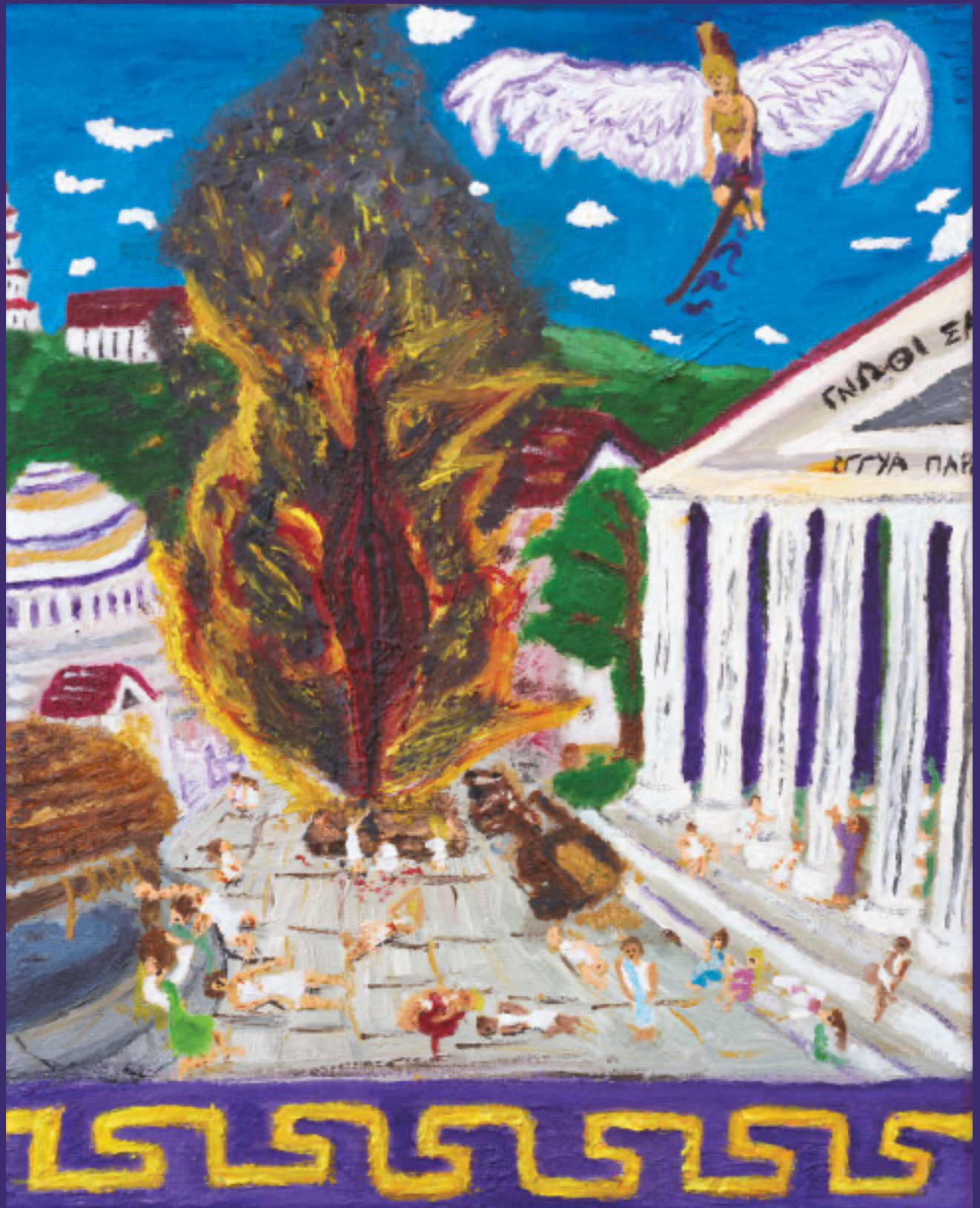


COLLOQUY



Cover: Strife - Sylvie Bernhardt

Colloquy

Issue 16 Spring 2025
On Becoming

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Graduate Institute Community,

I can't express how grateful I am for you and my time as a student at St. John's. Thank you for these past few wonderful years. I am a better person for knowing you and continually inspired by your patience, compassion, and thoughtfulness. I enjoyed our many conversations during our after-seminar gatherings, and have been enriched by our colloquies, both in and outside of the classroom.

These conversations are not just essential for our learning as students but also for our welfare as citizens. One of our most important freedoms is speech, being able to talk openly, to criticize the government, to protest injustice. This year alone, 381 books have been removed from the Naval Academy's library for containing content related to DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion). There is a genuine sense of hopelessness and angst in the face of growing authoritarian political shifts; including the defunding of education, dismantling of key government agencies, and suppression and forced deportation of people voicing their free opinions and seeking better lives for themselves and their families. However, it is my hope that through empowerment of creative expression and liberal discourse, this journal can provide a sense of resistance in the face of such radical infringements.

Within these pages are poems that explore the ideas of being, mentions of

that very Phoenix which is born and unborn again and again in the cycles of life and death. There is the story of Venus, destruction of cities and the harmony that may follow after such devastation.

Within these pages are candles that have been snuffed out, the remnants of a fire. There are apples at once a symbol of life, fertility, and beauty shown bruised and rotting: fruit not eaten or enjoyed, but observed, decaying. And yet this decay maybe the very thing needed to nourish the ground for new apple trees. The candles may be re-lit.

Finally, within these pages are buildings broken down into lines, simple geometries, that combine into structures. There are inquiries into the nature of the heart, and the soul. There is a collaborative project, art paired with new translations of Lucretius' work.

I hope this journal brings you delight. With the world on fire, who can we turn to but each other? There is still beauty in the world, and strength in our collective voice.

It's been an honor to serve as Editor in Chief this year and I'm happy to hand off the role next year to Amelia Wolfe. I'm excited to see where she takes the journal and look forward to reading many more editions in the upcoming years.

Sincerely,
Kees Bucca

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Poetry



Melted Candles I - Amelia Taylor Wolfe
oil on canvas-paper 9"x12"

Growing Pains

Alexander Simmons

Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani? – Matthew 27:46

Spring is a Passion:
flowers fracture frost and new life breaks the black earth.
Frantic, frenetic, a flinging-forth—
boiling clouds out of a clear blue sky,
winter's tabernacle rent by the pouring-out of summer.

Stones rolled aside teem with life.
Seeds spring forth in their tender glory,
shoots set upon gnarled churning roots below
craving, searching, desperate for
one lone sunbeam.

But perhaps the Passion is only a mirage;
a shimmering haze above a white-hot desert.
A promised renewal
scorched in the harsh bright of summer's sun.

And yet, for now,
in the tenuous wavering of wild mustard in the breeze
and the trickling stream of rainwater
rolling down my scalp
Hope abides.

Game Theory

Aaron Knight

Even a minotaur couldn't make heads or tails of this,
Although making sense wouldn't be too much fuss—
It's what you do with the sense you've made:
Where it goes, who gets paid.
This is the future after all,
No one wants mazes—too foreign, too old—
Icy alabaster or lacerating stone.
The way out's always through fear,
Over cowardice and shame.
I know at least that much for sure
So why bother with the game?

The Fern

László Boesze

Springtime. Barren ground.
Tiny fern pokes through the soil.
Unfurls. Meets the world.



- Aaron Knight

My Muse

László Boesze

I know she exists.
When periodically she visits
I feel her presence:
The air is cleaner,
The sky is bluer,
The sunshine is more pleasant,
The flowers are more fragrant,
And I become more sensitive
To nature's many
Sounds,
Fragrances,
The slightest puff of air.
I revel in that!
I become a different self!

If only I could tell
Which fragrance and movement of air
Is hers...

I thought I had, in thought, imagined love

Paul Harland-White

I thought I had, in thought, imagined love;
There, born of booming thinking - a new couple.
I had, hadn't I? They were made, loving,
Lovers summoned, cast in a reader's whim.

I read, guiding a heart's tale through the dark;
I set them t'ward their fated nuptials.
I substantiated their dream, part by part;
I had loved then, hadn't I? In thought, they swim.

Imprints, static, merely mirrors of mine.
Gone in foggy thought, if past tense arrives

If love it's to be, it must survive time.
Not loose, losing memory of gesture. Slept,
held soft, crumpled in Love and borne in text.
Pool-less reflections remembered as rhymes.

The Owl

George Kalandadze

The hooting owl ne'er scared me,
midst the blackness of sylvan night.
But so more she had prepared me,
veiled lore in sands of time foreseen.
-- Eyes of amber immured in light.

Wind -- her confidant, in hushed tone,
my notice happened to ensnare.
She resembled all, yet no one,
branches bending, beneath her lun.
Yet, misplaced, I wandered still, there.

Her head, a cosmic carousel,
an omnipotent balance wheel.
Each hoot, an echoed hoary bell.
Mistral's replies through bluebells swell,
Night hummed, a beehive, -- surreal.

That instant, yonder on the limb,
sat other owl, ready to speak.
The wind, now sacred seraphim,
my equal in ancestral dream.
In silence, we beheld mystique.

My War

Aaron Knight

I manage the peace for the Council of War.
No, nothing shocks my conscience anymore:
A million moldy stacks of hundred-dollar bills,
High-minded standards tortured and killed,
Daily injections with extracts of pain—
I've seen it all but I'm not ashamed.
All the explosions were just a puppet with a hat
Learning to tap dance in the upstairs flat.
Medics delivered a magic elixir
(Everyone was dying at the time),
Still peeking under the covers of fiction,
They kept insisting everything was fine.
(Neighbors asking questions
About trash that festers
While just down the road
They're burning the gold.)
Maybe now I'm too weak to fight the system.
So they'll come to me; I won't go to them.
My counsel is always to bide your sweet time,
Let God be the one to hear all the crying.
Our values are peaceful, our missions are just,
We're a people of love who enforce total trust.



Theater - Aaron Knight

What to Do if You Mixed Up the Clefs

George Kalandadze

I cried. My mother forced me to go. Music school final exam. I sat on the stairs, face wet, stomachache. The bus driver smoked cigarettes the whole way to the school. I was thinking about the blank canvas in my room, what will it come to be when the time comes? I pictured birds, and cattle, and a blue pond in the middle of a mountainous valley – What will it come to be when the time comes? I was performing three pieces: Chopin's Mazurka in A minor, Op. 68 No. 2; Mendelssohn's Song without Words, Op. 19 No. 1; Haydn's Allegro moderato: 1st movement from Sonata in B minor, Hob.

XVI:32. Everybody was there, I didn't notice any grown-ups only that blonde girl two grades above me, who I never had enough courage to talk to – She was there, everybody was there. I sat down; my book turned to page 37, Mazurka. I begin. Apart from size, the tusks are the parts that give an elephant the look of prehistoric might and power. Yet when my fingers fell on them with a barrage of staccatos, I did not feel any power. I could only wish for an elephant to stampede into the room and take back what was taken from him. From me. Eyes wet. Again. As I was crawling through the final bars of Mazurka somebody in the audience coughed. I coughed up the final half rest. Page 12. Mendelssohn. I knew I had mixed up the clefs. Treble in my left, Bass in my right. I knew it halfway through Mazurka. Music made no sense. I kept going. Scratching my fingernails through the window of music. Hardly music. Noise. Mendelssohn sounded like an elephant when poachers cut its tusks. I did not stop. When I wrapped up, nobody clapped. What do you do if you mix up the clefs? I just kept going – My father died.

The Constant State of Becoming

László Boesze

I am the result of two becoming one,
Yet go back to the beginning of time
When from nothing a universe sprang
In which I have been at various stages
Of “being” and of “becoming”.

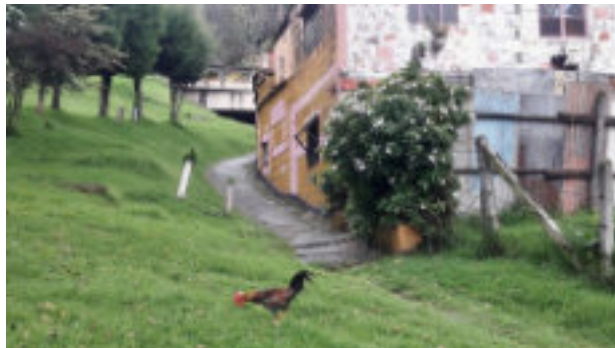
All that time I have faced the mystery
Of life and death and being and becoming.
I have been a part of this universe,
Whose parts are constantly in motion
And at various stages of becoming.

Galaxies rotate toward their center
Where their black-hole-maw sucks them to their death.
They ingest themselves until their meal ---
They themselves chewed up, tightly compressed ---
Explodes
And particles, dust and gases
Fill the space of their former selves
To then slowly form stars and solar systems anew
That arrange themselves into new galaxies.
Constant change, constant becoming, constant motion....

There is no graveyard of the stars,
But there is “Birth”, “Life”, “Death”, and “Rebirth”.
In this eternal cycle all parts are reassembled anew
For nothing gets lost in the universe
And nothing exists suspended idly in some corner.
This “process of becoming” the ancient Greeks
Summed up as --- the “Phoenix”.

Being part of “ALL”,
I fall under its law.
Being a composite of body and soul,
I accept the temporality of my physical self
But agonize over the future of my incorporeal soul
During my constant state of becoming.

NOTE: The celebration of the Spring Equinox --- Easter --- is an excellent example of “becoming” and the concept of “rebirth”. Christianity superimposed its values on the earlier pagan, nature-based celebration of “rebirth”.



Bogota Jardin - Aaron Knight

How to Be a Dog

George Kalandadze

Wag your tail, so hard your body shakes.
Chase the ball around until you ache.
Let your tongue, flop, in the air.
Don't forget to drool, all over the armchair.

Try to break a record, shedding fur.
Roll in mud or puddles, whichever you prefer.
Chase all the squirrels, until you are lost.
Avoid the bathtub, at all costs.

Bark loud, don't hide your voice,
at dusk or dawn, the choice is yours.
Go through the laundry, make sure it's clean,
and steal a sock or two, unseen.

Do tricks for treats and tasty eats.
Mark all the tires in the streets.
Jump into lakes and dive for rocks,
from beaches, bridges, and old docks.

But most importantly, be loyal,
and treat your owner as the royal.
And if you follow this "how to",
you might get lucky, on a barbecue.

Dialogue & Translation



Rotting Apples with Bottle and Candles - Amelia Taylor Wolfe
oil on canvas-paper 12"x16"

A Dialogue Concerning the Sun's Nature

Stephen Borsum

Upon his resurrection from death, René Descartes finds himself on a tour around Europe, meeting with various philosophers and scientists to see how his beloved subjects have progressed since his passing. He is presently dining on the veranda of the estate of one David Hume, who is beginning to probe into René's approach to reason.

Hume: You know, I often find myself considering what the limits of reason may be regarding the thing in-itself. For example, that a pot of water on the stove may seem scalding to me may not seem so warm to another who is perhaps more predisposed to heat. I know this was one such area of focus for you, but perhaps you could share with me some more clarity about your approach?

Descartes: Ah, this here is a noble question. You have read my work *The Meditations*, yes? Perhaps there is an argument from there I might walk you through, as I found myself greatly troubled by this very question for some time.

Hume: I am familiar, in fact I have an edition in my study, though I must admit it has been some time since I've reviewed it. Please, enlighten me.

Descartes: Well, let us take an object of shared experience, the same I do in that work, the sun. I don't

wish to jump to my conclusion too quickly though, so what could we both say about it that feels sufficiently reasonable before we explore in more detail about its nature?

Hume: The sun... well I would say if I'm making the most simple claim I can, it would be that it appears to shine a light upon the Earth. Perhaps another I can put forward without causing too much trouble is that with its light seems to come some heat?

Descartes: Good, yes I think this is a fine start. Would you put forward anything else?

Hume: May I, for the sake of this discussion, momentarily disregard what I know astronomers say about it?

Descartes: I was quite hoping you may, as I think we might find in there some of the flaws of our experience I articulate in the work.

Hume: Well, I would say to my immediate experience that despite its brilliance in warmth and light, it does not appear to be a very big object. I know I cannot reach out and touch it but given that I don't know how far away from me it is, and given what I know about radiant heat, it would seem it must be somewhat close for me to feel its effects and see its light.

For example, a torch near is both bright and warm...

Descartes: but on the distant horizon you do not feel its heat and it may be nothing more than a speck, precisely!

Hume: Yes, exactly. Might we consider this a sufficient basis for us to examine what we can know about the sun itself then?

Descartes: Quite so, as we've now examined that our experience of the sun. That it is warm, emits light, and appears to be such a size and distance away from us would give us, one would think, grounds by which we can make claims of its nature. But a complication arises here when we invite the detailed reasoning of the astronomer.

Hume: Please, say more.

Descartes: Well, it's quite complicated from what I remember of Copernicus's work, but for example, we can say that we've seen the sun eclipsed by the moon before. Yes? And thus we have at least the ability to claim that the sun must be further from us than the moon. But further, we can, at least according to the observations of astronomers, find methods to take measurements of these great distances.

Hume: This I am familiar with, where an observation in one location upon the Earth is matched with another in a different location, and that the combination of the two

provides us with a function to move from our apparent distance to the mathematical, more factual one. Is that correct?

Descartes: Indeed. Suppose my immediate experience suggests that the Sun is merely within the Earth's atmosphere, but the mathematical reasoning of many astronomers say the distance must be much, much greater. The question would then be what I find to be the most clear argument. To my knowledge, if I am aware that my senses can sometimes be faulty, like when I mistake the firing of a rifle to be very quiet, when in fact it is loud but very far away, then I must rely on something which can provide me greater certainty. In this case, the reasoning which demonstrates that sound decays over great distances should inform me that the rifle would be terribly loud if fired in closer proximity. The clarity of the logic, reasoned out by sound mathematical minds informs me of what is true about the nature of the gunshot.

Hume: I see, so with the sun it is the greater certainty provided by the astronomers in their calculations that can empower one to have knowledge of where in the heavens the sun rests. But, you mentioned this yields for you, per your argument, something true about the sun's place in the cosmos. Is there some further step for you that confirms even more concretely the accuracy of the

astronomers? Or the soundness of their original mathematical principles?

Descartes: I'm not sure why I'd need to examine such principles, *per se*. We are aware of the basic fundamental powers of arithmetic, are we not? If seven plus five is equal to twelve is a function I can perform time and again with no inaccuracy, then as long as the equations of parallax have been built with as much logical certainty, I can in good faith accept the mathematical arguments provided as proof, and further as certain proof of the fact of the matter.

Hume: I think this might overcomplicate the situation, though. What is gained by taking the result given as true? What I'm proposing is

that it may be sufficient for one argument to be more accurate than the other. From the more accurate argument, to which evidence is biased, we may continue to advance the work with some reasonable amount of certainty. But does truth here yield for you something more concrete?

Descartes: I feel we may be losing perspective on the original force of the conclusion here, for what is philosophy but the pursuit of that which is most clear, and what is most clear must be the truth? Is the evidence of God not pure truth?

Hume: I think we are done here. I'll have my servants show you out.

De Rerum Natura

Lucretius

Artwork and Passage Selections by Sylvie Bernhardt
translations by Anita Kent

1. Harmony – Venus' Becoming

Book 1, lines 21–23

Quae quoniam rerum naturam sola gubernas
nec sine te quicquam dias in luminis oras
exoritur neque fit laetum neque amabile quicquam...

Since then you alone steer the nature of things, and since without you,
nothing arises into the bright boundaries of light, nothing is made glad
nor lovely...

2. Perspective

Book 2, lines 331–332

et tamen est quidam locus altis montibus unde
stare videntur et in campis consistere fulgor.

And yet, there is a certain place in the high mountains from which they
seem to stand still, and in the plains a brightness is at rest.

3. Strife – Plague of Athens

Book 6, lines 1250–1251

nec poterat quisquam reperiri, quem neque morbus
nec mors nec luctus temptaret tempore tali.

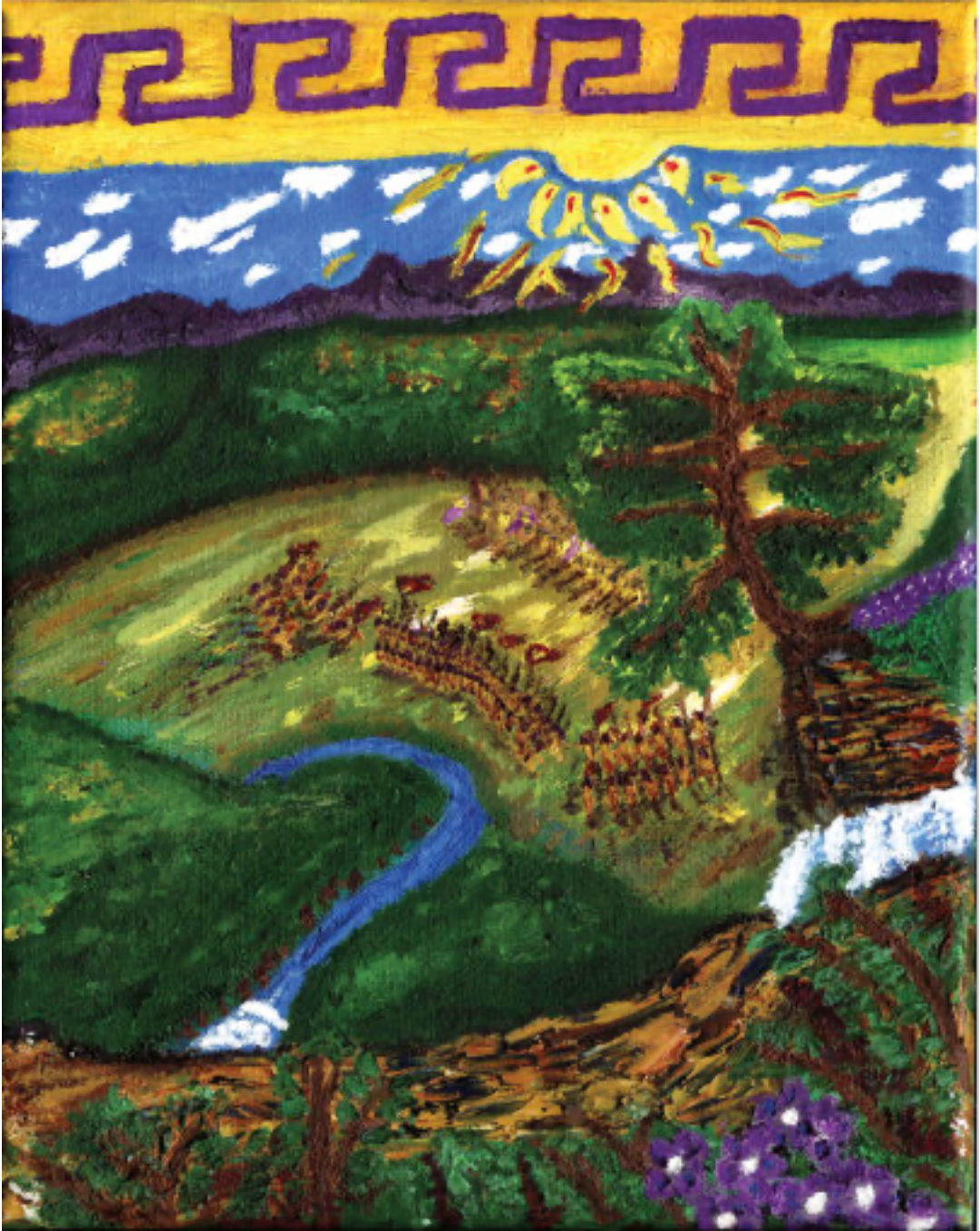
Nor is anyone able to be found, whom neither disease nor death nor
mourning has tested at such a time.

Harmony – Venus' Becoming



Since then you alone steer the nature of things, and since without you, nothing arises into the bright boundaries of light, nothing is made glad nor lovely...

Perspective



And yet, there is a certain place in the high mountains from which they seem to stand still, and in the plains a brightness is at rest.

Essays & Interviews



Melted Candles II - Amelia Taylor Wolfe
oil on canvas-paper 9"x12"

Right in the Heart

The Dialectic Motion of Mencius and Kao Tzu

Charles Edward Chapin

In the sixth book of the eponymous Mengzi (Mencius)¹, the author circles a question of what is “internal” and “external” about rightness, or morality, with one Kao Tzu. The author first introduces Kao Tzu as a respected – yet mistaken – peer, who shares a resistance to the desire for power. This desire is described as a stirring of the heart, an agentic behavior. The heart is the locus of yearning, a kind of magnet that must be monitored and kept in check, so that it does not stir for inferior things. Neither the stirring nor the object of desire are the target of judgment but rather their union. Together they reveal whether there is right in the heart.

“Appetite for food and sex is nature. Benevolence is internal, not external; rightness is external, not internal,” asserts Kao Tzu in one of their exchanges (VI.A.4.1). Mencius disagrees. He counters with a series of questions, arguing that rightness is not only internal but a natural product of a human propensity towards goodness.

This passage presents the core of an ongoing dialectic between Mencius and Kao Tzu that spans six

different passages. Four of these exchanges are direct (VI.A.1–4), and two quote Kao Tzu indirectly (II.A.2, VI.A.6). The repetition of Kao Tzu’s perspective suggests that it was instrumental to Mencius’ project, not just as an acknowledgement to a notable peer with contemporaneous influence, but as a literary foil to bring Mencius’ own views on right living into sharper focus. Although the cessation of stirring in the heart is the subject that introduces his dialectic with Kao Tzu, he eventually argues in favor of desire, specifically the desire towards right.

I.

In Book II, Kun-sun Chou remarks that Mencius’ character surpasses that of another man because his heart would not be “stirred” by the temptation of gaining higher position. Kun-sun Chou appears to be congratulating Mencius for passing a test, for shunning the lure of power. Mencius quips that his “heart has not been stirred since the age of forty.” One might read a double entendre in his joke, a reference to the stilling of intimate desires. In this double meaning, he would be teaching pupils, with a wink, to monitor their attraction to wealth and

¹ Mencius. (2004). *Mencius* (D. C. Lau, Trans.). Penguin Books. (Original work published c. 300 BCE)

status as closely as their stirring for companionship. When Kun-sun Chou complements Mencius for his self-control, Mencius retorts: "That is not difficult. Kao Tzu succeeded in this at an even earlier age than I" (II. A.2.4). Kao Tzu is thereby introduced obliquely. Mencius might be teasing and praising his peer simultaneously. With his complement to Kao Tzu, he increases both the respect for self-control and the deprecation of the joke. Whether this second meaning is fraternal ribbing, or a backhanded jibe is open to interpretation.

When Kun-sun Chou asks, "Is there a way to bring such success about?" he is therefore asking how to master the response to temptation of power in the manner of both Mencius and Kao Tzu. Mencius responds by describing the cultivation of courage. "Supreme courage," he asserts, is rooted in a "firm grasp of essentials," which he illustrates through a second-hand quote by Confucius about rightness as the source of strength against superior numbers: "If one finds oneself in the right, one goes forward even against men in the thousands" (II.A.2.9). Though the author does not mention Kao Tzu in this passage about courage, Kao Tzu's ideas both precede and follow this section. The character of Kao Tzu is in esteemed company: storied men of courage and Confucius himself.

Kun-sun Chou then provides the opening into the dialectic with Kao Tzu:

"I wonder if you could tell me something about the heart that cannot be stirred, in your case and in Kao Tzu's case?"

"According to Kao Tzu, 'If you fail to understand words, do not worry about this in your heart; and if you fail to understand in your heart, do not seek satisfaction in your Ch'i'.² It is right that one should not seek satisfaction in one's Ch'i when one fails to understand it in one's heart. But it is wrong to say that one should not worry about it in one's heart when one fails to understand words." (II.A.2.10-11)

Kun-sun Chou's query not only equates Kao Tzu's heart with Mencius' own heart but cites them both as role models. Mencius sustains his respected status by first quoting, and then partially agreeing with Kao Tzu. He is nodding to his peer.

Mencius then contradicts Kao Tzu by saying that one should worry in one's heart when one fails to understand words. He claims: "I have an insight into words. I am good at cultivating my 'flood-like ch'i'." He describes this ch'i as being nourished with integrity, as uniting "rightness and the Way," and being "born of accumulated rightness." It starves

² The definition of "*ch'i*", though relevant, is not the subject of these passages. The richness of this topic deserves separate study.

when “one acts in a way that falls below the standard set in one’s heart” (II.A.2.16–17). It is the cultivation of ch’i through unwavering dedication to rightness that causes Mencius’ understanding words to excel. That is, the worry in his heart about living rightly is the source of his strength in understanding words.

It is this connection between the right heart and the understanding mind that separates Mencius from Kao Tzu. “Hence I said Kao Tzu never understood rightness because he looked upon it as external. You must work at it and never let it out of your mind” (II.A.2.18). Kao Tzu is not present in this dialogue and unable to argue for himself, so readers must infer for themselves how a peer with rightness in the heart could also fail to understand rightness. Mencius seems to assert that Kao Tzu does not work at rightness continually. Still, he demonstrated earlier that Kao Tzu was at least right against the temptation of power, because of his unstirred heart. His understanding of rightness is therefore not absent but incomplete. In Mencius’ argument, perceiving rightness as external, rather than innate to the heart, is a failure to understand words. Kao Tzu’s misunderstanding is grave enough to cause Mencius worry.

II.

Kao Tzu said, “Human nature is like the ch’i willow. Dutifulness is like cups and bowls. To make morality

out of human nature is like making cups and bowls out of the willow.”

“Can you,” said Mencius, “make cups and bowls by following the nature of the willow? Or must you mutilate the willow before you can make it into cups and bowls? If you have to mutilate the willow to make it into cups and bowls, must you, then, also mutilate a man to make him moral? Surely it will be these words of yours men in the world will follow in bringing disaster upon morality.” (VI. A.1)

The ch’i, in the metaphor of the willow tree, provides Kao Tzu the raw material for a sense of morality shaped by external forces. The carpenter who makes cups and bowls out of the willow implies the tutelage of a skilled teacher who can shape the ch’i according to the proper forms of rightness. The heart is then the vessel that stores the molds of cups and bowls, so that a man can cultivate his ch’i continually in the same forms taught by his teachers.

Mencius reacts intensely to the notion that the ch’i does not hold the forms of rightness in its own nature. Rather than focus on the element of Kao Tzu’s metaphor that emphasizes the importance of a carpenter, or teacher, in developing the correct forms for the wood of the willow, he focuses on the mutilation required to transform the willow into lumber. For Mencius, the carpenter and the willow are active collaborators. The

willow is not raw material to be dismembered and shaped entirely by external forces; it is a living source of the substance of rightness, and it can be cultivated into the proper forms because of its own propensity towards those forms.

The conclusion of this dialogue on such a violent note suggests high stakes for Kao Tzu's externality argument, but the practical meaning of mutilation is nevertheless opaque. Is he suggesting that Kao Tzu aims to force people to behave according to rightness by edict, i.e., with law, rather than appealing to what is already in their hearts? Might he be reacting against the possibility of misguided laws, if rulers were to take seriously the notion that morality is defined outside of the heart rather than within? The more likely answer is that Mencius is reacting to a deep sense of spiritual loss in Kao Tzu's worldview. Removing the heart's magnetism towards right and carving the ch'i as if it were basic matter – these actions are like reducing Heaven to air and space for Mencius. There is a divine presence he observes in the heart and the ch'i that pulls people towards morality and harmony. Carving, though it be an act of creation for the carpenter, is an act of destruction for the willow. In contrast, he plants the seed for a motion of flourishing, a guidance of the living willow towards its own higher form.

III.

In their second direct dialogue, Kao Tzu works with another simile: "Human nature is like whirling water. Give it an outlet in the east and it will flow east; give it an outlet in the west and it will flow west. Human nature does not show any preference for either good or bad just as water does not show any preference for either east or west" (VI.A.2.1). Unlike the ch'i willow, human nature in this image is a channeled force, infinitely in motion but capable of being directed by an external influence. The opening of a channel for whirling water is like the training of one's will, by a teacher, in the direction of choice. The conclusion is that one must channel human nature in the direction of rightness; it will otherwise flow in whichever direction has the most convenient outlet.

Mencius pierces Kao Tzu's simile with the observation that water always flows downhill. "Human nature is good just as water seeks low ground. There is no man who is not good; there is no water that does not flow downwards" (VI.A.2.2). He continues to describe how water can be moved against its nature by force. Circumstances have forced it to behave against its nature. "That man can be made bad shows that his nature is no different from that of water in this respect" (VI.A.2.2). Had Kao Tzu been given the last word, one

wonders whether he would have prodded Mencius to defend his assertion that the “low ground” is goodness, rather than simple self-interest or even badness.

As a point of digression, readers might acknowledge that not all hills face the same direction. If an object of desire is at the bottom of a hill, then the water will flow towards it. If there is a moral question involved, then rightness is also a destination of desire. The person making the choice will have to desire to act rightly. The question is not whether water flows downhill, or whether it flows downhill towards good, but whether the slope towards a right choice is steeper than that towards the alternative. Mencius himself will make this point later, in the fourth dialogue (VI.A.4.6).

By drawing upon the movement of water, Kao Tzu evokes a never-ending source of energy that can be directed. The force of human nature could be a minor trickle or a monstrous flood. Though the term *ch'i* is absent from this passage, Mencius' previous reference to his cultivation of “flood-like *ch'i*” is relevant here. Both men seem to agree on human nature to have water-like properties: to fill a space, to flow towards a direction, and to have its direction changed consciously for good or bad. Even in their disagreement, they are sharing an

illustrative metaphor for training oneself in self-control.

IV.

The third dialogue is brief and ambiguous, introducing more elements of the natural world as instruments for calibrating one's sense of what is right in the heart. Kao Tzu begins by defining nature as, “That which is inborn.” Mencius asks whether this definition is, “The same as ‘white’ is what is meant by ‘white’?” Kao Tzu affirms, and Mencius inquires whether the whiteness of feathers, snow, and jade are equivalent. When Kao Tzu affirms again, Mencius closes the passage by asking whether the nature of a hound, an ox, and a man are equivalent (VI.A.3). Though unanswered, his question evokes a negative response in readers who believe humans are endowed with a moral compass and animals are not.

Sense perception is key to understanding how both philosophers perceive of rightness. Seeing the white feather, snow, and jade in the mind's eye invites readers to hold the color in concentration, just as holding the objects in the mind's hand. The color cannot be touched, yet touching and seeing white things is necessary to contemplate whiteness. The downy fluff of the white feather, the thrilling chill of the white snow, and the smooth heft of the white jade provide the mind with cues of differentiation.

Similarly, the snort of the ox, the bark of the dog, and the speech of the man invite the mind's ear to consider each's nature. As the mind senses each one, it considers how rightness can be seen, touched, and heard, to sense the truth about the heart.

However, readers who embrace the notion of morality as a construct, instantiated and enforced within the human heart by external training, might reverse Mencius' closing argument. Domesticated dogs are taught to conform their behavior to the human home, to be companions who adapt properly to the human environment. They behave rightly according to the expectations of their human companions, or they are considered disobedient. The training of oxen, as field workers driven by the whip, advances this argument. Compliance is "right," and behavior is defined not by the nature of an ox's heart but the needs of a human community.

The ambiguous conclusion of this passage does not read as a concession to Kao Tzu; quite the opposite, it reads like a conclusive final word. Mencius is arguing that the nature of men is superior to the nature of animals. In short, the nature of different beings is not equal. A dog's good behavior, and an ox's compliance, while still "right", are not moral to Mencius. What to do, then, with the equality of whiteness? It is tempting to wonder if Mencius is

implying that, while the eye might observe white snow and white feathers with similar colors, the quality of their whiteness cannot surpass that of jade's. There is a perplexing nuance here. Mencius reveals later that whiteness is indeed equal (VI.A.4.4). White jade is nevertheless superior to white feathers and snow. It is not the whiteness of these things that distinguishes their value. It is their nature. Man is superior to hound and ox. Moral humans are superior to good dogs and compliant oxen.

Still, one wonders if Mencius' argument has not created a larger ambiguity. Does he believe that canines and bovine incline towards moral goodness? If not, how does he avoid conceding the argument to Kao Tzu? Then again, how could Kao Tzu disprove that Heaven had granted rightness to the dog and the ox, as subordinates to man in the hierarchy of harmony?

V.

Animal instinct returns in the fourth and final dialogue, where Kao Tzu makes the assertion that opened this essay. "Appetite for food and sex is nature. Benevolence is internal, not external; rightness is external, not internal" (VI.A.4.1). Following the previous dialogue, his comment on nature being appetitive carries more weight. It is a response to Mencius' argument that humans differ from hounds and oxen. Kao Tzu sees the

essence of nature as equal between all life: appetite drives action. Desiring good for others, benevolence, is still a desire, an appetite. But rightness differs from simply desiring good for others; a moral judgment is an external standard by which others measure – and train – one another's behavior. It is not inherent to their appetitive nature, according to Kao Tzu.

Mencius disagrees. When he presses Kao Tzu, the latter returns Mencius to his own illustration of whiteness. "That man there is old and I treat him as elder. He owes nothing of his elderliness to me, just as in treating him as white because he is white I only do so because of his whiteness which is external to me. That is why I call it [rightness] external" (VI.A.4.3). His argument here can be distracting for readers who are sensitive to unjust treatment based on skin color. Kao Tzu's point is elsewhere. He is not drawing attention to the fact that a person in ancient China might be treated differently for having lighter skin. The elderly man having "whiteness" is used to better illustrate the fact that a man can have "elderliness." That is, attributes such as "white" and "elderly" are not part of one's nature but rather descriptors used by others to differentiate one from another. There is no differentiation between people at the level of nature. Just as the common physical substance of humans can develop different

attributes like age and color, their common nature can develop an attribute like "rightness" depending on how it has been channeled. Kao Tzu is reiterating his argument that the treatment of others is driven by appetite rather than nature, because the external attributes of one's elderliness or whiteness are not part of their essence but still generate desires or aversions, i.e. appetites, within others who then treat them according to those appetites.

Mencius counters by returning to his closing argument from the last dialogue:

"The case of rightness is different from that of whiteness. 'Treating as white' is the same whether one is treating a horse as white or a man as white. But I wonder if you would think that 'treating as old' is the same whether one is treating a horse as old or a man as elder?" (VI.A.4.4)

He is drawing Kao Tzu's attention back to the inherent difference in value between a horse and a man, a difference that dictates a greater moral responsibility toward the elder man than the old horse. He implies an inherent priority for the elder man; unstated, his argument may call on the assumption that the man has a more divine nature than the horse, or that the man has been endowed with the intelligence that accumulates wisdom whereas the horse cannot. These are conjectures, as the text is silent. Nevertheless, Kao Tzu does

not reject the premise of the elder man's superior worth to the old horse. Mencius' argument remains the same at its core: since a person's heart is drawn towards rightness, a human would naturally behave more dutifully toward an elder man than an old horse. It is the right thing to do.

Kao Tzu counters:

"My brother I love, but the brother of a man from Ch'in I do not love. This means that the explanation lies in me. Hence I call it internal. Treating an elder of the Ch'u people as elder is the same as treating an elder of mine as elder. We use elderliness as explanation. Hence I call it external." (VI.A.4.5)

By contrasting family and strangers, he is forcing Mencius to stop relying on the inherent superiority of humans over animals for his claims. If all humans are born with morality, then why do we not love universally? We love, he argues, based on internal desire, and that love is strongest for family members. But we respect elders based on upright training, and that respect for elders can be trained toward equal treatment of elder strangers as that of elder family. Morality is therefore external.

Mencius closes by poking at the appetitive reasoning.

"My enjoyment of the roast provided by a man from Ch'in is no different from my enjoyment of my own roast. Even with inanimate things we can find cases similar to the one under discussion. Are we, then, to say that there is something external even in the enjoyment of roast?" (VI. A.4.6)

He implies that loving a brother of a stranger can be just as desirable as loving one's own brother. The reason for that desire he does not articulate³. It may be obvious to some readers that the love of a stranger in the context of universality brings its own inner rewards, like peace and spiritual wholeness. Other readers may prefer a more material explanation, such as the increased chances of reciprocity and the promise of mutual security. Either way, Mencius is implying that the rewards of such behavior make it desirable. There is, therefore, an appetitive element in universal love, and there can be pleasure in morality.⁴

VI.

The memory of Kao Tzu returns indirectly, later in Book VI. Kung-tu Tzu, an apparent student of rightness,

³ Indeed, the implications of Mencius' writings on the right heart suggest fertile ground for inquiry into the nature of friendship as a function of the heart and its appetite or nature. Hat tip to Seminar Tutor Ms. Natalie Elliot for this observation.

⁴ Mencius reiterates this analogy at the end of VI.A.7. "Thus reason and rightness please my heart in the same way as meat pleases my palate." This passage is not included in the essay's main text since it does not involve Kao Tzu.

has been questioning his belief in internal rightness through dialogues with different teachers (VI.A.5, VI.A.6). He mentions a conversation with Kao Tzu, saying “Kao Tzu said, ‘There is neither good nor bad in human nature,’ but others say, [...]” The pupil then lists a few perspectives on rightness and human nature, none of them directly linked to other teachers, before confronting Mencius directly. “Now you say human nature is good. Does this mean that all the others are mistaken?” As the author of the *Mengzi*, Mencius closes his engagement with Kao Tzu here, through an interlocutor. Except for Meng Chi-tzu in VI.A.5, Kao Tzu is the only teacher cited by name among this pupil’s other influences on the nature of the heart. Readers are already familiar with Kao Tzu’s position by this point, but Mencius reiterates it to give himself the final word.

He responds with an ornate, conclusive passage:

“As far as what is genuinely in him is concerned, a man is capable of becoming good [...]. That is what I mean by good. [...] The heart of compassion is possessed by all men alike; likewise the heart of shame, the

heart of respect, and the heart of right and wrong. [...] Benevolence, dutifulness, observance of the rites, and wisdom do not give me a lustre from the outside; they are in me originally.” (VI.A.6.2)

He closes with a quote from the *Odes* and another from Confucius. The shining of Mencius’ effulgent heart radiates from the fuel of rightness, and it brings him a pleasure for which he wants his pupils to recognize their own appetites. Even a person who behaves immorally is “capable of becoming good,” and therefore already has rightness lying dormant in the heart, drawn to flow towards good but obstructed by circumstance.

Right therefore need not be carved out of one’s nature but channeled towards flourishing, according to Mencius’ dialectic with Kao Tzu. When sensed in others, it stirs within. The heart seeks release toward the pleasure of right behavior, consuming the fuel of those acts and producing a radiance that attracts others, shining right into their hearts as well.



- Paul Harland-White

The Story and the Slow Swoon of the Soul

Genevieve Fowler

A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. (Joyce, 225⁵)

James Joyce's short story *The Dead* opens with a bustle of "gossiping and laughing and fussing" at Kate, Julia, and Mary Jane Morkan's annual Christmas party (175). People dance, tell stories, eat, and perform. The story unfolds, largely through Gabriel's perspective, as lively people buzz and interact with one another. The liveliness builds inside Gabriel as he sets off to his hotel with Greta and anticipates the remainder of the night alone with her, escaping with her. In the final

pages, the story quiets. Greta's memory wrenches Gabriel from his internal narrative and gives him access to a picture that goes beyond his own. In the final paragraphs, Gabriel has an epiphany, and the prose turns to poetry. Snow is "softly falling... falling softly" (225). Falling, falling, falling, falling. Seven times falling repeats. We follow the snow across Ireland. "It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns" (225). The mouth assumes one position for the "ih" of "thickly drifted" and crunches through the clacking of "crooked crosses" (225). The words come out of the mouth almost like the gate's spears, thorns. And then, the release. The tongue untenses and the teeth soften to say: "His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling..." (225). The slipping flowing fall winds down and we harden our words: "... like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead" (225). Why does this language become more poetic only in the final moments of the story? What does this crossing, turning, stomping, swaying dance of sounds convey that the earlier narrative flurry of activity cannot?

⁵ Joyce, James. "The Dead." *Dubliners*, Penguin Books, 1993.

We enter to the bustle of the beginning of the story. Soon we wait nervously with the hostesses for the arrival of Gabriel. From the moment we hear of his anticipated entrance, the story circles around Gabriel. The Misses Morkan's hopes for the party rest on their nephew and cousin. This guardian angel of the party will help keep the not-so-temperate Freddy Malins from making a spectacle and soiling the Morkan's reputation. He will carve the goose and give the toast. Though the narration is third person, much of the action unfolds from his perspective. We have access to his inner thoughts on the guests and performances at the party. Gabriel's internal narrative becomes the prose of the story for much of the evening.

While he is perhaps the guardian angel of the party in the eyes of his aunts, his interactions all evening are full of marks missed when his own perspective butts up against another's. We see him stumble with Lily, the caretaker's daughter, upon arriving, and we see the self-doubt that follows. The incident spurs him to fear that he might "make himself ridiculous" when he gives his speech (179). We see him in similar turmoil, facing fear of looking "ridiculous" when he and Ms. Ivors dance and debate later in the evening (191). He observes the missed understanding in others as well. He observes Mary Jane's technical Academy piece

missing the mark with her audience, speculating that it has "no melody" for any of the listeners (186). We take note of Kate's misremembered tenor, Mr. Browne's attempt to smooth the situation, and Mr. D'Arcy's unwillingness or inability to play along (200). The Dead, for much of the story, is a narrative of actions and misunderstandings between people.

The story has its initial culmination when Gabriel gives his toast. The speech is his chance to shape the narrative of the evening for the party goers. In an evening full of pockets of misunderstanding, his words land well with his audience. Gabriel comments on the living and the dead. He speaks of the "tradition of warm-hearted courteous Irish hospitality, which... is still alive among us" (204). Later in the toast, in response to his earlier exchange with Ms. Ivors, he laments a possible death of this hospitality in the new "educated or hypereducated" generation (204). He hopes that parties like the Morkan's will be occasions when we can "still cherish in our hearts the memory of those dead and gone great ones whose fame the world will not willingly let die" (204). In this speech, where the words resonate with his audience rather than leading to a lack of understanding, Gabriel may get at a greater truth. He does not, however, truly realize this truth until after a final great misunderstanding of the night.

This great miss begins when Gabriel paints his wife as a symbol and builds upon this image on their cab ride to their hotel. Gabriel observes Greta listening to music at the close of the party. In his mind, he turns her external image into a painting he titles, not *Woman Pondering Distant Music*, but “Distant Music” (211). Object – the music – becomes subject and subject – Greta – fades from significance. The details of the painting he notes are her physical attributes, her clothing, her hair. He does not recognize her as a person who could experience a connection to music or poetry. After this “grace of attitude” has left his wife, Gabriel continues to build upon this static and one-sided image in his mind as they travel to their hotel. He remembers details of their “secret life together” (214). He longs to, with Greta, “forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy” (215). He imagines that “they had escaped” as they reach the hotel and longs to be alone with Greta (216). He spins a narrative for himself that rests on a togetherness, but a togetherness through his eyes alone.

When they are finally together in their hotel room, Gabriel finds that he and Greta are not, in fact alone. Greta has kept Michael Furey in her heart. He learns the story of Michael, who died for love of his wife. Greta becomes multi-dimensional. Gabriel

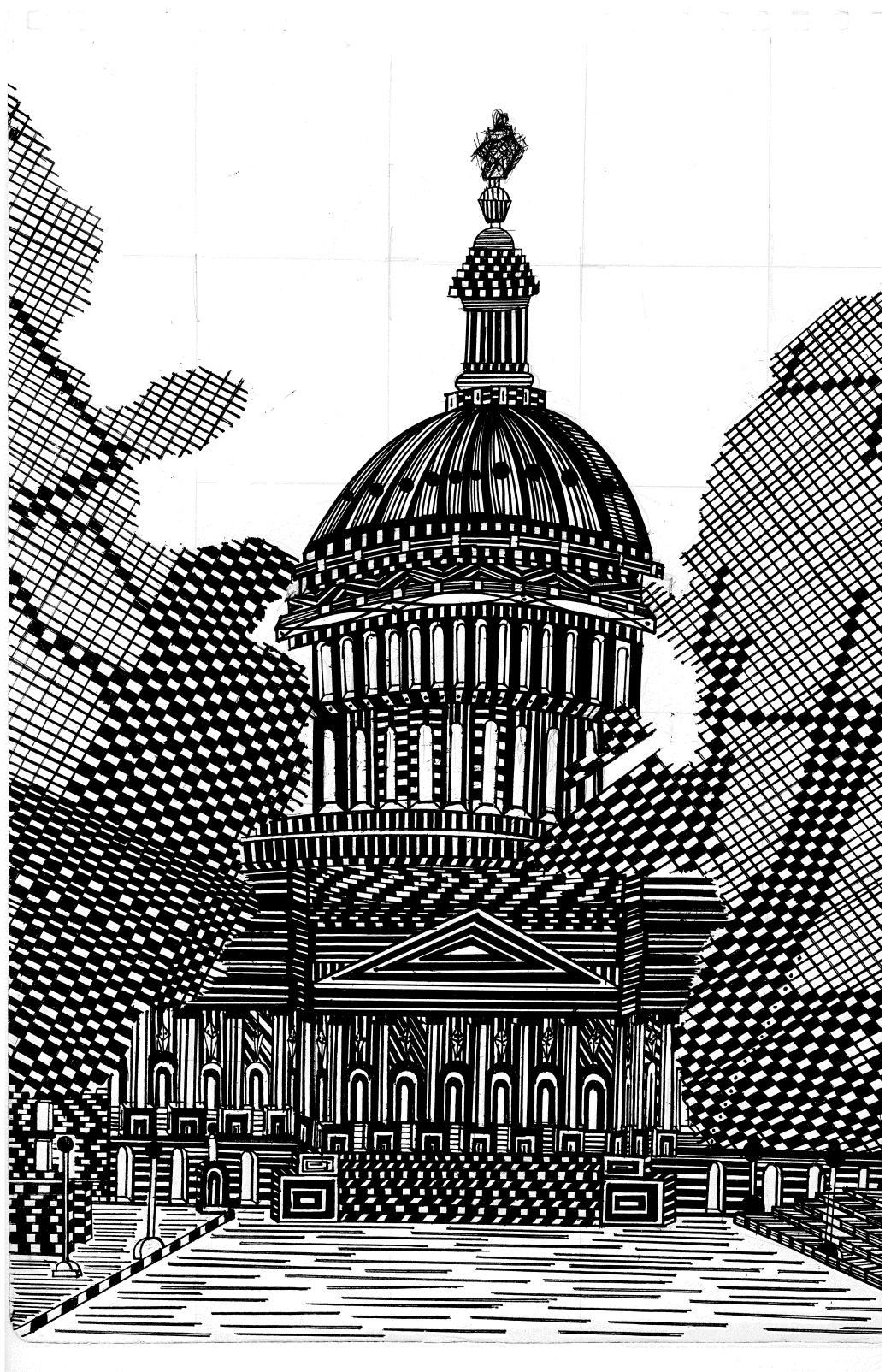
responds first with jealousy, then generosity. “Generous tears filled Gabriel’s eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love” (224). Gabriel has never felt a connection to another that makes him not wish to live without them, but he can nonetheless recognize the feeling as love. When Greta shows him what had been “locked in her heart so many years”, “that image of her lover’s eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live”, then Gabriel begins to recognize the love (224). Michael felt a love powerful and pure, if naïve, perhaps the love of youth, perhaps somehow eternal, kept alive in Greta’s heart and recognizable to all. Gabriel speaks of an eternity in his speech, a keeping alive of “the dead and the gone great ones” in our hearts (204). While Gabriel has said the words, Greta has enacted them. She has kept Michael alive in her heart. A gasworker, he is not one of the greats that Gabriel imagined. But he was human, and he felt a great love.

Like the snow which will soon be “thickly drifted”, Gabriel’s tears begin to gather “more thickly” (224). Through these thickening tears, he imagines “the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree” (224). He imagines the loved, the dead, without having directly seen or experienced this love himself. Gabriel’s perspective broadens and his singular identity moves into the background (224). The snow gives “a

few light taps upon the pane”, like Michael’s gravel on Greta’s window (225). The snow begins to fall. The words begin to dance.

We no longer see only what is before Gabriel’s eyes and memory. We see the whole of Ireland. We see a oneness of the living and the dead under this blanket of snow. In the final sentence, it is not Gabriel that swoons, but his soul. The swoon is a reaction of love. Gabriel’s soul, the eternal part of him which will become ghostly shade, is the part of him experiencing this love. The love comes from his hearing the snow falling: a “falling faintly... faintly falling” which crosses itself (225). A faint falling makes a sound, but it can only be heard when we listen. Like

the dead, it may otherwise fade into the background. The snow falls through a vast area, the universe, and over the living and the dead. The poetry of these final sentences conveys something universal, whole, and eternal. It conveys something which speaks to the soul. It shifts from the individual narrative perspective of Gabriel, the action where person misunderstands person. Like Gabriel’s recognition of love, the words of the final sentences come together and convey a melody, a universally recognizable beauty. Even outside the meaning of the story, they are sounds which we wish to sculpt, speak, reprise: to relish in their rhythm.



Rain in Washington D.C. - David Cherian

The Dimensions of Knowing

Why we act against our best interests

Lola Bondar

In Book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE 7),⁶ Aristotle is interested in the struggle of a person with a strong appetite—one who becomes so overwhelmed by pleasure that he acts against what he knows to be right (1146a30). Unlike the continent person, who follows rational judgment and acts in his own best interest, the incontinent person recognizes that his actions are wrong but gives in to his strong desires anyway (1145b11-14). This tension between reason and desire lies at the heart of Aristotle's discussion of incontinence (*akrasia*), as he examines why some individuals, despite knowing better, give in to their impulses. The incontinent individual knows well that "it is wrong to pursue this pleasant thing" (1146b24) and is "already persuaded to act otherwise," but "still acts wrongly" (1146b2-3). If the incontinent person both "knows" and is "persuaded" yet still follows his desires, does this mean he acts against all reason and knowledge? Aristotle offers a complex, if not perplexing, analysis of the dimensions of knowing in the mind of the incontinent person. This essay will examine Aristotle's treatment of knowledge and ignorance in the

incontinent person as presented in NE 7.

Aristotle's examination of *akrasia* appears to have been sparked by Socrates, who maintained that no one knowingly and willingly acts against his own best interest. As he begins his discussion of *akrasia*, Aristotle cites Socrates' claim that "it would be terrible . . . for knowledge to be in someone, but mastered by something else, and dragged around like a slave" (1145b24-26). For Socrates, knowledge reigns supreme as a fundamental human motivation, and incontinence is an illusion—one can choose something other than the good only out of ignorance. The root of the problem, then, is not incontinence but a lack of knowledge. Yet Aristotle acknowledges that the Socratic view contradicts how things "appear manifestly" (1145b28). Always a proponent of common sense, Aristotle argues that "it is evident, at any rate, that before he is affected the one who acts incontinently does not think <he should do the action he eventually does>" (1145b30-31). Before being overcome by desire, the incontinent man recognizes that the action in question is not in his best

⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2019).

interests. It is this very recognition—this knowing—that defines the problem of incontinence: the incontinent man knows what is virtuous, and this knowledge seems inherent in the very definition of incontinence, making it possible and supporting our ordinary beliefs, observations, and sayings about it. Aristotle will need to reconcile the Socratic perspective, which denies incontinence, with the commonly held belief that people act in ways they know to be against the good.

How are incontinence and knowing connected? To answer this question, Aristotle introduces the first dimension of knowing. “We speak of knowing in two ways,” he says: we can have it and not use it, or we can have it and use it, i.e., “attend to it” (1146b33–36). What does it mean to “attend to knowledge”? Aristotle himself considers it extraordinary if one has full knowledge, attends to it, and still performs the wrong action, but he allows for the option of acting without attending to knowledge (1146b36–37). To understand this idea, it may be helpful to apply Aristotle’s fundamental metaphysical distinction between potentiality and actuality. Perhaps Aristotle implies that an individual has capacity (i.e., potential) to exercise his knowledge required for taking an action, yet this knowing is incomplete and qualified. The potential needs to be actualized by applying it to a particular situation and using it effectively, which is a

different kind of knowing—the unqualified knowing.

Perplexingly, “having knowledge without using it” includes different types of having—having it “in a way” and not having it (1147a11–14). Aristotle insists that this condition appears to be at the root of those instances of incontinence that resemble the states of being “asleep, mad, or drunk” (1147a13) or experiencing strong emotions (1147a15). Aristotle considers these conditions to be “knowledge-disturbing” (1147a16). He writes, “For the incontinent person is similar to those who get drunk quickly from a little wine, and from less than it takes for most people” (1151a3–4). In other words, one who is intoxicated by pleasure is not fully conscious and therefore cannot actualize his knowledge, which, unfortunately, remains merely a capacity.

Importantly, Aristotle distinguishes another relevant dimension within our ability to know—the application of universal and particular premisses (1147a1–3). It is the particular premiss, which is controlled by perception, that directs our actions (1147a3, 1147a27). In other words, while we may generally and universally recognize that a sugar-filled cake is not a healthy food that benefits human beings, we may struggle to understand that the sugar in the cake in front of us will cause us harm. According to Aristotle, the

incontinent individual holds two universal beliefs—one which hinders him from tasting, the other indicates that everything sweet is pleasant—and while the composite of these two beliefs may tell him to avoid the sweet, his appetite still “leads him on” (1147a32–37). The perplexing application of universal and particular premisses (i.e., ways of knowing) to a specific decision-making situation in the mind of the incontinent individual appears to be central to Aristotle’s understanding of *akrasia*.

What happens with the universal and particular premisses when *akrasia* occurs? Aristotle’s attempt to answer this question (1147b10–19) involves several steps and confusing statements. First, he confirms that it is the “last premiss”—the particular, perceptible premiss, or knowledge—that determines our action, and the incontinent person doesn’t have it at the moment of taking action (1147b10–11). Next, Aristotle acknowledges that knowledge contained in the premiss about the particular, i.e., in the object of perception, is not universal (1147b13–14). On the basis of the two previously discussed dimensions of knowing—having knowledge and using/not using it (1146b33–37) and universal/particular premisses (1147a1–9)—Aristotle claims that this particular knowledge is not possessed by the incontinent person at the time of action, and therefore his disagreement with Socrates appears

somewhat justified, even though the general or universal knowledge doesn’t disappear in the moment of incontinent action.

Yet it remains unclear what actually happens with the universal and particular premisses, or knowledge, at the moment the incontinent action is taken. In the puzzling sentence which immediately follows and which seems to be designed to further justify his position, Aristotle offers a different view: “For the knowledge that is present when someone is affected by incontinence is not the sort that seems to be fully knowledge, nor is this dragged about because he is affected, but only perceptual knowledge is present” (1147b16–19). What does Aristotle mean by this? First, this view appears to reverse what we would expect as a result of his previous exposition, specifically that the incontinent person does in a certain sense possess knowledge in the moment of action. Moreover, the second part of the sentence appears to contradict the first, suggesting that knowledge in the full sense is not affected in the action, yet the incontinent person, at the time of acting, possesses only perceptual knowledge.

If we take the previous discussion of the dimensions of knowing seriously, specifically that it is the particular premiss that determines our actions, then the question “What does

the incontinent person know when he acts?” should be focused on the particular. In other words, we don’t need to resolve whether the incontinent person has universal knowledge, because it is not relevant to his actions. For example, it isn’t suspicious that a healthy-minded person, who knows that sugary sweets are not healthy food (i.e., has general knowledge), satisfies his desire to eat a chocolate cake; rather, the question is whether he knows at the moment of taking the bite of that cake that it will cause harm (i.e., has particular knowledge). For Aristotle, the incontinent person seems to possess the particular knowledge before the action, but this knowledge may become inactive under the influence of desire. The possession of the general premiss doesn’t appear to be relevant to the unfortunate action of the incontinent person. Yet general and universal knowledge hold special importance if we read the puzzling sentence in 1147b16-19 in a different way: that perceptual knowledge itself, being an opinion about the perceptible object of desire, is not “fully knowledge,” and that full knowledge resides in general and universal, and that knowledge is present, if not authoritative, at the time of taking incontinent action. The full knowledge is contained in the universal, even though the particular determines our action.

Overall, Aristotle’s treatment of akrasia in NE 7 does not appear to

take us much further than the previously reviewed examples of a drunk or sleeping person, in whom knowledge exists only “potentially.” This may help account for many cases in which one acts contrary to what he knows is good in a qualified way. Thus, incontinence is reduced to a form of morally reckless ignorance when desire arises outside the immediate presence of knowledge, whether universal or perceptual. Another way to think about it is faulty reasoning. I believe, however, that there may be other cases of incontinence that cannot be explained in such a reductive manner. Does Aristotle, unlike Socrates, allow for an authentic akrasia—the most degraded expression of incontinent action, with zero qualifications—in which the individual consciously acts against his best interests with full knowledge of doing so? Aristotle says of the incontinent person: “he acts willingly; for in a way he acts in knowledge both of what he is doing and of the end he is doing it for. But he is not base, since his decision is decent” (1152a16-18). By “decent decision,” Aristotle may imply that the incontinent person knows the general type of action he ought to pursue but not the specific action. However, he might also be acknowledging the existence of a far more problematic form of incontinence that is unrelated to ignorance.

One can imagine a person performing a morally reprehensible action, such as adultery, and repeatedly telling himself, “I really shouldn’t be doing this”—not drunk or asleep, but rather able to hold a rational discourse within his own mind. Such mental discourse in the mind of the incontinent person, when considered in light of his underlying beliefs, resembles that of the self-controlled individual. However, in terms of action and behavior, it is more akin to that of the self-indulgent man, creating an apparent contradiction within the virtue system of one who suffers from *akrasia*. There can be something in the character of the incontinent person that predisposes him to incontinence and prevents him from acting like a self-controlled person would, but such an approach to considering incontinence is also reductionary.

Aristotle does not provide a clear solution to the problem of *akrasia* in NE 7. Should it be solved through training and habituation of character? If the actions of the incontinent person resemble that of a self-indulgent man, then should he continue developing the virtue concerned with pleasures—temperance—a state of character which disposes the individual to desire the right amount of pleasure, in the right ways, at the right times (1119b17–19)? Yet the temperate

person won’t find self-indulgence pleasant precisely because he doesn’t have strong appetites—he desires in accordance with reason and doesn’t rely on the knowledge of what temperance requires in a particular situation (1119b14–16). It is precisely those with strong appetites who are prone to *akrasia*—even if only occasionally—because such appetites exhaust human nature and call for another solution. Since *akrasia* appears to be primarily a problem of incomplete or misapplied knowledge, and given Aristotle’s suggested dimensions and modes of knowing, do we also critically need to learn how to properly apply general knowledge of the good to particular situations? If that is the case, this solution turns into the challenge of attaining the virtue of *phronesis*—practical wisdom—and also trapping us in an endless loop where knowledge and wisdom can be continually overridden by desire.

Aristotle hints that the condition of *akrasia* can be difficult to cure (1146a33), although he insists that it is curable (1150b33). Is *akrasia* an illness, or merely akin to one? And if so, what kind? Aristotle suggests that some forms of *akrasia* are more curable than others, just as some diseases are more treatable than others. *Akrasia* driven by “spirited reactions” and “sexual appetites” (1147a15), as seen in “volatile people” (1152a27), is less complex and less severe—more like a temporary

illness—while *akrasia* caused by entrenched bad habits or nature is harder to correct, akin to a chronic disease (1152a28–34). Just as various illnesses represent different failures of the body's natural order, *akrasia* is a multifaceted failure of rational control over desires, with no single prescribed treatment.

I suggest that a better approach to considering Aristotle's answer to the problem of *akrasia* involves placing it within his broader theory of pleasure and pain. Aristotle asserts that "pleasure completes the activity" (1174b33), meaning a person performs any activity more effectively when they take pleasure in it. *Akrasia* arises within the inner struggle between strong appetites and pleasures on one side, and reason and knowledge on the other, as it relates to a certain activity. But if we are able to take pleasure in virtuous and reasoned activity itself—i.e., in making good, rational choices—it would minimize or eliminate the tension between bad appetite and

knowledge, replacing it with a different one: the tension between good appetite and bad appetite. In other words, if one learns to desire what is good—i.e., develops the correct desire—he becomes better equipped to choose the good desire and stand against the bad one. Although the limited scope of this work prevents me from fully developing this idea, this explication seems to recognize that, in individuals who do not automatically "follow reason in forming their desires" (1095a10), reason alone remains vulnerable to being overpowered by opposing desires for things that are bad for us. This would be a controversial claim for Aristotle, who insists that we are rational beings (1098a3–7), yet the analysis of *akrasia* may show that reason requires the support of correct desire to be the special human function Aristotle claims it to be.



Rotting Apples I - Amelia Taylor Wolfe
oil on canvas-paper 9"x12"



Rotting Apples II - Amelia Taylor Wolfe
oil on canvas-paper 9"x12"

Fear and Coercion in Leviathan

Strangely enduring, strikingly true

Lola Bondar

Hobbes writes that “covenants entered into by fear, in the condition of mere nature, are obligatory” (14.27), and that “fear and liberty are consistent” (21.3). We are free to deliberate and choose even in the presence of overwhelming physical danger or mental and emotional coercion, and we bear responsibility for choices made under these conditions. Because covenants can only be formed through free action, these ideas become central in Hobbesian thought, where political authority is grounded in individuals voluntarily surrendering their natural rights to a sovereign for the sake of peace and security. Hobbes’ view of fear, liberty, and what it means to be coerced may appear repugnant and even outdated in the modern liberal society, where freedom is often understood in opposition to coercion, and where consent under duress is typically seen as invalid. Yet Hobbes’ position challenges us to rethink the nature of liberty and coercion. I will argue that by grounding political order not in idealized notions of freedom and rationality, but in the stark realities of human animality, vulnerability, and desire for security, Hobbes offers a strikingly prescient

vision of sovereignty—one that anticipates not only later critiques of liberalism but also the revised understanding of the human condition advanced by modern life sciences.

The word fear is so central to Hobbes’ thought that it appears nearly 190 times in *Leviathan*, making it one of the most frequently used terms in the text. Hobbes defines fear as “an aversion with opinion of hurt from the object” (6.16). It’s a basic sensory response to move away, and this movement appears to involve emotion. It’s also a judgment or belief, so it’s not purely reactive—it requires imagination and anticipation. Because it is one of the fundamental human motivations, Hobbes insists that we can never be without fear (6.58). Fear is always present whenever we need to make a choice; in fact, we deliberate precisely when “appetites and aversions, hopes and fears, concerning one and the same thing arise alternately” (6.49). Deliberation itself seems to be an internal struggle between hope and fear—a churning of conflicting passions; in a sense, we deliberate because we fear. Importantly, deliberation isn’t unique to humans—

both men and beasts can deliberate (6.51), so all living creatures engage in a kind of internal reckoning before acting.

If fear plays a significant role in every deliberation, are the choices we make truly free? Hobbes says yes—and to illustrate his point, he turns to an extreme example. “When a man throweth his goods into the sea for fear the ship would sink, he doth it nevertheless very willingly, and may refuse to do it if he will; it is therefore the action of one that was free” (21.3). Hobbes presents a case where an individual acts under duress—fear of shipwreck—but still chooses to throw his goods overboard. He wasn’t physically forced; he could have refused (and risked sinking). Fear, pressure, or other internal motives—no matter how strong—do not negate freedom. The sailor deliberated, and his action was voluntary. Therefore, “fear and liberty are consistent” (21.3).

Hobbes conceives of liberty in negative terms: “Liberty, or freedom, signifieth (properly) the absence of opposition (by opposition, I mean external impediments of motion) and may be applied no less to irrational and inanimate creatures than to rational” (21.1). For Hobbes, liberty is a physical condition; to be free is to be able to move without being blocked. Hobbes equates human freedom with the unimpeded motion of animals, and even objects. He further clarifies that living beings are unfree only

“whilst they are imprisoned or restrained with walls or chains” (21.1). We are free, in other words, unless a physical obstruction prevents our movement.

But, in the context of Hobbes’ definition of fear, what happens when a living being perceives a physical obstruction? If we see a physical barrier, we are likely to modify our direction or behavior in response. Yet, in Hobbes’ extreme example of a physical impediment, such as a prison cell, are we obstructed only when we are actively banging on the walls or attempting to escape, or do we remain obstructed even while quietly sitting in a corner of the cell? Hobbes also speaks of liberty as man finding “no stop in doing what he has the will, desire, or inclination to do” (21.2). This refers not necessarily to what one is actively pursuing at any given moment, but to the potential for action—the capacity to pursue whatever one desires, whenever one wishes. This implies that liberty is not limited to what we are doing at the moment, or to immediate physical obstacles, but extends to our freedom to act on future intentions, desires, or inclinations.

Then what is the relationship between external impediments and fear? When we perceive a physical obstruction, the mind deliberates and forms a belief—a judgment—about the nature of the impediment before us. These beliefs give rise to fear, or

perhaps they are fear itself. If my house is on fire and the only escape is through the flames, what truly impedes me—the fire itself, or my fear of it? To say that the fire impedes the victim overlooks an important psychological nuance. Yet there's little question about how things will turn out: attempting to walk through the flames offers no real chance of survival—it is, in effect, no choice at all. Perhaps this brute fact—those cases where liberty and necessity converge—is most relevant to Hobbes. I will return to this idea later.

So how are fear and liberty consistent? At first glance, they seem incompatible: fear is an internal constraint, a force that compels us away from danger and limits our range of options, while liberty, in Hobbes' understanding, is the freedom to act—or move—without physical obstruction. Fear may strongly influence our behavior and choices, but it does not physically prevent us from acting freely. For Hobbes, actions that have their beginning in fear are voluntary actions (6.54). He insists that the presence of fear does not negate liberty because, in his broader view of human condition, the demarcation between free and coerced choices is blurred. Human beings, like all other living creatures, experience the world not through a detached lens of reason, but through constant movement of passions—pulled toward what we desire and pushed away by what we

fear (6.2). Our behavior is governed by appetites and aversions, which are not obstacles to freedom but its very essence: the will is merely the temporary triumph of one inclination over another—just as it is in animals (6.53). To act freely, then, is simply to act in accordance with the strongest present inclination, so long as no external force physically restrains us.

Hobbes is unconcerned with whether our choices arise from calm deliberation or from visceral panic—both, for him, are equally valid and free, as long as no external force physically obstructs our actions. Deliberating under the threat of fear or death is just as legitimate as deliberating while sitting comfortably on a couch. An action taken by a poor and suffering individual is just as valid as one taken by a wealthy and healthy person. In this way, fear, when understood as a motivating aversion, can coexist with liberty.

Not only are fear and liberty consistent, but so are liberty and necessity, because “every act of man's will and every desire and inclination proceedeth from some cause, and that from another cause in a continual chain” (21.4). The universe is governed by causality, and everything—external stimuli, internal desires, fears, and judgments—is connected in an unbroken chain of causes. Within this natural order, our actions are in a very significant way predetermined, although in Hobbes'

view they are nevertheless compatible with liberty. Internal and external causes may feel coercive as they influence our choices, but, to him, they don't negate liberty. In other words, we are free to decide whether to throw our property overboard from the sinking ship or not. Death, too, is an option; no one can be coerced into dying.

I suggest that we can better understand Hobbes by recognizing that all our actions are shaped by antecedent conditions. Some elements of these conditions seem more active—shaped by our own choices—while others appear more passive. But clear boundaries between the two, Hobbes might argue, are impossible. By choice or by neglect, consciously or not, we are perpetually reshaping our conditions. People, circumstances, and events exert their influence by their very nature—not always through direct physical or emotional threats, but by subtly shaping the background of our existence. Further, genetics, early life experiences, and unconscious brain processes shape our choices at every moment. In this sense, all of our actions follow from necessity, though Hobbes would still call us free so long as no external impediment prevents us from acting on our will. Causality is not coercion for Hobbes, yet it is both pervasive and often imperceptible; we are, in Hobbes' terms, free to act, but never uncaused.

Can Hobbes' view of liberty still express anything meaningful about freedom? If the line between free and unfree choices is blurred, then the distinction between free and unfree constitutions also loses meaning. Hobbes directly challenges the ideal of liberty: "There is written on the turrets of the city of Lucca in great characters at this day the word LIBERTAS; yet no man can thence infer that a particular man has more liberty, or immunity from the service of the commonwealth, there than in Constantinople. Whether a commonwealth be monarchical or popular, the freedom is still the same" (21.8). The inscription of LIBERTAS on the walls of Lucca is, to Hobbes, a kind of political theater: it proclaims freedom, but it doesn't mean that any individual person in Lucca is freer than one in Constantinople, under a monarchy. In a certain way, Hobbes seems to legitimize coercion while reserving this specific term for a very narrow set of circumstances (i.e., external impediments). Yet he would acknowledge that restrictions on autonomy must exist in every commonwealth, and yet we are nonetheless free to act within the constraints of the law.

Broadly speaking, and in an intuitive sense, coercion and non-coercion are inextricable in *Leviathan*. How then does human rationality fit into the picture? For Hobbes, rationality is a calculating

tool grounded in our passions. Reason, he argues, is “nothing but reckoning” (5.2)—a means of computing the consequences of our actions. Rationality, in his view, is overrated. What matters most is that reason alone cannot lead us to any decisions. Hobbes is not concerned with reconciling fear with rationality because, for him, they are not separate; his conception of rationality is perfectly compatible with emotions, with fear itself acting as a rational motivator (14.1). When fear arises, it triggers rational thought about how to respond. While I cannot fully explore this idea here, Hobbes would assert that reason itself emerges through fear, ultimately guiding us toward the realization that lasting peace requires submission to a common authority.

Hobbes’ view of fear, coercion, and the human nature underlying them aligns strikingly well with the biological perspective of modern life sciences, where rationality is understood as a behavioral adaptation—an evolved strategy for maximizing an organism’s ability to survive within a particular environment. Our “forms of reasoning” are judgments shaped by evolutionary forces—some are faster and more intuitive (biologically older), while others are slower and more deliberate (biologically newer). Fear is one of these biologically mature forms of reasoning, and what we typically consider “reasoning”

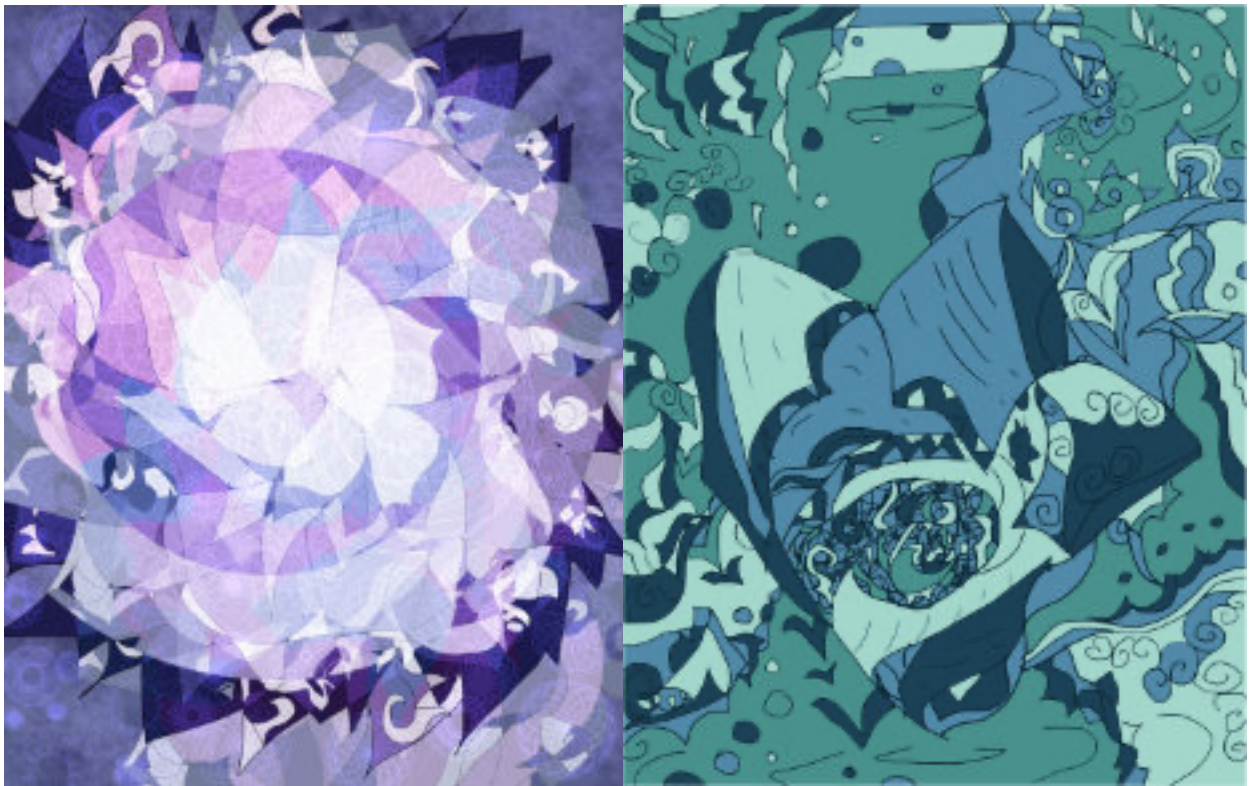
consists of newer evolutionary responses still developing. Different brain circuits contribute to the “rational” evaluation of costs, rewards, and risks—yet fear always plays an integral, and often dominant, role. It hijacks the brain and feels coercive because we never choose fear; any freedom we possess must coexist with it.

Hobbes anticipates a mechanistic view of the human being when he asserts that all “voluntary motions” have “internal beginnings” (6.1); it is the brain and body that initiate and govern our actions, with much of our behavior driven by internal physiological processes—a view now supported by modern fMRI studies. Although our actions may not be deemed rational in strictly philosophical terms, they are nonetheless rooted in such internal mechanisms. Unlike Hobbes, the life sciences have not defined “liberty,” as it remains elusive within the now-unsealed black box of human nature—but if they were to define it, they might do so in much the same way Hobbes did.

While somewhat bleak, Hobbes’ view is refreshing in its realism. Modern liberalism idealizes autonomy and agency as reflective, rational, and self-directed. Yet as Hobbes has pointed out, we are much like beasts—driven by primal instincts and fears that operate beneath the surface of our conscious minds. Our

actions are not the product of pure reason or free will but are produced through complex causal chains, and it's a sober reflection on human nature itself. Hobbes invites us to consider a political order grounded in

the recognition of our passions, and a concept of liberty that acknowledges the inevitability—and even the necessity—of fear as a structuring force in human life.



Twist and Flame – Kees Bucca

A Theological Reflection on Becoming

Stephen Cunha

Whenever I think of becoming, two thoughts simultaneously come to mind. The statement attributed to Heraclitus of Ephesus that “no man steps into the same river twice” and the fact that each one of us, personally, is constantly changing. I take Heraclitus’s statement to mean that both the river and the man who steps into it are constantly changing, making it impossible for the same man to step into the same river more than once. I suppose this argues more for flux or change than becoming. Becoming seems to connote more than mere change. It suggests a kind of τέλος in the sense of purpose – a moving toward something, a development, a progress, as can be found, for example, in Hegel’s conception of history.

Yet the reality, if we look around us, is that, if anything, the ongoing change for each individual seems in this world to ultimately be regressive. That’s not even the right word. Our physical change, at least, is ultimately in the direction of degradation and disintegration. While each of us is on the upswing physically for the early part of our life, except for those here at the end of the world, our bodies will all end up decayed, mixed with the elements, under dirt, or in the sand under the sea. In Herman

Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, Captain Ahab’s second mate Stubb uncharacteristically touches on something profound when he responds to a charge of inconsistency in thinking from the third mate Flask by saying, “I’ve part changed my flesh since that time, why not my mind?” (Melville 510). Not only our bodies but also our minds undergo change. This too seems to be in a negative direction. Sadly, some people even lose their minds altogether in this world, prior to their final physical demise.

In light of these considerations, with respect to each of us personally, is there a being that is becoming? Is there anything fixed about us? Is our personal change headed in any direction? I propose to address these questions in light of Scripture.

One thing that is permanent about each of us is our record – everything we do, say, feel, and think. This too is in a state of becoming, because it is not yet complete until we leave this world, but only in the same sense that a student’s academic transcript is in a state of becoming until the student graduates. At the end of each of our lives our record before God will be fixed. Kant was right in the all-encompassing importance he gave to morality. It is, to some degree,

integral to everything we do and think. The moral law, according to Scripture, will be the standard by which each of us is judged by God. There will be a personal accountability for our moral record, which strongly suggests that there is a never-changing “I” behind that record. It suggests that each of us has (as eloquently described by former St. John’s College tutor Bill O’Grady) “a self which grounds the doing, which is its responsible and somehow dependable cause, which stands behind it and disposes of it, which transcends it in a such a way that it is not exhausted by the sum of all its doings, far less by any one of them” (O’Grady 14).

The saying that “nothing ever disappears from the internet” is perhaps a bit of an overstatement. But just as servers around the globe permanently capture everything that happens in the digital world – every web search, social media post, text, and so forth – even more permanently everything we say, do, feel, and think is registered in heaven. God has a comprehensive book in his infinite mind, which holds even the smallest detail. “Every idle word shall be judged” (Matthew 12:36). This is one of the books that will be opened on the Day of Judgement.

While we are changing, even perhaps in our way of thinking, our transcript is augmenting. It is in a state of becoming toward a final

completed state of being. If this is not distressing and disconcerting enough, God’s standard for eternal life is perfection. That’s the moral equivalent of a flawless 100% grade in every course taken in a college curriculum from beginning to end. “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil – you cannot tolerate wrong” (Habakkuk 1:13). “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law” (Galatians 3:10). “Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it” (James 2:10). That means, if we consider ourselves to have already fallen short of this standard, that in our current state of becoming, we are already headed toward a state of being that will be intolerable. It’s only a matter of how intolerable since the Bible teaches that there are degrees of punishment, and therefore suffering, in Hell. Hence, the nine distinct circles in Dante’s depiction of Hell.

That seems rather bleak and those who are not distressed by such a consideration might perhaps be angered by it. It seems deeply unfair if not worthy of derisive laughter. Lot’s sons-in-law thought he was jesting. Perhaps there was scorn in their response. However, the God who made the universe and the rules, so to speak, is infinitely holy. As judge of the universe, he must punish transgression of his law. He cannot fellowship with impurity. Even the rebellious angels were cast down.

But the same God is also infinitely loving. In fact, he “is love” (1 John 4:8). Love comes from God as light and heat emanate from the sun. God is love and the source of all true love. Out of God’s love, he sent his one and only Son into the world to redeem an elect. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Jesus could be said to have been born in a state of being and becoming. Being in the sense that he is God the Son, the second person of the holy trinity. The twenty-first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism captures it well: “The only Redeemer of God’s elect, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so, was and continueth to be God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.” That infinite, unchanging being, the second person of the trinity, amazingly, out of love, took on a state of becoming, so that both coexisted in the same person, Jesus Christ the God-man. Why?

He was born under the law so that he could obey it perfectly on our behalf and he suffered and died to propitiate our sins. As the substitute for those who believe on him, he not only performed morally, such that he obtained a perfect transcript, but he also paid in full the just penalty for our falling short morally in our lives.

His death expunges the record, so to speak, of the failures of those who have faith in him. How could he be allowed to act as a substitute? God made that rule too. How can one man pay for the sins of many? There is not an explicit answer to that question in Scripture, but he is both God and man, so it would seem that his sacrifice has an infinite value.

When someone believes on Jesus, the person’s flawed moral record is paid for by Jesus’s once for all, historic sacrifice on the cross, saving from Hell, and Jesus’s perfect life of obedience under the law, his perfect record or transcript of righteousness, is irrevocably credited to the believer’s account, entitling the believer to eternal life in heaven. This double imputation – the imputation of the believer’s sin to Jesus and the imputation of Jesus’s perfect record of righteousness to the believer – is obtained by faith alone. “This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (Romans 3:22). Faith in Jesus Christ puts a person in a new state of being and becoming. The believer is in an unchangeable state of justification. The guilt of all sins, past, present, and future, is wiped clean by the blood of Christ and the perfect record of righteousness requisite to merit eternal life in heaven is possessed. This aspect of the believer’s state is fixed and will not change through all eternity. The believer will be no more justified before God two

million years from now than he or she is at the first moment of faith.

However, the believer in this world is becoming in the sense of being transformed into the image of the Savior, becoming actually, intrinsically purer and more righteous, by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, leading ultimately toward a future higher state of being, glorification. The believer's body continues to deteriorate but the believer's soul strengthens in holiness, albeit imperfectly. "Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). At death the believer will, as Augustine famously observed, no longer be able to sin. At the final resurrection, the believer's soul will be rejoined to the believer's glorified body, which, as Paul describes, will somehow be a "spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44).

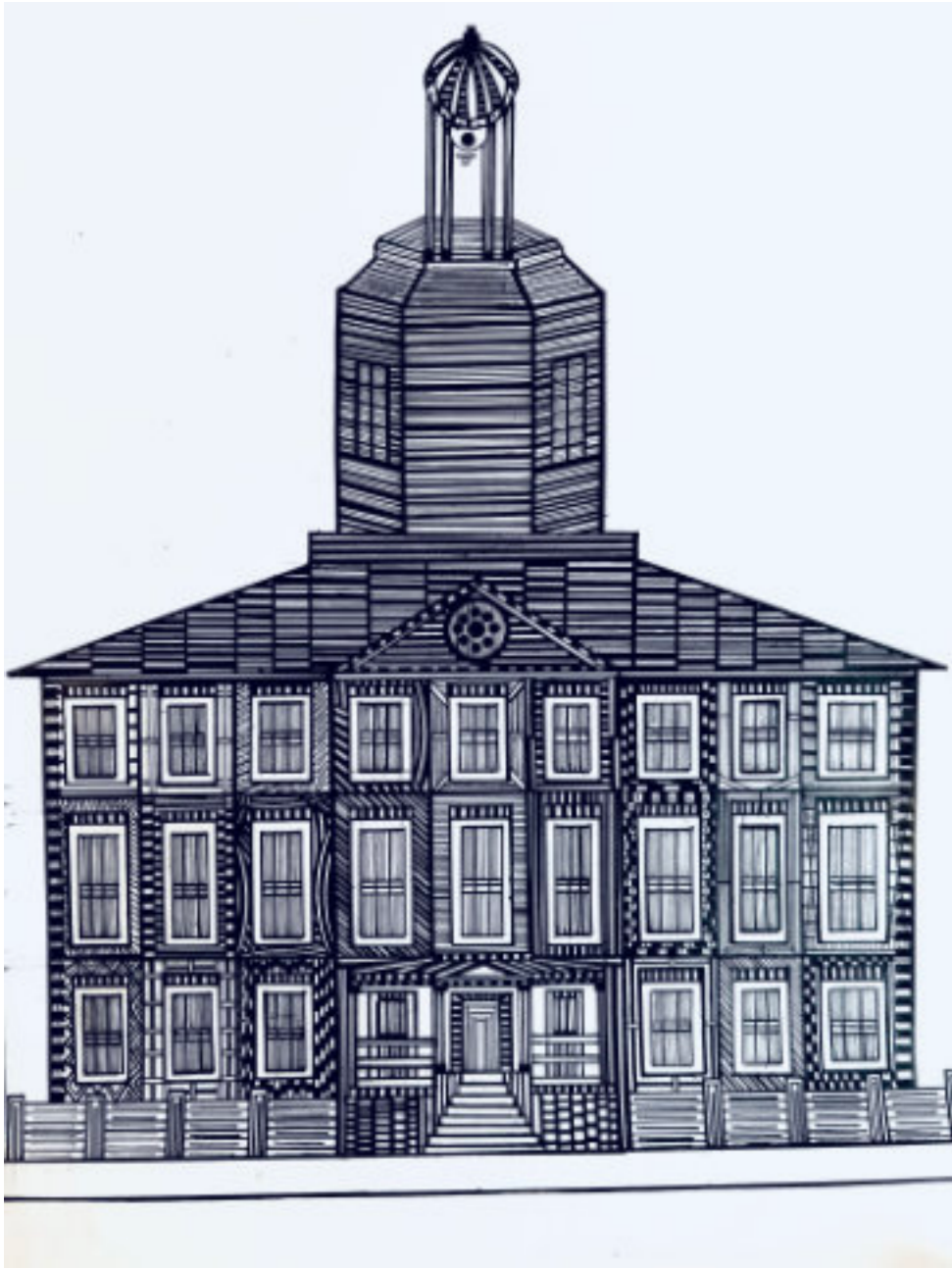
Will there be a state of becoming after the resurrection? It seems, by inference from the whole of Scripture, that the answer is yes. But

it will from that point on be a state of growing. Growing in love, growing in joy, growing in knowledge, growing in acquaintance with others, growing in relationship with God himself. The same "I" will be there, forever thankful for the grace of God. So, the believer will likely grow in gratitude as well. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

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McDowell Hall - David Cherian

Meet the Student: Mr Hassan Boulares

Shirley Quo



This is an interview that was conducted on 23 October 2023. It has been updated to reflect that Hassan is graduating on 10 May 2025.

When he was interviewed, Hassan was in his third semester at St John's College, Annapolis, as part of his Master of Liberal Arts degree (MALA). He was studying and working part-time. His undergraduate degree is in finance and economics which he completed at California State University Northridge (CSUN). CSUN is a public university in the Northridge neighbourhood of Los Angeles, California. It is located near downtown Los Angeles in the San Fernando Valley.

Hassan came across a book called 'Investing: The Last Liberal Art' by Robert G. Hagstrom.

Hagstrom explores basic and fundamental investing concepts in a range of fields outside of economics, including physics, biology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and literature. He discusses, for instance, how the theory of evolution disrupts the notion of the efficient market and how reading strategies for literature can be gainfully applied to investing research. Building on Charlie Munger's famous 'latticework of mental models' concept, Hagstrom argues that it is impossible to make good investment decisions based solely on a strong knowledge of finance theory alone. His book also referenced St John's College. There is a copy of a sample reading list from St John's College at the back of the book. This is how Hassan found out about the College and its liberal arts program focusing on the great books of Western civilisation. While texts are organized into segments, including history, philosophy & theology, politics & society, mathematics & natural science, and literature, the program is a truly interdisciplinary and coherent academic program that transcends disciplinary boundaries. The books

studied throughout the program have important things to say about many different aspects of our lives and provide insight into timeless questions of humanity.

In Hassan's own words, he found this link between finance and liberal arts, "enticing". It was unlike his previous undergraduate studies and education at CSUN. Coming from a STEM or technical background, the concept of asking fundamental questions about humanity and the breadth of the Graduate Institute program appealed to him. The readings of the program provide a chain of thoughts that connect the entire program into one comprehensive learning experience.

At the time of the interview, Hassan took a sabbatical from his work in a private equity firm although he was still working part-time giving financial advice on asset management. He has since founded a real estate investment firm and he finds himself thinking of Thucydides and Achilles, among others, during business negotiations.

Hassan completed Politics & Society in his first semester; Mathematics & Natural Science in second semester; and did Literature for his third segment. This semester,

he is doing Philosophy & Theology. Ideally, he would like to complete all five segments, even though he only had to do four segments as part of his MALA degree. The fifth segment is History.

In terms of what he has learned so far, he found the Literature segment to be the most difficult to understand from an emotional point of view, perhaps because of his background which he described as the perceived necessity to control one's emotions. He realised that he had been too rigid in this respect and that letting go of this control of his emotions actually benefited him from a personal development perspective and also in terms of managing others at work.

The other important lessons he learned from his studies at St John's is how to think more broadly and that some questions may never be answered with certitude and to embrace uncertainty and ambiguity. Taking an admittedly unusual lesson from Ahab (*Moby Dick*), he wonders whether "to think is audacity" and is supposed to be "a coolness and a calmness; [but] our poor hearts throb and our poor brains beat too much for that."



Turtles - Kees Bucca

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Nec poterat quisquam reperiri, quem neque morbus
nec mors nec luctus temptaret tempore tali.