

Lifelong learning in the Liberal Arts: Awakening to the “terrible beauty” of ideas

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Abstract

In 1945-1946 Bernard Lonergan gave a course to Montreal adults entitled `Thought and Reality`. His questioning methodology set the stage for topical exploration of multidisciplinary themes anchored each year by new and burning questions. The reading-discussion courses challenge students and discussion leader learners to unlock the secrets of the universe, to catch a glimpse of the good, to rethink the shaping of enquiring minds, and to appreciate how to harness the power of examining minds through art, literature and music.

Keywords Music, art and literature in Liberal Arts Education

Biographies:

Dr. Heather Stephens earned a Ph. D. in medicine from the University of Montreal and then was a post-doctoral fellow in London, England under Victor Dubowitz. She worked for two decades as a research neurobiologist in the field of muscular dystrophy, presenting papers internationally. Since 1967, she has been involved with the Thomas More Institute in one hundred multi-disciplinary courses first as a Liberal Arts student, then discussion leader designing courses yearly, incorporating literature with a view to enhancing the aesthetic appeal of course material. She is Registrar of the Institute, where she was a Director for over twenty years and also a member of the Institute's research affiliate.

Dr. Gert Morgenstern trained with Jean Piaget in Switzerland and John Bowlby in London. He has worked for over five decades as a child psychiatrist with McGill University at the Douglas Hospital in Montreal and presently visits professionally three communities in Northern James Bay. He is a musician and has sung with many choirs. For thirty years he has also pioneered the use of music in his Psychiatry for the Layman university-level course which he designs yearly for the Thomas More Institute where he is a Director/Member of the Board and for twenty years President of its Research affiliate.

Lifelong learning in the Liberal Arts: Awakening to the “terrible beauty” of ideas

The Thomas More Institute in Montreal offers a Bachelor of Arts degree in liberal arts through a 1975 affiliation agreement with Bishop’s University. The 108-credit degree requires proficiency in eight areas of study including philosophy, classical and world literature, history and religious studies/ theology. It highlights the importance of mathematics and both the natural and social sciences as necessities to open doors to creative abstraction (O’Connor, 1987). With the founding of its 1959 companion Research Institute in Adult Liberal Studies, the Thomas More Institute has promoted scholarly exchange on novel approaches to adult learning many of which have been documented in the series Thomas More Institute Papers.

From *Insight* to *Method*

In 1945-1946, the first year of what was to become the Thomas More Institute, Bernard Lonergan gave a foundational course entitled “Thought and Reality”. At the end of the year heartened by the enthusiasm and joy of students who ‘got it’, he started work on what was to become his seminal work, *Insight* (1957), on how humans come to understand. He formulated a cognitional structure comprised of experiencing, understanding, judging and valuing. From the transcendental precepts of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible, arise different kinds of enquiry. These queries include 1) questions for intelligence (i.e. the 'primordial drive of the pure question, the who, what, where, why of history), 2) questions for reflection (i.e. is it true?), and 3) questions of value (i.e. is it worthwhile?). Some questions can be ‘simply’ answered by facts/data but others evade definitive answers. Their widely-ranging fields of action evoke great literature and art and can be used effectively to anchor philosophic course enquiry. Examples include Paul Gauguin’s series (‘Whence come we? What are we? Whither go we?’) immortalized in his

‘musical poem’ and well-known oil painting, a spiritual testament, a cri de coeur springing out of the mysteries of the human predicament (Skira, 1953). Gauguin’s questions crystallize an interior search for meaning. Finally, the highest level of Lonergan’s conscious and intentional operations is decisional calling for individuals to act to become self-reflective, authentic human beings. The functional specializations involved are worked through in Lonergan’s 1972 *Method in Theology*.

At this juncture inspired by the Great Books Foundation of Chicago the Thomas More Institute had explored the possibility of small reading-discussion groups rather than magisterial lectures from professors (Tansey, 1993). There was an intellectual cross-fertilization of Lonergan’s ‘unrestricted desire to know’, which married with the Institute’s newly designed annual course offerings. These were inspired by undercurrents percolating below everyday consciousness of issues demanding to be faced by an informed citizenry. This creative symbiosis culminated in Lonergan being asked in 1975 to give a convocation address on “*Healing and Creating in History*” at the Mt. Royal hotel. The juxtaposition of disparate disciplines resulted in an important synthesis of economic and political theory invoking human development from above downwards and below upwards- healing vectors promoting cross-talk between disciplines. This unusual topic was assigned to address the central questions informing the reading-discussion course “To heal and to create: Communal effort in history” designed by Charlotte Tansey, one of the Institute’s founders along with Father Eric O’Connor, Lonergan’s lifetime friend and mathematics colleague.

Learning in Community

The group learning discussion groups are usually multidisciplinary and enlivened by short stories, novels, poetry, music. The discussion leaders are amateurs, volunteer and, often, lifelong, addicts of the Platonic eros. They are educators but not necessarily elites (Byers,

2007). The learning is co-operative rather than competitive. Eric O'Connor (1987) in a conversation with Bernard Lonergan emphasized how it is necessary to discover personal and interior meaning within oneself: definitions won't help genuine learning. According to

Gerald MacGuigan:

The salient mark of the Thomas More Institute for adult learning is, I suppose, the conviction that a truly human education is not, in its aim, instrumental, a fattening up for the marketplace, but rather a manifestation of the desire to know, a desire to make curiosity the centre of one's life, a launching of oneself onto the largely uncharted seas of the world and oneself. The second mark is the fact that this adventure is not undertaken alone but in the company of other adventurers in a kind of convoy. Not for protection: there are no enemies; nor for morale as in a regiment, but for good company, as with Chaucer's pilgrims (Thomas More Institute Discussion Leader's Handbook).

Nonetheless the journey for the (degree) student is facilitated by the interventions of the discussion leader teams. The process has been compared to mapmaking (Dias, 2004) and orchestra conducting (Morgenstern, 1984).

Northrup Frye's fascination with story also took hold to kindle the imagination of Institute course designers. Along with other scholars his visits ignited sparks below the surface that would burst into flame as new course offerings. Frye (1982) emphasized how words of power can unleash and hone the operations of the human mind:

The ideal of the scholar is to convey what he knows as clearly and fully as he can: he lays down his head and remains dummy, so to speak, while the reader plays it. The teacher may do some of his work as a scholar on a popularizing level, retailing established information to less advanced students. This conception of teaching as secondhand scholarship is common among academics, but I regard it as inadequate. The teacher, as has been recognized at least since Plato's *Meno*, is not primarily someone who does not know. He is rather someone who attempts to re-create the subject in the student's mind, and his strategy in doing this is first of all to get the student to recognize what he potentially knows, which includes breaking up the powers of repression in his mind that keep him from knowing what he knows. That is why it is the teacher rather than the student, who asks most of the questions...To answer a question...is to consolidate the mental level on which the question is asked. Unless something is kept in reserve, suggesting the possibility of better and fuller questions, the student's mental advance is blocked (p. xv).

The course designers set up the underlying and motivating subthemes that eventually mould the initially unconscious stirrings into a full-blown process of inquiry to be embraced by all the students.

‘Digging Deeper’

For many the success of Thomas More Institute courses rests on the intensity of the inquiry necessitating a very close and meditative reading, especially by the trio of discussion leaders. To find the significant question, Margaret Mead’s idea in the center of the table, is a demanding and formidable task. The leader only guides the conversation like a midwife, in a neutral fashion. (Every third week the leaders exchange positions so as to have an occasion to express one’s opinion, which also reinforces the concept that the leader is not an expert- the professor is the text). Often an appeal to emotions through fiction works as one delves deep into common ground. In a similar vein, Laurence Freeman (1998) hones in like a magnet in a discussion on the problem of tolerance between peoples of different faiths. He suggests “there is a deeper experience beyond language and thought. In that experience, which is silence, uniqueness and difference, along with all the other dualities, coincide: they meet in a unity that respects and fulfills difference and at the same time transcends division. This is love.” In addition, the theologian Paul Ricoeur in a dialogue with neuroscientist Jean-Pierre Changeux (2000) also echoes the need to unpeel the layers of onion skin, to ‘dig deeper’

Let me propose to you a comparison I am fond of making. I am standing on the surface of a fragmented sphere at a point that lies between different religious areas: if I try to run along this surface- if I try to be eclectic- I will never reach a universal religion through syncretism; but if I go deeply enough into my own tradition, I will go beyond the limits of my language. In moving toward what I call the fundamental- what others reach by other routes – I shorten the distance between myself and others along the dimension of depth. On the surface, the distance separating us is immense; but if I dig down, I draw nearer to the other, who travels the same path (p. 185).

What has five decades of course design and learning (see Tansey, 2004) revealed about plumbing the psychic depths (of an individual, culture). Let's turn to Eric Vogelin (1957) for a reply based on the Platonic notion of *pathos*:

The level of communication, if there is one to be found at all, lies deeper. And to this deeper level Plato must now appeal...This deeper level Plato designates by the term *pathos* (481C). Pathos is what men have in common, however variable it may be in its aspects and intensities. Pathos designates a passive experience, not an action; it is what happens to man, what he suffers, what befalls him fatefully and what touches him in his existential core...as for instance the experiences of Eros...In their experiences to pathos all men are equal, though they may differ widely in the manner in which they come to grips with it and build the experience into their lives..the *pathema* experienced by all may result in a *mathema* different for each man. The community of pathos is the basis of communication.

In our search for healing middle ground consider Chevalier (2002, p. 21):

The preceding comments imply that thought and mind can be reduced to brain on one condition: that the brain "becomes subject," through art, science, and philosophy (Deleuze and Guattari 1994:210). Husserl (1965:154) was right in this regard: the human sciences cannot and should not try to be exact. A better question, however, is whether any science should aspire to exactitude. The question applies to brain studies. Can they succeed where philosophical speculations about the mind have failed? Can neuroscience objectify the brain? I think not. As Deleuze and Guattari (1994:209) put it, "it seems difficult to treat philosophy, art and even science as 'mental objects,' simple assemblages of neurons in the objectified brain...If the mental objects of philosophy, art, and science...have a place, it will be in the **deepest** of the synaptic fissures, in the hiatuses, intervals, and meantimes of a nonobjectifiable brain, in a place where to go in search of them will be to create.

The art of telling the story

Over five decades in hundreds of courses designers at the Thomas More Institute have incorporated the use of short stories, novels and other varieties of literature to enhance students' engagement with the course material (Mason 2004; Tansey 2004). In an unpublished comment Charlotte Tansey claimed that "meeting as an artistic event is essential for learning. It's absolutely pivotal, because if we don't meet at a level both of humility and exaltation in a group, we can never talk to each other in a way that enables us to confer on

each other the kind of growth that's necessary if the process is to work at all". Indeed, as she professed "discussion leading is an art" (Tansey, 2004). The human attending to artistic events can be transformative (O'Hara, 2004). For instance novelists William Golding, Nadine Gordimer, Ian McEwen and J. M. Coetzee are powerful evokers of imaginative empathy, common ground. C. S. Lewis is a gold mine for cutting-edge science and story is a powerful tool for gently introducing the wary into science (Stephens, 2004). Last years' 2009-2010 "Power and Corruption" course pivoted around the phenomenal *All the Kings Men* by Robert Penn Warren. This exceptional novel is as much a philosophic and poetic treatise as a work on political history. Indeed, this year's 2010-2011 course on "Upending the Nature-Nurture debate" will revolve around preoccupations concerning human nature and will take an in-depth weekly analysis of the novel chapter-by-chapter. For instance the protagonist Jack Burden comments (Warren, 1946):

By the time we understand the pattern we are in, the definition we are making for ourselves, it is too late to break out of the box. We can only live in terms of the definition, like the prisoner in the cage in which he cannot lie or stand or sit... Yet the definition we have made of ourselves is ourselves. To break out of it, we must make a new self. But how can the self make a new self when the selfness which it is, is the only substance of which the new self can be made (p. 529).

Short extracts from the recent film of the same name will be used to highlight the issues. In addition to inviting students to care (and learn) about issues through pivotal literary figures, the passions that music can arouse are harnessed in our psychiatry courses.

Music in the Discussion Group

Our experience with liberal education has shifted the emphasis somewhat: keeping the focus on the promotion of the desire to learn in balance with the mastery of the text, it has continued to look for questions and context more than content. Students are encouraged to be

curious about the unknown beyond the horizon of their own understanding and of their colleagues' (not to speak of the authors of the texts). The truth is seen through the prism of the Copenhagen interpretation (Casti, 1989, p. 442-444) that every absolute statement coexists with a complementary contradictory statement that is, with the required effort of the imagination, equally justifiable. Our truths are limited by our means of measuring or expressing them, and the Truth is infinite: even the cumulative wisdom of all the minds in the class is thereby virtually reduced to the noise or the silence that so frequently frustrates our consensus.

So we try to promote the imagination: we encourage intuitive and personal interventions, electronic correspondence between students, satellite micro-discussion groups, even the use of poetry...and music.

Gilles Trembley has expressed the potential of music as follows: "To compose is to put things together All the events that are happening to us are pregnant of music Because they have relation in time, in density: A phone call, a political event, The texture of the skin that somebody did you touch. These events are not separable one from the other. They have relations. The conclusion is that for the musician everything could be transfigured and perceived as music." His demonstration of this is found on the first disc of "*Canadian Composers Portraits: Gilles Trembley*", (Canadian Music Centre, 2003).

What Trembley elucidates for the aesthetic dimension, Ethan Watters has made pertinent in his plea to liberalize the teaching methodology in the psychiatry profession, in his 2010 article "The Americanization of Mental Illness":

All cultures struggle with intractable mental illness with varying degrees of compassion and cruelty, equanimity and fear. Looking at ourselves through the eyes of those living in places where madness and psychological trauma are still imbedded in complex religious and cultural narratives, however we get a glimpse of ourselves as an increasingly insecure and fearful people. Some philosophers and psychiatrists have

suggested that we are investing our great wealth in researching and treating mental illness because we have rather suddenly lost older belief systems that once gave meaning and context to mental suffering.

If our rising need for mental health services does indeed spring from a breakdown of meaning, our insistence that the rest of the world think like us may be all the more problematic. Offering the latest Western mental health theories, treatments, and categories in an attempt to ameliorate the mental stress sparked by modernization and globalization is not a solution; it may be part of the problem. When we undermine local conceptions of the self and modes of healing, we may be speeding along the disorienting changes that are at the very heart of the world's mental disorder.

At one point in the 1999-2000 course called "Should We Learn to Talk To Strangers?", a student who had expressed his distress at the lack of secure answers and consensual support in the class process was told that his distress was indeed part of the subject of the course:

Dear student, I am sorry to inform you that you are indeed alone. But I must immediately offer the consolation: so are we all in our class (some may realize it more than others). I chose readings not to answer the questions of the course about friendships, communities, and talking to strangers (for there would be no work for our discussion to do), but to furnish a boundary to push beyond, a bond to pull together, and a bone to pick at in our common isolation.

The unwritten lessons are hidden in your colleagues' frustrated attempts to seize the emerging truth (and the authors of the writings too, for they have served their terms as one-time best-sellers and obsolete benchmarks. Perhaps a little poem might help: Listen closely, fellow member: One hand clapping is one gender; if you want to hear applause Ask a mate from Santa Claus. If you've got to get it right, you must turn hermaphrodite! If you must that urge abate Send it off to be castrate! Wouldn't it take quite a dunce Trying all these things at once? Yet we want to be unique, neither clone or neither freak... From your readings make no choice: Rage against them; raise your voice! We who love to read your page Need to rattle the same cage (Morgenstern, 2000).

Daniel Barenboim (2008) wrote in "*Music Quickens Time*":

Music is not separated from the world; it can help us forget and understand ourselves simultaneously. In a spoken dialogue between two human beings, one waits until the other is finished what he has to say before replying or commenting on it. In music two voices are in conversation simultaneously, each one expressing itself to the fullest, while at the same time listening to the other. We see from this not only about music but from music... a lifelong process. Children can be taught order and discipline through rhythm. Young adults who experience passion for the first time and lose all sense of discipline can see through music how the Two must coexist... even the most passionate phrase has to have an underlying sense of order. What is, ultimately,

perhaps the most difficult lesson for the human being... learning to live with discipline yet with passion, with freedom yet with order, is evident in any single phrase of music (p.17).

In class we played Barenboim's 1991 interpretation of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Goldberg Variations* number 18 (Erato-Disques) to inject the experience of multiple voices embraced in perfect harmony. His book emphasizes how important listening to music can be to facilitate group listening to disparate voices, learning how to harmonize.

But Beethoven dramatized even more poignantly how passion arises and is contained in each individual, and how individuals can merge their antagonism in a considerate but fiery duet in the opening of his "Kreutzer" sonata for piano and violin, number 9 (Martha Argerich and Gidon Kramer on Deutsche Grammophon, 1995). This was played first in class when the heat of class discussion threatened to disrupt the decorum. There was a stunned silence...and then beauty had its way.

What Beethoven expressed for couples, the World Saxophone Quartet could embody for a whole people: the black population of America. In their "*Requiem for Julius*" (Justin Time Records 137-2, 2002), their track Blues exemplifies the resilience of former slaves, the popular solidarity of their blues form, and the incredible energy, liberty, and versatility in joint improvisation with which they embraced these.

That spirit could be exported across oceans, across epochs, and across media. In 1957, Louis Malle was looking for music to accompany a dark film starring Jeanne Moreau called "Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud". Miles Davis crossed his path and gathered together a quintet who improvised the score about lost souls in Paris even as they viewed the movie on the screen. It was caught on the Fontana record (Polygram Jazz 1988) in this years 2010-2011 course "Brain, Mind and Adventures of Ideas". It was intended to contextualize the

alienation mixed with protest that our group was experiencing (*Florence sur les Champs Elysees*) in the burden of guilt and isolation brought on by a discussion of evil in society.

John Adams provided musical settings for moral controversies but questioned whether music's prime responsibility was social (*The John Adams Reader*, editor: Thomas May, 2006)

"I am uncertain about what kind of dynamic exists between encountering a work of art and then transforming that experience into social action. For sure, an artwork's aesthetic value has nothing to do with its social import." Here is what we quoted from his opera *Doctor*

Atomic:

Batter my heart, three-personed God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek
to mend; That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurped town, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but Oh, to no end.
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
But I am betrothed to your enemy:
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except that you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Adams' setting for Donne's sonnet does nothing to resolve Oppenheimer's anguish at the complicity with Hiroshima's evil that his knowledge has brought, but it leaves us listeners little room for indifference or cynicism. Other musical contexts open other opportunities as contexts for various aspects of moral reflection: Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, as he defiantly confronts his victim's spirit (scene 15, track 10 in Ferenc Fricsay's version for Deutsche Grammophon, 1961), projects proud anger, while Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* is saturated with fatal guilt (opening scene and closing scene in Andre Cluytens 1962 version, tracks I:1,2 and III:19). Shostakovich, who had ridden the rollercoaster of politics for a lifetime, leaves a message of enigmatic, compassionate irony in the opening of his fifteenth symphony (Bernard Haitink, Decca 1977). Stravinsky tunes down the dimension of social engagement to mock the devil rather than lament the loss of meaning in his post-Mozartian opera, *The*

Rake's Progress, R. Chially, Decca 1984) from which we quoted (lyrics are by W.H.Auden but the music has attitude too):

In youth the panting slave pursues The fair evasive dame; Then, caught in colder fetters, woos Wealth, office, or a name; Till, old, dishonoured, sick, downcast And failing in his wits, In Virtue's narrow cell at last The withered bondsman sits. That man alone his fate fulfils, For he alone is free Who chooses what to will, and wills His choice as destiny. No eye his future can foretell, No law his paths explain Whom neither Passion can compel Nor reason can restrain

This section of excerpts ends with a legacy from Benjamin Britten, towards the end of his opera, *Death in Venice*:

All folly, all pretence O perilous sweetness The wisdom poets crave. Socrates knew, Socrates told us. Does beauty lead to wisdom, Phaedrus? Yes, but through the senses. Can poets take this way then For senses lead to passion, Phaedrus, Passion leads to knowledge Knowledge to forgiveness To compassion with the abyss. Should we then reject it, Phaedrus, The wisdom poets crave, Seeking only form and pure detachment Simplicity and discipline? But this is beauty, Phaedrus, Discovered through the senses And senses lead to passion, Phaedrus And passion to the abyss. And now Phaedrus, I will go. But you stay here And when your eyes no longer see me, Then you go too.

Baroque composers seemed to sense the infinitude of the beauty and their explosive innovation coupled with intense desire for harmony led them to bridge the aesthetic gap between music and religion. Johann Sebastian Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor (we played the beginning of Peter Hurford's version on Decca-Argo, 1984) left quite as much the sense of divinity as the Kyrie of Haydn's Nelson Mass (St Lawrence Choir, Societe Nouvelle d'Enregistrement, 1996). The spread across ecumenical borders was extended still more widely when in "Mozart, Egyptian", Hughes de Courson blended arrangements of traditional Arabic music with Mozart compositions of overlapping expression (we quoted Disk #2, track 6: "Al Maghfera, The Pardon," Ballon Noir, 2005). Fittingly enough, a poem by Rumi (*The Essential Rumi*) can be appended to give closure to this reach for openness:

“The Granary Floor: ...”The disc of the sun does exist, but if you see only the ray-bodies, you may have doubts. The human-divine combination is a oneness. Plurality, the apparent separation into rays. Friend, we’re travelling together. Throw off your tiredness. Let me show you One tiny spot of beauty that cannot be spoken. I’m like an ant that’s gotten into the granary, Ludicrously happy, and trying to lug out A grain that’s way too big.”

Yes there’s a musical counterpart. At this point we would play “Fratres”, by Arvo Part (Atma Classique,2003, track 3 of Stabat Mater). From “Pardon” to “Brothers”, the music has one dimension in common: the underlying beat of the human heart. Perhaps a post-script is in order; Leonard Cohen wrote a poem called “Anthem” (from “Stranger Music”, McLelland and Stuart,1993) We frequently came back to it, and played it. (from the collection of his songs “The Essential Leonard Cohn”, Sony 1986:

The birds they sing at the break of day
Start again, I heard them say, Don’t dwell on
what Has passed away Or what is yet to be.
The wars they will Be fought again
The holy dove Be caught again Bought and sold
And bought again; The dove is never free
Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in
everything, That’s how the light gets in...

And so our sampling of the contribution of musical intrusions to context our readings and discussions brings us from Trembley’s omnipresent epiphanies to Cohn’s modest but loving interest in the cracked bells of our own discourse. Bach said it, and he set it : “Ich Habe Genug” (“I’ve had enough”) from his cantata BWV 82, as recorded by Karl Richter for Archiv in 1968. “Enough” is all the echo-space we have between the silence and the chaos where we meet, converse, and live. The joy to be found in music and story may be found in the learning pattern, with its mathematical overtones, of an individual’s interiority (O,Connor 1987).

Meeting in dialogue

Carley (2005) uses dramatic image and musical beat to ‘deepen our understanding of the human element : the good is concrete. The Thomas More Institute through the unrestricted desire in shared community learning (Stephens, 2008) shows the way to the “utterly concrete; this would mean the full range of human experience as this is lived out in actual lives...Story supplies for experience_-__missing or simply unattended to_-__,thus making questions and insights possible. And that supplying is made possible_-__is made to “fit”_-__by a certain angle of artistic vision in the story.” (Going, 2004).

A familiar Lonergan favorite (1985) evokes the healing powers of dialogue:
 ...beyond dialectic there is dialogue. Dialectic describes concrete process in which intelligence and obtuseness, reasonableness and silliness, responsibility and sin, love and hatred commingle and conflict. But the very people that investigate the dialectic of history also are part of that dialectic and even in their investigating represent its contradictories. To their work too the dialectic is to be applied.

But it can be more helpful, especially when oppositions are less radical, for the investigators to move beyond dialectic to dialogue, to transpose issues from a conflict of statements to an encounter of persons. For every person can reveal to any other his natural propensity to seek understanding, to judge reasonable, to evaluate fairly, to be open to friendship. While the dialectic of history coldly relates our conflicts, dialogue adds the principle that prompts us to cure them, the natural right that is the inmost core of our being.

It is this tradition of lifelong learning in the liberal arts, enlivened by story, art and music, this encounter of friends gathered to embrace the ‘terrible beauty of ideas’ that the Thomas More Institute strives to continue to foster. Why terrible - because some ideas are shocking, they bring us face-to-face with some of the ugly facets of human nature. But to come alive, to live fully one must take risks (Steindl-Rast quoted in Hallward, 2010). The human species is a magnificent creation with the ability to expand into new nooks, to evolve different kinds of intelligence and develop more fully our sensory capacities in ways as yet

unthought. Art (McRobert 2007) and story can lead the way but we must guard against bias and greed if the small blue planet is to survive.

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