WEEK 44, 2020

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS& CULTURE

UGNEPOUWELL/SHUTTERSTOCK

A statue of Dante Alighieri, 1865, by Enrico Pazzi, next to the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence, Italy.

LITERATURE

More Dante Now, Please! (Part 1)

How Dante Provokes Thinking

JAMES SALE

Recently, a top American academic at a highly prestigious American university dropped me a line and said, "The universities are dying." I wouldn't know personally whether this is true, since I have never attended an American university, and I don't live in the United States. But his words resonated with me, because it is certainly true in the UK.

Perhaps the science, the technology, and the medical faculties are swimming along swimmingly in their own self-congratulatory way—very happy with themselves as they still attract grants and support, and most importantly, as they are led to believe what clever boys and girls they are—the cream of intellectual achievement, in fact. But this is really a serious distortion of what education is about.

Science, for example, tells us "how" things are but not so much about the "what" and, preeminently, the "why." The "why things" are far more important than "how" they are; this is not to say that "how" is not important, but "why" encompasses ultimate questions such as our purpose. Science and technology, without true purpose, are not beneficial to humanity but dangerous.

To find out about the why, we need to revisit the humanities and their various faculties, which is, of course, where the dying is happening.

Here's an insight: Between the ages of 7 and 10, my youngest son, Joseph, was a Harry Potter fanatic; and through "Harry Potter," his reading skills and his imaginative capabilities advanced immensely. But it was a bit of a surprise when he was 18 (in 2011), and he looked at prospective universities and found one in the UK offering an English degree—with "Harry Potter" studies as a key component! How proud the university was of its right-on, contemporary, non-elitist approach to literature. And how sad it must be for that university now when the only proper response, apparently, to a J.K. Rowling book is to burn it for its author's insensitive view that being a woman means being a woman.

All this brings me to the basic point that unless we get serious about understanding what great thinking looks like—found in works by theologians, philosophers, writers, and poets—we as a civilization are going to fall.

Continued on ***Page 5***

Behind the Subscription

Your subscription will not only provide you with accurate news and features, but also contribute to the revival of American journalism and help safeguard our freedoms for future generations.

We aim to tell you what we see, not how to think; we strive to deliver you a factual picture of reality that lets you form your own opinions.

We believe that we live in truly epochal times, where the faithful representation of our current events won't just be important for the people of today, but also for the generations to come. The records we keep now will directly inform the foundations of the history they'll learn and the values they'll cherish—and this knowledge is what drives us.

Learn more at
EpochSubscription.com

THE EPOCH TIMES
TRUTH AND TRADITION

LITERATURE

Old Men, Stout Hearts
Some Perspectives in Verse

JEFF MINICK

When I shop at Martin's, our local grocery store here in Front Royal, Virginia, I am often struck by the physical infirmities of some of the older male shoppers. Some are in the store's mobile carts, some are crippled and twisted by arthritis, and some, ground down by toil and hard living, shuffle along the aisles. Others, like myself, may be more mobile, but our faces bear the wrinkles, scars, and discoloration of tens of thousands of days lived on this planet.

Let me tell you something that you may not know about these men.

Though we have arrived at old age by unique pathways, most of us, I am certain, share one attribute in common. In our mind's eye, the time-roughened face that greets us in the mirror each morning does not reflect the spirit in our heart and mind. Depending on our circumstances, and despite the wheezing in our lungs, the weakened vision, and the aching limbs, a younger man, I am convinced, abides within that battered frame of flesh—a soul possessed by dreams and ambition, regretful, yes, of past failures, yet hopeful too, even at this late stage of the journey, to make a difference in the world.

Here are two poems, two songs, and a movie that allow us a glimpse into the interior of such older men.

CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

After many adventures, Ulysses (also known as Odysseus) likely found it hard to give in to old age. "Odysseus Between Scylla and Charybdis," 1806, an engraving by William Bromley (after Henry Fuseli) of Odysseus looking down in terror at the whirlpool Charybdis, with Scylla as a sea monster writhing around rocks at left. Illustration for Alexander Pope's translation of Homer's "Odyssey." The British Museum.

Those of us who are old may look decrepit to you, but we are still alive with the fires of our youth.

The Man of La Mancha

In the Broadway play "Man of La Mancha," inspired by Cervantes's 17th-century "Don Quixote," an old gentleman declares himself "Don Quixote, the Lord of La Mancha" and sings "Hear me now/ O thou bleak and unbearable world,/ Thou art base and debauched as can be;/ And a knight with his banners all bravely unfurled/ Now hurls down his gauntlet to thee!"

Off this ancient and gallant knight rides to battle evil and answer the call of destiny. He reveals his vow and the object of his quest in the song "The Impossible Dream," including such promises as "To fight the unbeatable foe,/ To bear with unbearable sorrow,/ To run where the brave dare not go." He promises "To follow that star/ No matter how hopeless,/ No matter how far."

To many casual observers of the elderly, this passion may seem nonexistent, a banked fire at best. But if they dig deeper, they may discover a bright flame inside the man, the desire even in the twilight of life "To fight for the right/ Without question or pause,/ To be willing to march into hell/ For a heavenly cause."

We find such men throughout history. Winston Churchill, for instance, was well past 60 when he became prime minister and helped save the British people from the Nazis. Some of our presidents have served when they were past the age of 70 and showed themselves to be strong and courageous leaders.

Our energy and prowess may give way to Father Time, but in the heart, passion abides.

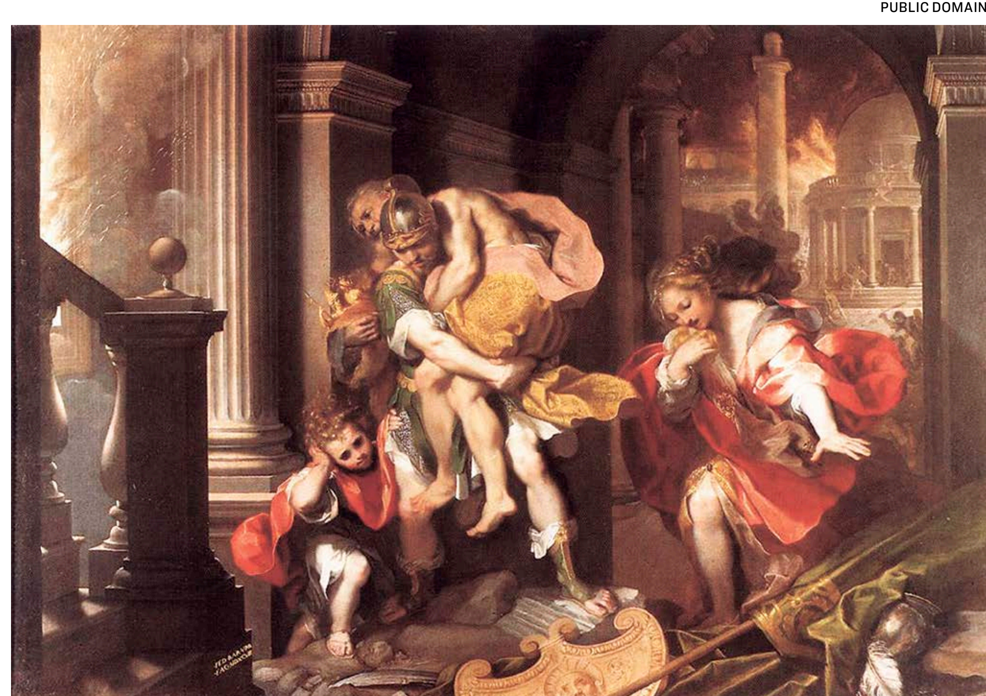
Ulysses

Some elderly men seek to follow that passion, to scratch another item or two from the bucket list, and to make a difference in the lives of others.

In Alfred Lord Tennyson's blank verse poem "Ulysses," we encounter one such hero. Tennyson depicts Homer's wanderer as an old man "by this still hearth," "an idle king" who reflects "How dull it is to pause, to make an end,/ To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!"

Like so many men nearing the end of their days, Ulysses knows that "Death closes all," yet he longs for a last great adventure, "some work of noble note." The poem's conclusion so well sums up this desire for one last crack at life that it deserves inclusion here in full:

PUBLIC DOMAIN



The great hero Aeneas saved his father and son from Troy. "Aeneas Flees Burning Troy," 1598, by Federico Barocci. Borghese Gallery, Rome, Italy.

TRUTH CAN BE BLOCKED
BUT NEVER STOPPED

Pass it on, one friend at a time!

"I enjoy reading The Epoch Times daily and share links, stories and "real news" updates whenever I can. Because of this, several friends and family members are now subscribers and have thanked me for sharing "real news" that is going on globally.
— DELINDA FORSYTHE

REFER YOUR FRIENDS *

For each successful referral you make, you get 2 FREE months added to your subscription. Each friend you refer will get 2 months of our paper for only $2!

Refer your friends and family today!
ReadEpoch.com/Friends

* This referral program is only valid online at ReadEpoch.com/friends. As we can't currently process check payments for this program, your understanding is appreciated.

"Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

"Though much is taken, much abides." When we pity an old man for his crippled hands or his doddering gait, we might pause to remember that on the inside he may well be ablaze with vigor and enthusiasm.

Aeneas

For a number of years, I taught Advanced Placement Latin to seminars of homeschooling students. I have no degree in classics and only formally studied Latin for three years long ago, but I applied myself and made up in enthusiasm and hard work for what I lacked in training and skill.

As we read passages from Virgil's "Aeneid," his epic poem that follows Aeneas and his Trojan comrades as they travel the Mediterranean seeking a homeland, I became fascinated by this tale. The trials faced by settlers crossing unfamiliar seas and settling in strange lands, the religious beliefs brought by these wayfarers, and the clashes with natives—all bore a resemblance to our own American story.

Taking a cue from Tennyson, I imagined what Aeneas might have felt once the years had left him by his hearth with only his memories to sustain him, and so wrote "Aeneas Senex," Latin for "Old Aeneas."

"When once the chill of autumn bit your bones,
O Teucrian king, and red dawns woke you stiff
As bloodied oxen hide, untanned, half-dried;
When once Ascanius, beloved son,
Redeemed by you that night from burning Troy,
Cast hungry eyes upon your burnished throne,
When once the thick array of Dardan spears
Grew thin as Lombard's winter grass, when men
Once strong now doddered through your halls—what then?

How did you wend that night-tide watch from dusk
To dawn, beset by cries of Cruesa's ghost,
By glittering Sybil's bough, by Hades' shades,
By Latium's dusty plains where Pallas fell,
By Turnus gutted by your bloody sword?

You and I have shared some common ground:
Like you I've lost a wife and friends to death,
Like you I sought my star of destiny—
But truth to tell, my days are but a jot;
I've only fought the skirmishes of life;
I've dared no caves of Pluto's reeking hell
(Though I have walked the halls of human hearts);
I've faced no shrieking Aeolian gales
(Though I have steered the storms of human souls.)

Yet still tonight I wonder, man of steel—

Did you like me see all your past as dream?
Did you like me look back with breaking heart
At life's fierce sweep of days, the rushing grains
Of grizzled Chronos?—Did you like me
Bear wine to bed to make the dead lie still?
It comforts me some nights to think of you
Abed, half-drunk and drowned in Dido's eyes."

Regrets, losses, the aches and pains of flesh and memory: like passion and desire, these shadows of time also belong to a man in his last years.

How that man responds to those afflictions defines his character.

Windows to the Soul

In the movie "Secondhand Lions," two elderly brothers, Garth (Michael Caine) and Hub (Robert Duvall), are living out their final years on a falling-down ranch in Texas when they take a young nephew under their wing. At one point, Garth is talking to Walter (Haley Joel Osment) about Hub and remarks, "A man's body may grow old, but inside his spirit can still be as young and as restless as ever."

Those of us who are old may look decrepit to you, but we are still alive with the fires of our youth.

In the musical "Man of La Mancha," the "no longer young" Don Quixote has "eyes that burn with the fire of inner vision."

If you wish to see those fires in old men, look us in the eye.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C., Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Old age doesn't extinguish the love for life. "Don Quixote de la Mancha and Sancho Panza," 1863, by Gustave Doré.

How to Share The Epoch Times With Your Friends and Family

As an Epoch VIP, you're passionate about the traditional journalism and in-depth reporting you get in The Epoch Times. You've even sent us ideas on how to spread the word. Here are some of the best suggestions from readers like you!

Request FREE Newspapers to Be Sent to Your Friends*
Submit the names and shipping addresses of your friends. You can request FREE newspapers for as many friends as you want. The Epoch Times will send the newspapers on your behalf for free.

Newspaper Sharing
Simply pass your copy of The Epoch Times, or a section of it, to someone else after you've read it. Consider neighbors, friends, family, relatives, co-workers, teachers, golf buddies, and your boss.

Newspaper Placement
Place a copy of The Epoch Times at places where people typically wait such as doctors' offices, dentists' offices, hotel lobbies, airline terminals, barbershops, and beauty salons. Also consider placing copies at community centers, company cafeterias, break rooms, coffee shops, gyms, churches, automobile dealerships, or in your car. Visit EpochShop.com.

Bumper Stickers
Put a bumper sticker on your car plus ask friends and family to put stickers on their cars as well. Visit EpochShop.com.

Getting the Word Out
Word-of-mouth is always a great way to spread the news about The Epoch Times. Talk it up at your local library, meetings, birthday parties, special events, and with friends and family over the holidays.

Using Email and Social Media
Use technology to share stories from The Epoch Times. Forward our daily email MORNING BRIEF to friends and family. Share postings from our Facebook site and YouTube channel. Simply copy the URL and then send it with a brief note such as: "Here's a story I thought you'd like to read."

Displaying Your Poster
The Epoch Times SPYGATE poster has become legendary—so consider posting it on a wall at your home or office. When friends or business associates ask, explain what the poster is about and how they can get their own copy.

THE EPOCH TIMES

Not a subscriber yet?
Visit ReadEpoch.com to learn more

* (1) Please log into your account at TheEpochTimes.com (2) Click your name to manage your account (3) Click "Request Free Papers" on the left menu bar and follow steps

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANDREW PLEDGE

(Left) "Cormorant," 2020, by Andrew Pledge. Oil on wood panel with silver leaf; 30 inches by 24 inches.

(Top right) "Wood Stork," 2019, by Andrew Pledge. Oil on wood panel with gold leaf; 28 inches by 20 inches. The painting won Pledge the title of the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation Wildlife Artist of the Year 2020.

(Bottom right) "Hornbill," 2020, by Andrew Pledge. Oil on wood panel with silver leaf; 20 inches by 30 inches.

FINE ARTS

A Penchant for Peculiar Birds

Wildlife Artist of the Year

Andrew Pledge's Paintings

LORRAINE FERRIER

Beauty is in the eye of wildlife painter Andrew Pledge, who seeks out unpopular—and let's face it, often ugly—birds to create beautiful images. It's a talent that's won the self-taught wildlife artist the prestigious David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation Wildlife Artist of the Year 2020 award for his painting of an American wood stork.

For 10 years, Pledge created handmade models for a small architectural firm in London, specializing in high-end homes. He learned his trade in-house, eventually becoming their head model maker. In his last year for the firm, he designed architectural models for the company's exhibition stand at the esteemed Venice Biennale, 2018. Pledge loves architectural model making and is now a freelancer.

"I'm very lucky; I get to do work that is fascinating," he said by phone.

But in September 2019, he decided to take a leap and become a full-time painter. And, as if affirming his career move, his very first painting after about 10 years away from the art won him the award.

The Difference Is Golden

Currently, wildlife art is mostly confined to specialist galleries, Pledge explained. He sees very little crossover between wildlife art and the mainstream art world. It's something he'd like to see change, and he hopes his art can bridge that gap.

Pledge's wildlife paintings are decidedly different. Rather than paint animals in their natural habitat, as he sees many wildlife artists do, he wanted to paint something unique.

That special something is adding gold and silver leaf. He'd used gold leaf to represent the River Thames in one of his architectural models for a building proposal in central London, and he liked the golden effect. And he had also enjoyed working with gold when he assisted a top contemporary artist who uses various ornamental techniques.

Sketches of a chimpanzee, jaguar, and lion are part of an alphabet of animals project that wildlife artist Andrew Pledge has made to raise funds for the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation.

> **You have unlimited inspiration with birds.**
>
> *Andrew Pledge, artist*

In addition, Pledge saw that wildlife artists quite often tend to focus solely on the subject: the animal, as opposed to the overall image. Pledge places utmost importance on the overall image and believes that composition is his strong point, a skill he partly attributes to his architectural background, having worked for many years with different architects and designers.

Of his wood stork painting, he said: "I've used very detailed techniques, but at the same time I've kept in mind that I want to create a beautiful image as well as just a study of the animal."

The gold enabled him to transform an almost ugly bird into something beautiful. His intention for using gold is not to change the bird: "It's enhancing the natural beauty of the bird in a way some people don't see."

The Charm of Birds

Birds have always fascinated Pledge. "You have unlimited inspiration with birds. There's just thousands of different kinds of birds and they're all different," he said. At age 8 or 9, or perhaps younger, Pledge remembers drawing swans and eagles but never really being interested in lions, tigers, and elephants.

Birds have what Pledge is looking for: plenty of details and character. "Birds just have an amazing amount of character," he said. He reflects on his favorite bird, the crow: "They seem to have a story behind them, a character behind them."

In terms of details, he believes that lions are beautiful, majestic creatures, but they don't have enough details for his paintings. "They're just fur and mane. But if you look at a bird, just one feather is incredible. … Each individual feather has individual colors depending on its reflective quality."

A Cormorant Reveals Its Colors

Pledge particularly loves cormorants. Observing cormorants on the River Thames, he noticed that their "almost pterodactyl physique" appears black, but a closer look revealed the cormorants' "beautiful blue and brown feathers."

In his cormorant painting, Pledge captures both the bird's prehistoric profile and colorful plumage. The bird seems to freeze as if it had just been spotted, and it seems as if the bird puffs out its chest with just a hint of pride in its pose. The textural effect of the bird's blue, jewel-like chest feathers are reminiscent of the river's ripples and currents.

Pledge painted the cormorant straight after his winning wood stork painting, but instead of using gold leaf on the bird itself, he used silver leaf as a background.

Just as the cormorant reveals its true colors only on closer inspection, so too does Pledge's silver-leaf picture. The painting is hanging in his front room, where the white walls reflect onto the painting's silver-leaf surface, making the painting's silver background almost invisible.

Portfolio Building and Fundraising

For a little over a year, Pledge has been adding gold and silver leaf to his paintings. It's a technique that requires endless patience and a mastery that he's still learning. For instance, in his cormorant painting, he applied squares measuring 3 1/8 inches by 3 1/8 inches one by one over the background, and then painted in oils on the silver-leaf surface. The silver leaf scratches particularly easily and any mistakes cannot be erased, only painted over, which is not always possible. But with each painting—a wood stork, cormorant, hornbill, and guineafowl—he understands the technique more.

As Pledge concentrates on building his portfolio, conservation is at the forefront of his mind. So in addition to his normal painting process, he's sketching his way through the alphabet—an animal for each letter—with 100 percent of the profits going to the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF), a UK-based charity that funds conservation projects across Asia and Africa.

A lion, a tiger, and an elephant are among those sketches Pledge has drawn, but one thing is certain: He will continue to appreciate and highlight those less-loved birds, so their peculiar beauty shines like gold or silver.

To find out more about Andrew Pledge's art visit, AndrewPledgeArt.com

LITERATURE

More Dante Now, Please! (Part 1)

How Dante Provokes Thinking

*Continued from **Page 1***

The falling will be into the stealth ideologies—equality, diversity, wokeism—all underpinned by a virulent form of Marxism, and the end of all true values as we know and love them.

What Great Thinking Looks Like

If we narrow great thinking down to an area that I am personally excited by, it would be to say: Every child should be exposed at continual points in their education to good, great, and the greatest literature. Indeed, as adults, the need to experience more than just bestsellers and pap is also of paramount importance if we are to continue to grow as human beings and as citizens.

What constitutes great literature is not contemporary books full of politically correct, woke memes and themes with all their self-congratulating virtue signaling and superiority. These are the equivalent of fast food, only less nutritious. Classic texts are not defined by patriarchal, white, middle-class males; on the contrary, they emerge from cultures because the people in a culture have thought long and hard about the text and have found that whenever they return to it, there is more value to be had: more entertainment, more ideas, more learning, more beauty, and—dare I say it?—more transcendence. The great classic speaks to the deepest parts of human nature and usually points to some divinity beyond it.

A great example of the literature I have in mind would be Dante's "Divine Comedy," a work of overarching genius. As far as the Western canon is concerned, only half a dozen works or so might be compared with it.

Let's be clear too. There's nothing wrong with a Western canon, especially if it be subject to lively debate and revision. It was English writer Dr. Samuel Johnson writing in his "Preface" to "The Plays of William Shakespeare" who put the matter most succinctly: "What mankind have long possessed they have often examined and compared, and if they persist to value the possession, it is because frequent comparisons have confirmed opinion in its favor. As among the works of nature no man can properly call a river deep or a mountain high, without the knowledge of many mountains and many rivers; so in the productions of genius, nothing can be styled excellent till it has been compared with other works of the same kind … What has been longest known has been most considered, and what is most considered is best understood."

And the thing is, Dante's "Divine Comedy" is not a dry-as-dust, academic book that we might politely applaud for its scholarship, or some politically correct parable extolling utopian virtues fit for utopian futures that will never be. (But, heck! Why not indoctrinate children with it anyway?) Rather, "The Divine Comedy" is as gripping a story as one could ever read: a journey down to Hell, up through Purgatory, and pressing on to Heaven itself. Even one canto of the 100 that constitute the whole poem is full of surprise, mystery, emotion, mythology, philosophy, and much more, including, especially, what we all want to know about—people, their predicaments, and their conditions, all sorts of them.

The Nature of Reality

The "Divine Comedy" is a work that explores the very nature of reality. As professor William Franke observes in his brilliant book "Dante's Interpretive Journey," understanding reality is never easy; it is something that each person must struggle with. The "Divine Comedy" is not some work of Catholic propaganda. Dante is constantly inviting the reader to interpret the meaning of what is going on for him or herself. And it's not: Here's the truth; take it or leave it. On the contrary, the text questions itself and invites you, the reader, to do exactly the same. How stimulating might that be for a late secondary school student, never mind an adult?

A couple of examples might help clarify what I mean here. The primary problem of the whole poem is whether it is literally true, for Dante claims it is. What are we to make of this work: Is it just a work of art—of artifice—or did Dante really go to hell and beyond, as he claims? Is he a visionary or a prophet of God? How can we know how to decide these claims?

Or take another example that I am particularly fond of, and which Franke explores in his book: How is it that Dante, on the one hand, refers to and dismisses the ancient and pagan gods as lying and false, and on the other, invokes Calliope and Apollo as his muses to inspire him on his journey?

With these questions, we come down to exploring the fundamental question of what truth is, and how true this account of Dante's journey is.

Big Topics Versus Virtue-Signaling Memes

These are big topics, but young people like big topics, don't they? Surely, this is the kind of book to inspire curiosity, engender wonder and amazement, and provide intellectual ballast for the rest of one's life! But I hope, too, it is obvious that this mode of thinking is a million light-years away from the certain certainties of woke thinking and political correctness.

In woke culture, the truth is always black and white, quite literally: black people good, white people bad; women good, men bad; freedom (aka: license) good, authority bad; liberal good, conservative bad; and so on. These self-evident truths are of course far from self-evident, but clearly so many people have now lost their ability to think—that is, to "discriminate" in the true meaning of that word—that they fall in with these mindless memes.

We are now literally in the 700th year since the passing of Dante Alighieri. He died on Sept.13, 1321, and so next year we need to celebrate this giant in the world of poetry and philosophy. What, however, in the meantime might be the biggest single contribution of Dante's poetry to our world now?

The answer, I think, is the issue of the freedom of the will and its fatal opposite, determinism. We'll be looking at this in part 2 of this article and seeing how this is explored in Dante's three worlds, and how in our society now, we are experiencing the disbelief in free will being worked out—disastrously.

James Sale is an English businessman whose company, Motivational Maps Ltd., operates in 14 countries. He is the author of over 40 books on management and education from major international publishers including Macmillan, Pearson, and Routledge. As a poet, he won the first prize in The Society of Classical Poets' 2017 competition and spoke in June 2019 at the group's first symposium held at New York's Princeton Club.

ALL PHOTOS IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

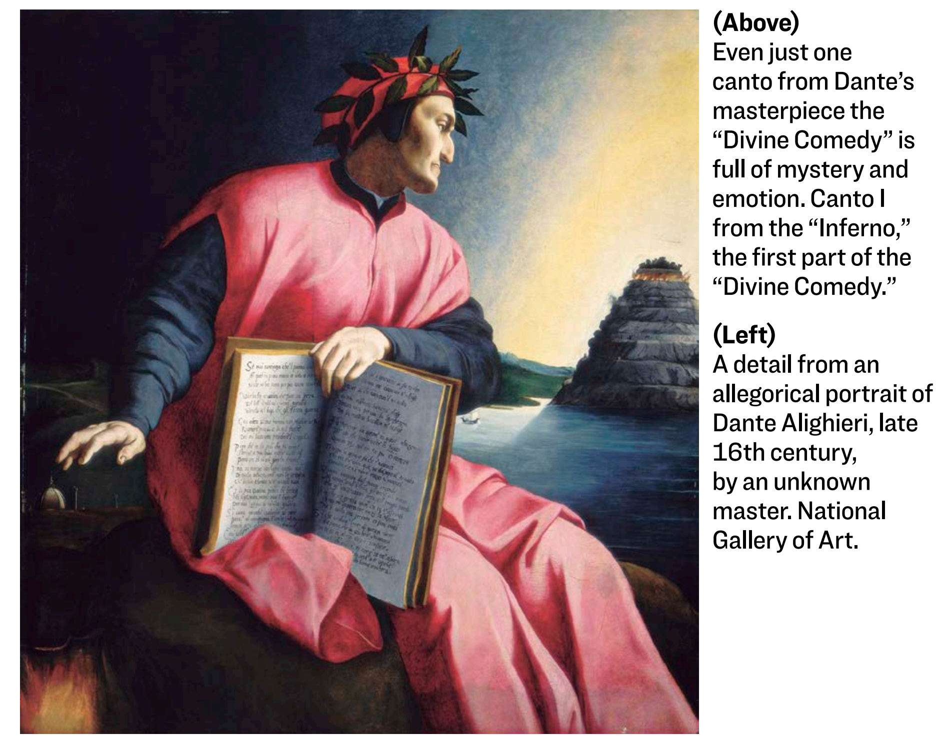
CANTO. .PRIMO.

CANTO PRIMO DELLA PRIMA CANTICA O VERO COMEDIA DEL DIVINO POETA FIORENTINO DANTHE ALEGHIERI: CAPITOLO PRIMO.

NEL MEZO DEL CAMMIN DI NOSTRA VITA

Mi ritrouai per una selua obscura
che la diricta uia era smarrita
Et hai quanto adir quale era e cosa dura
questa selua seluaggia & aspra & forte
che nel pensier rinuoua la paura
Tanto era amara che pocho e piu morte
ma per tractar del ben chio ui trouai
diro dellaltre cose chio uho scorte
I non so ben ridir chomio uentrai
tantera pien di sonno in su quel puncto
che la uerace uia abbandonai
Ma poi chio fui appie dun colle giunto
la oue terminaua quella ualle
che mhauea di paura el cor conpuncto
Guardai in alto & uidi le sue spalle
uestite gia deraggi del pianeta
che mena diricto altrui per ogni calle
Allhor fu la paura un pocho queta
che nellago del cuor mera durata
la nocte chio passai con tanta pieta

(Above) Even just one canto from Dante's masterpiece the "Divine Comedy" is full of mystery and emotion. Canto I from the "Inferno," the first part of the "Divine Comedy."



(Left) A detail from an allegorical portrait of Dante Alighieri, late 16th century, by an unknown master. National Gallery of Art.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF LONG TREK HOME PRODUCTIONS

DOCUMENTARY

'Finding Manny' Touches Hearts

An interview with documentary filmmaker Kacey Cox

MASHA SAVITZ

“This whole project was a blessing for me,” said Kacey Cox, the Toronto-based director and producer of “Finding Manny.” “I grew so much, personally and in my understanding of what the Jewish people experienced in the Holocaust: meeting a guy like Manny and spending time with him, learning about his personal outlook, his philosophies, and his sense of optimism.”

“Finding Manny” is the story of a family journeying back though space and time not only to revisit one of the worst genocides in history but also to retrace the steps of Manny Drukier's journey from Poland to Germany as a child. His family experienced the trek through the very personal lens of their husband, father, and grandfather.

As the title suggests, the documentary is about finding this man literally, as a historian had been searching for him—and also figuratively. This experience offered an opportunity for the family to contextualize, reconcile, and empathize with his life. He, like many survivors, had remained silent about his past for decades. In a very real sense, his family found the man they didn't quite understand or fully know.

The project began with a set of serendipitous events. While on a trip, Kacey explained, he got a call from his acquaintance Cindy Drukier, telling him that she would be going to Toronto the following week to visit her parents. Her elderly father, a Holocaust survivor, was going to be opening an old cigar box full of World War II-era photos, which he'd never shown the family before. She wanted Kacey to film the event.

No one, at this point, had any idea that this event would lead to a three-year project and feature-length documentary.

With the family present, Manny brought out the cigar box. “And that's when it got interesting,” Kacey said. Just after the end of the war, Manny ended up hooking up with one of General Patton's brigades, supporting them as a translator. Manny became almost an honorary member of the U.S. military for a short stint.

“Then he starts pulling out photos from the concentration camps. You're seeing dead bodies and, you know, stacked up, stacked on top of each other, emaciated. My jaw just dropped. Everyone there was jaw-dropped—with the exception of Manny. Maybe Freda, his wife, was not hit so hard, but his daughters were gasping.”

Now, strangely, around that same time, Manny's son, Gordon, an astrophysicist living in Connecticut, had stumbled upon a Smithsonian Magazine article about a place called Kloster Indersdorf, a home for displaced children in Germany. This is the place where his father had found refuge after the Holocaust. Gordon forwarded the article to his parents.

To her amazement, Freda instantly recognized her then-teenage husband in one of the photographs! Manny, too, was shocked. He read the article and discovered an interview with his best friend from the orphanage, Erwin Farkas. Manny set about finding Erwin, who then led him to Anna Andlauer, a German historian whose mission is to find the orphans from Indersdorf.

Kacey filmed the serendipitous Skype meeting a few days later between Anna and Manny. Anna explained that she had been looking for survivors from Indersdorf, and Manny, specifically, for nine years.

Anna “gets a certain amount of funding for the survivors to cover their fare and their stay if they can come back and visit the orphanage and do an educational presentation for the townspeople and young visiting students,” Kacey explained.

“For some of the survivors, it's like a healing process, or part of their own internal journey. And so, on that same call, Anna invited Manny back to Kloster Indersdorf.”

Initially, Manny rejected the invitation. “Why would I go back to the place of the worst horrors?” he asked his daughters.

Anna's suggestion also sparked the idea of filming more. “This could be a potential documentary if Manny would go on the trip, and the documentary aside, this would be a great opportunity for the family to get to learn more about their father,” Kacey said.

Eventually, Manny acquiesced—game on.

A Journey Back in Time

Amazingly enough, everyone in the family was able to take time off, so they turned it into a family trip: retracing Manny's roots, first in Poland and then on to East and West Germany.

And so began the epic journey, with Manny's three grown daughters, son, son-in-law, and two grandchildren traveling to Manny's childhood home, and to the places where he hid as a boy in Nazi-occupied Poland before he was caught by the Germans.

One of the most significant moments of the trip for Kacey was visiting the Auschwitz concentration camp. “The place is massive,” he recalled. “We got there in the morning. The place was shrouded by a forlorn, gray mist. It felt haunted. You could actually feel the presence of a tragedy there.”

“It was pretty life-changing to visit that place,” Kacey recounted. “Intellectually, my knowledge grew by going there, but internally and emotionally, that side of me really felt it.”

Manny chose not to go to Auschwitz that day. For the members of the family who did go, Kacey acknowledged, “It was quite emotional. You just saw the looks on their faces. Especially as the guide was explaining the specifics of how things were conducted there,” he explained.

Getting to Know Manny

“Each of Manny's children had had their own way of interpreting the different aspects of their father and how that had played out in terms of their relationship with him growing up,” Kacey said.

Of the four children, Manny only shared his stories with Gordon, the oldest and his only son, while everyone else only got little bits and pieces of it.

“Gordon's bedtime stories would be stories about Manny in the Holocaust, stories about what he did to survive or, you know, here's what sort of ingenuity I used to whip up something that might be useful during those periods we were in hiding, or while we were in the camps.”

Occasionally, as they were growing up, Manny would use dark humor about his past. When the children returned from summer camp and said, “We had fun at camp,” Manny might joke, “Well, at my camp, there were eight of us to one bunk,” Kacey said.

There was certainly much that the family needed to integrate and process about their history as a family, personally, and collectively as a people.

A School Presentation

Perhaps the trip and film's culmination was Manny's presentation at the Indersdorf school, the pitch-perfect experience for all involved.

“At least six busloads of students were there [at one of the two presentations]. The place was packed,” Kacey said. “That day was pretty special. You could feel this energy in the room. The kids, without any prompting from their teachers, had been bringing gifts up on stage for Manny.

“They were doing it from their hearts. It was so emotionally touching. I just knew this was magical,” Kacey said.

This event gave the director a pivotal experience, transforming him from an objective filmmaker to a fully engaged human being, committed and impassioned to tell this story, recognizing that it could really connect with people.

One female student in the audience asked Manny what he thought about the German people. He answered that he took each person on his or her own merit. “I don't look at Germans as all the same. It's really down to the individual,” Manny replied.

Finding Manny' is the story of a family journeying back through space and time to revisit one of the worst genocides in history.

“After that, it felt like everyone in that room, they all had permission to release themselves from this burden, because they were there, they wanted to learn,” Kacey said. “They wanted to embrace what had happened, take ownership of that, and whatever they could do to right those wrongs. It was amazing.”

Manny's positivity and strength to endure not only saved his life during the war, and allowed him to start a new life in Canada, but also continues to inspire others to this day.

“There are times while working on the film, or just in my own life, when I recall Manny's attitude and say, ‘OK, you know, what would an optimistic person like Manny do; how would he approach this situation? Would he be defeated by it, or would he look at the bright side and say, I'm going to overcome this?’” Kacey said.

“Manny is just a blessed person. He sees it as luck and part of his personality, but I see it as part of the larger design,” Kacey said. “I feel like my life has been enriched with this project.”

“Finding Manny” won Best Documentary at the Moving Parts Film Festival and the Audience Choice award at the Albuquerque Film and Music Experience. It was produced by Kacey Cox, Long Trek Home Productions, NTD, and by Jan Jekielek and Cindy Drukier, both staff members of Epoch Times Media. Directed by Kacey Cox and narrated by Stephen Baldwin, the film received funding from the Canada Media Fund, the Claims Conference, Doc Institute, and from generous private donors.

“Finding Manny” plays next at the (virtual) Alexandria Film Festival, Nov. 12–15, and then in the UK at the Crossing the Screen Film Festival, Nov. 26–20. For more information, visit FindingManny.com

(Top) Holocaust survivor Manny Drukier on a journey to his past. (Above) Manny Drukier (C) with his wife, Freda (L), granddaughter Leah (2nd L), and daughter Cindy at the Lodz Jewish Cemetery in Poland.

The director of “Finding Manny,” Kacey Cox.

(Left above) Anna Andlauer, a German historian whose mission is to find the orphans from Kloster Indersdorf. (Left) Manny Drukier's box of photos from World War II.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF DREAMWORKS ANIMATION/TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

(L–R) The characters as voiced by the actors: Gran (Cloris Leachman), Eep (Emma Stone), Grug (Nicolas Cage), Thunk (Clark Duke), Sandy (Randy Thom), and Ugga (Catherine Keener), in DreamWorks' caveman chronicle, “The Croods.”

FILM INSIGHTS WITH MARK JACKSON

Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valley, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school. At Williams College, his professors all suggested he write professionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he writes professionally about acting. In the movies.

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

“The Croods”: A Good Lesson About Adaptability

MARK JACKSON

The release date for “The Croods 2” is approximately a month away, so let's talk about the first one. Clearly it made a splash, or it would not have been invited back again.

Pixar had long dominated warm-fuzzy computer-animated kids films, whereas DreamWorks made “Shrek,” “Kung Fu Panda,” and the many “Madagascar” movies, which had a decidedly more catering-to-adults feel to them, full of double entendres and a slightly more hard-bitten Weltanschauung.

However, DreamWorks' 2013 update on, basically, “The Flintstones,” “The Croods” tried to capture a piece of the Pixar market by being very warm and fuzzy. Especially fuzzy, since it's about cavemen, or rather, one big patriarch caveman named Grug (voiced hilariously by Nicolas Cage), and his family.

It's an environmentally apocalyptic tale; the world is in the midst of tectonic plate shifts, and since the family appear Neanderthal, it must have be the Pleistocene Epoch shifting into the Holocene Epoch. I googled that. So basically, “The Croods” is a Neanderthal-centric version of the second “Ice Age” movie, except with more evolved CG.

This story concerning a major earth-shift is further accentuated by the fact that the Croods' tiger-skin-clad teenage daughter Eep (Emma Stone) is dating a little Cro-Magnon dude (Ryan Reynolds).

Now, it would appear (also from Google) that that particular relationship would have needed to bridge a gap of around 10,000 years. But no matter! The point is—this movie is about change!

The Family

Safety-obsessed paterfamilias Grug is married to zebra-skin-clad Ugga (Catherine Keener). Aforementioned daughter Eep has a chubby brother named Thunk (Clark Duke)—nice kid, not terribly bright. And then there's Grug's meddling mother-in-law (Cloris Leachman) who Grug—like many men whose mothers-in-law live with them—hopes will die soon. Bringing up the rear is Sandy, a formidably choleric, alternately googoo-gaga-ing/snarling feral child, whose cute fuzzy pigtails use big blue millipedes for scrunchies.

‘The Croods’

Director
Kirk DeMicco, Chris Sanders

Starring
Nicolas Cage, Emma Stone, Ryan Reynolds, Catherine Keener, Cloris Leachman, Clark Duke, Chris Sanders, Randy Thom

Rated
PG

Running Time
1 hour, 38 minutes

Release Date
March 22, 2013

★★★★☆

The Croods floating in a giant turtle shell in a tropical ocean.

(Above) (L–R) Belt (voiced by Chris Sanders), Guy (voiced by Ryan Reynolds) in a chivalrous moment, and Eep (voiced by Emma Stone).
(Left) Grug and his giant sabertooth kitty pet, one of the enormously fun creatures in the film.

Grug leads his Crood clan in daily food forages, which includes a scene where the family functions like a football/rugby team, quarterbacking and running-backing a giant filched egg from a Dr. Seuss-like ostrich.

What's clever is that the score evokes football by using Fleetwood Mac's marching-band hit song “Tusk” (one of those songs that get perennially played at college football games), and cleverer still, is the massive beastie that they all hop aboard to escape the irate ostrich in hot pursuit—it has giant tusks. “Tusk,” tusks, football. See?

The other thing Grug does is terrify his family into staying put in their furnitureless cave home, accompanying his storytelling with cave paintings about all the deadly flora and fauna lurking outside. Grug's motto is “Never not be afraid!”

Daughter Eep, however, is a rambunctious teen with a Stone-Age-sized rebellious streak. She's sick and tired of daddy's safey-safe, namby-pamby approach to life, and so one night, she pulls the prehistoric version of climbing out the bedroom window and jumping in some bad boy's rumbling Camaro.

Following the shadows of flickering fire on canyon walls (she's never seen fire before), she discovers a nomadic Cro-Magnonesque guy named Guy (Ryan Reynolds). He's got cool hipster hair and stripe-y ornamental body paint, and kinda, like, low-slung 1970s-style hiphugger bell-bottom jeans. Guy is higher on the evolutionary ladder. Guy knows fire. Guy knows shoes. Guy's also got a pet sloth called “Belt” who's got various jobs: hold Guy's pants up (obviously, with that name), but also sidekick, therapist, bartender, minimalist laconic jokester, medic, and muse.

One look at Ryan Reynolds-voiced cool Guy and Eep is over the moon, of course. Think Grug'll like Guy? Or do you maybe think Grug'll immediately wish he could lay his hands on that preventative measure against Camaro guys, beloved of modern dads—the shotgun?

The Journey

Continental plate shifts, geysers, volcano eruptions, earthquakes! The Crood family residence is flattened by a massive rock fall. It's suddenly the end of the world as they knew it, and Grug definitely doesn't feel fine.

Off they all scurry into a barren, scorched-earth, lava-flow landscape, with Guy as a guide. As mentioned, Guy knows migration, Guy knows figure-four dead-fall traps, Guy knows fire, and survival on the run as opposed to Grug's survival by cave, which Grug grudgingly must acknowledge and embrace.

Do they have a plan for their flight? Yes, “Follow the light.” Sounds trite, but it's quite alright—there are magnificent visuals, tons of action, and a jaw-dropping world-building that pays considerable homage to James Cameron's “Avatar,” especially in the fauna department.

There is a vast number of imagined prehistoric technicolor creatures: a cross between a sabertooth tiger and a neon-colored parrot fish; a crimson tide of murmurating piranha birds; a barking, panting, crocodile-canine that Thunk adopts and names Douglas; waddling land-whales; and two lemurs sharing the same banded tail. These make up just a few of the slew of fellow travelers on the Croods' magical mystery tour to the future.

All in All

As they all travel across the incredibly unstable prehistoric landscape, beset by danger, it's basically patriarchal, ultraconservative (caveman)-tradition-espousing Grug versus teen rebellion dream-Guy's innovative progressivism. The Crood clan shifts from thinking “father knows best” to seeing Grug as a pitiable fundamentalist. This would appear to strike a blow for the liberal agenda.

But Grug's game for some change! He turns out to be a revisionist, capable of adaptation—at first hewing to tradition to take care of his family, and then adapting in the midst of great change, and teaching his kids to take risks and be adventurous in order to survive. So that would appear to be two blows for the liberal agenda—the second being the conservative saw the error of his ways!

The interesting thing about this movie message is that in our current apocalyptic COVID climate, adventure seems out the window and caution is all the rage.

Nic Cage is clearly having a blast playing this updated version of Fred Flintstone, especially the scene where he tries to compete with Guy, coming up with hilarious, harebrained inventions like photography: “Paintings are so passé” (smears Thunk's face with gray mud and then whacks him in the face with piece of slate) “I call it a snapshot.” Thunk: “Can we do that again? I think I blinked.”

Between COVID-19, the uncertainty about our future in abundance all around us, impending zombie apocalyptic doom, and whatnot, “The Croods” provides an extremely hopeful message of surviving into the future. Little ones won't get it intellectually, but they'll get it on a visceral level, while being thoroughly entertained by Douglas the gator-dog. Or is it dog-gator? Croc-dog? You decide.

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

Questioning the Universe With Wonderment: 'Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery'

PUBLIC DOMAIN

"Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery," circa 1776, by Joseph Wright of Derby. Oil on canvas, 57.9 inches by 80 inches. Derby Museum and Art Gallery, England.

ERIC BESS

Science, with people believing that the truths it offers are absolute, has become a source from which many people gather their beliefs. The Age of Enlightenment was a philosophical catalyst in helping science gain a foothold over religion and faith, with some of the era eventually seeing them as outdated and even harmful modes of belief.

Science is always advancing, however, and the scientific truth of yesterday—despite being thought of as absolute—is often overturned by new evidence tomorrow. As science continues to develop and evolve, is there a place for those things that exist outside the domain of science, such as religion and faith?

Asking these questions makes me think of a scientific artist I loved as a young boy, Joseph Wright of Derby. As an adult, however, I find myself leaning away from the Enlightenment thinking that Wright advocated. Despite this, we can still see if his work, separate from his intentions, offers our hearts and minds any wisdom.

Joseph Wright of Derby

Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797) was an 18th-century English painter interested in the progress of Enlightenment philosophy and the industrial revolution. According to The J. Paul Getty Museum website, "Wright invented the scientific Enlightenment subject: scenes of experiments, new machinery, and the leaders of the Industrial Revolution."

The Tate Museum supports the Getty Museum's claim with another: "[Wright's] paintings of the birth of science out of alchemy, often based on the meetings of the Lunar Society of Birmingham, a group of scientists and industrialists living in the English midlands, are a significant record of the struggle of science against religious values in the period known as the Age of Enlightenment."

Wright, influenced by artists such as Rembrandt and Caravaggio, used tenebrism—an artistic practice of high contrast in which forms are illuminated in dark environments—to depict the scientific inquiries of the Industrial Revolution.

'Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery'

In his work "Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery," Wright depicted eight figures illuminated in a dark room. The room is one of study and research, which is indicated by both the orrery—a mechanical model of the solar system—in the center of the composition and the unveiled bookshelf at the top right of the composition.

The focal point is the philosopher: the large figure with gray hair and red cloak who towers over the other figures as he gives his scientific explanation of the solar system. The philosopher looks not at the orrery, however, but to his right, where a young man takes notes on the lecture.

The other figures around the orrery seem to be in a mode of cold, intellectual contemplation. The figure sitting to the far left is emotionless and cold, one of the figures to the right looks at the philosopher, and the other figure to the right puts his hand to his head as if in deep concentration.

The scientific truth of yesterday—despite being thought of as absolute—is often overturned by new evidence tomorrow.

Only two figures don't seem to be in the same type of deep concentration: the two children. The light from the orrery, a light representing the sun, shines on them the brightest, and they have expressions of playful curiosity.

The other child is almost silhouetted and has her back turned to us. Wright, by placing her with her back to us on the opposite side of the orrery from the philosopher, has increased the three-dimensionality of the composition as a whole. Having figures all around the orrery allows us to read the dark environment as a room with depth.

The Age of Enlightenment and Romanticism

In order to unpack some of the meanings this painting may have for us, it is important to first have an understanding of the Age of Enlightenment.

The Age of Enlightenment corresponds with a period of philosophical inquiry in the 17th and 18th centuries. Enlightenment philosophers pursued absolute truths centered around science, reason, and logic instead of faith-based belief.

Enlightenment philosophy attempted to produce absolute and rational truths by way of the human intellect. In other words, the Enlightenment philosopher looked to define human existence by using nothing but the logic of the human mind.

Traditionally, the philosopher is one who asks questions in pursuit of wisdom. Enlightenment philosophy also began with asking questions, but it ended with absolute definitions around how human beings think and experience the world, all in the absence, seemingly, of faith.

If we now return to Wright's painting and look at it, not from Wright's perspective but from the perspective that faith is important, it's easier to see Enlightenment principles at play. For instance, the philosopher seems more concerned with the notes taken by the student to his right than with the orrery in front of him.

Arguably, these notes—which are nothing more than the philosopher's thoughts manifested in the world—can be a symbolic representation of pure, rational thought, which became the purpose of the Enlightenment philosopher's inquiries.

The philosopher is no longer interested in the orrery, that is, the workings of the universe—the very thing that would have initiated his philosophical inquiries—but is now more concerned with the accuracy of the student's jotting down the philosopher's own definitions.

We can see the effect these definitions have on the other students. Some of the older students around the orrery are presented as having cold or detached expressions. These characteristics would later be criticized by Romantic philosophers.

Romantic philosophers argued that Enlightenment philosophy was too cold and calculating, and therefore tended to treat human beings like objects instead of possessors of sentient life. In its obsession with rational thought, Enlightenment philosophy left behind the heart and the gut, that is, human emotion and intuition, and faith as well.

Questioning the Universe With Wonderment

The two children, however, represent a certain hope. They still look at the universe with curiosity and wonder. Their interest suggests a curious questioning—as young children are apt to question everything—which is fueled by a foundation of wonderment.

The focal point is the philosopher: the large figure with gray hair and red cloak who towers over the other figures as he gives his scientific explanation of the solar system.

Scientific inquiry and absolute rational philosophy have not yet defined and therefore limited the children's wonderment. They are not overwhelmed by the absolute rationality of the philosopher's lecture. They most likely understand very little, if any, of it. They even seem to care very little for anything in the room but the model of the solar system in front of them.

Is this why the orrery shines its light on the children the brightest—because they still approach the mysteries of the universe, of life, with wonderment, a playful curiosity, and sincere questions?

Anything taken to an extreme can have dire consequences. I think Enlightenment philosophy went to the extreme of logic in its scientific inquiries, left behind matters considered irrational (such as emotions and faith), and became more concerned with its own definitions than with the mysteries of the universe.

This isn't to suggest that emotions reign supreme. The Romantic philosophers, like the Enlightenment philosophers, also were in danger of going to an extreme—the extreme of irrationality. But the Enlightenment thinkers looked at the universe through the lens of human logic only, anything else seemed irrational and therefore, suspect.

But is it rational to suspect faith? After all, isn't science based on faith in logic and the scientific method? Isn't it a matter of what one places faith in? And, isn't faith in logic alone limited to the parameters of what is already known?

For Kierkegaard, the later philosopher who coined the phrase "leap of faith," faith, which for Enlightenment philosophers was irrational, was an awesome force through which we lived; for him, the objective and abstract truths of science don't define us and could never express our individual authenticity or our love of God.

Maybe the representation of these two children can remind us to balance cold logic, reason, and our adherence to science with the fact that we are beings of faith, who often find meaning in life through a childlike curiosity about the mysteries of existence and the universe, and a love for God.

Art has an incredible ability to point to what can't be seen so that we may ask "What does this mean for me and for everyone who sees it?" "How has it influenced the past and how might it influence the future?" "What does it suggest about the human experience?" These are some of the questions I explore in my series "Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart."

Eric Bess is a practicing representational artist.

Cooking With Love, Paprika, and Musicals

Joe Pasternak's 1945 'Thrill of a Romance'

For more arts and culture articles, visit TheEpochTimes.com

TIFFANY BRANNAN

Dinner and a movie is a popular plan for evenings at home. This concept goes beyond eating in front of the television when the recipe comes from the movie's producer.

Joe Pasternak, who made over 100 movies during his three-decade career, was called the "Cooking Producer" because he loved making Hungarian delicacies for his Hollywood friends. His culinary flair was captured in a 1966 cookbook called "Cooking With Love and Paprika," which is much more than a collection of traditional European recipes. It is a collection of stories about golden era movie stars' favorite pastime after working hours—eating!

A perfect Pasternak production to pair with a recipe from this book is "Thrill of a Romance" (1945), his first Esther Williams film and a second leading role that made the swimmer a movie star. This movie further established Van Johnson as a heartthrob. It also was the film debut of Lauritz Melchior, a Metropolitan Opera star who made four out of his five films with Joe Pasternak.

Surprisingly, this story, which is set in a resort near Yellowstone, has more discussions about cuisine than average!

The story is about swimming teacher Cynthia Glenn (Williams), who is romanced by plastics tycoon Bob Delbar (Carleton G. Young). They wed after a month-long courtship and visit a mountain resort for their honeymoon. However, just after they arrive, Bob is called to Washington, D.C., on a big business deal, leaving devastated Cynthia alone at the hotel.

Joe Pasternak, who made over 100 movies during his three-decade career, loved making Hungarian delicacies for his Hollywood friends.

She soon meets war hero Thomas Milvaine (Johnson). They become good friends as she gives him swimming lessons, but she refuses to acknowledge their romantic feelings for each other. Other guests at the hotel are Nils Knudsen (Melchior), an opera singer who is miserably dieting, and Maude Bancroft (Frances Gifford), the flirtatious daughter of Delbar's business associate.

Cooking for the Stars

Pasternak specifically mentions this film's main stars in his cookbook, citing dishes he loved making for them. When he opens the chapter on casseroles, he refers to cooking them for Esther Williams:

"When I was working with Esther Williams, I invited her to dinner very often. The poor girl was in and out of the water … for days on end, and the least I could do was to feed her some of her favorite dishes to keep her energy up. Sometimes I'd think to take her home without having prepared anything in advance. Then I'd go home a little early and whip up one of my special casseroles."

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Joe Pasternak in 1957. He was known as the "Cooking Producer."

Interestingly, the producer's concern for his actress's watery profession is like a line that Cynthia's aunt, Nona (Spring Byington), says to her before dinner: "I wanted you to have such a nice hot dinner. You need one after a day of such damp work."

Like many other Americans invited to Mr. Pasternak's meals, Van Johnson was reluctant to sample the producer's Hungarian concoctions, not realizing how much he would like one unusual dish!

"The first time I served lecso (Hungarian Hot Dog Goulash) to Van Johnson, he looked at it and said, 'Hot dogs and tomatoes and green peppers! I don't even like those when they're not mixed up together!' So as usual I said, 'Taste it, taste it, just taste it. …' Now, I play very bad tennis and Van Johnson plays very good tennis. But after he had eaten the lecso, we made a deal. Every time I make it for him, he plays tennis with me for an hour."

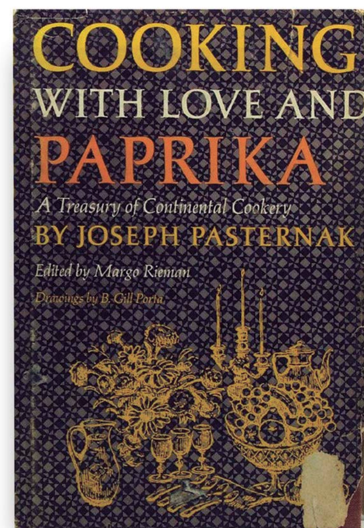
In contrast, Lauritz Melchior loved eating anything Joe Pasternak cooked. The European flair of Pasternak's cuisine wasn't foreign to the Danish singer, whose described hearty appetite is unsurprising:

"The best customer I have ever had is a man with an appetite as big as he is and a personality as warm and wonderful as his voice. Lauritz Melchior, the incomparable Wagnerian tenor, is every cook's dream, a gourmet who loves everything I cook. But choosing what to cook for him is a dilemma as well as a delight. Whenever I'm in doubt about what to feed him, I make Hungarian goulash, since he enjoys it above all else. And there could be no better reward than the song he sings for me in appreciation."

Thrill of a Good Meal

A major subplot in "Thrill of a Romance" is Nils Knudsen's strict diet of vegetables, which is very difficult for him, since "the only vegetables" he likes "are steak and beer." It seems this European character has acquired the American dislike of vegetables, which Joe Pasternak describes in his introduction to the chapter "Vegetables of Distinction":

"Here in America we can enjoy asparagus, green peas, … or corn anytime of the year.



Joe Pasternak's cookbook is filled with Hollywood anecdotes.

… Maybe that's one of the reasons Americans find vegetables boring. My recipes for vegetables take a little more time, a little more patience, and a little more love on your part. But they also make the vegetables just that much more exciting to eat."

Unfortunately, the hotel's chef doesn't know these recipes, so poor Mr. Knudsen must eat plain carrots. "Oscar," he complains to the waiter, "do I look even a little like a rabbit?" His friend Mr. Pasternak even had a solution for this vegetable:

"Poor old carrots, always considered such a dull vegetable! They need not be, if you'll try them this way (with cognac). I admit they aren't very glamorous served plain, but… [a] little fixing up helps almost everything, including the carrot."

While Nils is served unimaginative carrots, Mrs. Fenway (Ethel Griffies), who monitors his diet, orders herself a delicious meal, including "the noodle soup, roast duck with lots of dressing, asparagus with hollandaise sauce, potatoes au gratin, and a double chocolate sundae." The producer's cookbook lists many dishes from this extravagant menu. On page 56, he describes soup garnishes, such as Noodle Dough, which can be added to any broth:

Opera star Lauritz Melchior appeared in several Hollywood films.

"Like making a movie, making a soup requires lots of ingredients, carefully chosen and carefully blended. Then one adds one's own touches and garnishes to make the whole thing a finished composition. Almost all soups are better for these garnishes."

He also gives instructions for roast duck. He provides two pages of asparagus preparations, plus his hollandaise sauce recipe. While there is no recipe for potatoes au gratin, he gives instructions for cauliflower, spinach, and tomatoes au gratin, also providing three pages of potato preparations in the vegetable chapter. He lists no dessert as ordinary as a sundae, instead dedicating three chapters to more exotic sweets.

Music and a Meal

Pasternak was one of Hollywood's greatest musical producers. He made stars out of young singers Deanna Durbin and Gloria Jean at Universal and Kathryn Grayson and Jane Powell at MGM. His films without these youthful sopranos often contained other classical musicians, such as conductor Leopold Stokowski, pianist José Iturbi, and Heldentenor Lauritz Melchior, who makes his screen debut here singing a famous aria from "I Pagliacci." Later, he sings Franz Schubert's "Serenade" and Edvard Grieg's "Jeg elsker deg" ("I Love You"). In addition to his impressive singing, he plays a touching supporting acting role.

This musical celebration also features big band hits from Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra.

Fifteen-year-old Lyonel (Jerry Scott), a bellboy aspiring to be a singer, sings with the band. Tommy Dorsey's fictional daughter, Susan (Helene Stanley), sings and plays a jazzy piano rendition of Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsody" with his band. As a side note, supposedly, Pasternak believed he could make Stanley into a musical star, but an MGM board meeting decided that Jane Powell should instead be promoted to stardom. This is one of only two musicals Stanley made.

In the sauce chapter's opening, Pasternak explains his love for musicals:

"Now I have made a lot of musicals, as a producer, because I love music and feel that a world without it would be a gray world indeed. But when you make a musical, just as when you make a meal, you have to balance the voices to make a good duet."

This movie was 1945's seventh-highest-grossing film because it remains a perfect balance of music, romance, and friendship. Try balancing it with one of Mr. Pasternak's recipes to create a meal filled with love, paprika, and music!

Tiffany Brannan is a 19-year-old opera singer, Hollywood historian, travel writer, film blogger, vintage fashion expert, and ballet writer. In 2016, she and her sister founded the Pure Entertainment Preservation Society, an organization dedicated to reforming the arts by reinstating the Motion Picture Production Code.

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

A Moving Western About Standing Up for What's Right

IAN KANE

Similar to 1960's "The Magnificent Seven," director Fred Zinnemann's "High Noon" (1952) is a Western about courage and standing up for what's right, no matter the odds. And although this film shares that message, it doesn't begin as dramatically as the later film does.

"High Noon" starts off much more subtly, with shots of scruffy henchman Jack Colby (Lee Van Cleef) smoking a cigarette under a tree. Soon, he is joined by a couple of similar, devious-looking men, Jim Pierce (Robert Wilke) and Ben Miller (Sheb Wooley). The three men travel via horseback to a lone train station to await the noontime arrival of their leader, Frank Miller (Ian MacDonald).

Not too far away is the dusty little (fictitious) town of Hadleyville, New Mexico. (The film was actually filmed at locations in the beautiful state of California). The town's standup marshal, Will Kane (Gary Cooper), has just gotten hitched to a young Quaker named Amy (Grace Kelly).

Will wants to leave the law enforcement business behind and begin a new life as a loving husband. Therefore, the couple plans to leave Hadleyville and get a fresh start elsewhere. His replacement is due to arrive the following day, and the townsfolk assure him that they'll be safe without a marshal for one day.

Suddenly, Will receives news that Frank Miller is headed for Hadleyville in order to seek revenge on him and a few other folks, who sent him up to hang for his crimes. Will is faced with a dilemma—should he stay and defend his hometown and the innocent townspeople who live there, or turn and walk (or in this case, ride) away with his new bride?

The townsfolk insist that Will and Amy ride off, purportedly to protect the newlyweds' lives. In a moving scene, Will grapples with this dilemma as he and Amy ride off on horse and buckboard. His face visibly registers his inner turmoil as he shifts around uncomfortably and his hands clutch and fumble with the reins.

Despite Amy's warnings against their staying in town, Will turns the buckboard around and heads back. He's made his mind up to stay and protect its citizens. After returning to Hadleyville, Will prepares for his showdown with Frank Miller at high noon, and it's here that the film shows the different relationships between its main characters.

There's his second-in-command, Deputy Marshal Harvey Pell (Lloyd Bridges), a young hothead who seems jealous of Will's bravery; and well-to-do Mexican American businesswoman Helen Ramírez (Katy Jurado), who is romantically linked to Will, Frank Miller, and Harvey Pell (although she dumps the latter early on in the film). Then there's Martin Howe (Lon Chaney Jr.), a retired lawman who Will looks up to, but he doesn't seem too keen on taking up the fight.

All of these characters have various motivations that are touched on, revealing parts of both the town's history and the film's backstory. One of the most intriguing threads throughout its one-hour, 25-minute runtime is how most of the town's inhabitants want Will to leave. For instance, Harvey Pell seems to want Will to leave so that he doesn't have to live in his shadow anymore, while Helen implies that she simply wants him to enjoy a new life with Amy.

As the clock ticks closer to noon, the slow-burn pacing of the film begins to pick up. All of the stellar cast is able to convey the gradual ratcheting up of tension as the minutes tick by, and there's even a traitorous (no spoilers) person who chooses a pretty inopportune time to backstab our hero, Will.

UNITED ARTISTS

Deputy Marshal Harvey Pell (Lloyd Bridges) has little interest in helping Marshal Will Kane (Gary Cooper) catch the bad guys, in "High Noon."

Can Will keep up his resolve even though many of the townsfolk don't necessarily appreciate his selflessness? Or will he break down and leave them to their own devices, since he can't even seem to round up a single man to deputize?

A Subtle Western

Frankly, I'd assumed that the film would have plenty of gunfights leading up to its inevitable climax. However, most of the action takes place on the faces of Hadleyville's residents as they carry out their individual motives and machinations, and it's a real pleasure to watch things unfold.

> **The stellar cast is able to convey the gradual ratcheting up of tension.**

Cooper is excellent as a steadfast lawman who stands up for what's right, and Kelly is equally fun to watch as his conflicted wife. (Her character became a nonviolent Quaker after her brother and father were killed in a gunfight earlier in her life.)

Among the baddies, Ian MacDonald doesn't appear until the end of the film, although he makes for a pretty dangerous-looking dude. Van Cleef stands out as a comparably menacing henchman despite not having a single line of dialogue. It was one of the actor's first roles.

"High Noon" is a slow-burn classic Western that initially seems to have a simple setup. However, its complex characters and their various relationships to one another offer plenty of fascinating story arcs packed within its relatively short runtime.

'High Noon'

Director
Fred Zinnemann

Starring
Gary Cooper, Grace Kelly, Thomas Mitchell

Running Time
1 hour, 25 minutes

Rated
PG

Release Date
July 30, 1952 (USA)

★★★★½

Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To learn more, visit DreamFlight-Ent.com

2021 Calendar Released

Bring the beauty of Shen Yun home

Save 20% when you buy the bundle!

SHENYUNSHOP.COM | TEL: 1.800.208.2384