THE LOSS OF PERMANENT REALITIES: DEMORALIZATION OF UNIVERSITY FACULTY IN THE LIBERAL ARTS

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§1 Introduction

This paper examines a largely unrecognized mental disorder that is essentially a disability of values. It is their daily contact with this pathology that leads many university liberal arts faculty to demoralization. The deeply rooted disparity between the world of the traditional liberal arts scholar and today's college students is not simply a gulf across which communication is difficult, but rather involves a pathological impairment in the majority of students that stems from an exclusionary focus on work, money, and the acquisition of things. It is argued that this state of mind constitutes a self-disabling mental illness, which for a society becomes pathological ideology, and for the individual takes the form of clinical narcissism.

The resulting intellectual, moral, and spiritual impairment of students today renders them incapable of apprehending the *permanent realities* that are the *raison d'être* of traditional liberal arts faculty. Demoralization among these faculty is a second-order phenomenon, due to the encounter between a small professional population representing classical culture, and a larger population whose exclusionary values vitiate the range of their concerns, aptitudes, and capabilities.

§2 Faculty Demoralization

During the past several decades, the character of university study of the liberal arts has changed greatly. We are aware of the surface nature of this change, as vocationalism and monetary motivation have come to dominate higher education. Concomitant with the change in the character of liberal arts study has been the appearance of a certain form of demoralization among some university liberal arts faculty. As I try to show, the demoralization of university liberal arts faculty is a socially and culturally significant phenomenon, for what it tells us about ourselves, what we value, and what we aspire to.

Demoralization of faculty in the liberal arts has been explained as a psychological reaction, one of disappointment and, among some, clinical depression in the face of chronic stress related to university teaching.[1] According to this prevailing understanding, the main stress that liberal arts faculty experience in their university work is due to disappointment and frustration by academic reality, because of idealism and an ambition to live up to a set of ideals, which it is now difficult and perhaps impossible to achieve. Since academic reality now marches to another drum, traditional liberal arts values are inevitably compromised, and traditionally disposed idealistic, ambitious faculty become demoralized.

This understanding of the recent phenomenon of faculty demoralization in the liberal arts is, as this paper argues, both narrow and fundamentally mistaken. It is narrow because it fails to take into account the larger issues that concern, and bring grief to, many liberal arts faculty, and it is narrow because it does not recognize the strong social dynamic that brings about and perpetuates conditions antithetical to liberal arts life. It is mistaken because the demoralization that liberal arts faculty experience is due to forces much less easily comprehended and controlled than sheer vocationalism. These forces are, on a social plane, inherently pathological, specifically because they result in the spread of a largely unrecognized mental illness among today's students, as well as among much of the society at large. It is this intellectually, emotionally, and morally debilitating illness that is responsible, as I will try to show, for the demoralization of many university liberal arts faculty, as well as for the spreading epidemic loss of contact with the permanent realities to whose study the liberal arts are devoted.

[1] The clearest and most comprehensive study along these lines is Ayala Pines and Elliott Aronson: *Career Burnout: Causes and Cures* (New York: The Free Press 1988), pp. 9-10.

§3 Values and Mental Illness

Rather few psychologists have specifically emphasized the role of values in the genesis of mental illness. Viktor Frankl developed the concept of "noögenic neurosis" to describe the existential frustration that occurs when a person's need for meaning in life is blocked.[2] This frustration, and the suffering it can cause, are the result of conflict between opposing values. In the context here, such a conflict can take place between deeply felt commitments of the liberal arts scholar, and the vocational, materialist values of the majority of his students.

Other than Frankl's work, there are two schools of thought in psychology that suggest a connection between values and mental illness: phenomenological psychotherapy and rational-emotive psychotherapy. George A. Kelly's theory of personal constructs[3] is, like the phenomenological psychiatry propounded by his contemporary, J. H. van den Berg,[4] phenomenologically sensitive to the world as a person experiences or interprets it. According to Kelly, the choices that are open to a person are a function of his or her personal constructs, of the "channels of thought" that he uses to construe events. For Kelly, mental illness results when an individual's set of available choices becomes so limited as to paralyze or frustrate him in the attainment of his goals. Each of us uses a network of individual constructs to construe the world of his own experience; it is in terms of these constructs that experience has personal meaning. From this perspective, mental illness is the result of unnecessary constraints that an individual places upon himself: His values block his action and blind his vision.

Albert Ellis, following a different path, proposed that individuals are imprisoned within systems of rigid constraints, which they can however control and which they are free to liberalize. He claimed that a person's belief system — views about what "should" and "ought" to be — acts as a cognitive filter through which the individual interprets the world. Mental illness, from this point of view, results when a person's beliefs are re-

[2] See Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Washington Square Press 1959) and *The Doctor and the Soul* (New York: Knopf 1963).

[3] George A. Kelly, "Man's Construction of His Alternatives," *Readings in Current Personality Theories*, ed. Raymond J. Corsini (Itaska, Illinois: F. E. Peacock Publishers 1978), p. 121. First published in *Assessment of Human Motives*, ed. Gardner Lindzey (New York: Rinehart & Winston 1956), pp. 33-61. See also Kelly's *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (New York: W.W. Norton 1955).

[4] J. H. van den Berg, *The Phenomenological Approach to Psychiatry: An Introduction to Recent Phenomenological Psychopathology* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas 1955).

sponsible for responses to events that involve, e.g., severe anxiety, disorientation, feelings of worthlessness, futility, or depression.[5]

Though Frankl, Kelly, van den Berg, and Ellis have not extended their thought in this direction, it is evident that the values to which an individual adheres define the universe of his cares. Certainly there is a direct, even phenomenologically tautologous, relationship between a person's values and that to which he is able to attend with concentration, store effectively in memory, and sustain over a long period of time as the goal of his actions.

It was the other side of this attentional understanding of values that Kelly emphasized: We might call it the realization that attention obeys the principle of economic scarcity. Whatever occupies the attention, the concern, of an individual effectively excludes all else that is not included within the scope of that attention. In this sense, values are circumscriptive; they block the perception of alternative meaning.

We take this, then, as a general principle: The descriptive and circumscriptive character of an individual's values define the range of what for him or her is meaningful and important. Values provide focus; they also act as blinders.

Any psychologically sensitive professor soon realizes that the values of his students define and circumscribe what it is that they are capable of recognizing as a meaningful subject of interest. Much of the professor's work often falls into the category of attempting to communicate the presupposed values of his subject (as opposed to its content), values that may be new and alien to his students, and to persuade them to adopt them as their own, thereby widening the range of their genuine interests.

Unfortunately some systems of values possess an internal dynamic which makes them extremely rigid and immune to change. It is here that theory of value and psychopathology touch. When an individual, or an entire society, so firmly endorses a set of exclusionary values that the range of its interests, cares, concerns — the general boundaries of what is accepted as significant — becomes hermetically sealed, pathology results. This is the pathology of clinical narcissism, which affects individuals as well as groups, and frequently entire societies. When an individual's range of interests becomes

[5] For example, Albert Ellis, *Humanistic Psychotherapy: The Rational-Emotive Approach* (New York: McGraw-Hill 1973); A. Ellis and Robert A. Harper, *A New Guide to Rational Living* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall 1975).

pathologically self-enclosed, we call it narcissism; when this is true of the views of a group or nation, we call it ideology. Both are inherently pathological because they are characterized by a method of processing information that makes them highly rigid, exclusionary, and resistant to change.

As we shall see, the values of the vast majority of today's university students, and of their wider society, has this pathological character, and it is this pathology that is responsible, in turn, for the demoralization many university faculty in the liberal arts now experience.

§4 Acedia and the Work Epidemic

Elsewhere, I have analyzed the phenomenon of "work-engendered depression," a condition due to an exclusionary focus upon work, money, and things.[6] The culturally or spiritually depleted universe of people who inhabit a world of total work leads, I have tried to show, to a variety of depression little understood today.

Centuries ago, however, the condition was clearly acknowledged and comprehended with a remarkable degree of clarity. It was called *acedia* by the Scholastics. *Acedia* is no more, no less than a form of psychologically disabling malnutrition in which an individual, or an entire people, has lost contact with the very realities that concern the classical liberal arts scholar. These realities may be of a spiritual kind, they may be aesthetic, or they may be theoretical in nature, any of which can liberate a man or woman from the confines of a soulless dedication to the workplace, shopping malls, and financial planning.

More than any other single group, college students today exhibit the symptoms of *acedia*:[7] In the impoverished state of mind brought about by an exclusionary relish for work and its financial rewards, *acedia* leads to despair, which the Scholastics understood as an unwillingness to be fully human. They saw this form of despair as a condition of demoralization that presents an impasse to the realization of one's full human potential. From this point of view, the despair of *acedia* is a barrier that stands between the man or woman who is a slave to the world of work and money, and higher values. It is an incapacitating form of despair, because it constitutes an impairment, preventing people

[6] Steven J. Bartlett, "*Acedia*: The Etiology of Work-Engendered Depression," *New Ideas in Psychology*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1990, pp. 389-396.

[7] See the author's essay "Barbarians at the Door: A Psychological and Historical Profile of Today's College Students," forthcoming in *Modern Age*.

from transforming the mundane. The result is that their universe of concerns excludes all that is not mediocre.

This constricted human outlook brings with it the *filiae acediae*, the partners of despair in this narrowed universe, identified long ago by Aquinas.[8] They include: (i) a heightened need for distraction and stimulus; (ii) inner restlessness; (ii) instability of place or purpose; (iv) an unfocused, unanchored, indiscriminate, undisciplined attention; (v) the urge to scatter oneself in many pursuits; (vi) a repudiation, indifference toward, and neglect of higher values; (vii) antagonism toward higher values; (viii) resentful rebellion against those who represent and seek to cultivate higher ends; and (ix) a deeply seated resistance or even hatred for whatever may be capable of elevating man above the trivial, the fatuous, the superficial.

These are symptoms of individuals and of societies today that have lost contact with culture, with *cultus*, with the cultivation of liberating arts. Where for the Scholastics, *acedia* was a disease of the spirit, today it would appropriately qualify as a mental disorder. *Acedia* is essentially a disability of values that brigs with it a certain impairment of mental faculties — intellectual, aesthetic, or spiritual. It is an incapacity to cultivate leisure of a specifically liberating kind. Assuredly, the fault for *acedia* does not in the main lie with students themselves, but with the society and with the families that have transmitted to them the incapacitating blinders they wear.

§5 Liberating Values

There is a population of faculty in the liberal arts who, sometimes without self-conscious analysis, see themselves and their discipline in more or less classical terms: That is, they are committed to a certain set of beliefs about the fundamental purpose of liberal arts study, and they may also be committed to a slightly less well-formulated conception of their role in its teaching and scholarship. Among these beliefs are likely to be found convictions similar to these:

The liberal arts, or *artes liberales*, are essentially distinct from the servile arts, or *artes serviles*, both in kind and in value, in certain ways.

[8] Saint Thomas Aquinas, "Questiones Disputatae de Malo," in *Questiones Disputatae* (2 vols.) (Rome: Marietti 1949; original work published 1269-1272), Vol. II, p. 4; and *Summa Theologiae*, trans. by the English Dominican Fathers (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne 1912-1925; original work published 1265-1273), Part II of the Second Part, Ques. 35, Article 4, answer to the Second Objection.

- The servile arts are mediocritizing in their blunting effect upon the mind, and of a chore-like nature, concerned as they are with the impermanent worldly desires for monetary accumulation and practical effect. The liberal arts, in contrast, intend to liberate the individual from the circle of petty concerns of the mundane, material universe, and to open for him or her dimensions of human experience that are qualitatively different.

- These dimensions of experience make up a separate or distinguishable universe of meanings, perceived as a source of the significance of servile life. In this sense, from the standpoint of this derivational basis for human meaning, the universe to which the liberating arts provide access is hierarchically superior to the lower-order world of servile pursuits. — This is not a matter of marshaling objective and empirical facts, but, again, of descriptive phenomenology. It has the form, "If one understands by 'liberal arts' the following..., then ... is a psychological consequence."

- In the perception of the classical liberal arts scholar, human beings are unequally endowed in both their practical capacities and in their personal abilities to achieve access to this second-order, higher reality. Their practical capacities differ because of differences in personal taste, inclination, and opportunities to develop liberating skills. These inequalities may reflect individual preference, but they also stem from a poverty of opportunity to attend top-notch institutions of higher learning, to acquire libraries of fine books, of musical recordings, collections of art, etc., as well as from the scarcity of time to cultivate liberal pursuits. Too, personal abilities differ as a result of inborn talent, learned interest, and intellectual, spiritual, or aesthetic capability.

- Frequently, individuals who are particularly well-suited to liberal arts scholarship are ill-suited, or not suited at all, to other professions, just as the opposite is true. Like Thales, who, as popular legend would have it, fell into a well because his eyes were fixed on the stars, traditional liberal arts scholars tend not to be adept do-it-yourselfers in the material world; they tend not to fit the corporate mold; their psychological and personal profiles do not accord with the practical needs of reality's work-force.

  Partly as a result of their accurate self-assessment, some liberal arts scholars feel drawn ineluctably to their chosen profession with either something akin to a sense

of mission, or a more self-effacing acceptance that this is all they can do competently. Their sense of mission relates to their perception that meaning in the transitory practical world is ultimately derivative from an enduring universe of more permanent realities, which we will discuss later.

These are some of the convictions that identify the personal point of view of what I have termed the classical liberal arts scholar. As a personal point of view, it is inherently deliminative and judgmental. The lines of meaning are pre-drawn for such a scholar; he fits into a bi-partite reality in a non-ambidextrous fashion: where he can touch his finger to his nose with consummate skill in one dimension, he often is completely at a loss in everyday life. He is both endowed with a gift, as well as the victim of a disability. He can see in the world of the blind, but blunders blindly in the midst of those whose vision is mundane.

He is also judgmental, since his perspective is essentially elitist and non-egalitarian. For him, however, elitism and the natural rights of man are not in themselves necessarily political issues, or manifestations of personal arrogance, but facts in a life-world that is constituted as it is. This is the province of phenomenological psychology's descriptive interest in the *logos* of the psyche, a concern to make explicit the regulative principles of a particular life-world. That there exists a higher and a lower reality is as evident to the classical liberal arts scholar as the distinction between sea and land is for the man on the street. It is not a relevant matter of funding empirical studies with double-blind control groups to determine whether or not there is a genetic basis for liberal arts interest, talent, and skill. Reality for the classically paradigmatic liberal arts scholar simply comes with built-in indications of what is higher and what is lower.

Unfortunately for him, the political sensitivities of other men and women are easily ruffled. His in principle innocent perspective, which provides the scholar with a sense of balance and orientation toward what for him is most meaningful, is capable of being used against him by the politically driven. Certainly elitism and a repudiation of egalitarian principles can lead to overweening pride and abusive social evils, but this fact, with its historical, political, educational, and highly emotional overtones, is out of place in this discussion, whose intent is purely to describe the world as it is experienced by the classically disposed liberal arts scholar.

§6 Barbarism, Liberal Arts, and Permanent Realities

Elsewhere,[9] I have tried to show that the narcissism characterizing the mental and emotional world of today's college students, and of American and other industrialized societies today, meets the criteria that define barbarism. By barbarism, I mean a general intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual incapacity for culture: in other words, a form of impairment that blocks an individual or a population from access to a specific, distinct, and higher order universe of meaning, in contrast to mundane, immediate, and mediocre reality. The impairment in question fulfills the definitional conditions of a mental illness in that its victims exhibit specific symptoms of pathological narcissism and, in addition, manifest certain intellectual, emotional, and spiritual impairments. Their disability renders them incapable of apprehending what I call 'permanent realities.'

A century ago, the existence of permanent realities was so well established in human experience as not to require special mention, and certainly not defense or justification. Times and the abilities we have encouraged in our homes and schools have changed considerably, so that not only is the phrase 'permanent realities' suspect, but it has overtones of occultism and primitive metaphor, and excites the ire of committed relativists.

There are only two justifications of the existence of anything whose existence is questioned: One is appeal to observation,[10] the other is recourse to logical proof. In either instance, repeatability of an observation or proof by a plurality of investigators is a precondition for asserting public existence.

In terms of observability, relativists are at home in the recognition that the existence of anything can only be determined in a framework-relative manner, so that the existence of a sound, for example, can only be directly apprehended by someone who possesses an auditory frame of reference, i.e., by someone who can hear, sense air vibrations, etc., or by an instrument capable of registering sound. Similarly, the existence of an illuminated object can only be directly recognized from the standpoint of a light-sensitive apparatus or observer. This is no less true of permanent realities, whose existence is disclosed in a

[9] See note 7.

[10] The term 'observation' is used here in an extended sense: Its use is not restricted to testimony of the senses, but includes whatever non-deductive fact-establishing capacities human beings may possess, including intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual apprehension.

wide variety of ways, some of which we will note in passing. The case for the reality of any object of reference is decidable in just such a framework-relative way, and yet, as we will see, framework-relativism does not preclude permanence.

To clarify what I mean by 'permanent realities,' it will be helpful to mention some of the kinds of frameworks of reference from the standpoint of which permanent realities become evident: Within the traditional liberal arts, for example, mathematics, art, music, literature, philosophy, and religion were thought to provide such frameworks of reference. In a wide variety of ways, too varied and complex to consider here, these disciplines focused attention on subjects that mattered to individuals whose interests invested them with certain cares. Generally these cares involved a concern for realities of a higher order that do not change with the passage of time, and do not vary in character when identified by different individuals at different times. Terms like '*logos*,' 'formal reality,' 'transcendental principles,' etc., were used to refer to them.

These subjects of interest to mathematicians, philosophers, and others were asserted to be *perennial* in that the permanent realities they study constitute a level of discourse and of understanding that is enduring and beyond the effects of the passage of time.

Traditionally, the concern for realities of a higher order has possessed a special quality of attention, which has been called reverence or veneration. Many classical authors have so firmly associated reverence with the ability to become conscious of permanent realities, that reverence may well serve as a practical precondition for that consciousness.[11]

Reverence for permanent realities is essentially a form of respect that comes with an awareness that the objects of one's consciousness are timeless: that here one is presented with a special form of human understanding that transcends the transient and concrete. Reverence and the full realization that one has come into contact with realities of a higher order are concomitant. The respect in question has several aspects: It can serve as a source of appreciation felt toward one's subject, a source of motivation in one's work, and a source for meaning in one's life. Respect of this kind may evidently be a deeply felt value, one that would have to be shared by professor and his students, if permanent realities are to constitute the subject-matter; if this value is not already shared, then it

[11] The central role of reverence has been argued most forcefully in this century by George A. Panichas. The reader is referred to his "critical trilogy," consisting of *The Reverent Discipline* (1974), *The Courage of Judgment* (1982), and *The Critic as Conservator* (1992).

would need to be communicated by the professor and then felt by his students, to provide a context for their study.

But in fact, permanent realities no longer are the concern of most professors or of their students. This is not to say that mathematics is no longer done, or that the study of art, music, literature, philosophy, and religion no longer has a place in higher education. They do clearly still occupy a place, but the focus is no longer upon permanent realities themselves, but rather upon the acquisition of specific relevant skills, attainment of concrete results, and the like. It is as though, on a journey, one's eyes were fixed only on the steps taken by one's feet, without ever noticing the distant range of mountains which are one's goal.

The attitude of respect toward permanent realities has nearly disappeared, simply because permanent realities tend no longer to be explicit objects of attention. The formal character of mathematics and the other disciplines has not disappeared, but it has become much more difficult to apprehend reflectively, both by faculty and by their students. There are two reasons for this: The approaches of the disciplines have changed, and the values of researchers and teachers in these fields have become impoverished, as a result of the epidemic of *acedia* in the society and in the academic world.

Mathematicians, to take a clear example, have generally accepted that the extended family of proofs of formal limitation — beginning with Gödel's demonstrations, and then expanded by Kleene, Roser, Kalmár, Gentzen, Church, Turing, Post, Tarski, Mostowski, Löwenheim, Skolem, Henkin, Wang, Curry, Myhill, Chwistek, Uspenskij, Kreisel, and others — show that deductive, axiomatic mathematics is no longer capable of universality and total comprehension. The tendency in mathematics has been to interpret formal limitative results to mean that mathematical truth must now take a humble place, haltingly spelled out by a repertoire of results that can never be made formally complete, and though not themselves inherently tentative, they no longer have the permanent character that mathematicians saw in the objects of their work a century ago.

Philosophy, too, is now embarrassed by suggestions of permanence. Absolutism and the elitism it conveyed are not in the vogue of conventionalism, hermeneutics, language games, heuristics, etc., and at this time are assuredly not politically correct. Art, music, literature, and religion have similarly turned away from a recognition of and focus upon permanent realities, and have self-comfortingly embraced a voluntary myopia that keeps the professional's nose to the grindstone. Reflections relating to *logos* in literature, art,

and music are now simply no longer the fashion, and are much more difficult to achieve, because the values of the time are in opposition. The ecumenism of religion, the multicultural anthropology of world religions, and the contextualism of faiths have similarly left spirituality in a universe of discourse dominated by comparative mythology, linguistic metaphor, and cultural relativism.

Relativity physics, to some extent, has offered a counterexample to this trend. Einstein's special and general theories, while acknowledging framework-relativity for the individual observer, have remained for physicists clearly metacontextual insights: The framework-relativity they determine is at the same time a metacontextual formulation that transcends the relativism of individual physical frameworks, and so has a more clearly acknowledged permanent character as physical law.

Framework-relativism in other disciplines is no more, no less than this: The identification and formulation of general principles governing framework-relative cases. These principles themselves possess the same characteristics of permanence, categorical definiteness, and temporal unchangeability as did their classical correlates. Unfortunately, the more complex logic of framework-relativism has been misinterpreted to imply tentative, provisional, impermanent results.[12]

If the approaches used by the liberal arts disciplines have changed, certainly the attitude shared by its scholars and teachers has done little to oppose the tide. The epidemic of *acedia* has narrowed the human outlook, so that, with few exceptions, creative individuals and the teachers who transmit liberal learning alike have succumbed to exclusionary, myoptic values that have now so constricted man's vision that culture has no central place in higher education or in life. When there is a loss of reverence, contact with permanent realities is lost.

I mentioned earlier in this section a second way in which the existence of permanent realities can be demonstrated. In addition to their apprehension in the course of research in the liberal disciplines, there is also logical demonstration. The form of such a proof is

[12] For a discussion of the metalogic of framework-relative studies, see the author's *A Relativistic Theory of Phenomenological Constitution: A Self-Referential, Transcendental Approach to Conceptual Pathology* (Université de Paris, 1970; *Diss. Abs. Internatl.* No. 7905583); "The Idea of a Metalogic of Reference," *Methodology and Science*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1976, pp. 85-92; "Referential Consistency as a Criterion of Meaning," *Synthese*, Vol. 52, 1982, pp. 267-282; with Peter Suber, ed., *Self-Reference: Reflections on Reflexivity* (Dordrecht, Holland: Martinus Nijhoff 1987); *Reflexivity: A Source-Book in Self-Reference* (Amsterdam, Holland: North-Holland, Elsevier Science Publishers 1992).

as follows; for a more detailed presentation, I refer the reader elsewhere:[13] Consider the frame of reference from the standpoint of which reference to such permanent realities is possible; that is, consider a framework in terms of which permanent realities can be identified, described, etc.[14] Such a context of reference is essential in order for permanent realities to constitute a meaningful topic of reference; this is tautologous. Now, the relativist who wishes to deny the existence of permanent objects cannot meaningfully deny their existence without self-referential inconsistency, for to do so would deny what must be assumed in order for it to be possible for permanent objects to have their intended meaning. In other words, the attempt to reject the existence of permanent objects is self-undermining, since it must grant the referential preconditions for the identification of the objects whose existence it would deny.

Both ways of establishing the existence of permanent objects, whether by means of observation or by logical proof, require, in fact, a certain capacity in an audience; some such capacity in an audience would be required for the establishment of the existence of any category of objects. If the audience is congenitally blind, for instance, visual objects can have no real meaning for them. This is why certain phenomenological philosophers, Husserl, for example, have stipulated that students of phenomenology possess a certain special ability, *eidetic* insight; it is a pragmatic prerequisite, so to speak, for phenomenological study. The permanent reality conveyed by a piece of music similarly requires a special sensibility in the listener. Religion, in the same sense, requires a framework of faith or contemplation. Mathematicians like Poincaré spoke of a special variety of formal intuition required by creative mathematical proof.[15] The understanding and appreciation of the permanent reality expressed by individual works of art and literature requires formal-operational thought, to employ Piaget's categories. Certainly, there are special capacities required for the apprehension of different types of permanent reality.

Here, we must admit to an elitism of abilities: Not everyone is capable of the sensibilities required by each discipline. Sometimes, such sensibilities appear to lend themselves to learning; often we must rely upon in-born sensibilities, or talent. But ours is not a time in

[13] See references in the preceding note.

[14] If the objection is made that the assumption here involves a *petitio principii*, in a benign sense it does: It is the assumption made by the man who can see, and who attempts to describe vision to those who lack the faculty. Reference to "visual objects" by those who cannot see, and for whom this category of experience is denied, is of course empty of meaning.

[15] See, for example, Jacques Hadamard, *The Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1945).

which the public, or our institutions of higher learning, wish to confess to an elitist outlook. Everyone must be equally able to do everything. This ideological commitment to a democracy of abilities insures, for the reasons we have seen, that permanent realities will remain out of grasp.

§7 The Psychology of Demoralization Among Liberal Arts Faculty

So far in this paper, we have threaded a way through a series of subjects: from a discussion of the connection between values and mental illness, in which values that lead to rigid, hermetic self-enclosure were characterized as pathological; to a description of the mental illness of *acedia*, which results in an impairment to an individual's capacity for culture and the inability to realize his or her potential; to a description of the traditional values of liberal arts faculty, recognizing that these values promote a sense of direction, yet can also be disabling in the context of everyday life; and concluding with a group of reflections concerning the ontology of permanent realities, the nature of the realities that concern us, the need in their study for certain abilities or sensibilities, and the absence of any incompatibility between permanent realities and framework-relativity.

Our purpose in this analysis is to understand just why it is that some university faculty in the liberal arts have become deeply demoralized. The answer proposed here is more complex than earlier studies of so-called "career burnout": It is not a matter of the disappointed idealism of youth, or of frustrated ambition. Rather, demoralization among liberal arts faculty is due to their regular contact with a population of students who are victims of a pathological narrowing of outlook that renders them incapable of the learning the traditional liberal arts professor would seek to communicate. Demoralization of liberal arts faculty, as I have described it, is a second-order phenomenon that results from the encounter between a small professional population representing classical culture, and a much larger population whose exclusionary values significantly impair the range of their concerns and abilities.

The sickness that pervades much of the society and infects the minds of today's college students is a very real, clinically significant phenomenon. The narrowing of outlook that this paper has focused upon is not a metaphorical impoverishment, but represents a state of substantial impairment, intellectual in nature, or aesthetic, or spiritual, and usually all in combination. Tragically, the social dynamic that maintains the pathology is strongly

self-reinforcing, so that the barbarity of thought and consequent behavior is self-perpetuating.[16]

The demoralization of some classically-oriented liberal arts faculty would be a topic of a certain rather specialized interest, were it not for the fact that the phenomenon represents one of the first visible symptoms among a group of professionals of a widespread, destructive, and regressive change in society. It is a giant step backward for civilization.

An individual's values define what for him are most significant, desirable, and important. The values of the classically disposed liberal arts scholar define an unbounded world of meanings, human aspirations, and goals in living. The exclusionary outlook of the victim of *acedia* also defines a world, but one of narrowly construed meanings, aspirations, and goals. Within the walls of higher education, the two sets of values occasionally meet in the classrooms of liberal arts scholars. Many of them are troubled by the frustration they feel, as *acedia* blocks a professor's communication of liberal arts values to his students. Such faculty experience a grief that is rekindled daily in their contact with minds deadened to culture by a debilitating impoverishment of the spirit that has no known human remedy. Some of these demoralized faculty will mistakenly come to believe that they are victims of "career burnout" in their profession, but moving to another career may be made difficult or impossible by their sense of mission, or their inability to adapt to the everyday world.

CONCLUSION

If the perspective offered in this paper is correct, the diagnosis of career burnout is far from accurate. Instead, the demoralization university liberal arts faculty feel is fundamentally the demoralization that comes from a losing moral struggle against the epidemic of a pathogen that destroys human culture and the human ability to contact permanent realities.

[16] See note 7.