

# Many projections of Y2K disasters are based on fear and hype

by Edward Kovach

It was one of the most unexpected e-mail questions I've ever received. The sender, living in the southern section of the US, wanted to know if he should sell his house and move into the country. He had heard how all the "influential" and "most respected" members of the FUS faculty had done this. The "fact" that our University had begun farming also added to his concern. Would it be prudent for him to do the same, to protect his young family from the coming anarchy?

This message would have been humorous were it not for the fact that many other sincere people throughout the world are asking similar questions, and making major decisions based on hearsay and rumor. Their concerns stem from alarming projections about problems likely to be caused by a computer "bug," which many literally believe will end life as we know it: the so-called Y2K problem.

For those who may not know yet, the Y2K, or Millennium Bug, is the result of our efforts to save money in the 60s and 70s. Back then computer memory was expensive so, to save

memory, the year was represented with the last 2 digits instead of 4 digits. The date May 20, 1954 was represented by 052054 or 540520. This has worked fine until now. But with a new century looming, we have a problem. May 20th of the year 2000 will register with computers as 052000 or 000520. These numbers are indistinguishable from the representation of May

20, 1900. This problem is further exacerbated in embedded systems—specialized computer components designed as parts of larger devices. These systems can control the temperature in a refrigerator, the monitor of a life support system, the engine of a modern tractor, or the fuel rods of a nuclear power plant. These cannot be simply reprogrammed. In many cases, the

entire system needs to be replaced. It is argued that Y2K will render many of our technological devices useless. Those systems not directly effected will be incapacitated as supporting systems crash, bringing about the end of civilization as we know it. Or will it?

Certainly there is potential for

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It is estimated that only 8% of the Y2K failures will occur on 1/1/2000.

## What liberal educators may not omit

by Regis Martin

What is the single most important issue we face as an academic community? Surely it is the task of determining what things our students are most in need of knowing. Everything else, from food to the fieldhouse to festivals of praise, remains subordinate to this single end, i.e., the acquisition of such learning as we deem it necessary for them to possess.

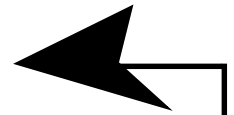
Have we completely thought through the nature and implication of what we're doing? Of the meaning of liberal education? Are we fully intent on imparting all that is worth knowing in the tradition, "the best," as Matthew Arnold famously put it, "that has been thought and said"?

I ask the question because it is

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# The arrogance complex

by Alice von Hildebrand

CHESTERTON WROTE THAT THE TWENTIETH CENTURY WAS A CENTURY OF “UNCOMMON NONSENSE.” HAD HE LIVED LONGER, HE COULD HAVE ADDED THAT IT HAS BEEN A CENTURY CHARACTERIZED by complete confusion. Innumerable examples could be brought forward to illustrate this thesis, but I shall limit myself to just one that I shall call “the arrogance complex.”

When I started teaching at the City University in New York (a young foreign girl, coming from a sheltered Catholic background, totally unprepared for the challenges that teaching in a secular college would bring her), I was informed by one of my colleagues—suspecting rightly that I would not live up to the “spirit” of the foreign planet on which I had landed—that “it was arrogant to claim that truth was objective, that moral values were absolute, that one can know what is true or false, good or evil.” According to the ethics he was propounding, there was only one absolute: arrogance was absolutely intolerable.

In his view, to say that truth is objective was to claim that “one’s truth” was universally valid, and therefore could be imposed on other people. Such a claim was overbearing, anti-democratic and arrogant.

Apart from the fact that he was unwittingly reintroducing an absolute through the backdoor (namely, the evil of arrogance), the professor fell prey to a confusion. He lowered truth to the level of error. Every man should be given a patent for his errors and mistakes, for these aberrations are truly his “private property.” But the proclamation that a statement is true precisely implies that it is not the “property” of the person stating it. By its very essence a truth cannot be a personal possession. Truth is not “mine,” but “ours.” A true statement is one that harmonizes with the fact to which it refers, and facts



are not personal possessions. It may happen that one man can see it whereas another is blind to it, but the latter’s misfortune changes neither the reality of the fact nor the truth of the proposition stating it. Truth itself is necessarily a common possession. For this reason, no valid communion, or community, can be built upon error, for error isolates. Truth alone can unite people. A true proposition is as true for the one who sees it as for the one who does not see it, for it is not “seeing” that makes it true, but its harmony with reality.

In the aftermath of Vatican II, some Catholics have caught the “arrogance complex” and shrink from declaring that the Catholic Church has the plenitude of revealed truth. The claim strikes them as “arrogant” and “triumphalistic.” Alas, they have fallen into the same confusion.

When the Jewish people say that they are God’s chosen people, they are not being arrogant. It is as true for non-Jews as it is for Jews. One only need read the Old Testament to be convinced of this fact. They did not choose themselves; God chose them. And who is to question God’s decision?

When the Holy Virgin told us that “God has done great things in me,” she was in no way arrogant. She was hum-

bly informing us of the incredible privilege she had received. She did not say that she had done great things; she said that God had done great things in her. All she had done was to say “yes” to God’s invitation. Mary engendered the Savior of the world by her total receptivity to God’s grace. She was the chosen one, the privileged one. She did not claim that this was due to her own merit. She merely acknowledged, with humility and gratitude, what God had accomplished in her.

When St. John tells us repeatedly that he was “the disciple that Christ loved,” far from being arrogant, he, too, is humbly acknowledging that he was favored by a special love. He knew that this privilege carried with it a call to respond with a greater love, for he who has received more should give back more.

The Holy Catholic Church claims that She has the plenitude of revealed truth. She bases this claim on the fact that She alone was founded by Christ; She alone goes all the way back to the Apostles; She alone is protected by Christ’s promise that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against Her. She has kept this holy teaching in all its purity in spite of the constant attacks which have been waged against Her from the very beginning. Why should one be a Roman Catholic if it were not because one believes that the Church has this unique privilege: Peter has been given the keys of the Kingdom and the Church has the means of sanctification in the sacraments. Far from being arrogant, She is inviting all men, independent of race, to join Her for the glorification of God, and for the good of their immortal souls.

Unfortunately some Catholics have responded to the privileges they have

received as members of the Bride of Christ by assuming, arrogantly, that they were somehow “better” or “superior to non-Catholics.” The term “triumphalism” (introduced in Vatican II by Bishop De Smedt of Bruges, Belgium) was perhaps meant to cope with this error, but it led to some deplorable confusions. It was now assumed that to claim that the Church has the fullness of Truth is arrogant and overbearing. This is a fatal confusion. One can give a wrong response to an unmerited privilege—e.g. an unwarranted feeling of superiority—or one can give the right response, the Catholic response, which is gratitude and humility.

The more one receives, the more one should humble oneself. The Holy Virgin, the most blessed of all crea-

tures, is also the most humble. Each time St. Teresa of Avila was graced by new visions and new insights into the infinite beauty of God, she humbled herself more. Instead of imagining she was “superior” to others, she experienced herself as the worst of all sinners. This is the Catholic attitude. All Catholics conscious of the unfathomable gift they have received (the fullness of revealed truth, the infallible Magisterium of the Church, the sacrament of penance, the possibility of receiving Christ’s Holy Body every single day of the year) should live in fear and trembling, because, having received more, more will be expected from them when they appear before the awesome throne of God.

Let us not fall into the illusion that we are humble because we refrain from

proclaiming the holiness of the Bride of Christ. This acknowledgment is a “response to value” (to use my husband’s terminology). But to assume that one is superior because one has been granted a gift that so many have not yet received, is to fall into an aberration which plainly clashes with the authentic spirit of Catholicism. Let us liberate ourselves from the confusion that it is arrogant to sing the glory of the Church. We cannot think highly enough of the holy Bride of Christ. We cannot think too little of ourselves. ■

*Dr. von Hildebrand, widow of Catholic Philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand is a trustee of Franciscan University.*

## Modesty and beauty—the lost connection

by Regina Doman Schmiedicke

**I**N HIS BOOK *MAN AND WOMEN*, DIETRICH VON HILDEBRAND POINTS TO A PARTICULAR “PERFECTION” OF THE FEMININE NATURE: “WE FIND IN

WOMEN A UNITY OF PERSONALITY BY THE FACT THAT HEART, intellect, and temperament are much more interwoven ... This unity of the female type of human person displays itself also in a greater unity of inner and exterior life, in a unity of style embracing the soul itself as well as the exterior demeanor.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, women possess a special genius for harmonizing their outward appearance with their interior life—for incarnating their beliefs and ideas in concrete, visible ways.

Sadly, just as many women have forgotten what it means to be feminine, we have also forgotten how to attain this unity. In short, while many of us Catholic women believe strongly in chastity and purity, our dress does not always reflect our convictions.

In order to correct this situation, we need to recover a sense of the reason why women in the past dressed mod-



estly, and how modest dressing “befits” the dignity and vocation of women.

In our fragmented society, scanty clothing has somehow become associated with women’s social progress—as if the “right” to wear less indicated that we are moving up in the world. But my casual overview of history leads me to almost the opposite conclusion. It seems to me that in most cultures, the more clothing a person wears, the more

important that person tends to be in society.

In history, slaves were often forced to go naked; royalty and other important personages were draped in robes. Peasant girls, slaves and concubines often wore short dresses (mini-skirts?), sometimes to show that they were sexually available. Women of rank were outfitted with long garments—queens of ancient Egypt, medieval France, and Victorian England all wore gowns that fell to their feet. My knowledge of anthropology is admittedly limited, but I believe this was the case in almost every culture until the advent of more effective and available birth control, when the situation changed to what we have now.

Even in the debased symbolism of our modern culture we can find remnants of the association between clothing and human dignity. Judges still wear robes, as do priests, bishops and

popes. On ceremonial occasions, professors and graduates wear them as well. In our society, only women are culturally permitted to wear "robes" at any time if they wish. I began exercising my "cultural prerogative" to wear robes (long skirts) as often as possible when I realized how crucial and valuable a woman's role is to society. We're meant to be much more than sex objects.

Dressing immodestly is insensitive to men. In today's gender wars, Catholics can work for change by cultivating good relationships between men and women, of friendships built on trust and mutual respect. I've had the pleasure of meeting many fine Catholic young men who bend over backwards to understand and accommodate a woman's sensitivities and special genius. However, in the area of modesty, most young Catholic women haven't responded in kind. I myself am puzzled as to whether this is sheer ignorance or merely an uncaring attitude.

Once a chastity educator I know, who wore very short skirts, said to me: "If men have a problem with my clothes, well, they just have to deal with it." This attitude tramples on men's visual sensitivity. What men see affects how they feel in a far more direct way than it does with women.

A parallel is a woman's emotional vulnerability. FUS women are familiar with the "sweet guy" who is perpetually discerning the priesthood or avoiding all commitments. This kind of man makes himself attractive to girls by the attention he gives them. He flirts with them and spends lots of time with them, tantalizing them with the idea that he is romantically interested. One of the most trying problems with "Mr. Discerning the Priesthood" is that his offense is so innocent and so subtle that most girls won't ever try to set him straight. This is very similar to the difficulty men encounter when women dress immodestly. It may bother them, but they would really rather not say so to the girl in question.

Having talked to a generous handful of Catholic men on the subject, my

guess is that most pure men living in this culture have visually numbed themselves to the immodest dress of most women, including the Christian women they know. If a woman is dressed in a short skirt or a tight fitting top, they tune her out visually — they don't look at her unless they must, and they avoid being close to her.

This "tuning out" allows would-be chaste men to avoid the sin of lust despite the abundance of opportunities around them. But in the same way that getting hurt has made many women less emotionally vulnerable, I would guess that this visual numbing of male sensitivities won't help the growth in charity between men and women in the Church.

At a time when some men are learning to respect women as their equals, too many women are debasing themselves in men's eyes by the way they dress. Women will complain about the lack of knights in shining armor, but it hasn't occurred to many of them that they are scarcely dressing like the chaste ladies of the days of chivalry.

In talks on modesty, I've frequently heard the comment that a Catholic woman shouldn't wear anything that the Virgin Mary herself wouldn't wear. While I agree with this, I'll observe that I've never seen a memorable image of the Virgin Mary wearing a dowdy, shapeless dress. On the contrary, her dresses are usually softly draped, flattering to her feminine figure. She is rarely depicted in drab colors—strong, clear colors abound in her dresses, sometimes with embellishment. In a word, the Blessed Mother is portrayed as beautifully dressed. Here I feel is the key to the modesty problem.

Some unfortunate Jansenist or Puritanical impulse in the modern Catholic imagination has equated modesty

with hiding the womanly figure. Apparently too many Catholic women think being modest means wearing bag-like, unattractive clothing. Could this be why even women undergoing profound spiritual conversions quietly bypass the idea of adopting modest dress? I've seen my Catholic women friends approaching their beloved Savior in the Eucharist—or, sadly—entering into the Sacrament of Marriage—with scarcely any notion of how their exterior appearance is at odds with their interior beliefs. I've detected a fearfulness in them about looking like a prude or "not looking nice"—as though modesty and loveliness are inherently opposed to each other! Clearly, our cultural imagination needs an overhaul.

For one thing, I think we are profoundly, tragically ignorant of the great allure and splendor of modesty. Men have told me that a girl in a becoming, modest dress was "a breath of fresh air," "just delightful to be with."

With their visual sensitivity, men are free to look at a chastely-dressed girl and just enjoy looking at her, without a trace of sexual temptation. Modesty tied to beauty brings with it a liberation between men and women we can hardly begin to imagine.

Our society desperately needs women to recover a sense of the fittingness of modesty to our dignity and vocation. It depresses me to see how many strong, thoughtful and devout young Catholic women, including some who are on the front lines defending the faith, seem to have no notion of the nobility of their own bodies, and are content to be possible temptations rather than "breaths of fresh air" in society. From what I've seen, the culture of dress even among the orthodox Catholic elite has been affected more by Vogue than the Vatican. At many

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Catholic social gatherings and Steubenville weddings, little black dresses and bared shoulders abound—as if modest dress were only for orthodox orders of nuns. The charism of the laity for changing the culture is not in evidence.

Having mentioned the Vatican, I will throw out a concrete solution as a starting point. If they want to see the inside of many churches in Italy, women must cover their shoulders and their legs down to below the knee. Some might be familiar with the “Pope’s Rules.” In the 1940’s, Pius XII was asked his opinion of what women teaching in Italian schools should wear to preserve their modesty. With the delicate reserve of any average man asked for his opinion on women’s clothing, he simply indicated, “Below the knee, halfway down the arm, and two finger widths below the collarbone.” I find these guidelines most reasonable.

And far from being restrictive, such rules actually liberate women. As Chanel Coco, the French designer once

said, freedom of a woman involves freedom to move. In a dress that incorporates the Pope’s Rules, a woman can cross her legs, stretch, bend down to pick up a pencil, or curl up with her legs beneath her without fussing with her hemline. She can squat down to talk to a small child, sit Indian-style, or lie down on the floor to watch a movie without worrying about undue exposure. In a skirt that is long enough and full enough, a woman can climb trees, ride horseback, even be flipped over a man’s back while swing dancing—without being immodest. One would think that more girls would opt for more modest dress for sheer reasons of comfort, but another heresy in our debased culture has equivocated formal dress in a woman with discomfort—i.e., high heeled shoes.

I believe that women are powerful. I believe that the way they dress and carry themselves as the crown of creation has great potential to proclaim the truth. Without any activism, by the woman’s genius of merely “being,” a

Catholic woman can be a powerful evangelist of the Gospel of Life without speaking a word, by the way she dresses, moves and carries herself. It is time for lay Catholic women to exercise their creativity and ingenuity towards creating a standard of dress that enhances their vocation instead of detracting from it.

I pray that the words “a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit” won’t remain a vague catechism answer disassociated from concrete reality. My dream is that someday whenever someone sees a Catholic woman, they see a striking reminder, a modern incarnation, and a living icon of that first-century Jewish maiden who was told one day by an angel that she would be the Bride of the Holy Spirit. ■

*Mrs. Regina Doman Schmiedicke, who graduated from FUS in 199? writes from Front Royal, Virginia.*

<sup>1</sup>reprinted 1992 by Sophia Institute Press, p. 36.

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## Y2K hype

*Continued from page 1*

serious problems in some areas. It is conceivable that Y2K malfunctions could cause electric power brown- or black-out in portions of the US for a short time; that failing computerized factory machinery temporarily stop production for some companies, and that some computerized records be corrupted. Yet much of what we hear concerning the Y2K is rumor, misunderstanding, and hype. There are a number of conditions that must be met for the Y2K to cause serious problems in a particular computer system.

1. The computer application must involve time calculations that include the year. Many applications have time calculations that do not involve the year. For example, the time system of the GeoPositional Satellite (GPS) system is based on seconds, hours, days and weeks, but not years. These will not be

effected by the Y2K. (Interestingly enough, this system will have its own crisis when its time system, based on 1024 weeks, will turn over to week 0 on August 22, 1999.)

2. Time calculations that involve years must use dates stored in a Y2K sensitive form, such as yy/mm/dd. There are many ways to implement time storage and calculations on a computer. Many of these are based on the number of seconds or days that have elapsed from a fixed “date.” Thus an embedded system can execute a yearly test after 365, 730, 1095, and 1461 days have elapsed without referring to the actual date. These methods generally use less memory than Y2K-sensitive methods and are usually employed in systems that do not require a human user to enter or see a date. Most embedded systems are in this category.

3. The failure of the system must be significant. Many camcorders keep track of the year. In the year 2000,

many will record 1900 on the tapes they make. Big deal.

Thus, unless these 3 conditions are met, the computer system will not be significantly affected by Y2K.

There is another fact that is frequently overlooked in Y2K “consciousness raising.” Y2K failures will not be confined to the first week of January 2000. They began in the year 1993 (BYTE) and will continue at least through 2003. It is estimated that only 8% of the Y2K failures will occur on 1/1/2000. (USA Today website 11/13/98) As of March 1998, over 35% of large US companies have experienced some sort of Y2K failure. (BYTE) As they occurred, they were corrected, with minimal, if any, inconvenience to the public at large. (The worst case seems to have been a credit card company whose cards dated 00 failed. I have a friend who received one of these cards.) More of these problems will be discovered and corrected in 1999 as major

corporations, governments, and governmental agencies switch over to their fiscal year 2000. (Japan, Canada, and New York State begin their fiscal year 2000 in April 1999. Their experiences should be a good preview of 1/1/2000.) Thus the “Y2K disaster” will probably be more of a period of inconveniences, mainly of a minor nature, lasting several years long.

This is not to say that institutions are just waiting for the bugs to appear. (If that were the case, the worst case scenario would happen.) Computer science professionals have been working on this problem for a number of years. The Gartner Group reports that 30% of 1998 IT (Information Technology) Budgets were directed to Y2K issues. The Gartner Group estimates that 44% of 1999 IT budgets will be directed to Y2K (PCWeek). Will all the Y2K bugs be corrected before they appear? No, but enough progress has been made that a number of Y2K alarmists are revising their prophecies of doom. The Kansas City Star recently reported the following: “Even Canadian computer programmer Peter de Jager, who is generally recognized as the first to bring the year 2000 problem into the public arena and has been an alarmist on the issue, said that now there might be too much alarm. ‘The people who say buy a cabin in the woods and take your money out of the banks and the markets, they’re not only silly, these are self-fulfilling prophecies,’ de Jager said. ‘If everyone takes their money out of the banks, the banks will fail.’”

The same article reports that John Koskinen, Chairman of the President’s Council on Year 2000 Conversion, Senator Robert Bennett, Chairman of the Senate Special Committee on the Year 2000 Technology Problem, and Jim Cassell, author of a recent Gartner Group research study have all become more optimistic and less alarmist about Y2K. The 12/31/98 issue of USA Today reports that only 10% of Y2K experts now “anticipate major economic disruptions, social upheavals, and martial laws.”

There are several ways to prepare

for any Y2K problems;

1. Carefully check all financial statements for any strange figures.
2. Make hard copies of all records stored on computers.
3. Check the Y2K status of your personal computer and software.
4. Have some extra cash and food on hand for the weekend of 1/1/2000.
5. Check into what your community has planned should there a disruption of some utilities in your area.
6. Check into the Y2K status of your financial institutions, medical institutions, utilities, and employer. (Many of them have already prepared statements explaining their current Y2K status.)

7. Verify your information and don’t accept hearsay or rumor. When you hear how some group is preparing for the worst, carefully confirm the facts. Remember that some people believe that FUS is farming and her faculty has fled to the hills. Check also to see if the information’s source has a bias. Many of the prophets of doom are also selling products to “help” those “wise enough” to purchase them. There are also those individuals who see in the coming Y2K “disasters” confirmation of their personal eschatology.

There is one other important item. Do not panic. We must have an attitude of hope. Because of the nature of the Y2K problem, no one can guarantee that the worst will not happen. We Americans have grown to expect that all our technology will work. When we hear that something might not work, we want to make sure it does or we assume the worst. (Or we sue. The American Bar Association believes that the price of litigation over the Y2K problem will

be at least that of the price of fixing it. (BYTE))

But what if I’m wrong? What if the worst predictions come to pass? That is a possibility—a small one, like the possibility of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan or a new viral pandemic that kills 280 million persons in a season. If it does happen, I hope my reaction will be that of the saintly Russian priest in the following story. During the Bolshevik revolution, several Orthodox clergy were discussing the future. One of the priests, noted for his personal holiness, began to list all the sufferings which the Russian people and Church would experience. He shocked his horrified listeners by ending his litany of terrors by praising God. “Father,” one unbelieving priest responded, “surely you don’t understand what you are saying!” “Yes, I do,” he retorted, “Jesus is still victor!”

Whether Y2K is a minor inconvenience or a major disaster, Jesus is still victor! ■

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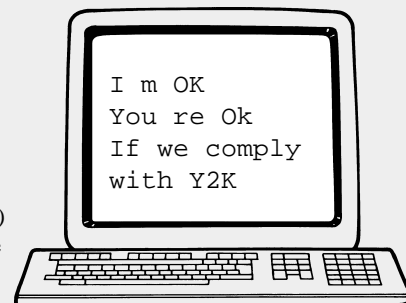
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## Liberal arts educators

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entirely possible for a graduating senior at this University to obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree, a degree in the liberal arts, without ever having read a line of Homer or Dante or Shakespeare. This strikes me as an absolutely astonishing omission inasmuch as here, unquestionably, are the high-water marks of world historical literature. Indeed, each represents one of three seminal epochs of human consciousness. Omit such titans and, all at once, we leave our students bereft of such education as their tuition fees entitle them to receive.

In what does a liberal education consist but those things we are not at liberty to omit? And why is that? Because, at the deepest level, such things determine what it means to be human, i.e., free. Here are things which aspire to the highest possible perfection of the human personality, the pursuit of intellectual excellence for its own sake. There is the operative phrase, the crucial distinction at the heart of what a liberal education aims to accomplish. To use the language of Newman, “there is a knowledge worth possessing for what it is, and not merely for what it does.”

What this means is that there exist disciplines laying claim to an intrinsic importance, as opposed to the merely instrumental. Classes in typing, book-keeping, automotive repair may be useful, but only in terms of something plainly more useful. A taste for typing, for instance, is something one learns to perfect for the sake of what it is one wants to type. The message of the syllogism or the sonnet is finally more important than the medium. Homer is more important than Hotel Management. We need especially to attend to those activities which carry their justification, as it were, on every line.

What ought the governing question to be? Why not ask to what extent this or that proposed course is likely to touch upon the most elemental dimension of the human person? Will it promote the desire to know the truth, the aspiration

to do the good, the capacity to take delight in the beautiful? These transcendental pursuits are precisely what warrant the existence of a liberal education in the first place. And to that end courses in theology, philosophy, literature, history, natural science, music and art ought to be found at the center of the curriculum.

Asked once which books young people ought to read, the philosopher George Santayana said that it didn't matter so long as they all read the same ones. Can it be so hard to come up with a provisional list? While perfect curricular consensus may be quixotic, could not a cross section of our own University faculty produce a handful of books every student should be expected to read? Do not in fact such texts come almost trippingly off the tongue? After all, didn't we have to read them?

“Poetry, story, and speculation,” wrote Mark Van Doren, a wonderful writer and teacher who helped design the celebrated Humanities I and II at Columbia College back in the late 1920s, “are more than pleasant to encounter; they are indispensable if we would know ourselves as men. To live with Herodotus, Euripides, Aristotle, Lucretius, Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Pascal, Swift, Balzac, Dickens, or Tolstoy—to take only a few names at random, and to add no musicians, painters, or sculptors—is to be wiser than experience can make us in those deep matters that have most closely to do with family, friends, rulers, and whatever gods there be. To live with them is indeed experience of the essential kind, since it takes us beyond the local and the accidental, at the same moment that it lets us know how uniquely valuable a place time can be.”

Missing out on such stories and songs and speculations, the stuff of who we are and where we come from, is tantamount to a loss of complete civilizational identity. Why would a University want to deprive its students of so basic a patrimony? Why would it wish to commit suicide in this way? An education unmindful of the whole of human experience, of the best that

has been thought and said, can only be contemptuous of the students it is charged with teaching. As Lionel Trilling once put it: “The best citizen is the person who has learned from the great minds and souls of the past how beautiful reason and virtue are and how difficult to attain.” Or, to quote an old professor's pithy definition: the ideal citizen, he said, is someone who, in a pinch, could re-found his civilization. Are we preparing our students to become citizens in this way?

I close with the following from Allan Bloom, describing his first encounter with the world of higher education; taken from *The Closing of the American Mind*, it is a moving evocation of what true learning had meant to him in his youth: “When I was 15 years old I saw the University of Chicago for the first time and somehow sensed that I had discovered my life. I had never before seen, or at least had not noticed, buildings that were evidently dedicated to a higher purpose, not to necessity or utility, not merely to shelter or manufacture or trade, but to something that might be an end in itself.”

Is it too much to hope, I wonder, that here at Franciscan University we too might fashion a setting not unlike the one Bloom describes as having ravished his youth? A place where intellect and soul, Athens and Jerusalem, exist amid a myriad of splendid tensions marking the life of a great University? If such is not a goal worth striving for, then what possible excuse have we for offering an education to those who come to us seeking wisdom and wholeness? ■

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