

## **Enriching Liberal Education's Defense in Universities and Colleges: Liberal Arts, Innovation, and *Technē***

J. Scott Lee

For a number of years, it has struck me that people who write about a “liberal-arts education” rarely write directly about the arts. They write about political, religious, and moral dispositions; they write about the rise of the sciences; they write about cultures; and recently, they write about the conditions of education. Sometimes, they write about books and core texts within the tradition of the liberal arts, but these books and their associated arts are written about as exemplars of politics, morals, science, and culture—rarely as exemplars of arts.

A recent spate of writings defending the humanities and humanism, the college and the purpose of education—by Martha Nussbaum, Tony Kronman, Andrew Delbanco, and Patrick Deeneen—all mention liberal-arts education. They defend the fine or liberal arts, but none of these authors ground their defenses of liberal-arts education in art per se.<sup>1</sup> All these writers sense an

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1. Andrew Delbanco hardly approves of Anthony Kronman's great-books curriculum for the ideas it raises, and he cites the *artes liberales* ideal of education that Bruce Kimball has extensively documented as a tradition of aristocratic European liberal learning that opens the mind. But it is America's “attempt to democratize” this tradition through its collegiate educations that really interests him (*College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012], 33.) “Working to keep the ideal of democratic education alive,” Delbanco, in an extensive analysis of the past and present social conditions of col-

ebbing of liberal education correlated with the economic, scientific, and technological conditions under which we live. Nearly

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leges as institutions, ultimately locates the “universal value of a liberal education” in the belief, derived from the nineteenth-century religious college, that “no outward mark—wealth or poverty, high or low social position, credentials or lack thereof—tells anything about the inward condition of the soul” (171). He transmutes this belief, today, into a liberal education whose “saving power” (171) that allows students to “ignite in one another a sense of the possibilities of democratic community” through “the intellectual and imaginative enlargement [college] makes possible” (172). He concludes, “we owe it to posterity to preserve and protect this institution. Democracy depends on it.” (177). Martha Nussbaum begins her “manifesto” in defense of the humanities and arts with a crisis in which “the humanities and the arts are being cut away in both primary/secondary and college/university education, in virtually every nation in the world.” This entails “discarding of skills that are needed to keep democracies alive.” In the survival of the humanities and arts within educational institutions “the future of the world’s democracies” is said to “hang in the balance” (*Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010], 1-2).

Notwithstanding a very serious concern with “ideals of freedom,” Anthony Kronman is less focused on the links between democracy and liberal education than on the links between the humanities and our culture (*Education’s End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). He stresses particularly the humanities’ abandonment, within colleges and universities, of the search for meaning in our individual lives, and he warns against our scientific culture’s way of aggrandizing our technical powers without setting them within the limitations of human finitude. The combination, he believes, yields a kind of spiritual desiccation. Oddly similar to Kronman notwithstanding their published differences, Patrick Deneen argues that since the Enlightenment, greatness seems to rest in transformation, whereas before the rise of the New Sciences, whose authors often belittled ancient books, greatness rested in a “pre-dominant understanding” of cultivated endurance, and an acceptance of the limits of human power, knowledge, and ambition. The modern great books program contains many scientific, political and economic works which support the idea of transformation. So Deneen asks, might

all find that the present responses of our institutions to these conditions impede rather than aid the robust maintenance or development of something like a liberal education. Most of their arguments rely on research, though their positions on whether research—scientific, bibliographic or otherwise—within a university favors or harms undergraduate liberal education tends to range Nussbaum on one side and Delbanco, Kronman, and Deneen on the other. In contrast, each author attempts to revive traditions of the liberal arts by linking them to current conditions of democracy, spiritual needs of cultures, or ethical understandings of faith. All believe that the souls of our students and our citizens are at stake, though of course they disagree about the constitution of the soul and the education designed to nurture it.

A common concern among these authors is whether our cultural assumption that we can transform almost anything, particularly through the technology of science, is good for our souls and good for liberal education. For Nussbaum, technology appears as the attractive image of students in a lab—instead of pictures of students “thinking”—that administrators use to lure students to universities.<sup>2</sup> Delbanco notes the advantage that the sciences have over the humanities in public evaluations: technological landmarks of progress, accompanied by an occasional historical or philosophic “breakthrough.”<sup>3</sup> For Kronman and Deneen, technology is the differential gear which imparts varying force to science, culture, and education. Further, Kronman and Deneen come very close to each other in noting the meretricious effects upon our character and our sense of limits that technological achievement unleashes in the form of *pleonexia*. The humanities currently fail to oppose it (Kronman), or worse, education encourages it through

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there be an alternative way to think about the core texts of the ancient to medieval Western tradition, ultimately as a way of restraining our scientifically released *pleonexia* for mastering and transforming our world? He suggests great books might be justified by recovering this earlier understanding’s humility (“Against Great Books,” in *First Things* [January 2013], 35.)

2. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 133.

3. Delbanco, *College*, 95. Apparently, literature does not rise to “breakthroughs.”

a philosophy of transformation, of creating original knowledge and innovations through research (Deneen).<sup>4</sup>

4. At one point, Kronman and Deneen come very close to saying—and meaning—the same thing. Kronman’s case for the humanities in large part rests on controlling technology through a recognition of human limits: “We have a desire for control that can never be satisfied by any degree of control we actually achieve. We always want more. . . . This is the human condition, which is characterized by our subjection to fateful limits that we can neither tolerate nor do without. . . . The most important thing about technology is not *what* it does but what it *aspires* to do. . . . Technology encourages us to believe that the abolition of fate should be our goal. . . . Technology discourages the thought that our finitude is a condition of the meaningfulness of our lives. . . . It makes the effort to recall our limits and to reflect upon them seem less valuable and important” (Kronman, *Education’s End*, 230-233). For Kronman, the research ideal is, of course, partly justified in the sciences by the “fruit”—both in discovery and in technology—that it produces: “The research ideal is today the organizing principle of work in every academic discipline. . . . In the natural sciences, the research ideal has proved remarkably fruitful. The new discoveries that pour from our college and university laboratories every year and the clear sense of progressive movement toward an objective understanding of the structure and mechanisms of the natural world testify to the productive fit between the natural sciences and the modern research ideal.” Whereas in the humanities “understanding,” but *not a productive technology* characterizes research results: “In the humanities . . . the benefits of research are less uniform or certain” (ibid., 130-133). Nevertheless “research in the humanities has produced results of lasting value. It has added importantly to our understanding of the historical, literary, artistic, and philosophical subjects with which the humanities deal.” The demands for specialization and for teaching to that specialization ought to be less insistently felt in the humanities: “What must be resisted is the imperial sprawl of the research ideal, its expansive tendency to fill every corner of each discipline in which it takes hold and to color the expectations and judgments of teachers in these disciplines regarding what they do. Admittedly this is asking a lot. . . . But . . . it is merely asking for a somewhat greater degree of humility on the part of those in the humanities who first allegiance is to this ideal” (ibid., 248-249).

For Deneen, the (current) point of a philosophy of education is not to admire the world, or suffer its limits, but to change it, to transform it.

Finally, while all these authors seem to be convinced that the products of arts are essential to any revival, and while they are skilled fashioners of argument in areas where no single discipline can claim precedence, the discussion of fine or liberal arts and their products is not in terms of art, but in the terms of the political, cultural, or religious end sought. For example, Nussbaum devotes large portions of her book exploring arts and a whole chapter to “Cultivating the Imagination: Literature and the Arts.”

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To Deneen, it seems that since the Enlightenment, greatness seems to rest in transformation. So he asks, might there be an alternative way to think about and assign terms to the core texts of the Western tradition, ultimately as a way of restraining our excesses in transforming our world? He begins by accepting a stasis in the political, moral, religious, and poetic inheritance of books that extends from the ancients through the first stirrings of modernity: “Great books such as *Paradise Lost* sought to inculcate a sense of limits, . . . we could look at a dominant understanding of a long succession of great books from antiquity to the Middle Ages . . . to conform human behavior and aspirations to the natural or created order” (“Against Great Books,” 35). By way of Baconian, Cartesian, and Hobbesian repudiation of books, Deneen elaborates the argument that he feels undermines the “human limits” understanding by trying to discriminate two kinds of liberty. The first, associated with great books, is a “liberty . . . of hard-won self-control through the discipline of virtue,” which often animates defenses of great books as materials in preparing for citizenship. The second is a liberty with “the stress . . . upon the research, creative activity, scholarly inquiry and the development of new knowledge” (ibid., 37). The former constrains our desires, the latter endlessly satisfies them through “the human project of mastery.” The latter pursuits were justified by the arguments of Bacon, Descartes, and Hobbes, reinforced by Dewey, which depended on the idea “that a larger number of natural forces and objects [could be or] have been transformed into instrumentalities of action” in the West than in cultures which did not exploit the natural resources available through scientific technology (ibid., 36). Deneen concludes that we do need to teach these two competing notions of liberty through the great books, but defenders should exchange the notion of “greatness” for a notion of “humility” derived from the earlier works of the intellectual tradition represented in the West (ibid., 38). Humility might, then, restrain our excesses in regard to transformation.

In the latter, we learn that “in order to be stably linked to democratic values, [both the artistic cultivation of capacities for play and empathy in a general way, and the treatment of particular cultural blind spots] require a normative view of how human beings ought to relate to one another . . . and, both therefore require selectivity regarding the artworks used.”<sup>5</sup> A catalog follows of the failures of artworks, of “defective forms of ‘literature,’” to cultivate the sympathy that Nussbaum desires. Undoubtedly, Kronman’s understanding of the search for meaning and his discussion of civilizational “conversation” depends on art; Delbanco’s distinction between research and reading instances canonical works from ancient to modern times; and Deneen’s argument is concerned with a residuum of teachings that earlier great books leave us. Yet, in these social-moral defenses, an entire line of argument concerning the arts is, for the most part, relegated to an instrumental, supporting, or ancillary role in a discussion that might be titled: “Social Conditions, Educational Institutions, and Individual Capacities: Wither Liberal Education?”

I wish to suggest now that the ecology of liberal education defense could be enriched by also focusing on the *arts* of liberal-arts education. Then we will see what liberal education’s relation to research, democracy, or culture might be when looked at through the lens of the arts. Please note that my preceding remarks are not meant to imply the absence of artistic works in liberal-arts programs, nor that some parts of those programs are not structured by the arts. For example Yale’s Directed Studies program has courses explicitly divided into three groups: Literature, Philosophy, and Historical and Political Thought. Clearly literature is art. Columbia’s Core’s program has the Literature/Humanities and the Contemporary Civilization sequences, not to mention the Music offerings. Again, no one doubts that this program involves art. What I am interested in are the rationales and justifications for programs using core texts that can be grounded in the liberal arts.

Why is it important to develop a line of argument about arts

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5. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 108.

to the point where we might see them in the guise of an end, not just a means, to liberal-arts education? Do you remember, about forty or fifty years ago, if you aspired to a bachelor degree, you chose either a bachelor of science or a bachelor of arts? No one today questions whether a student possesses a science if she or he earns a B.S. What art or arts, however, do our students possess if they have earned a B.A.? So, if we claim to offer a liberal-*arts* education in undergraduate bachelor programs, it might not be amiss to ask what arts are our students learning and we are teaching. And asking such a question can enrich our view of liberal-arts education using core texts—whether of the Western tradition or not.

When educators of any stripe are seeking renewal, they often resort to an examination of the past, so I thought the best place to begin a search for a renewal of liberal-arts education might be in a book by Bruce Kimball first published in 1986: *Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education*.<sup>6</sup> The book's scholarship and judicious consideration of a vast number of core texts, curricular materials, and the scholarly production surrounding liberal education make this work a seminal contribution to the history of liberal education. Kimball has paid much more explicit attention to the *artes liberales* educational ideal, especially in relation to the research ideal—or, as he styles it, the liberal-free ideal—than any current author we have examined. For our purposes he also reaches more thoroughly into the past. With the important exception of an unstable accommodation in a very few universities and colleges between these two ideals—Chicago, Columbia, St. John's College being the primary examples—his extended history gives little comfort to the conviction that liberal-arts education, particularly in relation to democracy, has much of a chance of revival in most of today's universities or colleges, precisely because of the success of the ideal of research throughout academe, and its allied notion of freedom.

Kimball's history, which extends from ancient Greece to late

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6. Bruce Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education* (New York: Teachers College, 1986; rev. ed., New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1995).

twentieth-century America, reflects a two-fold tradition in education. A rhetorical liberal tradition complains about disarray and divisions of undergraduate education, while an epistemic, research quarrel among the fields of science, social science, and the humanities over “definitions of knowledge and culture” influences undergraduate education.<sup>7</sup> These two educational traditions—the *artes liberales* ideal for citizenship and the liberal-free ideal for specialization—compete in public, graduate, and undergraduate contexts. To bring this competition down to earth at the undergraduate level: Kimball finds “it is supremely difficult for an undergraduate major . . . to coexist with a thorough [curricular] commitment to citizenship, virtues, the republic, and the appropriation of the textual tradition of a community.”<sup>8</sup> The reason is that these two polarities, or ideals, are systematic: they entail different ends, characteristic qualities, and, ultimately, curricular expressions. Syntheses, accommodations, or blends of the two have limited appeal and, typically, short lives. The *artes liberales* accommodation is unstable partly because it cannot readily convince academics that classics are necessary to a critical intellect, and partly because its insistence upon exploring ancient texts “conflicts with the liberal-free mind” in its desire to range where it will.<sup>9</sup>

To varying degrees, then, Kimball anticipates the ambivalence that Kronman and Delbanco feel about reading great texts at the undergraduate level with modern research in mind. Kimball also anticipates Kronman and Deneen’s concern with the way in which the rise of science has shaped our educational institutions toward a research ideal and away from a reflective, character-building liberal-arts education. And, in a strange twist of fate, Kimball also recognizes the role of the liberal-free ideal in harnessing science and research to the democratic and market-based national project of the United States. And in this he anticipates Nussbaum’s and Delbanco’s attempts to have our educational institutions, committed as they are to the research ideal, serve the

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7. *Ibid.*, 286.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 223, 225, 226.



national or international life of democracies—a role formerly reserved for the *artes liberales* ideal.

In sum, historically and philosophically, with research and disciplines firmly entrenched by the rise of science in the modern university, all of these authors find themselves in a very difficult position. They sense a pervasive cultural and ethical emptiness related to the very institution of education to which their lives are committed. They resist this emptiness by offering an alternative end to liberal education—call it democracy, humanity, or faith—something other than research. Yet all supporters of liberal education are faced with an institutional history that is well documented and that holds out little hope (but let us not say *no* hope) of successfully wooing the disciplines and departments that mark universities and colleges to the ends of liberal education.

Since all of these authors are interested in liberal education and in renewing its institutional life, it is not a fault that they should closely examine institutional histories of liberal education. But the origins of liberal-arts education were not entirely institutional. As I will argue shortly, before and even after the innovative congregating of lecturers into medieval universities, education in the liberal arts was often done outside an institutional context. This “outside” development matters because in one way or another almost all of our authors acknowledge institutional atrophy at various points in the history of liberal education. And if, today, liberal-arts education is institutionally “strangled” rather than atrophied, that is all the more reason to examine sources outside academe, or sources within academe that are not currently predominant in models of education, for inspiration in renewing liberal-arts education. In particular, the transition from Aquinas to Bacon has as its *backdrop* the rise of universities—but the actual *stage* was filled with liberal artists outside of academia who were actively developing new educations, arts, and sciences. The work of these liberal artists may provide us with generative—perhaps even transformative—models, grounded in the classics, that can contribute appreciably to institutional revival of the liberal arts.

Through tracing the specific use of the words “liberal education” and “liberal arts,” Kimball concludes that, as a historical fact, liberal education based in a normative curriculum of the seven liberal arts simply didn’t exist until the late Roman Empire.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the seven liberal arts, which eventually became the trivium and quadrivium, circumscribe what Kimball takes historically to be the instantiation of a liberal-arts curriculum. Under Roman development, the general *artes liberales* educational ideal becomes firmly tied to “the goal of training the good citizen to lead society,” as well as to the “prescription of values and standards for character and conduct,” through this normative curriculum.<sup>11</sup> To cut a very complicated story short: this ideal and its *primus-inter-pares* art was rhetorical, and the situation remained so until the rise of the medieval university.<sup>12</sup> That rise is accompanied by the rise of philosophy as the organizing discipline of university education. Kimball finds that when medieval universities began to concentrate on theoretical matters or systematic matters of philosophy, a “philosophic” curriculum replaced an oratorical one.

This “revolution” and “transformation” is traced to “the rediscovery and translation of the lost philosophical learning of Greek antiquity, especially the corpus of Aristotle . . . [as well as] Arabic, Jewish and other Greek writings on mathematics and natural science.”<sup>13</sup> But in Kimball’s analysis, the philosophic takeover of the liberal-arts curriculum does not give rise to a philosophic ideal associated with it that can be described as a systematic ideal for liberal education. One might have expected the liberal arts to have been strengthened by four developments that occurred during this time: the new relative importance of logic; the rise of “technical and schematized *artes*”; the formation of “a curriculum of liberal education dedicated to *scientiae speculativae*” within medieval universities; and the innovation of *grammatica specu-*

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10. *Ibid.*, 3, 25, 29.

11. *Ibid.*, 37.

12. *Ibid.*, 31-33.

13. *Ibid.*, 58, and 61.

*lativa* as an investigation of the universal grammar that “underlies the different grammars of all languages.” On the contrary, the *septem artes* diminished in importance, largely owing to Aquinas’s dictum that “the seven liberal arts do not sufficiently divide theoretical philosophy” and the emergence of new studies in graduate programs. All of this led to a distinct separation of the seven arts from philosophy within the curriculum of new medieval universities.<sup>14</sup> All of this leads Kimball’s argument to an unstated conclusion: the liberal arts were not being led by philosophy; they were slowly being trivialized or supplanted by it. To push the unstated conclusion a step further: despite many innovations in logic and grammar, as well as in mathematics, the *scientiae speculativae* that supplanted the liberal arts were not really sciences in our modern sense. So, to read backwards from Kimball’s Enlightenment identification of the liberal-free ideal’s characteristics, the medieval rediscovery of the ancients seems not to have been an exercise in “freedom from a-priori strictures and standards” nor “a critical skepticism” linked to “scientific method.”<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, the humanists’ interest in oratorical skills allowed the liberal arts to flourish successfully *outside* the universities during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Kimball finds, that beginning with Petrarch’s interest in Cicero and Quintilian, the *artes liberales* ideal leads to a revival and spread of enthusiasm for literature among the general public, but a widespread revival of studying literary classics in the curricula of universities did not take hold until the middle of the fifteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

A similar historical development occurred in the emergence of modern science, notwithstanding Newton’s appointment at Cambridge, the pursuit of philosophy in the name of the New Science of Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza led to a blockade of natural philosophy from the curricula of

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14. Ibid., 66 and 71.

15. Ibid., 120-121.

16. Ibid., 80.

universities. The philosophically based liberal-free ideal emerges *outside* of the universities, relying for its support on widespread Enlightenment attachment to freedom and rationality. The ideal does not shape curricula until it combines with the re-organization of German universities under the research program in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. That re-organization, in turn, leads to the destruction, in the U.S., of the more or less uniform liberal-arts curricula by the nineteenth century's end.<sup>17</sup> These historical threads, Kimball shows, are the roots of the two ideals that lay claim to the title of liberal education. Infrequent and mostly unstable accommodations between these two ideals, Kimball says, with a few precedents in the nineteenth century, only happened in the twentieth.<sup>18</sup>

Since the rhetorical ideal and its foundational art, rhetoric, was excluded from universities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, while the philosophical, liberal-free ideal and its new sciences were excluded from the sixteenth to nearly the end of the eighteenth centuries, the faculties shaping university curricula for long periods in the West have excluded one or another version—or, at least, significant portion—of what could be termed “liberal education.” So then, we might ask, in these periods where did liberal arts and liberal education go?

Kimball recognizes that humanists outside the universities were concerned, beyond politics, with the “development of personality.”<sup>19</sup> In Bruni's fourteenth-century letter to Lady Battista Malatesta of Montefeltro on “the Study of Literature,” this shift has importance to the ideal, the curriculum, and the goal of education. Bruni is addressing a woman who must, of course, “leave the rough-and-tumble of the forum entirely to men.” What, then, is she studying for? This turns out to be “human excellence,” which transcends the historical circumstances of political life: “There is, indeed, no lack of examples of women renowned for literary study and eloquence that I

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17. *Ibid.*, 146.

18. *Ibid.*, 151, 153, 186, 221.

19. *Ibid.*, 78.

could mention to exhort you to excellence.” Here Bruni cites Cornelia, Sappho, and Aspasia.<sup>20</sup>

The point of Bruni’s urging is to form a liberal education outside the university and the common expectations of men.<sup>21</sup> In consequence, Bruni does not recommend a technical study of rhetoric, but rather a grammatical and broad “knowledge of sacred letters” (54), philosophy, and poetry. What Bruni is doing is *explicitly* substituting for the Ciceronian, highly developed, technical elaboration of rhetorical distinctions and artifices (no “practice of the commonplaces” nor study of “knotty *quaestiones* to be untied”) the broader literatures of history, philosophy, and poetry, which are exercised in writing.<sup>22</sup> While his treatise’s intellectual roots lie in grammatical considerations of such authors as Augustine and Isadore, Bruni is accomplishing a re-ordering of liberal education that is new and innovative. It is neither directed toward philosophy in the medieval sense, nor directed toward salvation in the Christian sense, nor directed toward statecraft and citizenship in the Roman sense. The character one achieves is that of a fine artist.

Invention is the principal organizing part of Ciceronian, and indeed Roman, rhetoric. Invention is the discovery or devising of things, arguments or signs, to render a case probable or true (*De Inventione*, I, vi, 9). As such, invention is embedded in the *artes liberales* ideal. Commonplaces or *topoi* are central to invention and (*De Topica*, I, ii 7; *De Partitione Oratoria* I, ii, 9; xx, 68) one of principal technical features which dialectic shares with rhetoric is the use of commonplaces or *topoi*.

These features of invention, discovery, and commonplaces, ultimately, suggest ground of accommodation between Kimball’s two ideals. Three works beyond Bruni may serve as examples. Machiavelli’s *Prince*, in its operational concerns, its

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20. Leonardo Bruni. “The Student of Literature To Lady Battista Malatesta of Montefeltro,” in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. Craig W. Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 47-63.

21. *Ibid.*, 47-48.

22. *Ibid.*, 53, 55.

focus on the problem of new states, and its topical organization of how to analyze a state or ruler's situation falls well within the traditions of expedience and invention characteristic of the rhetorical tradition. Galileo's *Starry Messenger* is the application of dialectical commonplaces derived from observation of nature. The moon is examined first as whole, which is light, and then as a whole which is dark; its parts are, then, divided into light and dark, and its boundaries into continuous and discrete.<sup>23</sup> The entire treatise continues in similar fashion as it produces its four major discoveries. Finally, Bacon, readily acknowledging in the *New Organon* that current philosophy and arts are "use[ful] for supplying matters for disputations or ornaments for discourse," distinguishes between "methods [of] cultivation" of those matters and "*invention* of knowledge" which he is engaged in developing.<sup>24</sup> The sciences should be "methods for invention or directions for new works."<sup>25</sup> Yet, much of his analysis is directed less toward the experimental manipulation of phenomena, than the re-ordering of the mind, or "intellectual operations" by frameworks properly adapted to nature.<sup>26</sup> The analysis of the blocks to scientific progress, occupying the first book of the *New Organon*, is presented as a series of "aphorisms," a dialectical term indicating definitions or important distinctions. These aphorisms either move toward properly orienting the mind or showing that current systems of disputation, philosophy, and experience distract the mind. Indeed, Bacon sounds something like Bruni, for he says that, "my purpose [is not to 'found a new sect of philosophy' but] to try whether I cannot . . . extend more widely the limits, of the power and greatness of man."<sup>27</sup>

By converting the principal part of rhetoric, invention, into its

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23. Galileo Galilei. "The Starry Messenger," in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, trans. and ed. by Stillman Drake (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 21-58, esp. 31.

24. Francis Bacon, "New Organon," in *Selected Philosophical Works*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 63-206; 88, aphorism 8; 90.)

25. *Ibid.*, 90, aphorism 8.

26. *Ibid.*, 92, aphorism 18.

27. *Ibid.*, 138, aphorism 118.

*end*, the aphorisms take on the character, not of persuasion or eloquence, but discovery. The “Interpretation of Nature” in Book II, which is either to increase man’s powers over natures or to discover the form of a nature, is carried on in aphorisms. And, in illustrating discovery which is subsumed under the invention of knowledge, Bacon outlines a procedure of collecting physical instances, instead of opinions, forming tables of instances (of the presence or absence of the nature in question), and, then, applying “induction”—that is, separation, inclusions, and exclusions of the sought for nature from other natures—based on the table of instances.<sup>28</sup>

Bacon criticized the arts and philosophies of his day as useless in the production of knowledge. Galileo tired of “long and windy debates.” Machiavelli pitted imaginary constructions of politics and ideal descriptions of human behavior against the usefulness of his treatise based in “realities.” Bruni not only found scholastic subjects to be useless, but also clearly tried to provide a liberal education for a woman while wondering whether the standard rhetorical arts educated men at all. I want to stress here that in the hands of these authors the liberal arts were essential in challenging and criticizing the learning that came before. Yet, however much all these authors argued their separation from the past or their differences with current versions of education, none of their protests can obscure the continuity of art that tied the past to the present. So the transition from Aquinas to Bacon was actually a roadway paved by innovation as individuals attempted to *extend* the liberal arts into many different areas—including, apparently, areas universities simply wouldn’t touch.

Now, Kimball acknowledges that the *artes liberales* ideal incorporates a critical skepticism, yet, in the end, he concludes that this skepticism “misses the point of the scientific method: any conclusions inferred become new hypotheses and are always subject to challenge and criticism.”<sup>29</sup> So, let us ask: While the hypothesis

28. *Ibid.*, 178, aphorism 21.

29. Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers*, 121, 172; see also 225-26. This same objection is reformulated in Kimball’s characterization of the mutual misunderstanding of each other’s position over the phrase “criticism of life” that Huxley and Arnold both employed.

may well be essential to the *science* of a liberal-free ideal, is it the hypothesis or, on the contrary, the continuous growth of knowledge that is essential to the liberal-free ideal as *a whole*? Kimball was not the first to conclude that the German research university changed American institutions toward something like the liberal-free ideal. And research—not hypotheses or laboratories per se—is what changed higher education from within:

Visiting American graduate students and professors returned from German universities enamored of the specialized scholarship, the commitment to speculative research, and, above all, the atmosphere of freedom they had seen in their host institutions. Particularly this latter aspect—*Lehrfreiheit* (freedom to teach what one wishes) and *Lernfreiheit* (freedom to study what one wishes)—impressed the Americans. [The atmosphere of freedom] was seen “to follow from the searching function, the presumption that knowledge was not fixed or final,” a presumption underlying all aspects of the idealized German university that the Americans took to be “dedicated to a search to widen the bounds of knowledge rather than merely to preserve the store of knowledge undiminished.”<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the question of whether hypotheses or the growth of knowledge is essential to the liberal-free ideal is not without significance. The former, representing science, tends to draw a firm distinction between the humanities and the sciences; the latter, representing the humanities, tends to admit that instances of significant mutual influence shape education. The former tends to restrict criticism to specialists. The latter tends to make criticism and critical thought dependent on broad views of knowledge.

If in their artistic inventions Bruni, Machiavelli, Galileo, and Bacon were using the liberal arts, then, they were “proving opposites.” But they were not simply constructing arguments opposed to works of the past. They were constructing extensions of

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30. Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers*. 161, quoting Carl Diehl, *Americans and German Scholarship: 1770-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).



the arts they knew, the liberal arts. They thought that they were breaking with a past of instruction and knowledge in the liberal arts; yet, *because arts proceed by invention, not hypothesis*, these artists refashioned liberal-arts ends, principal parts, techniques, and devices, and made them suitable for new discoveries of knowledge, new feats of action, new methods of production, new formations of character, and new explorations for expanding the bounds of human inquiry. In other words, *invention* is the characteristic response of the liberal arts to the project of continuing the quest for knowledge. In our context, *invention* provided the bridge between old and new knowledge, while it simultaneously constructed both the distinction between past and future, and also the distinction between the sciences and the humanities. Thus, in the transition between Aquinas and Bacon, liberal-arts invention provided as much continuity as discontinuity. The foundation for an accommodation between the liberal-free ideal and the *artes liberales* ideal appears, therefore, to be *inherent* in the development of the New Philosophy or New Science, and, more deeply, inherent in the liberal arts themselves.<sup>31</sup>

The complex interrelations among the liberal-arts projects of Bruni, Machiavelli, Galileo, and Bacon suggest that the places to look for liberal education not only include institutional curricula, but *individual instances* that evidence liberal learning or

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31. In 2003, the Association of Core Texts and Courses began a three-year NEH grant, "Bridging the Gap Between the Humanities and Sciences." The grant had three summer syllabi on "Motion and Natural Law in the Physical and Political World," "Life, Origins, Purposiveness, and Transformations," and "Technology, Art, Values, and the Problems of Technoscience." All three syllabi began with ancient Greek texts; the first ended with texts of the seventeenth century; the others ended with later texts. Teams from ten institutions—each composed of one humanist, one scientist, and one administrator drawn from any discipline—attended the sessions and to their home institutions to devise curricula and even teaching teams that "bridged the gap." The whole effort was inconceivable without a liberal-arts orientation. See <http://www.coretexts.org/projects-and-grants/neh-grant-bridging-the-gap-between-the-humanities-and-sciences>.

education. All of these authors were learning via the liberal arts; only one of them was doing it in a university, and he found few who embraced his extension of dialectical methods. No curriculum for women existed until Bruni devised one for Lady Battista. No widespread method of science existed until Bacon articulated one. These examples of individuals practicing and acquiring liberal education outside of an academic institution show that an “*artes liberales* accommodation”—a synthesis of the *artes liberales* and liberal-free ideals of education— not only might have occurred earlier than we usually think, but also might have been more persistent and coherent in educational history than seems apparent.

All of our authors demonstrate an acute awareness of the work of predecessors. Galileo is, of course, the patron saint of scientists; and though Bacon may or may not capture the essence of science, no one doubts he was advocating for what is recognized as modern science by first reviewing works and knowledge from the past. Thus, it was the liberal arts that first brought us research in its nascent form, before it reached the universities. Is there, then, an illustration of humanities research requiring liberal education by an individual after research reaches the universities? An example is depicted by Henry Adams in his book, *The Education of Henry Adams*.<sup>32</sup> Adams was a man groomed by lineage and by a stale antebellum, Harvard liberal-arts education to become, later, one of America’s foremost specialized historians of the nineteenth century at his alma mater, during the very time that Harvard made the transition from a college to a research university.<sup>33</sup> Yet, the book’s first person narrative shows that in the opening of his *specialized* historical study to any source of knowledge or human achievement, an opening which begins in the 1890’s well after his undergraduate education and his life as a professor had ended, Adams exhibits some of the finer uses of liberal-arts, core-text study. His service in

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32. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* in *Adams: Democracy, Esther, Mont Saint Michel and Chartres, The Education of Henry Adams* (New York: The Library of America, 1983), 715-1181.

33. *Ibid.*, 777 and 993-997.

Great Britain during the American Civil War, followed by comic revelations, some thirty years after the fact, by principals of the British government about their real motives in considering entering the war on behalf of the South in 1862, convinced Adams that private experience, or even, a research career devoted to historical analysis of American Presidencies, was too small a scale for adequate judgment of the motives of men—or, what was the same, “a chart of history.”<sup>34</sup> This conviction was augmented, in part, by his friendship with John Hay, the Secretary of State, who quickened Adams’s interest in the international scale of human relations—the true locus, Adams ultimately decides, that determines the motives of human beings. Only as Adams moved from the local to the remote, only as he took an interest in symbols, only as he began to study seriously not only politics, but science, art, religious thought, and their core monuments—at Chartres, in the theology of Aquinas, in the dynamo, in the discoveries of Curie, in the art of LaFarge—and added these to his store of diplomatic and governmental knowledge—only then did he discover the Education of Henry Adams.<sup>35</sup>

The education Adams garnered at the end of his life was a preparation for a new theory, a new art, a new science—in this case a theory of history. But let us make a quick induction using all of the authors we have discussed. The proper use of education, and particularly the liberal arts, is to render students capable of making available to themselves the world’s cultural resources in order to construct a future. Adams’s employment of cultural history as the means for his re-education suggests, as do the works of our other authors, that no one should presuppose education begins with firm, well-grounded disciplinary assumptions and then proceeds to the mastery of the discipline’s tools. Actually, it seems to be quite the opposite: if we are to offer students real education, then we are obliged to abandon the presumption of given disciplines and construct a curriculum in

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34. *Ibid.*, 1105.

35. *Ibid.*, 1066ff and 1109ff.

which students may explore and conceive the foundations of disciplines for themselves.<sup>36</sup>

In constructing such curricula, there is an obvious need for liberal-arts education to select core texts. This brings us back to several arguments mentioned earlier: namely, that ancient, medieval, and early modern moral teachings can be reduced to restraint; or that a proper selection of texts can promote the correct democratic values and skills; or that the limitlessness of technology is destroying our culture and character. Each of these serious arguments may be true, but they simply don't come close to expressing the fullness that a liberal-arts education can offer. The liberal arts have never been merely moral, ethical, political, and cultural. They are fundamentally *inventive* and *transformative*. We remember that Aeschylus disapproved so much of the blood-bath at the end of the *Odyssey* that he devised a tragic trilogy, the *Oresteia*, to celebrate the creation of the jury trial, in which justice, and not merely revenge, could be felt by all. I recall the attempt in Plato's *Republic* to replace Homer with philosophy, and rhetoric with dialectic as the basis of education—and, perhaps, of society. We remember Aristotle writing—in a society that seemed unaware of human rights in general, and of the right of expression in particular—a treatise on art which defended its own governing principles. We recall that the *Aeneid* not only artfully incorporates the two Homeric epics, but also incorporates art into Aeneas's education. In having Aeneas gaze upon the artfully wrought wall of Carthage, and upon Vulcan's artfully wrought shield, and upon the artfully wrought belt of Turnus, Virgil incorporates art into the education of his hero—

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36. I mean to suggest that by continuously returning to the principal parts of liberal *arts*—poetic and rhetorical invention, as well as dialectical discovery—the liberal arts and their associated core texts played a significant artistic role in developing the new philosophy or new science. In the same way, they may continue to develop human innovation today. This argument can be extended across civilizations backward in time, and forward toward the present-day sciences, particularly in their use of the humanities and liberal arts to explain themselves. Examples are: Darwin's *Origin of Species*; portions of Einstein's *The Meaning of Relativity*; Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*; Feynman's *QED*; Wilson's *Consilience*.

an education into a vast enterprise *beyond his ken*—in a way that neither Homer nor most of the Biblical writers employ. We recall the importance of books—scriptures—to ancient Jews and Christians, not only in the canon that became the Bible, but in the remarkable synthesis of writers and texts that Ezra seems to have read to the people of Jerusalem as he united them after their second exile. We remember from the opening “archaeology” of Thucydides’s *History of the Peloponnesian War* the kind of works one reads matters. And we recall the sharp contrast between the Athenian virtues of Pericles’s “Funeral Oration” and the Judeo-Christian virtues of Christ’s “Sermon on the Mount”—the importance of the soul in each, together with the enormous differences of those souls and their purposes. And we remember Augustine’s struggle with the uses of the liberal arts and the wealth of pagan works his society possessed as he came to be not only one of the greatest expositors of the Bible, but also one of the chief agents who synthesized Athens and Jerusalem into a single educated culture.

And so I think we arrive at a justification for great books or core texts which is, perhaps, essential if our moral, cultural, political, or religious perceptions of the past’s resources are to be made available to us in a way that is promising and fruitful. Often we read core texts from many disciplines to explore ideas as a way to enlarge student experience. This is laudable, but in exploring great ideas, it seems to me that we don’t want to lose the thread of our own story—I mean the story of making books. This is the story about writing books, about reading and contemplating them, and about building educations around them. As I have suggested above, the production of books is part of the larger story of made things, the story of art, *technē*. *Technē* has been a chief source of change in civilization almost since its inception, and if you want to learn how and why culture, religion, literature, philosophy, morals, and science change, you must read books of great depth and invention across genres, disciplines, cultures, and eras.<sup>37</sup> When we do present

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37. By a book I mean any written work that comes down to us, and which, of course, may be found in many different media—scrolls, velum, hyper-text, and someday, I suspect, something like holographic-imaging ipods.

the story of making books—and, more broadly, the story of developing arts—and when we build an education around them, it is not only our students who gain a powerful resource for building the future. We, the educators, do so as well.

Specific liberal arts are instantiations of *technē*, that intellectual virtue concerned with making something out of the world of the variable, bringing something into existence that otherwise might not be. And the essence of a liberal-arts education is the development of artistry in relation to making—*technē* in relation to *poiēsis*. Here we approach, at first, what are collectively known as the fine arts. In a discussion of liberal education, literature has something of a pride of place in any list of fine arts because of the early development of the education fashioned by Isocrates and Cicero. Yet neither Isocrates nor Cicero best capture what freedom of artistry is about, as Aristotle did in the final chapters of the *Poetics*. Throughout the *Poetics* an argument builds that poetry is something more philosophic—more general—than history, and that, indeed, its function is not to narrate or dramatize “the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that *might* happen, i.e., *what is possible*” [italics mine] (1451a 36). The argument continues to the end with a defense of poets and poetry against the challenges of philosophers, politicians, and technical disciplinarians who in their systems and educational plans always tie art to the truth. Aristotle reminds us that the standard of correctness “is not the same . . . in poetry (*poiētikēs*) as in politics or, indeed, in any other art (*technē*).” Indeed, if, an “error” in any art object was useful, if the poet meant to “describe [a thing] in some incorrect way . . . [so that] it serves the end of poetry itself,” then objections by other disciplines about the product or the artistry are really to no avail. This is even the case in moral questions, for in the *Poetics* Aristotle’s interest in poetry is not whether an action or character conforms to a specific ethical or political system, or models or cultivates a specific character in the audience; his interest is in what to consider when answering whether “something said or done in a poem is morally right or not.” That is, he is concerned with “intrinsic qualities of the actual word or deed,” as well as the agent, the purpose, the patient, the means, the time, and the relations of the actions to greater or lesser goods or evils.

More generally, then, Aristotle's *Poetics* is far less concerned with constructions that use rhythm, language, and harmony as matters of truth, than as matters of what might be: "If the poet's description be criticized as not true to fact, one may urge perhaps that the object ought to be as described—an answer like that of Sophocles, who said that he drew men as they ought to be" (1460b33-35).

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle takes poetry's side by constructing a dialectical defense. The defense depends on a criticism which investigates poetry in its own terms, that is, in the internal functioning of its products. In this sense, when we come to consider the construction of curricula of books, the *Poetics*, notwithstanding Aristotle's statements about liberal education in his *Politics*, structures a liberal-arts education and promotes the free character that it produces, for such an education is less a study of the truth, than of the possibilities humans have invented and made for themselves.

The point is extendable to all books, as well as to literature and artistry from any discipline. Thus, a similar point about the object of a liberal education is suggested by Aristotle for "literary" constructions such as Bruni's, Machiavelli's, Galileo's, and Bacon's. Aristotle makes a distinction in his *Parts of Animals* between "two distinct kinds of proficiency": "scientific knowledge" and "educational acquaintance" with any subject. Indeed, the mark of a "universal [i.e., general] education" is for the holder of such an education to "to be able to form a fair offhand judgment as to the goodness or badness of the method used by a professor in his exposition." And this acquired ability applies to "all or nearly all branches of knowledge" (639a1-10). Subsequently, Aristotle constructs a dialectical set of questions pertaining to characteristics of animals and the processes which lead to the formation of those characteristics, as well as a review of how earlier authors had treated both characteristics and processes. And, indeed, he analogizes this treatment arising out of general education to analyses of art (640a25-33). In sum, tracing the invention of fine arts or sciences or the characteristics and foundations of such arts and sciences relies on a process of "criticism" (*kritikon*) "quite independent of the question whether the statements [in a work] be true or false" (639a14-15). What is at stake educationally is knowledge of the available and variable

means of construction for any given art or science. This is what freedom in artistry is. Education needs institutions and curricula in which students can acquire the arts that make such constructions available.

I have used Bruce Kimball's distinctions between the *artes liberales* and liberal-free ideals and traditions of education to suggest that the accommodations in higher education during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries may have stronger, longer, more continuous historical foundations than seem apparent from educational documents and curricula created during the same period. So far we have seen that the principal parts of the liberal arts—rhetorical invention and dialectical discovery—played a significant artistic role in developing the new philosophy or new science ideal. Furthermore, we have seen that the long tradition of the liberal arts is concerned with transformative arts, ideas, and culture. And, finally, we have seen that the free character of a liberal artist is not only a propaedeutic for research, but also a source of invention and imagination for the future.

Each of these considerations seems to have implications for the future of the liberal arts in research universities and colleges. If it is plausible that the liberal-arts accommodation—that is, recognizable liberal-arts curricula, innovation, and a productive, but not stifling, link to research—has stronger, systematic ties to education than might be suspected, then we should see these ties in histories of institutions, as well as in analyses of the place of liberal-arts education up to the current time.<sup>38</sup> Kimball focuses on the liberal-arts influ-

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38. Certainly, Kimball's analysis that a *artes liberales* accommodation had real intellectual impetus and some institutional steam by the end of the nineteenth century is right. Indeed, I think Adams is an individual instance. But because faculties in the early modern era used to exclude either the *artes liberales* ideal or the research ideal, educational historians should not expect to find many instantiations of institutional *artes liberales* accommodations until sufficient "steam" develops. Nonetheless, there was some inherent intellectual "inertia" for an accommodation much further back in history than the nineteenth century, and that inertia, while not a driving force, is still significant for institutions even at the beginning of the twenty-first century.



ences of a complex of three related universities and colleges—Columbia, Chicago, and St. John's. Although he analyzes them quite sympathetically and sensitively, he nevertheless regards them as unsuccessful accommodations—not because their programs foundered, but because their models failed to spread widely, and when they did spread, they tended not to persist.

Let me take Chicago as my example in this regard, and discuss the opinions of two key figures in its relation to core texts and liberal arts: Richard McKeon and Leo Strauss.

Strauss first. To cut very short his very complex analysis of liberal education: the history of Western culture is the history of solving the problems of governance in a democracy, ultimately by creating a democratic aristocracy of citizens educated in their country's and culture's intellectual traditions of political science and freedom. The current problems of governance involve providing wisdom to guide the technological and dehumanizing influences of modern science and systematic tyranny. The great books stand as a bulwark in this fight: through them, citizens can discuss what they should value. For researchers like Strauss, the historical investigation he outlines *is* education: "education is in a sense the subject matter of my teaching and research." Political science is the science of liberal education.<sup>39</sup>

For McKeon, the Chicago approach to general education—which is to say, the university approach—is grounded in disciplines and relates them through broadening and widening arts, methods, ideas, and even sciences. The innovation at Chicago was not that professors were to survey ever wider swaths of subjects. Nor was it that a professor was to give courses in highly developed specialized methods that were then to be applied to previously unsuspected areas of study. Rather, the innovation was that, to broaden the context in faculty discussions of the so-called humanities, "the methods employed and developed were the lib-

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39. This admittedly truncated summary is derived from "Liberal Education and Responsibility," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 9-25, and "What Is Liberal Education?," *ibid.*, 1-8.

eral arts.” Those discussions, using different liberal arts, were necessarily interdisciplinary. In other words, they related one liberal art to another, or one formulation of a discipline to another, via the liberal arts. For McKeon, general education implied purposeful interdisciplinary attempt to unify the fractured humanistic subjects and departments through methodical (which is to say, artful) inquiry—even when disciplines disagreed on what was said about their subjects.<sup>40</sup> The point of McKeon’s discussion of the Chicago new college was that the design of the college, implied by Hutchins’s stated design of the general education he outlined in the *Higher Education in America*, was to transform graduate schools and the organization of their disciplines, even their research, through general education.<sup>41</sup> In these ways, McKeon’s education orders a free character, but the ordering is to knowledge, not to wisdom, or prudence, or even citizenship. In both cases, the liberal-free ideal was accommodated to the *artes liberales* ideal in that the liberal arts were being used to invigorate research and curricula, not the other way around.

The varieties of Chicago curricula and programs, the conceptions of liberal education that arose out of the different divisions, and the faculty who met there and migrated elsewhere created a pluralism of ideas about liberal-arts education through great books or core texts. These different visions have generated a plethora of liberal-arts developments in institutions around the world. To point to just a few: Shimer College, Saint Mary’s College of California, the University of Notre Dame’s Program of Liberal Studies, Thomas Aquinas College, the University of Dallas, the Erasmus Institute, the Liberal Arts College of Concordia University in Montreal, the Chinese University of Hong

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40. Richard McKeon, “Criticism and the Liberal Arts: The Chicago School of Criticism” in *Profession* 1982, ed. Phyllis P. Franklin and Richard I. Brod, (New York: Modern Language Association, 1982), 2-4.

41. I have argued this more thoroughly, both in a speech given at Marroquín University (see note 44 below), and in a speech delivered in the Public Lecture Series at Shimer College: “Re-thinking Universities and Hutchins: Faculty and Student Resistance to Core Text Curricula,” which can be found on the web at <http://j.mp/j-scott-lee-at-schimer-college>.

Kong, and Boya College of Sun-Yatsen University are all of them in some way closely or distantly intellectually, educationally, and personally related to the three institutions mentioned above. All of these institutions have had self-reflective faculty who have published materials on some aspect of liberal-arts education. One of them, The University of Dallas, developed a great books program in literature unrelated to Chicago/Columbia/St. John's, and then welcomed Straussians to teach in their core. All of them have different configurations of curricula, different internal organizations, different purposes for a baccalaureate, and different relations between general education and research.<sup>42</sup> The accommodationist ideal has, in fact, stimulated

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42. Prior to arriving at Chicago, McKeon and Mortimer Adler were involved together at Columbia with the professors who developed the Contemporary Civilization core sequence and, later, the Literature-Humanities core sequence. Ultimately, each of these sequences replaced the departmental offerings of general education courses that, in the early twentieth century, had preceded the requirements for graduation from Columbia. To this day, Columbia offers a bachelor's degree without a major. Scott Buchanan was involved in adult education spin-offs of Columbia in New York City before he and Hutchins came to Chicago to develop liberal education programs. Saint John's College developed, partly, out of this complex of institutions and personalities. St. John's curriculum entirely eschewed the departmental-disciplinary basis of the Chicago program, while it retained the liberal arts, and it explicitly identified its program with the great books and authors of the Western world. In 1953, Notre Dame, in large part through the work of Otto Byrd, whose teachers included Adler, McKeon, and Etienne Gilson (Otto Byrd, *My Life as A Great Bookie*, [San Francisco : Ignatius Press, 1991], 46 ff. and 66ff.) organized a three-year major called the Program of Liberal Studies on the basis of disciplinary courses that stretch across all the fields found at Chicago; but Notre Dame retained the idea of interdisciplinary reading seminars that characterized St. John's program. A 1941 article by Adler, delivered to the American Catholic Philosophical Association's Western Division, on "The Order of Learning" (in *The Moraga Quarterly* [Autumn 1941]: 3-25) sparked at first a short-lived attempt (1943-44) and then the enduring establishment of classics-based liberal-arts education programs at Saint Mary's College of California; this ultimately resulted

the invention of institutions and innovative programs that are enormously different. Rhodes College's "Search" courses (formerly "Man" courses) and Yale University's Directed Studies Program illustrate innovations not depending on personal con-

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in a St. John's-like program for a major, alongside a four-semester great books program taken by those who majored in a discipline. (See *What Is It To Educate Liberally? Essays by Faculty and Friends of St. Mary's College* [St. Mary's College: Office of the President, 1996], 1-28). Though modified, both programs are still running. Shimer College adopted one version of the Chicago-Hutchins, or "new college," curriculum, but it has no departments and, for the baccalaureate, only four general concentrations, including one in science; it has carefully staged integrative courses and requirements in every year of its curriculum.

Straussians graduated from Chicago and went, in particular, to the University of Dallas. There, in conjunction with literary specialists who formed a core sequence of genre studies unrelated to political science that was conceived by Louise and Donald Cowan (who were in turn influenced by southern critics at Vanderbilt), the university faculty formed a disciplinary core leading to majors that had no interdisciplinary courses but was founded on great books. This new curriculum transformed the education at that institution. The University of Dallas founded the only graduate program explicitly using the Western Great Books, which offers three PhDs in political science, philosophy, and literature. Its graduates not only have staffed institutions across America, but also have helped to re-organize the New England Political Association so that there is a "core text/political philosophy" section of the Association's annual meeting that contributes more than a third of the papers at the meeting.

Meanwhile, at Columbia, William Theodore deBary rejected Adler's and Hutchin's contention that great books education had to consist only of books from the Western tradition. For over fifty years, and continuing to this day, deBary has translated or collaborated in the translation of Chinese texts, and has argued for the inclusion of these texts in some courses of the Columbia core. Although his work took place during the period when China has risen to threaten the U.S. while at the same time destroying its own cultural traditions in the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, deBary's work has no tinge of cultural superiority about it, for it is not rooted in Greek education or Enlightenment political philosophy as is Strauss's. In so far as he is concerned with the core program at Columbia, deBary wishes to "liberate the powers of the indi-

tact with the complex of institutions above, but emerging rather from an awareness of problems and solutions in general education.<sup>43</sup>

vidual by disciplining them” (Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers*, 4). His work is part of a larger effort by the University Committee on Asia and the Middle East to incorporate Chinese, Indian, and Islamic texts into the core, as well as to develop sophisticated research programs. St. John's, motivated by its own experience in teaching great works, has also developed at its Santa Fe campus a masters degree in Eastern Classics, reading and discussing Indian and Chinese texts. In 1978, Frederick Kranz, a graduate of Columbia, along with Harvey Shulman and Geoff Fidler, establish a three-year liberal-arts baccalaureate college founded on the Western great books tradition at Concordia University in Montreal. In the Far East, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, under the direction of Cheung Chan Fai and Mei Yee Leung, recently developed a two-course sequence in the humanities and sciences based on great texts of the West and East, which owes part of its development both to Chicago and to Columbia. This program provides a selection of general education courses to fulfill the Chinese government's mandate that higher education institutions convert from the European, specialist, three-year baccalaureate to the American, mixed, four-year baccalaureate. This list of institutions shows almost all the related forms and affiliations of the accommodated liberal-arts ideal as it is beginning to spread from North America into the wider world. And yet this list hardly enumerates the whole network of core text programs found worldwide, nor does it describe the role of the liberal arts in actually shaping that network.

43. Michael Nelson, ed., *Celebrating the Humanities: A Half-Century of the Search Course at Rhodes College* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996), 3-31, begins with a post-World War I narrative of Charles Diehl's attempts to bring liberal education to Southwestern (now Rhodes) College between the 1920s and 1950s. This program was based in Christian traditions, but with an awareness of the educational innovations at Columbia, Chicago, and Vanderbilt. Justin Zaremby's *Directed Studies and the Evolution of American General Education* (New Haven: The Whitney Humanities Center of Yale University, 2006), 32ff., says that Maynard Mack, educated entirely at Yale, helped to devise and found the program with Dean William Clyde DeVane. Mack was seeking to solve the problems of “choice” that had arisen in general education, which were the cause of the differences between Hutchins and Dewey.

To a large extent, the Association of Core Texts and Courses (ACTC) is a result of these accommodations and innovations.<sup>44</sup> There have been two chief vehicles for ACTC's growth, both related to the liberal arts. The annual Conference is the first vehicle, the Liberal Arts Institute, the second. As a pluralist, my goal as director of ACTC has been to maintain cross-disciplinary, general-education discussions notwithstanding higher education's habits of narrow disciplinarity. Part of what is at stake in having such discussions is fairly obvious: faculty members get exposed to ways of thought about their own disciplines that they will

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44. A precursor to this paper was delivered as a speech entitled "Accommodating the Core Texts Tradition of Liberal Arts in Today's Universities: History, ACTC, and Marroquín—An International Phenomenon," to the faculty of Marroquín University in Guatemala, in September of 2012. At this point in the text, the speech noted that "the Association for Core Texts and Courses was co-founded by Stephen Zelnick and myself in 1995 in order to bring together programs that used common readings, taught in common courses, by shared faculty. The idea was originally Zelnick's, who was Director of Temple University's Intellectual Heritage Program—a two course sequence of texts from the sciences, social sciences, and humanities stretching from ancient to modern times required of every Temple undergraduate. He had discovered that the wide variety of professional associations at the time did not really address educational issues of these kinds of programs. As the organization grew, it encouraged faculty and institutions to develop and use their own core text programs in their own fashion for their own institutional missions. . . .

After the first organizing conference, under my direction, ACTC conferences took on the following structure: originally, paper proposals were organized into panels over two days with each session exclusively devoted to one of four categories: Interdisciplinary Questions, Science, Social Science, or the Arts & Humanities, accordingly characterized by texts, problems, or disciplines discussed—but not by faculty presenters. That is, if you were a humanist and wished to address Newton's *Principia*, that was fine. After about seven years, the membership voiced a desire to have panels of the four categories appear in each session. Generally, this movement by the membership was an effort to allow conferees to attend the fields, perhaps the disciplines, which they were most comfortable with."

rarely encounter at disciplinary conferences. Another part of what is at stake is a little more subtle, though it can be found in almost all the works I have discussed. Many core texts serve a dual role in intellectual history: on the one hand, they help to found or articulate a discipline; on the other hand, their ideas, deep-seated attitudes, or basic techniques migrate across disciplines. This is true in regard both to Eastern and Western texts. So, for both of these reasons, the determination to keep discussing great texts at ACTC conferences plays an essential role in maintaining the liberal-arts orientation of the organization.

ACTC does not have a list of canonical texts that must be addressed in papers read at its conferences, though the “usual suspects” among ancient and modern authors frequently appear on its panel sessions. There is an insistence that every paper address a core text for at least three quarters of a page in a five-page paper.<sup>45</sup> The treatment of the text is up to the conferee. But what is most important is whether a given text within a proposal, or a set of texts within a collection of proposals, will spark an exchange of ideas about the ideas themselves, and about the programs, the texts, the teaching, or other matters of liberal-arts concern. This is a matter of perception, not a matter of doctrine, established argument, or disciplinary governance. It is frankly remarkable how many panels actually cohere quite well using texts as the starting point for potential inquiry and discussion—whether the panels are disciplinary or interdisciplinary in focus.

ACTC is filled with accomplished scholars and teachers, but it exists to promote conversations about texts among faculty members across institutions, programs, and disciplines. Here we enter a fertile field deeply furrowed by a distinction Bruce Kimball discusses at the beginning of *Orators and Philosophers*: the distinction between *ratio* and *oratio*. Disciplinary conferences

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45. ACTC has published to date ten selected, peer-reviewed proceedings. Seven more are in various states of pre-publication. It also helped to support the publication of Bruce Kimball's *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Documentary History* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2010), which made selections of core texts in the tradition available to a wider public.

exist to offer extended versions of the *ratio* of a discipline—long papers and complex panel sessions marked by highly specialized arguments, and offering little actual time for serious questioning and discussion. ACTC’s conferences exist for a quite different reason. The first sentence of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is, “Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic.” The Greek word translated here as “counterpart” is *antistrophē*—as in the return dance of the chorus that leads to their exit from the stage. This, of course, makes dialectic into the strophe, and this has important implications for the relation of these two verbal arts. First, one needs to know which direction one is headed in. This is not always easy to figure out, given the nature of language and the closeness of the two arts. Because the intention of the conferences is to produce serious discussion around the seminar table, the brevity of the papers leaves the direction of the conversation open. Second, even if a presenter’s argument is either mainly rhetorical or mainly dialectical, the ensuing conversation will likely lead, at least, to reflections on what the argument would look like from the viewpoint of the other art. Since there is no list of canonical works and no standard set of disciplinary preconceptions that contain conversations within pre-set boundaries, ACTC presenters are asked at least to consider a rationale for why their text should be considered a world classic or a text of major cultural significance. If this defense were being made to a disciplinary audience, it might well be entirely dialectical, since the audience already agrees on the basic outlines of what belongs within the discipline’s boundaries. But because the audience at ACTC’s conferences are interdisciplinary, such defenses must be at least partly rhetorical, insofar as it is aimed at persuading listeners from many disciplines to consider a text for inclusion in a liberal-arts program. Even here, however, such a defense would become dialectical if it focuses on what the liberal arts, a discipline, a text, or an idea contributes to our understanding of education.

At the close of *Orators and Philosophers*, Kimball makes a well pointed observation: In the academy “there is rarely a recognition that the means to accomplish the resuscitation of the community of learning lie in elevating and emphasizing the study of



expression, rhetoric, and the textual tradition of the community. Yet the means are self-evident. A community is, after all, a group of people who talk to each other and do it well. This view of community was dear to Socrates, no less than to Cicero.”<sup>46</sup> This is what ACTC promotes: the opportunity for faculty members, through the liberal arts and its traditions across all disciplines, to co-operate in discussing, planning, and implementing general-education curricula. It is very much interested in *oratio*, in the expression of thought, communicated to others, that concerns itself with the available resources of intellectual traditions across disciplines and cultures, and with the invention of educational programs that transmit the arts of absorbing and using those resources. Its continuing mission is to join with all those who share these aims to promote the invention, enrichment, and development of more core text, liberal-arts programs in universities and colleges of the future.

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46. Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers*, 240.