Focusing on skills necessary to enter the job market is robbing students of a true liberal arts education

The Liberating Power of the Humanities

Thomas S. Hibbs

In contemporary discussions of liberal education and the humanities, the appeal to the role of liberal education in inculcating useful, transferrable skills is increasingly prominent. Institutions of higher learning tout the critical thinking skills of students exposed to the humanities. Major national documents on the humanities have come to highlight these skills as well. The most recent national report, *The Heart of the Matter* (2013), fails to mention beauty, virtue, truth, ethics, morality, goodness, religion, justice, or wisdom, while the term *skills*, critical thinking and communication skills, surfaces forty times. It seems as though even the leading defenders of the humanities have caved to the increasingly instrumentalist conception of all American higher education. Another problem is that the conception of skills itself has become increasingly parochial and undeveloped. Yet any number of classic statements of the indispensable role of the humanities in a fully human education rest precisely upon a rich conception of skills and their liberating power. In what follows I want briefly to rehearse some

Thomas S. Hibbs is dean of the Honors College and Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Culture at Baylor University.

reasons for, and consequences of, the rise of the skills-acquisition defense of the humanities and some criticisms of this conception. Then I will turn to two quite distinct but overlapping defenses of the role of humanistic skills in the liberation of human souls from conditions of being bound: one from George Orwell and the other from Frederick Douglass.

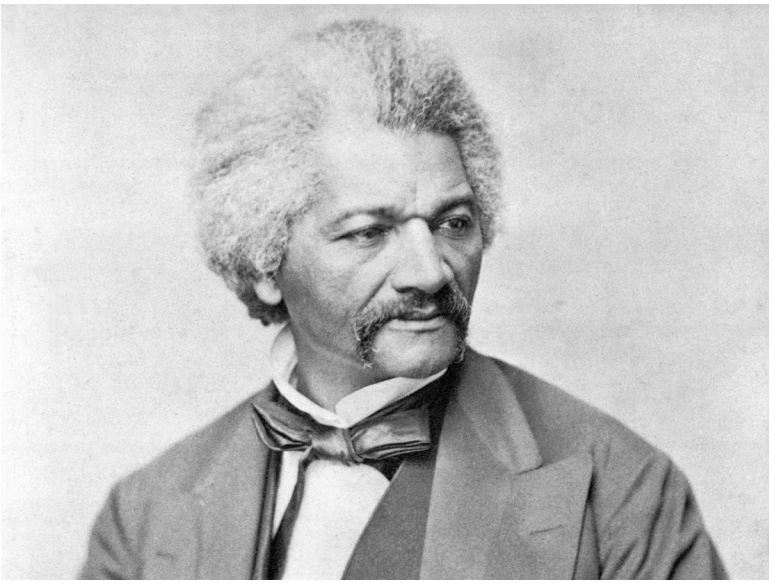
The ascendancy of skills and recent critiques

There are various reasons for the ascendancy of an instrumental, skill-based case for liberal education. There is in modern culture and especially in American culture an accent on useful knowledge, a suspicion of mere book learning, and a desire to demonstrate the productivity of whatever arena of activity to which citizens devote themselves. Alexis de Tocqueville observed almost two hundred years ago that middle-class Americans think of education as nothing but the achievement of the techno-vocational competencies required of free beings who work, and that, in his view, there was almost no higher education, properly speaking, in our country. Tocqueville's observation, arguably, has become truer over time. Certainly the philosophic pragmatism of John Dewey continues to be the dominant philosophy of education, and it is reinforced by the judgments of the experts who inhabit our foundations and our government.

In recent years, both Republican and Democratic politicians have denigrated liberal education. Senator Marco Rubio suggested that young persons would be better off learning the trade of welding than they would be devoting themselves to the study of philosophy. Meanwhile, President Barack Obama dismissed the study of art history as a waste of time and money. Obama's Department of Education moved steadily in the direction of grading universities on how well their graduates do in finding employment and has demanded, following the lead of Margaret Spellings, President George W. Bush's secretary of education, that all instruction be validated through measurable student outcomes relevant for the marketplace.

Add to these tendencies the elevated costs of higher education, tumescent student loan debt, and a tighter job market, it is not surprising that the accent would increasingly fall on the economically productive or instrumental results of education. The STEM disciplines and business courses would seem to suit the rational calculus of parents wanting to diminish the chances that their children will return home at the end four or five or six years in college only to move from one part-time job to another while reoccupying their childhood bedroom. In such a context, any case for the humanities would naturally bend in the direction of displaying their utility in acquiring skills or job-ready competencies. There's also, of course, the humanities' own decline in self-confidence, which flows from any clear and unifying understanding of what the humanities are, even or especially among their leading proponents. In some measure, touting their pragmatic value for the marketplace fills a void that comes with the disappearance of any other clear conception of their purpose. And professors of English or philosophy are sometimes relieved to learn that what they do can be validated as facilitating "critical thinking" or "effective communication." They are remarkably oblivious to the fact that they may be digging their own graves, given that those skills or competencies can so obviously be acquired without all that historical or philosophical baggage.

In recent years, the consequences of this lack of vision about the proper ends of distinctively higher education have come under attack from faculty and administrators in



Frederick Douglass knew most poignantly how lack of self-knowledge could aid and abet oppression

elite universities. In the early twenty-first century, in America's most highly ranked universities, institutions renowned across the globe, there is growing unease. Having become increasingly skeptical about knowledge itself, they now find themselves unprepared to educate youth for the common good. Consider, for example, a recent book by Harry Lewis, a former dean at Harvard, *Excellence Without a Soul: How a Great University Forgot Education*, a central contention of which is the dismal judgment that the ideal of liberal education lives on in name only.[1] A crucial period of time in the lives of young men and women is being squandered by universities that increasingly treat students as consumers oriented to achievement in whatever goals they happen to have. The laissez faire attitude of students—abetted by the consumer sensitivity of careerist administrators—conspires with the narrow interests of research-oriented professors; both groups of "stake holders" in higher education are happy to be left alone to pursue personal goals. Professors who do not see teaching as a "mission or noble calling" are ill equipped not just to "shape the lives" of students but even to initiate them into "the life of the mind."[2] Far from helping students become adults, the university extends their childhood—a point Lewis makes with respect to what he calls "the artificial and infantilizing sexual world" of college life.[3]

In a similar vein, Anthony T. Kronman, former dean of Yale Law School, in *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*, writes that, under the influence of misguided conceptions of pluralism and secularism and the pressure of the research ideal, universities have largely given up on the question "What is living for?" Basing his argument on his experience teaching in the Directed Studies Program, an optional, integrated core curriculum for undergraduates, Kronman argues that a "disciplined survey of the answers to the question 'what is living for?' supplied by great artists and writers of the past can be helpful to students" in thinking about the purpose of their own lives.[4] To bring faculty on board for this pedagogical project will mean giving them "relief from the inhibitions of the research ideal." It will involve fostering an antiutilitarian sense of

wonder as the beginning and the end of education.[5]

Related criticisms of higher education can be found in the occasional essays of Andrew Delbanco. He acknowledges and praises "the liberalizing trajectory of higher education" in the second half of the twentieth century that has opened doors for many who were previously shut out because of race, ethnicity, or gender. It has also allowed for the founding of many small religious liberal arts colleges. As in every human story, Delbanco adds, "there is loss as well as gain." The loss, as he sees it, concerns the question "what students ought to learn" once they get to college" or even "why they are going at all." In nearly a quarter century of teaching at Harvard and Columbia, Delbanco writes, "I have discovered that the question of what undergraduate education should be all about is almost taboo." He goes on to note that the greatest freedom is allotted to those few American students who attend a traditional liberal arts college, where "intellectual, social, and sexual freedom" is assumed to be an inalienable right. Delbanco wonders whether "behind the commitment to student freedom is a certain institutional pusillanimity"—a market-based fear of how requirements of any sort, anywhere on campus, might shrink the applicant pool and thus trigger a decline in the university ranking in the *U.S. News and World Report*'s annual evaluation of colleges.[6]

Anticipating many of the recent observations about the flaws in contemporary universities, David Brooks's essay "The Organization Kid" finds much to admire in contemporary students at Princeton University. Brooks finds industrious, personable, responsible, and articulate students, whose primary vocabulary is that of happiness understood in terms of achievement. This generation of students "doesn't see itself as a lost generation or a radical generation or a beatnik generation or even a Reaganite generation. They have relatively little generational consciousness." They are "not trying to buck the system; they're trying to climb it."[7]

But these same students, who rarely discuss intellectual matters outside of class, become tongue-tied when it comes to the question of what "makes for a virtuous life." In response to the question of what builds character, they cite the honor code forbidding cheating or policies intended to reduce drinking. Indeed, in discussions of ethical matters, they move rapidly in the direction of legislative issues and adopt a legalistic or therapeutic vocabulary. Brooks detects in students a longing for something more than what universities supply in the way of services and paths to career success. Students are not merely interested in money or success narrowly conceived. In his book *On Paradise Drive*, Brooks puts the problem in terms of a question:

> How do you organize your accumulations so that life does not become just one damn merit badge after another, a series of resume notches without a point? Students hunger for the solution. But that is the one subject on which the authorities are strangely silent.[8]

There is a certain irony in the fact that some of the complaints for which Allan Bloom was once reviled are now common in higher education. The original title of Alan Bloom's surprisingly successful 1987 *The Closing of the American Mind* was *Souls without Longing*. Lambasted after its initial release, it can now be said to have anticipated a host of recent writings decrying the state of higher education. From the concerns over faculty specialization, the desuetude of a common core curriculum, the dangers of dogmatic multiculturalism, to hand-wringing about the exclusively careerist ambitions of students and the sexual libertinism embodied in what the novelist Tom Wolfe calls "hooking up," all these and more are part of Bloom's diagnosis of contempo-

rary academic pusillanimity. But Bloom's book is most notable for the way it weaves together contemporary observations with a complex genealogical account of modernity and America. It is also a straightforward plea for a revival of the enduring longings of the soul, and of liberal education as addressing that longing and issuing in a wisdom about fundamental human problems.

Even within the realm of skills, the focus is attenuated and narrow. There is little effort made to distinguish between different sorts of skills that the humanities might foster. One area in which one might have expected something of a convergence between traditional humanities and the cultivation of skills has to do with the learning of foreign languages, classical and modern. Language acquisition clearly fosters a number of crucial capacities: analysis and interpretation, the immersion in an alien culture, and the appreciation of the difficulties of translating across time and culture. The lack of any serious attention to language acquisition is striking especially given that perhaps the second most prominent justification of the humanities in contemporary universities has to with fitting students for a globalized world.

The skills-acquisition defenses, more importantly, tend to ignore the specific content of the disciplines of inquiry. They fail to make a direct, substantive case for humanistic study. Here we face a phenomenon in modern civilization that is wider and deeper than the field of education: the disregarding of ends and the fascination with means. The latter are, as Jacques Maritain observed in his book *Education at the Crossroads* (1942), "so good, we lose sight of the end."[9]

Attending to the capacities inculcated in liberal education might also lead one to think that the very use of the term *skills* is inadequate and that something like the traditional notion of "virtues" is necessary to capture the phenomena of formation that occurs in these disciplines.

Virtues form character, in its intellectual, moral, aesthetic, or religious dimensions, in determinate ways. They are also connected to specific visions of the goods that they nourish. By contrast, mere skills float free of any particular content, either in the character of the one possessing the skill or in the subject matter over which they are exercised. But surely the importance and relevance of this or that skill depends on some understanding of who each of us is and what we are supposed to do as beings fitted to accept the moral responsibility that comes with living in the truth. If skills are as free-floating as the pragmatists say, if they can be simply applied by flexible role players in any context, then it really is true that the study of philosophy or history or literature is nothing more than an optional lifestyle choice, a hobby.

Stanley Fish has recently made the case that the chief goal of higher education, including the humanities, is "the mastery of intellectual and scholarly skills."[10] He adds, "If you're not in the pursuit-of-truth business, you shouldn't be in a university." Developing any account of the authentic pursuit of the truth, including, of course, the indispensable skills, cannot avoid articulating a set of virtues. Meanwhile, the philosopher Bernard Williams has made the case for the virtues of truth and truthfulness as central to any humanities education. Williams focuses especially on the virtue of accuracy, a "passion for getting things right."[11] Fish himself cites John Henry Newman, who argued that the aim of a liberal education was a "philosophical habit of mind," a habit that enabled one to see things whole and to discern relations among the parts of knowledge.

Orwell on skills and self-governance

The acquisition of skills and the inculcation of intellectual virtue and, indirectly at least, of certain virtues of moral character are rent

asunder in contemporary conversations. And so the utility of the humanities is disconnected from their content. One noteworthy problem with a document like *The Heart of the Matter* is that its defense of the humanities fails to draw any inspiration from the humanities, and that means, of course, that the readers of the document would never likely be inspired to study the humanities. It turns out, however, that the humanities are the best place to go to discover the proper role of skills in forming a whole human being of competence and character.

In his midcentury essay "Politics and the English Language," Orwell, who knew a thing or two about the ways in which modern citizens could be bound, had this to say about the decline of our public discourse:

> The decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely. A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.[12]

Orwell highlights for us the danger of a kind of passivity with respect to the common language, the way in which a certain laziness with language atrophies the mind and paralyzes thought. The advice he offers to writers applies equally to thinkers and speakers, that is, to citizens:

> A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?[13]

These habits of thinking, speaking, and writing are more than mere rhetorical ornaments or academic niceties. These are the virtues of inquiry, discovery, and articulation, virtues traditionally inculcated in the *trivium*, the arts of discourse, essential to a liberal education. Without such habits, Orwell explains, we will remain bound by the ready-made will of public opinion:

> But you are not obliged to go to all this trouble. You can shirk it by simply throwing your mind open and letting the ready-made phrases come crowding in. They will construct your sentences for you—even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent—and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself. It is at this point that the special connection between politics and the debasement of language becomes clear.[14]

Orwell's accent on politics and on the good of what we would be tempted to call critical thinking skills in curbing the decline of public language might seem to provide only an instrumental defense of the humanities. But it is much more than that. First, there is something more than mere critical thinking method operative in what Orwell recommends to writers. There is a non-rule-governed capacity to appraise arguments, diction, and modes of expression—a facility of language and thought that no mere critical thinking skill can guarantee. Second,

the political and social payoff is not the creation of productive workers helping to grow the economy. Instead, the vision of politics here presupposes that citizens exercise self-governance, especially in matters of judgment. It underscores an important and underappreciated link between specific conceptions of education and politics, on the one hand, and visions of citizenship, on the other.

Orwell here offers a concrete application of Alexis de Tocqueville's thesis from the end of *Democracy in America* about the threat, not of traditional slavery, which he thought was doomed to extinction, but of a new shape of servitude, which does not seem like servitude really because we willingly submit and because the source of the tyranny is impersonal. There is no single person or class of people to which we are subordinate, and the instrument of servitude comes to us as something offered to make life easier. In fact, for Tocqueville, there is a hidden alliance between centralized government and individualism. They are mirror images of one another; each tends to give birth to its opposite. How are we to understand the relationship? According to Tocqueville,

> When the inhabitant of a democratic country compares himself individually with all those about him, he feels with pride that he is the equal of any one of them; but when he comes to survey the totality of his fellows and to place himself in contrast with so huge a body, he is instantly overwhelmed by the sense of his own insignificance and weakness. The same equality that renders him independent of each of his fellow citizens, taken severally, exposes him alone and unprotected to the influence of the greater number.[15]

The impotence of the individual before the whole of society makes possible a hitherto unknown form of tyranny, a "new physiognomy of servitude." The great danger is not, as it was in previous eras, that of the despotism of a single man or even a ruling class. The fear is that above the multitude of isolated citizens there will emerge "an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratification and to watch over their fate. . . . For their happiness such a government willingly labors . . . what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?"[16] The result would be enervated citizens, really not citizens at all, those whose childish souls atrophy with the shrinking of each person's world to a very small circle. This individualism, Tocqueville explains, is "a mature and calm feeling, which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows and to draw apart with his family and his friends, so that after he has thus formed a little circle of his own, he willingly leaves society at large to itself."[17] As the individual retreats into a narrow and self-indulgent private life, liberty is surrendered to impersonal domination by public opinion and meddlesome bureaucracy.

More important for Tocqueville than institutional structures and constitutional principles are the customs and mores of democratic nations. He thought it was crucial that popular mores invigorate individuals with a sense of the grandeur of life in a democracy and that it present examples of the virtues and sacrifices necessary to keep alive the spirit of liberty. Classical education, he suggests, could provide precisely such an antidote. Not for everyone but at least for some, it is useful that they "refresh themselves at the springs of ancient literature": there is "no more wholesome medicine for the mind."[18] Its discipline and its contents could also draw students out of a concentration on the present and an immersion in petty pursuits to take a long-term view of human life and to participate in the political

life of the nation. Here, too, the form of education is not separable from its content; skills are intimately connected to the formation of character of beings capable of ruling themselves and others.

Frederick Douglass on the liberating power of skills

In *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Douglass makes a similar sort of case for skills acquisition. Consider, for example, learning a skill as basic as reading in Douglass's life. Throughout the book, he turns to the issue of education, access to which is systematically denied to slaves. Douglass was born into slavery on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. When at a certain point, Douglass is sent to Baltimore, he encounters a woman of the "kindest heart and finest feelings," the mistress of the house, who begins teaching him to read. But the husband abruptly terminates his education with the blunt statement:

> A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world. . . . It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable. . . . As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy.[19]

Douglass receives this harsh commentary as a "special revelation" concerning the "white man's power to enslave the black man." He concludes that "education and slavery were incompatible with one another."[20] The very effort to deny the rudiments of education, its basic skills, is evidence of the liberating power of skills.

Despite his masters' attempts at foreclosing any prospect for education, Douglass was fortunate and resourceful. Occasional free time on the city streets of Baltimore affords him opportunities to engage in spelling competitions with white boys from the neighborhood. Douglass would spell a word he knew and challenge the other boys to spell different words. By exercising diligence in the pursuit of knowledge—what the medievals called the habit of *studiositas*, the vehement and virtuous application of oneself to learning—Douglass expands his vocabulary and increases his confidence in his capacity for learning. He discovered his own nobility and greatness in the process of gaining an education. As he puts it, "To properly teach is to induce man's potential and latent greatness, to discover and develop the noblest, highest, and best that is in him" and unfold and strengthen "the powers of the human soul."[21] We should notice here the deep connection between the mastery of skills, on the one hand, and self-knowledge, a sense of one's own dignity, and an enhanced and expanded capacity to interact with others and experience the world, on the other.

In this way, skills can be reconnected to the original, etymological meaning of liberal education, which literally means to be led forth or out into freedom. As is the case for many African American authors, Douglass attends not just to the horrors of slavery and prejudice and the incompatibility of either with education, but also to the ways in which the condition of being bound is characteristic, in analogous ways and to varying degrees, of all human beings. Understood in these terms, liberal education is not an ornament for an aristocratic class but a necessity for true freedom for us all. In the very opening of his *Narrative*, where Douglass relates what little he knows of his origins, he states that one of the strategies of the masters is to deny slaves the possibility of coming to know who and what they are. Slaves are kept ignorant of their exact dates of birth, even of precise knowledge of their parents and siblings:

> By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. . . . The white children could tell of their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit.[22]

Here a certain kind of education, which teaches a disciplined and contented ignorance, undermines the possibility of an education that frees. The deprivation of self-knowledge, of information about one's past, one's sources or roots, cuts one off from knowledge of where one now stands in the present; paradoxically perhaps, the ignorance about the past deprives one of hope for the future. The scope of one's awareness contracts to the mere present. One approaches the condition of animals, whose capacity for memory and for anticipation of the future is quite limited. Douglass is indicting a peculiar feature of modern slavery, a feature that others will identify as having analogues in modern politics. Modern politics can be an instrument of oppression precisely by its tendency to deprive individuals of the possibility of gaining self-knowledge through the inquiry about the traditions and purposes that shape our world. The absence of knowledge makes an individual more pliable, docile in the face of the forces that would control him or her.

Douglass's conception of education involves much more than the mere acquisition of technical skills. It is the opportunity to inquire with others about the good, to deliberate about the just and the unjust, the natural and the unnatural, as Aristotle describes the political order in the opening of his *Politics* (1253a10–18). Above all, Douglass notes, masters forbid slaves to speak together about weighty matters. Another insidious practice of slavery is the allowance for false freedom. On holidays, slaves are free to indulge in every kind of unrestrained behavior, involving alcohol, sex, and violence. Having been immersed in such disorder, the slaves are happy to be rescued by the order provided by slavery. Better to let them indulge in drunken orgies on holidays, thereby reinforcing the notion that they are not "intellectual, moral and accountable." Douglass detects a cynical strategy: "When the slave asks for virtuous freedom, the cunning slaveholder, knowing his ignorance, cheats him with a dose of vicious dissipation, artfully labeled with the name of liberty."[23]

On Douglass's account, liberty is complex. It is obviously incompatible with unjust external constraint and violent subjection to the will of another. It is also not to be equated with license, the permission to do whatever one happens to want. Moreover, one can be externally unfree while attaining internal freedom, and externally free without possessing liberty of mind or soul.

In Douglass's *Narrative*, slaveholders do everything in their power, in the name of the gospel, of course, to destroy a Sabbath school in which Douglass studies scripture with fellow slaves and in which many learn to read. "I had at one time over forty scholars, and those of the right sort, ardently desiring to learn. They were of all ages. . . . They were great days to my soul. The work of instructing my dear fellow-slaves was the sweetest engagement with which I was ever blessed."[24] He describes the "society of fellow slaves" as "noble, brave souls." We were, he writes, "linked and interlinked with each other"; Douglass's fellow inquirers constitute a community of souls jointly sharing and recognizing goods held in common. One would be hard pressed to find a better description of a community of teachers and students. On the one hand, the passage calls to mind the

tradition of liberal learning, embodied in the famous saying about Chaucer's clerk: gladly would he learn and gladly teach. On the other, it is a reminder that certain kinds of tyranny are most opposed to certain kinds of human friendship—ties formed in the recognition and pursuit of goods independent of, and in opposition to, a hostile political order, an order that is most content with an indifferent and disconnected populace.

A defining feature of slavery in the modern American South, and in striking contrast to slavery as practiced in the ancient world, is the refusal, on pain of grave penalty, to allow slaves to be taught to read and write. So contrary to nature is this slavery, Douglass holds, that

> to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one. It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and, as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason. He must be able to detect no inconsistencies in slavery; he must be made to feel that slavery is right; and he can be brought to that only when he ceases to be a man.[25]

The implication for liberal education is that without a felt need, an awareness of an absence, education can have no purchase on an individual soul. The realization of our humanity is not a given; it depends in some measure on forces external to us and the development of powers internal to us. Wherever forces threaten to darken our powers and to render us content with subhuman states of existence, there are obstacles to liberal education, forces that seek to extirpate the enduring longing for knowledge and freedom. The longing for education will be most deeply felt by those at the margins of modern society, who experience most dramatically the gap between possibility and reality. As a black preacher of the time observed, "the ignorant whites had every chance to learn, but didn't. We had every chance to remain ignorant, and many of us learned in spite of them."[26]

Rekindling desire

The decline in our ability to name what is missing does not mean that there are not voices expressing concern about the vanishing of liberal education from our institutions of learning. In her bestselling *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, Azar Nafisi offers a memoir of her time, under Iranian totalitarian rule, as an underground teacher of young Iranian women with a curriculum consisting of forbidden Western literary texts. In an account that is at once beautiful and deeply moving, Nafisi makes a compelling case for the power of these texts to keep human longing alive and thus to subvert the aspirations of a totalitarian regime. In her latest book, *The Republic of Imagination*, Nafisi, now settled as a professor in America, wonders at the indifference of Americans to their own intellectual and literary heritage, an indifference that she fears will endanger the democratic ideal.[27] In totalitarian countries, liberal education is a "basic need," as it enables one to reclaim an identity always under assault.[28] Those who have suffered censorship, jail, and torture because they have pursued an education have a profound sense of the significance of Western works. But what about ordinary Americans? Do they even "know what they are missing"? How can we "rekindle the hunger"?[29]

Orwell and Douglass were acutely aware of the assaults on freedom arising from systematic political injustice, but they were also cognizant of other sources of servitude arising from the absence of a truly liberating education. The chief obstacle to that education today is not an emphasis on skills but an impoverished or one-dimensional conception of skills as merely technical, as detached

from questions of character formation, and as serving no larger role in the turning of souls to a consideration of the good. With that detachment, education risks reinforcing various kinds of bondage of the soul and becomes blind to the truly liberating power of the humanities. The best cure is a return to the careful reading of those texts that offer simultaneously training in skills and an initiation into the practices constitutive of human freedom. ✝

NOTES

1 Derek Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Harry Lewis, *Excellence Without a Soul: Does Liberal Education Have a Future?* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs, 2007). See Anthony T. Kronman, *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007);
2 Lewis, *Excellence Without a Soul*, 8, 14.
3 Ibid., 5.
4 Kronman, *Education's End*, 35.
5 Ibid., 216, 251.
6 Andrew Delbanco, "Colleges: An Endangered Species?" *New York Review of Books* 52, no. 4 (2005): 19–20.
7 David Brooks, "The Organization Kid," *Atlantic Monthly*, April 2001.
8 David Brooks, *On Paradise Drive: How We Live Now (And Always Have) in the Future Tense* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 162.
9 Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1943), 3.
10 Stanley Fish, *Save the World On Your Own Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 20.
11 Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).
12 George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," in *A Collection of Essays by George Orwell* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954), 163.
13 Ibid., 171–72.
14 Ibid., 172.
15 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, The Henry Reeve Text, revised by Francis Bowen, with further corrections, edited and with a historical essay by Phillips Bradley (New York: Random House, 1945), 2:11.
16 Ibid., 336.
17 Ibid., 104.
18 Ibid., 66.
19 Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845; repr., New York: Dell, 1997), 33.
20 Ibid., 38.
21 See Frederick Douglass, "Blessings of Liberty and Education," September 3, 1894, http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/blessings-of-liberty-and-education/.
22 Douglass, *Narrative*, 1.
23 Ibid., 74.
24 Ibid., 79–80.
25 Ibid., 95.
26 Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 3.
27 Azar Nafisi, *The Republic of Imagination: A Life in Books* (New York: Penguin Group, 2014), 10.
28 Ibid., 15.
29 Ibid., 325.