

Richard J. Franke

*The power of the humanities
& a challenge to humanists*

The humanities protect and give life to our most enduring values. The very DNA of civilization is encoded in the poet's song, the painter's brushstroke, and the vibrant dialogue about ideas. Although the study of the humanities cultivates the critical thought necessary for a civil society, it has suffered neglect over the last few decades, both in terms of financial support and in the national debate on education.

Among our great universities, Harvard, Chicago, Yale, and Columbia have recently redefined their general education curricula. While all four institutions affirm that the purpose of a liberal education is to pursue knowledge without explicit concern for vocational utility, Harvard's *Report of the Task Force on General Education* empha-

sizes how education should relate to students' personal, social, and eventual professional lives. Specifically, the report declares, "The ambition of the program of general education . . . is to enable undergraduates to put all the learning they are doing at Harvard . . . in the context of the people they will be and the lives they will lead after college."¹

General education curricula include the humanities and the sciences, both of which are considered necessary for a complete education. Yet federal funding for the humanities and the sciences has diverged significantly over the last thirty years. For example, in 1979 the dollar value of National Science Foundation (NSF) grants was five times greater than grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). By 1997, NSF grants were thirty-three times greater than NEH grants.² According to the NSF's 2005 annual *Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges*, total spending for sci-

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1 Task Force on General Education, *Report of the Task Force on General Education* (President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2007), preface.

2 John Hammer, *On Federal Support for the Humanities in Comparison with the Sciences* (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2007).

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ence and engineering research and development was almost \$46 billion.³ Even given the most generous estimate, humanities research and development expenditures did not exceed \$1 billion in 2005.

Of course, it is difficult to compare funding between the sciences and the humanities, as much of this disparity can be explained by the high costs of scientific research. Nevertheless, through omission or commission, the value of the humanities is diminished on most scales of measurement. Moreover, the growing inequality is symptomatic of a much deeper misunderstanding of the role of the humanities in education. The U.S. Department of Education's 2006 report on the future of higher education, which addresses the decline in U.S. higher education, focuses almost exclusively on math and the sciences. The report stresses that academic programs must serve the changing needs of a knowledge economy, and it recommends that universities develop "new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies to improve learning, particularly in the area of science and mathematical literacy."⁴ If we use this assessment of the educational demands of a knowledge economy in conjunction with the rationale for the Harvard curriculum changes as a barometer for the climate of funding, we can reasonably infer that the humanities lag so far behind the sciences, in part, because it is unclear how humanistic in-

quiry and critical thinking relate to the world of everyday life.

Generally speaking, the humanities consist of languages and literatures, the arts,⁵ history,⁶ music, linguistics, and philosophy. While the exact definition of the humanities remains debated, this broad characterization offers a sense of the disciplinary diversity within the humanities. The common ground of such disparate fields of inquiry is critical thinking, that Socratic habit of articulating questions and gathering relevant information in order to make reasonable judgments. Although similar arguments could be mounted in other traditions, I am consciously confining myself to the Western tradition for the purposes of this discussion.

The rebirth of classicism in fourteenth-century Italy helped to revitalize the tradition of critical thinking. Petrarch's preference for the classical rhetoric of Cicero and the language of Virgil over the "barbarous inventions" of medieval Latin led to the search for lost texts in monastic libraries across Europe.⁷ De-

5 The arts and humanities are often distinguished; the art historian *studies* art whereas the artist *makes* art. Nevertheless, good art criticism requires the imagination of an artist, and good art requires making informed decisions. In general, the humanities cultivate both our critical and creative faculties, which is precisely what makes them so useful. I want to emphasize the creative aspects of the humanities by including the arts in their definition.

6 Some universities regard history as a social science, and indeed it does straddle the distinction. As a history major and a lifelong supporter of the humanities, I tend to think of history as a humanistic endeavor.

7 Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. Middlemore (London: Phaidon Press, 1944), part 3.

3 WebCASPAR, Integrated Science and Engineering Resources Data System, <http://webcaspar.nsf.gov> (accessed October 15, 2007).

4 The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* (2006), 25.

ploring medieval scholasticism's failure to convey essential truths persuasively, Petrarch's return to classical eloquence was a pragmatic appeal. He argued that logic and metaphysics may help us to define the nature of virtue, but only poetry and metaphor *move* us to become virtuous.⁸

Although the influence of classical thought is evident in late medieval writers such as Thomas Aquinas and Dante, this Petrarchan return to original sources not only generated a new appreciation for the critical thought of antiquity, but shed light on textual discrepancies long buried by church authorities. According to a document known as the *Donation of Constantine*, the Emperor Constantine had granted political authority over the Roman Empire to Pope Silvester in the fourth century. In 1440, the gifted Latinist and early humanist Lorenzo Valla proved that the *Donation* was an early medieval forgery.⁹ Contrasting it with the rhetoric of contemporary Roman law, Valla demonstrated that the *Donation* was inconsistent with Latin of the fourth century, thus proving it was written centuries after its alleged creation. This triumph of textual criticism marked the emergence of a new kind of thinking that would dominate Renaissance Europe and that continues to shape our world today. By concentrating on the rhetorical nuances of original texts, Valla helped to inaugurate what we might today call close reading.¹⁰ More impor-

tantly, by going to the original sources Valla made his argument through the intrinsic evidence of the text itself.

Intent on restoring the Bible to its original meaning, Valla went on to challenge authoritative interpretations of scripture, too, through evidence-based historical reconstruction. Before the Reformation, biblical exegesis, whereby a passage was understood to operate on four levels (the literal, allegorical, moral, and metaphysical), was conducted in and justified through church authority.¹¹ Valla's methodology, therefore, only expanded the interpretive tradition to include rhetorical and historical considerations. The Renaissance humanists then brought the full range of these methods of interpretation to non-biblical texts, ushering in a new age of critical thought and knowledge.

Critical thinking is characterized by first asking questions. Once the primary question or problem is identified, then data, evidence, and information are gathered. We make an interpretation and then compare our reading to other standard interpretations. The process of critical thinking, then, mirrors the scientific method of observation, hypothesis, prediction, and experimentation. Indeed, Lorenzo Valla's textual empiricism anticipates Francis Bacon's theory of inductive reasoning, which formalized the methodology essential for the Scientific Revolution to occur. And just as interpretations of literary texts change over time, so do scientific models and methods. Einstein's theory of relativity proves that Newton's equations are not valid on the astronomical scale, for example. But a sci-

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8 Hannah Gray, *Three Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 6.

9 Diarmaid MacCullough, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided* (New York: Allen Lane, 2003), 81.

10 Ciriaco Morón Arroyo, *The Humanities in the Age of Technology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 24.

11 Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, trans. E. M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. E. Eerdmans, 2000).

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entific theory is required to explain both the failure and the former success of the theory being overturned: the success of Einstein's equations depends on their ability to demonstrate that Newton's equations are accurate approximations on scales and at speeds observable in the seventeenth century.

A humanistic interpretation does not necessarily overturn other readings of a text; rather, it contributes to a tradition of interpretation. Moreover, people read literature at various levels of understanding. A poststructuralist reading of *Moby Dick* does not invalidate a Russian formalist or a literal reading. *Moby Dick* really is a story about a whale; it is also a meditation on violence, power, and obsession. It is precisely for admitting different degrees of understanding that more people are familiar with *Moby Dick* than they are with fundamental scientific concepts such as the second law of thermodynamics.

Rooted in critical thinking, both the humanities and the sciences strive for objectivity. Innovation in either discipline requires creativity chastened by analysis. Interpretations or models are always subject to further examination as new information or perspectives emerge. Take Leonardo da Vinci, the prototypical Renaissance man, for example. Formally trained in human anatomy by the sculptor Andrea del Verrocchio and renowned more so for his painting, Leonardo's studies in engineering and science are just as innovative. He honed his powers of observation after he was given permission to dissect human corpses at the Santa Maria Nuova hospital in Florence, and this habit of close inspection ultimately provided a methodology for his scientific advances in optics and hydrodynamics, as well as helped to improve

his art.¹² In Leonardo's case, polarity between the humanities and the sciences simply did not exist; the tradition of critical thinking inspired new inquiry in all disciplines – though a palpable difference between humanistic and scientific critical thinking, with respect to their fields of inquiry, emerged during the Scientific Revolution.

The sciences consider physical phenomena and admit only those interpretations that can make accurate, measurable predictions about the outcome of reproducible experiments. The values and personal investment of the scientists involved in making the interpretation are, in principle, irrelevant to the scientific conclusions, and the ultimate success of a theory depends only on its ability to reproduce results in the world. Explanations of incompletely understood phenomena are admissible, but until an equation or model is produced that can make measurable predictions, they remain interpretations.

When Newton declared his laws of motion in the *Principia* of 1687, he limited the domain of scientific knowledge, or experimental philosophy as he called it. Newton could not “feign a hypothesis” as to the cause for the phenomenon of gravity that his equations described, explaining that such speculations have no place in experimental philosophy. The hypothesis is necessary to initiate physical investigation, of course. But “in this philosophy,” Newton clarified, “particular propositions are inferred from the phenomena, and afterwards rendered general by induction.”¹³ With

12 Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvelous Works of Nature and Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 251.

13 Isaac Newton, *Principia*, trans. I. Cohen and A. Whitman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 943.

this statement Newton defined modern scientific critical thinking – that the assumptions of the scientist in framing the question or hypothesis are incidental to the goal of the inquiry: to render scientific laws by induction.

In contrast to the sciences, emotions and values are always at play in humanistic inquiry, which employs critical thinking to probe the less explicitly measurable, even unquantifiable, domains of intention, meaning, and spirit that animate the human experience. As readers we are emotionally engaged in our reading of a text. We feel Raskolnikov's isolation and moral confusion in *Crime and Punishment*. The tension between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* is at once familiar and oppressive. We are appalled by the barbarism depicted in McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. Our assumptions about beauty are at risk when we look at a sculpture by Eva Hesse. We put our values and beliefs to the test when we read Plato, Hegel, or Derrida. We ask ourselves not only what does a text say, but how does this compare to our experience? Instead of setting our feelings and assumptions aside as is done in the sciences, humanistic critical inquiry requires that we explicitly acknowledge our own personal bias and emotional investment when reading a text, listening to music, looking at art, or addressing a problem.

In principle, the sciences use all means possible to control or limit the risk of empirical bias in order to achieve some form of objectivity. When the domain of inquiry is the inherently ambiguous life of the human spirit, which includes the world of values, emotions, and beliefs, scientific objectivity is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. In the humanities we try to arrive at objectivity, but we also acknowledge the inextricable bias of our beliefs and the emotion-

al impact of a work of art or literature. Far from lacking standards, humanistic critical thinking allows us to appreciate the sophistication of an interpretation by the degree to which it engages a text and makes explicit its assumptions.

Both the sciences and the humanities are rooted in empiricism. Science is methodologically empirical in its study of nature and attempts to remove all bias from its investigation. Acknowledging that there are subjects from which we cannot extricate ourselves, humanistic inquiry closely observes both the object of study and how we ourselves study the object. Put another way, the sciences seek exact knowledge, whereas the humanities strive for wisdom.

C. P. Snow's 1959 article "The Two Cultures" initiated a debate about the lack of exchange between the sciences and the humanities that persists to this day. With unique experience as both a novelist and a theoretical physicist, Snow notes the incomprehension among the literary establishment of some basic aspects of science, including, most famously, the second law of thermodynamics. While acknowledging that many of his colleagues in the sciences are themselves not well read in literature, Snow argues that such mutual ignorance will have disastrous consequences for generations to come. Although much of the subsequent furor centered on the veracity of Snow's observations, most of his article focuses on how to improve education in the sciences. Snow justifies his emphasis by considering the most pressing problems facing the world then, much like today, to be nuclear war, overpopulation, and the widening gap between rich and poor countries, all of which, in his estimation, are best addressed through scientific inquiry. Moreover, scientific policy deci-

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sions made by democratically elected governments, he argues, require an informed citizenry to understand the terms of those decisions and subsequently elect the most qualified public officials to legislate them.¹⁴

There are two striking assumptions in Snow's analysis, especially if we imagine his developing a parallel set of recommendations for education in the humanities. First, Snow assumes that the sciences offer tangible benefits to society and that scientists and engineers do their research with these benefits in mind, even in the case of the most theoretical branches of science. Second, and just as important, he assumes the general public understands that the sciences have a clear social purpose, especially in the case of biology, medicine, and mechanics. (Admitting that we can dispute the social good of nuclear proliferation, Snow nevertheless argues that the original intention of nuclear research was for the benefit of humanity in the form of inexpensive power.) If we attempt to extend his argument to the humanities, however, we encounter a fundamental problem: most people cannot succinctly describe the social benefits of the humanities.

We need to define the social purpose of the humanities in a manner that is clear and accessible to the public. The sciences include two distinct areas of inquiry: the broadly theoretical and the specifically applied. Engineering schools train students to study the safety, feasibility, and reliability of using theoretical concepts from physics and mathematics to create new products. As a result, the sciences have a tangible public presence in the form of technological products. While the humanities have

scholarly standards, it is unclear to most people what the humanities' social purpose is or how humanistic inquiry can be used to improve one's life. Everyone involved in the humanities needs to understand and convey how humanistic critical thinking can be directly applied to solving problems in our professional lives.

The humanities are vital to public life; they help us imagine the consequences of our actions and give us the tools to make informed policy decisions. Even more, the moral, aesthetic, and spiritual discoveries of the humanities reveal what is common to the human experience and provide the foundation for a successful and fulfilling life. Everyone knows what doctors, lawyers, and plumbers are supposed to do. We need to define the purpose of the humanities just as clearly. Only when ordinary citizens understand and demand support for the humanities can policy-makers and public officials, the gate keepers of federal and state budgets, justify the allocation of funding for humanities research.

At first glance, the idea of the applied humanities seems little more than a rhetorical ploy. Engineers may apply science to solve problems, but as far as the humanities are concerned, scholars have the reputation of being the only readers of the work produced by other scholars. On the contrary, imagination and critical thinking – the root of the humanities – are essential components for a successful career in almost any profession. In addition to my recent work in the humanities, I have also spent my entire professional career at one company, John Nuveen & Co. Extraordinary growth marked the twenty-two years that I was CEO. In an age of rapidly changing technology and shifting mar-

14 C. P. Snow, *Public Affairs* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 13 – 47.

kets, there was no simple formula for success. The one thing I came away with from my years at Nuveen is that the world in which we operate is fundamentally complex, unpredictable, and incompletely understood.

When I consider my forty-one years at Nuveen, I know that my business degree was not enough to prepare me for the changes and uncertainties of investment banking. Business courses alone were – and are – not adequate to prepare students for the changes that will be shaping business decisions in the next forty years. In fact, my own habits of reading and critical analysis, particularly of literature and history, and the encouragement of such study among employees were crucial to Nuveen's success.

As a relatively young CEO, I wanted to encourage collaboration and new thinking among our employees. People who rose to leadership positions at Nuveen had to have excellent technical skills, but I believed also that a background in the humanities stood them in good stead. In order to develop new thinking at Nuveen, I introduced lectures, study groups, and other company-sponsored educational programs. I then invited scholars to discuss what we had just read and studied. These programs promoted cooperation and collaboration among employees in an unprecedented way. At the same time, our young leaders learned the importance of careful analysis of evidence and information, of expansive thinking that is open to the interpretation of others, and, finally, of developing their own judgment by applying rigorous criteria and making their assumptions transparent. In many ways, the humanities offer the ideal training for the leadership of corporate enterprises by giving young executives an opportunity to experiment

with ideas, to grow by taking risks, and to learn how to change their minds when new information or insights emerge. In other words, I was trying to broaden their imagination and sharpen the critical faculties so necessary for their success.

As ways of doing business evolve, the nature of work is becoming more intellectual. Regardless of profession, we spend most of our time representing ideas to coworkers, colleagues, and potential customers. The humanities are fundamentally about representation: the representation of ideas, emotions, and cultures. By studying the most powerful and imaginative forms of representation, we refine our communication skills, sharpen our critical faculties, and consider new ways of thinking. Moreover, as new markets emerge, knowledge of different cultures, histories, and values becomes essential for success. If we are able to demonstrate the connection between the skill of critical thinking and work performance, people will begin to think about the humanities differently. In the context of business, critical thinking teaches us how to structure questions, evaluate competing goods, and solve problems.

We can find ourselves assaulted with opportunities at work, not all of which fall within ethical boundaries, and we have to respond quickly. As a result, we must rely on an accurate moral compass. In considering the central conflict in Sophocles's *Antigone*, for example, we confront fundamental questions about the nature of morality. We see Antigone and Creon both acting out of the conviction of their profoundly different commitments. Divine justice and family custom require that Antigone bury her brother, but Creon has to uphold the law of Thebes and deny Polyneices's burial rights. Elemental in its contour, the con-

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flict raises a host of difficult questions about what truly defines justice. Although the clash of values may be intractable, we are forced as readers to ponder the nature of moral actions in the vivid context of a play. This kind of ethical deliberation can be applied directly to making decisions in the real world. We need to understand our ethical assumptions and be able to look at a problem from different perspectives. But in order to do so, we must be prepared. By exposing ourselves to the conflicts dramatized in Shakespeare's plays or the nature of virtue in a philosophical discourse, we train ourselves to face the complexities and ambiguities of life.

The connection between the humanities and public policy can be unclear, but the arts have a long tradition of engaging pressing issues. Indeed, policy discussions often remain in policy circles because it is difficult for a large cross section of the population to anticipate the consequences of a decision based on technical data alone. Until recently, for example, the debate about climate change has gone on with limited attention from the broader public. While there is still some disagreement among researchers about the degree to which pollution contributes to global warming, a great majority involved understands that the consequences of climate change are serious, even calamitous. It is striking then that the debate has taken so long to capture public attention. The apparent indifference is due in part to our inability to imagine the repercussions of the scientific conclusions. In addition, scientific researchers are careful to limit their conclusions to what they can demonstrably extrapolate from data. It is not their responsibility to prepare us for the con-

sequences of climate change. This is precisely where the humanities have an important contribution to make to the conversation.

Artists and writers imagine and help us to understand or anticipate something we have never seen before, such as the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, the Santa Ana fires of California, or the horrors of war. Our system of education needs to train students not only to value artistic vision, but also to cultivate their own imagination. As the consequences of climate change become more tangible, so do its practical and ethical challenges. In all likelihood, civilization will not end in a single cataclysm, but more gradually, in a protracted series of disasters. This raises a number of deeply troubling questions. For example, what will happen if Bangladesh is completely inundated? What would we owe the disaster-struck people of Bangladesh? Given our lack of technical and moral preparation to handle the crisis created by Hurricane Katrina, surely we are even less prepared to anticipate what we ought to do in the event of the evacuation of an entire nation.

On a more fundamental level, what is our collective and individual responsibility to future generations? As conscious beings capable of highly sophisticated forms of communication, do we have a special responsibility to perpetuate the human race and maintain biodiversity? Furthermore, the idea of cataclysm and the end of the world has a fascinating history, which for generations scholars have considered from many historical, literary, and religious perspectives. What happens when a civilization vanishes and what is the nature of our apocalyptic anxieties? These are the questions we need to be asking now, so that we more fully understand what is at stake when we make our personal and

political decisions that address climate change.

The assumption at the Chicago Humanities Festival, of which I served as chairman from its inception in 1990 until 2006, is that the humanities can provide the context for fundamental questions bridging politics, science, ethics, art, and philosophy. The 2007 festival, *The Climate of Concern*, was organized around the specter of global environmental and ecological disruption. Scholars, scientists, artists, naturalists, and philosophers were invited to the festival to bring their expertise to the myriad problems that we will face in the next century. Although many discussions addressed consensus scientific findings and their premises, *The Climate of Concern* was organized primarily around more fundamental questions. As such, it serves as a powerful reminder of the practical value of the humanities.

Scientists provide us with the empirical data crucial to making informed policy decisions, but the data tell us nothing about the implications of our decisions. For that we need artists and writers to bring those repercussions to life, scholars to remind us how others have addressed or failed to address similar problems, and philosophers to help us clarify our responsibilities. In fact, we need to bring the full range of humanistic critical thinking to bear on our most difficult choices. A citizenry exposed to the humanities is able to identify and articulate the issues most important to their lives and, in turn, make decisions with greater clarity. A free-market society committed to democracy becomes stronger and more dynamic when scholars, journalists, and ordinary citizens raise sometimes uncomfortable questions about the inherent assumptions in our policies. By questioning how a

problem is framed and critically analyzing evidence, the humanities serve as a safeguard to the public sphere. No matter your stance on the war in Iraq, we can all agree that the country would have benefited from a fuller engagement with the cultural insight and critical thinking of the humanities in the days leading up to the war.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a great work of art asks fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of life. We read to pursue answers to those questions, to see how others have addressed them. I've been involved in a reading group for over thirty years. Last year we read a selection of American literature, including Saul Bellow's *Herzog*, which I had first read soon after it was published in 1964, but without a critical eye: four decades later I have become a more critical reader. Facing the catastrophe of his own life, Moses Herzog confronts both the world of materialism, where money is God, and the literary world, where God is dead.¹⁵ Against these restrictive models of modern life, Herzog considers the value of an achieved and successful life. Despite his prodigious intellect, Herzog questions the strictly intellectual life, concluding that we will be unfulfilled unless our knowledge is shored up by serious reflection and emotional honesty.

I was surprised and challenged by this reading. In the fragmentation and vicissitudes of contemporary life, what is important? How do we define a successful life? As I suggested earlier, humanistic critical thinking demands that we put our feelings, prejudices, and values at stake in our reading. We question

¹⁵ Jonathan Wilson, *Herzog: The Limits of Ideas* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 8.

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our assumptions and expand our spiritual lives when we confront the ideas and experiences of others. We read to discover both the range of human experience and what is common to humanity. But above all, we read to discover and to question. And we read to affirm or recalibrate our values.

While *Herzog* wonderfully illustrates the importance and the richness of living the intellectual life, Moses Herzog finally recognizes that fulfillment comes only through an explicit engagement with the world and with others. It is this commitment to our communities and engagement with the world outside of the academy that I am asking humanists to consider. Be a spokesperson for your discipline. Teachers should show students both the joys of scholarship and the practical value of the humanities in the classroom. We will all benefit from such advocacy.

Although it is apparent to academics why critical thinking is an essential tool for living in the twenty-first century, it is obvious neither to the general public nor necessarily to those who determine curricula. Lorenzo Valla's insistence that arguments be justified by evidence rather than by authority not only led to the Reformation, but also provided the sciences with the methodology and philosophical grounding necessary for progress. Likewise, the Enlightenment would simply not have been possible without a rational ethics that compels us to proceed from facts to axioms to laws. In short, our most lasting institutions are anticipated by the spirit of critical inquiry that sent Valla back to the original manuscripts. "To the sources" was the maxim of the Renaissance humanist. The source of critical thinking are the seeds of rigorous analysis sown by the early humanist scholars and cul-

tivated by teachers and students of the humanities the world over.

In terms of the pragmatic climate of the debate around education, the value of critical thinking is incalculable. From assessing markets to identifying the salient features of a policy to decisions about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, critical thinking clears a path for rational judgment. And it is to the humanities that we are indebted for the sharpening of these critical faculties and the expansion of the imagination necessary for a responsible, productive, and successful life.

Advocates, administrators, scholars, and teachers together are responsible for educating the public about the value of the humanities. Once we have identified the values shared by the various humanistic disciplines and by disparate schools of critical thought, we need to promote the humanities beyond the academy. By increasing involvement in the humanities through its great tradition of debate, and by raising public awareness of how the humanities relate to robust and prosperous citizenship, we create a rationale for greater public funding, which can occur only through citizens' insistence that their legislators make humanities funding a priority.

Teachers and scholars of the humanities are charged with the unique responsibility to share ideas and to demonstrate how those ideas relate to the world around us, whether we are discussing Babylonian history or the novels of Saul Bellow. Just as doctors look after the health of their patients and engineers ensure public safety in their designs, so should humanists serve the public through education. All citizens of the twenty-first century, whether they are scientists or telemarketers, can use the critical thinking of humanistic inquiry to develop the emotional

honesty and analytical skills necessary to define the nature of a successful life and the best way to achieve it. In turn, all of us involved in the humanities need that sense of public service to measure the success of the work we do.

While the tangible benefits of the sciences include technological products that make life more comfortable, the humanities bring meaning to our lives through critical thinking and through great works of art. The stakes are high, as the humanities engage not only our knowledge and reasoning, but the emotions and spiritual values that drive our questions. Their reward is great, however. Through imagination, deliberation, and critical thinking, the humanities clear the path for a successful life.

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