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How to Drink from the Pierian Spring: A Liberal Arts and Humanities Question about the Limits of Honors Education

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Small wonder that students in both honors and the humanities are less satisfied by the shallow stream of entertainment media when they have dipped into the Pierian Spring.

—Larry Andrews, “The Humanities are Dead!
Long Live the Humanities!” (2015)

A little learning is a dang’rous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.

—Alexander Pope, “An Essay in Criticism” (1711)

Honors educators frequently engage in conversations about the decline of interest in and funding for the liberal arts and humanities. Larry Andrews’s essay “The Humanities are Dead! Long Live the Humanities!” is

one of several that contributes to a metanarrative about the liberal arts and humanities, playing out along the following lines: workforce-minded politicians, short-sighted university administrators, STEM-related programs, and market-driven students no longer understand the true value of the liberal arts and humanities because they cannot be easily measured in dollars and cents; consequently, higher education today typically narrows students' perspectives, facilitates short-term and uncritical thinking, and fails to adequately enable student growth and development—that is, growth and development of the fully formed person, of the well-rounded individual, and of the caring soul. (For other articles that tie honors education to this narrative, see Blach and Ditzler; Dooley; Martino; Salas; and Wintrol.)

This familiar narrative offers some truths, no doubt, but its simplicity is troubling. It quickly papers over many complexities related both to workplaces and to the liberal arts and humanities, and, followed to its logical conclusion, it becomes less a narrative about education and more a narrative about limits, about who and what provide limits as opposed to who and what provide freedoms, about who and what open minds and who and what close them. Those in higher education who focus too much on careers, as this narrative goes, are in the business of setting limits on what students receive from a college education, which stunts their personal, professional, and intellectual growth; conversely, proponents of the liberal arts and humanities are interested in developing fully formed minds, expanding horizons, and unshackling students from career-based chains that keep them from becoming critical thinkers, strong and empathetic communicators, and seekers of truth.

This narrative warrants critique, however, particularly in how honors educators tap into it and further its pervasiveness in ways that treat the liberal arts and humanities too broadly, too uncritically, and too heroically. The goal here is not to argue against the liberal arts and humanities per se. As someone whose academic background is English, who teaches humanities courses every semester, and who understands, sees, and viscerally feels the value of the liberal arts and humanities, I am a strong proponent; however, I seek to explore the dangers that arise when liberal arts and humanities education is offered as a remedy to current educational woes. Two particular dangers arise: the first is that in advocating for the benefits of the liberal arts and humanities, proponents end up not necessarily offering any particular kind of knowledge or wisdom but often reinforce the development of skill sets that the liberal arts and humanities just happen to be good at producing in students; the second danger is that honors educators frequently paint the liberal

arts and humanities as a homogenous entity whose purpose and value would be crystal clear if more people would simply take their eyes off the money and turn them instead toward the larger truth. This approach neglects to account for the relationship between the liberal arts and humanities and liberalism itself as a pervasive ideology that saturates all social and political institutions, including higher education, in the twenty-first century. Liberalism and the liberal arts, in short, are not as compatible as most would assume or like, and liberalism's push for individual freedoms and autonomy sometimes exacerbates many of the exact problems that liberal arts and humanities proponents seek to end. I want to work toward offering thoughts about the liberal arts and humanities that do not pit them against career-centered programs and people but instead offers ways for honors educators to further explore and perhaps reconcile the contradictory need to impose limits and boundaries in the context of institutions and programs that continually seek their removal.

WISDOMS AND APPETITES

The benefits of the liberal arts and humanities often appear ethereal. This alone should not make them suspect or subject to the vast criticisms they unduly receive, but it should give honors educators pause about their messaging. In "Defending the Traditions by Preserving the Classics," for example, Kevin L. Dooley asserts that "Honors students should understand that learning is a life-long process and that the pursuit of truth will provide greater happiness and success than more contemporary, profit-driven models of education" (57). He continues this line of argument:

A traditional, classical liberal arts education is not only vital to the well-functioning of the United States but to the future of democracy and its variants around the world. As honors administrators and faculty, we must impart this wisdom to our students and show them that they are both heirs to and beneficiaries of this legacy and that hope for the future lies not in the immediate gains of the present but in the lessons of the past. (57)

That the pursuit of truth is messy and complicated and that happiness and success do not reside solely in money are important lessons. Students "should understand" this, no doubt, and I suspect that many already do, even if their educational choices appear extrinsically motivated.

Of greater concern is the notion that honors educators, through the liberal arts and great books, have some deep-seated wisdom to impart to

students that makes pursuit of truth and concern for the future of democracy independent of and more desirable than the pursuit of income. While Dooley's points may be true, what exactly this wisdom entails and how it is imparted is unclear. The classical liberal arts can provide students a usable past to help propel them forward as human beings who seek meaning and truth, but too frequently arguments for the liberal arts and humanities (and, in Dooley's case, the classics) fall back on an undefined wisdom and knowledge that students gain, seemingly, by mere exposure to certain texts and wise educators. Nothing seems to stand in the way of this exchange except one's desire to maximize earnings.

In "Creating a Common Voice for Liberal Arts Education," Charles F. Blaich and Maura A. Ditzler provide another example of describing the liberal arts as valuable even when that value is not manifest:

The character and outcomes of a liberal arts education are more relevant now than ever before. The timeless nature of the liberal arts is the perfect antidote to the diminishing shelf life of information. An education that transcends specific content and culture is crucial in a time when we must find a way to educate an increasingly diverse student body. An education that promotes understanding of self and others is invaluable as we strive to create a global village. An education that goes beyond disciplinary boundaries remains valuable as we tackle those problems that have resisted the best efforts of our scientists and philosophers. (27)

For Blaich and Ditzler, the liberal arts are relevant and important in how they escape being tied to anything specific, including content, disciplines, locations, and even time. Students, then, benefit from the liberal arts in the end because they make gains in areas related to innovation, problem solving, and inquiry. Similar to Dooley's take on the classics, Blaich and Ditzler employ the liberal arts as a means to advocate transcendent skills that seem to hover above those practical skills that can be employed directly and obviously in workplaces. Unlike, say, computer programming skills that require the ability to know specifics related to coding or nursing skills that require one to diagnose and treat a specific illness, these liberal arts skills (perhaps they should be called metaskills) are broadly transferable and applicable in a range of situations because they are cast as free-floating entities. They cannot be easily defined and understood because they lack the detailed contours and applicability one gains in jobs-based training.

This argument makes liberal arts and humanities skills somewhat eccentric but also makes them malleable enough, perhaps even amorphous enough, that they can be shaped to fit into diverse conversations about student learning and professional development. At the same time, though, honors advocates for the liberal arts and humanities frequently circle back to the realm of the practical. As a case in point, Larry Andrews's "The Humanities are Dead! Long Live the Humanities!" laments that universities are "touting the professional majors and the pragmatic value of a college education," that "liberal arts colleges are adding master's programs in professional fields in order to stay afloat," and that higher education "is more and more run as a big business, and boards of trustees hiring a president or even a provost look to the CEO as a model" (4). Later in the article, however, Andrews celebrates the liberal arts in a moment of optimism about their application to workplaces:

English, history, philosophy, and language majors are finding all sorts of interesting and useful employment in law, government work, environmental organizations, international business, fundraising, public relations, human resources, and management generally. As CEOs keep telling us, employees with excellent communication skills—including writing—and a good work ethic are in high demand. Enlightened thinking about the human condition feeds everything from the spread of recycling and organic farming to the celebration of diverse cultures and new forms of architecture and water wells for the poor. (7)

In this iteration, a liberal arts education is valuable in its direct application to employment in various "useful" fields, some of which, like management, are often decried exactly because of their disconnect from the liberal arts, and the liberal arts are valuable as well for certain broad skills that seem inherent in them: communication, work ethic, and enlightened thinking. This argument for the value and importance of liberal arts and humanities skills in workplaces and marketplaces is increasingly circulated far and wide in both scholarly and trade publications (see, for instance, Nussbaum; Stross; and Zakaria). I do not necessarily find it problematic that none of these statements is verifiable. Perhaps English and history majors are more enlightened thinkers and better communicators than electrical engineering and accounting majors although I doubt this is true across the board. In suggesting earlier that the arguments for the liberal arts and humanities taken by honors educators like Dooley, Blaich and Ditzler, Andrews, and others are dangerous, however, I mean that

these arguments often end up proving exactly what they set out to disprove. Despite the disdain for and lamentations about higher education turning into a training ground for job seekers, the liberal arts and humanities can sustain only so much pressure to rise above the fray and represent access to universal truth and wisdom before they must be brought back down to terra firma and the realm of workplaces and job skills. This observation does not fault the liberal arts and humanities in the least—in most ways, they have always sought to provide skills to students, even as far back as Ancient Greece and Rome—but rather speaks to the ways the liberal arts and humanities are employed to make and sustain arguments against modern changes in higher education and the politics, publics, and economics behind them.

In “‘The Endless Appetite’: Honors Education and the Spirit of the Humanities,” Andrew Martino writes, “Honors programs are a model for what the humanities can teach us. An honors curriculum promotes a willingness to push the boundaries of how we think about educational value, moving us beyond use value and toward exploring epistemological questions” (28). Honors educators, I assert, should *not* move beyond use value in order to engage instead in larger epistemological questions. The use value of an honors education grounded in the liberal arts is precisely the epistemological question at hand. Use value here is not to be confused with the exchange value that honors and non-honors educators alike frequently condemn when it comes to swapping academic credentials for jobs and paychecks. Rather, how we know what we mean when we say that the partnership between honors and the liberal arts and humanities is valuable and useful to students is a question of paramount importance.

WHY LIBERALISM MATTERS

Honors conversations about the liberal arts and humanities would open themselves up to richer dialogue if they considered more deeply what version of “liberty” or philosophy of liberalism underwrites them at any given moment. I am not suggesting that the liberal arts and humanities always have something directly to say about liberty or liberalism, and vice versa, even if the words “liberty,” “liberalism,” and “liberal” are cognates. However, outlining even basic contours of and connections between these terms provides important ways to better understand how and what we mean when we use the phrase “liberal arts” as well as how these conversations do or do not integrate with the modern project of liberalism. The implications of this question are much greater than they appear on the surface, especially given all the

ways liberalism is now being called into question (see, for instance, Deneen; Losurdo; and Luce).

In *Why Liberalism Failed*, Patrick J. Deneen's critique of liberalism does not, rightly so, include a focus on improvements in civil liberties and individual freedoms that have worked to create greater equality, dignity, and fairness among all people. Rather, his critique is pointed at four overlapping systemic areas that have actually compromised freedoms: politics and government, economics, education, and science and technology. In each, Deneen argues, "liberalism has transformed human institutions in the name of expanding liberty and increasing our mastery and control of our fates. In each case, widespread anger and deepening discontent have arisen from the spreading realization that the vehicles of our liberation have become iron cages of our captivity" (6). In discussing education, for example, he writes,

The rising generation is indoctrinated to embrace an economic and political system they distinctly fear, filling them with cynicism toward their future and their participation in maintaining an order they neither believe in nor trust. Far from feeling themselves to constitute the most liberated generation in history, young people believe less in their task at hand than Sisyphus rolling the boulder up the mountainside. (11)

Deneen quotes one of his students at the University of Notre Dame:

We are meritocrats out of a survivalist instinct. If we do not race to the very top, the only remaining option is a bottomless pit of failure. To simply work hard and get decent grades doesn't cut it anymore if you believe there are only two options: the very top or rock bottom. It is a classic prisoner's dilemma: to sit around for 2–3 hours at the dining hall "shooting the breeze," or to spend time engaged in intellectual conversation in moral and philosophical issues, or to go on a date all detract from time we could be spending getting to the top and, thus, will leave us worse off relative to everyone else. . . . Because we view humanity—and thus its institutions—as corrupt and selfish, the only person we can rely upon is our self. The only way we can avoid failure, being let down, and ultimately succumbing to the chaotic world around us, therefore, is to have the means (financial security) to rely only upon ourselves. (12)

Educational institutions rest on grand philosophical mottos, usually in Latin, that typically include terms like “truth,” “light,” “wisdom,” “justice,” “virtue,” “citizenship,” and “liberty,” among others, yet as institutions now implicitly tasked with the charge to sort winners and losers, higher education creates prison-like structures where a sense of success, freedom, and autonomy feel more like a personal escape from life at the bottom of the social heap than the kind of growth and self-actualization implied in a phrase like “Knowledge is Liberty” (James Madison University’s motto).

Deneen makes a distinction between modern and ancient conceptions of liberty by exploring the advance of liberalism as a political philosophy and ideology beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries up to the present. Liberalism is not simply a “narrowly political project of constitutional government and juridical defense of rights. Rather, it seeks to transform all of human life and the world. Its two revolutions—its anthropological individualism and the voluntarist conception of choice, and its insistence on the human separation from and opposition to nature—created its distinctive and new understanding of liberty as the most extensive possible expansion of the human sphere of autonomous activity” (*Why Liberalism Failed* 37). Modern liberalism’s version of liberty, Deneen argues, contradicts the ancient conception of liberty that, instead of extending spheres of individual choice and activity, involves a “condition of self-governance of both city and soul, drawing closely together the individual cultivation and practice of virtue and the shared activities of self-legislation” (37). Unlike modern liberty’s focus on self-autonomy and expansion of freedom, the ancient version centers on self-imposed limits as both a virtue and an art.

Honors programs, as often noted, grew out of liberal arts and humanities traditions, and most still require students to take coursework that revolves around these traditions in one way or another. The National Collegiate Honors Council’s “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” document, for example, recommends that honors curricula be designed so that honors requirements can be met through general education requirements, and general education is where most students encounter the liberal arts and humanities. Honors curricula typically expose students to texts by writers such as Aristotle, Cicero, Aquinas, and Milton, those who, among many others, advocate the ancient conception of liberty as the learned capacity and cultivation of self-restraint and virtue. Most honors programs and colleges also seek to instill in their students various virtues related to the public good, community building, citizenship, and personal responsibility. While

such aims are important and admirable, honors typically promotes them as a series of activities and learning moments rather than the core of its being, its *raison d'être*; the biggest sales pitch to potential honors students is based not on a portrait of limits, restraints, and responsibilities but instead on perks, freedoms, advanced opportunities, and, frequently, access to the proverbial big dream or mountaintop, which, perhaps, indirectly supports the fear mindset of Deneen's student.

"No matter the political program of today's leaders," Deneen writes, "*more* is the incontestable program. Liberalism can function only by constant increase of available and consumable material goods, and thus with the constant expansion of nature's conquest and mastery. No person can aspire to a position of political leadership by calling for limits and self-command" (41). Today's leaders in honors education, I would argue, by similar political and economic necessities refrain from calling for limits and instead promote honors as an educational component that is largely additive: it is bigger, deeper, stronger, and more expansive than a non-honors education, which is the language of Deneen's *more*. Honors education, in short, is caught in liberalism's maelstrom and cannot help but make appeals to its stakeholders through the language of better, usually meaning more. Modern liberalism's larger ideological frameworks saturate institutions and the vast and powerful repercussions cannot be adequately explored, addressed, or challenged with only arguments about liberal education's foundation on traditions, classics, and the pursuit of truth.

While Larry Andrews in "The Humanities are Dead! Long Live the Humanities!" laments the state of higher education today, he also celebrates various achievements of the humanities and explains how and why honors education and the humanities make for good partners. They "share core values, including the importance of deep, sustained reading" (8); they both emphasize studying primary texts, high levels of reading ability, critical responses to texts, broad and integrative knowledge, and the development of wisdom. Additionally, both honors and the humanities value "questing and questioning minds," students who "wrestle with universal problems of human experience," and those who hold a "tolerance for ambiguity and a recognition of complexity and context" (8). These certainly are the types of (meta) skills described above by Dooley, Martino, and Blaich and Ditzler. More importantly, though, Andrews further develops his argument about this relationship through the language of *more*:

Understanding global economics and politics requires seeing the big picture, including the historical background behind the current particular. Sorting out moral conflicts, including conflicts between two goods, calls for serious mental energy. Immersion in imaginative literature helps students grow large inside with the participation in the boundless range of human characters and experience. Small wonder that students in both honors and the humanities are less satisfied by the shallow stream of entertainment media when they have dipped into the Pierian Spring.

Finally, I suspect that humanities faculty bring to honors programs an overweening intellectual ambition. English professors are notorious for dipping into other fields and thinking that their ken stretches over the whole intellectual domain. Expressed in a more kindly fashion, they (we, I) suffer from an endless appetite for exploration. They are less condemned to specialization than many of their colleagues in other fields. (9–10)

The goals and values that Andrews espouses appear admirable and uncontroversial. It makes little sense to suggest otherwise, to argue, for example, that honors programs and faculty should strive to serve students who are intellectually lazy and unambitious. However, what I question here is how to cultivate in students an “overweening intellectual ambition” and “endless appetite for exploration” without any recognizable end or limits in mind. Put a bit differently: I question what connection exists between these goals and the specific types of people, citizens, and professionals that honors educators seek to develop and send out into the world. This language of *more* appears valuable here for its own sake, but it lacks a larger framework of understanding, a theory, a wisdom, a series of boundaries to capture its aim. Faustian allusions aside, it begs questions about the location of a line between a good and responsible *more* and a bad and damaging *more*, about the location of lines between an endless appetite for exploration and an endless appetite for self-reliance that directs Deneen’s student’s drive to avoid the “bottomless pit of failure” rather than work to eradicate that pit altogether. If honors educators engage in the language of *more*, the metaphor of endless appetites, the rhetoric of big quests, big questions, and ultimately honors students’ big dreams, we do harbor some responsibility to help students navigate, define, and understand these lines, to help them establish and rewrite boundaries rather than always assume that pushing on them and breaking them is, by default, a good thing for themselves and for others.

One can readily assume that Andrews is advocating for the good kind of more, the endless appetite for knowledge that is responsible and ethical. However, the boundaries between the good and the bad easily become blurred, particularly in honors education that frequently fixates on student excellence, prestige, competitiveness, ambition, and exploration of new terrains both physical and intellectual. Honors students are more likely to study abroad, participate in exchange programs, apply for and win nationally competitive scholarships, and attend graduate and professional programs in regions far flung from where they began. Consequently, honors education contributes to liberalism's push for the version of liberty that frees individuals from any constraints they seek to discard. Deneen discusses this version of liberty not specifically in the context of honors education but generally in the context of elite educational institutions that

engage in the educational equivalent of strip mining: identifying economically viable raw materials in every city, town, and hamlet, they strip off that valuable commodity, process it in a distant location, and render the products economically useful for productivity elsewhere. The places that supplied the raw materials are left much like depressed coal towns whose mineral wealth has been long since mined and exported. Such students embrace "identity" politics and "diversity" to serve their economic interests, perpetual "potentiality" and permanent placelessness. The identities and diversity thus secured are globally homogenous, the precondition for a fungible global elite who readily identify other members capable of living in a cultureless and placeless world defined above all by liberal norms of globalized indifference toward shared fates of actual neighbors and communities. (132).

What many often refer to simply as the "brain drain," which occurs when talented students leave a particular region or state, Deneen sees as much more pernicious. The "brain drain" metaphor looks only at what happens to the places left behind. Deneen, however, also looks carefully at what happens to the individuals who leave, what type of individuals get created by this "strip mining" effect: ones who become placeless, cultureless, and communityless. These individuals become liberal—free, autonomous, detached—in ways that disconnect them from and make them potentially dangerous to economies and to social and political institutions.

As one example, Deneen remarks that elite educational institutions are quick to take credit for students who win prestigious awards like Rhodes and Fulbright Scholarships or move cross-country to attend an elite medical school, but they fail to note whether or how their institutions helped cultivate the greed and irresponsibility that produced disasters like the 2008 economic crisis. It is a good bet, Deneen implies, that many of the major players in these types of crises received degrees from institutions that put a premium on educating students in liberal arts and humanities traditions (*Why Liberalism Failed* 127). Approaches to honors education that involve endless appetites for exploration and overweening intellectual ambitions without tangible frameworks dedicated to defining limits risk producing individuals whose sense of autonomy and freedom unburdens them from commitments and responsibilities to other people, places, and institutions.

I am not suggesting that honors education's partnership with the liberal arts and humanities is somehow a corrupt enterprise. However, the extent to which honors education traffics in the language and rhetoric of *more*—asking and expecting more from students, expecting them to dig deeper, go farther, explore broadly, and form endless appetites for knowledge—necessitates a responsibility to spend as much effort producing a language and rhetoric of limits and boundaries. Surrounding students with the muses and offering them a dip in the Pierian Spring are likely not alone sufficient to build these structures.

A LITTLE LEARNING IS A DANG'ROUS THING

My argument does not derive from a conservative position and is not a suggestion that honors students should shut down their brains and stop plucking fruit from the trees of knowledge; nor does it suggest that honors students should not pursue big dreams and mountaintops or resign themselves to structures of oppression that too many already face too often. Rather, it explores the dangers of putting the liberal arts and humanities in the service of combating problems for which they are not entirely equipped, especially when the liberal arts and humanities are frequently presented holistically and homogenously, transcendently and ethereally, and ahistorically and indefinably. In short, my call is for limits, of sorts: it is a call for understanding the limits of the liberal arts and humanities to tackle and solve the problems now endemic to higher education generally and honors education specifically; it is a call for placing limits on the language of honors education, for limits on escalating the language of *more*, intentionally or unintentionally, without a

thorough understanding of its implications. I am not sure that we as honors educators have discovered the wisdom yet to determine how much is too much, nor am I sure if current political climates surrounding higher education allow for this wisdom to develop within us—another epistemological question, to be sure.

It is critical, however, not to confuse a call for limits with a call for confinement. Wendell Berry eloquently clarifies this confusion in “Faustian Economics: Hell Hath No Limits.” He writes that

our human and earthly limits, properly understood, are not confinements but rather inducements to formal elaboration and elegance, to *fullness* of relationship and meaning. . . . We must learn again to ask how we can make the most of what we are, what we have, what we have been given. If we always have a theoretically better substitute available from somebody or someplace else, we will never make the most of anything. It is hard to make the most of one life. If we each had two lives, we would not make much of either. (41)

Liberalism is not wont to support this philosophy, nor are institutions of higher education that seek to propel elite students farther, faster, and higher than ever before. Honors educators and their embrace of the liberal arts and humanities, however, can try to pivot, to place less emphasis on imparting wisdom and traditions and greater emphasis on exploring with students directly and candidly the implications of attaining an elite education with its explicit and implicit calls for more (despite how much we try to convince ourselves and our students that honors is not more work but smarter or deeper work). As Deneen shows, the cultivation of *more* now frequently leads to the growth of less: fewer bonds and connections to places, people, communities, and institutions. Students need and deserve to understand what they potentially lose, or give up, if and when they become one of the global elite. This potential loss is not simply a matter to be taken up by calls for wisdom, traditions, and great books to be found in the liberal arts and humanities; rather, it is a matter of showing—across the range of our institutions’ disciplines and curricula—the impacts of liberalism’s version of liberty in sociological, psychological, cultural, environmental, historical, economic, literary, and political terms, among many others. Honors education needs to partner with liberal arts and humanities allies that worry less about fighting career-focused programs and students and more about the personal, communal, social, and political bonds that modern liberalism increasingly destroys in the name of freedom from limits and constraints.

References to the Pierian Spring in Larry Andrews's article and Alexander Pope's "Essay on Criticism" open this essay—and close it as well. Andrews suggests that a full "dip" in the spring is eye-opening for honors students, enough to make them dissatisfied with the kind of knowledge available through modern media forms. Pope would likely agree with this assessment to some extent, though the Pierian Spring for him yields a fundamentally different perspective than what Andrews suggests. Pope would probably be uninterested in pitting some qualitatively better knowledge gained from the Pierian Spring against the inferior knowledge gained from other popular and ordinary sources. The rest of the passage from Pope's "Essay on Criticism" that began in the epigraph above continues like this:

A little learning is a dang'rous thing;
 Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
 There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
 And drinking largely sobers us again.
 Fir'd at first sight with what the Muse imparts,
 In fearless youth we tempt the heights of Arts,
 While from the bounded level of our mind
 Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind;
 But more advanc'd, behold with strange surprise
 New distant scenes of endless science rise!
 So pleas'd at first the towering Alps we try,
 Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky,
 Th' eternal snows appear already past,
 And the first clouds and mountains seem the last;
 But, those attain'd, we tremble to survey
 The growing labours of the lengthen'd way,
 Th' increasing prospects tire our wand'ring eyes,
 Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise! (ll. 215–32)

For Pope, then, the Pierian Spring offers a knowledge in limits: the more one drinks, the deeper one drinks, the more one comes to recognize the unattainable heights and breadth of learning's terrain—these Alps increasingly stack upon Alps. In short, the more one learns, the more one understands how much he or she does not know. If honors education advocates a *more*, this is the kind of more that is needed: not a more that simply seeks to liberate from social, cultural, and economic constraints but a more that makes us and our students tremble, makes us feel that our ways are always lengthening,

and makes our wandering eyes tire when we spend too much time staring at the mountaintops. It's okay to live among the lower hills and valleys. These provide fullness and elegance too.

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