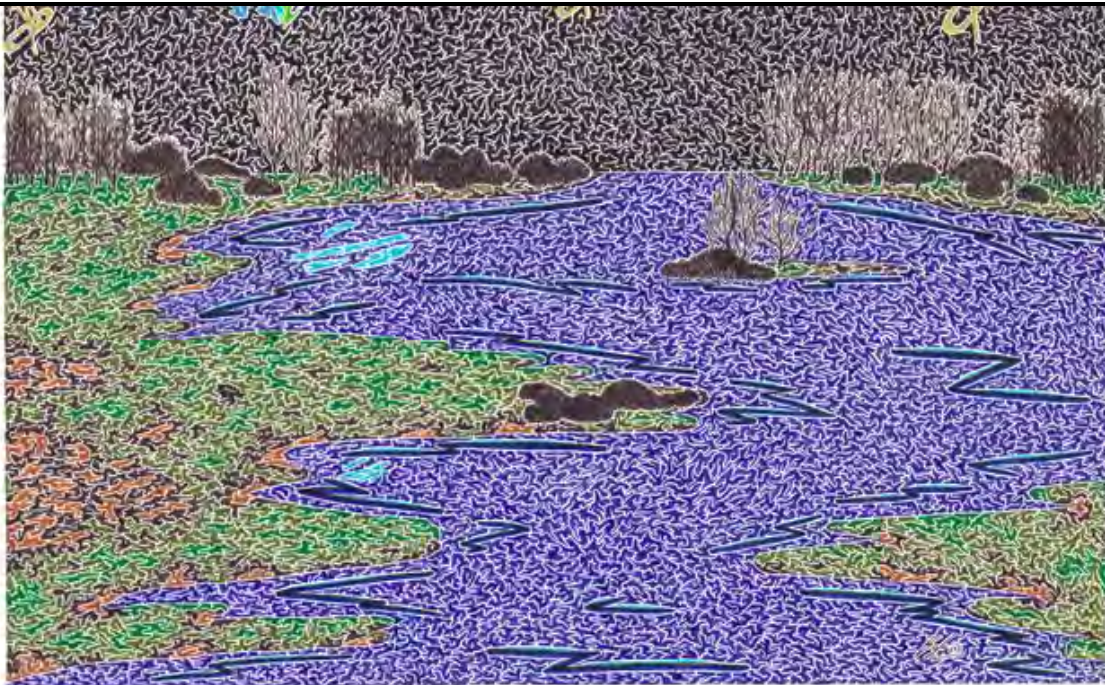


in medias res

A Liberal Arts Journal
Spring Issue 2009



Inside:

- Beyond the Spirit of Fear
- Should There Be Equal Opportunity?
- Madama Butterfly
- Socratic Pestilence
- And much more . . .

Editorial Policy

This journal is devoted to understanding the human condition which is to be *In medias res*, latin, “in the middle of things”. We intend to print a wide range of articles, essays, travelogues, reviews, poetry and fiction which highlight the interests, expertise and manners of thought cultivated in the various disciplines studied at this university. Indeed, the university must, in some sense, have portions of all things in order to be an *universitas*, a whole which has sufficient diversity and depth to merit its name. Situated as we are between many things, ideas, experiences and events, both at the university and in the wider world we might benefit by recognizing and discussing the possibilities inherent in or constitutive of this reality. The purpose of this paper is to create a space where the life of learning and the life of everyday can be brought together. Both students and faculty are encouraged to contribute to this publication, and anyone who is interested in becoming a member of the Editorial Board is more than welcome to come out to the meetings—no experience is necessary!

Submissions can be made in electronic versions to inmediasres@stmcollege.ca or to STM 223.



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Beyond the Spirit of Fear: Celebration of the Fruits of Interreligious Dialogue in the Renewal of Catholic Contemplative Prayer

Alan W. Reese

More than Forty Years ago in 1965 the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church acknowledged that goodness and wisdom were also to be found in other great religious traditions of humanity (*Nostra Aetate*, 1965). Benedictine and Cistercian monks and nuns already in 1964 had been commissioned by the Church to dialogue with Buddhists and Hindu monks and this has become the ongoing "Monastic Interreligious Dialogue" that continues to this day. This dialogue on the basis of mutual respect and openness to truth wherever it may be manifest is of profound historical significance. It is comparable to early Christianity dialogue with Hellenistic Greek culture in the era of the Church Fathers as well as to the later appropriation of Aristotelian logic (via Islamic Spain) that produced the great *Summae* of the Catholic Middle Ages.

One practical and transformative result of contemporary inter-religious dialogue has been the renewal of forms of ancient Christian contemplative prayer. Meditative practices once restricted to a celibate spiritual elite of ancient Christians are now adapted to the needs of ordinary Christians. The practices of Centering Prayer (Cistercian based) and Christian Meditation (Benedictine based) attract many thousands of persons who once thought that had to leave their spiritual roots and make "the Journey to the East" in order to learn meditation.

Forty years ago the monastic author and poet, Thomas Merton, made the following observation: "Obviously, the dialogue conducted by theologians and bishops on the level of doctrine and of practical adjustment can never have any serious meaning if, in the background, there persists a deep conviction that the non-Christian religions are all corrupted in their inner heart, and that what they claim as their highest perfection and their ultimate fulfillment is in fact nothing but a diabolical illusion. However I do not think that serious scholars and theologians are really making such sweeping generalizations today." (T. Merton, "*Contemplation and Dialogue*" 1968)

Merton would be saddened to learn that there has been in some quarters a return to the paranoia of the past; that some now challenge the propriety of our renewed forms of contemplative prayer. Among the concerns expressed is that the practice of the presence of God in stillness is somehow not properly Christian and may leave one exposed to demonic influence. Rather than worry about any supposed non-Christian influences (and remember that Christianity is already deeply indebted to pagan Greek philosophy), we do better to observe whether or not those who practice new forms of contemplative prayer bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22).

Part of the resistance to contemplative prayer stems from the fact that it is relatively unknown to most modern Christians. Many who fear this kind of prayer think Jesus never practiced it. That is not the case. According to scripture it was the practice of Jesus to rise while it was still dark and go to a desolate place to pray. (Cf Mark 1:35) It seems highly unlikely that the prayer of Jesus would be limited to merely discursive or petitionary prayer. With each breath Christ hallowed the name of God, hastened the coming of the Kingdom and surrendered his humanity to the purposes of the divine will. Refreshed by frequent immersions in the Living Waters of the Spirit he rose up to heal, teach and love friends and enemies alike. Thus Christ himself is the model of all true Christian prayer, and the goal of prayer is communion with God. Christ told his followers time and again not to be troubled, anxious, or afraid. As St John the beloved disciple wrote: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear ... and one that fears is not perfect in love." (cf. I John 18)

SOCRATIC PESTILENCE: THE CAMPUS GADFLIES ASK ABOUT MIND, SOUL & BODY

In an attempt to delve deeper into the student psyche our team here at *In Medias Res* engineered a short Q&A section aimed at just that. Jokes and foolery aside, we wanted to find out the details of, well everything, from you, the students. The Gadflies are not afraid to ask the hard questions; and as it turns out our readers are not afraid to answer them. With a great response to our questions about imagination in our last issue, we thought we would keep it personal and ask some students just what they consider themselves to be. What we wanted to know is whether you consider yourself a mind a body, a soul, or something else, whatever that might be. Now we know what you do on your Friday evenings: if it's drinking a beer, reading a novel, or sitting in meditation. But no hard feelings. We won't judge you. Here's what you had to say:

Note: The 'Gadflies' are not responsible for any atheism or corruption of youth that may or may not occur from this article



Do you consider yourself a mind, a body, a soul or something else?

I would consider myself a Soul. I guess it would be more linked to religion, thinking about spirituality and emotion, and stuff like that, I should hope that there's a part of me that is most important. I see myself as all of them but the one I would see as the primary would be the soul because in my ability if I would think there's a part of me that would continue on that would be what makes me who I am, I guess that would be the part which is most important.

Megs – College of Education

I believe that I am mind, body, soul, and spirit, in such a way that all parts equally relate and cannot exist without each other. If I didn't have a body, then my mind, soul, and spirit would not be something that anybody else really could pick up on. The body relates people physically. My mind – an analogy that I heard and I sort of like, is that somebody could see something that I wrote but didn't actually see me writing it, but they read it and said that it sounds just like Kent, and so that's my spirit, the essence of what I am is reflected because they can see me in it without me actually being there or they can see me writing it and say that must be Kent, I saw him write that down just now, so that's the physical side of it. The soul would sort of be me understanding what he wrote as opposed to just my arm doing a bunch of jerky movements that are somehow translated as writing, and my mind is the ability of making all that come together.

Kent – Final Year Arts and Science

I would consider myself a body, I find myself very material, I consider mind as part of the body.

Alexander – 4th Year Political Studies

I would say mind, everything you do, you do with your mind, you experience it, and your body is subject to your mind's control or else it wouldn't do anything.

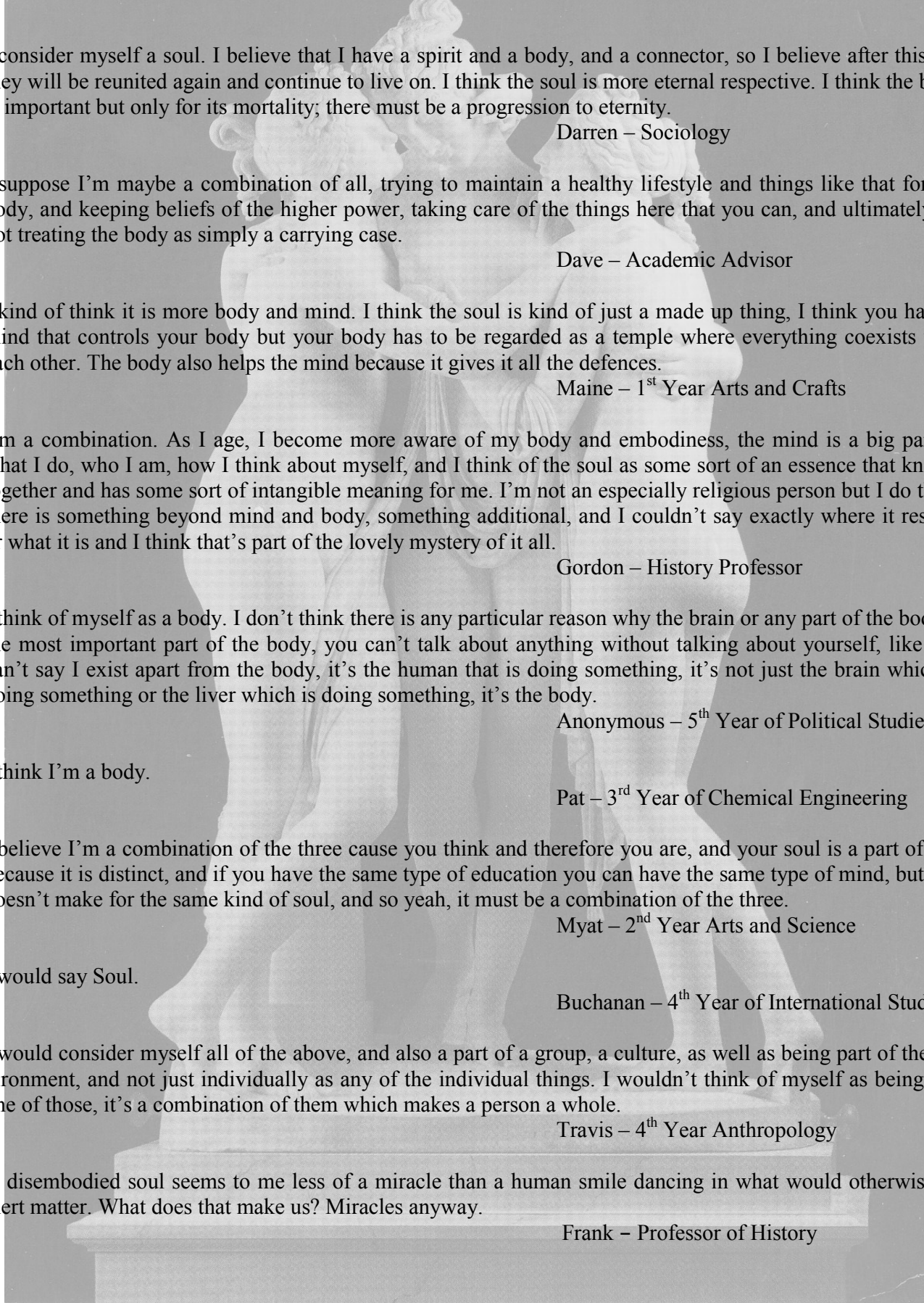
Derek – 4th Year Arts and Science

I think of myself as something else. I guess it would be mostly all of those things. I don't think that you can say that you're a mind, a body, or a soul, or anything like that. I think that you're all of those things that if you weren't you wouldn't really be able to take anything in especially from school, here, or whatever, because it takes all those things. I don't think that all function exactly the same but that they all work together to get you what you want.

Justin – General Arts and Science

I think that people are a combination of all three and probably something else, but I don't know what the something else would be. The soul and the mind would be more important, because I think the mind is more than just the brain but I'm not particularly religious and I have a hard time with the concept of one particular soul. It could be that there is one soul for everybody. As an individual, I think of myself as whatever animates me combined with something more than that.

Sandy – 3rd Year International Studies



I consider myself a soul. I believe that I have a spirit and a body, and a connector, so I believe after this life they will be reunited again and continue to live on. I think the soul is more eternal respective. I think the body is important but only for its mortality; there must be a progression to eternity.

Darren – Sociology

I suppose I'm maybe a combination of all, trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle and things like that for the body, and keeping beliefs of the higher power, taking care of the things here that you can, and ultimately, of not treating the body as simply a carrying case.

Dave – Academic Advisor

I kind of think it is more body and mind. I think the soul is kind of just a made up thing, I think you have a mind that controls your body but your body has to be regarded as a temple where everything coexists with each other. The body also helps the mind because it gives it all the defences.

Maine – 1st Year Arts and Crafts

I'm a combination. As I age, I become more aware of my body and embodiment, the mind is a big part of what I do, who I am, how I think about myself, and I think of the soul as some sort of an essence that knits it together and has some sort of intangible meaning for me. I'm not an especially religious person but I do think there is something beyond mind and body, something additional, and I couldn't say exactly where it resides or what it is and I think that's part of the lovely mystery of it all.

Gordon – History Professor

I think of myself as a body. I don't think there is any particular reason why the brain or any part of the body is the most important part of the body, you can't talk about anything without talking about yourself, like you can't say I exist apart from the body, it's the human that is doing something, it's not just the brain which is doing something or the liver which is doing something, it's the body.

Anonymous – 5th Year of Political Studies

I think I'm a body.

Pat – 3rd Year of Chemical Engineering

I believe I'm a combination of the three cause you think and therefore you are, and your soul is a part of you because it is distinct, and if you have the same type of education you can have the same type of mind, but that doesn't make for the same kind of soul, and so yeah, it must be a combination of the three.

Myat – 2nd Year Arts and Science

I would say Soul.

Buchanan – 4th Year of International Studies

I would consider myself all of the above, and also a part of a group, a culture, as well as being part of the environment, and not just individually as any of the individual things. I wouldn't think of myself as being just one of those, it's a combination of them which makes a person a whole.

Travis – 4th Year Anthropology

A disembodied soul seems to me less of a miracle than a human smile dancing in what would otherwise be inert matter. What does that make us? Miracles anyway.

Frank – Professor of History

A Lesson in "Failure"

Candy Hui

July 2008

Dear Journal,

Today, I got my letter from pharmacy. Days before, I got this horrible feeling when I was working that I did not get in. So, when I opened the letter and I saw the first couple of words "I regret to..." I did not feel surprised. I don't think I was emotionless but I definitely did not feel sad or depressed. Perhaps, I felt a bit of confusion and frustration. Frustration on how I can tell my parents, how I can tell my friends. Confusion on what I should do next in my life. That is, do I continue to try?

It turned out the next day I told my closest friends all at once through a text message and my parents at breakfast. My parents comforted me and told me that it was no big deal but I didn't feel comfort from their words but more like knives stabbing into my heart. I felt like I had disappointed them. I felt like I could do better. I later convinced myself that I did not disappoint them, I did not fail but truth be told I did. My failure is not in not getting into pharmacy; my failure was in thinking that my parents were disappointed in me. I knew all the people around me were not disappointed in me but worried about my feelings.

But the more everyone around me tried to comfort me by saying kind words, the more it made me feel like a failure. It made me feel like a failure because I was worrying them. I was unsure on what I should do next in my university life, so I did not know how to comfort them. I was utterly confused by my own actions. I kidded around with them with sentences like:

"I'm going to continue to try to get into pharmacy until I get in. I may be 40 when I get in but I think I will still be just as happy, eccentric, and hyper as now." As the words came out of my mouth I knew it was comforting to my friends and family. Knowing I didn't have them worry about me made me breathe a sign of relief. I could now focus on myself now.

I came to a conclusion that not getting into pharmacy was a step towards getting to pharmacy, rather than a failure. I know this seems strange because a failure is a failure and success is success. But sometimes life isn't as black and white. I may seem delusional but I think that failure is not a failure until I quits trying. What I said to my family and friend was comforting words but also the truth. I knew that as long as I tried I was not a failure in the sense of getting into pharmacy. I know success is never guaranteed, so I do not and did not think much on the difference between success and failure.

March 2009

Dear Journal,

I honestly think that failing to get what you desire is not a "failure" it is merely a small bump on the road to where you want to be. Perhaps the bumps on the road may help you to cherish your success even more and enjoy more of life. Since not getting into pharmacy, I have taken many classes just for fun and have enjoyed much of the time of taking random classes. Although, I am unsure of what the future may hold for me, but I am sure that on the way I will learn a lot as I have in this past year.

The reason why I wanted to share this excerpt from my journal is to share my feelings towards "failure"...how it really isn't a failure until you wish not to try. It is also not a failure if you stop trying at something but found something else in which you desire even more. Life is full of "failures" but in the end you will succeed if you continue to be who you want to be and continue to learn from all your "failures".

Food for thought: Is Canada doing enough to stop hunger?

Richard Medernach

We have all seen the images of bags of grain being unloaded from trucks in places like Haiti, Afghanistan, and numerous African countries. The crowd of agitated people clamours around the aid workers desperately trying to get food before supplies run out. We have seen the ads on TV showing sad looking children in the Global South and asking us to sponsor a child or at least make a onetime donation. We live in a world where harsh weather can lead to crop failure and famine. It is also a world where greed and selfish economic policies lead to cycles of poverty and hunger.

There is no question in my mind that food aid is necessary to get populations through food shortages but is Canada giving enough? After some quick online research, I discovered that Canadians and the Government of Canada are not doing too badly in terms of the amount of support for the World Food Program and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. There are, of course, many other NGOs that Canadians support that provide aid and emergency relief. Canada can do more though, and ought to increase its international aid to reach the 0.7% target of the Millennium Goals. That is the kind of thing I am happy to pay taxes to support. The volume of food aid is not the only consideration. I think an equally important question is whether or not the food aid we are donating is nutritionally adequate.

According to Doctors Without Borders, “For infants and young children, good nutrition depends on breast feeding and nutrient-rich complementary food. It is an issue of diet quality—nutrients and energy density—as much as quantity. But for poor families living in regions devastated by malnutrition, attaining nutrient-rich foods on a daily basis, particularly animal-source foods, is not possible. Yet at the international policy level, nutrition programs have not paid sufficient attention to addressing deficits in diet quality for infants and young children.”

Perhaps the most important food aid questions are related to the political and economic structures and policies. Food aid is meant to be temporary but sometimes when surplus food from other countries is brought into

a devastated region, especially when it is for an extended period of time, it ends up destroying the local food markets which makes it harder for local farmers. This extends the need for food aid and the cycle continues.

Some donor nations such as the U.S.A. use “tied” food aid to disguise agricultural subsidies as international charity. I am not suggesting that no aid is better than tied aid because I imagine that people who are starving are happy to have any food and don’t much care about its source or the politics behind it. For those of us not starving however, we can afford the luxury of thinking more deeply about these issues to make sure that the food aid is first and foremost for the benefit of those receiving it.

Canada has recently “untied” our food aid so that we do not only send Canadian grown grain, but we will also donate money so that more local food supplies can be purchased (if available) and used for food aid. Sometimes we get things right and we should be happy about that.

We’re looking for new members to join the Editorial Board for the coming 2009-2010 Academic Year. If you’re interested, give us a shout! Either email us at inmediasres@stmcollege.ca or stop by Room 223 in STM to find out more. No experience is required!

How to Catch a Horse

Celene Sidloski

What I have learned about how to catch a horse cannot, I expect, be reasonably transmitted in the short space allotted to me here, and in any case the information I have to impart is not of the kind that can be taken up by an amateur (or your average horse owner, for that matter) and fruitfully be put to use in any immediate fashion. My education in horse catching occurred as the apprenticeship of years and seasons and wind and thistles and dirt and wild hay and miles upon miles of rough pasture, heavy summerfallow, stubble, gopher holes, dried-up sloughs brimmed with sage brush and rock piles, and rectangular dugouts. It is an apprenticeship into the occasional unreliability of fencelines, into operating in a slightly chaotic universe not ordered by nice corrals and barns and stalls and tack rooms. It is an apprenticeship into manure piles that must be regarded as obstacles that might interrupt an otherwise appropriate trajectory of influence over the object of desire – the horse that is to be caught for riding. It is an apprenticeship into sweat and dust, open spaces, probable fatigue, and occasional bad language. But most of all it is an apprenticeship into the relatively unknown laws of vectors and trajectories as they apply to the mind of a horse – relatively unknown, I say, because these are not the formulae of Newtonian physics as we know them from our calculations regarding hypothetical airplanes in Grade 11. It is, in other words, an apprenticeship into angling the horse with the eye and one's own body, so that from a quarter of a mile away, you might awe into submission and acquiescence the horse that has lead you through an apparent lifetime, so that you might walk toward it finally, but oh, so carefully, at the regulated angle that has so mysteriously revealed itself as the enchanting one – so that you might walk that line as if it were the tightrope to eternity – and place a hand on that horse. But here I wax abstract. If this is beginning to sound like a romance, be assured that it is – but only the last part.

Those who were raised to know their horses as those gentle creatures who stand patiently at a beautiful white fence waiting for a carrot or a lump of sugar need not read any further. That is a romance whose absence I spent many of my childhood years grieving. On a few occasions I actually attempted to feed my horse such things from my hand, having been convinced, I suppose, that this represented some ideal aspect of the relationship between a girl and a horse. It was always an abject failure, although I eventually came to regard this kind of failure as a badge of honour, as a sign that something more noble had been preserved. No – I had my own horse at a young age, a spirited, darkly rich mare, and we had dozens of horses at one point on the farm – but although they were excellent riding horses they were otherwise unschooled and unbridled, left to their own devices, relatively free and wild for months of the year – unbarned, unstabled, rough, gorgeous, and independent. (At this point we might also dispense with any notion you might have adopted that this little expose engages another romance – that of the horse “whisperer” who, through his or her vaguely telekinetic industriousness, summons up a horse who is somehow tricked or charmed into thinking it is a human being and who subsequently engages in fuzzy little Eskimo kisses with its owner as a sign of communion. These things happen, I am sure – they just never happened to me.)

So what of how to catch a horse? For me, through my years of experience catching horses during my small childhood, girlhood,

adolescence, and even adulthood, catching a horse has come to entail, on a lucky day, a little romp of 15 minutes out in the pasture, a little messing around, jabbing and feinting, a little dance to ensure that both parties can claim their self-respect, all culminating in that heart-stopping moment when the horse appears to have conceded, and you claim her servitude through a careful approach and the piece of twine in your pocket.

On other days – most days – the story is different. On these days the story has epic grandeur, composed as it is of a seeming lifetime of tragic reversals, moments of great hope, mind-numbing repetition, futile efforts, and missed opportunities. Such a day means traversing miles and miles of the same tract of land, back and forth, along fencelines, into corners (great hope now!), bursting out to run the diagonal, cutting off the angle through the slough (I felt that the mare could not help but feel defeated in the recognition of the sacrifices I was willing to make in her pursuit), shouting out impolite phrases in an authoritative voice, and occasionally throwing a lump of dirt at rapidly receding hindquarters. These episodes include many moments when it appears the game is up, and one gets near enough to place a hand on the horse's neck, only to have her wheel about and thunder away. On these days, horse catching is a trial of character governed by a simple rule: if you let the horse get away, if you concede defeat after an obvious effort, that horse might never respect you again – and you might in future be reduced to the pitiful spectacle of using an all-terrain vehicle – an undignified way to catch a horse. So back it is into the fray, the hot pursuit, the humbling servitude of humankind to horse. Eventually, only one option remains – that you surrender the undisciplined, passionate, exhausting demonstration of physical energy and sheer force of will to the patient, careful negotiation of the angle of approach, a negotiation that slowly winds down the clock, mentally restricts the physical space, and frees the mind into pure concentration, reducing the “oscillations of the mental substance.” Prayer is involved. In this mode, one further rule exists: you must not avert your concentrated gaze from the horse you intend to catch. Even if you are hundreds of metres away, you must endure now with patient virtue. You must not turn your back. Now, it goes differently. Your goal is to master the interval of space between you and the horse, and in doing so you master the mind of the horse. Now, every movement of the horse's head is mirrored with a slight turn of your own; every perceptible shift in the horse's center of gravity is met with the slightest shift – in the same direction – of your own. Who knows what the horse is thinking. She retains all of the power to flee, but is mesmerized, enchanted, hooked by the angle that appears to admit of no escape, even in the midst of a wide open field. You approach now, wearing the clothes of confidence that you do not feel, step by step, always managing the fine angle of approach, feeling the plumb weight of a line that leads directly to the goal. The horse is caught now, and all the beauty and promise of the day returns.

Postscript

To anyone who thinks that chasing a horse for miles (and sometimes hours) on foot just to enjoy a ride for pleasure must be a sheer waste of time, I can only reserve my pity. But this is a story for another day.

For True Minds re: Impediments

Over.

love's not time's fool.

Untrue.

it changes,
alters but still is.

Over it.

good, make peace (Noun: see hope, joy and LOVE)
with circumstance, that which alters
when it alteration finds.

Hurt...

relationships burn
but charred affection has endured
the fiery tempests.

Hate.

bitterness
is tenderness with heartburn;
within not overhead.

Lost.

merely wandering,
past the smoldering edge of doom.

Decided.

neither you, nor the ticking grim Sickle,
can remove it.

>love remains beyond her symptoms, beyond
>her welcome.

>>trust me,
>>i have both written and loved.

-Charlie Peters



Hemlock

the only thing
worse
than realizing
you know nothing
is failing
to do so

make excellence
a habit
by learning
everything
and still knowing
nothing

corrupt
athenian youth
and supplant
the status quo

to live,
one must
drink the hemlock

oh!
and forget the gadfly,
he knew
nothing
anyway.

-Charlie Peters

Act, sing, and dance your way to success:

Allison Pawluk

The influence of the performing arts on a child's self confidence

Children are performers right from the moment they are born. The crying for attention, learning new sentences, moving kinaesthetically, all of this is very similar to how a professional Broadway performer would learn a new part. Performance, whether it is at a hockey tournament or at an art exhibit, follows the same protocol as performing on a stage: demonstrating a skill through creativity.

Creativity is often a word that comes to mind when we think of children. Children enjoy performing in any context, whether it is make believe play at home, or dancing in a ballet recital. Because they are children, their high energy and enthusiasm is present in whatever they do, thereby making it apparent that the performing arts specifically have a great impact on child development.

Having worked with children in theatre programs for about six years now, I have come to the conclusion that learning good performance skills is not the only thing that comes from a good theatre program. Having witnessed how children act while around peers in a classroom setting, it has become clear that around the middle years grades (5, 6, 7, 8), the general confidence levels of students is quite low. For most children, this lack of confidence comes from not "fitting in" or being popular. On occasion it has to do with dress or physical appearance. Generally, among young girls appearance is a most important thing, and can cause their self esteem to be much lower than that of boys of the same age.

The performing arts should be more prominent in education from an early age, because it has the potential to guide a child down a path of confidence. A child involved in theatre can pick up on many useful skills that other activities will not provide. Children learn how to communicate, how to speak clearly, how to express their individual personality, how to learn creatively, and create lasting social skills and friendships. In addition, by being involved in any of the three "Triple Threat" aspects of theatre - acting, singing or dancing - children develop a strong sense of personal character, leading them to have a better understanding of themselves and the people that surround them. Setting this in stone at a young age can prevent the development of many problems typical of the older years. This confidence that is instilled ultimately assists the child for long term goals and passions, creating a lifetime of achievement.

So how does self confidence develop? Of course it develops gradually over time. Getting a child involved in many activities can create a sense of self achievement making him or her feel willing to expand their skills beyond. For example: in-

stead of just attending voice lessons every week, a child may now have the confidence to audition for a choir! Of course, no matter how high of a self confidence a child may have, there will always be moments when that confidence level may not be up to the fullest potential. The following is an example from my own experience directing children.

In my children's theatre group entitled *Thalia Theatre* we were getting ready for our opening matinee performance. Of course, I could tell the new students and even of the more experienced students were nervous. Normally, my students would be ecstatic. It would be almost impossible to quiet 30 of them down! So, wondering why, I asked the kids, "*What is wrong? Aren't you guys excited about the performance?*" One girl replied, "*Well we would be if we didn't have to perform in front of the whole school!*" Even though our musical production was polished, that anxiety, that feeling of being in front of other classmates and potentially looking silly, caused the whole vibe of the group to slide. I began by telling them, "*What does it matter? You*

have worked so hard on this show! Do you want to give the whole school the power to take that joy away from you? Or do you want to show them what you can do?

This definitely made a huge impact on the majority of the students, and while I could not completely clear all of their minds, I led them to once again believe that what



they have learned and spent time practicing for several months should reflect their performance. For an opening show, it turned out to be a fantastic performance!

I would like to conclude that although this article focused on the performing arts as a key to self confidence, any type of performance whether it is a sport or an art class, can create the same rewarding feeling. The performing arts, however, have one unique aspect that no other activity can compare to, and that is the idea of limits. There are never any limits, you can take your performance ability to the farthest possible, and there will never be a right or wrong answer. Whether or not a child carries on with the performing arts in the future, that child will still have those building blocks, guaranteeing success everything she decides to do. Learning to act gives us the confidence to act like ourselves.

"Dance like no ones watching.
Sing like no one's listening.
Live like there is no tomorrow"

-Author Unknown

A twig cracked,
a fly lingered in the moist air
The death, the work, began:

The Agony in the Garden

He never knew the word *around*
and when door after door to agony opened for him
he did not deny even one of them

He approached, humble saviour,
and with a heart big enough for dying,
walked right *through*: the only direction he knew

But the time ticked darkly
and the ultimate crossroads materialised
The mouth of history prepared to sing
or bite its tail

while nature kept naturing
and tired men did what they do best
What silence around a trial!

A twig cracked,
a fly lingered in the moist air

Sweat, liquid earnestness, appeared on his features
His prayer, gone quantum,
infused every cell with the single word:

—Abba!—

But in his gaze, horizon and sky narrowed
The whole panorama of meaning
distilled into a cold cup
that shimmered indifferently there
It could go on waiting forever

But the Will
did not get stuck between his lips
He swallowed it whole
and it became a part of him
And every cell that was stamped with their
darkness, after three days submersion,
became Life

He began the three days sinking on his knees
and the sound of his bones crushing against the
earth's cold floor was the sound of originality

But when he ascended there, he appeared
twenty feet taller, a man from there-and-back-again
Collected, sober, titanic, submissive

And when the wolves came for the willing Lamb,
it was only this that levelled them—
the already conquering Master beneath: "I AM"

-Miranda Traub



Wheels

i don't need a limo
to take me to my death

i'll ride the bus;

efficient, unobtrusive,
why make a thrifty occasion
grandiose?

i won't burden
my dearest
with a luxury bill to pay

death is only a pit-stop anyway

send me in a cab, if you must,
but my vote is for the bus.

-Charlie Peters

Home Schooling: How Does that Work?

Leah Beech

I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.
—Mark Twain

The conversation always began the same way, “What school do you go to?” To this I replied (sometimes reluctantly knowing that more questions would inevitably follow), “I’m homeschooled.” Homeschooling (or home-education) has always seemed eccentric and mysterious to people. Over the years I’ve had all kinds of questions from the humorous to the legitimate: “Can you stay in your pajamas all day?”, “Do you have recess?”, and “Are your parents teachers?” Such curiosity indicates a genuine interest to learn more about it, a curiosity I would like to satisfy, if I can.

Homeschooling includes many different approaches. One method is a structured curriculum with scheduled time during the day for each subject. Others focus on a few core subjects such as mathematics and English, leaving the remaining aspects of learning up to the child. Perhaps the most controversial approach is self-directed learning or as it is known colloquially, un-schooling. The name alone reveals much of this teaching philosophy. There is no structure; children are allowed to explore and be creative, letting their interests guide them. The parents’ role is to encourage the exploring child and to provide necessary resources.

Many such resources exist for homeschooling that did not in its beginnings. Through the Department of Education, families receive yearly funding for children ages 7-18; the money is often used for learning tools, curriculum, and activities such as art and music lessons. Homeschool coordinators, employed by school boards, monitor the progress of homeschooling children, provide resources for parents through the school board, coordinate events, and send out newsletters informing the homeschooling community of upcoming events and activities. Parents often order curriculum online through websites such as Canadian Home Education; the curriculum offered is usually tailored specifically for home-educators. SHBE, the Saskatchewan Based Home Educators organization, also has a website that provides current news in the province for homeschoolers and offers links to home education magazines, support groups, and resources for those new to homeschooling.

Why do parents choose homeschooling? The reasons vary but the following are the most common. Many feel that children would learn more efficiently and at a pace tailored to them as individuals. Furthermore, many have lost faith in the ability of the education system to teach their children effectively. They may feel that their children receive very little attention and are not challenged enough. Although there are excellent schools and excellent teachers, not every child experiences those. Many children simply do not do well in a formal, structured school because their learning style is not well-suited to this environment. Peer-pressure and bullying have been another reason parents have chosen to home-educate their children.

Aren’t homeschooled children socially awkward? Occasionally I’ve been told, “Well, you seem quite normal. I never would have known you were home schooled.” I have never known whether to take that as a compliment or an insult. This comment ignores the fact that many personalities exist in our diverse world. One can find people anywhere, in school or out, who don’t fit our image of “normal.” A child’s unusual personality is never connected with homeschooling until this fact is revealed. Socialization, in any case, is always a product of several environments besides the school. Homeschooled children are often taught in the company of siblings (sometimes quite a few), so

they do not live in isolation. They also participate in various activities such as drama, sport and music lessons, which are arranged by the homeschooling community or by the district community.

So how did I learn if I wasn’t in school? This question reveals what a narrow view we have about learning. If learning is sitting at a desk all day, in a classroom with 30 other children, working at the same pace as the rest regardless of ability, and watching a teacher writing on a chalkboard, then no, I wasn’t learning much. But if we could extend learning to an experience and even an exploration of the world, discovering new things in various ways through books and conversations, then yes, I was learning all the time. I am not discounting the fact that learning does happen in classrooms and through a teacher lecturing and writing on a chalkboard because this happens in university every day. I insist, however, that this is not the only place learning occurs.

What was my personal experience of homeschooling? Most of the time, I loved being at home. How did I spend so much time with my family without being driven to insanity (and vice versa, how did they put up with me!)? I will admit that not every day was perfect, but I enjoyed homeschooling because it gave me freedom and flexibility that would not have been possible if I had been in school. The amount of schoolwork that I did varied daily and even weekly. Some days I did no formal work and other days I did three or four hours. To bring this into perspective though, a teacher in a classroom has 20-30 children to monitor whereas my parents had only a few (although they would have agreed at times that a few is enough). I had friends who sat down at a desk from 9am until 3pm every day; however, my parents were very relaxed when it came to school work. I often taught myself, coming to my parents only when I needed assistance. I was always absorbed in a book (and often still am), and I loved playing the piano; these activities, for the most part, occupied my time. My journey from home schooling to university consisted of taking open studies through various venues until I had enough credits to enter full-time.

Is homeschooling for everyone? Of course not. To make such a statement would be unreasonable considering the size and influence of the education system in our society. Many families cannot afford to have one parent to stay home. Perhaps both parents want to work because they love their jobs thus sending children to school is preferred. Some children thrive in school whereas others struggle. There are pros and cons to homeschooling as there are to the education system.

For further information, see the following list. The books marked with an asterisk are located at the U of S Library.

**The Well-Trained Mind*—Jessie Wise, Susan Wise Bauer (1999)

**Teach Your Own: The John Holt Book of Homeschooling*—John Holt and Pat Farenga (2003)

**Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*—John Taylor Gatto (1992)

The Unschooling Handbook: How to Use the Whole World as Your Child’s Classroom—Mary Griffith (1998)

The Well-Adjusted Child: The Social Benefits of Homeschooling—Rachel Gathercole (2007)

WORDS, WORDS, AND MORE WORDS

IMRE BORDE

The ability to express one's own self adequately is essential to how ones ideas will be received. As students, expounding information in a precise fashion can make the difference between passing and failing. Exams, essays, presentations and class discussion all require a sound use of vocabulary. However, the average student's vocabulary has, apparently, declined 20% since the 1940's. That is 1200 fewer words in your discussions, and 2000 fewer words in your papers! Without a purposeful use of words, one's main idea can easily be lost amidst a sea of dull and overused wording. Improving your vocabulary is an easy and effective way to help your ideas become more explicit.

This disappointing decline in student vocabulary is probably a result of the technological advancements our society has experienced over the past seventy years. Today people watch the news instead of reading a paper, they watch a movie instead of reading a book, or they text a brief message instead of having a conversation. Technology is convenient and, to some extent, efficient. Our vocabulary, nevertheless, is paying the price. As disappointing as this may seem, there are a few simple things a student can do in order to retrieve their lost words.

Improving your vocabulary does, however, take time and effort. Setting a simple goal can be very helpful. Encouraging yourself to learn, understand and adequately use 100 new words in a year is a reasonable goal. I urge students to try carrying a dictionary. Adding a dictionary and/or thesaurus to your backpack will prove itself very useful. This may seem obvious; yet, most students do not bring any kind of reading or writing aid with them to school—which is where we need them most. Having a dictionary or thesaurus readily available encourages you to look up a word as necessary, rather than believing you will do it later, when you never do.

Learning a new language is another recommendation for those serious about their vocabulary. This, understandably, takes considerably more time and effort than throwing a dictionary in your bag. Nevertheless, learning a second language serves more than one purpose. Not only is a new language a valuable tool in special circumstances and a specific resource but also, according to recent studies, it is an exceptional way to increase language use and comprehension in general.

Another tip is to simply slow down. Reading, conversation and proper editing all take time. Avoid texting information that can easily be explained in a brief phone conversation. Voice conversation allows you ample opportunity to incorporate a new word into the conversation. (When was the last time you used words such as "ambiguous" or "exquisite" in a text message??) It will only take mere minutes, but will do wonders for your use of language. Allowing yourself the time to sufficiently re-read and edit assignments will also prove itself to be worth your time. Looking-up and confirming your use of a word can change the meaning of a sentence or thought entirely. With an electronic dictionary and thesaurus

at your fingertips—literally—there is no excuse for over-using the word "interesting" in an essay.

On the other hand, we must also be aware of becoming wordmongers. The purpose of learning new words is not to use them carelessly or incorrectly, or just to show off. Beware of using 30 words in a paper where 10 will do an idea justice. Your goal should be the *appropriate* assertion of your thoughts. Do not use as many intelligent-sounding words as possible in the hopes of lengthening your paper. In other words, learning a new word is only half of the challenge. The memorization *and* accurate usage of the word is the key to developing your vocabulary.

There are approximately 700,000 words in the English language, of which we use a mere fraction. On average, you will use only 7000 words when writing and closer to 4000 when speaking. Not to mention, the average person's vocabulary ceases its expansion around the age of twenty-five to thirty. As discouraging as the statistics may be, it is important to keep a few things in mind. The number of words we use when we speak is only about half as many as we can understand passively. The fact that we understand nearly twice as much as we put to use is encouraging. Increasing the number of words you use directly develops your understanding! Furthermore, as students, you will find a larger vocabulary will come more naturally. Those that have done significant amounts of reading will already be approaching a vocabulary of nearly 12,000 words. (Shakespeare's vocabulary was bordering on 45,000 words!)

Extending your vocabulary is indeed a challenge. At the same time, new words are a valuable asset for many reasons. The greatest use, I believe, will be the ability to express yourself more accurately. You will find your ideas will flow more freely and, as a result, others will receive your ideas more accurately.

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submissions for the Fall 2009
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creative writing, non-fiction,
poetry, prose, and anything
else you want to
inmediasres@stmcollege.ca
or stop by Room 223 in STM
to drop it off!**



Madama Butterfly

Composer: Giacomo Puccini
 Librettist: Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa
 Sung in Italian with Met Titles in English,
 German and Spanish

Members of the In Medias Res Editorial Board got their act together and went to see the famous opera, *Madama Butterfly*, by Giacomo Puccini at Galaxy Theatre where it was being broadcasted live from the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. The opera tells the tale of a young Japanese Geisha who marries an adventurous American Navy Lieutenant, only to have her heart broken in the end. Set in the early 1900's and based on true events, the opera also served as the basis for the West End Musical Miss Saigon. On Saturday, March 7th, 2009, IMR spent an afternoon at the opera right here in Saskatoon. Check it out!

D -So what did you, guys, think of the show? I myself was pretty impressed. Except sitting so close was hard on my neck. I really didn't think that it would sell out. Next time we really ought to get into the scalping business. But you know, you could hardly call it a young audience. Why do you think there were so few other youth in the audience?

W-There were probably few youth in the audience simply because few youth are opera fans. That being said, because Opera is so awesome,

T- I had no idea that such an event even existed at the Galaxy Cinemas until our group mentioned it. I would like to blame a lack of advertising and promotion. The fault, however, is mostly my own. The theatrical information is out there, I just need to start looking harder!

S- My guess is that there just aren't a lot of people who realize the full extent of the arts performances in the city, myself included. Definitely, with a little bit of advertising you could probably draw out a bigger crowd. Otherwise, who else would really believe that the opera would really show side by side with the crazy movies of the day in Galaxy Theatre.

W- I assume that if young people were more familiar with it they would be lining down the street to see this kind of thing, so more awareness would be helpful.

D- Well I guess that might be it. Do you mean that young people simply haven't been exposed to this kind of art? Or is "awareness" more of a question of education?

W- I'll have to think about that. But didn't you find the use of traditional puppetry for Butterfly's and Pinkerton's child distracting from the story? The visible joints and puppeteers really threw me off. But during one of the backstage segments when it was explained that using a real child could be even more distracting because they aren't generally good actors I decided that it was a good decision to make. The fakeness of the puppet would only really be distracting vision for the out of house audience who got close ups when a child could ruin it for everyone.

D- I thought it was a nice touch, especially since it draws attention to simple gestures which can ultimately be extremely expressive. It's not a singing part and the point does not seem to be to be realistic so ...

S- Personally, I believe that the use of traditional puppetry added

something of a fantastical element to the opera as well. The fact that those who manipulated the puppets seemed to genuinely partake in the feelings that the puppet must be experiencing didn't detract either but rather reinforced their liveliness.

T- I, however, did actually find the puppetry rather distracting. Though, only to the extent that it intrigued me. When the puppet was first brought on stage, my interest was drawn away from the actors and to this fake little-boy. Looking back, however, I think it did add interest to the overall feel to the opera. Just not at first. Maybe fantastical touches that may bring one out of the moment an important part of theatre?

W- Well, I think it depends if the general idea behind the theatre work is an escape from reality, or telling a story as best you can. Musical theatre would fall more of the escape from reality side and dramatic plays may fall more on the believable storytelling side. Opera is difficult to categorize because it has the weirdness that is people singing all the time, but the stories are generally relatable and well told. I guess Opera is a careful balance between the two.

D- Well, in general all opera plots seem rather fantastical to me. I mean, is there really merit in telling a story like that of *Madama Butterfly*? What is expressed in the opera that can be applied to real life?

W- I started out not entirely sure, but now I am going to go ahead and say yes. My main problem with it is that it tells a fairly simple story that is really really sad and will make you cry. I don't think making people cry is a laudable goal. But there is a theme in the story about how dehumanization of people in other cultures is wrong, which I would say is a pretty good theme to have. Even though the view that that sort of racism is wrong is widely held and we don't really need an opera to tell us that it's wrong, the opera serves the purpose of reminding us how that was at one time a legitimate problem. I think historical perspective is a good reason for an opera.

S- Sure, there is merit in telling a story like that of *Madama Butterfly*'s. If nothing else at least one might realize the recklessness of betraying someone's love.

D- And I guess maybe a simple plot can make room for music to express a dimension of the drama- of a kind of situation that maybe does in some form occur in the real world-that other ways of communicating don't capture.

T- Well, Pinkerton doesn't view his marriage to Cio Cio San as fully legitimate, but expresses the wish to someday get a real American

wife, and, well, marries a second time, to an American, that is. Can anyone sympathize with a creep like that?

W-I actually can sympathize with him. I think it's really unfortunate for a person to be dumb. Assuming he was brought up in a culture where foreign people were treated quite poorly, it's amazing that he shows as much remorse as he does in the opera. He plays the part of the villain by, well, causing pretty much every single problem, but I can sympathize because he actually did fairly well based on what he would have been thought at the time. I guess it's some sort of a natural lottery consideration.

T- Well, to be honest, I too could not help but sympathize for B.F. Pinkerton. He sought happiness for himself in a reckless manner. This makes him a careless human, not a villain. The fact that he came to know the damage he had caused by abandoning his Japanese wife, and will forever feel his own guilt, seems to make my pity for him justifiable.

S- I can sympathize with his mistake but only because he seemed to be so genuinely distraught at the end of the performance for his actions. If he were really such a well traveled and adventurous man, however, you would think he would have known better than to think he could Americanize everyone.

D- What a jerk ... who would leave a woman who can sing like that?

T- Hey, do you think that if the opera had been in another language than Italian, it would have detracted from or added to the experience? And what do think about the subtitles that ran throughout the

performance?

W- I was really glad that there were subtitles. I had heard that there wouldn't be. I liked that it was sung in Italian though, just because that's how it was originally meant to be sung. I want to hear what Puccini wanted and meant, and I think even just the sounds of the Italian words are necessary to maintain that integrity.

S- That the opera was in Italian and not English say, made it much more appealing to me. Since it was in a different language you get a bit of an exotic feel for the opera, and are drawn in rather than left bored with nothing to figure out and imagine. The subtitles didn't detract at all from the performance for me.

D- And what about the backstage presentations during intermission? Would you have preferred not having the magic of the stage explained to you? Isn't art supposed to hide art ... or isn't that how Horace put it?

S- It was great to have that extra bit of insight into the work of the play and it really made one feel as though they were interacting with the performers but at the same time I think the presentations could have been a bit shorter so that the main storyline could have been followed with less of an interruption.

W- No I was glad for the commentary! If it weren't for that I would still be grumpy about the use of puppets.

MADAM BUTTERFLY

by

G. PUCCINI.

Act I.

A Japanese house, terrace and garden.

Below, in the background, the bay, the harbour and the town of Nagasaki.

Allegro. $\text{♩} = 122$.

1st Violins. *ff vigoroso*

PIANO. *ff vigoroso*

PRO ET CONTRA:

CAN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ADDRESS INEQUALITIES IN CANADIAN SOCIETY?

PRO:

Affirmative Action plays a vital role in integrating minorities into Canadian society. The opportunities Affirmative Action provides, and the extent of the historical injustices it is intended to correct, completely justifies any discrimination it creates. Policies of Affirmative Action or Equal Opportunity represent necessary steps to bring about equality for historically and systematically oppressed people such as First Nations peoples and women.

Affirmative Action recognizes how difficult it is for a society to move forward. The harsh reality is such that members of large and important groups of our population would never make it to certain positions within society if it were not for such a program. In a country that promotes diversity, positions in government and education and business should reflect our diverse population.

Affirmative Action can have a double benefit. First of all, it brings new perspectives and new voices into situations and institutions where such perspectives and voices had not yet been seen or heard. Even a well meaning male cannot really speak from a woman's perspective. He cannot see reality as a woman sees it. Secondly, affirmative action creates role models. How can a First Nations person believe that it is possible for him or her to become, say, a doctor if he or she has never seen a First Nations doctor before? Once again, it is very difficult for those who are not members of a group that has been historically excluded to understand the nature of the barriers that hold back those who have suffered from discrimination.

There is no denying that certain types of discrimination are created in the process of introducing affirmative action. But such "positive" discrimination is temporary, because once the perspectives of oppressed groups are represented in positions of power and once young members of oppressed groups find role models in positions of power, such groups will no longer be disadvantaged. The need for affirmative action will simply disappear.

Of course, affirmative action cannot on its own solve the gender and racial discrimination from which our society suffers. There must be other initiatives, above all in education. Affirmative action is, however, an essential component of a plan to eliminate systematic injustice against important parts of our population.

Johannes Miller

CONTRA:

Affirmative Action might address some inequalities in society, but the harm it does heavily outweighs any benefits, especially in this day and age. Simply put, there are so many employment opportunities already out there, and so many more that are constantly being created that these conflicts shouldn't even arise. Everyone should be able to pursue his or her plans and projects in an open competition. Frankly, employers, especially in the private sector, are going to want the best people they can possibly hire, so why place any sort of limiting factor on that possibility by instituting a policy of Affirmative Action.

All that Affirmative Action would do for a possible borderline candidate is lessen any sort of credentials they might otherwise have had because they are then getting their job not through their ability but because of some past injustice.

And, that is another key word: "Past" injustice. Why should a policy be implemented when those benefiting aren't even those who were forced to face the actual injustice? It is insulting to say that if the candidate in question is Aboriginal or a woman that they must need some sort of advantage to succeed. What about those who manage to do so anyway without any sort of favouritism?

Some people say that Affirmative Action is a temporary measure, but by allowing people who are not the best to take positions we create grave inequalities based on factors which should not count. Affirmative action creates a kind of "positive" discrimination giving advantages to formerly disadvantaged groups. Yet doesn't this simply ingrain the idea that we should see people as different according to skin colour or gender? In fact, affirmative action treats people as unequal. We should be trying to eliminate inequality, not ingrain it. Affirmative action cannot be a temporary measure, since it relies on the very form of discrimination which it tries to eliminate. Therefore, it cannot succeed.

If someone wants to truly solve these inherent societal problems then one must return to the root of the issue and focus on providing an energetic and complete education to all individuals and convince them to follow through with it. Those who have no interest in completing their education are willfully forfeiting their right to good employment later in their lives.

Bjorn Russe



Faculty Files:

Dr. Mary Ann Beavis
Department of Religious
Studies

Why did you choose Religious Studies? Was there something in particular that interested you in the area?

Serendipity. I took a Religion course in the last year of B.Ed., and the head of the department asked me if I wanted to do a Master's. I was shocked at the idea initially, but on second thought, I decided to give it a try. My interest springs from my fundamentalist upbringing—I found the academic approach to religion, especially the Bible, refreshing.

In your opinion, what do you think constitutes a well-rounded Liberal Arts education? What kind of value do you think a Liberal Arts Education possesses in contemporary society?

I think a Liberal Arts education should stretch students in directions they otherwise wouldn't have thought of, and also allow them to follow their own interests. As Head of the Religion & Culture Department, I should add that it definitely should include religion courses! The value of a Liberal Arts education lies in the exposure to a variety of academic perspectives, the development of a critical perspective, and the cultivation of cultural literacy.

What are your current projects and research interests?

I'm currently working on a commentary on the Gospel of Mark to be published by Baker Academic, which I hope to have completed in Fall 2009. My next major project will be a full-scale feminist commentary on the Letter to the He-

brews for the Liturgical Press. I'm also doing some research on the effects of goddess spirituality on Christian feminist practice.

Outside of being a Religious Studies professor, what are your hobbies and interests?

At this stage in my career, academic work takes up a lot of my time. Other than that, the usual: reading, going to movies and theatre, working out, travel—I like to take one "major" trip a year—this year it's the south of France. I am also addicted to Turner Classic Movies.

If you were to teach outside of your discipline, what area would you choose to teach and why?

Urban Studies, I guess, because I know something about it—I was Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg before I came to STM.

Could you please list for me your top 5 favourite movies of all time? And perhaps what appeals to you about them?

Casa Blanca—a classic, love the characters, not a sentence wasted.

A Christmas Carol—the one with Alistair Sim—my favourite Christmas movie, and the only movie version worth watching.

Enchanted April—I just saw this one last week—a quiet, uplifting film that looks like it's going to be about female bonding but turns out to be something else entirely.

Persuasion—the one made back in the 90's—my favourite Jane Austen movie by far—I love the unknown cast and the soundtrack, which doesn't have that staccato violin music that most English period movies are afflicted with.

Babette's Feast—I watch this one every couple of years with my Bible & Film class, and I always find something new in it.

Capitalism: A Flaw in the Machine

Charlie Peters

I count myself very fortunate to be privy to some wonderful conversations. The topics are diverse, but some of the most stimulating have to do with philosophy. I commend those of you still reading, the few not scared away by that dreaded word: philosophy, the annoying child constantly tugging at society's proverbial sleeve. It's never easy to ponder philosophy; it requires that we look at ourselves, our ideas, and those of others critically and without bias. It is not easy, but it is, I argue, necessary to do. After all, what are we scared of? If our values cannot withstand some rational scrutiny, are they really worth continuing to hold? Socrates reminds us that "the unexamined life is not worth living."¹ So, friends, let us examine!

One topic that frequently arises is capitalism. Capitalism refers to a system involving private ownership of wealth in which individuals (or corporations) compete for their own benefit – in short, the system in which we live. This article is not meant as a critique of the system as a whole, but rather a critical reflection on a hypocritical attitude closely related to it. Many people invested (pun fully intended) in capitalist ideology hold that a free-market system, a capitalist one, will always reward those who work hard. This is not wholly untrue – indeed, many people have earned their way from rags to riches, or at least fewer-riches to more-riches, in the manner of the hard-working and self-made (wo)man – nonetheless, this view is woefully incomplete. Work-ethic and drive are not always rewarded, yet the view that those who are not successful at making money are so because of failures of personal character and attitude continues to be prevalent. It is not just to blame (or praise) a person for their state if it was not their actions or qualities that got them there.

Many people assume that money, the capitalist indicator of success, springs directly, and possibly only, from hard work; this view is also held in reverse, whereby the destitute are so because they did not and do not work hard enough. If this were true, the wealthy really would deserve their luxury, and the poor, their fellow humans, would have fairly received their just deserts. Let us dispute the basic truth of this view with concrete examples. What about inheritance? Those who are born into money have done no work to earn it. The good-fortune of their birth resulted in the acquisition of that money. On the small scale, this may seem a minor point; when taken to the extreme, however, the actual magnitude of the problem become clear. If one inherits a fortune (for the sake of the example, let us say that it is such a great sum of money as to support the person in an extravagant lifestyle forever), the recipient has done nothing at all to earn that money and yet is somehow seen as deserving of it. In the sense that capitalism treats each person as if they had been obliged to work for their money, this possibility calls into question either the system or the assumption that all those with money have earned it.

Money cannot be said to spring directly from hard work. Too often the poor are blamed for being so. Common words that get tossed around include "unmotivated," "lazy," and "freeloaders." While these terms can, in some situations, be accurately applied, more often than not these are nothing more than hateful stereotypes. Indeed, there is no more inherent truth to these types of comments than there is to the idea that anyone earning over \$100 000 per year is heartless, self-serving, and arrogant. To me, laziness does not seem to be the issue for a single-mother working three jobs and still making barely enough to feed, clothe, and house her two small children (true story, by the way). I fail to see how those engaged in a daily struggle to find enough food are unmotivated, even if they don't take the advice of commentators by "going back to school" or "getting a better job." The starving cannot pay tuition, and the struggling haven't the time to spend searching for a "better" job or attending classes. Moreover, when 66%² (or more) of the homeless population suffers from debilitating mental illness and even more from

addiction and the associated psychological and social problems, I refuse to accept that the issue is as simple as "maybe those lazy bums should go out and get a job."

Even something as basic as innate talent throws a wrench in the gears of traditional capitalist thought. If hard work was really all that counted, talent would be meaningless. A prime example comes from our own academic community, yet the same is true in business and the corporate world. There are those who labour long and hard for a mark of 80%; there are also those who can put little effort in and receive the same mark. This simple example demonstrates that it is not effort expended but results that are valued. Thus the popular saying, "you work, you eat," should be revised to "you succeed, you eat." The assumption of the former implies that, succeed or fail, you will be taken care of if you work. The second more accurately reflects what the case truly is. It says this: you are a means to an end; if you achieve the end, and only then, do you have worth. I do not mean to belittle innate talent or those who possess it; rather, this line of thought leads me to question many assumptions about how our system rewards people.

Famously and dangerously, capitalism assumes a level playing field, at least at the beginning. The above example of a person born into wealth (and the numerous examples of those born without it) shatters that assumption – ass of you and me, anybody? Moreover, it presumes that we all determine our own destiny, another half truth. We are largely self-determinate but a myriad of things impact us and our situation. John Donne was wise to note that "no man is an island."³ We rely on others and are greatly affected (for better or worse) by the choices of other people. Kissing ass works wonders and the fact that it does shows just how much power something seemingly trivial can have over us. Combine this with the earlier examples and we can infer that, at least sometimes, good reputation, number of dependents vs. number of income-earners, and even mental health can have far more power to determine success than "work ethic" or "motivation."

These revelations lead to some startling adjustments in how we must think. The basic idea upon which capitalism is based (and which I hold in highest regard) stands: people should be equal and every person has inherent dignity and worth as a member of humanity. If, as we have seen, people do not start equally (in terms of wealth), and nor are they necessarily rewarded equitably for their efforts, is it fair to assume that money can be viewed as an indicator of success as it has been in the past? Moreover, can we, when confronted with poverty and suffering, do nothing more than recommend working harder? Can we assure people that a winning, American-dream attitude will be enough? Or must we see the suffering as the result of complex systems and varied circumstances and, recognizing this, strive to make the world the fair place it should be?

It is unfair and wrong to assume that, as our system currently functions, hard work will invariably lead to success, however you define it. While the examples I have used may have been extreme, they were never untrue. There are serious flaws in the thinking of many people in contemporary society, dangerous and harmful flaws. It is time for us to look at our own thought-process objectively. It is time for us to abandon hypocrisy and false superiority. It is time to revise our views on money, who has it, who deserves it, and why. It is time to do all this. It is high time.

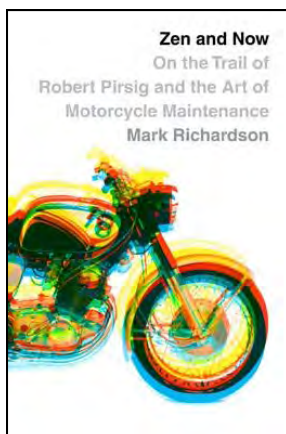
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¹ Plato, *Apology*, sec. 38.

² Mental Health Policy Research Group, *Mental illness and pathways into homelessness: proceedings and recommendations*, Toronto, 1998.

³ John Donne, *Meditation XVII*.

Book Reviews



Zen and Now: On the Trail of Robert Persig and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

By Mark Richardson

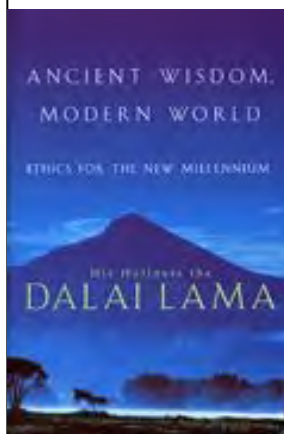
Review by Thomas Fleury

In his recent book, *Zen and Now: On the Trail of Robert Persig and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Toronto Star Wheels Editor Mark Richardson spurs his readers through a multi-textured tale of tortured genius, autobiography and two-wheeled adventure. While retracing Robert Persig's famous American motorcycle trip across the Northwest United States, novelized by Persig in his now-classic text *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Mr. Richardson incorporates past stories from both his and Persig's lives, as well as road-tales from his current trip, in an effort to explore the philosophy expounded in the original text.

Like Richardson himself, I originally stumbled across Persig's novel as a teenager and struggled to get through it. Having read it much later in life, after receiving an education in literature and philosophy—not to mention nurturing a decade-long passion for motorcycles—I should represent an optimal audience for Richardson's work. Unfortunately, it is a very mediocre book. Even when expressed by a certified genius, as Persig himself is, his philosophical system comes across as a tenuous mix of idealism and pragmatism – focusing on actions of “quality” as a route to an esoteric and ill-defined “Good.” Richardson's continual attempts to connect his own actions, such as changing a flat tire, to Persig's philosophy come across as highly contrived, and they only serve to slow the pace of an already unadventurous ‘adventure.’

Despite its weaknesses, Richardson's book does have some redeeming features. He tells his own stories of reckless youth without any forced connection to an overarching system, and they provide for interesting miniature narratives within the larger story. One such tale, for example, involves an incredibly low-budget and dangerous motorcycle tour through Alaska in his early twenties that leaves him stranded in Vancouver with a ruined motorbike and \$20 to his name. Richardson's exploration of Persig's own troubled and exciting life also provides for an interesting read, receiving increased attention from the author near the end of the novel as the excitement of his own trip appears to wane.

Ultimately, however, most readers would be much better served with a full-fledged biography of Robert Persig, if their interests tend that way, or a more ambitious motorcycle journey.



Ancient Wisdom, Modern World—Ethics for a New Millennium

by Dalai Lama

Review by Torrie Bulmer

Ancient Wisdom, Modern World- Ethics for a New Millennium is an ideal read for those in search of a refreshing perspective. Written by the Dalai Lama, it offers a spiritual -but not necessarily religious- opinion of what exactly modern society is lacking. The Dalai Lama calls for a spiritual revolution; “on the one hand, acting out of concern for others' well-being. On the other, it entails transforming ourselves so that we become more readily disposed to do so.”

He expresses a concern that so many of us sense, but cannot explicitly discuss. His perspective and wisdom together create plausible recommendations for human ethics with a clear and modest tone. He suggests, for example, “a call for a radical reorientation away from our habitual preoccupation with self.” Though, the Dalai Lama does not seem to condone a solution to all contemporary society's problems. He does, however, strongly assert that the continued neglect of our “spiritual dimension” will never bring our world to any kind of solution.

Beyond the initial selling point of the Dalai Lama's name on its cover, the book possesses an undeniable truth. A truth that even after reading the book, I have a difficult time articulating myself. The Dalai Lama however, succeeds in addressing contemporary concerns and offering an unequivocal approach to ethics that turns on ageless wisdom.

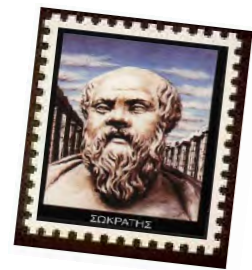
ISBN: 978-0349114439

As a reader of literature, a student of philosophy, and a lover of motorcycles, I really wish I could recommend this book, but it seems to be more of a cash-in on Persig's massive popularity and sales than a serious narrative in itself.

ISBN: 978-0307269706

I stared down into what felt like eternity and could not help but shiver. I had been quietly practicing my virtue for hours. The conditions were unfortunate, but my hopes remained high. The others made focussing difficult with their nasty language and vulgar behaviour. I tried to avoid eye contact at all costs. I kept to my tiny corner and remained silent. When the time was right, I moved swiftly. I struggled with it for only a second before its eyes appeared. The others gathered quickly in my corner and watched with admiration as I demonstrated my ability. I grabbed what I had come for and turned with pride to show the others. Each of the boys glared at me as if I was a murderer; I had killed their hopes and dreams, I suppose. For a second, a look of pity must have crossed my face. I had no intention of hurting their feelings, yet my skill was undeniable. The jack-fish flopped profusely in my hands, and I decided there was no time for such compassion. I had to go fillet my fish.

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Postcard Stories

What's a postcard story? A postcard story is a condensed piece of storytelling in no more than 250 words. Use drama, poetry, humour, dialogue to write one. Anything goes, there are no restrictions except the word limit. Stretch yourself by writing short. -Guy Vanderhague

The slow, monotonous dripping from the dark ceiling above me created a small pool of brownish liquid beside my dark navy pumps. Each drop from the ceiling splattered onto the chilled, gray cement with a lack of luster that blended in quite well with the rest of the subway station. The white, painted, concrete walls, dull, silver tollgates and industrial sized wastebaskets seemed perfectly contented with the newest member of their monochromatic community. Picking myself up off of the uniform bench, I made my way over to the tollbooth window to purchase my subway ticket home.

Everyone loves Emma Lehrer. At least that's what I heard from the murmuring crowd as I negotiated my way to the refreshments table. There was another man there, drinking a tiny cup of punch and balancing a brownie on a bright blue napkin while offering the occasional smile, nod, and "yeah, she's really something". Nobody loved Emma Lehrer. The party was in as precarious a position as the brownie on the man's napkin. All that we could hope was that it would land icing-side up so that it wouldn't leave a stain on the carpet. A gray haired woman came up to me and said hello. She was Emma and my high school English teacher. Neither of us was particularly fond of the other or of Emma. We exchanged pleasantries and a hug. Both of us took a brownie and joined the man standing at the side of the refreshments table. Poor Emma Lehrer.

Whitney Lilly



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