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On the cover: John August Swanson (b. 1938). *A Visit*, 1995. Serigraph print. 38 1/2" X 14 1/2".

John August Swanson makes his home in Los Angeles, California, where he was born in 1938. He paints in oil, watercolor, acrylic, and mixed media and is an independent printmaker of limited edition serigraphs, lithographs, and etchings. His art reflects the strong heritage of storytelling he inherited from his Mexican mother and his Swedish Lutheran father. Swanson's serigraph *A Visit* is a chronicle of God's presence among humanity as depicted in scenes from Creation to the Annunciation to Mary. The artist gave permission to Valparaiso University to use his work as the centerpiece for its Advent Christmas Vespers service held in the Chapel of the Resurrection on December 13, 2013. An original serigraph of *A Visit* will be presented to the Christ College Art Collection in Valparaiso University's Brauer Museum in honor of Dorothy Bass and Mark Schwehn.



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On Realizing an Alternative Concept of Academic Vocation

Mark W. Roche

SEVERAL BOOKS TELL THE TALE OF THE secularization of the American academy. An even larger number offer strong critiques of the contemporary American university. Mark Schwehn's meditation on the meaning and purpose of academic life, *Exiles from Eden*, stands out in this crowd for several reasons. Mark's book is beautifully written, at times even poetic; impeccably clear while being attentive to subtlety and nuance; and animated by his deep desire to do justice to the institutions and works he is discussing, as well as by a profound conviction that when we are discontented, our sacred task is not to hate the world but to seek to understand it and intelligently draw attention to the ways in which it differs from how it should be. Further, whereas Mark points to a number of internal contradictions in the academy, he is remarkably consistent: he is charitable toward, and does justice to, his interlocutors just as he professes the virtues of charity and justice; he suggests we move beyond merely disinterested knowledge and so uses his diagnosis of the past and present to shed light on what might still be done; and he adopts a proleptic approach, integrating the objections of others in a dialogue, not with questions and answers, but, more modestly, with "questions and considerations."

Whereas the jeremiads have quickly been forgotten, Mark's book and the topics he raises have gained in importance. The tension between research and teaching has continued to increase. The idea that teaching amounts to nothing more than fostering critical thinking and disciplinary methodology has only intensified, moving from Max Weber's early analysis to Stanley Fish's

repeated claims that the teaching of virtues and values has no place at the university. As university faculty seek to advance research ever further, they often long for a missing sense of community. And the idea that universities can best compete and that the landscape of American higher education is most enriched when there is diversity in mission has been reinforced in the past two decades.

Although Mark's essay is rich and complex, I see, above all, three overarching arguments:

First, research has usurped teaching as the core element of the academic vocation. Specialization, while necessary for the advancement of knowledge, has often led us away from the larger *telos* of education. We suffer from a university investment and reward system that elevates research over teaching and specialization over breadth. Faculty know that their scholarly contributions are most likely to be accepted if they attend to finite innovations in method and carve out discrete spheres of inquiry. The result is less investment in teaching, less teaching that engages the great questions or transcends disciplinary content and methods, and the loss of teaching as a primary calling.

Second, certain virtues, religious in origin and best reinforced by religious practices, are necessary conditions of the search for truth. In making this claim, Mark returns not only to the Christian tradition but also to Plato, who shows how virtues are necessary for the pursuit of knowledge. The insight still holds today. For example, to listen carefully to the views of others and to weigh them honestly, even if they should contradict our initial inclinations, is to practice a form of justice, and to challenge the views of interlocutors without mak-

ing the attack personal and thus without drawing their eyes away from the search for truth is to practice diplomacy. For Socrates and the young Plato, not only are virtues necessary for the pursuit of knowledge, knowledge also leads to virtue. This now counterintuitive claim derives from the belief, which Mark shares and which most college students wish to experience in their classes, that knowledge can change you as a person.

Third, friendship, love, and community help foster a truly flourishing academic environment. Mark understands community both synchronically and diachronically; our connection to tradition is another way of fostering community. Yet scholars, especially in the humanities, are often absorbed not with what is around them and what already exists but with what they can invent and what will make them marketable. They identify less and less with their local college community. The teacher-scholar whose identity involves fostering the community of learning at her own institution is devalued in relation to the scholar who identifies above all with her discipline.

All three topics are linked, for the first suggests that teaching matters, the second that teaching and research presuppose and foster virtues, and the third that the highest social virtues are friendship and love and that these are at home in the classroom. All three foster a sense of wholeness.

Mark's analysis explains much of the anthropology of higher education: the odd mix of feelings among academics that what they do is infinitely important and yet that what they do is not recognized by anyone and so without value, a contradictory set of feelings that derives from the inability to recognize the modest but legitimate place of one's own research in the wider sphere of the unity of knowledge. It also explains the academy's falling prey to what Giambattista Vico called the "barbarism of reflection," the emergence of an empty reasoning that has lost any contact to substantial contents, a strategic attitude toward fellow human beings, and a lack of roots and traditions and thus of emotional richness.

WANT TO HONOR MARK IN THE REMAINDER OF this essay by taking seriously his aspirations and gesturing toward some of the ways in which

what he values might become more fully realized. How can those in the academy who recognize the value of teaching, the links between knowledge and virtues, and the role of community help foster these priorities? What tools does an administrator have at her disposal to motivate faculty along these lines?

The power of an administrator lies above all in three areas: vision, personnel, and budget. The most powerful tool is vision. The ideal strategy any university has to motivate faculty members toward its goals is to craft, in concert with faculty members, an appealing vision. When we act

Certain virtues, religious in origin and best reinforced by religious practices, are necessary conditions of the search for truth.

because we identify with a vision, we are intrinsically motivated. Repeated allusions to the vision help university constituents build an emotional attachment to the institution and help form a culture and ethos where the vision is central. In addition, hiring, promotion, and leadership decisions determine the personnel who will carry out a vision. Finally, budget expresses vision through differential allocations and priorities.

First, then, a university must articulate a vision, and Mark here is exemplary, having written in compelling and inspiring ways about the idea of a Christian university and about Lutheranism and the future of the university. Moreover, *Exiles from Eden* offers a vision of the academic vocation. A vision needs to be compelling, and it needs to be communicated and embodied. Vision is partly conveyed nonverbally, and so it is not surprising that as Dean of Christ College at Valparaiso University, Mark continued to teach, mentor students, and publish scholarship.

Second, we can realize the priorities Mark espouses—the value of teaching, the links between knowledge and virtue, and the development of community—if we seek out and recognize those who embody and advance those

priorities. Ideally, the potential contribution of faculty candidates to teaching and formation is central to the interview process. "Who was your best teacher?" "What attracts you about teaching in this community?" "How will your research help you as a teacher?" Answers to such questions can help committees and administrators sift a potential faculty member's contribution to teaching and community.

If departments cannot identify candidates who satisfy such expectations, one needs to become creative. One strategy I found advantageous as a dean at the University of Notre Dame

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was to introduce competitive searches. Invite more departments to search than you have lines available, telling them that you will hire only the very best candidates in the competition. That quickly motivates departments to satisfy an institution's vision for itself and an administrator's expectations. Depending on where lines land, you can raise or lower a department's expected contribution to the general curriculum, and you can challenge departments to compete more efficaciously for hires.

Socializing faculty members effectively interweaves vision and personnel. New faculty members are eager to learn about a college's vision, history, and customs. The first year on the faculty and the year after tenure, when faculty members are never more curious about their newly permanent home, offer wonderful opportunities for a college to articulate its vision and

priorities, to cultivate solidarity with that higher purpose, and to benefit from the ideas of newer faculty members.

On average, universities do a poor job of helping new faculty members understand the ethos of an institution beyond their departments. Ideally, one has not simply a weekend orientation in the fall, but a year-long orientation with multiple engaging events, including time with the president, and selected common readings, which help form a cohort and give faculty insight into the college's distinctive mission. Similar events can be planned for those who are embarking on administrative roles at the level of chairperson or above.

On smaller campuses the orientation might be led by the president, provost, or dean, and at larger universities one such session might involve reading a document by its president and discussing it with the author. Continuing events across the year allow faculty to renew their relationships across disciplines. Besides ensuring that faculty meet colleagues from other disciplines, thus widening their horizons, such an orientation fosters loyalty and community. It ensures that new faculty understand how the missions of their new and former educational institutions differ.

It is therefore fitting that I can offer as ideal examples of the interweaving of vision and personnel the various programs supported by the Lilly Project that Mark conceived and directs, among them the Lilly Graduate Fellows Program and the Lilly Postdoctoral Fellows Program, which serve not only Valparaiso but the wider community as well.

Finally, appropriate support structures and incentives help to realize a vision. Ideally, the budget is driven by the vision. Support structures and incentives ensure continuity between aspirations and what is necessary to meet those aspirations.

Faculty seminars can be helpful. These might take the form of multi-week summer seminars, compact seminars, reading groups, lecture series, or sets of discussions over the course of a semester. At Notre Dame, we sponsored for some years an annual university-wide, year-long seminar on a topic involving Catholicism, such as the Catholic intellectual tradition or the Catholic

social tradition. Recognizing that many faculty members could not give the requisite time to such a demanding initiative, we also sponsored each semester single-afternoon workshops on aspects of Catholicism. Each workshop offered an introduction to Catholicism, explored a classic work in the Catholic tradition, or engaged a topic involving Catholicism and contemporary society. Analogous seminars and workshops could be structured to advance the priorities and distinctive vision of any university.

A simple workshop can offer faculty practical strategies for expanding their teaching repertoire in order to help students develop virtues. For example, the learning goals on a syllabus might include the development of diverse virtues: from pre-social virtues, such as discipline, to social virtues, such as teamwork. Selected exercises, such as having students co-lead discussions, can help to realize such virtues.

Administrators can also allocate funds to foster community building. For example, a college might encourage newly tenured faculty members to invite a few colleagues from other departments to a meal and celebration at the college's expense. Or faculty who receive teaching awards might be encouraged to invite a small number of students to a celebratory lunch at the college's expense. Or the college might reimburse faculty members who host students at their homes.

Funding can be released to support groups of faculty from diverse departments working together, for example, on topics of integrative scholarship across the disciplines, such as the environment or development, or community challenges, such as integrating academic and residential life or balancing career and family obligations. As an institution becomes larger or enhances its research profile, it will want to look for ways to foster meaningful dialogue across disciplines and to emphasize the ways in which the

university is a communal and hospitable environment.

To the extent that reward structures signal values and priorities, colleges would do well to recognize teaching as they do research, and not only classroom teaching in one's discipline. Special prizes can be awarded for teaching in the liberal arts as well as for advising and informal mentoring, and service prizes can be given for building community.

Incentives can be designed to link academic and budgetary priorities. One could imagine course development grants for faculty who want to reconfigure a course around a meta-question, such as how discussion classes test and develop various virtues, or around a privileged concept, such as friendship.

In seeking to realize any academic vision, we need to be practical. Politics is the art of the possible. If our goal is not simply to articulate, but also to realize, an academic vision, we need to think not only of what *should* be but also of what *is*. The goal of politics is to bring the descriptive more into harmony with the normative level, and for that one needs to know both one's aspirations and the lay of the land, including what is possible. Not all faculty can stretch toward the vocational vision Mark advocates. One might start with those who can and try over time to widen the circle. †

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