

# The 5<sup>th</sup> Libertas Liberal Education Symposium [2021 International]

## 제5회 리베르타스 교양교육 심포지엄 [2021 국제 심포지엄]

### The Humanities as General Education 교양교육으로서의 인문학

 **December 10<sup>th</sup> (Fri.), 2021**



Time

Rep. of Korea and Japan (UTC+9) 13:40~18:00  
Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and China (UTC+8) 12:40~17:00  
Amsterdam, Netherlands (UTC+2) 05:40~10:00



Venue



Zoom URL (Click!)



<https://yonsei.zoom.us/j/82888503792?pwd=dDNCWkpQVmpGTGVjbURZUjRLMWdTQT09>

ID: 828 8850 3792

PW: 570696



(QR코드)



Host

Research Institute for Liberal Education, Yonsei University

主 催

延世대학교 교양교육연구소

Co-host

CAGE (Chinese Association for General Education),  
TTRC (Taiwan Teaching Resource Center)

共同主催

中華民國通識教育學會 & 臺灣教學資源中心

Host



연세대학교 교양교육연구소  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR LIBERAL EDUCATION

Co-host



中華民國通識教育學會  
Chinese Association for General Education

Sponsor



한국연구재단



臺灣教學資源中心  
Taiwan Teaching Resource Center



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한국연구재단  
National Research Foundation of Korea



臺灣教學資源中心  
Taiwan Teaching Resource Center





## 환영사

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안녕하십니까? 여러분을 모시고 연세대학교 교양교육연구소의 5번째 리베르타스 교양교육 심포지엄을 개최할 수 있게 되어 매우 기쁩니다.

지난해에는 교양교육과 철학에 대하여 의미 있는 발표와 토론이 있었습니다. 이어서 올해에도, 교양교육에서 매우 중요한, 인문학 교육에 관한 논의가 있을 예정입니다. 제4차 산업혁명 또는 과학기술의 비중이 그 어느 때보다 커지는 시대에 인문학은 더더욱 중요할 수밖에 없습니다. 너무 잘 알고 있는 사실이지만, 강조의 의미로 한 과학자의 견해를 소개하겠습니다. 사회생물학을 창건하고 통섭의 중요성을 주장한 에드워드 윌슨은 외계인의 비유를 들어 인문학의 중요성을 설명했습니다. 만약 외계인이 지구에 도착해서 인간을 이해하고 싶으면 무엇을 연구하겠는지를 묻은 질문에 대한 답이었습니다. 이 과학자는 “과학과 기술은 객관적이어서 결국은 지구인과 외계인이 다르지 않을 것이다. 외계인들은 지구인만의 특징이 망라된 인문학을 통해서만 인류를 이해할 수 있을 것이다”라 하였습니다. 과학은 있는 그대로 볼 것을 요구합니다. 저는 과학을 제대로 했다면 윌슨과 같은 결론에 이를 것이라고 생각합니다.

그런데 인문학의 현실은 그 중요성에 비해, 암울하기 그지없습니다. 과학 시대에, 현실적인 이유를 핑계 삼아, 많은 대학에서는 인문학의 입지를 점점 줄이고 있습니다. 그래서인지, 어쩌면 앞으로 예컨대 철학과도 종교학과도 없어질 것이라고 염려하는 사람들도 있습니다.

인간이 인간으로서 모습을 갖추게 해온 문화는 여태까지 그랬던 것처럼 앞으로도 인문학의 도움이 있어야만 존속은 물론 더욱 발전할 것입니다. 그래서 본 연구소는 이 심포지엄이 현대를 살아가는 많은 사람에게 인문학의 중요성을 다시 생각하는 계기는 물론 교양교육이라는 대학교육의 근본을 되돌아보는 계기가 되기를 기원합니다.

끝으로 이 행사에 소중한 글을 제공하고 발표해 주시는 선생님들과 많은 참여자, 그리고 이 행사를 준비한 분들을 포함한 모든 분께 고마움을 표합니다. 또한, 이 행사를 지원해 주신 엄태호 학부대학 학장님의 축하 말씀을 대신하는 바입니다.



**장 수 철**  
(교양교육연구소장)

2021년 12월 10일

**장 수 철, Ph.D.**  
연세대학교 교양교육연구소장

## WELCOMING REMARKS

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Dear distinguished guests, it is my great pleasure to host the 5th Libertas Liberal Education Symposium of Research Institute for Liberal Education of Yonsei University.

Last year, meaningful presentations and discussions were performed as to philosophy in relation to liberal education. This year, the main subject is on humanities education, which is very important in liberal education. Facing the era of the 4th Industrial Revolution, during which science and technology are growing more than ever, the humanities are inevitably all the more important. This is a fact that is all too well known, but, for emphasis, let me introduce a scientist's view. Edward Wilson, who founded sociobiology and suggested consilience based on biology, explained the importance of the humanities with a metaphor about aliens. This was the answer to the question, "What would aliens study if they arrived on Earth and wanted to understand humans?" The scientist reasoned that science and technology are objective, so in the end, those of Earthlings and aliens will not be any different. And he concluded that aliens will be able to understand humans only through the humanities, which encompasses the characteristics of Earthlings. As you know, science requires seeing things as they are. I believe that, if anyone who did the science right, he or she would reach the same conclusion as Wilson.

However, the reality of the humanities is grim compared to its importance. In the age of science, citing practicality as an excuse, many colleges and universities are gradually diminishing the standing of the humanities. For this reason, some people are afraid of the possibility that the Department of Philosophy and the Department of Religion will disappear in several universities and colleges in Korea in the near future.

Culture has allowed humans to take shape as human beings. In addition, it will not only survive but also develop further with the help of the humanities in the future, just as it has done in the past. Therefore, we hope that this symposium will be an opportunity to rethink the importance of the humanities for many people living in this modern world, as well as to look back on the fundamentals of university education, the liberal education.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all the participants, organizers, and especially those who provided and presented valuable articles for this symposium. Also, I would like to express my congratulations on behalf of the Dean of University College Tae Ho Eom, who has supported this event.

December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Soo Chul CHANG, Ph.D.**

Director, Research Institute for Liberal Education, Yonsei University

# PROGRAM

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Date : December 10<sup>th</sup> (Fri.), 2021

Venue : On-line Zoom

Theme : The Humanities as General Education

(UTC+9) Rep. of Korea	(UTC+8) HongKong & Singapore	(UTC+2) Amsterdam, Netherlands	MC	Pf. Seok Min (Peter) HONG (洪 錫敏), Yonsei University, Director of Research Centre for Liberal Arts Education; Vice President for Int'l Cooperation, KAGEDU
13:40 - 14:00	12:40 - 13:00	05:40 - 05:50	Opening Ceremony	
13:40 - 13:50	12:40 - 12:50	05:40 - 05:50	Opening & Welcoming Remarks	K - Pf. Seok Min (Peter) HONG (洪 錫敏), Yonsei University
13:50 - 14:00	12:50 - 13:00	05:50 - 06:00	Congratulatory Remarks	K - Pf. Soo Chul CHANG (張 秀哲), Yonsei University, Director of the Research Institute for Liberal Education
14:00 - 15:20	13:00 - 14:20	06:00 - 07:20	Session 1	
14:00 - 14:40	13:00 - 13:40	06:00 - 06:40	Speaker 1	K - Pf. Emeritus, Sung Ki HONG (洪 聖基), Ajou University (亞州大學校)
			Title	Value Education and the Humanities as General Education (인문교양교육으로서 가치교육)
14:40 - 15:20	13:40 - 14:20	06:40 - 07:20	Speaker 2	SG - Pf. Yuet Keung LO (勞悅強), National University of Singapore
			Title	The Nonutilitarian Utility of the Humanities
15:20 - 15:30	14:20 - 14:30	07:20 - 07:30	10-Minute Break	
15:30 - 16:50	14:30 - 15:50	07:30 - 08:50	Session 2	
15:30 - 16:10	14:30 - 15:10	07:30 - 08:10	Speaker 3	HK - Pf. Mei Yee LEUNG (梁美儀), Chinese University of Hong Kong
			Title	Teaching the Humanities or Cultivating Humanity? Reading Classics across Cultures and Disciplines to Bridge the Past and the Future
16:10 - 16:50	15:10 - 15:50	08:10 - 08:50	Speaker 4	NL- Pf. Murray PRATT, University of Amsterdam
			Title	Human Learning, Learning Human: Approaching General Education in the Anthropocene
16:50 - 17:00	15:50 - 16:00	08:50 - 09:00	10-Minute Break	
17:00 - 18:00	16:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 10:00	Round Table	
			Moderator	Pf. Seok Min (Peter) HONG (洪 錫敏), Yonsei University
			All Speakers with Moderator & Audience	

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Soo Chul CHANG | Director of RILE, Yonsei University

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## Value Education and the Humanities as General Education 인문교양교육으로서 가치교육

Pf. Emeritus, Sung Ki HONG [洪 聖基]

Ajou University [亞州大學校]

홍성기는 1956년에 서울에서 출생하여 한국과 독일에서 문학, 논리학, 철학을 공부하였다. 그의 박사학위 논문은 1~2세기 인도의 불교논사인 龍樹(Nāgārjuna)의 주저 『中論頌』의 논쟁구조에 관한 것이고, 이후 ‘괴델의 불완전성정리’, ‘데데킨트 절단에 의한 실수 도입 증명’을 용수의 논쟁구조를 이용하여 비판하였다. 2017-18년 한국교양교육학회장을 역임하였고, 교양교육의 정상화와 학부교육의 재정의를 위해 2020년부터 동북아시아의 교양교육 국제학술교류인 滄波講座와 국제포럼 조직에 참여하고 있으며, 현재 ‘대학의 역사’를 주제로 연구 모임을 하고 있다. 관심 분야는 연기론의 응용과 자유학예교육의 역사이며, 『용수의 논리』, 『불교와 분석철학』, 『시간과 경계』등 전문서적과 시사 문제에 대한 몇몇 공저가 있다. 아주대학교에서 2021년 8월 퇴임하고 현재 명예교수로 있다.





## 인문교양교육으로서 가치교육

홍 성 기(아주대학교, 명예교수)

### 1. 인문교양교육의 중심이 가치교육이라는 주장

교양교육 중에서 적어도 인문학 교육은 그 목적이 가치교육 혹은 ‘건전한 가치관의 정립’이라는 생각이 널리 퍼져 있다. 예를 들어 기후변화와 관련된 환경보호, 기술혁신과 관련하여 AI의 사용이 갖는 윤리적 문제들에 대해 인문학 혹은 인문·교양교육이 필요하다는 것이다. 이처럼 인문교양교육의 본령이 가치의 문제를 다루는 것이라는 생각은 하버드대의 『Redbook』에도 나와 있다.

학습 영역의 분할 방식에 대한 훨씬 더 나은 정당화는 지식의 방법론 측면에서 찾을 수 있다. 자연과학과 인문학의 차이부터 시작해 보자. 전자는 기술하고, 분석하고, 설명한다. 후자는 평가하고, 판단하고, 비판한다. 자연과학에서는 한 진술이 참인지 거짓인지 판단된다. 인문학에서는 어떤 결과가 좋은지 나쁜지 판단된다. (...) 화학자는 칭찬하거나 비난하지 않고 그의 화합물의 실제 구조를 기술하는 데 만족한다. (...) 인문학은 가치의 영역을 탐구하고 드러낸다. 예를 들어, 문학에서 학생들은 비극적이거나 영웅적인 모습 또는 단지 한심하고 우스꽝스러운 삶의 다양한 방식을 접하게 된다. (...) 지적인 선생은 인간이 혼란스럽지만 집요하게 모색해 온 이상(理想)을 이끌어내기 위해 위대한 예술과 문학을 탐구할 것이다.<sup>1</sup>

어쩌면 교양교육에서 인문학의 가치지향성은 자유교육(liberal education)의 교육목표 중의 하나로 알려진 인성교육(character formation) 혹은 ‘어떻게 삶의 살 것인지’에 대한 동서 고등교육의 오랜 철학적 성찰, 또는 ‘지혜로운 인간 양성’과도 연결될 수도 있다. 또 ‘과학이 해결할 수 없는 문제’가 주로 가치와 관련된 영역에 있으며, 따라서 교양교육이 ‘가치 있는 것’과 ‘그렇지 않은 것’의 구별과 그 정당화를 학생들에게 가르쳐야 한다면 인문학이 개입되어야 할 것이라는 생각은 매우 자연스럽게 받아들여지고 있다.

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1 『Redbook』, pp. 58-59. 또 이 책의 저자들은 교양교육의 또 다른 주요 영역인 사회과학은 인문학과 자연과학의 방법론적 특징 모두를 갖고 있다고 기술하고 있다. (같은 책, p. 60)

그러나 자연과학이 있는 사실과 가치의 세계와는 무관한 자연의 법칙성을 탐구하는 학문이며, 참된 진술과 거짓된 진술 역시 가치판단과는 무관하다는 생각은 조금만 생각해 본다면, 상당히 ‘이상한’ 주장이라는 점을 알 수 있다. 자연과학을 학생들에게 가르친다면 우리는 무가치(無價値)한 무엇을 가르친다는 것인가? 사실을 기술하고 자연의 법칙을 발견하는 것은 무가치한 혹은 몰가치(沒價値)한 행위인가? 전혀 그렇지 않다. 우리는 ‘과학적’이라는 표현을 사실판단에만 국한하여 사용할 때에도, 점성술이나 미신과는 비교할 수 없는 큰 가치를, 즉 이런 판단과 주장에 ‘큰 신뢰’를 부여하고 있다. 그렇다면 이처럼 가치 있는 자연과학적 진술이나 분석, 법칙을 발견하거나 이해하기 위해서 학자나 학생이 ‘가치 있는 행위’와 ‘그렇지 않은 행위’를 구별하지 않는다는 것을 불가능하다. 왜냐하면 그렇지 않다면 자연과 관련된 어떤 진술도 과학적 가치를 지닐 수 있어야 하기 때문이다. 그러나 단순 추정과 실험이나 관찰 등의 증거로 뒷받침된 이론과 진술의 차이는 그 생산과정의 가치평가에 있다. 이 점은 인문학 잡지 뿐 아니라, 자연과학 학술지에 항상 동료평가가 필수적이라는 점에서도 명백한 사실이다. 따라서 이런 가치평가 방법을 생략하고 자연과학을, 교양교육이든 전문교육이든, 가르친다는 것은 사실 생각할 수가 없다.

이런 비판이 자연과학이나 기술 분야 내부의 가치평가와 외부의 가치평가를 구별해야 하고, 교양교육에서 중시해야 할 가치평가는 과학과 기술 외부의 가치평가라고 대응할 수 있다. 전자는 좁은 영역에서 기술적인 평가라면 후자는 좀 더 넓은 지평에서 의미를 지니는, 혹은 모든 사람에게 중요할 수 있는 가치평가라는 것이다. 예를 들어 미용을 위한 성형수술, 피임약 사용, 코로나 예방주사 의무화 등의 경우 여러 가지 기술적 가치평가가 물론 필요하지만, 보다 더 중요한 점은 그 윤리적 측면이라는 것이다. 그러나 앞에서 예를 든 과학기술의 창조물이 아무런 가치의식 없이 만들어지거나 사용되는 것은 아니다. 예를 들어 전쟁의학에서 나온 성형수술은 아름다워지기 싶어하는 개인의 욕망, 피임약은 성적 욕망의 자유로운 해방 그리고 코로나 예방주사는 개인 뿐 아니라 타인의 건강이라는 가치들과 관련이 있다. 물론 이런 욕망 충족이 ‘올바른 가치’인지 혹은 ‘개인이 자신의 신체의 안녕의 주인’이라는 인권 원칙이 코로나 팬데믹의 상황에서도 그 가치가 절대적으로 인정되어야 하는 지가 바로 윤리적 논쟁의 대상들이고 특정 전문영역에 국한되지 않음은 분명하다.

해서 생명윤리와 관련된 경우 대부분의 국가에서 윤리위원회에 과학자나 의사 이외에도 철학자나 법학자 등이 참여한다. 마찬가지로 교양교육에서 이런 과학기술의 윤리적 측면, 조금 더 구체적으로 윤리적 논쟁을 다루려면 인문학이 담당해야 한다는 것이다. 이런 윤리적 논쟁에 인문학자들이 관여할 필요가 있음은 현실적으로 정당한 이유가 있다. 왜냐하면 인문학자 특히 철학자들은 논쟁에 필요한 여러 가지 기술과 함께 일반인이 생각하기 어려운 여러

가지 특수한 경우들, 예를 들어 윤리적 딜레마와 이런 문제에 접근하기 위해 필요한 여러 윤리적 연장들에 비교적 익숙하기 때문이다. 그러나 이런 현실적 이유가 인문학자나 철학자들이 이 문제를 독점해야 한다는 주장에 이르지 못함은 물론이며, 이들이 반드시 가장 지혜로운 해결책을 제시할 수 있을 것이라는 기대는 충족되기 어렵다. 한때 매우 큰 논란이 되었던 성형수술과 피임약 사용에 대하여 적어도 한국에서는 대학 안팎에서 거의 관심을 끌지 못하지만 그 이유가 인문학자의 지혜로운 해결책에 의한 것은 아니다.

## 2. 가치판단을 위한 전제: 사실판단

그러나 인문학자들이 과학기술과 관련된 혹은 그 어떤 영역의 가치적, 윤리적 측면을 다루기 위해서는 더 중요한 선결문제가 있다. 그것은 이런 논의는 반드시 ‘~의 윤리적 측면’이라는 점이다. 여기서 ‘~의’는 사실판단 혹은 가치판단이다. 후자의 경우 일반적으로 메타윤리라고 부르는 것으로서 대부분의 논쟁적 상황에서는 피할 수가 없지만, 이 메타윤리도 궁극적으로 사실판단을 전제하지 않을 수 없다. 미용을 위한 성형수술이 무엇인지, 왜 하는지, 그 실태가 통계적으로 어떠한지에 대해서<sup>2</sup> 아무런 사전 지식도 없이 성형수술의 윤리적 측면을 다룰 수는 없다. 그렇지 않고 ‘자연미인’과 ‘인공미인’에 대한 가치판단을 미리 형성하고 이 문제를 다룬다면, 논리적으로 성형수술에 대한 가치판단은 동어반복에 불과하다.

이처럼 사실판단이 가치판단에 선행한다는 사실은 여러 가지 인간 유형을 다룬다는 문학수업의 경우에도 마찬가지이다. 『Redbook』의 필자들은 문학작품을 읽으면서 학생들이 작품 내의 인간 유형들에 대하여 ‘가치판단’을 한다고 보지만, 여기서도 ‘문학작품 내의 인간유형들’에 접한다는 과정이 있음은 분명하다. 물론 이런 작품 감상을 사실판단이라고 말할 수는 없더라도, 마치 사실처럼 전개되는 작품 내의 스토리와 접한다는 점에서는 비슷하다고 할 수 있다. 이점을 작품을 읽지 않고 작품에 소개되는 인간유형들에 대하여 가치판단을 내리는 것과 비교해 보면 분명해진다.<sup>3</sup> 한국에는 고등학생들이 대학입학 자격시험을 보기 위해 문학이나 기타 고전 작품에 대한 다이제스트 설명과 표준화된 해석을 원전을 보지 않고 암기를 하는 경향이 있는데, 이런 수업의 문제는 ‘이 경우 설명과 해석이란 없는 것보다 못하다’는 것이다. 이점은 가치판단과 인문교양교육에서 가치교육에 매우 큰 의미를 지닐 수 있다.

2 한국은 성형수술의 ‘왕국’ 혹은 ‘대국’이라고 볼 수 있는데, 2020년 조사에 의하면 남성의 2%, 여성의 18%가 성형수술 경험이 있다고 한다. (전체 성인의 10%)

3 사실 문학작품 내의 위대한 인물을 높이 평가하고 해서는 안 될 일을 저지른 인간을 낮게 평가한다는 것은 아마도 반만의 스토리일 것이다. 독자는 도둑이나 악인에게 빠질 수도 있고 도덕적 원칙을 지킨 인물에 대하여 답답하게 느낄 수도 있다.

‘사실과 접한다’, ‘작품을 직접 대한다’는 것의 중요성은 가치판단이 윤리적 판단이 아니라 미적판단인 경우에도 마찬가지이다. 시각예술의 경우 다양한 경향과 스타일이 존재하며, 서양에서는 20세기 이후 나온 추상적 회화와 조각의 경우 학생들이 미적판단에 어려움을 느끼는 경우가 적지 않다.<sup>4</sup> 그것은 이런 작품을 접해도 어떤 미적 감흥도 일어나지 않는 경우가 있기 때문이다. 이럴 때에 학생들에게 이런 작품들의 위대성을 설명함으로써 미적판단을 유도할 수는 있어도 그것은 미적 판단의 주체가 궁극적으로 학생들이어야 한다는 점에서 다만 중간과정이라고 말할 수밖에 없다. 학생들이 ‘감각적으로’ 예민하게 이런 작품들에 대하여 반응하기 위해서는 많은 경험과 시간이 필요하다. 특히 문학이나 조형예술의 경우 이런 감각적 반응은 실제로 작품을 실제 만듦으로써 배양되는 것인데, 그런 상황이 아닌 경우에는 더욱 쉽게 기대하기는 어렵다. 학생들이 이런 작품에 대하여 좋은 의미에서 알레르기(과민) 반응이 요구되는 데 이런 반응은 미적 가치판단에 필요한 전제로서 일종의 사실판단의 위치를 차지하고 있다.

### 3. 가치관의 주입의 부정적 결과

미국의 로스블라트 교수는 15세 이전의 엘리트 계급의 소년들이 대학교육을, 특히 기숙교육을 받을 때에는 교수가 부모 역할을 함으로써 인성교육이 자연스럽게 이루어질 수는 있었지만, 현대의 연구중심대학에서 성인이 거의 다된 젊은이들에게 ‘올바르게 사는 방법’을 가르치는 것은 쉽지 않을뿐더러 그 효과도 기대하기 힘들다고 말한다.<sup>5</sup> 또한 교수가 이처럼 ‘올바른 삶’을 가르칠 수 있는 자격이 있는지도 불분명하며, 때로는 학생들의 사생활에 선생이 개입하는 것이 법적인 문제를 야기할 수도 있다고 말한다. 즉 이미 보편화된 대학교육에서 선생이나 학생들은 대학이 인성교육을 강조하더라도 실은 양자 모두 관심이 없으며 실효도 없다는 것이다.<sup>6</sup>

특히 가치판단의 경우 여러 가지 상이한 견해들이 존재하는 것이 일반적이다. 이때 선생이 자신의 입장을 학생들에게 강요하거나, 강요하지 않더라도 수업의 목표 자체가 특정한 결론을 이미 내렸을 때의 수업 효과는 크지 않다. 한국의 경우 과거에 모든 대학의 교양교육과정에 필수적으로 군사훈련, 한국사, 국민윤리 및 체육이 도입되었다. 설사 그 내용이 일반

4 우리 주변에는 추상적 평면, 추상적 입체로 가득하며, 누구나 미적판단을 하는 건축이나 의상도 실은 대상의 모방이 아니라 실은 인간이 만든 추상적 조형물이라는 사실을 놓치는 경우가 많다.

5 19세기 미국의 학자들이 독일 연구중심대학으로 유학을 갔을 때 놀란 점 중의 하나는 독일 교수들이 학문 이외에 영역에서 학생들의 지도에 아무런 관심도 없다는 사실이었다.

6 Rothblatt, *The Living Arts, Comparative and Historical Reflections on Liberal Education*, AAC&U, 2003, pp.23-28

교양수업으로 도입해도 무방할 수 있더라도, 1980년대 말 법정필수 교양교과목 규정이 사라진 이후 한국 대학에서 이들에 대한 기억은 매우 부정적이다.

그러나 공동체가 유지되기 위해서는 구성원들의 대부분이 그 어떤 공동의 가치를 인정할 필요도 있다. 이런 공동의 가치 혹은 가치규범에는 가정교육과 종교 이외에도 문화적, 역사적 관습이나 예절이 포함되어 있다. 일반적으로 고등교육 이전에 이런 규범들을 몸에 익히는 것이 거의 모든 국가의 교육체제의 일부라고 할 수 있다. 이런 공동의 가치들 중에서 ‘우리가 모여 사는 공동체는 최선의 방식으로 운영되는가?’라는 질문에 대한 답은 매우 중요한 의미를 지닌다. 왜냐하면 그것이 바로 국가의 정치체제이기 때문이다. 바로 이런 이유로 모든 국가 권력은 자신의 존재의 이유를 법을 통해 정당화하며, 교육을 통해 국민들의 마음에 내재화시키려고 한다. 실제로 역사적으로 왕정이든, 귀족정이든 혹은 민주주의 체제이든 전체주의 체제이든 항상 국가 권력은 이를 정당화시켜왔으며, 때로는 실패하고 때로는 성공하였다.

물론 현실에서 어떤 국가도 ‘최선의 방식으로 운영되고 있다’고 말하기는 힘들고 또 ‘최선의 방식’이 무엇인지에 대한 논의는 오래된 정치철학의 주제이다. 중요한 점은 이러한 논의가 불이익을 감수하지 않고도 대화의 방식으로 일어날 수 있다는 것 자체이며, 우리는 전통적으로 이 가능성을 ‘사상의 자유’라고 부른다. 즉 대화의 참여자가 평등하게 자신의 주장을 할 수 있는 상황이 바로 사상의 자유이며, 이런 점에서 사상의 자유는 대화의 평등성과 내용적으로 완전히 일치한다. 이때 사상의 자유를 부정하고 싶어도 그 어떤 평등한 대화 상황이 필요하다는 점에서 사상의 자유는 대화의 주제이자 동시에 대화의 틀이다. 이런 점에서 사상의 자유의 필요성 혹은 정당성은 부정될 수가 없다. 여기에 공동체의 구성원들이 자신과 공동체의 이해관계가 관련된 공공의 영역에서 국민이 의사결정 과정에 참여하는 것이 정당하다면, 자유민주주의는 형식적으로 정당화될 수 있으며 이런 전제하에 정당화 될 수 있는 유일한 정치체제이다.<sup>7</sup>

만일 공동체의 핵심가치로서 정치체제가 정당화되지 않는다 해도 그 구성원에게 다른 선택의 여지가 항상 존재하는 것은 아니다. 언어, 귀속감, 삶의 방식, 문화, 직업 등등은 한 공동체의 구성원이 쉽게 다른 공동체를 선택할 수 없도록 만드는 요소들이다. 역으로 국가 권력은 바로 이런 점을 이용하여 공동체의 구성원이 그 정당성을 인정하도록 조작할 수도 있다. 여기서 핵심은 사실 자체의 왜곡과 함께, 아예 특정한 가치관을 갖도록 만듦으로써 사실을

7 이것이 대략 독일과 한국의 헌법에 언급된 자유민주적 기본질서(freiheitlich-demokratische Grundordnung) 도입의 의미이다.



보는 관점 자체를 왜곡시키는 것이다. 즉 사실판단과 가치판단의 순서를 뒤집는 방식이며, 이때 사상의 자유는 본질적으로 위축될 수밖에 없다.

#### 4. 사실판단과 가치판단이 분리불가능하다는 주장

그러나 사실판단과 가치판단의 순서 문제는 ‘양자가 서로 불가분의 관계에 있다’는 주장과 충돌할 수 있다. 그러나 이 주장이 무엇을 의미하는지는 확실하지 않으며 더 살펴볼 필요가 있다.

우선 모든 사실판단은 가치판단의 대상이 될 수 있다는 것, 즉 사실판단은 가치의 영역에서 벗어날 수 없다는 해석으로서 부정하기 힘들다. 그러나 이런 의미에서 양자의 불가분성은 사실판단과 가치판단의 순서 문제를 부정하지는 않는다. 거꾸로 모든 사실판단이 가치판단의 대상이라는 점은 가치판단에 의해 사실판단이 왜곡될 수 있다는 점에서 이 순서의 중요성을 더 부각시킬 수 있다.

다음으로 가치판단에 따라 사실의 선택이 자의적일 수 있다는 주장이다. 이점은 역사학의 경우에 모든 개별적 사실들이 역사해석의 대상이 아니라 역사학자의 역사관, 가치관에 따라 취사 선택된다는 해석이다. 이점은 선거에서 서로 경쟁하는 후보들이 자신을 돋보일 수 있는 과거의 행적들은 널리 강조하고 그렇지 않은 행적들은 감추는 것과 흡사하다. 따라서 사실판단과 가치판단은 동시에, 이른바 하나의 메뉴로서만 등장한다는 것이다. 그러나 이 주장의 문제는 이처럼 가치판단에 따라 사실들을 ‘의도적으로’ 취사선택한다는 것이 정당한지, 혹은 불가피한지라는 질문에 ‘그렇다’고 대답할 수 없다는 사실이다. 다른 한편 이런 취사선택이 비의도적이라면, 그것은 판단자의 사실 선택의 한계를 의미할 뿐 사실판단과 가치판단이 불가분의 관계에 있음을 말하지는 않는다.

마지막으로 사실의 기술에 사용되는 언어 자체에 가치판단이 이미 포함되어 있다는 의미로서 양자의 불가분성이다. 예를 들어 전혀 이질적인 두 문화권이 하나의 상황을 묘사할 때 반대의 가치판단이 함축된 언어를 사용함은 물론 두 문화권의 사실판단 자체가 서로 양립하지 않는 경우를 생각할 수 있다. 또한 한국어와 여러 언어에서 볼 수 있는 존칭, 평칭 그리고 비칭의 사용도 언어가 대상의 가치평가에 개입하는 경우이다. 그러나 전자의 경우처럼 인위적으로 어떤 상황을 가정해야 하지만, 이런 극단적인 상황은 인간의 자연스러운 성정(性情)에 배치될 수 있다는 점에서 상당히 자의적이라고 생각된다. 후자의 경우 사실 기술의 외양, 색채에 불과하다는 점에서 사실판단과 가치판단의 불가분성의 정당화와는 연관이

키기 쉽지 않다.

다른 한편 우리는 사실판단 및 사실의 기술이 언어 및 사고와 불가분의 관계에 있다는 점은 철학적으로 매우 중요한 입장이고 불가철학에서는 이점이 강조되기도 한다. 예를 들어 일체 유심조(一切唯心造)와 같은 유식론(唯識論)의 입장과 서양에서 언어가 세계를 구성한다는 구성주의적 관점이 여기에 속한다. 그러나 상식의 세계에서 사실의 기술에서 판단자의 가치 판단에 따라 합치될 수 없는 사실판단들이 동일한 언어공동체에서 나오고, 이들 중에서 어떤 것을 선택할 수 없다면, 우리는 ‘사실’과 ‘비사실’이라는 개념 자체를 가질 수 없을 것이다.<sup>8</sup> 따라서 사실판단과 가치판단의 불가분성은 널리 퍼진 주장이지만 그 의미가 과대 평가될 필요는 없다.

## 5. 사실판단과 가치판단의 순서 문제

인문교양교육의 핵심이 가치교육이라는 주장의 뒤에는 올바른 행동은 올바른 가치관에서, 잘못된 행동은 올바른 가치관의 결여에서 나온다는 생각일 것이다. 예를 들어 이산화탄소 배출을 줄이고 기후변화의 문제를 해결하기 위해서는 환경의 가치를 인식하는 것이 중요하며 이에 따라 인류는 삶의 방식을 바꿔야 한다는 것이다. 예를 들어 도시의 중심부에서 ‘개인 승용차의 사용금지’와 같은 정책이 도입되기 위해서는 시민 다수의 동의가 필요하며 이때 공동체 구성원의 환경의식 즉 가치판단이 중요하다. 이런 논리구조는 충분히 설득력이 있지만, 이때 시민의 동의는 전체적으로 ‘자발적’이어야 한다. 이때 자발적 동의란 현재 지구가 처한 환경위기의 실상을 충분히 이해하여 나온 결정(informed decision)이라는 점이 강조될 필요가 있다.

또한 현재 유럽에서 추진되고 있는 전기 생산 시설에 대한 환경인증(green taxonomy)과 관련 독일은 가스발전소를, 프랑스는 원자력발전소를 제안하고 있어 서로 의견이 갈리고 있다. 전자는 재생에너지의 확대까지 잠정적이라고는 하지만 이산화탄소 배출이 지속되고, 후자는 이산화탄소 배출은 없지만 대형 원전사고의 가능성과 폐기물 처리 문제가 걸려 있다. 이 문제는 한국의 경우에서도 현 정부의 탈원전정책을 놓고 국내의 여론이 갈려 있는 상태이고 앞날을 예측하기 힘든 상태이다. 어느 경우이든 여기서도 그 실태와 예측에 대한 이해와,

8 일본의 아키라 구로사와(黒澤明) 감독의 영화 <나생문(羅生門)>(1950)이 이런 문제를 다루었다. 1951년 베니스 영화제에서 황금사자상을 수상한 이 작품의 스토리는 한 사무라이의 죽음과 관련하여 사무라이의 아내와 산적 그리고 피해자의 영혼을 불러온 무당이 관청에서 진술한 이야기가 모두 다르다. 그러나 일상에서 이런 일이 비일비재하다면, 이 영화의 도입부에서 세 명의 진술의 불합치에 대한 목격자 스님의 고민은 불필요했을 것이다.



어렵더라도 객관적 판단이 중요하다는 점은 강조될 필요가 있다.

그러나 ‘올바른’ 가치교육이 갖는 어려움은 여기에 그치지 않는다. 인류의 역사에서 전쟁과 같은 인간이 만든 재앙들은 대부분 가치의 강조에서 나왔다. 왜냐하면 전쟁을 일으키기 위해서는 국민을 동원해야 하며, 국민을 동원하기 위해서는 전쟁의 명분 즉 가치판단이 전제되기 때문이다. 그리고 형식적으로 부인하기 힘든 사실판단과 가치판단의 순서로 인해, 사실을 왜곡하고 상대국에 대한 적대적 표현을 사용하여 국민을 흥분시킨 경우는 수없이 많았다. 왜냐하면 종교분쟁이나 민족분쟁, 국가 간의 분쟁은 최고의 가치에 속한다고 보아 국민들이 그 훼손에 매우 쉽고 격렬하게 반응하기 때문이다. 하늘을 같이 이고 살 수 없는 불구대천(不俱戴天)의 적으로, 자명한 진리를 거부하는 반동(反動)으로 낙인찍는 방식들은 그중 일부에 불과하다. 물론 이런 과격한 가치판단이 옳바르지 않으며, 바로 이런 이유로 더더욱 올바른 가치교육이 필요하다고 말하고 싶겠지만, 개개인으로서 결코 판단하기 쉽지 않기 때문이다. 즉 집단적인 흥분의 경우 그 원인은 가치판단의 과잉에 있으며, 집단히스테리의 와중에는 자신의 판단이 틀렸거나 틀릴 수 있다는 점을 대부분 인식하기 어렵기 때문이다. 가치판단의 과잉에 대해서 『論語』는 다음과 같이 지적하고 있다.

사람으로서 인하지 못함을 너무 심히 미워해도 난을 일으킨다(人而不仁 疾之已甚 亂也).<sup>9</sup>

인을 좋아하고 배우기를 좋아하지 않으면 그 폐단은 어리석음이다(好仁不好學 其蔽也愚).<sup>10</sup>

2008년 한국에서는 미국산 쇠고기의 수입을 반대하는 운동이 전국에서 100일 이상 계속되었다. 중고등학생들은 물론 어린아이들을 포함하여 수많은 국민들이 이 운동에 참여하였다. 당시 ‘미국산 쇠고기를 먹으면 뇌에 구멍이 뚫려 죽는다’는 주장을 한국 국민의 80% 정도가 믿었다는 조사가 있었다. 이런 주장을 만들고 퍼뜨린 자는 대학교수와 언론이었지만 곧바로 정치인과 사회단체 등이 대거 참여하였다. 이들의 동기는 표면상으로는 과학적 사실판단이었지만, 내용적으로는 정치적 가치판단에 의해 사실을 왜곡한 것이었다. 당시에 미국산 쇠고기의 안전성을 객관적으로 판단한 사람들이 있었지만 극소수였다. 13년이 지난 지금 인간광우병에 걸려 죽은 한국인은 없지만, 당시 한국 정부의 행태에 분노하여 몇 명이 분신자살하였다.

한국과 일본 간의 외교 관계가 악화되면서 광우병 사태와 비슷한 사실 왜곡이 있었다. 중등교육 교과서에 조선인 노동자가 마치 노예처럼 취급 받는 사진이 실렸는데<sup>11</sup>, 이 사진을 토

9 『論語』, 「泰伯」

10 「陽貨」 六言六蔽

11 이후 사진의 출처가 알려지면서 삭제되었다.

대로 한국의 곳곳에 징용공의 고통을 표현하는 조각상들이 세워졌다. 그러나 이 사진은 1920년대 일본의 한 지방에서 납치된 일본노동자들이 구출된 직후의 사진으로서 일본의 근대 사진 도록에도 실려 있다. 또한 한국의 한 대학교수는 1950년대 일본의 한 폐광의 좁은 갱도에 드러누워 석탄을 캐는 일본인의 사진을 조선 노동자로 착각하여 뉴욕에 전광판을 디자인할 때 사용하였다. 이후 이 사진을 찍은 일본 사진작가가 원 필름을 공개하면서 그 대학교수는 자신의 실수를 인정하게 되었다.

이런 일들은 사실판단과 가치판단이 분리불가능하기 때문에 일어난 것도 올바른 가치관이 부족하였기 때문에 일어난 것도 아니다. 이런 사실 왜곡은 가치판단이, 이른바 편견이 사실을 제대로 보지 못하게 만들기 때문에 일어났으며, 중세 유럽의 마녀사냥과 직선적으로 연결되어 있다. 다른 한편 『傳燈錄』에는 다음과 같은 대화가 소개되어 있다.

백장(百丈): 그대는 화로 속에 불이 있는지 헤쳐 보았는가?

위산(滌山): (헤쳐 보고서 말했다.) 불이 없습니다.

백장: (몸소 일어나 깊숙이 헤쳐서 조그마한 불을 얻고서는 그에게 들어 보이면서 말했다.) 이것이 불이 아닌가?<sup>12</sup>

이 대화에서 ‘불씨’가 불성(佛性)을 의미한다는 해설도 있지만, 그냥 화로의 불씨로 보아도 백장선사의 마음을 전할 수 있다고 생각한다.

## 6. 가치판단의 양면성

개인의 삶이나 공동체의 유지를 위해서 올바른 가치의 이해와 법적·도덕적 규범의 도입 필요성은 명백하다. 왜냐하면 인간의 사회적 존재이고, 구성원 간의 그리고 개인과 공동체 간의 갈등을 평화롭게 해결할 수 없기 때문이다. 이러한 규범 중의 상당 부분은 인간이 사회적 존재라는 점에서 ‘내가 이러이러한 행동을 할 수 있다면, 타인도 나에게 같은 행동을 할 수 있다’는 상호성에서 나온다. 예를 들어 절도, 살상, 간통, 사기 등등을 내가 할 수 있다면 타인도 나에게 그런 행위를 할 수 있기에 결국은 야만 혹은 폭력 사회로의 이행이 불가피하기 때문이다. 바로 그런 이유로 폭력집단도 행위 규범을 도입하지 않을 수 없다.

다른 한편 이런 행위들의 대부분은 인간의 거치른, 제어되지 않은 욕망에서 나온다는 것이 일반적인 견해이다. 여기서 욕망의 근원을 찾아간다면 그것은 좋아하고 싫어하는 감정, 특히

12 『傳燈錄』 9권 潭州滌山靈祐禪師

과거의 달고 쓴 경험의 기억에서 나온다고 할 수 있다. 여기서 애증의 감정과 인간의 생존 능력에 기억의 중요성을 생각해 본다면 이들은 인간의 조건이라고 말해도 무방할 것이다. 해서 애증과 욕망의 문제가 유가, 도가, 불가를 막론하고 동양사상이 이들을 핵심적인 문제로 간주하는 것은 충분히 이해가 된다.

문제는 도덕적 규범 자체도 좋아하고 싫어하는 감정의 대상이라는 점이며, 인류의 역사에서 숭고한 종교적 이상과 인간 해방의 이데올로기가 폭력으로 변할 수 있는 수없이 확인되어 왔으며, 바로 앞에서 인용한 『論語』의 구절에서도 직접 확인할 수 있다. 즉 유가의 가장 중요한 덕목인 인도 그 본래의 취지가 망각되어 잘못 사용되면 배타적 논리로서 작용할 수 있다는 것이다.

이러한 가치판단의 양면성은 또 다른 인간 조건인 기억에서도 확인할 수 있다. 인간과 동물은 과거의 경험을 통해 현재의 상황에 대처하며 이것을 우리는 ‘학습’이라고 부르며, 이런 학습 능력이 없다면 생존하기 어려울 수도 있다. 그러나 동시에 과거의 경험이 일어났던 상황과 같지 않은 현재의 상황에 기억을 투사함으로써 왜곡시킬 수도 있다. 따라서 애증의 감정과 기억은 인간에게 삶의 기쁨을 인도하는 이정표의 역할을 하면서도, 동시에 인간의 삶에 질곡(桎梏)으로 작용할 수 있다는 점에서 이를 잘 운전하는 것은 동양 심학(心學)의 주요 과제였다.

## 7. 가치교육과 가치판단의 사용

윤리적 규범과 기억의 이중성을 살펴볼 때, 인문교양교육에서 가치교육은 그 사용법과 함께 전수되어야 한다는 점을 확인할 수 있다. 그것은 가치판단은 절제되어야 하며, 불필요한 상황에서 강조될 필요가 없다는 점이다. 사실판단과 가치판단의 순서의 중요성 역시 이런 맥락에서 이해될 수 있으며, 서양에서는 이를 ‘이해관계를 떠난(disinterested)’이란 표현으로 집약하였다. 동시에 과거에 있었던 일에 대한 가치판단을 불필요하게 현재에 투사하는 것은 대부분 가치추구와는 무관하게 현재의 이해관계, 예를 들어 금전적 이익의 추구나 정치적 배타성, 예를 들어 정적의 무력화나 자신의 도덕적 우월성을 과시하기 위하여 사용된다. 왜냐하면 대중사회에서 과거의 사건에 대한 도덕적 판단은 대중들이 가장 쉽게 ‘손가락질’하기 쉽도록 만들 수 있고, 따라서 애증의 감정을 극대화할 수 있는 주제이기에 금전적, 정치적 이해관계와 연결될 수 있기 때문이다. 이처럼 ‘가치판단이 놀려 가는 경우’는 한국을 포함하여 주변 국가들과 긴 역사적 기억이 남아 있는 나라들에서, 또는 과잉되거나 단순화된 가치판단을 자신의 문화유산에 적용할 때 생기는 현상이다. 문화적 산물은 하나의 요소에

의해 생성되지도 않으며 또 하나의 관점에서 평가될 수 있는 것도 아니기 때문이다. 중요한 점은 애증과 기억을 잇는, 비유하자면 우리 마음을 리부팅하는 것이 필요하다는 사실이다.

지극한 도는 어렵지 않음이요	至道無難
오직 간택함을 꺼릴 뿐이니	唯嫌揀擇
미워하고 사랑하지만 않으면	但莫憎愛
통연히 명백하리라.	洞然明白 <sup>13</sup>

애증과 기억은 많은 마음의 에너지를 요구하는, 바깥 말해 힘든 일이다. 따라서 불필요할 때 이런 작업을 하지 않는 것은 편안함을 의미하기도 한다. 그러나 소극적 해석을 떠나서 가치판단의 적절성과 관련해서 마음의 리부팅은 적극적인 의미를 갖기도 한다. 즉 인간의 도덕적 행위의 원천과 관련 후천적인 교육에 의한 올바른 가치관의 정립이 중요하다고 보는 것이 일반적이지만, 인간의 선천적인 본성에 올바른 행위 능력이 이미 갖추어져 있다고 보는 관점도 있고, 이때 이런 본성의 발현을 막는 것이 욕망과 바로 애증이라는 것이다.<sup>14</sup>

그러나 인간의 본성론에는 많은 논쟁들이 있고 또 교양교육의 현장에서 쉽게 설명하기 어려운 경우도 있다. 차라리 순간의 감각적 판단과 열정, 과거에 대한 기억도 미래에 대한 예측도 없는, 나와 타인과의 구별도 없이 현재의 순간만이 중요한 직업이 있다. 바로 시인과 예술가들이다. 인문교양의 중요한 영역인 예술작품은, 우회로 없이, 직접 이런 보석 같은 순간들을 증언하고 있다.

옥계단에 맺힌 흰 이슬	玉階生白露
깊은 밤 비단 버선에 젖어든다	夜久侵羅襪
수정 발 내리고	却下水晶簾
영롱히 가을 달을 바라본다	玲瓏望秋月 <sup>15</sup>

## 8. 인문교양교육의 한 방법

교양교육도 그러하지만 인문교양교육의 영역은 상당히 다양하다. 문학의 경우에도 국내문학

13 僧璨, 『信心銘』

14 朱熹, 「大學章句」 “명덕이란 사람이 하늘에서 얻어 허령불매하여 모든 이치를 갖추어 만사에 능한 것이다. 단 기품이 구속하는 곳, 인욕이 가리는 곳에는 곧 혼미해질 때가 있다. (明德者人之所得乎天而虛靈不昧 以具衆理而應萬事者也 但爲氣稟所拘 人欲所蔽 則有時而昏)”

15 李白, 「玉階怨」

과 국외문학으로, 그리고 후자는 다양한 지역과 시대의 문학이며 그 장르 역시 다양하다. 시대의 문제를 다룬 소설과 자연을 노래한 시가 같은 문학에 속한다고 생각하는 것은 하나의 분류체계일 뿐일 수도 있다. 과거 서양에서는 자유학예의 하나였던 문법에 시, 산문, 우화 그리고 역사가 하나의 장르로 속했다. 또 역사학은 현재 한국과 일본에서 인문학 영역에 포함되지만, 다른 나라에서는 사회과학의 영역에 포함되는 경우도 있다. 뿐만 아니라 18세기까지 이성이 사용되는 모든 분야를 철학이라고 부른 적이 있어 물리학은 자연철학으로 간주되었다. 따라서 모든 인문학 분야에 공통의 방법론이 존재하는지는 의문이다.<sup>16</sup>

다만 여기서는 앞에서 논의한 인문교양교육에서 가치교육, 특히 애증과 기억에 의한 가치판단의 양면성 문제를 다루는 방법에 대해 간략히 이야기하고 이 글을 끝내고자 한다. 가치교육을 가치판단 과잉의 시대에 학생들에게 하는 방법은, 바로 이 문제로 고민하는 학생들의 마음과 글을 교재로 삼는 것이다. 대학교육의 보편화 시대에도 대학의 입학은 이제 막 성인이 되는 학생들에게 성공의 기쁨과 좌절의 고통을 안겨주고 있다. 바꿔 말해 이들은 자기 자신에게 사회가 만든 가치판단의 척도를 적용하는 경우가 매우 흔하다. 또 적지 않은 경우 이들은 중등교육 시절 다른 학생들을 불필요하게 미워하거나 혹은 미움을 당한 경험이 있다. 여기에 대학의 고학년들은 대학생들의 경험과 사회에 진출하기 위한 준비과정에서 이전보다 훨씬 복잡한 인간관계를 경험하면서 심적 고통을 겪게 된다.

학생들에게는 미안한 이야기이지만, 이런 상황은 올바른 가치판단과 그 사용법, 불필요한 가치판단과 그로부터 벗어나는 방법에 대해 이야기하기 위해서는 좋은 환경이다. 예를 들어 ‘좋아하고 싫어하는 감정으로 인해 사실판단의 오류를 범한 경우’에 대하여 진솔하게 짧은 글을 쓰게 하고, 이를 수업 시간에 (익명으로) 공유하는 과정에서 이들은 자신의 문제점을 성찰할 수 있다. 또 추상적이고 사변적인 철학자의 공리공담으로만 여겨졌던 오래된 지혜들이 실은 매우 구체적인 상황에 적용될 수 있음을 실감함으로써, 인문학의 ‘실용성(!)’을 체험할 수 있다. 또한 자신들의 동료 학생들의 경험들에 접하면서 애증과 기억의 문제로부터 벗어날 수 있는 사람은 없다는 사실, 그리고 이런 인간 조건이 자신의 삶에 매우 중요함을 인식하게 된다.

그러나 학생들의 글을 수업의 교재로 삼는 것은 새로운 방법은 아니다. 차라리 발제자에게 인상적이었던 점은 학생들의 진솔성과 성찰능력 뿐 아니라, 선생이 생각하지 못한 여러 사례들은 물론, 학생들에게 어떤 제약도 하지 않을 경우 이들이 스스로 『論語』와 같은 고전

16 19세기 중반에 만들어진 독일의 ‘정신과학(Geisteswissenschaft)’의 방법론으로 딜타이(Dilthey)는 이해(Verstehen)를, ‘자연과학(Naturwissenschaft)’의 방법론으로 설명(Erklären)을 제안하였다. 그러나 이 양자의 차이가 그렇게 분명하지 않다는 지적이 있다.

의 문구를 나름대로 해석할 때 교수도 배우는 바가 적지 않다는 것이다. 코로나 팬데믹으로 영상강의에 추가하여 실시한 온라인 실시간 강의를 하면서 도입한 학생들과의 이 소통 방식에 대하여 ‘왜 이렇게 늦게 (학생이 아니라) 교수가 마음을 열었을까?’라는 생각을 가끔 하게 된다.



[ II ]

## The Nonutilitarian Utility of the Humanities

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**Lo Yuet Keung** is Associate Professor of Chinese Studies at the National University of Singapore. He had taught in North America for over a decade before moving back to Asia. Professor Lo specializes in Chinese intellectual history and religions covering Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism and their interactions from the classical period to late imperial times. He authored six books in Chinese, including *Intratextual and Extratextual: Interpretations of Classics in Chinese Intellectual History* (National Taiwan University Press, 2010). He also edited two books and co-edited four others, including *Philosophy and Religion in Early Medieval China* and *Interpretation and Literature in Early Medieval China*. In addition, he published over 100 book chapters and articles in English and Chinese which appeared in Europe, America, China, Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia. Professor Lo is interested in making classical Chinese philosophy and culture accessible to the general public. Since 2014, he has been writing a weekly column on the Taoist philosopher *Zhuangzi* for a local newspaper; some of the essays were published as a book called *Divining Dreams in a Dream: Essays on the Daoist Master Zhuangzi* in 2016. Professor Lo was often invited to give public lectures on Chinese philosophy and religion. Currently, he is completing two books on early medieval China, one on Buddhist storytelling and one on Buddhist influence on female virtues.





## The Nonutilitarian Utility of the Humanities

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Like it or not, we live in an age driven by cost-effectiveness, output, and profit. When profit is maximized, success is achieved. Being driven habitually, we are prone to become the driver itself that strives to produce output and pursue profit, sometimes regardless of the cost. Such utilitarian mentality permeates many fields of human endeavor including education today. The fierce annual competition among universities around the globe for the top spot in various world university rankings perhaps best epitomizes the entrepreneurial and corporate culture in higher education much in the same way countries in the developed world fight for the most competitive places for talent in the world. Deep underneath, the two competitions are intricately related as the mission of university education is to nurture talents (and to draw the best students for it), and it is no coincidence that they are allied in a practical and utilitarian spirit. Utilitarianism as a philosophical doctrine is a form of consequentialism whose core idea is that “whether actions are morally right or wrong depends on their effects. More specifically, the only effects of actions that are relevant are the good and bad results that they produce.... Utilitarians believe that the purpose of morality is to make life better by increasing the amount of good things (such as pleasure and happiness) in the world and decreasing the amount of bad things (such as pain and unhappiness). ... Instead, utilitarians think that what makes a morality be true or justifiable is its positive contribution to human (and perhaps non-human) beings.” (Nathanson, n.d.). It is fair comment to say that university administrations are motivated by utilitarianism but the fundamental question at least for secular institutions of higher education is whether or not education can be considered a moral enterprise, and if so, what may be the good and bad results it produces. Regardless, an utilitarian education, if successful, may lead to happiness on both the university and the students, but it does not care about meaning—at least it does not give the students a sense of what they are living for and why. This paper examines the functions of the humanities in general education through

the lens of utility and argues that they are invaluable despite their perceived lack of values. It urges educators in the humanities to ask themselves how they should undertake their role to make their challenging task meaningful.

### Value and Identity

On the annual open house day for potential applicants to our department, high-schoolers and their parents typically ask about the job prospects for a Chinese Studies major; specifically, they wonder what kinds of job they would be qualified for. On a deeper level, it is not so much a question out of curiosity as a friendly challenge. In fact, it is a challenge of much broader significance that bears on the humanities as a field of study. The survival of the humanities in university education could be at stake. Oftentimes, a similar question— “Why humanities?” — is raised to scholars of humanities, usually by those from other disciplines, with the subtle intent to ask for a justification. The same question is hardly asked of instructors in vocational training, business administration, or researchers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), or perhaps even social sciences, and when it is asked, it is an innocent inquiry with regard to which specific area of training is currently the most vendible. To us scholars in the humanities such a question or challenge, blameless as it may be, is worth some critical reflection as it effectively asks us to clarify and perhaps to reevaluate our professional identity and ascertain our conviction in what we do as an educator.

To the inquisitive and career-oriented high-school graduate, the difference between the humanities and non-humanities lies in market value even if only a perceived one. Whether or not the humanities have market value is debatable and we shall examine this below. In any case, market value is certainly not the only value we can imagine. After all, the consensus has yet to be that the goal of undergraduate university education, at least in competitive Asia, is to prepare students only for job-hunting. There should be other values besides professional training in university education.

The modern conception of the humanities traces back to the Classical Greek *paideia*, “a course of general education dating from the Sophists in the mid-5th century BCE, which prepared young men for active citizenship in the polis, or city-state; and in Cicero’s *humanitas* (literally, “human nature”), a program of training proper for orators,

first set forth in *De oratore* (Of the Orator) in 55 BCE.” (Britannica, 2021) While intellectual origin itself does not vouchsafe for the validity of the humanities today—this is an important lesson we learn from the humanities— it is significant to know that *paideia* was indispensable for the health of the democratic citizenship of ancient Greece, so was *humanitas* for the statecraft in the Roman Republic. Neither were designed for economic value. In the contemporary context, the humanities refer to “those branches of knowledge that concern themselves with human beings and their culture or with analytic and critical methods of inquiry derived from an appreciation of human values and of the unique ability of the human spirit to express itself. As a group of educational disciplines, the humanities are distinguished in content and method from the physical and biological sciences and, somewhat less decisively, from the social sciences. The humanities include the study of all languages and literatures, the arts, history, and philosophy.” (Britannica, 2021) Collectively, the humanities constitute a tripartite entity of substance, method, and expression. Substance determines the identity and intrinsic worth of our species as well as our cultural heritage that comes to define who we are; methods concern the analytic and critical nature of the inquiry into our substance; expression gives rise to limitless ways of displaying and proving our identity. While substance and expression are unique to the humanities, method shares its fundamental nature with those in the natural and social sciences and effectively links up with them. In other words, the disciplinary rigor of the humanities is as strict as the natural and social sciences; the difference only lies in where and how it is applied.

It is an unfortunate misunderstanding that the humanities are all about subjective fancy that do not demand a critical and robust methodology and analytic skills to investigate. Not only is this far from the truth but the humanities indeed are necessary for the cultivation of such analytic skills and critical thinking abilities by learning how to ascertain meaning and significance in multiple fields of human creation, interaction, and expression including the textual, artefactual, intellectual, affective, psychological, spiritual, etc. The experiences under investigation might well have transpired in the distant past elsewhere or right in the here-and-now, but they are relevant and real, if not always fresh, as they are part and parcel of humanity. The fact that valuable experiences long gone are still possible for re-examination means that they had been preserved or recovered and kept in the vigilant and dutiful custody of librarians and archivists, and researched by historians. Without their expertise and dedication, we

would have been a species without history or cultural heritage much like our fellow species in the animal kingdom. Writ large, the study and practice of the humanities are the only means and hope to keep us human.

#### Global vs. Local

It is worth remembering that the implementation of general education began around the mid-twentieth century in the United States and one of the reasons was to break out the straitjacket of overspecialization which catered for practical education and tended to compartmentalize disciplinary knowledges. A set of common courses called core curriculum was then required of all students for their graduation. It was also known as general education. The very idea of general education means that it aims at well-roundedness and the scope of its curriculum is, by default, not parochial. Well-roundedness is a value in itself although its materialization is often constrained by a university's resources including human ones.

What is deemed “general” in education may vary with different cultures and societies. The word “general” in general education should not be assumed to mean “universal” or “global;” rather, it should be understood in the local context. Although the modern idea of general education is borrowed from the United States, the curriculum should be tailored for local specificities and needs. There is no reason to adopt the U.S. model wholesale and indiscriminately. Take Singapore for example. It is a highly Westernized modern city-state that is ever ready to anticipate and prepare for new changes in global economic and technological developments in order to remain competitive as a viable polity; its tertiary education mimics the British and American models and general education is indeed an integral part of the undergraduate curriculum of its leading universities. For instance, the National University of Singapore, my home institution, states that it “seeks to provide students with a holistic education. This means being trained for not just a specialisation, but also developing critical competencies and intelligences that enable one to thrive in today’s rapidly-changing professional landscapes while fostering awareness for societal and community-based issues.” As a comprehensive research university, its mission to offer a “holistic education” perhaps should be taken for granted, but the dual goal of providing professional training and fostering awareness appears to be heterogenous in its intent. It is hoped that students will thrive professionally vis-à-vis rapid changes and stay aware about their society and

communities.

Until 2019-2020, the University's General Education consists of five "pillars" of learning as follows: 1. Human Cultures; 2. Singapore Studies; 3. Thinking and Expression; 4. Quantitative Reasoning; and 5. Asking Questions. As the University puts it, the general education curriculum "prepares students to think critically and communicate ideas clearly; meet the challenges of a rapidly changing and increasingly interconnected world; build meaningful and responsible relationships with communities." The first two pillars concern cultural heritage despite the city-state's fifty-six years of short history. In spite of its rather limited offerings and its imbalance between premodern and modern history favoring the former, the modules under "Human Culture" do attempt to open up students' minds to the wider world of alternate cultures. As the curriculum describes, "Cultures are sets of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that are associated with a field, an activity, or a societal characteristic. This pillar cultivates an understanding of how differing cultural understandings have shaped human societies and the human condition, knowledge, beliefs, behaviour, scientific and technological innovations." Collectively, the modules, presented from a disciplinary or multidisciplinary perspective, consist of "elements that promote intercultural understanding" and "introduce global awareness." "Students will learn how various disciplines inform our knowledge of civilizations and cultures, as well as scientific/technological realms." Thus, the "Human Culture" modules aim to enhance students' intercultural awareness of the increasingly global world and perhaps even to improve their marketability, given that more than 37,000 international companies, including 7,000 multinational companies, have their headquarters in Singapore in 2018.

In contrast, the "Singapore Studies" pillar has a full menu of multifaceted modules that address "the issues and challenges confronting Singapore society covering various aspects of Singapore's history, politics and economy, medicine (healthcare, aging), environment (biodiversity and sustainability), infrastructure, transportation and resource management, technology (data analytics, digital economy, AI, Smart Nation), the future economy and industry." These modules are designed to "develop insights about the Singapore context and/or how Singapore relates to the region and the world, to position Singapore as the primary focus and point of departure, to situate a Singapore issue in the Asian/ASEAN context, and to relate Singapore to the global." In short, they help students cultivate "a critical awareness of contemporary and/or future

issues that impact Singapore society.”

It seems that the first two pillars are meant to foster students’ awareness for societal and community-based issues while the remaining ones aim to develop students’ critical competencies and intelligences for professional successes. Its overall curricular thrust notwithstanding, there is an apparent split embedded in the five pillars of learning into practical utility and nonutilitarian utility for professional development and civic commitment respectively. Of course, this distinction is relative and valid only within the five pillars of learning. When contrasted with disciplinary knowledges that are perceived to be currently marketable, general education as a whole would be depreciated perhaps to worthlessness. Nevertheless, as far as the five pillars of learning are concerned, it cannot be overemphasized that the two kinds of utility effectively represent two distinct yet complementary values—practical utility creates market value whereas nonutilitarian utility is inestimable value which makes practical utility valuable in the first place.

#### Maximizing Human Potentials

Different disciplinary knowledges occupy a unique niche in the value system of university education in order to nurture well-rounded students with a sense of purpose in their lives beyond their career prospects. Once acquired, disciplinary knowledges can create market value beneficial to job-seeking but the acquisition itself is an invaluable process of learning that teases out the potentials of the students as much as possible because each disciplinary domain stimulates and challenges their cognitive, affective and artistic abilities in different ways. In the process, students may be able to find the purpose of life beyond career prospects but this most likely will be the unique contribution of the humanities.

Every student is different and while students may be certain what their academic interests and career goals will be, no one actually knows the full range of their potentials as a human being. A student’s potentials are not limited to her intellectual capacity. Decades ago, Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner proposed a theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983); he suggested that people have many kinds of intelligence including visual-spatial, linguistic-verbal, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences and that they are not equally endowed in all intelligences. Thus, as a learner, everyone has different aptitudes, strengths and weaknesses, and is suited for particular jobs which

require different skills and personal traits. Despite its criticisms from psychologists and educators (Cherry, 2019), Gardner's theory has significant pedagogical values; it sensitizes educators to students' differing aptitudes and strengths, whose recognition could facilitate a better curricular design for General Education. This, presumably, can be substantiated by educators in the humanities. For instance, if a curriculum is mainly designed to train and develop a student's logical-mathematical skills, not only could it easily limit the possibility of maximizing her other intelligences but it would also deprive her of the opportunity of identifying the strength of her other intelligences. This is comparable to identifying the potentials of an athlete. While we do not need every athlete to excel at decathlon, it is important for a coach to recognize the peculiar strengths of an athlete. Furthermore, even when they are identified, training for one sport invariably involves that for another. Pugilism, for instance, requires training for running whereas a strength training program for runners includes weightlifting. Just as different kinds of training reinforce the athlete's overall performance, divergent disciplinary knowledges and their differing methods of acquisition would produce creative chances in the learning mind of the student thereby enhancing her intellectual and personal growth. Still, there is another repercussion for the failure to help maximize students' potentials and capacity, namely, the inability to help foster a student's personal flourishing could lead to the waste of talents and, ultimately, will create an adverse impact on the society's workforce and citizenry. Furthermore, general education with the humanities as an integral constituent could minimize the compartmentalization of disciplinary knowledges in the learning mind of the students and helps build a versatile workforce. In the long run, this will promote social mobility because talents and skills will be less easily pigeonholed than if they are exclusively cultivated by vocational training or education in natural sciences. In short, a good general education curriculum cannot afford to leave out the humanities even though their market value might not be immediately evident.

### Nonutilitarian Utility

The complaint about the uselessness of the humanities all too often zeroes in on the study of literature. For instance, Stanley Fish says in a recent New York Times article (2015, 320-324) titled "Will the Humanities Save Us?",

Teachers of literature and philosophy are competent in a subject, not in a



ministry. It is not the business of the humanities to save us, no more than it is their business to bring revenue to a state or a university. What then do they do? They don't do anything, if by "do" is meant bring about effects in the world. And if they don't bring about effects in the world they cannot be justified except in relation to the pleasure they give to those who enjoy them.

To the question "of what use are the humanities?", the only honest answer is none whatsoever. And it is an answer that brings honor to its subject. Justification, after all, confers value on an activity from a perspective outside its performance. An activity that cannot be justified is an activity that refuses to regard itself as instrumental to some larger good. The humanities are their own good. There is nothing more to say, and anything that is said ... diminishes the object of its supposed praise.

That Professor Fish is a distinguished scholar of Western literature makes his opinion particularly poignant, and disappointing. Still, he is erudite and eloquent, his writing in the essay lucid and his logic sound in spite of a flawed judgment. One would assume this is primarily due to his training and practice as a literary scholar for most of his long career. No doubt reading literature can be pleasurable, but books themselves do not give pleasure, it takes the reader to make the reading experience pleasurable. If we are talking about instinctive pleasure of reading, be it a literary masterpiece or a pornographic magazine, no academic training is needed. Thus considered, there is no reason why a literature department should exist at all. One wonders what exactly Professor Fish teaches his students in the classroom or if he should be hired in the first place. For a similar reason, culinary schools around the world should be all closed down, so should athletic coaches be laid off. Professor Fish's hard-nosed appraisal of the study of literature is tantamount to self-mockery. Indeed, Fish's scholarship was criticized by Robert V. Young, Jr., a specialist in Renaissance Literature and Literary Criticism, who says,

Because his general understanding of human nature and of the human condition is false, Fish fails in the specific task of a university scholar, which requires that learning be placed in the service of truth. And this, finally, is the critical issue in the contemporary university of which Stanley Fish is a typical representative: sophistry renders truth itself equivocal and deprives scholarly learning of its reason for being... . His brash disdain of principle and his embrace of sophistry reveal the hollowness hidden at the heart of the current academic enterprise.

Fish's view on the study of literature and Young's criticism of his scholarship help

explain why enrollments in the humanities are falling in the U.S. and perhaps the losing respect for scholars in literature elsewhere as well.

Fish's article originally appeared in 2008 and five years later America's famed cultural critic Lee Siegel offered his reasons why literature should be removed from university education. In a *Wall Street Journal* article called "Who Ruined the Humanities?," Siegel (2013) argued that literature should be read in private without the pressure of the competitive classroom as it belongs to everyday life in the first place. He said, "Every other academic subject requires specialized knowledge and a mastery of skills and methods. Literature requires only that you be human. It does not have to be taught any more than dreaming has to be taught." In fact, Siegel added, "The classroom also ruins literature's joys, as well as trivializing its jolting dissents" because it is made to speak for social condition and modern culture in the disguise of literary theory. As such, the academic study of literature cannot really help to "cultivate empathy, curiosity, aesthetic taste and moral refinement." Curiously, Siegel's argument reinforces Fish's smug belief in the self-indulged pleasure in reading literature but of course he comes to a diametrically opposite conclusion. Yet, if the academicization of literary art by tendentious pedants is in fact the culprit, we should not throw the baby out with the bathwater. It is imperative that instructors of literature critically re-examine their professional identity and personal commitment to their noble duty as well as the way they teach. And this is not a matter about utility.

Interestingly, although both Fish and Siegel target the humanities in their articles, they only speak about literature. Their arguments, regardless of their validity, would not, at least *prima facie*, apply to the other disciplines under the same umbrella such as anthropology, archaeology, art, history, human geography, languages, law, philosophy, and religion. In all fairness to Fish, he does ask: "Do the humanities ennoble? And for that matter, is it the business of the humanities, or of any other area of academic study, to save us?" And his answer to both is negative. He challenges the premise of "old-fashioned humanism" that "the examples of action and thought portrayed in the enduring works of literature, philosophy, and history can create in readers the desire to emulate them." He says people will not be less likely to sell their souls after they watch with horror what happens to Faust, nor will they not impose restrictions on others that they would resist if the same were imposed on them even though they understand Kant's categorical imperative. If reading of great works of literature and

philosophy did have such transformative powers, Fish argues, “the most generous, patient, good-hearted, and honest people on earth would be the members of literature and philosophy departments, who spend every waking hour with great books and great thoughts, and as someone who’s been there (for forty-five years), I can tell you it just isn’t so. Teachers and students of literature and philosophy don’t learn how to be good and wise; they learn how to analyze literary effects and to distinguish between different accounts of the foundations of knowledge.” It is no surprise Fish dismisses the possible effects good literature and philosophy could have on the reader, or else they would not be useless. However, his claim is built on the flimsy ground of his forty-five years of teaching in the English department. In the long course of human history, book banning took place not infrequently, and all over the world. In China, the First Emperor of Qin ordered that history books were burned in 212 B.C.E.. The Roman poet Ovid was banished from Rome for writing *Ars Amatoria* (The Art of Love) in 8 C.E.. The Bible and works by Shakespeare met similar fate later. If writings have no impact on the human mind, what were all these fusses about? More importantly, the effects of reading literature and philosophy cannot and should not be measured in the same way the results produced in a scientific experiment.

The humanities do matter and ennoble; they make a difference but not in terms of direct economic value. Great works of the humanities are concerned with the meaning of life. But the humanities make a difference in the students’ lives only in the able hands of the educators who hold themselves in self-respect, commit themselves to their noble task, and perform it professionally and effectively. Under the tutelage of the conscientious teacher, students learn how to read, how to think, how to analyze, how to interpret, how to organize, how to express, how to gather and assess evidence, how to judge, and how to make decision, etc. All of these critical skills need to be learned and acquired continually even as the student is in the process of learning them. In the realm of human experiences where these skills are learned and practiced—which is qualitatively different from the physical world and isolated laboratory of the natural sciences—sympathy and empathy must also be cultivated and that makes the humanities altogether different and deserve their legitimacy in general education.

Evidently, the aforesaid skills are transferrable beyond the humanities to whatever discipline the student happens to specialize in. She may use them to organize a company’s annual event, to analyze the malfunctioning of an airplane, to communicate

with her subordinates, to defend her client in court, and to investigate how a murderer commits his crime. Of course, before the student has any chance to do any of these, she has to dispel the doubts of her prospective employer who wonders if the candidate can think, defend and articulate herself when her disciplinary knowledge is tested. Critical skills of thinking and articulating in tandem with a good sense of sympathetic imagination are certainly marketable. In fact, the quality of university education hinges on none other than the student's ability to imagine alternate reality, to think and to make decision on her own regardless of the discipline. It is one of the marks of leadership. This goes beyond the realm of intelligence and demands the magic of the intellect.

The pre-eminent American historian Richard Hofstadter (1963) astutely differentiates intelligence and intellect such that for our purpose, the ultimate goal of general education, perhaps the humanities in particular, is made extraordinarily clear. Intelligence, Hofstadter declares, is "an excellence of mind that is employed within a fairly narrow, immediate, and predictable range; it is a manipulative, adjustive, unfailingly practical quality.... Intelligence works within the framework of limited but clearly stated goals, and may be quick to shear away questions of thought that do not seem to help in reaching them." This squares perfectly well with vocational training and technical education. "Intellect, on the other hand," Hofstadter continues, "is the critical, creative, and contemplative side of mind. Whereas intelligence seeks to grasp, manipulate, re-order, adjust, intellect examines, ponders, wonders, theorizes, criticizes, imagines. Intelligence will seize the immediate meaning in a situation and evaluate it. Intellect evaluates evaluations, and looks for the meanings of situations as a whole... When the difference is so defined, it becomes easier to understand why we sometimes say that a mind of admittedly penetrating intelligence is relatively unintellectual; and why, by the same token, we see among minds that are unmistakably intellectual a considerable range of intelligence." It is the professed goal of general education to offer a wide range of disciplinary knowledges to complement a student's specialized discipline, but it should not be mistaken that it is simply an additional amount to fulfill graduation requirements. General education is not an add-on; it is an added-value. It aims to cultivate the intellect in Hofstadter's understanding by providing the creative chances for the cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary illumination of knowledges in the fertile mind of the student in the hope of cultivating her intellect to the fullest. Once

this noble goal is achieved even to a lesser extent, the nonutilitarian utility of the humanities in general education will become the ineffable magic that creates a spark across the gap between different disciplinary knowledges to maximize their specific contributions creatively.

### Conclusion

The humanities have been around for thousands of years even though their coverage continually changed and continues to vary. The world would be a very different place without them, or should they decline. Imagine a world without human artefacts. We have an abundant and powerful legacy of them only because they were inspired and driven by human imagination to make human life meaningful and to enlarge human beings themselves. The humanities not only help to preserve humankind's history and cultural past but imagine a different world from what can be seen here and now. None of the expertise requisite for such underappreciated endeavor has any direct economic value; they are deemed useless in today's job market. Yet, the very idea of utility can be capricious. A well-known conversation between two good friends in the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi* is a useful reminder as it has been for the past two millennia in China and for its reader worldwide in the recent two centuries.

Hui Tzu said to Chuang Tzu, "Your words are useless!"

Chuang Tzu said, "A man has to understand the useless before you can talk to him about the useful. The earth is certainly vast and broad, though a man uses no more of it than the area he puts his feet on. If, however, you were to dig away all the earth from around his feet until you reached the Yellow Springs, then would the man still be able to make use of it?"

"No, it would be useless," said Hui Tzu.

"It is obvious, then," said Chuang Tzu, "that the useless has its use." (Watson, 1968, p.300)

We must realize that the knowledge we rely on to make a living allows us to stand firm on the ground, but we need to walk to have a life, to map out the world, and for that we count on something else that is not what we are standing on. We have to understand the useless before we can talk about the useful. The humanities and other academic disciplines belong to the same earth; they are all useful and useless. It all

depends on where we stand. Practical utility by nature is custom-made while nonutilitarian utility is to make everything custom.

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[III]

## Teaching the Humanities or Cultivating Humanity? Reading Classics across Disciplines and Cultures in 21 Century

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Teaching the Humanities or Cultivating Humanity?  
Reading Classics across Disciplines and Cultures in 21 Century

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**The Crisis in the Humanities**

“Crisis in the humanities” is a recurrent topic in the discussion of higher education. In the US, the alarming calls can be traced back at least to 1920s (Bivens-Tatam, 2010) and more recently, there has been cries about a crisis “of massive proportions and grave global significance.” (Nussbaum, 2010) However, some eminent academics reject or downplay the notion of a crisis, and the debates are lively and on-going. Ahlburg (2019) attempted to objectively evaluate whether the crisis exist by using an evidence base and quantitative approach in collaboration with academics in 10 different countries. While the claim of world-wide crisis is not supported by the data of student enrolment in many countries, the continuation and adequacy of public financial support look more problematic. A closer look at the student enrolment statistics in different countries reveals that in many countries where enrolments are increasing, it is because that new areas such as visual and performing arts, communications and media studies are considered as subjects in the humanities. Enrolment in ‘core humanities’ including English, Classics, languages, philosophy and history is in general declining. Moreover, in many countries the humanities are seen only as a default option for students entering university. While academics discussed potential contributions of the humanities to social goods, it is not evident that they are widely understood or accepted, (Ahlburg, 2019, pp. 262-266) In short, claims of global crisis may seem too alarmist, but a general malaise does exist, especially for the core humanities.

All these quantitative analysis are rather reassuring reference. Be that as it may, in the USA, reports of plan of cutting back positions of the humanities or closing down liberal arts colleges popping up time and again. (Marcus,2018) In UK, with the marketization

of higher education and the dominating culture of public accountability, the value of the humanities seems require particular justification in order to claim a share of the public budget. The humanities should demonstrate their distinctive contributions to the public good, and to explain why the humanities matter comparatively with other subject areas. (Small, 1-2) If the long standing repetition of alarms of coming catastrophe for the humanities does not reflect a real crisis, it points at least to a *sense* of it. (Bivens-Tatum, 2010) Afterall, statistics average out real-life qualitative experience, and a long term historical account disregards concrete life drama of losing one's academic position in a university.

But not all sense of crisis related to precarious situation at personal level or have purely financial concern. One of the origins of the sense of crisis comes from the feeling of being disregarded or misunderstood by the society of the contributions that the humanities can make to the society. It is often by a sense of responsibility to engage the humanities in a more public role that scholars offered its defence. For Martha Nussbaum, the cutting away of the humanities in school curricula means that the humanistic aspects of education in general “the imaginative, creative aspect, and the aspect of rigorous critical thought” are losing ground “to pursue short-term profit by the cultivation of the useful and highly applied skill suited to profit-making.” (Nussbaum, 2010) Peter Brooks also argued that the skill developed in the humanities are “more than ever needed in a society in which manipulation of minds and hearts is increasingly what running the world is about”. (cited by Ahlburg, 264)

### **Common Core and the Humanities**

In fact, the society does have expectations from the humanities.

When talking about educating citizens to participate in a global economy in 1993, Sheldon Hackney, president of the University of Pennsylvania and later Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), focused on the role a humanities education could have in helping students explore a range of common and important questions related to problem of values:

“The country have never needed the humanities more. ... we face a crisis of values at home. What is happening to family and community? Who are we as a nation and where are we going? What hold us together as a nation and what do citizens owe to each other? What is the relationship of the individual to the group in a society whose political order is based upon individual rights and in which group membership is still a powerful social influence?” (Cited by P Jay, 2014, 20)

24 years later, political and cultural commentator David Brooks made very similar comments. He argued that we are suffering from an inadequate dispersal of the skills that a humanities education can impart. Brooks suggested that broader education in the humanities and some of the social science may help “build new national narratives, revive family life, restore community bonds and shared moral culture.” (cited by Ahlburg, 5)

Both argued for an important role the humanities could and should play: that the humanities had an advantage in contributing to the discussion of perennial questions about values, family, community, nation, and the relationship of individual to the society. Unfortunately, this assigned role of dealing with perennial questions triggered only controversies, or even “wars” among the practitioners of the humanities, and consensus seems difficult to achieve.

In the 1980s, when many colleges and universities were urged to address problems of general education, the content and methods of the humanities became centre of attention because they seemed have an advantage to organizing programs for core curriculum to replace broad distribution.” (White, 1996. 262) Unfortunately, the so-called culture wars erupted. Extreme positions of the conservative critics and the ‘cultural left’ presented to the public an image that the humanities were about an “either /or choice between tradition and politics, between a vision of the humanities as the static preserve of timeless cultural value, on the one hand, and a hotbed of critique and revolt, on the other.” (Jay, 21) and the polemical language used in many attacks in the academy “gave little evidence of the humanities’ capacity to provide insight and promote balanced judgement.” (White 263) At the turn of 21<sup>st</sup> century, the idea of a common core inspired by the content and methods of the humanities that could benefit all students and the community interested few in the academia and drift into oblivion.

### Community, Value and the Humanities

Using the term of the humanities to designate a branch of learning does not have a very long history. The Oxford English Dictionary defined the humanities as “the branch of learning concerned with human culture” with a first citation dated 1855. (Siskin and Warner) As the term is an organizational or classifying one, and the subjects that are classified under the humanities can vary from time to time, when discussing ‘the future of the humanities’, Collini (2017, 225) suggests that an essentialist approach is not preferable, and “we do better to speak of individual disciplines rather than use the category of ‘the humanities’”, More radically, Siskin and Warner (2019) proposes a ‘dezoning of knowledge’ to put an end to the crisis of the humanities. Academics should abandon the border of academic ‘zoning’ and “ [w]ithout the blunt, binaristic borders between zones .... Scholars could interact with their counterparts in all fields without the burdensome assumption that they represent more -- an entire community more -- than their specific area of expertise. Literary historians, for example, could do literary history without also having to be the experts in the “human” in the room -- an act of humility that our fellow humans across the disciplines might appreciate.” ‘Dezoning’, if put into practice, can without doubt end the crisis of the humanities, because this is just the end of the humanities.

The position taken is indeed revealing: this individualistic view of specific subject is denying the fundamental value and broader concern of the humanities: that they are connected with human nature and to the cultivation of humanity. Only by keeping this connection that it can seek to contribute, beyond the specialist-academic production, to the society and for the common good.

The origin of the humanities can be traced back to classical Greek *paideia*, Cicero’s *humanitas*, Saint Augustin’s *De Doctrina Christiana*, and *studia humanitatis* proposed by Renaissance humanists. (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Spanning from mid-5<sup>th</sup> BCE to 15<sup>th</sup> century, these predecessors of the humanities were different education programs. The idea of what qualities one needs to have to be political and social leader of a republic was first clearly articulated in Cicero’s *On the Orator*. Cicero used *humanitas* (human nature) to describe the formation of an ideal

orator through *artes liberales*. Eloquence is an ultimate virtue for an orator, but it should however be accompanied by learning and virtue. “**Eloquence** is actually a certain ultimate virtue...which embraces all **knowledge** and then **explicates** the sentiments and thoughts of the mind **with** such **words** that it can compel those who listen in any direction it applies itself. But the great its power is, by just so much is there the greater necessity of it being conjoined with **integrity** and **the highest wisdom**.” (Cicero, *On the Orator*, Kimball, 2010, 33, emphasis added) Later, stoic philosopher Seneca put virtue as the highest goal of liberal education. The virtue exalted by Seneca contained two aspects: one aspect is about knowing one’s emotions to free one from one’s passion which can “banishes fear, get rid of desire, or curbs passions”. The other aspect is opening to the other, to treat the other as the equal of oneself. Kindness is a virtue that “stops us from being arrogant towards our fellows, or bad tempered. In words, deeds and feelings she shows herself obliging and good-natured to all, **regarding other people’s troubles as her own...**”; and the virtue of Mercy “**spares another’s blood as if it were its own, and knows that no human being should make wasteful use of another human beings...**” (Seneca the Younger, “On Liberal and Vocational Studies”, Kimball, 2010, 38-40) Virtue is more important than learning.

As education programs, the *artes liberales* evolved and first stabilized around 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. into the normative one including seven liberal arts which incorporated three language arts (*trivium*: grammar, logic and rhetoric) and four mathematical arts (*quadrivium*: mathematic, geometry, astronomy and music) Rhetoric was the crowning subject. (Kimball, 1995, 30) the *artes liberales* were redefined in the middle of 13<sup>th</sup> century as a five-step program of intellectual formation in the order of trivium, quadrivium, natural philosophy, moral philosophy and metaphysics. ( Kimball, 1995, 67) Among them, logic is the most important. (Kimball, 2010, 126, 127))

In 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century Italy scholar proposed a different ideal which focused on the literary and artistic heritage of the ancient world. *Studia humanitatis* were taught with a commitment to moral instruction of the good citizens and the continual refinement of the human person, and a focus on the literary and artistic heritage of the ancient world. (Kimball, 1995, 78)

In spite of the different forms and contents of liberal arts, there were shared characteristics in these education programs: the number of subjects studies were limited,

the body of texts to study were relatively constant, the Greco-Roman tradition was respected even though the emphasis may differ (rhetoric, logic or heritage of the ancient world). Through the concrete curriculum of liberal arts, the aim of education was the cultivation of the human person to attain the quality of eloquence, virtue, reasoning and refinement of taste to be orator, philosopher, or gentleman.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the German model of research university flourished and, with its devotion to specialization and new knowledge, displaced the liberal arts colleges as the compass of higher education. (Kimball 1995, 163) The scientific emphasis on value-free research challenged the commitment to a unified prescribed curriculum, and the ideal of speculative research undermined “the classical notion of a liberal education...in which truth was look upon as uniform, fixed and eternal.” (Kimball, 1995, 167). The liberal arts subjects gradually remodelled into academic disciplines under the category of the humanities, and when the elective system widely adopted, and Greek and Latin ceased to be entry requirement of universities, the decline of liberal arts and the humanities became obvious.

Plumb provided a very vivid description and insightful observation of the crisis of the core humanities interwoven with the decline of traditional liberal arts education. In the introduction of *Crisis in the Humanities*, Plumb (1964, pp.7-8) described the golden days of the humanities where “History, Classics, Literature and Divinity... were , with Mathematics, the core of the educational system and were believed to have peculiar virtues in producing politicians, civil servants, Imperial administrators and legislator.” However, “the rising tide of scientific and industrial societies, combined with the battering of the two World Wars, has shatter the confidence of humanists to lead or to instruct. Uncertain of their social function , they either clung to their traditional attitudes and pretend that change could be repelled, or retreated into their own private professional world and deny any social function to their subject. Plumb believed both courses were “suicidal”.

As an historian, Plumb observed that the rise of natural science deeply influenced history. The ‘scientific revolution’ in the study of history brought about professionalization along with narrow specialization and fragmentation.

“The contribution of the scientific attitude to history has been monumental. It has given the subject an intellectual discipline which it had never previously possessed, and it has multiplied the material of history a millionfold... But each study is largely an end in itself, a pursuit by professionals for professionals. History is now strictly organized, powerfully disciplined, but it possesses only a modest educational value and even less conscious social purpose.” (Plumb 28) Historical investigation produces only an “arid desert of monographs”. Most of the historians cannot reach out to “inform, instruct, enliven, and ennoble and render more profound the common heritage of man”, because wide discussions were distrusted, and broad generalizations must be put off until all the buried facts have been examined under academic light. (Plumb, 1964, 27-28, 44)

In the area of classic studies, Finley also lamented the classicists who refused to find a bridge to the widespread popular interest in classical literature, art and archaeology. He “turns his profession into a narrow guild, a self-contained world of specialists communicating with each other alone, surrounded by an illusory defensive wall of all-or-nothing Utopianism. Exact-linguistic studies, meticulous editing of texts, detailed investigations into problems of chronology or lexicography are all essential...But they remain no more than ‘the entrance hall and the ante-chamber of learning’...A mere collection of linguistic, literary, or historical data is...no more meaningful or purposeful than a collection of stamp.” (Finley in Plumb, 21)

In other humanities disciplines, such as literature, fine arts and philosophy, the situation is not better. Professionals cherish their corrosive literary criticism, jargons or linguistic conundrums rather than reaching out to citizens who crave for knowledge and understanding. (Plumb, 8)

Denying the social function to their subject, forgetting the aim of the humanities is to educate, to cultivate the quality of the human person, these are the deep causes of the crisis of the humanities. If the ideal of the traditional liberal education was to cultivate elites, Plumb and his academic friends, being aware of the change of the times, preached for educating the citizens with their expertise, the humanities.



## The Humanities for the Future of Humanity

The challenges humanity facing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are unprecedented. Global warming and ecological crisis, conflicts and wars with weapon of mass destruction, artificial intelligence and biotechnology with the power to reshape and reengineering life, to name but the most impending. What should educators in the humanities do to prepare the students to flourish in this versatile and globalized world?

In his recent work, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, Harari gives compelling descriptions and sharp analysis of the problems the world faces today. In this grim, or even devastating picture of the world of tomorrow, there seems not much that we, as teachers, can do.

In today's world, goes Harari, "the last thing a teacher needs to give her pupils is more information....instead, people need the ability to make sense of information, to tell the different between what is important and what is unimportant, and above all to combine many bits of information into a broad picture of the world". He recognizes that this has been the ideal of Western liberal education for centuries, "but up till now even many Western schools have been rather slack in fulfilling it." It may also be futile to focus on providing students with a set of predetermined skills, because since "we have no idea what the job market will look like in 2050, we don't really know what particular skills people will need. (Harari, 265, 266) We can agree with him so far, and would think more effort should be made to fulfil the promise of liberal education.

When he addresses directly to the young, Harari is more frank and direct:

"As strangeness becomes the new normal, your past experiences, as well as the past experience of the whole humanity, will become less reliable guides...To survive and flourish in such a world, you will need a lot of mental flexibility and great reserves of emotional balance...**Teachers themselves usually lack the mental flexibility that the twenty-first century demands**, since they themselves are the product of the old educational system...

So the best advice I can give to a fifteen-year-old...is : **don't rely on the adults too much...** Because of the increasing pace of change, you can never be certain whether what the adults are telling you is timeless wisdom or outdated bias."

(Harari, 269-271)

The young cannot rely on technology. “If you know what you want in life, technology can help you get it. But if you don’t know what you want in life, it will be too easy for technology to shape your aims for you and take control of your life.” One cannot rely on oneself as such neither: “The voice we hear inside our heads is never trustworthy, because it always reflects state propaganda, ideological brainwashing, and commercial advertisements, not to mention biochemical bugs.” (271)

The only positive advice Harari gives is “ you will need to work very hard at getting to know your operating system better—to know what you are and what you want from life. This is, of course, the oldest advice in the book: know thyself.” So it is this timeless wisdom that we need, and urgently.(272) But how can one to get to self-understanding?

Studying is not what we may expect to get to true satisfaction. The academic world provide him with “powerful tools with which to deconstruct all the myths humans ever created, but it didn’t offer satisfying answers to the big questions of life.” His side hobby of reading a lot of books about philosophy and had lots of philosophical debates only provided endless intellectual entertainment but not real insight.”(315) Harari’s ultimate suggestion is meditation, an inward journey to observe the reality as it is, to realize that the deepest source of one’s suffering is in the patterns of one’s own mind (318).

We can never more agree with Harari that “know thyself” is the timeless wisdom that we all need, but after all the global problems that he has so vividly elaborated in his book, we can only be frustrated to find that the only proposed solution is “saving yourself from suffering”. The implication is a desperate assertion: at collective level, nothing can be done, especially through education.

The human cultivation that was at the origin of the humanities and carried on by different humanists across the time, is not only about self-understanding and self-control. There is always a dimension about community; about how one can and should live with

others. The society and the culture are part of our humanity because they are the creation of human beings, even if sometime they may work against individuals living in it. Knowing one-self without thinking of or caring about the community does not cultivate humanity in full.

In the time of Cicero, the community is the Roman republic, in the time of Plumb, the community is citizens of modern democracy, and today, what we need is to build a global community to face global challenges, and urgently. Apart from one self, our students need to learn to know people, cultures, religions other than theirs. Not only should one embrace diversities, but one has to understand our common humanity.

In *Cultivating Humanity. A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Martha Nussbaum introduces and analyses how different educational approaches can create a community of critical thinkers to cultivate one's humanity by taking charge of one's own thoughts, being capable to think and act for the common good, respecting the humanity of our fellow citizens of different cultures, religion and races. Practicing Socratic method, developing sympathetic understanding, and leaning to arts to cultivate powers of imagination, are ways for educators to guide students to build up a community of citizens of the world. (Nussbaum, 1997)

In The Chinese University of Hong Kong, we have also, since 2012, fully implement an approach to general education that may contribute to cultivating our students into world citizens.

In 2012, a common core program comprising two 3-unit courses was introduced as a supplement to the existing distribution requirement of general education. The two courses, namely “In Dialogue with Humanity” and “In Dialogue with Nature”, one focusing on the humanities and the other on sciences, form together the General Education Foundation (GEF). The program tries to bridge between two major academic fields, where the lack of communication were bright to public notice since C.P. Snow's famous lecture *The Two Cultures*.

The courses are not structured by academic disciplines, however. Classics-text studies and seminar-based discussion are the main features of GEF. The syllabi are developed

around questions about life, society and knowledge, which are not bounded by any single discipline. Questions such as “What is a good life?”, “What is a good society?”, “What and how do we know about the physical world?”, “What is life?”, “What is scientific thinking and what is, if any, its limit?” are fundamental questions about life, society, and knowledge that teachers invite students to think through and make connections with their life experience when reading the texts. Students can raise their own questions in classroom discussion, reflective journal and term paper.

“In Dialogue with Nature”, looks at achievements made by scientific enquiries, and examines their limitations and human implications, through such classics as *The Republic*, *Principia*, *The Origin of Species*, *The Double Helix*, *Silent Spring*, and *The Shorter Science and Civilizations in China*. “In Dialogue with Humanity” asks what constitutes a good life and an ideal society; and explores their relationship through classics such as *The Symposium*, the *Analects*, the *Zhuangzi*, the *Bible*, the *Qur’an*, the *Heart Sutra*, *Waiting for the Dawn* and *The Social Contract*.

Although we use classics as the major learning material, we do not use the classic texts as canons, as if they possess absolute authorities and lead to unchallengeable truth. Content-wise, the excerpts of selected classics are drawn from a wide range of traditions and disciplines to provide students with a real multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary worldview. The collection of texts gives them a grasp of the thoughts essential in shaping knowledge, cultures and beliefs today, and enable them to revisit their own tradition to reflect on the elements that can stand the test of time or those need to be criticized or reformed. They are also exposed to cultures, traditions and knowledge that they are not familiar with. Careful reading and reasoned discussion will facilitate respectful communication with others, and revision of one’s own views. Pedagogically speaking, these texts are used as vehicles or access points through which students approach those fundamental questions. In the discussion sessions and written assignments, teachers guide students to discover their own answers. There are no definitive “correct” answers, and students are encouraged to contemplate, criticize and, only where they see fit, adopt the values they have thought through. In short, the reading of classics is medium to help students gain ownership of their own thought and speech. In Martha Nussbaum’s sense, we use the classic texts to cultivate students’ humanity: be themselves yet open to other.

GEF is also a community building program. Reading the same set of classic texts and discussing common themes can provide a common learning experience among students, and foster their sensitivity to common concerns of human existence. The condition created by GEF facilitates intellectual dialogue and the building of a community of learners. Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) outside classroom teaching are also implemented to help students who struggle with reading classic texts, or who want to have more interaction with their peer beyond the classroom discussion. PASS is a voluntary based peer learning study recruiting students who performed excellently in previous year to serve as PASS leaders. They are trained to use Socratic method to lead the discussion outside normal class time. More and more students join these session voluntarily.

From the teaching team a community of learners also emerged. “In Dialogue with Nature” tackles scientific knowledge with a humanistic perspective, while “In Dialogue with Humanity” tackles humanistic questions with a cross-disciplinary approach. We have two teaching teams, one from science background mainly for the teaching of “In Dialogue with Nature”, and the other from the humanities mainly for the teaching of “In Dialogue with Humanity”. Within each team, the academic trainings of the teachers are diverse though. The Nature team includes teachers from physics, chemistry, biochemistry, computer science, information engineering, pharmacy and science education; while the Humanity team comprises teachers from Chinese literature, history, religious studies, cultural studies, geography, political science, education and philosophy. Each teacher would guide students in his/her classes to go through the whole set of classic texts. I say “mainly” because we also encourage teachers from one team to teach the other course farther away from their academic background. However, to make sure that academic vigor is respected, reading groups are formed, seminars with invited scholars are organized, and in-house conferences are held.

Community building is not something abstract on paper. It is lived by our students and our teachers, and our experiences tell us that it can be done.

### **What General Education can do in 21<sup>st</sup> Century?**

Let me return to Harari to conclude.

In lesson 8 Religion , in order to explain the role of religions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Harari categorizes the problems of the century into three types, namely, technical problems, policy problems and identity problems. He points out that for the first two types of questions, religions played an important role in the past, but become irrelevant nowadays. In contrast, for the identity problems, they are still impactful, but do more harm than help find a solution. (128) This framework is very useful for us to reflect on the role of different components in higher education, so we borrow it for our reflection, and will discuss his last point in relation to general education.

The technical problem, refer to questions like “how to help farmers deal with flooding or droughts triggered by global warming.” We may fix these problems with scientific and technological knowledge. And in a university, specialized knowledge training experts in major studies, especially in science and engineering subjects, will be very useful.

The policy problems like “what measures should governments adopt to prevent, to contain or to mitigate the consequences of global warming?” need broadly educated leaders to solve. Those leaders may not be scientists, but should have a scientific mind-set, (they must have respect for truth for example), and they should have knowledge about governments and societies, and ability to work in team. They should also have the ability to deal with complex problem, make informed judgement, balance different claims to make decision, and communicate convincingly. Training in the humanities will be an advantage. To expose students to a broad range of knowledge, cultivate open mind-set and instil generic problem solving skills are the goals of general education, and distributive model should be appropriate to expose students to different fields of learning. Engaging pedagogy should be used to trigger active learning and deep reflection. Mere exposure will not be enough to form capable leaders, but providing an open mind-set and instilling self-learning skills constitute good starting points.

The identity problems refer to questions like “should I even care about the problems of farmers on the other side of the world? Or should I care only about problems of my own of people from my own tribe and country?” To tackle this problem, general education with a common core to cultivate global citizens should be the good direction.

In the past, religions were invented to unite large numbers of people, to accumulate power, and to preserve social harmony. People identifying with these religions or ideologies would create cohesion in a group. Mass identities enhance mass cooperation and can generate enormous historical force. But when people distinguish and differentiate themselves from their neighbour, to reinforce cohesion, they easily turn against others with prejudice, contempt, and even cruelty. That is why Harari thinks that religions constitute a major part of the problem of identity instead of a potential solution to it. (Harari, 128) Not only religions, other ideologies can have similar effect, so in lesson 20 “Meaning” Harari deconstructs forcefully nationalism, fascism, communism, liberalism along with religions (Harari, 273-313 ).

But it is only one side of the story. When discussing the identity problems in “religions”, he himself observed that “These differing religious traditions often fill daily life with beauty and encourage people to behave more kindly and more charitably.” (Harari, 134-5) In lesson 12 “Humility”, he puts “Most people tend to believe they are the center of the world, and their culture is the linchpin of human history”. But if we study world history seriously, we know that all these claims are false. Instead, we will find “morality, art, spirituality, and creativity are universal human abilities embedded in our DNA.” (185) Different people may manifest these values differently, but there are common grounds we could and should recognize, and learn to be humble. Studying world history in the light of finding commonality among people will be a very good course to cultivate humanity in our students.

In today’s world, the success in this kind of endeavours may be the only chance for humanity to move on. Teaching the humanities to cultivating humanity is more than ever needed in our society.

[IV]

## Human Learning, Learning Human: Approaching General Education in the Anthropocene

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## Human Learning, Learning Human: Approaching General Education in the Anthropocene

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This is a paper about change and innovation. As such, it necessarily participates in the process of education itself, for if change is not just for its own sake, and innovation means something more than novelty, then they ought to be informed by aims such as improvement, solutions, wider perspectives, or the acquisition of useful skills and knowledge—the same aims we ascribe to education, howsoever they are stressed or configured differently in each of its manifestations. It is also about hope, since the process must be founded in a belief that these aims are achievable. However, writing during the UN Glasgow Climate Conference (COP26), this is a commodity that is in short supply. What hope can there be, for the survival of our species, that of others, and for the future of the planet, when this last best chance is characterised by the usual business of horse-trading margins of economic exploitation, framed by the empty rhetoric of aggrandisement, and serves in the interests of a politics that puts stability before sustainability and justice? Erudition rather than action is rightly dismissed by the protesters, as “blah, blah, blah”, even as ‘world leaders’ scurry to appropriate their voices and defuse their rage, in a damning critique of societies that value sounding and looking learned rather than radically doing something different to what they have always done.

Education and the Anthropocene are each, to state the obvious, big concepts, and much is at stake. In the space available in one short essay, it is important to focus on essentials rather than attempt to elaborate a comprehensive argument. The primary objective of the paper is, after all, a targeted one, to consider how to approach the introduction of a Humanities-based General Education module for students in South Korea, alongside other modules, that might be thought of as disciplinary, applied or technical. However, the first point I wish to make, is that to approach this goal *without* attending to the immediate crisis confronting humankind would ultimately lead to

meaningless learning objectives and experiences, failing to provide learners with the right tools for the work required of them. One might say that rehashing existing models would be like handing out fiddles they can play while the world burns, or deckchairs to rearrange while our collective Titanic sinks. It is interesting though, that the metaphors that have come to my mind to outline these dispositions are, themselves, quite loaded. On the one hand, tools imply technology, the capacity to build or fix, perhaps raise marvellous cities like Rome or construct ships, planes and machines yet to be invented. Music or the arts (even if only the art of arranging patio furniture in this case), on the other hand, are dismissed in the examples I used as mere pastimes, and more than this, as indications of the vanity and vain-glory of humankind, trifles compared to the ravages of nature. Already, then, we are stumbling upon a deeply rooted prejudice against the Humanities, taking the form of a binarism that might be seen to elevate technological progress over aesthetic appreciation. Surely the next generation should be equipped with twenty-first century skills commensurate with the advances in industry and technology, rather than spending time on ‘soft’ learning with no practical application? Yet, and this will be the second major strand of argumentation in the essay, to posit such a dualism would be to radically miss the point of education, particularly at such a pressing moment.

Rather than sticking with the false dichotomy between arts and hard science, or, to put it in other terms, familiar to those from liberal or general education backgrounds, between learning for self improvement and advancement and instrumental or applied learning, it is time to forge new paradigms. I base this assertion on two recent theories, each of which addresses education, whether directly or indirectly, in terms of the contexts and uses to which it is put. Together, they make a strong case for changing the terms of the debate—we cannot answer questions about what to teach, far less how to teach it, until and unless we are clear about the reasons for educating, and in the current situation the answer to this fundamental question must, in some real sense, be about equipping humanity with an understanding of the climate catastrophe, and inculcating a real commitment to averting it, as much as providing the skills to do so. This means that we have to talk about values, perhaps even recalibrate values, since doing what we always have done (making profit, competing for resources) will give us what we always got (exploitation of the environment, extraction, and disregard for nature).

The first theorist I propose to consider is not one who is conventionally associated with thinking about education, yet his thesis has far-reaching consequences for how we frame our endeavours in universities and schools. I refer to the contemporary Chinese philosopher, Yuk Hui, who focuses on technicity, or the ontologies according to which technologies are ascribed value, as the cornerstone of modernity, and, in particular, led to the current state of our planet. He writes:

The Anthropocene is regarded as a new era—a new axis of time—in which human activities influence the earth system in previously unimaginable ways... The recognition of the Anthropocene is the culmination of a technological consciousness in which the human being starts to realise, not only in the intellectual milieu but also in the broader public, the decisive role of technology in the destruction of the biosphere and in the future of humanity: it has been estimated that without effective mitigation, climate change will bring about the end of the human species within two hundred years. The Anthropocene is closely related to the project of thinking modernity, since fundamentally the modern ontological interpretations of the cosmos, nature, the world, and humanity are constitutive of what led us to the predicament in which we find ourselves today. (Yuk Hui, 2016, pp.311-12)

Yuk Hui is not directly addressing the role of education, however the way in which he lays out delusional and misplaced faith in technology as the summum of human activity points clearly to the interconnections between his thesis and our “consciousness”, how we “interpret” and “imagine” the earth system and the cosmos, in short, to the basic components of education when it is conceived of contextually—perception, ontology, and understanding. This connection becomes more evident as Yuk Hui proceeds to identify the dilemma we currently confront: can we solve the planetary crisis by throwing new technological solutions at it, through an accelerated ‘geo-engineering’ of our environment, as COP26 seems to be prioritising, or do we need to learn from the mistakes of our past and adopt new approaches? His answer is informative. “Ameliorative measures” such as reducing pollution (or, one could add, carbon trading or capture), he writes, “are necessary but not sufficient”. (pp. 298-299) More important, he argues, is to become aware of how the European model of neo-liberalism, now elevated to a world ecology, is premised on a technicity that never tires in mining nature for its resources and reducing humanity to labour in its service. Other thinkers, such as Bruno Latour (2018) and Achille Mbembe, arrive at similar conclusions, and also point to the same solutions. For Latour, it is incumbent on us to seek answers that

posit “the terrestrial” as co-agent, rather than the setting for our actions (p.42), while Mbembe looks to pre-colonial Africa (much as Yuk Hui finds alternative models in Chinese traditions) for ontological and metaphysical dispositions for myths, oral literature and cosmologies that “concern the limits of the Earth; the frontiers of life, the body and the self; the themes of being and of being in relation; and of the human body as an assemblage of multiple entities, the articulations between these a task to be resumed continuously.” (89)<sup>1</sup>

In each case, it is incumbent on us to find ways to reset natural balances, find (and reimagine) ways to live sustainably, learning both from ancient, and often overlooked, forms of wisdom, and from attuning to the natural ‘cosmotronics’ that inform them. There is a lot to learn (as humans), even more to unlearn (about what human has become), and not much time in which to do it.

I refer next to the work of Tim Ingold, (2018) a very different thinker, who revisits some of the most insightful educational thinking of recent years in terms of precepts drawn from his own discipline, anthropology. Building on John Dewey’s rejection of education as a form of transmission of knowledge through imitation or inheritance, Ingold points to anthropology’s emphasis on participation, practice and community as the requisites for an attentive education, one that provides learners with shared experiences leading to reflection, reassessment and reasoning. In this sense, it is counter-intuitive to prescribe goals, or pre-determine outcomes. Instead he refers to the ancient Greek concept of ‘school time’ as unhindered by destinations or aims, much as the anthropologist approaches ‘the field’ through attending to it, rather than bringing expectations to it:

The purpose of school was not to furnish every child with a destiny in life and the means to fulfil it, in the form of a given identity with its particular ways of speaking, acting and thinking. Quite the reverse: it was to un-destine, to suspend the trappings of the social order, to detach means from ends – words from meanings, property from use, acts from intentions, thinking from thoughts – so as to set them free, bring them into presence in the here-and-now, and place them at the disposal of all... (T)he educator is not so much a custodian of ends as a catalyst of beginnings, whose task it is to restore both memory and imagination to the temporal stretch of life.

Education in this sense is a form of longing, a practice of care, a way of doing

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<sup>1</sup> The original reads “Ces questionnements concernaient les limites de la Terre, les frontières de la vie, du corps et du soi, la thématique de l’être de de la relation, du sujet humain comme un assemblage d’entités multiples dont l’agencement était une tâche sans cesse à reprendre.” Translation is mine.

undergoing, and its freedom is the freedom of habit... It is a field alive with minor gestures, in which false problems can be set aside for real ones – ‘open problems that bring us together in the mode of active enquiry’. (p.49)

Ingold goes on to draw out three characteristics of this disposition, or approach (for he is effectively considering the question of how we learn) as follows:

1. Education should not take place in isolation, independently from the concerns of society, but rather as an integrated part of the social, in common, or what he refers to as **commoning**.
2. We should not conceive of education as a staging point, or a way to get from a to b, but rather as an immersion in the thick of things. Quoting Michel Serres, (1997) he describes this as entering the middle of the river, the current or the milieu, something better thought of not as a dividing line but as **a new and unpredictable space** that ‘unfolds into a universe’. (p.48)
3. Education ought to be approached with **detachment**, leaving preconceptions behind. He denounces the orthodoxy where, instead, it is the repository of our prejudices, by quoting the French author, Daniel Pennac describing school children on their way to class, ‘Look, here they come, their bodies in the process of becoming and their families in their rucksacks’. The task of education, it becomes clear, requires these assumptions to be left outside the classroom: ‘The lesson can’t really begin until the burden has been laid aside and the onion peeled’. (Pennac, 2010, p.50)

These principles might, at first glance, seem in contradiction to my emphasis on context (in communing, the objects of study are defamiliarized, uprooted; by detaching learners from their background their situation is suspended), however, what I would argue, with Ingold, is that in seeing education as a milieu where all participate in enquiry together as equals a new kind of context is created, the educational context, and this is one that can open up, or unfold, beyond this. As Ingold concludes:

[B]eing collectively present here and now means not only that you are present to others. They are also present to you. They too are lifted from the positions and categorisations into which they have been consigned by the majority, freed up from the ends to which they are customarily deployed and brought to our attention not as objects of regard but as animate things in their own right, to which we are bound to respond... Things act, they speak to us directly, make us think: not just about them but with them. They become part of our world as we are of theirs. We care for them, as they for us. This is what it means to study. (p.49)

Our approach to education, then, for Ingold, is as important as what we study, for it is in cultivating and fostering attentive, care-ful dispositions that we learn, re-learn, or even, forge the values that we share. By stressing the animate nature of the world around us, and our obligation to it, he is clearly aligning education with an un-doing of those ideologies and philosophies that have relegated the non-human to the category of the worth-less.

\*

In the second part of the essay, I seek to apply the insights of Tim Ingold and Yuk Hui, particularly their emphasis on an attentive pedagogy, to the more local problem at hand, namely, how to approach the design of a general education component common to all students, to be taken alongside other modules. In doing so, I am aware of the many practical and political constraints involved in introducing educational change, and therefore my approach is one that is adaptable, while nonetheless being grounded in the principles of what colleagues and I have written about elsewhere (Cohen de Lara et. al., 2019) as ‘learning-centred education’—a practice that foregrounds the process of attentive and contextual learning over the expectations of teachers or the interests of learners, neither of which, on their own, can sufficiently reorient pedagogy away from reproducing existing social structures. Paolo Friere, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, provides a far-reaching critique of the former, demonstrating how traditional education dehumanises learners, but, I would argue, the dialogue he seeks can also be counter-productive if it is too far weighted in favour of learners’ agendas or direction. After all, they, as much as their teachers, are products of the same social situations. Instead, and to put it more schematically than such questions deserve, for the sake of advancing the argument, I emphasise the context, practice and content (which together constitute the ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘what’) of education over the participants (the ‘who’). My consideration of the ideas of Yuk Hui and Tim Ingold, I hope, have already provided an indication of the first two questions: determining what to teach is perhaps a more familiar conundrum to those of us working in universities. Endless turf wars over what belongs in which disciplinary group or sub-group are commonplace, and as higher education is increasingly aligned with national and corporate interests, questions about the utility of the curriculum have become highly charged. From the perspective of a planet in crisis, though, these debates pale into insignificance. Advocates of

interdisciplinarity, such as Steph Menken and Machiel Kestra, argue that it is only by questioning the assumptions behind disciplines, and integrating their insights, “notwithstanding their theoretical and methodological differences”, (Menken and Kestra, 2016, p.24) that scientific advances are possible. They cite progress in epigenetics and our understanding of visual perception as examples of how taking into account plural perspectives can counter science’s in-built assumption that “the universe will behave tomorrow according to the same laws as yesterday and today”. An interdisciplinary approach to the ‘what’ of education, they continue, is therefore one that emphasises the ways in which the object of study consists of complex adaptive systems (such as tipping points) through explicit strategies of integration (adding, adjusting and connecting perspectives, theories, knowledge bases). The relevance to our world today should be clear. As, our experiences become more complex, less predictable, and more likely to result in tipping points that overturn our existing preconceptions, then the ways in which we process information and acquire insight must, even more urgently, correspond to the problems we confront, rather than to models in textbooks we have derived from past experience.

It could be argued, however, that the requirements outlined here apply more to hard sciences than to the humanities. After all, problems such as carbon reduction, geo-engineering or medical advances are more pressing, require exactitude and will benefit the world most if they can take on board the insights of multiple scientific disciplines. As Yuk Hui has pointed out though, technicities are not ideologically neutral, and our thinking can evolve if it is informed by an awareness of which assumptions it makes, what its viewfinders are, what it includes and excludes as relevant—and these exercises are the very fabric of a humanities education, particularly one that is less fixated on the objects of study and more attentive to learning how to learn, thinking about how we think, seeing what seeing is.

Before elaborating further on an approach to General Education then, I briefly want to cite three examples demonstrating the importance of humanities approaches for students and researchers with, themselves, complex educational curricula. All three are drawn from experience. First, an ambitious programme in international studies developed to be taken alongside any disciplinary programme at the University of Technology Sydney facilitated the learning of a new language, in its cultural context, and including a year of in-country study that was supported by educators across disciplines. This gave a



generation of engineers, lawyers, medical practitioners and many other professionals a chance not just to experience new linguistic and cultural codes, or how these recalibrated the assumptions within their disciplines, but to engage with how deeply worldviews are embedded within language, and how different things look when alternative systems are adopted. Next, at Amsterdam University College, within the ambit of a liberal arts and sciences education, we pioneered laboratory-style learning in the humanities and social sciences. (Dibazar and Pratt, 2020) To some extent, this initiative already crossed the macro-disciplinary divide, as the learning design was often informed by the Science Cycle whereby predictions were tested against observations. More valuable than this though, were the lessons those involved, not least us as teachers, learned regarding the importance of attention and happenstance. Through structured activities such as watching, walking, waiting and wondering (activating the imagination by targeted inputs including first hand experience, texts and artworks), we sought empathetic encounters with what was happening around us, including that which could not be predicted. Education in the field, or in the wild, is an opening to questions that arise rather than those that are predetermined, and the Culture Lab classes I was involved in would often come upon enigmas that exceeded any of our expertise, challenging us to work out how we could find out more, and what was important to discover and know. Finally, as a humanities researcher, my most recent project considering humans at the edge of the Anthropocene exposes me to cultural objects that confront the boundaries between the human and the non-human, whether the natural world to which we intrinsically belong, yet persist in denying, or other forms of intelligence, artificial or imaginary, which, like new languages, suggest alternative ontologies and technicities, and with them, different perspectives or values. As such, in addition to considering these objects as belonging to culture, I am drawn to theorists from other areas, such as Karen Barad (2007) and Nico Carpentier (2017), who point to the importance of approaching society and culture in ways that accommodate both materiality and discourse, emphasising the entanglement of agencies in the quest for what matters.

Turning, then, to the immense opportunity for designing a General Education that matters, particularly at a critical moment for our planet, I would encourage an approach that, informed by the considerations above, rather than setting a syllabus or prescribing a curriculum, first and foremost focuses on ‘how’ and ‘why’ we attend to the world,

and takes this disposition as the starting point for the activities that follow. The implications are radical and implementing them takes courage, but confronting our responsibility for destroying the planet is perhaps the only chance we have to learn how to mend it.

To begin with, it is important that those involved in delivering the education are given time and space to prepare. They will be engaged in forms of pedagogy with which, while building on existing best practice within and beyond formal education, they may not be familiar. They will listen rather than preach, facilitate and scaffold rather than direct, discover and explore, harness collective wisdom rather than be the fount of all knowledge. My first recommendation is therefore to form an engaged and willing cohort of teachers through training workshops that put attentive and open learning into practice, and provide moments for reflection, adaption and reassessment of their own values and connections. The same principles apply to the modules themselves. Working in small groups, the students are first encouraged to talk with and actively listen to each other, as a way of becoming aware of the values they share.

However, they should also be exposed to cultural norms, practices and assumptions that differ from their own, alternative mindsets that contest the taken for granted. This can take a range of forms, including sourcing together cultural texts and objects that convey meaning and values from the past, or from other societies, and responding critically to these differences.

Since the onset of the pandemic we have developed digital formats for interaction and communication, and while these fail to match the holistic and haptic experience of embodied contact, these nonetheless offer ways to connect across continents. Partnering with learners in other countries is therefore a way of opening up new perspectives.

Next, the learning design cannot be limited to the traditional classroom. If learners are to be given opportunities to connect more authentically with the world around them, then classes need to move, encounter, test theories and ideas where they come into contact with practice and experience. As such, projects and experiments should be encouraged that require interaction with environments and communities, and stakeholders invited to join in the learning. The projects in which the learners engage ought to give rise to reflection on the uses to which their learning is put: the time when students could complete internships with companies working on tweaks that raise profit margins with no regard for the environmental or human costs has long passed.

When it comes to assessment, again a reassessment of our predetermined thinking is required. Combatting planetary decline is not measurable by nuanced grades nor by achieving prescribed learning objectives. What matters here is being present, in the fullest sense, encompassing participation and active awareness of themselves, others and the world, and none of us are competent to judge what a pass rate looks like in these regards. Instead of formal assessment then, or even any formal indication of success or failure, the module should be concluded with reflection, recognising what worked and what didn't, and the reasons for this, leading to further attention and learning. This process could lead to sharing what has been learned, even awards and celebrations, once more identified by the learners themselves, but should also humbly include equal consideration of insufficiencies, false starts and errors.

In practical terms (for I am mindful of the need for an implementable rather than idealistic recommendation), the module could begin to shape as outlined in the figures below.

**Figure 1: Planning Parameters**

<b>Pre-delivery</b> (3 month project)	Planning and refining the module, with input from a range of stakeholders and including pilot sessions with learners
<b>Teacher Training</b> (2-3 intensive workshops)	Participants should be motivated and willing to reflect on their own practice to develop facilitative and mentoring skills
<b>Module</b>	Delivered in a unique format and timeslot (for example Saturday mornings, or evenings); Groups small enough to allow all learners to interact (15 max); Has a home base (classroom) and access to learning technologies; Flexibility to range elsewhere
<b>Delivery</b> (over a semester, say 12 weeks)	1-2 Focus on learning design and developing attentiveness in learning 3-4 Cultural objects, theories and encounters providing input from different perspectives 5-6 Exploring fields of activity, practices, places 7-8 Considering and piloting what adaptations or changes might mean (project work) 9-10 Communicating findings and engaging with stakeholders 11-12 Reflecting on learning

**Figure 2: Key Components**

**Learning Design** (identifying values, assumptions and forms of alienation) – including students in the process through dialogue, with each other, with other communities, and

through critical reflection on cultural objects

**Local Learning Labs** – learning in, from and with communities (their own/others), identifying concerns and exploring solutions, giving back/placemaking

**Studio Classes** – making and doing, (co-, re-)creating, practitioner informed reflection

**Educational visits** – to sites that are not pre-determined but emerge organically as part of the learning

**Walking tours** – whether mapping, wandering, exploring, with and without commentaries, generating pathways through attention to built and natural environments

**Curating and convening** – putting collaging into practice

Encounters – on and offline, but always responsive, attentive, with care

**Reflection and Further Learning**

In brief, the components of a humanities-based general education for the mid twenty-first century should provide learners (including teachers) with spaces, activities and projects that challenge assumptions and seek new lessons, rather than reassure or comfort, encourage connection with rather than alienation from nature, each other, ourselves. A general education informed by the humanities in the current predicament ought to be taken seriously as an invitation to learners to develop an awareness of what it is to be human, what it can be, what it ought not be.

Cixin Liu, the author of the acclaimed ‘Three Body’ trilogy, which uncovers a universe where humanity loses its primacy, and ultimately the species, provides a good example of the broader perspectives that learners of the module might consider. In an earlier text, *of Ants and Dinosaurs*, he imagines earth before humans, and tells the story of how dinosaurs, hampered by their mass and clumsiness, collaborated with the agile ants, who in turn, were incapable of creative thinking. In brief, they learned together, drawing on their mutual strengths and forging technicities that corresponded through simultaneous co-working, and in doing so advanced civilisation. As the novel progresses though, they learn an important lesson, and that is that care has to extend not just to those inhabiting the planet, but crucially also to the planet that sustains life. He describes this mutual collaboration as follows:

As communication between the two worlds improved, the ants absorbed more and more knowledge and ideas from the dinosaurs, for each new scientific and cultural achievement could now be promptly disseminated throughout ant-kind. And so the critical defect in ant society – the dearth of creative thinking – was remedied, leading to the simultaneous rapid advancement of ant civilisation. The result of the dinosaur-ant alliance was that the ants became the dinosaurs’ dextrous hands while the dinosaurs became a wellspring of vision and innovation for the ants. The fusion of these budding intelligences in the late Cretaceous had

finally sparked a dramatic nuclear reaction. The sun of civilisation rose over the heart of Gondwana, dispelling the long night of evolution on Earth. (Liu, 2010, p.57)

I won't reveal the end of the novel, but let's just say that through their neglect of the proto-continent of Gondwana and the Earth, the sun will finally set on their civilisation and a long, night ensue. The subtitle of Liu's novel is a "cautionary tale". Human learning in the Anthropocene needs urgently to pay heed to our own, and others', fates if we and our planet are to co-evolve beyond the brink of catastrophe.

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## The 5<sup>th</sup> Libertas Liberal Education Symposium

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### [V] Round Table

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Vice-President, Int'l Cooperation, Korean Association of General  
Education (KAGEDU)



## Round Table

Moderator: Pf. Seok Min (Peter) HONG (洪 錫敏), Yonsei University  
with All Speakers







제5회 리베르타스 교양교육 심포지엄  
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## The 5<sup>th</sup> Libertas Liberal Education Symposium

### 제5회 리베르타스 교양교육 심포지엄

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