.***

Paul continues in the beautiful and memorable words, "Love is patient and kind. Love is not envious or boastful." But we have heard enough to recognize that the highest endowment for Paul, the power of powers, is the capacity to love.

Now our problem seems even greater for we might wonder not only how does one come to have virtue or justice but how does one come to have love, the fullness of Christian virtue. Surely virtue and love cannot be taught in the ordinary sense of teaching. Plato and Aristotle were right on this. Yet this does not mean that parents, friends, teachers and the materials considered in education are unimportant to our striving for the power of powers.

We have been given some direction by those same classic authors who denied that virtue could be simply taught. Virtue seems the outcome of a complicated but blessed process involving a gifted or receptive nature, a proper nurture or training, and the extension or application of our logos-potential to the human condition itself, to the question of the ultimate good and the moral consequences that flow from one or another answer. Thus for Aristotle, we recall, the most notable utilization of logos-potential was for the finding and declaring of justice. *Logos*, thought Aristotle, should be supreme in human affairs. Whatever moral inclinations the human being has by nature, they need to be nourished, developed and ultimately defended by the arts of reason and language. The power of powers does derive in part from the exercise of those distinguishing arts or powers of the human being. But this doesn't happen necessarily or automatically, for these powers of reason and

language must be well-focused if they are to yield more than technologies of control over nature and other humans. It is through the guiding and focusing of our primary powers on the question of purpose and ultimate good that we have hope of finding the ground, not merely for control, but primarily for self-control and self-direction.

Now is the time for me to confess what some of you probably suspected all along - namely, my opinion that our cultivation of the liberal arts, our course of liberal studies and other such courses in this and other universities are really on the side of the angels or in the path of virtue. It is important, however, to notice why it is so, for I believe it is so precisely because we do not cultivate the liberal arts simply in themselves or as value-free instruments. We study those arts in and we practice them on the heritage of a great tradition; this is represented in the great books that constitute the core of our studies.

The books of this tradition help us focus and help us rub together contending positions for light on the most fundamental human questions. At our best, we teachers and students are helping one another to focus and probe as we set the trivial, the merely informational, aside from the essential. What we are doing in the process is bringing our logos-potential to bear on the human condition and trying to work out the question of human meaning and purpose. It is possible that our extension of logos can lead us not only to the reason of nature but to an even more satisfying encounter, a meeting with the *Logos* of John's Gospel, with the Word who is Christ, that illuminating Center whose presence for scholars and students, indeed for all people, is captured in the mosaic on this Memorial Library building.

Yes, we do develop human arms or powers, the seminal ones, the ones foundational not only for the art of rhetoric but also for the entire and awesome repertoire of powers of modern civilization. We are implicated at the foundations of nuclear power and genetic engineering. But we are attuned by our tradition and by its manifestation in our curriculum to the centrality of the question of human purpose and human good. Consequently we strive for the power of powers; we strive with the gifts and powers we have.

But now that we are not yet immersed in the task of this year's journey, let us especially rejoice in each other, in our co-work on a tradition that needs to be reclaimed by us and sometimes improved or advanced by us. Let us rejoice in a University and nation that supports such endeavors. Let us begin.

Walter Nicgorski

Delivered August 29, 1984

***Chapter 13 of St. Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians* is the location of the quoted passage. Edgar Goodspeed's translation was used.

INTRODUCING SUSAN YOUENS

I suppose that if I had possessed any premonitory powers at all some six or seven years ago, I might have been able to see that my footsteps were already turning in the direction of the PLS, but, woefully deficient in prophetic skills as I am, the existence of the Program came as a marvelous surprise. I had no idea that the odd collection of experiences that compose the last decade or so of my life would lead me here, and yet, for all the panic that attends the frantic first encounters with works outside my ken, my arrival here has had from the first weeks a rare and utterly satisfying sense of inevitability. Why, I am not always sure, especially in the moments when my lack of background in philosophy seems most oppressive, but perhaps I should simply consign the sensation to those Things Beyond Analysis and enjoy it.

Over the years since I began teaching in 1974, I have watched many students, including several this year in PLS, wonder about the path they should take, which skill to cultivate, which interest to pursue, which values to place at the top of a personal priority list. At times, I think I have missed something valuable in life because I did *not* go through such a formative, if often agonizing experience, but I have known from the moment I first became aware of a larger world that I was a musician. I grew up in Houston, Texas in a family that quite literally worshipped music, that heard in Bach and Mozart much of what is most beautiful and enduring in the human spirit--for many years, the same delightful woman taught all five of us, the entire Youens clan, piano, voice, and composition. I had the usual adolescent musician's dreams of becoming a concert pianist and trained as one at Interlochen and a small school in central Texas, Southwestern University, that had an extraordinary music department, which I now realize was a rare assemblage of musicians and human beings. During my three years there, I studied with a musicologist who introduced me to so much music that I had not known before--I shall never forget hearing Mozart operas for the first time at his family's home--and who sent me to Harvard in 1969 (the year of the SDS riots. . . .my family staged their own kind of riot at the prospect!) to study with his teachers. Boston was nothing less than a revelation: I found there the people and the resources, but most of all, the people, who taught me, not just music, but where music and living intersect. I discovered that I have a voice and studied for years with two teachers who divided their time between the Yale School of Music and Boston, for them, like me, a home-away-from-home. I also gradually discovered that my early and abiding love of poetry, the new world of vocal music, and musicology could all come together in a field that could quite conceivably occupy twenty Susan Youenses for thirty lifetimes: all of the various relationships possible between words and music, with a particular focus on nineteenth and twentieth century German and French song. For the past five years, I have been working on a book, now nearly finished, on one of Franz Schubert's last compositions, the song cycle *Winterreise* (Winter Journey), and on Debussy's songs, which I am helping to edit for a new complete edition of that composer's works. If I have anything at all to offer to the Program, it is an understanding forged over the past fifteen-plus years that the arts should not, in fact, cannot, be consigned to their separate caves or pigeonholes but must meet in "the foul rag-and-boneshop of the heart" and mingle with all the other experiences and ideas that matter and that last.

--Susan Youens

REINTRODUCING MARK JORDAN

In the French Academy, a new member takes his seat with an encomium of his predecessor. The new member is then introduced by another speaker chosen from those who already belong. Thus Marguerite Yourcenar, though she could have drawn out the lessons of her induction as the Academy's first woman, read instead a tribute to Roger Caillois--whom she knew better than personally by knowing his books. Yourcenar was then welcomed by Jean d'Ormesson, who showed himself a careful reader of hers.

It would be much easier to applaud my predecessors and colleagues in PLS than to introduce myself. To speak only of those who have gone: There was Bill Frerking, who smiled most merrily when he asked the telling question. How easy it would be to write his introduction, not least because of the episode of singing under Fr. Hesburgh's windows. Or an introduction for Otto Bird, whom I had known by reading before ever meeting here 'in person.' Or Fr. Ivo Thomas, who, they say, read symbolic logic the way I would read pulp science fiction. (Perhaps the analogy is more exact than I meant it to be.) But I am asked to introduce myself and so to show that I know the difference between *amour propre* and *amour de soi-même*, as La Rochefoucauld has it (and he knew a dozen drawing rooms more eloquent than the just invented Academy).

Fortunately, the introduction can be made as a repetition. I taught in the Program once before, during 1977-78. Some of you may remember this; most will have repressed it. After seven years at the University of Dallas, I am returning to Notre Dame as to an earlier home. Those of you who have not effaced the memory entirely will recall that I studied in the 'Great Books' program at St. John's. The curricular ideals that the PLS shares with that program (and a few others) remain for me the most defensible principles for undergraduate education. They are our common home. But the particular manners of the seminar and tutorial, the familiar texts, the friendship of a faculty not cut up into departmental fiefdoms--these are also the figures of my own best education and so I come back to them as to the home of affection.

You may also remember (as the repressed further revenges itself) that I had written my dissertation on the doctrine of creation in St. Thomas. Since then, my writing has continued to treat Thomist texts, especially as they regard the hierarchy of learning and the place of the *trivium* in philosophy. At the same time, I have tried to think about philosophy's pedagogy and its rhetoric more generally. There is, for example, the ancient literary genre of the protreptic (or exhortation to a way-of-life), which was used by philosophic authors from Plato to Iamblichus as a decisive instrument of philosophic teaching. I have been trying to learn this genre and its Christian transformations. In yet another direction, and because of a suggestion made by Phil Sloan one afternoon the the 'pay caf,' I have become quite interested in the relation of medicine to medieval philosophy. What might seem an arcane infatuation is in fact a useful means for coming at large questions about the re-discovery of Aristotle and its consequences for the balance of natural science to metaphysics. The medical study also involves much manuscript work, which is a perfect pretext for wandering about old libraries.

For the moment, I am enjoying my ironic status as an old-new-member of the faculty, as I enjoy the escape from a Department of Philosophy (*sic!*) and its lecture courses. I would also say that I am enjoying the January weather, but even homecoming has its sensibilities.

- Mark Jordan

WRITING IN AN AGE OF COMPUTERS: A GRADUATE ROUNDTABLE

In the previous issue I posed a topic that grew out of a suggestion by Thomas Duffy (class of 1970) for a forum on the impact of computers. The issues were posed in terms of competing claims concerning the effect of the computer on writing and thinking. The following essays were received in response to that topic. The first contribution is from Leo Linbeck (class of 1984), a PLS-Engineering double major. The second is from Peter Peterson (class of 1971) , who has contributed before to these pages.

--ED.

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY AND LIBERAL EDUCATION

Around 1454, I am told, Johann Gutenberg printed the first book by mechanical means: the Bible. Although there are few, if any, accounts of the immediate impact of this technological breakthrough (not even Dr. Cronin was around then), I would not be surprised if the scholars of the time were up in arms. After all, before the introduction of the movable type press, all books were manuscripts, each one painstakingly copied by artists. Gutenberg's press truly works like the Book of Kells; beautiful calligraphy had give way to boring consistency. I would not be surprised if monasteries had rioting in their halls.

If there ever were any protesters, though, their voices have since died out. It would be difficult to find any modern scholar who objects to books printed with movable type. The onset of movable type expanded the potential for education and scholarship beyond the dreams of any medieval monk. The ability to educate people of all classes, not just the aristocratic and the wealthy, is possible in large part because books can be printed at a reasonable cost.

Today we are faced with a technological revolution of comparable impact: the availability of the digital computer. As Professor Sloan pointed out in the previous edition of *Programma*, only thirty years ago digital computers were monstrous machines which filled entire rooms, while today there are machines which do far more than those behemoths, yet are smaller than the average breadbox. These marvelous machines make the laborious trivial and the impossible practical. Still, such a powerful technology is not to be accepted blindly; it should be subjected to a critical analysis of its benefits and shortcomings. It seems to me that there are two fundamental questions which must be asked when faced with any powerful new technology: "Should we support the proliferation of this new technology?"; and, "What is the best way to utilize (or usurp) this new technology?" I will attempt to answer these questions for the powerful new technology of

computers.

Should we support the proliferation of computer technology? I believe that we should. The reason for this belief can be expressed in one sentence: computers make it possible for us to overcome the scale of our world without giving up individuality or pluralism. I think that it is easy to see that in a world of four and a half billion people, or even a nation of 230 million people, there are significant problems which are purely a result of scale. If a nation of this size had no computers, just counting the number of people would be a monumental task, much less collecting taxes, operating a telephone system, or managing a stock market. In a world without computers, then, it seems to me that we would be faced with two unattractive alternatives. First, we could be forced to give up our individuality in order to make a society of this size possible. This amounts to a Marxist doctrine, in which man is simply a species-being and so has no "personality" which is separate from the "personality" of the society of which he is a part. The other alternative is to break a nation of more than a few thousand into smaller, more homogeneous parts. Each part, then, could have people of the same race, religion, and political ideology. Individuality could be maintained, since people of a different race, religion, or ideology could always move if they saw a nation with a "personality" closer to their own. This would signal a return to the democracy of Athens. Gone, however, would be the pluralism which so often keeps nationalism from degenerating into chauvinism and imperialism (cf. Thucydides).

The computer can save us from having to choose between these alternatives because many tasks which would be enormous to a human can be handled routinely by a computer. This allows a very large group of people to be organized together without forfeiting their individuality or being stifled by problems of scale. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that only since the advent of high technology has true democracy on a large scale become a possibility. It should also be noted that in the realm of the individual, computers can ease problems of scale. For instance, with a word processor, writing a Senior Essay need not require hours of typing and retyping drafts. More time can be devoted to researching, expanding, and polishing, thus allowing for longer, more significant, and more readable essays. This may cause, however, a reaction from the PLS faculty not unlike the reaction Gutenberg must have received from the monks of his day.

The second question I will consider is, "What is the best way to utilize this new technology?" The important fact which we must realize before we try to answer this question is that the new computer technology is only a tool, and is therefore only as useful as the person who uses it. A new electronic range/microwave/convection oven does not a good cook make. If there was value in critical thinking and readable writing before the computer age, then we should not give these up merely because we have a new toy. In fact, I believe that the value of a classical education is more important than ever before. However, we must seek a middle ground in which a liberal education seeks to explore new technologies without abandoning the principles which make it liberal in the fullest sense of the word.

While it is critical that a middle ground be found, it is equally important that the advocates of liberal education make the first move. Technology is the sort of animal which will devour those who do not use it responsibly. If we do not seek to educate people as to the right and wrong way to use computer technology, there will develop a rift between those who command computers and those who are commanded by them. Eventually, we would be left with only two types of people: the automaton and the alienated.

The task of tempering computer technology with critical concern need not be difficult. We

could begin by including as part of a liberal education a course in computer programming. This would serve a three-fold purpose. First, it would teach students that computers are really quite dumb. This would overcome the intimidation which most people feel when they are confronted with a computer and would demonstrate the importance of knowing what to write before committing ideas to disk. Second, it would be excellent means of teaching elementary logic, since most computer languages operate on absolutely rigid rules of logic. This would be a new way to approach a discipline which has been considered part of a liberal education since the days of Socrates. Third, it would be an excellent way to teach mathematics to a group of people who often consider math somewhat akin to reading Hegel in the original German.

I believe that the computer revolution is real and is here to stay; it is up to us to decide whether to be revolutionaries or reactionaries. It seems to me that we must be willing to seek out ways of combining the power of computer technology with the principles of liberal education. This was this very point which Lord Ashby made in his treatise "Technology and the Academics."

A student who can weave his technology into the fabric of society can claim to have a liberal education; a student who cannot weave his technology into the fabric of society cannot claim even to be a good technologist.

--Leo Linbeck
Class of 1984

Pete Peterson took up the issues in a short essay on writing with the computer. The title is my own.

--Ed.

WORDPROCESSED

When My boys were younger, I used to play a game with them on the way home from school, pretending I didn't know the way and asking them to tell me how to get back to the house. When they would say "Turn here," I would either deliberately turn the wrong direction, or else so soon as to go up the wrong street. I would not stop at the house unless they specifically told me to, and so on. It was great fun, but it also taught them a precision in giving instructions that is not unlike that required in using a computer. The charge that computers will destroy logic and encourage fuzzy thinking is not only groundless, but clearly contrary to the truth, as witness the articles which curse the machine because the user is too sloppy to direct the brute object in concise, logical terms.

I have been using a Texas Instruments Professional for all my writing over the past six months and my typewriter is consigned to a basement closet where it may stay forever as far as I am concerned. As a freelancer, I find that my bread-and-butter writing is frequently devoted to somewhat monotonous if not downright dull subjects, and I am saved by being able to crank out the stuff in a third of the time it would take to write it on a typewriter. False trails are merely blown away at the point where they begin and a new start made without tedious retyping, and the machine puts out crisp, clean copy with a minimum of handwritten corrections (perhaps one in ten

articles). Previously, the best effort still required a final draft, and even final drafts are subject to clumsy fingers--a poor typist can turn out a final draft that is every bit as flawed as was the first draft. Not on a computer.

As to the charge that older methods brought out better phrasing, I find it also groundless. I determined long ago that no two writers have the same working habits and to try to copy Ernest Hemingway's triple-space legal pads, stand up writing posture, and early morning work schedule would be as fruitless for me as attempting to make the Yankees by aping Babe Ruth's batting stance. My own working style is eminently suited for the word processor, since I had a tendency to let an infelicitous word or phrase stand if it meant retyping an entire page. When it merely requires jumping back up the screen and substituting the preferred words, it is no problem and my prose has become significantly more clear and pleasing since I switched to the computer. It is the difference, really, between a lazy person, which I am, and a sloppy writer, which I have no desire to be, and the computer aids the lazy person without doing anything one way or the other for the sloppy writer.

On the writing I love, I find the computer to be a genuine pleasure. I cannot otherwise make copies of my novel, or chapters of it, for my volunteer critics without devoting an afternoon to standing next to a copy machine feeding three hundred or so pages one at a time and then collating the resulting mess. The expense is considerably less. Certain editing tasks are easier; name changes can be made quickly by searching for the old name and replacing it with the new. Descriptions of characters can be expanded or reduced without having to retype the entire chapter to accept the change in the number of lines. And, since I tend to print out chapters for my own review, I still end up with a history of my efforts (the one potential disadvantage of editing on a computer).

There are many things the computer will not do; I have not been able to interface with any magazines yet because compatibility remains a hit-or-miss proposition. Since a computer is incapable of giggling, it accepts stupid, pretentious and intemperate prose with the same ease as the brilliant stuff I normally input. But I do have a program that will warn me when I have typed the word "studnet" into my copy, which could cut Dr. Cronin's ink bill by 40%.

--Pete Peterson
Class of 1971

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The following graduates of the Program have changed their addresses and would like their old friends and teachers to be informed of this.

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