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A Newsletter for Graduates of the Program of Liberal Studies

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The View from 318

Greetings to alumni and friends of the Program of Liberal Studies. From this point, just past half-way in a full and sometimes intense academic year, I write and greet you on behalf of all the faculty. Please take special note of the REUNION '84, the University-wide reunion weekend scheduled for May 31 to June 3, 1984. The classes of 1954, 1959, 1964 and 1974 will be celebrating very special reunions, and graduates of the General Program of these years may want to follow the pattern of recent years and schedule a seminar together during the weekend. Please let us here know about your interest in such an event on the weekend, your willingness to assist in organizing it and your suggestions for a seminar reading. Recent 25 year and 10 year reunion classes have found delight and stimulation in coming back together around a table together with Pascal in hand or ready for a fresh "go" at the "two cultures" split. All Program graduates who return for the reunion will be able to visit with the faculty and one another at a late morning breakfast-reception on Saturday, June 2, 1984. By the way, that class of 1954 which will be celebrating a 30th anniversary is the first to graduate from the Program.

When you return in June, you are likely to find the Program's faculty liberated from the basement of the Library to offices where both sun and shadow can be known. 'Tis only just that those who have talked so often of the allegory of the cave might have a little of the literal experience on which it is based. Directly east of O'Shaughnessy Hall there has arisen a three-building complex known as Decio Faculty Hall. This is to be the new home of most of the faculty of the College of Arts and Letters. Here at the middle of the complex on the third floor the faculty of the Program will be clustered, all in individual offices with windows!

A few weeks ago my wife and I were able to stop in and visit with a group of Program seniors completing a weekend retreat under the direction of Father Nicholas Ayo of the Program's faculty. Soon such a retreat will be held for juniors in the Program. These retreats that Father Ayo has initiated and directed over the last few years have a special dimension and momentum in the light of the closeness of the students and their shared academic experience. Certain faculty of the Program have regularly joined in leading and participating in these weekends. These retreats are a welcome addition to the common life of the Program.

Your continuing support for the Program through donations to the University is most significant and notable, and this marks the Program in a special way

among the various academic divisions and departments of the University. I thank you for this attention to the continuing efforts of a remarkably dedicated faculty endeavoring in every way to maintain the necessary personal dimension of a liberal education. I am grateful too for the gentle but persistent effort of Programma editor Professor Phillip Sloan, who amid many responsibilities, helps us get this semi-annual newsletter together.

Walter Nicgorski
Chairman

EDITOR'S DESK

Greetings once again to our growing list of readers. In this issue as our feature articles, we have two essays all should especially enjoy. Professor Stephen Rogers has agreed to publish his lecture to the faculty and students that opened our academic year in September. Addressing the question of the liberal arts and liberal learning, a topic which has been a point of focus on his researches for some time, Professor Rogers has pulled together for us some seasoned and timely reflections on education generally. It is hoped that you will save this essay and share it with others.

As mentioned in the last issue, Professor Katherine Tillman is back with the Program in full-time status after a year's sabbatical leave in England. Her essay shares with us her reflections on encountering the paradoxes of the English, paradoxes which have fascinated visitors to England for centuries. Her detailed explorations in the thought of John Henry Newman are also described. She returns to the Program, able to enrich the understanding of our own academic enterprise with a deeper sense of the relationship Newman himself saw between the ideal and the real in education. We should have many long-term discussions within the Program concerning our own "idea" of a university.

Phillip Sloan

Programma (the Greek word meaning "public notice") is published toward the end of each academic semester by the Program of Liberal Studies for its graduates.

Faculty Editor:
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Phillip Sloan
University of Notre Dame

LIBERAL ARTS AND THE RHYTHMS OF LEARNING

Let me begin, somewhat abruptly, with a question which may startle you. You don't have to answer out loud, of course. Just look into your hopes and misgivings. Then, in total privacy, answer the question: Do you believe that somewhere, in some sense, you bear within you a spark of genius?

I can tell you that the course of learning you are about to embark on if you are a sophomore, or to renew if you are an upperclassman, or to assist in if you are a professor--this common project which we all take upon us--assumes such a conviction among the half-formed beliefs and hidden motives that have brought us all together.

Without inviting comparisons to Einstein or Mozart or Vergil, I hope you said yes to my opening question, though you might never admit such an assent in public. For belief in the spark of genius, that is, in some human power that transcends all the habits of art which culture expects us to teach, is precisely what liberal education, especially in this Program of Liberal Studies, assumes, whether we know that it does or not.

I can show you at once that this is true. By now you have all had some taste of the seminar; at least you've all had some introduction to its method. This method, as it stands without appropriate explanation, is open to a severe challenge. The question is: What is the theory of interpretation which allows us to turn relatively untutored and inexperienced minds loose on the greatest books of the world? How can these untutored minds possibly be ready to give those books the right interpretation? And if the interpretations aren't right, what good are they? In other words, isn't this a miseducation? Shouldn't we know the history, the original languages, the author's intentions, the meanings the books must have had for contemporaries of the authors? If there is some one right answer as to the meaning of each great book, then we had better find out what that is, inculcate it on young minds, and send them out of here with the truth. If we do anything else, we lead them into ignorance. We're charlatans at best, though we may not know it.

That's a deplorable theory. It denies that students have the spark of genius. The only ones who may rise to the point of understanding the great books of the world are the scholars, and on this theory, the scholars themselves are lesser lights. The only thing they can do is to reconstruct the glorious meanings which existed in the past, or which they suppose existed there.

To answer this criticism, I can express the justification of our practice in a simple phrase: With respect to the higher learning, students come into the PLS as into "the chamber of maiden thought." The phrase is Keat's; it comes from his letter to John Hamilton Reynolds--3 May 1818. Keats is twenty-two at the time. He has already written some extraordinary poems, but not yet the great odes which will guarantee his place in the pantheon of poetic genius. Although he has been trained as a surgeon (which was not quite the exalted profession that it is now), he has decided not to practice surgery but to be a poet instead--not an uncourageous decision, considering that he was poor; that he was nursing his brother Tom who was dying of tuberculosis; and that he himself had "fears that I may cease to be / Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain." He is teaching himself to be a poet; and he is watching with intense

interest the development of mental processes. In the passage I'm about to quote from, he has been considering Wordsworth's images for the stages of mental life: "the splendor in the grass"; the "shades of the prison house"; "the philosophic mind." Notice incidentally how he does not refrain from matching himself against the great ones:

... to be more explicit and to show you how tall I stand by the giant, I will put down a simile of human life as far as I now perceive it; that is, to the point to which I say we both have arrived at---'Well--I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many Apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me--The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think--We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle--within us--we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there forever in delight....

Surely this mansion is the world of mind; we may think of it as the university (for us the PLS), which will eventually open upon the great world. (I mean to denote here an attitude rather than a fact.) The intoxication with a new light and a new atmosphere is the enthusiasm of young powers freshly awakened by a full and vigorous exercise. The "pleasant wonders," for us, are first meetings with Plato and Sophocles--with philosophy, with great literature, with mathematics and science. Last year's sophomores have testified that these feelings are as vivid now as they have been in every generation.

Let us give this first experience of the higher learning a less figurative name. Let us call the chamber of maiden-thought "the stage of romance," allowing the term "romance" to retain its connotations--freedom, novelty, intuitive insight, the sense of vast possibilities, emotional ferment. Then the best philosophic commentary on the chamber of maiden-thought is to be found in an essay entitled "The Rhythm of Education," by Alfred North Whitehead. In that essay the mature philosopher pins down what the youthful poet suggests. Judge for yourselves: "The stage of romance," Whitehead says,

is the stage of the first apprehension. The subject-matter has the vividness of novelty; it holds within itself unexplored connexions with possibilities half-disclosed by glimpses and half-concealed by the wealth of material. In this stage knowledge is not dominated by systematic procedure. Such system as there must be is created piecemeal AD HOC. We are in the presence of immediate cognisance of fact, only intermittently subjecting facts to systematic dissection. Romantic emotion is essentially the excitement consequent on the transition from the bare facts to the first realizations of the import of their unexplored relationships. (THE AIMS OF EDUCATION, New York, 1929, p. 28)

It seems to me that these words describe exactly what happens always in the seminar and usually at the beginning of any tutorial. The facts in the

seminar are principally the values and emotions as well as the statements and the ideas in the great text under discussion. The students lift and handle this heavy freight with the elasticity and the blithe assurance of fresh, strong minds in their first bouts with the giants. At his best and most honest, like Socrates, the professor shows himself for what he is, namely, "an ignorant man thinking," to borrow another of Whitehead's phrases. Many of the Platonic dialogues dramatize the first romance with knowledge. The seminar attains to one of its highest moments when it resembles one of Plato's dramatizations, whether in their recourse to the boring details of elementary logic, or in the unsophisticated conviction that how we think bears directly on how we live. All of us in seminar--or almost all--act as though we were certain that we seek knowledge to make us stronger, to make us better, to make us fitter as persons; and to this extent we are surely in Plato's camp.

Besides the stage of romance, Whitehead describes two others---the stage of precision and the stage of generalization.

The whole period of growth from infancy to manhood forms one grand cycle. Its stage of romance stretches across the first dozen years of life, its stage of precision comprises the whole school period of secondary education, and its stage of generalisation is the period of entrance into manhood. (p. 40)

Those of you who are familiar with Whitehead's pages may feel some mis-giving, because my application of his categories seems out of sync. For Whitehead the entrance into maturity is the life at the university; university education coincides with the first great period of generalization.

Maybe that's true at Oxford and Cambridge. English secondary education carries students to a higher technical proficiency than ours does. One reads of the Freeman Disons, who gobble up differential equations at fourteen during a Christmas vacation, or of the unparalleled Stephen Hawking, who at Oxford as an undergraduate could re-invent for himself any solution in physics that he heard about; or of distinguished classicists, who were interpreting Greek like veterans at the age of twenty. (I do not intend to suggest that American scholars and scientists must take a backseat to their British counterparts---not by any means.) In any case, observation convinces me that among us the period of true generalization comes much later. For American undergraduates the university is, as it ought to be, the chamber, or indeed the palace, of intellectual romance. Therefore, though I shall have a word to say about precision and generalization in a moment, I want to linger with students in this romantic phase, as we know them here among us.

It would not be right to leave the romantic phase without noting that it has a darker side, which the philosopher passes over and the educator often ignores. Here I must go back to Keats. I take up the quotation from his letter to Reynolds exactly where I stopped quoting a moment ago. Keats implies that the impulse to think, or the spark of genius as I have used that term, inevitably pushes those who possess it into confusion and mystification while they are still in the chamber of maiden-thought. Keats says that among the effects of maiden-thought

. . . is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man---of convincing ones nerves that the World

is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression--whereby This Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open--but all dark--all leading to dark passages--We see not the ballance of good and evil. We are in a Mist--We are now in that state--We feel the "burden of the Mystery," To this Point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive when he wrote 'Tintern Abbey' and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark Passages. Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them . . .

Keat's own case might remind us that this late adolescent bout with darkness is not exclusively the experience of university students: it affects young intelligence in almost any path of life; but the romantic night, as I may call it, descends over the spirits of undergraduates, and over PLS students in particular, so as to cause disorientation and a disquiet which is sometimes severe. I shall explain and illustrate with the help of excerpts from a student journal.

One cause is fatigue--not plain physical tiredness which is wiped away in sleep; this is that "weariness of the flesh" which Ecclesiastes ascribes to too much study. Listen to this note entered in a young woman's journal while she was a sophomore a few years ago. Listen with the "third ear" or with the ear of memory perhaps:

Tuesday, the third: A morning prayer in October . . .

After having slept eight hours, I thought perhaps this morning I could work or study, but I find my mind too tired. Why? Tired so tired, my body lays here, my eyes sunken in my skull, my lids so heavy. My head . . . I have much to do, but one cannot study forever. "Man," I say, "there must be something more, an added twist to this life. I could study, work, play, believe, and yet it would not be enough. Need it be? For happiness and rejoicing are ever changing. What is for the moment happiness may very shortly bring me to despair."

God, please help me to stay awake this cold, grey, Tuesday morning.

Why despair? Why the doubtful clutching at a wispy happiness?

One answer might be some emotional stress, disappointed affection, perhaps. Thwarted love brings pain at every age, but in youth, during the sojourn in the chamber of high intellectual romance, it comes with a poignancy that seems fatal and everlasting. (So it was for Keats and his beloved Fanny Brawne.) We have a hint of some such thing in another entry from the same journal. I quote it because, although muted and restrained, it gives one expression to what many a student has felt (and acknowledged) while explaining his or her difficulties:

Saturday, the fourteenth: A fist

Sometime I would like to take your mind. It is closed like a fist, holding tight, and I can see the blood flowing, trapped, in bulging veins. I would like to pry open your thumb and

fingers to free what there is to see within you. How, how, can you open up? How can I touch you when you don't want to face anything with an open hand? You want to hit the world, yet open you could bring so much to others.

Love and loneliness are often involved; but they are not the whole story, or even the main one. A few days earlier she had already written:

Tuesday, the tenth:

I sit here
But a flicker of insignificant
flame.
Noticed little by myself,
and
even less by others.
Desiring at times to
drink of the water; to
brave a strong wind; to
be extinguished,
before becoming a raging fire.
Feeding upon the innocent.

She wishes, it seems, "to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them"--to challenge reality and, perhaps, be overcome by it.

The analogy with Hamlet is not an accident. Being like Hamlet is symptomatic of this stage. Hamlet is perhaps the great paradigmatic type of the romantic phase. In his veering among opposite moods he outdoes Shelley and Byron and Keats; he outdoes Goethe, for that matter, and Goethe's characters, Werther, Wilhelm Meister, Faust. It is quite to our purpose to summarize Hamlet's problems with Alasdair MacIntyre's elegant phrase: Hamlet is the type of the modern man who "has too many hypotheses." This is exactly what happens to many of our students. Having exercised day and night, in school and out, with the best that has been thought and known in the world, they grow weary; but more than that, they grow uncertain. The moorings of family affection have been weakened or temporarily cut. Metaphysical foundations have been swept away. Ethical convictions, if not the habits of virtue, have been opened to question. And religious belief has been thrown into doubt--not because the teacher wishes for such results, but because the rigors of the higher learning produce them, and the impulse toward the higher learning seems to require them of our students as it required them of us, of Keats, of Goethe, and (who knows?) maybe of Shakespeare and Sophocles.

Hence it happens that there is a wish to go back, to resist or slow down the inevitable advance of the mind into the complications of the full life, to dissolve the self that has been formed by art (as if we could) and return to impulse. The young woman's journal expresses this wish, along with the ambivalent sense that there is no going back, nor should there be:

Little girls
hold naught but "little girl" dreams and thoughts. . . .

Most of all though
I would desire to be a little girl.
I could escape then from the cages of growing up.
Not the problem of responsibility,
but the Cries of Boredom
and the stifled
minds.

And how does this malaise come to an end? For it is not permanent; it does end. (Well; you write a senior essay and graduate and live happily ever after.)

In fact, the sense of ambiguity does not end. You are inoculated with it; it is a necessary portion of the higher learning. For that's what the higher learning means, if it means anything at all--that the growing mind takes on the great questions about purpose and value which always surround the intellectual effort of persons. Even those who go through undergraduate education as a practical training are introduced into this atmosphere. Questions of purpose and value hound the engineer as they haunt the metaphysician. Initiation into the communities of those who make it their business to raise and take seriously such questions is one grand result in this ritual of passage.

In due course this malaise is relieved by the cyclic rhythm of education. There is a time for the global questions, but the mind quite naturally wearies of them. Eventually it feels the urgent need to pass beyond them. It feels that the fiddle has been strung, and now the song must be played. With this feeling coincides the beginning of the second phase, the stage of precision.

Another way to describe this transition is to say that the stage of precision begins when the learner, at any age and in any subject, overcomes what I shall call the interest barrier. Bringing you across this threshold is the task we teachers face in virtually every tutorial. We acknowledge the predominance of the romantic stage at the beginning of the tutorial, when we encourage you to ask: What's the good of poetry? What's the nature of science or philosophy or mathematics? What's the essence? What's the point? Why should I be spending my precious life force, my spark of genius, in the mastery of such things, which may not seem to have much bearing immediately on the urgent business of my life--on love and friendship, on power, success, self-sufficiency, and all the other concrete concerns that have to do with who I really am and how I shall live?

I hope I have shown that the feelings prompting these questions are perfectly appropriate, and the questions themselves are the right questions at certain recurring moments in the development of the inquisitive mind. These are, indeed, the "abiding" questions. They abide because we never answer them finally, once and for all. Whether satisfied or sated and bored by the quest, we put those questions aside, for the time being. Either we abandon the subject (poetry, science, philosophy) altogether, or we give it a new kind of effort. Concern shifts from the orientation of the self to the objects of learning.

The predominant questions changes from "why" to "how." Now we want to know: How was the poem written? How does language work? How is the

experiment done? How is the argument made? How do the findings tally with observation and known laws? At this point also we want to know how the leading members of the given intellectual community think about the subject: What are their opinions, their conclusions, their methods? How do they judge? The chief preoccupation is no longer myself. My attention is focused outward. In this phase, when I consider myself at all, I wonder: What am I to do? How must I think and act, if I am to become a member of this learned community? And the first thing I must do is adopt its assumptions--at least the most basic ones. I must learn its principal rules and its leading systems; I must understand its notions of fact and its standards of truth. Not uncritically, of course: the rules of criticism are part of the baggage I take on when I enter any learned community. And I must work, in a voluntary and not uncritical subjection, to the rules and the authorities of that community. As Nietzsche says: "You must obey someone, and for a long time." These are some conditions in the stage of precision.

Here's how Whitehead explains it:

It is evident that a stage of precision is barren without a previous stage of romance: unless there are facts which have already been vaguely apprehended in their broad generality, the previous analysis is an analysis of nothing. It is simply a series of meaningless statements about bare facts, produced artificially and without any further relevance. The facts of romance have disclosed ideas with possibilities of wide significance, and in the stage of precise progress we acquire other facts in a systematic order...

(pp. 29-30)

Although the American undergraduate often cycles through brief phases of precision (the PLS student should have this experience intensively in each tutorial), precision does not become the dominant note of mental life until college is done. I can tell you that in your early twenties you will enter upon a period of work which will be more rigorous, more exacting, and more lengthy than any you have passed through so far, whether your career takes you into graduate school and the professions, into marriage and the rearing of a family, or into business and the marketplace. Those are the years from, say, twenty-one or two to forty or so, when you learn the "nuts and bolts," master the facts, acquire the essential techniques that are pertinent to your calling. Those are the years of apprenticeship, with its long hours and little sleep and meager rewards. In the precise phase, the self you doubted as a romantic will be taxed and tested as it never was before. What makes this period easier, despite its toil, is that you will have made choices; you will have committed yourself to loved ones, to colleagues, to work, to goals. You will, in some large measure, have settled, for a time, the questions of purpose and personal identity--the questions of orientation--which must occupy you now. You will be ready to labor and become, in William James's reassuring phrase, "One of the competent ones of your generation." This is no small achievement, modest as it may sound.

The precise presupposes the romantic; the romantic leads to the precise. The two are opposites, related as thesis and anti-thesis. Each has its difficulty, its value, its necessity; both are incomplete. Here is Whitehead one last time:

The final stage of generalization is Hegel's synthesis. It is a return to romanticism with the added advantage of classified ideas and relevant technique. It is the fruition which has been the goal of the precise training. It is the final success. (p. 30)

An obvious corollary follows at once from all this: that is, teaching must be appropriate to the learner's phase. If it is not, learning may cease altogether. Young teachers run up against this corollary because, coming fresh out of graduate school and still working through the problems of their own main precise phase, they try to impose their facts and their systems on younger minds still at the romantic stage. Thus we may understand some difficulties of the new scholar-professor. Old teachers often prove the corollary as well. They have found the knowledge they love. They have lived a long while among its sure methods and its tested truths. They want to transmit this prize possession whole, as if they could lift their students over the long years of study and assimilation that divide them.

True generalizers, in whom the cycles of learning have been fulfilled, do not, as a rule, make this mistake. They are able to take their bearings wherever they find themselves. They have fashioned the mental equipment to find their way. Their systems of reference are not rigid but flexible. In their intellectual life they proceed by hypothesis rather than by dogma, for they have dealt with the world's instability, and it has not made them sceptics. They are not always right; nor do they expect to be. Though astonished by little, they are capable of much wonder and admire the achievements of many people, including many young people.

The mature persons I speak of may or may not be leaders in a public way: that's a matter of temperament and gift. Professionally they may be this or that or the other thing; but they know what they are and what they are not, and they are inclined to accept, for the most part, the givens they were born with and the choices they have made. They are not by choice tragic heroes, a calling very attractive to the imagination of youth, though they hope they can rise and stand amid mighty opposites if life assigns them this unhappy duty.

Now, to summarize and conclude, I want to tell you a story, which may stand as a sort of parable. It is one of Isaac Asimov's tales in the collection Nine Tomorrows. I have long felt that this is a story which PLS Students (and faculty) ought to hear.

It takes place at a time in the future when the precise phases of education are taken care of by technology. When you are eight years old, you go down to the town hall on an appointed day with others of the same age, and after waiting your turn, you enter a little booth. There the habit of reading is implanted in your mind. You come out of the booth after a few seconds, and you know how to read, easily, as if you had always known.

Ten years later, when you're eighteen, you and your fellows go to a learning center again, this time to be programmed in the same swift way for your life's career. Whatever your profession is to be, you pick up the know-how as quickly and painlessly as you learned to read.

On the other hand, if you're like our hero, you have a shock in store for you. You go to the learning center when you're eighteen expecting, because you're bright and promising, that you will be programmed for a desirable profession. Instead of being sent into a booth to be zapped with your precise knowledge, however, you are shunted off for a battery of tests. While your best friends are being set up for life, you languish in uncertainty. Finally, to add insult to injury, the authorities whisk you off to an institution where, far from being programmed, you are told that you can learn whatever you like. The only catch is, you must learn it by study, by reading, by experimenting for yourself.

You're surrounded by weirdos who are doing exactly that: they're sitting around reading or hanging around in laboratories, learning what they please, but at a slow, old-fashioned rate. You feel like a reject. You think they must have judged you crazy or retarded.

At last, after many adventures and a lot of anxiety, you hook up with a man who puts you in touch with the authorities: it is time to learn the reason for your tribulations. The authorities tell you that you are not crazy or retarded. On the contrary, you belong to a special breed, the people who can really learn and think for themselves. You are not a reject at all. You are one of the privileged few on whom the advance of learning and technology depends. In short, you have what I have called the spark of genius, the impulse to the higher learning, which you must experience, not without toil, through all the phases of its natural cycles.

With that I hope I have discharged my office. The best I can do by way of peroration is to return to that letter of Keats's which I have quoted already. He says to his friend Reynolds:

Tom has spit a leetle blood this afternoon, and that is rather a damper--but I know--the truth is there is something real in the World Your third Chamber of Life shall be a lucky and a gentle one--stored with the wine of love--and the Bread of Friendship. . . .

This is surely what I wish for you.

Stephen Rogers

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

A conference entitled "Beyond Mechanism: The University in Recent Physics and Catholic Thought" will take place at the Center for Continuing Education on the Notre Dame campus on March 30-31. The Conference is sponsored by the North American representative of Communio: International Catholic Review, with partial support from the Program of Liberal Studies. The purpose of the conference is to explore some of the implications of developments in contemporary physics for Catholic philosophy and theology. The conference will center around the work of the theoretical physicist David Bohm (Birbeck College, University of London), and will include papers by John Cobb (Claremont), Kenneth Schmitz (Toronto), John Wright, S.J. (Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley), William Hill, O.P. (Catholic University), and Frederick Crosson (Notre Dame). There will also be roundtable discussion on the themes "physics and worldviews" and on the educational implications of Bohm's views. Invited participants in addition to those named include several Notre Dame faculty from the Program, Physics and Philosophy departments, and several theologians, philosophers, and physicists from other institutions. An informational brochure and registration form may be obtained from Ann Porowski, Beyond Mechanism Conference, Center for Continuing Education, Box W. Notre Dame, Indiana. 46556 (219-239-7864).

REFLECTIONS ON ENGLAND

Have you ever seen a Constable sky? I shall tell you where you can find one, almost daily, in case you are not near a museum with good English paintings. You leave your rooms of a Cambridge college and walk out into the gardens of Cambridgeshire. It is late October, just when the clocks turn back to eternal dark and you think the rains will never end. The roses are still in bloom beside the berried holly as you follow one of the thousands of public footpaths that claim the entire English countryside the peoples' own. Ten minutes' walk from anywhere, you are out on the fens, which stretch in all directions toward the washes and the sea. The broad expanse of rich farm and pasture land, for mile upon infinite mile, seems to go toward no horizon, limited only by the low, flat sky. This island sky is unlike any sky I have known. It is always, always moving--sometimes churning, sometimes hovering, sometimes trying with great fluffy heaves to disengage itself from the broads and moors that cling to it. But it is almost always many grays and low, that sky, so low that you can walk in it, tasting its mists and fogs on your face. Or it is just high enough for you to notice how lost you are in its boundless effusion. Occasionally it manages to bulge way up, higher than the Channel is deep, and then the oh-so-distant sun breaks through, finds England for a brief moment, and reaches down to touch its sweet wet greens and downs as if to say, "See, I've really not forgotten you."

In and under the skies of East Anglia, I took in for one year a life and culture which I, naively, had never really seen as different from my own. Of course, I had realized that the people spoke with a different voice and different words. But I never knew that December nights could intrude at mid-afternoon; sunset having descended at lunchtime. Nor did I know that such deep winters contain their own kind of consolation: the tiny "snow-drop," first flower of the spring, which pushes its delicate white blooms by the millions right up through the snows of January.

I did not know that music and theatre and art could be so genuinely alive and integrated into an English-speaking culture, or that the pride of England is rooted in its history and traditions and creations in a way that young America can never know. Nor had I realized that the people of any first-world culture still live according to clearly defined upper and lower class divisions, with all of the social, economic and attitudinal demarcations that entails. I marvelled at the amazing phenomenon of British wit--that widely-possessed combination of perfect command of the language, alacrity of logical insight, verbal sleight of hand, and mental smiles. I saw this fascinating social instrument used to express human warmth and camaraderie, and I saw it wielded coldly, in a split second, to demolish utterly the position of an opponent. Though I often delighted in the skill of the practitioner, I do not pretend to understand this kind of humor, which everyone English seems to possess. I feel that in can distance people from one another, often intimidating and occasionally devastating them, that it keeps everyone safely at arm's length, even when used to express affection. But my British friends laughed at my foolishness. Americans, they said, are too direct, overly friendly and outspoken, lacking in the dignity of personal reserve. This mutual stereotyping was nicely brought home to me when I asked a British friend if ever the colors of the autumn leaves were more intense than the gentle hues I saw that fall. She replied, with a typical mental smile, that the British people find "rather off-putting" the "garish" colors of American autumns!

Time at Cambridge University was graciously granted me by Notre Dame in order that I might make the transition from a three-year term in university administration to the intellectual life of reflection and writing, before returning to full-time teaching and scholarship in the Program of Liberal Studies. With the exception of a week in each of Scotland, Ireland and Israel--and a little travel on the continent at my year's beginning and end, I lived and worked for about ten months in St. Edmund's House, Cambridge. St. Ed's, the only Roman Catholic college of Oxbridge, is home for visiting scholars like myself, and for Cambridge graduate students, from all over the world. (There are 25 or so colleges at Cambridge and again at Oxford.) In the rich context of that mostly Catholic intellectual community, I was able to attend daily Mass, take meals, enjoy the social comfort of "tea" mid-morning and mid-afternoon, study and write in my rooms, dialogue during serious, interdisciplinary evening seminars, watch "the telly" and take my turn at tending bar--all right there in the main house of St. Ed's with the same Catholic/scholar friends. I attended lectures of "the Moral Sciences Club" and "the 'D' Society," that is, the philosophy faculty and the divinity faculty, and audited some of their courses as well. I read voraciously-- philosophy and theology by day, and by night the novels of Iris Murdoch, Dorothy Sayers, Virginia Woolf, Anthony Trollope and Charles Dickens. Many a late afternoon, I delighted in sung Evensong at St. John's College or King's. On the short walks to lectures or to Evensong, I wove my way among the flowered banks of the Cam past "the Backs" of the stony old colleges which date to the thirteenth century; I often thought of those before me who had walked through these same courts and lawns when they were residents of Cambridge. I thought of Milton, Marlowe, Darwin, Wordsworth, Wittgenstein, Francis Bacon, Dryden, Coleridge, Maynard Keynes, Lord Byron, Nehru, Chaucer, Tennyson, Bertrand Russell, Vaughan Williams, Whitehead, Newton, Erasmus. I felt the piety and power of what John Henry Newman, visiting Cambridge for the first time, referred to as the "genius loci." Sometimes I would take an afternoon train the short ride in to London to visit Newman and Virginia Woolf (my heroes of the year) in the National Portrait Gallery, or stop by the Constable room in the Victoria and Albert Museum, or see a play by Shaw, hear a concert at the Royal Festival Hall. Of all the artistic richness and variety that was mine throughout the year, I single out two events that I shall never forget: a Mozart performance by Isaac Stern and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in the majestic setting of medieval Ely Cathedral; the King's College Choir singing Newman's grand and visionary poem, "The Dream of Gerontius," set to music by Elgar.

Immersed so in the living mind and culture of England, at home in her hallowed heartland, I spent most of my year's time reading the works of one of her greatest sons, Cardinal Newman, and writing on his thought. I wondered about his insistence in the Idea of a University that "knowledge is one thing, virtue another"; that liberal education is somehow "burdened" with virtue and religion, yet incomplete without ethics and theology; that knowledge of universal first principles and their relations has no direct or influential bearing upon the sphere of personal moral life. What was this "cultivation of the intellect" alone, of knowledge as an end in itself, as the idea of a CATHOLIC university?

Then I discovered the Catholic University Gazette, the "school newspaper" of Newman's Irish university. (I think it must have been more like Programma than like the Observer!) In 1854, the year in which the university opened its doors to its first 20 students, Newman published anonymously in the columns of the Gazette twenty lead articles on Catholic university education. These substantive articles (about 250 pages in all) are about the real Catholic university in its developing historical, moral and personal dimensions; they frame and

embrace and contextualize, they embody and develop the idea of a Catholic university, in a way that had only been touched upon in the important last two discourses of the Idea of a University.

Real Catholic university education consists in the philosophic habit of mind, which can be cultivated only by the complete, liberal circle of knowledge; yes. But that must be accomplished in a very definite way, says Newman: through the living voice and personal influence of good teachers (as well as through books); through communities of colleagues, communities of care and thought (in which books originate); through seminars of commonly centered student and faculty inquirers; through the university church; through close friendships of resident scholars in the colleges; through customs, traditions, legacies, rituals and liturgies which become a part of the community life; through the recovery within itself of its own history and tradition (out of the ancient and medieval schools and universities, out of its own particular national and local heritage); indeed, even by means of the physical site and location of the university. So, and only so, is Catholic university education in its completeness effected.

As I participated in the rich community life of a Catholic Cambridge college, I learned from Newman and experienced personally how (as one of the Gazette articles is entitled) "the college is corrective of the university." The intellectual work of the university cannot flourish without the life that nourishes it; college life has no meaning or purpose without the idea of the university. In distinguishing between Anglican theology and Roman Catholic theology, Newman wrote in the Apologia that Anglican theology "supposed the Truth to be entirely objective and detached, not" (as in the theology of Rome) "lying hid in the bosom of the Church as if one with her, clinging to and (as it were) lost in her embrace." So does the idea lie hid within the reality, theology within religion, ethics within the moral life--not the other way around. This insight into the internal relation of Newman's idea of a Catholic university and the developing historical-moral-personal Catholic university has led me to rethink the seemingly dichotomous relation of "notional assent" and "real assent" in his Grammar; to similarly probe the relation of "explicit reasoning" and "implicit reasoning" in his Oxford University Sermons, and, more broadly, to see a way of describing how reason works within living faith.

I return to the Program of Liberal Studies, my "college" in this Catholic university. I share Newman's ideas with my students in Foundations of Thought and Senior Essay Tutorial; I share the life of the Program with my colleagues, with our students, aware more deeply than ever that the idea develops and bears fruit only within the life of the academic faith community in which it continues to originate.

Katherine Tillman

LINES OF COMMUNICATION

The following alumni have recently indicated that they would like their old friends and teachers to know their whereabouts:

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