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# REACHING THROUGH TEACHING

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A NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTING CLASSROOM PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE AMONG KENNESAW FACULTY

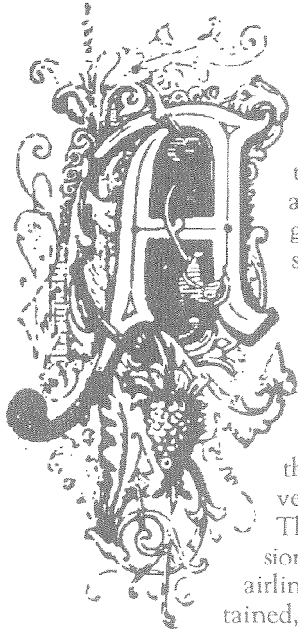
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## A MODERN FABLE

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A group of disillusioned professors broke away from their universities and banded together to go in search of the legendary Mountain of Knowledge, Wisdom, and Truth located in a far away land. Planning the quest was an adventure of itself. There were provisions to be purchased, airline tickets to be obtained, guides to hire, visas to secure, maps to study, and a host of other tasks which kept them busily and happily working together. They were united by a common interest, even though they represented diverse disciplines from accounting to zoology. They talked with one another collegially, drawing upon the expertise of first one then another, as suited their needs. Everyone had something to contribute.

Finally the day of departure arrived. They travelled by commercial airline

then by smaller plane to a landing strip beside a river, at the edge of a mysterious jungle. There they loaded dugout canoes which native guides poled upstream to the foothills of a vast mountain chain. Supplies had to be backpacked the rest of the way. The little band of scholars climbed steep trails, traversed streams, and hacked their way through uncharted wilderness. They had a common quest—a calling to fulfill; and though the way was very hard, they worked together, affirmed one another and were happier than they had ever been.

Many weeks passed before, at long last, late one afternoon just before they were about to stop to set up camp, they saw the object of their quest looming in the distance, its summit shrouded in clouds, its rocky walls green with tropical growth. No one slept that night in anticipation of what awaited them the following day. When the reluctant dawn finally arrived, they quickly struck their tents, packed their provisions, and pressed quickly toward the prize, the mysterious mountain.

Two surprises awaited them when they arrived. First, it was immediately apparent that the base was perfectly round, unlike any mountain ever seen before. Also, everyone had assumed that it would be necessary to climb the mountain in order to discover its wealth. "Not so," said the keeper of the mountain. "The ore must be mined from the caves around the mountain's base." On

closer inspection they discovered that there was a literature cave, a history cave, an art cave. There were caves for psychology, management, biology, music, and mathematics—conveniently—one cave for every scholar there, and their entrances were equally spaced around the base of the mountain.

The scholars knew instinctively what to do. Each found the appropriate cave, entered and started searching. What took place can only be described as a discovery frenzy. They revelled in the richness of knowledge, wisdom, and truth the veins yielded, as deeper and deeper they made their way into the mountain.

At first, at the end of each day they would meet outside the mines to exchange pleasantries with colleagues. But as they went deeper and deeper into the heart of the mountain, it became less and less convenient to do so. Soon, the once close-knit group had practically ceased communicating. An occasional visit to a neighboring mine produced suspicion that someone might be trying to steal something. Some scholars even added doors and locks to their cave entrances. After awhile, all became virtual hermits, each working selfishly alone, each convinced that his or her particular vein of ore was unique and of ultimate importance.

Then one day an amazing thing happened. With all those scholars tunneling toward the center of the mountain,

*(continued on page 11)*

But like the priests of the late Middle Ages, today's academics guard their orthodoxies, and often the privileges that come with entry into the profession, apparently as afraid of "Reaganism" as the old clerisy was of "Galileoism" and the new science. They are in a stronger position than the old clerics were, however, and it is unclear whether the universities will reform themselves under pressure from an ascendent elite as the church did during the Reformation.

D'Souza is not so pessimistic. He suggests three "modest" reforms at the end of his book. These proposals are both consistent with American principles and are ordered to the liberation of the universities from the worst excesses of the recent past. His first reform would modify affirmative action admissions policy by making it non-racially based, directed instead toward underprivileged, but promising, students. The second would have universities discourage the practice of minority self-segregation on campus. The third would institute a course sequence for students which would expose them to the fundamental issues regarding equality and human difference. In these courses, the student would be exposed to classic texts, including non-western texts, which deal substantively with this issue. He insists only that these non-western texts be foundational, or civilizationally representational, and not merely propagate an ideological agenda of a western elite (254-256).

It is this latter suggestion that bears most on our situation at Kennesaw State College. D'Souza would, I suspect, view the recent cosmopolitanizing of the core curriculum at Kennesaw as benign in itself, reflecting a quite proper concern for the internationalizing of the economy as well as the hope that Georgia be at the center of it. On the other hand, he would no doubt see these reforms as the opportunity to do something academically serious on the order of instituting a liberal inquiry into equality and human nature. As Kennesaw State College seeks a common foundation, thread, and capstone to its new core, it would do well to consider D'Souza's suggestion. 🍎

(Interdisciplinary continued from p.3)

proximately ten pages) of each play, the analysis limited to the particular approach which the student had taken in background reading. These approaches, as previously noted, were interdisciplinary in nature, the topics being taken from anthropology, history, music, and psychology as well as literary analysis.

Since the specific content of this course was more advanced than the subjects which these teachers would be immediately teaching, I urged them to look at the material in a practical manner, and I required them to write a short report outlining ways in which they might make use of the content material of the course in their own teaching. One student wrote that she would be able to use some of the material on English Renaissance history in her eighth-grade world history course. Another student wrote that she would introduce the idea to her eighth-grade class that words have connotations which reveal personality. Still another student wrote that she would introduce the concept of the play to her fourth-grade class in literature, going from the idea of play to play-acting, and then try to get students to see similarities. They all made conscious efforts to see connections and to imagine ways in which they could use the material in their own classrooms.

Many students made and used charts and other visual aids in their presentations. Since all of the students are also teachers, they enjoyed the opportunity of presenting their ideas and their different methods before their peers; I enjoyed their presentation of ideas, and noted the various teaching techniques which they used. The course was, therefore, an interdisciplinary course for me as well: I was able to play student for a part of the course, and to let them teach me in sessions which were more formal than the usual question and answer format.

This course could be used in a variety of undergraduate disciplines, using psychology, or anthropology, or history as the major component, and literature as one of the interdisciplinary approaches. All of education is, after all, connected. It remains only for us to see and to show the connections. 🍎

(Fable continued from p. 1)

it was inevitable that, sooner or later, the tunnels would meet. Bright people that they were, they should not have been surprised, but they were. When the first two of them met in the center they stood in disbelief, blinking at one another in the beams of their lamps. Then another broke through into the central chamber, and another and another, until all were reunited. And a joyous reunion it was, for their work had taken its toll in loneliness.

What was truly astounding was their discovery about the ore they had been collecting. They had assumed that each vein was unique, but now they saw that they were merely branches of a great mother lode at the center of the mountain. It became clear to them then that their ore samples of knowledge, wisdom, and truth were remarkably similar. "Why were we not sharing our findings with one another all along?" they cried. "Why did you not tell us this to begin with?" they inquired angrily of the Keeper of the Mountain. "Ah," he replied, "This was the greatest treasure to be found, and no one could discover it but you, yourselves."

The scholars returned with great haste to their teaching posts, where nothing was ever the same for them, their colleagues, or their students. For not only did they share the new knowledge, wisdom, and truth about their disciplines, they shared their greatest discovery as well. It caused an academic revolution! English professors teamed up with scientists to offer courses which helped students learn to think and write clearly. Business faculty and philosophers, musicians and computer programmers, political scientists and teacher educators, mathematicians and environmental biologists all found connections between and among disciplines. The students, of course, were the greatest beneficiaries. But the faculty benefitted too. They had a common quest—a calling to fulfill; and though the way was very hard, they worked together, affirmed one another, and were happier than they had ever been. 🍎

