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Wendell Berry and the Christian Liberal Arts

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Although they have come in many shapes and sizes over the last hundred years, liberal arts models in higher education have justified themselves by connecting to something greater than an education's disciplinary or professional specializations. In its various forms, it has sought to integrate, to connect, to re-member diverse fields of knowledge that in life are connected but in specialization can get dismembered. At its most ambitious, it has aimed at an educational wholeness. The assumption has been that knowledge, like life, does its best work in the person and in the world when it is whole and related, directed toward connections to "what really matters" beyond our individualized selves. Ironically, the growing dis-ease with the liberal arts among some constituencies has been that a liberal arts education is *no longer connected* to "what really matters." Today, what *does* matter increasingly is that students are educated to find the best jobs with the highest salary upsides so they can afford to flourish in the modern industrial economy.

I am sympathetic. I consider gainful employment one of the two primary ends of a college education and with two nearly post-college children currently trying to launch careers, I hold this value deeply. At least one criticism of a liberal arts education, and perhaps the chief one, is that it distracts from this end. Students and their parents wonder, often anxiously, what connection the liberal arts and general education have to career goals. The high cost of education and the distance-to-degree are making students more anxious about learning that does not appear directly connected to jobs. It may not be the subjects of history or art or biology that cause, say, Business majors anxiety (though they may cause boredom); rather, it is the perceived detour from the main road of career preparation that students question and sometimes resent. In this climate, a liberal arts education continues to have a hard time articulating its value in a way that is compelling. None of this is new for defenders of the liberal arts, but framing the topic in the terms of health, disease, and the body as this conference does, if not new, may have hit upon a critical context and a unifying framework for a liberal arts education. With issues of health in mind, I have found Wendell Berry to be the most helpful modern interlocutor for exploring the wholeness,

integration and connections of a liberal arts education, especially for those of us who teach at religious and specifically Christian colleges.

Wendell Berry and the Great Economy

Wendell Berry denies that he, as one interviewer put it, is a rock star.[1] Yet the author of over 50 books of essays, novels and poetry, and recipient of both a Guggenheim Fellowship and the National Humanities Medal has a broad fan base. His work brings together people from conservative and liberal positions, different socio-economic locations, and from various faiths. Some Christians see Berry as a prophet, speaking truth to power (most often corporate power), others as a conservative voice for traditional family values and the free market. (Berry has publicly identified as a democrat.) His popularity among Christians is in some ways strange. Berry himself is often critical of religious institutions and faults American evangelicals or at least *evangelistic* Christianity with spreading a dualism that has undermined a biblical view of God's world. Berry, who says somewhat dispassionately that his "native religion, for better or worse, is Christianity," says "I owe a considerable debt myself to Buddhism and Buddhists" ("Christianity and the Survival of Creation" 95). While he is a regular Sabbath-keeper ("as rich and demanding an idea as any I know") who does attend church, on nice days he does not, preferring the woods near his home and in keeping with his claim that the Bible is an outdoor book (103). Yet, in many places in his writing, Berry sounds like a man of deep Christian faith, as when he says,

> "I take literally the statement in the Gospel of John that God loves the world. I believe that the world was created and approved by love, that it subsists, coheres, and endorsed by love, and in that, insofar as it is redeemable, it can be redeemed only by love" ("Health is Membership" 146)

Elsewhere, when pressed to come up with a term that describes what kind of economy could be considered the most comprehensive, he calls it (with Wes Jackson) "The Kingdom of God" ("Two Economies" 55).

[1] Christenson, Allan Stromfeldt. "Wendell Berry: the Not Quite Rock Star Seer." *From Filmers to Farmers. fromfilmerstofarmers.com/movie-un-review-wendell-berry-the-not-quite-rock-star-seer/ (*Accessed Feb. 2, 2019.)

For Berry, it is learning to live within this "Great Economy" that is also the most important and comprehensive context for education. It is this Kingdom of God Economy that, in an echo of Mt. 6:33, "should be sought first" and which an education for professional careers in the human-industrial economy ("the little economy") ought to serve ("Two Economies" 55). Such an education must be, for Berry, *connected* through and through, and therefore requires a kind of liberal arts education--whether that be in a college or a village: "The Great Economy proposes arts and sciences of membership; ways of doing and ways of knowing that cannot be divided from each other or within themselves and speak the common language of the communities where they are practiced" (75). Berry's notions of education are provocative not because they are new but because they are so old, rooted in a specifically Christian story, embracing ancient wisdom of many kinds, and the moral mandates that flow from these. Today, in a world supposedly "global" but nevertheless experiencing disconnection, disharmony, violence and widespread destruction, his views have a renewed relevance and pose a challenge to liberal arts and general education models of the last century.

The Liberal Arts and General Education: What Contexts? Which Connections? Whose Coherence?

(Note: because of the paper's 35- page length, readers less interested in this overview may want to skip to the "Health" section on p. 7)

The fundamental question in one form or another that has hovered around a liberal arts education for more than a hundred years is, what is an education for if it is for more than a preparation for gainful employment? We know that the deep history of the liberal arts educated the wealthy, those rich enough to be free (Lat. *liberalis*) from having to work for a living and so ideally free to take up the mantle of leadership and governance in their places, which sometimes took the form of religious leadership (clergy). The education believed to best form such men--and men they were--followed the classical, medieval trivium and quadrivium of subjects, of which much has been written. It was an interdisciplinary education. The well-educated leader needed to have a broader view--of literature, of history, of languages, of politics, of the natural world--to lead the rest (ostensibly) for the common good. Such a connected

education, of course, we know also preserved a social hierarchy, maintaining the elite as leaders and the masses as followers, certainly benefiting the former (*Degrees of Inequality* 11).

With the rise of industry, innovation, and professionalization in 20th-century America, however, questions arose about what contexts the liberal arts should address and whom these connections should serve. We have not stopped talking about these questions since. What contexts and connections--both within a liberal arts curriculum to the world beyond it--justify such an educational model? The changing terms for such an education--"general education," "breadth," and "core"--indicate that reforms were afoot in the twentieth century and with them came alternative ideals of educational coherence and connection, each requiring its own justification. "General education" arose actually as an *alternative* to the traditional "liberal arts" model. "Where liberal arts education emphasized the study of the heritage of Western civilization for purposes of contributing to students' intellectual development and cultural appreciation, the general education movement, inspired by the work of John Dewey and other turn of the century Progressives, focused on the integration of knowledge for purposes of engagement with problems of contemporary civilization" ("From the Liberal to the Practical Arts" 607). From there, general education reforms in the twentieth century developed several strands, each diverse and fluid. A team of researchers in 2009 examining curricula and general education from 1975-2000 found that four general models of general education or core requirements had survived into the 21st-century: the "core distribution model," the "cultures and ethics" model, the "civic/utilitarian model" and a resurgence of the "traditional liberal arts" model ("Models of General Education" 2009). My interest is not so much in whether these classifications are the only ones--the authors themselves admit that the trends are variable from decade to decade and college to college--but rather that they all implicitly or explicitly presume connections and contexts that should *matter most* for an interdisciplinary education. For instance, the Core Distribution Model developed early on in order to bring the social sciences and natural sciences alongside the humanities for the sake of "breadth" with a view to complex contemporary problems whose solutions required multi-perspectival approaches. (More recently towards the same end of addressing contemporary problems, universities have tried to organize these disparate disciplines into thematic bundles addressing

various contemporary issues.) The expansion into these so-called "breadth requirements" may have begun with aspirations to integrate coursework across disciplines for just this purpose. However, the authors conclude that at an organizational level, "breadth requirements" developed as departments argued for a piece of the general education pie, more with a view to expanding their faculty and funding than from a strategic effort to create an integrated education with a defined educational telos.

Still, intentional efforts at coherence came and went as surging cultural values inspired reorganizations of university general education requirements. Within the Core Distribution movement, a civic/utilitarian model became highly visible in curricula during the 1980s on the heels of state mandates, connecting students to the contexts of politics and industry, and emphasizing courses in government, business and technology ("Models of General Education" 609). A third and more recent turn was and has become what the authors call the Culture and Ethics model, developed initially by faculty at elite universities like Amherst and Stanford. This approach, disturbed by the privileging of western texts and authors in traditional liberal arts and general education curricula, sought to connect students to texts from non-western and minority writers in an effort to expand multicultural appreciation and to challenge national and racial structures of power. Following upon this and as a conservative reaction to it, a Liberal Arts model has returned to the more traditional liberal arts education engaging the classical texts of western civilization. This has found ground for growth in many denominational or religious colleges and seems to be arising in private, religious, secondary educational institutions as well.

In confessional Christian colleges, the coherence of the liberal arts where it can be found has been influenced not only by the models above but also has been organized around some version of "faith and learning" integration--a descendant of the 'two books' tradition of Christian knowledge: the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture. The religious or theological themes that bring coherence to the curriculum at these schools often depend upon the particular contexts of a college's theological distinctives and traditions. Roman Catholic, Mennonite, Reformed, Lutheran, Wesleyan, and Evangelical/Interdenominational, to name a few, find contexts for their educations in theological emphases, including sacramentalism, discipleship, God's sovereignty, justification, holiness, biblical

fidelity, and activism. To what degree these actually provide coherence outside of the religious or theological general education requirements is uncertain.

Again, the variations are nearly as many as the number of colleges themselves. In the foregoing, maybe I am belaboring an obvious point, but the explicit justifications for preserving the liberal arts or general or core requirements rests on arguments made for *crucial connections* between a college education and common goods that lie beyond merely the scope of career preparation. These connections and their goods are various: connections to character; connections to ethics, connection to equity, connection to diversity, connections to cultural appreciation, connections to tradition, connections to contemporary issues, connections to leadership, connection to political engagement, connection to skills, specializations and jobs, and in the case of religious colleges, connections to the various salutary and salvific truths of sacred texts. I am not naive enough to think that this tournament of educational connections and their values in institutions has flowed from intelligent debate and that any future coherence can be easily achieved that way, although it is worth a try. Rather, as was said before, core or general education requirements have often been arrived at piecemeal and politically through compromises or accretions that have granted curricular space to various disciplines and as pendulums in cultural values and access to power have supported first one, then another.

The questions for the liberal arts, then, remain: what contexts, which connections and whose coherence implicitly or explicitly justify a liberal arts education and can provide what students have always sought and colleges have struggled to provide: some compelling, missionally faithful and readily recognizable themes that will integrate the incoherence of a general education and make it whole?

Here is where I think Wendell Berry can be helpful. Berry himself does not believe big problems cannot be solved by big solutions. He is wary of big *institutional* solutions whether they are political or educational because of their inevitable capitulation to market and industry forces. Such big solutions accumulate the weaknesses of fads, are followed in ignorance of their local effects, run dry from impatience, are often too abstract, and require "too little personal involvement" as people demand that this or that organization or governing body do more to solve the problems ("Think Little" 48). Berry

would not, for instance, put his faith in a particular curricular scheme for all places. He would not want to put a fence around it. However, he would want it frequently to return to the same well, whose waters--in his mind--flow from confessional, creational beliefs that are recognizably Christian. From these foundations, Berry offers a coherent vision of the core connections an education should serve and--more prophetically--how our educational systems have been and continue to be indifferent to and complicit in destructive disconnections. What is remarkable, and what many have noted, is how Berry's vision coherently addresses such a broad range of issues over his 50+ books divided among novels, poetry, and essays both cultural and agricultural. Five thematic touchstones from these for our purposes are central: 1) health/wholeness 2) place 3) membership/community 4) affection, and 5) imagination. One imperative might encompass all of these: "only connect"--which could well be the motto of a liberal arts education.

Health

If one were to look in Berry's work for the most important and most integrating concept for an education--whether that is one taught in a university or in a home--it would be the notion of health. In a seminal 1977 essay, "The Body and the Earth," Berry begins to explain what he means by this, noting that health belongs to a family of words in the English language including wholesome, hallow, hale and holy (107). "Wholeness" seems to be his favorite, which takes him well beyond what many normally think of as health. The problem with modern understandings of it is that they are far too narrow, a consequence of specialization, individualism, community decay, failures of imagination, and a contempt for the body. Bodies are important to Berry because they are how we connect to relationships and to the world. It is the failure to recognize the interdependent nature of our lives and to think of bodies in relationship to other bodies (including the 'bodies' of land, water, and other creatures) that is a failure to imagine and live in reality. The irony, Berry writes, is that "Intellectually, we know these patterns of interdependence exist; we understand them better now perhaps than we ever have before; yet modern social and cultural patterns contradict them and make it difficult or impossible to honor them in practice" (107).

As a consequence of the failure to see these connections, contemporary views of health have separated bodies from one another, from their places, and even from their very 'selves.' The unintended consequence of medical specializations, for instance, has often led us to see the body not only in isolation, but also atomistically. Health has meant the absence of disease in the body, insulation of it from outside contagion (for instance, from "germs"), and the elimination of pain. "By health," Berry writes, "we mean little more than how we feel. We are healthy, we think, if we do not feel any pain or too much pain, and if we are strong enough to do our work" ("The Body and The Earth" 107). At a popular level, the health of the body has been confused with beauty and 'fitness,' resulting in a competition between bodies or a despair over them since the notions of the ideal body are so narrow as to exclude the many who do not carry the lottery-like combination of genes to achieve such ideals. "[Since] very few resemble these models . . . the result is widespread suffering that does immeasurable damage to individual persons and to the society as a whole" (107). The bizarre result is a division of the self from one's own body (as if "self" and body are separate) such that we must now turn our energies toward 'accepting one's body' for the sake of psychological and relational health--that is, so that we do not hate ourselves.

For Berry it is a law of life that health cannot flourish in isolation and that bodies cannot be whole alone. We do not aspire to connections as much as we *are* connected, whether we like it or not. The result of such division is an example of a cautionary truism for Berry: all that is excluded is at risk of destruction. To focus on healing the body alone is to "collaborate in the destruction of the body," leaving untreated the wounds of isolation and exclusion that cannot be healed and that sometimes lead to self-harm. (In "The Body and the Earth," Berry discusses suicide, acknowledging that many will find it strange that this enters into an essay on agriculture, 106). Health, for instance, is impossible in loneliness, says Berry, and loneliness is a symptom of a failure to take the body seriously in its physical, social and spiritual needs for connection. Indeed, what we see as a psychological or spiritual crisis that so many suffer over "identity," crises that certainly affect the body, is for Berry a consequence of bodies no longer finding connection to their places, the responsible callings to health in those places, and the ways in which such pursuits inevitably connect us to all the people, creatures and divinely created natural life in

those places ("The Body and the Earth" 115). Recent studies and books are revealing the great irony that our super-connecting technologies our only increasing a sense of loneliness as teens alone in their rooms mistakenly believe that "social lives" are also relational ones. (Dodgen-Magee 65). The further irony is that the contemporary obsession with the body and its image does not actually take seriously what is needed for the health of the body and may be working against it.

For Berry, it is in reality our modern *contempt* for bodies that lies at the root of our many physical, social and environmental problems. What humans have come to despise is their finitude, the boundaries of which begin with the particularity of the body. Such contempt manifests itself in a determination to push out of the boundaries of propriety, that which 'fits' bodily existence, usually into doing things faster, more efficiently, and more desirably. "Since the beginning of the technological revolution," Berry writes, "more and more people have looked upon the body along with the rest of natural creation as intolerably imperfect by mechanical standards . . . The body has limits that the machine does not have; therefore, remove the body from the machine so that machine can continue as an unlimited ideal" ("Feminism, the Body and the Machine" 254). Indeed, a radical individualism has made plenitude of desire the only human limit, which is no limit at all, and the essential human right to do as we please, regardless of the human boundaries that concerns for fidelity, neighbors, community, and posterity might impose. Granting corporations the status and rights of "persons" (Lat. *corpus*-body) has cleared the way for an autonomy of desire and greed at a supra-human level. The problem, Berry writes, is that the corporation is not a corpus/body but "a pile of money" that does not age, does not know the shortness of human life, does not depend on the resources of its particular place (there are always other places), that experiences no hope or remorse, that cannot humble itself nor have a change of heart. ("The Total Economy" 73). It is more a machine than a person. The consequence of this for higher education has been the pursuit of knowledge and research for the sake of industrial production, whose goal it is to inflate human appetite, acquisition, and consumption to a super-human scale with "applied knowledge" that outpaces our knowledge of how to solve the problems that such production has caused for human and earthly bodies. For instance, our economy's "most voluminous product is waste, valuable materials . . .

discharged as poisons" in quantities now that are threatening the lives of the very people who consumed the goods in the first place (or more likely, the lives of our global neighbors who live in other places with less power to prevent the pollution of their land and waters). For Berry, the blind trust that industrial progress for the sake of the economy is "always good" is exceeded only by the blind trust that industry and government will have the will, knowledge and technology to solve the problems is being created. Such thinking or lack of thought takes place on a "heroic scale," and not on that of the finite human and community. Says Berry, "In our age of global industrialism, heroes too lightly risk the lives of people, places and things they do not see. We must work on a scale proper to our limited abilities. We must not break things we cannot fix. There is no justification, ever, for permanent ecological damage . . . [and] we must abandon the homeopathic delusion that damages done by industrialization can be corrected by more industrialization" ("The Future of Agriculture" 334).

Berry is, of course, best known as an advocate for sustainability and for his critique of the industrial economy built upon runaway consumption, but he is not finally a single issue intellectual--or if he is, it is because our industrial-size desires and their contempt for bodies are at the root of most of our other major problems, including civil rights and war. Berry believes the 'environmental problem' cannot be separated from these others: "They have the same cause, and that is the mentality of greed and exploitation. The mentality that exploits and destroys the natural environment is the same that abuses racial and economic minorities, and . . .that makes war against peasants and women and children with the indifference of technology. The mentality that destroys the watershed and then panics at the threat of flood is the same mentality that gives institutionalized insult to black people and then panics at the prospect of race riots" ("Think Little" 48).

For Berry, "contempt for the body is invariably manifested in contempt for other bodies--the bodies of slaves, laborers, women, animals, plants, the earth itself ("The Body and the Earth" 101). It was the Europeans' psudeoaristocratic unwillingness to work the land with their own bodies that took hold early in American and gave rise to slavery and racism ("Discipline and Hope" 110). Various forms of manual labor became "N------ work" and white people were too good for it. "The unwillingness or inability to

dirty one's hands in one's own service . . . the notion that someone is always too good to do what is necessary for *somebody* to do is always weakening" (*The Hidden Wound* 106). The good life in our modern economy is the escape from the "drudgery" of physical labor, further distancing us from connections between the processes of production and their effect on places, and those who themselves must carry out the labor. It is the sublimating of these connections between production, our consumption and the other places and the people affected by these that many industries are happy to have us forget.

It is making visible these and other connections and interdependencies for the sake of wholeness, health and the common good, that ought to justify and help unify a liberal arts education, according to Berry for whom "connection is health" ("The Body and The Earth" 143). As Mark Mitchell writes, "Health for Berry, then, is a condition of wholeness. And the way to heal the divisions of unsettled society is to restore the connections between body and earth, persons and communities, husbands and wives, body and soul" (*The Humane Vision of Wendell Berry* 128).

It should be said that Berry's emphasis on connections for the sake of health or wholeness may not be far from the biblical ideal of shalom. Philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff in his essay, "Educating for Shalom," argues in his own way for an education rooted in seeing the connections that make for health. Although Wolterstorff notes that the biblical concept of "shalom" is closely associated with justice, he thinks that the word is better represented by something broader, by the notion of "right relationships in general, whether or not those are required by justice: right relationships to God, to one's fellow human beings, to nature, and to oneself. The shalom community is not merely the *just* community but is the *responsible* community, in which God's laws for our multifaceted existence are obeyed" (23). Both Wolterstorff and Berry seem to agree that flourishing or health cannot be limited to particular bodies in isolation, but must take into account what Wolterstorff calls "interlocking systems" and what Berry calls "the full membership." Wolterstorff, like Berry, employs the language of disease and health, noting that none of the other models he describes (educating for freedom, humanism, socialization, and the academic disciplines) "responds adequately to the wounds of humanity–in particular, the moral wounds; none gives adequate answer to our cries and tears" (22). Berry would agree and does so forthrightly in his

semi-autobiographical book on racism in his own lineage, which he calls aptly, *The Wound*--a wound that inflicts all those connected to the story of slavery and its racist aftermaths. While I am not prepared to discuss the differences between Wolterstorff's vision for healing the "wounds of the world" and how it may differ from Berry's, there is no question that Berry finds the starting point not in the language of "global citizenship" but in being rooted and aware in one's own place with local knowledge as a tutor of what healing requires.

Berry and Christianity

(Note: Because of the paper's length, readers less interested in Berry's foundation in but also critique of Christianity's relationship to creation may want to move onto to the "Place" section, pg. 15)

Before moving on to the second theme of place, we should stop and consider the ways in which Berry, a self-identified Christian, implicates this tradition in enabling the destruction of health in places. When Berry is critical of Christianity, he is so for two major reasons: one is in perpetuating a dualism and related gnosticism that divides the spiritual from the physical, souls from bodies, individual salvation from communal and creational restoration, and churches from their communities. The other reason and a consequence of the first is that the church has shown no resistance to the industrial bias that all economic growth and the habits of consumption that enable it are good for the world and everyone in it. He writes, "many if not most Christian organizations now appear to be perfectly at peace with the military-industrial economy and its 'scientific' destruction of life" ("Christianity and the Survival of Creation" 99). While this may be a little less true than it was 25 years ago when Berry wrote those words, it is still largely true that "the uselessness of Christianity in any effort to correct the destruction" of the world is one of the "established clichés of the conservation movement" (93-94). Berry believes that neither of these reasons—dualism nor a gnostic apathy--are inherent to Christianity. Indeed, he believes the Bible is misread and that there are "catastrophic discrepancies between biblical instruction and Christian behavior" (95).[2]

[2] For a constructive critique of Berry's view of Christianity and the church, see Mark T. Mitchell's "Wendell Berry's Unlikely Case for Conservative Christianity" in *The Humane Vision of Wendell Berry.* Mitchell writes that "Berry may have failed to see the ways the institutional church, no matter how flawed in practice, actually resonate with his

In particular, Berry sees a gap between the biblical command in Gen. 2:15 to "keep" or "preserve" the garden, which belongs to God, and the assumption of most Christians that they own the world and therefore can use it as they see fit. The Scriptures, however, are unequivocal on this: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1) ("Christianity and the Survival of Creation" 96). Berry certainly recognizes that there is in our laws the right of land ownership. However, "In biblical terms, the 'landowner' is the guest and steward of God": "the land is mine," says God in Leviticus 25:23, "for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (97). In reminding readers that the doctrine of creation refers not just to an originating event but to a relationship of dependence on and connection to God, Berry further sites Elihu's whose words to Job that if God would "gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together" (Job 34:14 – 15) (97).

With regard to the origins of humankind, Berry notes that at creation, "God did not make a body and put his soul into it like a letter into an envelope. He formed man of dust; and then by breathing his breath into it, he made the dust live." Soul, Berry says rightly, refers to the whole creature. Adam is presented to us in Genesis 2:7, "not as a creature of two discrete parts temporarily glued together but as a single mystery" ("Christianity and the Survival of Creation: 106). A dualism that misinterprets soul as disembodied and enlists certain passages in support of this--like Christ's warning against losing one's soul to gain the world (Mt. 16:26)." Such dualism, Berry says, is the "most destructive disease that afflicts us" (105). Again here, disease for Berry is nearly synonymous with disconnection, discontinuity and fragmentation.

Berry has more to say in his works about the damage that follows from the separation of religion from economy adding to this fragmentation, perhaps surprisingly, a proper notion of art. By art, Berry means, "all the ways by which humans make the things they need" (108). All artists—by which he means makers—"work only by reworking the works of creation . . . how we take our lives from this world, how

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call for sensitivity to the interrelatedness of body and soul, the created order, and the world of the Spirit" (134). Mitchell rightly notes that Berry in emphasizing God as Creator deemphasizes Christ as Redeemer and the reconciliation to the God of love that is critical to life in the Kingdom of God and to the salvation of the world (140).

we work, what work we do, how will we use the materials we use, and what we do with them after we have use them–all these are questions of the highest and gravest religious significance" ("Christianity the Survival of Creation" 109). In other words, they reveal what we think of God's work of creation. For Berry, it is why the division of the fine arts from craftsmanship and craftsmanship from labor is arbitrary and potentially destructive. All of this making should be considered as a whole, and is or should be part of the same story of creation and stewardship, of keeping the garden while cultures are created, and of how our making can honor God's making. For Berry, whether or not we see our work, our making, our production and the human economy within the Great Economy of God's creation has made and will make all the difference. "[Berry] is adamant that any discussion of the human story that ignores this creation story is destined to be diseased, just as any rejection of God's story is destructive" (*Wendell Berry and the Cultivation of Life* 88).

Again, the mistake made by many Christians is to consider the doctrine of creation as that which pertains only to the world's originating event rather than that which is sustained by Him, exists for Him, and is a continuing source of pleasure to Him. Berry would agree with Norman Wirzba who writes, "Creation names the ongoing reality of human beings, animals, plants, land and weather, all connected to each other and bound to God as their source, inspiration, and end . . .When we confine creation to an originating event, we lose the sense of it as a dynamic place so cherished that God enters into covenant relationship with it (Gen. 9:8 – 17). It so beautiful that God promises to renew it (Isaiah 65: 17 – 25), and so valuable that God takes up residence within it (John 1:14 and Rev. 21:1 – 4)" (*From Nature to Creation* 20-21). Part of the gnostic heresy that the church has battled for most of its existence is to assume that God has come to save us *from the world and the body*, and that salvation is something reserved for the soul apart from creation. On the contrary, "Central to the way the New Testament conceives the final destiny of the world is Jesus's proclamation in Matthew 19:28 of a regeneration that is coming, or in Peter's words, a "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21) (24). "Keeping" creation, understood as "all things" created "good" by God, is then not only an act of health, but also a sacred and salvific act. As Berry says in his poem, "How to be a Poet," "there are no sacred and unsacred places,

there are only sacred and desecrated places" (*New Collected Poems* 354). For Berry, there is no question about our general calling to value and preserve God's creation in all places, there are only obedient and disobedient responses to it.

This biblical story of and about creation is not the one that we have inherited from a European history and understanding of the "New World." The view of the New World "was not perceived as God's creation and as a gift to be gratefully received nurturing shared. instead it appeared as so much virgin territory and raw material waiting to be turned into a possession that could then be modified to enrich its holders" (*From Nature to Creation* 26). As Willy James Jennings has written in *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race,* explorers saw only "a system of potentialities, a massive undeveloped, unused, misunderstood, not fully understood potentialities. Everything--from peoples and their bodies to plants and animals, from the ground in the sky– was subject to change, subjects for change, subject to change" (quoted in *From Nature to Creation* 26). Many contemporary Christians have inherited this view of the earth's "raw materials," effectively living an atheistic, materialist story rather than a biblical one when it comes to every given thing. The result, Berry writes, is that western Christians have "stood silently by while a predatory economy has ravaged the world, destroyed its natural beauty and health, divided and plundered its communities and households" ("Christianity and the Survival of Creation" 115).

Place

As we have seen, For Berry, central to connections of health and wholeness is the connection to place, the second theme of the five mentioned above. Beginners to the environmental discussion often assume that environmentalists like Berry are concerned with preserving those places in the 'natural world' like Yosemite or Yellowstone for 'visitors.' For Berry, rather, the 'environment' is where we live; it is any place we find soil, or where soil lies beneath. There is no culture that has not cultivated itself through some relationship to the land, for good or for ill, and our health is not finally separable from the health of our landscapes. The healing of connections, therefore, must begin by attending to the health of our local

places, which because we are all connected, especially in the economies of consumer capitalism, is a healing that must see recognize all other places as living "downstream" from our places.

In his 2012 Jefferson Lecture, "It All Turns on Affection," Berry returned to a pair of terms used by his Stanford mentor, novelist Wallace Stegner. Stegner divided Americans into two kinds, "boomers" and "stickers." Boomers, says Berry, are those who move easily from place to place with no regard except for the economic value and resources they can garner from their places. They seek to make a killing rather than make a living, as Berry often puts it, in the places they inhabit, often only temporarily. Indeed, boomers need not even be resident in those places to exploit them but do so often from a distance safe from the consequences of their exploits. Berry recalls his first visit to Duke University where he came face to face with a bronze statue of James B. Duke, the university's founder and industrial tobacco mogul (13ff). His statue, which stands out front of the University Chapel, names Duke as an "Industrialist" and "Philanthropist." For Berry, the statue symbolizes the cultural naivete, even perhaps James Duke's own, in being unable to see the historic disconnects between education, industry, and the health of places. Berry's own family suffered more or less directly from Duke's boomer ambitions. With his Durham-based American Tobacco Company, Duke created a monopoly that eliminated all competition and reduced the price of tobacco to levels that pleased him, bringing thousands of small farms to the brink of and into extinction, expanding Duke's own lands and profits. This monopoly included Berry's own grandfather in Henry County, Kentucky, who found that the sale of his 1906 harvest left nothing to live on at all as Duke had driven prices so low there was no money left after costs of transport to market. The Berrys, however, decided at that moment to advocate for these farmers and their land-conserving economies. It is they who knew the particular qualities of land in each place, how it could be properly cared for if it were in turn to provide for those who lived from it and on it, not just then but in the future.

It is this commitment to local economies that characterizes the "sticker," the other term Stegner provided for Berry. Unlike the boomer, motivated solely by profit regardless of place, stickers are "motivated by affection, by such love for a place and its life they that they want to preserve it and remain in it" (It All Turns on Affection: 11). The sticker understands, too, that local economies are crucial for

the kinds of relationships we want with one another. In his essay, “The Work of Local Culture,” Berry summarizes the slide toward alienation in communities as the local culture gives way to a mobile, global culture where each of our relationships is with a distant global economy rather than a local one. Such a place then “loses it memory, [and its] members no longer know one another. How can they know one another if they have forgotten or have never learned one another’s stories? If they do not know one another’s stories, how can they know whether to trust one another? People who do not trust one another do not help one another, and moreover they fear one another” (105). For Berry, the knowledge we need depends not upon being a “global citizen” but a local one. "No human has ever known, let alone imagined, the entire planet . . .But if we are to know any part of the planet intimately, particularly, precisely, and with affection, and we must live somewhere in particular for a long time. . .." Only then is it possible to know “intimately, particularly, precisely, gratefully, reverently and with affection” (Life is a Miracle 138-139). Berry maintains, quoting Biologist Roger Payne, that “An[y] observant local always knows more than a visiting scientist. Always. No Exceptions” (“Local Knowledge in an Age of Information” 120).

For Berry, to be a sticker does not require that one becomes a farmer or lives in the same place one’s whole life. Rather it is a mentality that seeks to come to know a place and a community, and to learn how it flourishes. Other information or specialization inevitably goes the way of abstraction and globalization. What professionals and their publics want, Berry claims, is knowledge that is applicable to every place, to every person, and that can sell books in every market regardless of geography or community. In a marketplace of ideas, the ideas must be relevant, it is assumed, to more than the local. Of course, we benefit greatly from information and research done all over the world, often with a thoroughness that would require resources of time and money that we cannot duplicated in our own places. However, for Berry, an education that merely *adopts* information without *adapting* it to local knowledge runs the risk of obscuring the actual truths of our particular places. It assumes that knowledge is neither produced nor transmitted in local contexts, making the commodity of knowledge more like products that are branded and sold at the same outlets in every city.

Berry, of course, has in mind the local knowledge of how particular landscapes can thrive and be preserved into the future against corporate knowledge which brings into every place the same means of production (and its machines, chemicals, etc.) without regard for how distinct landscapes naturally thrive and live on (or fail to) when corporations have pulled out. Analogous disconnects could be imagined, however, for our universities. Information and research related to student flourishing, for instance, needs to be read and discussed, but should be done in conversation with students on a local campus who along with all others comprise the "landscape" in which we must work. This does not happen as naturally as one thinks, for national conflicts, talking heads, and media "information" take the place of more local and precise discussions of the realities our on our campuses (and here I am thinking of "information" about race), often creating more polarization than conversation. What would it be like, for instance, if universities incentivized faculty to narrow their research scope to benefit the health and flourishing of their particular places, not just the campuses themselves but also the neighborhoods in which they are placed? If this took place across departments, then these specialists would be forced to talk to one another, to work together toward a unifying vision of health that might unite them in turn. This "placed knowledge" would move beyond *knowledge-communicated* to knowledge arising from *conversation* among those most involved and most affected (*Local Knowledge* 122). Berry deserves to be quoted in full here:

> "Can this convocation of specialists, who have been "called together to learn and teach, actually come together? In other words, can the convocation become a conversation? For that, the convocation would have to have a common purpose, a common standard, and a common language. It would have to understand itself as a part, for better or worse, of the surrounding community. For reasons both selfish and altruistic, it would have to make the good health of its community the primary purpose of all this work. If that were the avowed purpose, then all the members and branches of the university would have to converse with one another, and their various professional standards would have to submit to the one standard of the community's health" (*Life is a Miracle* 60).

Berry's long lament is that not only does careerism of all kinds take us far from home, but that we educate our students for homelessness as well. The story of modern education has been that students are destined for a better place and a better life than the one they had at home. (*Cultivating Virtues of Place* 2). While there are many who have suffered in their disadvantaged communities, and whom we must educate

for better lives, the "boomer" myth of education sometimes goes beyond common sense amelioration to a narrative in which 'successful adulthood' *must mean* moving away from home. What is worse and maybe hurtful is the assumption that our students must surely want to leave the places and cultures from which they came. A good question for our universities is, how can our education lead students to practice a healthy contentment with and affection for particular people and places, or at least not educate them for disaffected transience?

One of the ways we unintentionally separate our students from one another even on a campus community, according to Berry, is in a facile training for "leadership." While one would hope that our students lead in their intelligence, creativity, skills, hard work, wisdom and love, the idea often gets handed down implicitly as a choice: one either leads or follows. In careers, the distinction is between leaders who work with their minds and others who work with their hands. Berry worries that this plays out in a disdain for those engaged in manual labor, those working directly with materials, including those materials on which most of us depend for life. This also plays into the old error of a liberal arts education that reifies the distinction between a plutocracy and a working class. The alternative is not to train some for "leadership" and others for something else, but to train everyone for skilled work (including skills for leadership at any level) for the good and health of the community, which necessarily is a disciplinary cross-training, no matter what one's gainful employment turns out to be. The mayor ought to work a garden of his own or at least know how the runoff from his lawn's chemical fertilizer is affecting the watershed of which his city is a part, information he could get from an observant fishermen or environmental scientist alike. Indeed, for those of us who live in what seems like one continuous city, the notion of one's own watershed boundary lines that are now mapped for all of us to see may be a better way to locate one's self in a community than those of cities or counties.

Another error of place in the language of leadership, Berry maintains, is the adjective 'global,' that often precedes "leadership" or "citizen." At its best, it reminds us that all is connected, that our products come from somewhere, and our lifestyles and the practices that preserve them ripple out everywhere. However, for Berry, the usefulness of the word has limits, for "global thinking is not possible" at least in

ways that are salubrious. "There can be no such thing as a global village. No matter how much we may love the world as a whole, one can live fully in it only by living responsible in some small part of it. Where we live and who we live there with define the terms of our relation to the world and to humanity. We thus come again to the paradox that one can become whole only by responsible acceptance of one's partiality"[3] The obstacles or threats to healing communities are first, as we have noted, a tendency toward a consumer driven autonomous individualism guided only by the plenitude of individual desire. The second is a tendency toward a leadership overreach. The preparation of students to be "global leaders," besides often being a bit of enrollment salesmanship, feeds a mentality that disparages the local. The problem with most global leadership thinking, for Berry, is that it is the kind of thinking done by corporations and businesses who do not have affection for particular places, and lacking affection, they have no knowledge of particular places except that of "consumer satisfaction." Berry is not opposed to the free market but is worried that globalization has made community members unable to engage in the free market of their local economies, simply by eliminating those local markets, and with them, but local memory, knowledge and relationships particular to the thriving of those places.[4] These matters of global and local markets are not a digression from the educational context, but are germane to them as the jobs available for students increasingly draw them into the large companies and corporations who not only have a history of disregard for places, but also are increasingly in the 'nowhere' of virtual space.

Membership, Affection and Imagination

Along with Berry's core themes of 'health' and 'place,' comes 'membership,' an idea that has been touched upon already several times in this paper. When it comes to our relationships in place and for the sake of its health, it is 'membership' which Berry prefers as opposed to "resident" or "citizen." It is a carefully considered term that appears everywhere in his essays and fiction. Ragan Sutterfield writes, "Rather than the term 'resident,' which seems too passive, simply holding ground, or 'citizen,' which is

[3] Quoted in *The Humane Vision of Wendell Berry* 144.
[4] See Mark T. Mitchell's "Wendell Berry's Defense of a Truly Free Market" in *The Humane Vision of Wendell Berry.*

dependent on political identity, 'membership' is a term that can include the whole of a place--its people, but also its animals and land, its history and future, its town and its country" (*The Given Life* 90). Berry says explicitly that he is drawing here upon the Apostle Paul's imagery for the church in 1 Cor. 12:12 ff. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ."

Membership for Berry carries with it the connotation of *belonging*, what we know to be a need and crucial sense for a student to thrive in a learning community. Such belonging, however, is accompanied and complicated by the search for a distinct identity which has become powered now by an almost frantic energy dedicated to branding, displaying, and differentiating the self. The belonging of membership, however, is rooted in a coherent relationality that recognizes difference but where each enjoys his or her place in and support of the full membership where the smallest unit of health is not the individual but the community (*The Given Life* 91). A concern for the full membership returns us to Berry's claim that the best notion of 'the economy' is the 'Kingdom of God,' which is characterized by a desire to include. It cultivates a mind that would notice the loss of a single sheep and find ways to recover it, while another mind "would lose no time in demonstrating mathematically that it 'makes no sense' to leave the ninety-nine sheep perhaps in danger while you go to look for the only one that is lost" ("Going to Work" 37).

In his essay "Two Minds," Berry calls the mindset of the Kingdom of God the "sympathetic mind" as opposed to what he calls the "rational mind." "The rational mind, he writes, "is motivated by the fear of being misled, of being wrong. Its purpose is to exclude everything that cannot empirically or experimentally be proven to be a fact." For Berry, the rational mind is shrewdly utilitarian, calculating what can be measured in terms of power, resources, utility, profit, and gains. The sympathetic mind is not characterized by non-rationality, however, but by a fear that something valuable may be excluded. It admits as important even those things whose value cannot be measured quantitatively or more precisely in cost-benefit accounting--like the health of watersheds, the virtues and satisfactions of doing one's own labor, the stability of families and communities, the beauty of one's particular local landscapes, and the goodness of cultivating and stewarding what has value for one fundamental reason--it has been called

divinely 'good'. Berry writes, "The sympathetic mind is motivated by fear of error of a very different kind: the error of carelessness, of being unloving. Its purpose is to be considerate of whatever is present, to leave nothing out. The rational mind is exclusive; the sympathetic, mind however failingly, wishes to be inclusive" ("The Two Minds" 88). When it comes to membership, the sympathetic mind looks out for the weaker or smaller members, not only out of affection but out of the knowledge that *all* is connected, that in some real way, the exclusion, destruction or disappearance of one part of the membership will have a degrading effect on the whole, which may not be evident immediately but always returns. In a conversation this year with a colleague about racial issues that have been divisive on our campus, my interlocutor cautioned that the "tail" (those arguing for racial sensitivity) "should not wag the dog" (presumably, the rest of the university). A right notion of membership would know that this is exactly what *should* happen: that the suffering of one part of the body should draw healing attention and actions from the whole body to it.

Berry claims that such a notion of the full membership for the sake of health, possessing a 'placed' knowledge, cannot be sustained apart from *affection.* Affection for a place that comes from personal, tangible contact with it goes hand in hand with a more precise loving knowledge of it and raises the probability that the membership will use that knowledge to protect and sustain the place. In his *Jefferson Lecture*, Berry opposes such loving, personal knowledge to statistical knowledge, which for all its detail tends to move its knowers further into abstraction, disconnection and objectification. Often statistical knowledge becomes so vast, dealing in such large quantities, that its subjects become literally unimaginable and therefore are not ever truly imagined at all. Berry writes, "To hear of a thousand deaths in war is terrible, and we 'know' it is. But as it registers in our hearts, it is not more terrible than one death fully imagined" (*It All Turns* 28). To be able to see or imagine places in their particularity, then, is critical for a loving knowledge capable of care, for it is imagination that conveys knowledge to the heart. In 'Two Minds," Berry writes "we humans necessarily make pictures in our minds of our places and our world . . . we live in two landscapes, one superimposed upon the other" (85). Such imagination for the world, its places and ourselves in it, are constructed not only from a knowledge in place, but conveyed

also in the stories we are told and tell in turn. The tasks of an education in part is to give students an imagination that *sees* places and cultivates an affection for them that students might imagine, in turn, their lives in that place's story.

Conclusion

With all this talk of health, place, membership, affection and imagination, we seem to have come a long way from the topic of a liberal arts education. I think, however, we are right on topic if we return to our earlier observation that the organization of the liberal arts and their justifications depend upon arguments or stories, implicit or explicit, about the value of contexts and connections, sometimes called "the common good." It is reasonable to suppose that a liberal arts education should seek connections to a set of goods that are the *most* 'common,' which is to say, addresses contexts and connections whose roots reach out into every sphere of human activity and every place where humans live. It should touch the many problems and dangers that threaten human life and relationships, and--in a Christian context—it should deepen our understanding of and engagement with the gifts, joys, callings and responsibilities given to us by the Lord God (first named as such at creation in Gen. 2:4). Again, neither Berry nor I myself in this paper would go so far as to outline a curriculum for say, a general education or core, or an organizational structure by which the disciplines might talk to one another. However, it is possible to come up with a 'curriculum of questions' that could be at or near the center of a liberal arts education, and are important especially to the degree that they have often been overlooked.

Such questions might include, "*Who are we and of what story are we a part"*? What does it mean to be finite humans, created from the earth by the hand and breath of God? What ought our relationship be to other created creatures and bodies, and in what ways are they, too, sacred or "good"? What are our responsibilities as only tenants and keepers of God's world? What is our calling to participate in the redemption and salvation of the world? What does "the world" include and how might 'salvation' and its scriptural synonyms--'saved,' 'rescued,' 'reconciled' and 'healed'--apply to all that God has

created? How would we describe the health of the communities in which we were raised--socially, physically, financially, spiritually, vocationally--and what served or failed to serve health in those places? What is our human intelligence getting us into today and will our intelligence be able to get us out of its consequences?

Another set of questions could ask, *Where am I?* "What happened here in geologic time? [Some evidence has come to the surface on my campus where a building project unearthed a wooly mammoth, now an archaeological site.] What has happened here in human time?" Who occupied this place and what became of them? "What, if we weren't here, would nature be doing here? What will the nature of the place permit us to do here without exhausting either the place itself or the birthright of those who will come later?" What damage has been done here or is being done and can we mend it? What is still here from the original landscape? "What do we have, in this place and in ourselves, that is good? . . . Under what conditions might our work here be helpful and beautiful?" From where come the resources to sustain this place and where do these go when we discard them (into whose communities or into what places)? ("Going to Work" 34).

In *Cultivating Virtues of Place: Wendell Berry and Higher Education*, the most comprehensive book to date on how the university can benefit from a dialogue with Wendell Berry and other conservationists, Spring Arbor University professors Jack Baker and Jeffrey Bilbo expand our imagination of how "Organizing knowledge around a set of placed questions changes the center of learning" (185). They expand Berry's notion in "The Loss of the University" that knowledge is like a tree whose branches divide but in root and trunk are connected. It is an image for knowledge, Berry writes, that is "at least as old as Genesis, and the form it gives us for all that we know is organic, unified, comprehensive, connective – and moral ("The Loss" 82). Berry continues, "the history of modern education may be a history of the loss of this image, and of its replacement by the pattern of the industrial machine, which subsists upon division" (83). Berry, according to Bilbro and Baker, acknowledges that "determining what constitutes [education's] trunk, or the core curriculum, is a difficult matter, but our current practice of leaving this up to the student is an avoidance of responsibility" (*Cultivating the Virtues* 37). Whatever

particular form it takes, such an education will need to be "broad and basic" (83). It will begin with many of the subjects of the traditional trivium--grammar (the art of order), dialectic (the art of thinking and language), and rhetoric ("the art of soul leading"). These will teach students how to speak and write well, not first and finally to be a public speaker or a technical writer or a broadcaster or a creative writer (which Berry, of course, himself is), but because clarity and precision are necessary to tell the truth, historically and presently, in a world where the languages of specialized professions, advertising, or public relations often unintentionally or intentionally obscure the truth and consequences of human action. Such a broad and basic education would also teach subjects included in the traditional quadrivium--arithmetic (the art of quantifiable relationships), geometry ("the art of number in space"), music ("the art of number in time"), and astronomy ("the art of numbers in space and time") (*Cultivating the Virtues* 58). Many of our universities, of course, require these already as part of a general education curriculum, and if so, it is the framing of this core that is critical, helping students understand that they are preparing to be more than "good citizens" or even integrators of "faith and learning" but agents of redemption and reconciliation, carrying out the command to be vigilant preservers of God's world in the particular places and the people there where they live, beginning with the very campus and surrounding community. It should be clear from the foregoing that there is no discipline that cannot be a part of this end, from sociology to chemistry, from kinesiology to theology.

As students move through their disciplinary specializations into employment, they need to be mindful, according to Berry, that "the problems of affect and influence are inescapable because, whether acknowledged or not, work [including academic research] always has a context. Work must 'take place.' It takes place in a neighborhood and in a commonwealth" ("Going to Work" 34). Many modern work settings obscure this fact, taking place in enclosures that separate workers from the chain of actions that come before them and proceed from them in a kind of "nowhere" or now frequently "cyberspace" ("Going to Work" 33). What student will ask in their career center, "tell me, what do you know about the effect of industry X on the health and nurture of the people and places from which its products are derived and where they are used?" Such a student would be what we call a "critical thinker" and, on Christian

campuses, someone who has integrated faith, learning and vocation for the sake of others. Bilbro and Baker write, "When students arrive on campus, they are constantly asked, 'What do you want to do with your life?' Students might approach education differently if instead they were asked, "What does your community need and what do you need to learn to meet those needs?" (*Cultivating the Virtues* 187).

Berry's despair about education is aimed mostly at the large research universities, often the land grant universities, which he believes have failed in their responsibilities to care for the land, contrary to the specific charge of the 1862 Morrill Act that established them. He holds out little hope that that the large research university given over to an educational-industrial complex can educate students toward the healing, care, community and stewardship that is now more urgent than ever. However, in his commencement address at Bellarmine college, a college of about 3300 students in Kentucky, he maintains hope that an, "Actual education seems now to be far more probable in the smaller schools . . . A school the size of this one still can function as a community of teachers and students, with responsible community life as its unifying aim."[5]

In what has gone before, it is clear that the notion of a liberal arts education whose motto might be 'only connect' is woefully incomplete if it involves only the classroom curriculum. If an education for connection, health, responsibility and affection includes the body, work, community, eating, waste, diversity, neighbors, habits of consumerism, worship and the watershed, then it must overflow into a responsible community life. It means that what we call the curricular and the co-curricular are both major branches of the tree of learning that have been unnecessarily separated in practice.

The importance of such a community life to the theme of this conference, the anxieties students experience in the liberal education 'race,' comes home here. The connections of which we are speaking are ultimately connections of belonging, identity, inclusion, meaningful work, cooperation over competition, and a sense of home. In her book, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith*, Sharon Parks observes students growing into adulthood

[5] http://christianstudycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/WendellBerry-BellarmineCommencement.pdf Accessed Feb. 24, 2019.

confront necessarily a growing vastness and seek often anxiously what their place will be in it all. Students wonder, she writes, “Can I be at home in the universe; among vast stellar spaces; among my own varied and conflicted yearnings; among diverse cultures; among multiple perspectives, theories, and ideologies; among a wide array of possible features? And if I make this move rather than that one, who and what will I miss?” (36). Home, she notes, is one of the most powerful words in the English language, echoing both where we have come from and symbolizing a deep, often unarticulated longing for our futures. While journey and pilgrimage have been ubiquitous and privileged metaphors for human growth and development in western literatures, psychology, and spirituality, the journey (from the French, *jour*, meaning a day’s travel,) and the related motif of pilgrimage are ultimately *for the sake of* returning home with more understanding, wisdom, and capacity for commitment (50). After surveying a number of theories of human growth and development, Parks writes, ”if we understand human development not simply as departures and arrivals but also as transformations in the meaning of home, then the young adults with whom we have the privilege of making meaning may become more viably at home in the universe” (52). (One of those transformation may be the capacity to commit to a place amid whose diversity we may not initially have felt at home.) Laurie Schreiner’s research on student thriving and success identifies *membership, relationship, ownership partnership* and the “sense of belonging, of feeling at home” as key indicators for student success (and especially critical for the thriving of students of color in their historical experiences of exclusion) (48). Could it be that health, place, membership, affection, and identities of belonging both and in God’s great economy form the best possible contexts for a liberal arts education?

In the fashion of some of Wendell Berry’s essays and as a stimulus for further discussion, I want to end with a beginning—a partial list of questions that might be close to the center of such an education, recapitulating and adding to what has been mentioned above.

1. What kinds of stories are we telling about success, concerning in particular where success should take us? Are we training students for mobility or dwelling? Do we consider the university as a

train station where students stop temporarily to gather resources and raw materials for their journey, or as a place of ongoing community where they can learn for a time how to care for a place and its people, a learning that they will bring to the next community in which they dwell?

2. What stories are we telling about leadership and do these reinforce the gap between those educated for "leadership" and those educated as "workers"?
3. What work are students urged to do for their campus and community, becoming partners in place with those who may be sustaining its life--cleaning their residences, working the landscape, preparing their food, and disposing of their waste?
4. What do students know about their university's local community, what was there before, what has been replaced, who lives there now, and what quality of life is experienced by those who live around them?
5. What do students know about the student population's demographics, and what contact do they have with the diversity of stories different from their own?
6. Is spiritual formation understood as something that moves just from the inside-out, or also from the outside-in, with the responsibilities of living for the health of community and the sustainability of creation leading us to the particular virtues and fruit of the Spirit we are called to develop?
7. What are student attitudes and engagement with the local church or "parish," and how can we help them develop a contentment with and an affection for these often imperfect bodies?
8. What is the notion of the world's salvation or redemption taught in the school's theological tradition and courses, and what does "the world" include?
9. Does research done at the university address the needs of the community or places nearby, and is it done amid those affected most by it?
10. What do students understand by finding one's "calling" and is the Gen. 2:15 calling to stewardship and a biblical understanding of creation even on the radar as they explore the work and industries to which they aspire?

11. How is service learning or missions work imagined, and what are students learning about the needs and conditions for flourishing in those places from the wise and observant members of those communities?
12. Do our students have an affection for their homes, the places they have lived, their university environment, and its neighbors, and is such affection moving them toward a deeper, caring knowledge of these places?

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