

Sophia Ad Infinitum

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Being that I am an alien in United States, the very culture began to transform or mold my views in different ways, enhancing my already diverse view about the world. When I started University of Wisconsin-Baraboo/Sauk County, I never expected to be changed as much as I am right now. For me, transformation was a very overwhelming thing that caught me by surprise, I found myself becoming a different person, teleporting somewhere I have always aspired to go to, and that is into higher plains of knowledge, on a quest for wisdom. Liberal education is more than just a word; it is a complex set of interlinking life-important veins. Although they may seem divided from each other, they actually are a single fully functioning heart of understanding.

The first class that opened new realms for me was Philosophy. I became enthralled by Plato and Sartre, realizing how little we as humans know, and how much we can discover just by analyzing *The Allegory of the Cave*. I became an Existentialist despite the fact that the view is somewhat depressing in making us realize that we are condemned to be free, and that every choice we make, or choose not to make is still a choice. There is some hidden beauty in forlornness, anguish and despair. Then I found myself wanting more. That is where the Philosophy of Human Nature, Religion and Society continued and the Intro to Philosophy left off. Then I was introduced to Anselm, Augustine, Nietzsche, Aquinas and Wiredu, and their arguments for and against the existence of God, understanding good and evil. I came to understanding that we as finite beings cannot define the ultimate terms, but only strive to reach that perfection. With or without God, we will always do, or try to do what we believe to be appropriate.

It felt that the flood gates opened; my head was spinning with questions and my mind seemed not to know any limits. College invoked the desire to channel that energy in some positive way. This is where my Composition classes allowed me to express myself in any way I

wanted. First, it was English 102 that allowed me to argue about anything I really wanted, with no censorship. I was happy that for the first time I could write about anything and argue for and against it by every means that were available for me, without worrying about what someone might say. I still remember the last essay I wrote for that class, it revolved around religious practices, and evidence and support for or against them. I spent many hours reading and researching. I also remember the look on the librarian's face when I walked out with ten books. It was one of awe and wonder.

And then came two Literature classes that changed my perspective on a lot of things. I learned that I am both a Modernist and that I am a Medievalist. I walked across the realms of "The Waste Land" and became one of "The Hollow Men" with T. S. Eliot, and I got blown by the "Red Wind" of Raymond Chandler. I sat on the "Snows of the Kilimanjaro" with Ernest Hemingway and contemplated on suicide while "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" and realizing that we must have values and principles that this life "Provide, Provide" with Robert Frost.

Then my ideals of knighthood and chivalry got smashed with "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", and I fell down because of pride with "Beowulf". I was shocked that the Pardoner worked for both sides in *The Canterbury Tales*, and laughing with Julian of Norwich, despite the fact that women did not write. I made deals with the devil in "The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus" and I bathed with Satan in the fiery lakes defying God in *Paradise Lost* and not realizing that we have been set up from the start. I was condemned to Bedlam with *The Rakes Progress* where I still laugh, even as the world is crashing down. Words mean power, knowledge is power, and to control that power, humanity must learn humility, because power corrupts and destroys. With that in mind, my next transformation came from studying Politics.

According to the International Politics, there are two houses of thought; one is Realism and other Liberalism, thus mankind is sinful and wicked or altruistic but corrupted by the institutions. Coming from a war torn country, the politics class explained to me that lines between peace and war are thin, and in order to save the world, we must defeat ourselves. It showed me that politics is a device that must be handled with care or the end results can be devastating. This is the place where I signed SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties) treaties, and worried about MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) in case of a nuclear exchange. I talked about mirror images and détente, and strived to create or dismantle the New World Order. This is where the wheels of globalization started taking hold, and where the conflicts arose. This is where United States politics got assessed, and where I became the agent of transformation.

From Machiavelli to the Framers of the Constitution is a long journey, and I inquired about the Legislative, Judicial and Executive branches of the government, about the 2/3's overrule and judicial restraint. This is where I created the government and worried about the bankers like Andrew Jackson warned, or became aware of the agendas of interest groups. This is where I pondered fixed or staggered terms and the attempt to set policy. It is just another battle that must be fought.

But there were many battles, weren't there? This is where the American History From Colonial Exchange to 1800 came into play and I realized that even the most beloved leader is just a man, that Francis Scott Key was not able to see the battle from all the fog and smoke, and where Pocahontas and John Smith were politicians and not a romantic couple. I realize that KKK believed and still believes that it is protecting the American heritage. Then I truly debate should the fourth of the July be celebrated as the Day of Independence, because if it weren't for the French making it official couple of months later, who knows what could have happened. The

history opened up and transformed me into someone who questioned everything, who learned from the mistakes of the past.

I can go and on, about all the great things that I have learned, but I do not have enough time (as it is a constant for a student) or space to write everything I have learned. I am not a same person who entered those doors two years ago, and I will not be the same when I exit them. I learned how to form strong, valid and sound arguments, how to separate truth from fiction, how to inspire people with my voice, how to decipher the problems in the world and how to be a humane human being through literature. Liberal education needs to transform itself into what it has been from the beginning, and that is a single entity. Human beings have a tendency to separate everything according to style, color, number, not realizing that all of us and everything is connected. A system at war with itself cannot win, so the solution lies in awakening into a new consciousness. “Do I dare disturb the universe?” I dare to create a new one.