

Research Space

Journal article

**The fierce urgency of now and forever and unto ages of ages:
Study and the restoration of Paradise on Earth**

Wilson, S.

The Fierce Urgency of Now and Forever and unto Ages of Ages: Study and the Restoration of Paradise on Earth

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to explore and evoke an old educational concept called 'study'. This is learning which leads to love and love which leads to learning. It is a dynamic experience which engenders transformation whose *telos* is simultaneously endlessly knowable and unknowable. The paper argues that it unites humans with the world, the material world with the transcendent, speed with slowness, alignment with resistance, in a series of antinomic relationships which come together in the heart. Study, it is argued, should form the basis of true education and a truly sustainable relationship with the world.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The paper's approach is informed by the Eastern Orthodox Christian theology of ecology, particularly its complex and holistic concept of the heart and perceiving with the heart. It revels in the antinomies fostered by this tradition.

Findings: The paper's findings are inevitably provisional. They stress the need for beauty in educational practice, and indicate that the form of study described may foster an individual sense of vocation, which can transform self and the world.

Originality: The paper hopes to contribute to a re-orientation in education, sustainability, and ecology.

Keywords: Education and sustainability, theology, Christianity, love of learning, beauty, antinomy, paradox, vocation.

The theme of this article is an understanding of education which is probably unfashionable: the love of learning which I will call 'study'. This is learning which leads to love, and love which leads to learning. 'Study', that is, conjures a certain relationship between equals which is, or should be, the foundation for true sustainability. Going well beyond a conception of sustainability as simply the preservation of what we have, it engenders unending, reciprocal transformation whose *telos* is endlessly knowable and endlessly unknowable at the very same time.

The dynamic experience of a transforming and transformative relationship "with (a) the environment, (b) other people, and (c) ourselves" would seem to lie behind the best and most holistic conception of sustainability, and possibly of education too (Scoffham, 2020, pp.17-18). 'Study' goes beyond even this definition, however, to take in the transcendent, indeed, the afterlife. Heart-felt study may ensure that the world beyond the world and the self beyond the self are sustainable too.

Rather than emphasise the otherworldly at the expense of the this-worldly, or the infinite at the expense of the finite, however, study unites them all. It is antinomic, merging binary oppositions without confusing them. Paradox is its heart. Its speed, for example, lies in its stillness and its stillness in its speed. Its urgency is now, and forever, and unto ages of ages.

Other Ways of Perceiving

This may seem a strange lens through which to view both sustainability and education. But as the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew 1 of Constantinople (the so-called Green Patriarch [see Chryssavgis, 2019, pp.183-201]) stressed in 2015, “before we can change the way we treat the world, we need to change the way we think of and perceive it” (Donley, 2016, p.10). In the words of John Chryssavgis, the cause of what most of us would probably term an ecological crisis “is rooted in the way we visualize and relate to our world” (Chryssavgis, 2019, p.113). We cannot have a true relationship with someone or with something unless we are able to see them as fully as possible, and we cannot see them fully unless we have a true relationship with them. All depends on the quality of our relationship, the quality of our seeing, the quality of our visualising, and, indeed the quality of our words, our language (see Foltz, 2014, p.21). One may justifiably doubt whether the technical protocols and language of science, engineering, and so of much ecology and sustainability thinking, possess the quality we are require. Indeed, they may even prevent a relationship or blind our perception by “dismember[ing] and defac[ing]” the world through their soulless approach and inanimate language (Wendell Berry, cited in Foltz, 2013, p.21).

The same points apply to education. We cannot have a true relationship with the subject studied or with each other if we are unable to see all as fully as possible, and we cannot see all fully unless we have a true relationship with the subject and with each other. We need, too, to attend to the quality of the language we use, and to the deadening and alienating effects of the managerialism which has taken over Anglo-Saxon universities, with its insistence on “metering and monitoring” (Wilson, 2017, p.53). This dogma has brought with it a grisly gallery of “spectral metaphors, dead on arrival, of targets, outcomes, benchmarks, outputs, resources, impacts and other items of neo-liberalese” (Curry, 2017, pp.42-43). These terms which haunt our universities are, among many other things, abstractions, and abstractions are always dead. Any relationship nurtured by this language would be necrophile in nature.

Beyond the world of managers, some educationalists themselves seem to employ a killing language. This may be true, for example, of neuroscientific or constructivist readings of

education. Sue Mathiesen, for instance, states that constructivism “views learning as a process of building and adjusting the structures of the mind” (2015, p.65). These metaphors reduce the human mind in particular, and the whole person in general, to the status of machine, something dead to be tinkered with, re-programmed or bodged. At best we are cyborgs, at worst zombies.

‘Study’, however, is alive and cannot be subjected to control, whether that be of the managerialistic species or any other kind. It requires relationships which are unpredictable in their transformations. It opens the eyes, which then see ever more (but never definitively) into the essence of what we study, which then returns the loving gaze, opening our eyes further. Its language is beautiful, and alive with poetry.

Study

I was first made aware of the foundational meaning of the noun ‘study’ by Ivan Illich. Illich, of course is best known in educational circles for the book *Deschooling Society* (2002). His brief discussion of ‘study’, however, appears in a later work, entitled *In the Vineyard of the Text* (1993). Here he points out that the very first meaning of the noun ‘study’ given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* goes like this: “Affection, friendliness, devotion to another’s welfare; partisan sympathy; desire, inclination; pleasure or interest felt in something” (Illich, 1993, p.14; see *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989, p.979). The primary meaning of study, then, has to do with going out of the self, abandoning it for an other; it has to do with desirous and pleasurable longing or yearning. Properly understood, at the heart of study is love. Thus Dante, who was well aware of the implications of the word, could write in his *Convivio* that true study is “the application of the mind to the thing it is in love with” (quoted in Frisardi, 2015, p.10). The first English writer to use the word in this sense was Chaucer, in about 1374, and the last was Dryden, in 1697 (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989, p.979).

“Affection, friendliness, devotion to another’s welfare; partisan sympathy; desire, inclination; pleasure or interest felt in something”: study, understood in this way, is “an act akin to gazing on the face of someone we love” (Wilson, 2020, p.128). It is perfectly evoked by the Eastern Orthodox theologian Pavel Florensky, when he writes

knowing is not the capturing of a dead object by a predatory subject of knowledge, but a living moral communion of persons, each serving for each as both object and subject. Strictly speaking, only a person is known and only by a person (1997, pp.55-56).

Study is not an exercise of power over a helpless object. Nor is it a presentation of what quite accurately are called ‘bullet points’ (bullets after all kill, and PowerPoint slides are evidence that a murder has been committed).

The lived communion of two equals represented by study, each gazing at the other with the eyes of love, is the precondition for transformation. As our beloved willingly reveals his or her depths to us, we are changed, and reveal more of our depths to the beloved in never-ending mutual knowledge.

Study may, in part, be understood as a process of what is called in Christian theology *kenosis*, or self-emptying (see, for instance, Ware, 2013, p.100). When I study, I abandon myself for my beloved, and my beloved rewards me by giving her/himself to me. The other fills me, and I fill the other, and this mutual self-emptying and exchange of plenitude is not subject to outside control. It may be true that, as Clement of Alexandria (140-c.220) wrote, “Most people are...curled up in their obsessions after the manner of hedgehogs” (cited Clément, 1993, p.26): kenotic and studious love, however, necessarily uncurls our habitual hedgehog nature, opening up our fixed viewpoint, our well-tended opinions, which in the light of love are revealed to be a cage which entraps us and presents needle-sharp spines to others. This is a liberation, and a surrendering of the self which undermines the assumptions of identity politics, or what educational theorist Gert J.J. Biesta, following Rancière, calls “identification” (Biesta, 2016, p.84), and allows something unheard of, radically unanticipated to come into being, rather than accept an identity from the existing matrix of possibilities. Being a student, in this sense, is to take the beautiful risk that one does not know what the outcome of the experience will be, or indeed if it will have a final definite outcome. This notion of study comprises the relationship between student and the beloved subject/object of his/her studies, and also that between teacher and student. It is, *par excellence*, education as understood by Biesta, “the slow way, the difficult way, the frustrating way, and... the weak way” (2016, p.3). One may add, it is the uncontrollable way, and as such it cannot be confined within the classroom, or any other space. It describes in fact the nature of our relationship to everything: to the world, to other people, to the whole of Creation. As such it is the basis of a sustainable future, weaving intricate webs of connexion between the student, Creation, and all other creatures.

As must be becoming clear by now, my understanding of this connexion has been profoundly influenced, in many different ways, by Christian theology. In particular it has been formed by what seems to me to be the most significant contemporary discourse on ecology and sustainability, namely the ecological theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church (see for

example Theokritoff, 2009; Chryssavgis and Foltz, 2013; Foltz, 2014; and Chryssavgis, 2019).

In my elucidation of ‘study,’ then, I will be drawing on this powerful but marginalised theology, and especially its perspectives on nature and sustainability. I would like, however, to start at the beginning, or very close to it, and explore two contrasting ways of acquiring knowledge as described in Genesis. The first is the archetypal moment of study, encompassing Creation and all the creatures within it, while the second is the archetype of the rapacious capturing of a dead object so that it can be turned into a means to an end and nothing more.

My choice of Genesis was influenced especially by Biesta’s discussion of the traditional understanding of the Creation of Earth “as a powerful act” (2016, p.12), the antithesis of the ‘weak’ creativity which interests him. That is not my understanding of Creation as described in Genesis, which is rather an on-going process requiring the mutual study of humans and all other creatures.

According to Genesis, God, having created the world and everything in it, sees that it is all “good” (Genesis 1). The Greek Septuagint translation of the original Hebrew text uses the word *kalos* to describe this goodness. The term also means ‘beautiful’, and stems from the verb *kaleo*, ‘to call’ (Chryssavgis, 2019, p.95). The goodness of Creation is displayed in its beauty, which is called into existence by God (Chryssavgis, 2019, p.95), and which calls out to us.

Having created the first human, God invites Adam to participate in Creation by naming the birds and the animals. He “brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof” (Genesis 2: 19). Adam does not capture and kill the creatures to know them. Rather, they call to him in and through their beauty, the goodness and beauty of their presence. This then calls out of him their name. Receiving this, the animals and birds know their name and consequently become more and more their true, their essential selves (on names in the Bible as revelation of a thing’s essence see Schmemmann, 1973, p.15). Becoming more themselves, they become more beautiful, and so call out ever more to Adam, who knows them more deeply.

This first knowing is a mutual embrace; it is love; it is study. As St Ephrem the Syrian (306-373) wrote, “[The animals and birds] came to [Adam] as though to a loving shepherd, passing in front of him without any fear” (1990, p.203). This kind of loving knowing calls for the beautiful risk of vulnerability on both sides, as the animals offer themselves to know

themselves, and Adam has to forget himself and all that he may want or like them to be, or indeed what he thinks God might want him to say.

This is co-creation through study, and it is a potentially infinite process. It is necessary for the continuous self-becoming of Creation, which is to say that it is the foundation of true sustainability. This sustainable self-becoming is entirely free, and has to be so. Indeed, it may even develop in ways unknown to God: there is surely a hint in the text that God may not know in advance the name that is called forth from Adam's heart by the beauty of the creatures. It is an extraordinary thought, but God Himself may be surprised by what emerges from study.

Heart-centred Study

If Adam's naming of the creatures is an example of true sustainability and co-creative study, it is evidently worth asking what makes it possible. The answer is that it is the heart, in all its plenitude, which is the organ of his studies. The heart, in the Eastern Church, is not just a physical organ, nor simply the place where the emotions, affections or sensibility are believed to reside. It is all those things, but it is it is also, at the same time, "the spiritual centre of man's being, ... the deepest and truest self, the inner shrine" (Ware, 1995, p.115). As the centre of the whole person, it is the place where all our faculties are, potentially at least, gathered together in a whole, where they may be "integrated into a living unity, on the level of the deep self" (Ware, 2000, p.62). The heart, the self of the self, is a holistic organ endowed, most importantly, "with that faculty of intuitive understanding and of direct spiritual awareness which... far surpasses the discursive reason" (Ware, 2000, p.63).

It is not that reason is "repudiated or repressed" (Ware, 2000, p.61): rather it is included in the heart's loving knowing, where indeed it is "exercised to the maximum" (Staniloae, 2002, p.208), but, in the end, put in its place, as it were, by direct spiritual insight. That is true of all the other faculties of the human person: all are included, and experienced in the light of spiritual insight. This is perhaps what is meant by *kenosis*: no longer distracted by opinions, prejudices, etc, Adam is able to go out of himself, to fully study the other beings, and know them as far as is possible. In other words, in emptying himself, Adam is all heart. Perceiving with the heart, with his whole person, he opens himself to the essence of the animals and birds, as they go out of themselves to him. The heart gathers all together, connecting all into its wholeness.

As the organ of study, the heart is necessarily an organ of vision. St Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), quoting St Basil the Great (c.330-379), refers to seeing with "the eyes of the

heart” (1983, p.76), a mystical form of perception which perceives not only the material world but also, simultaneously, spiritual realities shining through.[1] The eyes of the heart see with what Kallistos Ware, drawing on Blake, calls “double vision” (2013, pp.94-95; see also Blake, 1932, p.1068). As Ware explains, “by a strange paradox the more a thing becomes transparent, the more it is seen as uniquely itself (2013, p.95). So when Adam studies the creatures, he is responding to them in all their specificity, but the beauty which calls to him in and through them is the divine goodness of Creation revealed through them. At one and the same time the creatures are, each of them, utterly themselves, and also a theophany. Adam, that is, sees an antinomy: a horse, for example, and God. Neither element in the antinomy vanishes or is obscured.

Behind this there is a second antinomy, that of spirit and matter. Neither are annihilated by Adam’s mystical vision. So the body of the horse is not blanked out in favour of the spiritual reality, but neither does it obscure it. Both have to be present, both are necessary. Adam sees this because, being all heart, he is both body and spirit, a whole inextricably woven together. Things become unsustainable when one accepts only one side or the other of the antinomy as final truth (cf. Florensky, 1997, p.119).

Then there is a third antinomy, the foundational one perhaps. God is immanent in Nature, and at the same time transcendent (see, for example, Chryssavgis, 2019, p.27). It is this antinomy which means that loving study is infinite: at every moment Adam sees the truth of the animal and of God and simultaneously knows that he will never see the final truth of the animal or of God.

Such antinomic seeing and experiencing is widely regarded by Orthodox theologians as the fullest and truest form of vision. Antinomies are necessary, writes Vladimir Lossky, to avoid “replacing living experiences with concepts” (1975, p.52). Andrew Louth, paraphrasing Florensky, avers that “without antinomies, without contradiction, we would simply be faced with rationally convincing proofs... Truth without antinomy... is both tyrannical and also something that makes no sense in the world in which we live” (2015, pp.34-35). Florensky himself states, with only apparent simplicity, that “truth is an antinomy” (1997, p.109). To know the truth, as Adam does, we have to abandon our selves and our need to rationally analyse everything, and instead to participate in truth itself. This is only possible if we see with the eyes of love (Florensky, 1997, pp.48, 109, 121): that is, if we study.

The Paradox Model and a Sustainable Afterlife

It will be understood, then, that the paradox model is very old indeed, predating by several millennia any contemporary version. The particular model suggested as the structure of the online conference out of which this paper has emerged, *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Navigating Paradoxes in Sustainability Education*, organised by Canterbury Christ Church University, UK, and the University of Plymouth, UK, (18th – 21st May, 2020), holds together the paradoxes or tensions of speed and slowness, resistance and alignment. Adam's study of the creatures shows that education can embody both speed and slowness at the same time, in what I have called an antinomy. His study results in immediate and unmediated knowledge of their very essence. But it is not definitive, and never will be. He and Creation will be sustained by the deepening of mutual love. This is slow: it lasts forever. Its end cannot be seen. At the same time Adam is able to resist any temptation to impose himself on the world or to make of it what he wants it to be, and in doing so aligns with divine will. Study is fast as light, and is never-ending. It cannot be controlled but is always aligned with divine love. All these are true. At the centre of the conference's paradoxes stands the individual, working with these antinomies, open to all of them. I am arguing that this is the place of study, its very core. This is primarily the place of the heart, which is the centre of the whole person, which unites all into a living and lively whole. The heart is the place of loving-wisdom, of dynamic change, and openness to uncontrollability.

This is true life-long learning. The student is constantly transformed by what is learnt throughout her/his life, while what is studied endlessly evolves too as each reveal their essence to each. As Clément writes, "The more God is known, the more he is found to be unknown. (And it is the same with our neighbour)" (1993, p.240). It is also the same with the world and all its inhabitants: all is transformed without end in a complex intertwining of studious vision, like a Celtic knot, in a process called *epektasis* ("reaching forward" or "drawing on" [Ware, 1995, p.138]).

This constant transformation continues after we die. As St Gregory of Nyssa (330-c. 395) writes:

for all eternity, world without end, anyone who is hastening towards thee [i.e. God] grows ever greater and rises continually higher. . . . At each instant, what is grasped is much greater than what had been grasped before, but, since what we are seeking is unlimited, the end of each discovery becomes the starting point for the discovery of something higher, and the ascent continues.

Thus our ascent is unending. We go from beginning to beginning by way of beginnings without end.

Nor, whilst ascending, do we cease to desire more, knowing what we know. Rather, as we rise by a greater desire to one still higher, we continue on our way into the infinite by increasingly higher ascents. (cited in Clément, 1993, p.240)

Vision is transformed, and thus what it sees is also transformed. For ever.

So we may also understand the heart as the link between this life and the afterlife, gathering both into an eternal, dynamic and ever-changing unity. One may indeed make the somewhat startling claim that heart-centred study thus ensures the sustainability not only of this life but of the afterlife too. If we do not study, the afterlife simply stops: it becomes static, frozen, the same forever, with, as it were, no future. It dies, in other words.

This may seem like an obscure, even irrelevant point. But secular ecology has its own version: it imagines a future, beyond our own lives, for our descendants. This future, however, is usually, in essence, nothing more than a version of our present world projected into the future: better or worse, perhaps, but little or no different in quality. It lacks the utter freedom implied by the Orthodox vision of life, in this world and beyond, as infinite transformation into something which is eternally new and always beyond our knowing. This view is necessary in order to escape the stasis of the material imagination. In the final analysis, the present is only sustainable if the afterlife is conceived of as constant and unpredictable change.

Bad Educational Methods and Boredom

Study may still have the power to open the gate of the Garden so that Creation may once more be Paradise. Certainly saints have always been able to live with creatures in the way once enjoyed by Adam and Eve (see Theokritoff, 2009, pp.117-154), which is indeed the birthright of us all. But the trembling vulnerability - or weakness in Biesta's terms - of this notion of study as heart-centred participation in Creation is demonstrated by the fact that humans can and do refuse it and turn their backs on it. The result is a practice of knowledge accumulation characterised by the assumption that everything and everyone is merely there as a means to achieve the outcomes which I have been promised and which I promise myself. The archetype of this type of education is the eating of the forbidden fruit. This episode has nothing in it concerning sex or sexual shame: rather it is model of knowledge and teaching which is the opposite of that demonstrated by the naming of the animals. The serpent is a very different teacher from that represented by the God in whose presence Adam utters the names. It offers knowledge as a transactional act: do this, and the outcome will be that. Eat, it says, "then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"

(Genesis 3:5). Eve eats the fruit, the text tells us, because she can, because it is appealing, and because it will make her “wise” (Genesis 3:6). She does not see it with the eyes of the heart, she does not take in its essence, she does not fall in love with it. It is a dead object which she consumes in order to possess something else: divinity. This is the act which begins the despoliation of the Earth by greedy humans, and it kills the whole of Creation, including us. Eve’s grasping transforms the Garden into the Abattoir. As Schmemmann writes:

The world of nature, cut off from the source of life [i.e. God], is a dying world. For one who thinks food in itself is the source of life, eating is communion with the dying world, it is communion with death. Food itself is dead, it is life that has died and it must be kept in refrigerators like a corpse. (1973, p.17)

Or in the words of Theokritoff, “The fall, we might say, solidifies man in his animal nature. It makes him merely a top predator, a ‘consumer.’ The world around us is no longer a revelation of our, and its, Creator, but a resource to satisfy our appetites” (2009, p.84).

Pollution spreads out from the hand holding the apple to the whole of the world, killing it and killing humans as part of it (Theokritoff, 2009. pp.171-172). And all because the serpent successfully followed its outcome-based lesson plan. The Fall is the result of bad educational methods (c.f. Foltz, 2014, p.170).

The serpent may promise that its educational methods will open Adam and Eve’s eyes, but in fact they close the eyes of their hearts so that the first couple, and after them the whole human race, tend only to see matter, and nothing shining through. Nature – the material world in general – now seems to be “an end in itself... opaque, and not shot through with the presence of God” (Schmemmann, 1973, p.160). Our thoughts and affections, flying desperately out of their true sphere, attach themselves to the various objects of the material world, as that now appears to our perceptions to be the only world (Larchet, 2016, p.34). The serpent’s teaching gambits thus smash the heart’s unity, dispersing its faculties among the intriguing surfaces of a world seen with single vision (Larchet, 2016, p.79).

As the infinite depth of the divine has been effectively blocked for most of us by serpentine education, we actually live in the state of boredom described hypothetically by one Orthodox theologian:

Without a divine transcendent nature of knowledge,... we would soon finish the work of knowing the truth. That would mean, however, that it is limited and that the thirst of our nature to know is finite. But we can see that it can’t be so. Our nature in this case would reach an insupportable boredom... (Staniloae, 2002, p.25)

Dispersed in a world of surface, our heart attaches its desires to those surfaces. They distract us, but essentially only offer the same thing again and again. Where Eve reached for an apple, we now may turn to the latest Apple device: being deprived of spiritual reality by our grasping gaze, neither however reveal the endlessly dynamic nature of ourselves, our Creation, or, for that matter, of the Afterlife.

With no divine beauty to call to us through the natural world, however, we inevitably turn, like Eve, to consuming and consuming and consuming: that is both a symptom and a cause of our boredom. Repeating her mistake, we too become pupils of the serpent, obedient to its methods of teaching. The danger is then that, if the boredom which comes from the absence of loving study is not alleviated, the whole of creation becomes a repetitive killing machine, which may eventually consume itself totally. Instead of being ever-changing and joyous Paradise, Creation becomes a dead and static Hell.

The serpent's methods, then, have created a world in which bad education and unsustainability inevitably thrive. Education which has its basis in neo-liberal conceptions of the student as consumer, and the university as service provider, is just the latest – and most hellish - manifestation of this post-lapsarian version of reality. As are the putatively predictable learning outcomes tutors are obliged to devise. They promise that education can be known in advance and so controlled (and so killed). Meanwhile modularisation leads to standardisation of methods and content. There is no place for heart-filled study here, or for the paradoxes and antinomies which bespeak life. All that is left is the tyranny of more and more of the unsustainable same. Universities are Hell.

Maniacally Erotic Education

Study stands against these infernal institutions: it is study which we need to nurture. The heart needs once more to go out of the every-day self, which is otherwise so curled up in its opinions and obsessions. The heart's "[a]ffection, friendliness, devotion to another's welfare; partisan sympathy; desire, inclination; pleasure or interest felt in something" all need to be disentangled from the shiny surfaces of the material world alone, so that its eyes once more see concrete matter and, at the same time, glimpse infinite divinity shining through and amongst all.

To do this, education must try to awaken what Ware calls "intense and fervent longing for the Divine" (2000, p.62). This phrase is his paraphrase of *eros*, which he, and the other translators of the *Philokalia* define thus:

the word *eros*, when used in these texts [i.e. the *Philakolia*] retains much of the significance it has in Platonic thought. It denotes that intense aspiration and longing which impel man towards union with God, and at the same time something of the force which links the divine and the human. (St Nikodimos and St Makarios, 1995, p.432)

Education should in fact nurture what St Maximos the Confessor (c. 580 – 662) called “*eros maniakos* (maniacal eros)” (Markides, 2002, p.46) and what St Gregory of Sinai (1260-1346) referred to as “longing for the divine... a spiritual intoxication” (1995, p.222). This ecstatic longing, this maniacal *eros*, is what Adam knew when the divine beauty of the creatures called to him and called their names out of him.

As an educator, one’s aims may perhaps be more modest than awakening maniacally erotic reactions (which is in any case a phrase liable to provoke misunderstandings). But one can pay attention to beauty, such as in the choice of language one employs. It is entirely doubtful whether beautiful language is specifically Christian: it is however profoundly and essentially poetic. Beauty in poetry points to something beyond the material, while finding it in the specific concrete images offered by the world. It is always itself, and always endlessly reveals realities beyond. Indeed, the great French poet Paul Claudel understood Adam’s naming of the creatures as the archetypal poetic act (Donley, 2016, pp.111-112). Adam was the first poet, and true poetry is to see with the eyes of Adam: undistracted, yearning, in love. It is to see Creation, as indeed the earliest Christian Fathers and Mothers saw it, as “an endless love poem... meant for us to read and reread, to heed and treasure” (Chryssavgis and Foltz, 2013a, p.3).

We can then understand Bartholomew I of Constantinople when he calls for “more poetry in our theology” (cited in Donley, 2016, p.1). I would go well beyond that, however, and add that there should be more poetry in all subjects, from the most practical to the most philosophical. We should try to imagine what social sciences, geology, business studies, biology, economics or engineering written and taught in poetry, or at least prose poetry, would be like. If that seems hard, we can at least recognise that education, being poetic in essence, cannot be controlled and outcomes cannot be predicted. Indeed, the very word outcome would have to disappear.

Meanwhile, beauty should be nurtured in all the elements of universities, such as in their architecture, furnishing and fittings. Drably utilitarian education factories and warehouses should be torn down, and replaced with the kind of beautiful buildings which were once the norm for academia. This need not be expensive: it just means paying attention to forms which

speak to the heart. Universities could then once more be places of study, that is places which cultivate the love of learning and the learning of love.

Being places of poetry and beauty, universities would also be places of contemplation. They would cultivate the calm, tranquillity and patience which is necessary for things to truly change in our relation to the world (and which should thus not be mistaken for stasis). As Chryssavgis has written,

ecological correction may in fact begin with environmental in-action or mere awareness. It is a matter of contemplation, of *seeing* things differently. Progress is not just a matter of moving without stopping; it is slowing down, even stopping, in order to consider proper direction and appropriate action. (2019, p.133)

I would add that the perceived need for speed in everything we do is both a symptom and cause of the general catastrophe enveloping humans and the world. Speed does indeed kill.

To subvert and reverse the direction, to bring about true transformation, we need to reject speed and embrace the slow way, the contemplative way of study. In any case, Adam has shown us that study has the potential to produce lightning-quick insight. Even if that fails to happen, it will bring about change which moves exactly at the speed it needs to.

As for my own educational practices and their bearing on sustainability, it is not my intention to describe them in detail here. Suffice it to say, I have explored specific landscapes and indeed the campus of my own university with students, colleagues, and other interested parties through poetry, prose, image, folklore and myth, in the hope of transforming vision. We have of course literally explored them too, walking them, sometimes very slowly and meditatively indeed. My hope was to create a holistic experience, structured around a series of antinomies: mind and body; spirit and matter; presence and absence; past and present; present and future; etc. Through this, it has always been my aspiration to inspire heart-felt relationship between student and Creation and, to open the eyes of the studious heart. It was however never possible in advance to know what would actually occur, if anything. These are things beyond control. I have however often been pleased by subsequent comments from participants in the activities. Informal written feedback has included reference to a walk taking a participant “to another mode of experiencing the campus surroundings”. Without prompting, another person described the way the walk opened “inner eyes of imagination” while being “a very sensory and erotic experience”. One participant spoke of “place informing experience, and *vice versa*”. I was told that “this should happen more often in life.” I encourage students to reflect creatively on their experiences, and express what they have learnt in a variety of ways: in art, poetry, and/or more formal academic essays. They ask

themselves whether the type of study they have encountered differs from that which they have found elsewhere at school or university, and how, too, the kind of knowledge it creates may differ. I have generally remained silent about my own spiritual assumptions, unless it became appropriate to mention them: whether that will continue to be the case I am not sure. This article has also been an attempt to at least indicate that study is possible, in all its wildness and order, its speed and endless slowness. It has been a walk through these and many of the other antinomies experienced when the eye of the heart opens. There can be no true conclusion, only a pause for further contemplation. In that moment of stillness I and the reader, like Adam, may hear beauty, in all its goodness and wisdom, calling to us, and calling out of us corresponding goodness and wisdom. Calling a self and a world into being, both of which are ever new and ever unpredictable, alive unto ages of ages.

This then is the ultimate aim of study: not to learn employability skills, but to hear our calling and the world's calling. To hear the vocation which is calling through both. That vocation is to realise Paradise.

[1] The experience of seeing with the eye or eyes of the heart is of course not confined to Orthodox Christianity. It is found, for example, in Islam, too (Nasr, 2002). Indeed, Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues that it is “universal” (2002, p. 38).

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