Integrating Intelligence and the Soul

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John Steinbeck's short story "The Affair at 7 Rue de M—" is a tale that breaks the traditional Steinbeck mold of the Central California venue and transports the reader to a comic-horror family scene set in Paris. The plot involves a laissez-faire father who turns warrior, exercising effort to extricate the cancerous, pulsating wad of rubbery chewing gum from the mouth of its host, the father's son. The rise of action begins as the eight-year old victim cries out to his father, "I am not chewing it, sir. It's chewing me!"[1] The pulsating monster has gained senscience, is named the *Thing,* and struggles for survival to live in the salivary cavern of its inception. One can't help but wonder if Steinbeck was equipping parents with the right story to share with their children just before bed in hopes of eliminating that nasty "curious American practice, the chewing of bubble gum."[2] However, in the midst of the tension between comedy and horror, Steinbeck inserts a profoundly philosophical statement, "Intelligence without the soul to balance it must of necessity be evil."[3] Whereas one may question whether this type of intelligence *must of necessity* be evil, the statement challenges a thought provoking contemplative session nonetheless.

Steinbeck was not the only author wrestling with the issue of a soulless intelligence. C.S. Lewis grapples with the condition in his book *The Abolition of Man* and David V. Hicks prefaces his book *Norms & Nobility* with similar concerns. Each author commences with a focus on the purpose of education. Lewis launches his exposition in response to *The Green Book* which he asserts is an operation to produce learners who are without chests.[4] He continues his argument with a prophecy that exclusively intellectually-focused education without soulful and emotional counterbalance will produce shadows of people when he writes, "We remove the organ and

[1] John Steinbeck, "The Affair at 7, Rue de M" *Magazine of Horror The Bizarre and the Unusual* , Winter 1955-56, 61.

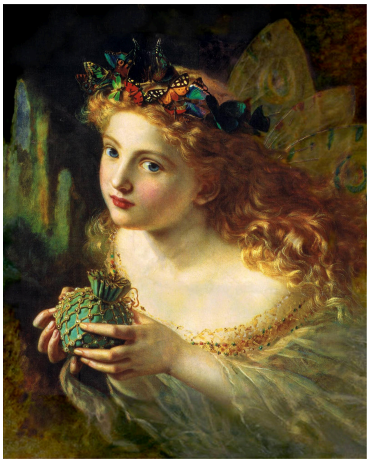
[2] Steinbeck, 60.

[3] Steinbeck, 65.

[4] C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, (NewYork: Harper Collins, 1974), 25.

demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful."[5] Whereas such a casing of a human being may not of necessity be evil, such a *Thing* is most certainly without virtue, truth, goodness, and beauty.

With similar concerns as Lewis, Hicks focuses on the end product of an educational system that concentrates on rationalism at the expense of human virtue. He asserts that "Education must address the whole student, his emotional and spiritual sides as well as his rational. The aims of education, the teacher's methods, the books and lessons, the traditions, and regulations of the school—all must express not just ideas, but norms, tending to make young people not only rational, but noble."[6] Hicks concedes the need for rational thought, however, it must exist in combination with the noble, well ordered soul to guide the learner to discern good and evil, modesty from immodesty, holy from vulgar, and eternal from temporal.



Whereas Steinbeck's reader is left wondering whether the *Thing* has been completely conquered, Lewis and Hicks raise awareness of the dawning resurgence of an educational paradigm to overcome soulless intelligence. Classical Christian Education begins with the premise that every learner is an image-bearer of the Most High and Living God. Although the nature of humanity is distorted due to the Fall, the proper education which focuses on truth, goodness and beauty can guide the learner to focus on realigning the soul. Cognitive intellectual development is a *part* of the overall learning experience. However, it is bound with moral and character development so that the learner becomes a thoughtful, emotional person equipped to exercise virtue and discipline. Classical Christian Education strives to integrate intelligence with the soul to produce learners who are not *Things*, but Human Beings.

[5] Lewis, 26.

[6] David V. Hicks, "Preface to the 1990 Edition" in *Norms & Nobility A Treatise on Education* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc. 1999), vi.

Dr. Memmott and her husband, Kyle Memmott, are founders of Acacia Classical Academy. Acacia Classical Academy serves the homeschooling needs in the greater Sacramento area as a hybrid, homeschooling enrichment program designed to equip learners and parents for earthly and heavenly citizenship through Classical Christian Education. The core values at Acacia Classical Academy are Christ-likeness, Classical, Community, Discipleship, and Piety to train learners to love God, serve others, and lead communities. Homeschooling? You are not alone!

Interested in reading “The Affair at 7 Rue de M—”

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