

1. The Classics & The Humanities

The French writer Charles Péguy once observed that “Homer is ever new; nothing is as old as the morning paper.” One of the best reasons for studying the works of the oldest of dead white European males is their very novelty. Moreover, in reading the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, you are engaging the same texts that influenced virtually every educated person in our history. So if you want to understand the mind of Descartes or Abraham Lincoln or William Faulkner or even Clint Eastwood—and if you want to understand yourself—you need to understand the classics.

– A Student's Guide to the Core Curriculum

by Mark C. Henrie

Today's students are technically well-equipped, but Philistine. Function of the peoples's books, which was carried out in Greece by Homer, Italy by Dante, France by Racine and Molière, and Germany by Goethe, seems to be dying a rapid death. The constant return to and reliance on a single great book or author has disappeared, and the result is not only a vulgarization of the tone of life but an atomization of society. Shakespeare could provide the necessary lessons concerning human virtue and the proper aspirations of a noble life. (...) because he shows most vividly and comprehensively the fate of tyrants, the character of good rulers, the relations of friends, and the duties of citizens, he can move the souls of his readers, and they recognize that they understand life better because they have read him; he hence becomes a constant guide and companion.

– Shakespeare's Politics

by Allan Bloom

2. THE REPUBLIC

Platon

(translated by Francis M. Cornford)

(514A)

SOKRATES:

“**N**ext, here is a parable to illustrate the degrees in which our nature may be enlightened or unenlightened. Imagine the condition of men living in a sort of cavernous chamber underground, with an entrance open to the light and a long passage all down the cave. Here they have been from childhood, chained by the leg and also by the neck, so that they cannot move and can see only what is in front of them, because the chains will not let them turn their heads.”

SOKRATES:

“At some distance higher up is the light of a fire burning behind them; and between the prisoners and the fire is a track with a parapet built along it, like the screen at a puppet show which hides the performers while they show their puppets over the top. Now behind this parapet imagine persons carrying along various artificial objects, including figures of men and animals in wood or stone or other materials, which project above the parapet. Naturally, some of these persons will be talking, others silent.”

GLAUCON:

“It is a strange picture, and a strange sort of prisoners.”

SOKRATES:

“Like ourselves, I replied; for in the first place prisoners so confined would have seen nothing of themselves or of one another, except the shadows thrown by the fire-light on the wall of the Cave facing them, would they?”

3. Defence of Socrates

Platon

(translated by)

38D

Perhaps you suppose, men of Athens, that I have been convicted because I was at a loss for the sort of speeches that would have persuaded you, if I had supposed that I should do and say anything at all to escape the penalty. Far from it. Rather, I have been convicted because I was at a loss, not however for speeches, but for daring and shamelessness and willingness to say the sorts of things to you that you would have been most pleased to hear: me wailing and lamenting, and doing and saying many other things unworthy of me, as I affirm—such things as you have been accustomed to hear from others.

But neither did I then suppose that I should do anything unsuitable to a free man because of the danger, nor do I now regret that I made my defense speech like this: I Much prefer to die having made my defense speech in this way than to live in that way.

41D

... But you too, judges, should be of good hope toward death, and you should think this one thing to be true: that there is nothing bad for a good man, whether living or dead, and that the gods are not without care for his troubles. Nor have my present troubles arisen of their own accord, but it is clear to me that it is now better, after all, for me to be dead and to have been released from troubles. This is also why the sign did not turn me away anywhere, and I at least am not at all angry at those who voted to condemn me and at my accusers. And yet it was not with this thought in mind that they voted to condemn me and accused me: rather, they supposed they would harm me. For this they are worthy of blame.

This much, however, I beg of them: when my sons grow up, punish them, men, and pain them in the very same way I pained you, if they seem to you to care for money or anything else before virtue. And if they are reputed to be something when they are nothing, reproach them just as I did you: tell them that they do not care for the things they should, and that they suppose they are something when they are worth nothing. And if you do these things, we will have been treated justly by you, both I myself and my sons.

But now it is time to go away, I to die and you to live. Which of us goes to a better thing is unclear to everyone except to the god.

4. Metaphysics

ARISTOTELES

(translated by W. D. Ross)

All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer seeing (one might say) to everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things.

... Cause means

(1) that from which, as immanent material, a thing comes into being, e.g. the bronze is the cause of the statue and the silver of the saucer, and so are the classes which include these.

(2) The form or pattern, i.e. the definition of the essence, and the classes which include this (e.g. the ratio 2:1 and number in general are causes of the octave), and the parts included in the definition.

(3) That from which the change or the resting from change first begins; e.g. the adviser is a cause of the action, and the father a cause of the child, and in general the maker a cause of the thing made and the change-producing of the changing.

(4) The end, i.e. that for the sake of which a thing is; e.g. health is the cause of walking. For 'Why does one walk?' we say; 'that one may be healthy'; and in speaking thus we think we have given the cause. The same is true of all the means that intervene before the end, when something else has put the process in motion, as e.g. thinning or purging or drugs or instruments intervene before health is reached; for all these are for the sake of the end, though they differ from one another in that some are instruments and others are actions.

5. Novum Organum

FRANCIS BACON

(translated by James Spedding, Robert
Leslie Ellis, Douglas Denon Heath)

The Idols of the Tribe have their foundation in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men. For it is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of things. On the contrary, all perceptions as well of the sense as of the mind are according to the measure of the individual and not according to the measure of the universe. And the human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolors the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it.

The Idols of the Cave are the idols of the individual man. For everyone (besides the errors common to human nature in general) has a cave or den of his own, which refracts and discolors the light of nature, owing either to his own proper and peculiar nature; or to his education and conversation with others; or to the reading of books, and the authority of those whom he esteems and admires; or to the differences of impressions, accordingly as they take place in a mind preoccupied and

predisposed or in a mind indifferent and settled; or the like.

There are also Idols formed by the intercourse and association of men with each other, which I call Idols of the Market Place, on account of the commerce and consort of men there. For it is by discourse that men associate, and words are imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar. And therefore the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding. Nor do the definitions or explanations wherewith in some things learned men are wont to guard and defend themselves, by any means set the matter right. But words plainly force and overrule the understanding, and throw all into confusion, and lead men away into numberless empty controversies and idle fancies.

6. Leviathan

- The Matter, Forme and Power of
a Common Wealth
Ecclesiasticall and Civil

Thomas Hobbes



This Endeavour, when it is toward something which causes it, is called APPETITE, or DESIRE; the later, being the general name; and the other, oftentimes restrayned to signify the Desire of Food, namely Hunger and Thirst. And when the Endeavour is fromward something, it is generally called AVERSION. These words Appetite, and Aversion we have from the Latines; and they both of them signify the motions, one of approaching, the other of retiring. So also do the Greek words for the same, which are orme and aphorme.

(...) But whatsoever is the object of any mans Appetite or Desire; that is it, which he for his part called Good: And the object of his Hate, and Aversion, evil; And of his

contempt, Vile, and Inconsiderable. For these words of Good, evil, and Contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that used them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and evil.

7. The Theory of Moral Sentiments

ADAM SMITH

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner.

... Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever.

On the other hand, what noble propriety and grace do we feel in the conduct of those who, in their own case, exert that recollection and self-command which constitute the dignity of every passion, and which bring it down to what others can enter into! We are disgusted with that clamorous grief, which, without any delicacy, calls upon our compassion with

sighs and tears and importunate lamentations. But we reverence that reserved, that silent and majestic sorrow, which discovers itself only in the swelling of the eyes, in the quivering of the lips and cheeks, and in the distant, but affecting, coldness of the whole behaviour. It imposes the like silence upon us.

... And hence it is, that to feel much for others and little for ourselves, that to restrain our selfish, and to indulge our benevolent affections, constitutes the perfection of human nature; and can alone produce among mankind that harmony of sentiments and passions in which consists their whole grace and propriety.

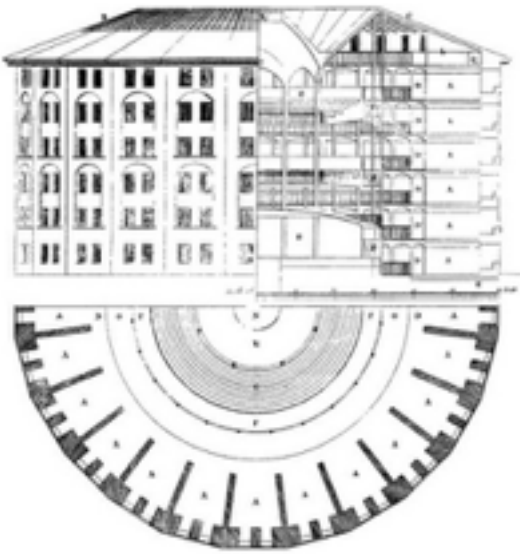
8. An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation

Jeremy Bentham

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire: but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while. The interest of the community then is, what is it?—the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it.

Panopticon

Morals reformed – health preserved – industry invigorated, – instruction diffused – public burthens lightened – Economy seated, as it were, upon a rock – the gordian knot of the Poor-Laws not cut, but untied – all by a simple idea in Architecture!



Tracts on Poor Laws and Pauper Management

Mischiefs produced by the practice of begging

1. In the instance of passengers in general, considered as exposed to the importunity of beggars—to some, the pain of sympathy:—no pain, no alms-giving;—begging is a species of extortion to which the tender-hearted, and they only, are exposed.

2. Disgust; which may exist where there is no sympathy:—the sympathy experiences a sort of relief by giving; the disgust finds no relief. The multitude of the persons subject to this pain of sympathy, or to this disgust, considered, there can be little doubt but that the sum of these pains taken together is greater than the difference to the beggar in point of comfort between begging and working.

9. Utilitarianism

John Stuart Mill

the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides.

An anyone who thinks that this preference takes place at a sacrifice of happiness—anyone who denies that the superior being is, other things being anywhere near equal, happier than the inferior one—is confusing two very different ideas, those of happiness and of contentment. It is true of course that the being whose capacities of enjoyment are low has the greatest chance of having them fully satisfied and thus of being contented; and a highly endowed being will always feel that any happiness that he can look for, is imperfect.

But he can learn to bear its imperfections, if they are at all bearable; and they won't make him envy the person who isn't conscious of the imperfections only because he has no sense of the good that those imperfections are imperfections of — for example, the person who isn't bothered by the poor quality of the conducting because he doesn't enjoy music anyway. It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool or the pig think otherwise, that is because they know only their own side of

10. On Liberty

John Stuart Mill

The struggle between Liberty and Authority is the most conspicuous feature in the portions of history with which we are earliest familiar, particularly in that of Greece, Rome, and England. But in old times this contest was between subjects, or some classes of subjects, and the Government.

By liberty, was meant protection against the tyranny of the political rulers. The rulers were conceived (except in some of the popular governments of Greece) as in a necessarily antagonistic position to the people whom they ruled. They consisted of a governing One, or a governing tribe or caste, who derived their authority from inheritance or conquest, who, at all events, did not hold it at the pleasure of the governed, and whose supremacy men did not venture, perhaps did not desire, to contest, whatever precautions might be taken against its oppressive exercise. Their power was regarded as necessary, but also as highly dangerous; as a weapon which they would attempt to use against their subjects, no less than against external enemies.

11. A Theory of Justice

John Rawls

I begin by sketching the nature of the argument for conceptions of justice and explaining how the alternatives are presented so that the parties are to choose from a definite list of traditional conceptions. Then I describe the conditions which characterize the initial situation under several headings: the circumstances of justice, the formal constraints of the concept of right, the veil of ignorance, and the rationality of the contracting parties.

No one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like. I shall even assume that the parties do not know their conceptions of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance.

12. 현대 사상

Many meanings attach to the word democracy. The word is what some philosophers have called 'an essentially contested concept', one of those terms that we can never all agree to define in the same way because the very definition carries a different social, moral or political agenda. But somehow, nowadays at least, we cannot live without it. In my 'In Defence of Politics' 40 years ago I reified 'this most promiscuous word' as if a Greek or Roman nymph - or say Democratia, an Athenian minor deity: 'she is everybody's mistress and yet somehow retains her magic even when a lover sees that her favours are being, in his light, illicitly shared by many another.'

Plato, of course, detested democracy. To him it was the rule of 'doxa' over 'philosophia', of opinion over knowledge. The Greek for rule was 'kratos', and 'demos' was 'the people', but many other ancient (and modern) writers gave it a pejorative sense, simply the majority as the mob - a powerful, selfish, fickle, and inconsistent beast.

- "Democracy" by Bernard Crick