

THE TRICORN

NEWSLETTER published jointly by the BOSTON +
LONG ISLAND + PHILADELPHIA GREAT BOOKS COUNCILS

MARCH, 1978

Colby: Journey To The Limits Of Reason

The wheels of the Great Books Summer Institute week at Colby College aren't merely turning. They're spinning, whirring. Colby is always over-subscribed. However, Iz Wachs now reports that "advance reservations are running at the fastest pace we've seen in many years. We're not sure what has happened, but it's a floodtide. It looks as though the 'Sold Out' sign is going up very early. It should be a warning to all procrastinators."

All Great Bookers have received their Colby reservation notices. Here, in brief, is the information:

Date: The week beginning August 6, 1978.

Cost: \$170 (same as last year).

Deposit: \$70 per person, payable to Colby Summer Institute Committee, c/o Isadore Wachs, Chairman, 500 Lewis Tower Bldg., 15th & Locust Sts., Philadelphia, Pa. 19102. Refundable, less charge for books and mailing if you notify before July 15 that you can't attend.

Groups: Specify whether you want to be included in a Leaderless Group or a Rotating Leaders Group. We will offer Leader Training in addition. Also, specify how you want your names listed.

Theme: Limits Of Reason

Readings: Mysteries, by Knut Hamsun.

Reason and Existenz (selections), by Karl Jaspers.

A Separate Reality, by Carlos Castaneda.

Manual of Zen Buddhism (selections), by D.T. Suzuki.

The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge, by Rainer Maria Rilke.

Helene Kohn, deeply involved among those making the Colby reading selections, submits the following three excerpts as provocative previews reflecting the theme: Limits Of Reason:

Dostoyevsky (Notes From The Underground): Indeed, if there really is someday discovered a formula for all our desires and caprices – that is, an explanation of what they depend upon, by what laws they arise, how they develop, what they are aiming at in one case and in another and so on, that is a real mathematical formula – then, most likely, man will at once cease to feel desire, indeed, he will be certain to. For who would want to choose by rule? Besides, he will at once be transformed from a human being into an organ-stop or something of the sort; for what is a man without desires, without freewill and without choice, if not a stop in an organ?

You see, gentlemen, reason is an excellent thing, there's no disputing that, but reason is nothing but reason and satisfies only the rational side of man's nature, while will is a manifestation of the whole life, that is, of the whole human life including reason and all the impulses. And although our life, in this manifestation of it, is often worthless, yet it is life and not simply extracting square roots. Here I, for instance, quite naturally want to live, in order to satisfy all my capacities for life, and not simply my capacity for reasoning, that is, not simply one twentieth of my capacity for life. What does reason know? Reason knows only what it has succeeded in learning (some things, perhaps, it will never learn; this is a poor comfort, but why not say so frankly?) and human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously or unconsciously, and, even if it goes wrong, it lives.

Karl Jaspers (Reason and Existenz): We experience the limits of science as the limits of our ability to know and as limits of our realization of the world through knowledge and ability; the knowledge of science fails in the face of all ultimate questions. We experience limits of communication: something is lacking even when it succeeds. The failure of knowledge and the failure of communication cause a confusion in which Being and truth vanish. In vain a way out is sought either in obedience to rules and regulations or in thoughtlessness. The meaning of **truth** assumes another value. Truth is more than what we call truth (or rather correctness) in the sciences. We want to grasp truth itself; the way to it becomes a new, more urgent, more exciting task.

In the world **man** alone is the reality which is accessible to me. Here is presence, nearness, fullness, life. Man is the place at which and through which everything that is real exists for us at all. To fail to be human would mean to slip into nothingness. What man is and what man can become is a fundamental question for man.

Man, however, is not a self-sufficient separate entity, but is constituted by the things he makes his own. In every form of his being man is related to something other than himself; as a being to his world, as consciousness to objects, as spirit to the idea of whatever constitutes totality, as Existenz to Transcendence. Man always becomes man by devoting himself to this other. Only through his absorption in the world of Being, in the immeasurable space of objects, in ideas, in Transcendence, does he become real to himself. If he makes himself the immediate object of his efforts he is on his last and perilous path; for it is possible that in doing so he will lose the Being of the other and then no longer find anything in himself. If man wants to grasp himself directly, he ceases to understand himself, to know who he is and what he should do.

Jorge Luis Borges (Dreamtigers): It's the other one, it's Borges, that things happen to. I stroll about Buenos Aires and stop, perhaps mechanically now, to look at the arch of an entrance or an iron gate. News of Borges reaches me through the mail and I see his name on an academic ballot or in a biographical dictionary. I like hourglasses, maps, eighteenth-century typography, the taste of coffee, and Stevenson's prose. The other one shares these preferences with me, but in a vain way that converts them into the attributes of an actor. It would be too much to say that our relations are hostile; I live, I allow myself to live, so that Borges may contrive his literature and that literature justifies my existence. I do not mind confessing that he has managed to write some worthwhile pages, but those pages cannot save me, perhaps because the good part no longer belongs to anyone, not even to the other one, but rather to the Spanish language or to tradition. Otherwise I am destined to be lost, definitely, and only a few instants of me will be able to survive in the other one. Little by little I am yielding him everything, although I am well aware of his perverse habit of falsifying and exag-

gerating. Spinoza held that all things long to preserve their own nature: the rock wants to be rock forever and the tiger, a tiger. But I must live on in Borges, not in myself – if indeed I am anyone – though I recognize myself less in his books than in many others, or than in the laborious strumming of a guitar. Years ago I tried to free myself from him and I passed from lower-middle-class myths to playing games with time and infinity, but those games are Borges' now, and I will have to conceive something else. Thus my life is running away, and I lose everything and everything belongs to oblivions, or to the other one.

I do not know which of us two is writing this page.

How do the Colby readings get selected? Technically, the books or readings, plus the themes, are selected by the Colby Committee. But first several potential themes must be selected. Then numerous books relevant to each theme must be selected, then read. And ultimately it simmers down to the selection of **the** theme and **the** readings complying with that theme.

It's sometimes said that a camel was once a horse designed by a committee. So how does a committee keep a horse looking like a horse? Over years of experience the Colby Committee has honed its system so that it works smoothly and efficiently. Themes are recommended or suggested by Committee members, group leaders and others. The same people also recommend readings that fit the respective themes – or selections from cited books; or research is done to find appropriate books with provocative substance for discussion. Then it comes down to the nitty-gritty task of reading the actual books – dozens of them – to make the evaluations. This year, and in the recent past, this enormous task has been assigned to two long-term Great Bookers and leaders, Helene Kohn and Gus Soderberg, who have been immersed in constant reading since last Fall. They submit their final recommendations to the Committee for approval.

Can **any** Great Booker participate in suggesting themes or readings? Yes. The Committee both welcomes and seriously considers such suggestions. However, if you plan to recommend or suggest, keep a few thoughts in mind. Don't merely suggest a theme, but also recommend at least several readings that mold to the theme. Don't merely suggest "a book." It has no value unless related to a theme that is suitable for Colby and the Great Books tradition. Also, if, particularly, it's a large book, then suggest selections from the book. Also important, is the book available in paperback? Hence, to be excited about a recent book you've read isn't enough. It must fit into the Great Books concept. It must be mated to a theme – and accompanied by other readings, as well. Thus there are various "conditions" that must be met – which gives you an idea of the abundance of effort that goes into putting together the readings and discussion program for Colby.

Gus Soderberg comments on the new Leader Training available at Colby. Originally, the Great Books Foundation began holding summer institutes designed expressly to train leaders, who would then return to their respective communities, start new groups and spread the Great Books program. Iz Wachs is one of the many people who entered the program this way.

Now the Colby Committee has decided to rejuvenate that original idea by holding special Leader Training during the forthcoming Colby week. You can select, on your reservation form, to join such a group. This will be in addition to your regular discussion group. The readings will be the same as for all at Colby. The discussions will be used in part to examine and practice the role of the leader. Training materials will be provided, and extra time spent in leadership seminars. The training will be done by former Foundation staff members who regularly lead at Colby. This is an excellent opportunity to benefit from professional leader trainers and to develop the rich skills of discussion leadership.

More Colby history – with gratitude to Grace Marciano. In the March, 1977, Tricorn, we listed the Great Books themes and readings at Colby from 1963 to 1977. We said that the Summer Institute had been in existence since 1962. Well, we were hiding our age. We're older than we realized. Grace Marciano, a Colby regular since its beginnings, hurried to her attic (a typical Marciano attic – everything neatly in its place, easily accessible) and extracted the printed Summer Institute programs since their inception, 1957, which places our 1978 Institute in its 21st year. Moreover, the first Summer Institute wasn't held at Colby but at Williams College at Williamstown, Mass. In 1958 we moved to Colby. Anyhow, here is the list of the missing themes and readings at the Summer Institute, 1957-1962, supplementing the 1963-1977 list published in the March, 1977, Tricorn:

1957: GREAT ISSUES IN FAITH

A Free Man's Worship – Russell
 Pensees (selections) – Pascal
 Dialogues Concerning Natural
 Religion (selections) – Hume
 Fear and Trembling – Kierkegaard
 I and Thou – Buber

1958: MODERN MAN AND HIS RELIGION

Ash Wednesday – T.S. Eliot
 Modern Man In Search Of
 A Soul – Carl G. Jung
 The Flies – Jean-Paul Sartre
 Between Man and Man – Buber
 Siddhartha – Hermann Hesse
 The Religious Situation – Tillich

1959: CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE AND ESSAYS

Night – Robinson Jeffers
 Do Not Go Gentle – Dylan Thomas
 What Is Life? – Schrodinger
 Magic, Science and Religion –
 Malinowski
 The Bear – Faulkner
 Language and Myth – Cassirer

1960: THE STATE

Note: The entire week's discussions were given over to The Republic, by Plato.

1961: WAR AND PEACE

Community of Fear, and A World
 Without War (two pamphlets)
 The Iliad – Homer
 City Of God (Part 5) – Augustine
 Perpetual Peace – Kant
 Civilization and Its Discontents
 – Freud

1962: INSIGHTS INTO MAN

Essay On Man (Parts 1-2) – Cassirer
 Canterbury Tales – Chaucer
 Tragedy of Dr. Faustus – Marlowe
 Notes From The Underground –
 Dostoyevsky

Philadelphia News

Fall Institute. After a two year hiatus the Fall Institute returned to Pocono Manor Inn in November, 1978. The return to original site was welcome! It gave the participants a warm feeling.

The theme of the weekend was Humor. There was intellectual laughter with Tom Stoppard; down and dirty laughter with Brecht's "Three Penny Opera," and belly laughter (or was it south of that) with Aristophanes' "Lysistrata."

The committee is now up to its collective ears in book and theme selection for the upcoming year. Arrangements are just about concluded with Pocono Manor Inn to return there again in November '78.

Mid-Winter Theatre Party. Phila. Council brought out (and sold out) the house for a showing of Chekhov's "The Seagull." Bob and Leah Blumenthal and Aaron Heller as impresarios, Sylvia Kasser as registrar and Emil Bix as master of the leaders did a splendid job, as close to 200 great bookies came to bask in one another's warmth. Lively discussion followed the play and provided much food for thought. They'd probably still be going on had not the late hour provided thought for food. Phila. Council will undoubtedly want to do it again next year.

Coordinator Norma Oser reports: Philadelphia has had an exceptional season for new groups. Altogether, 13 more are in operation, and a 14th in prospect. These groups are largely self-created, and once the organizational work is done, the groups maintain regular contact with the local council. Why so many new groups this year? We think it's due largely to the two new series: **Search For Meaning**, and **Becoming Human**. Only three of the new groups are doing the traditional Great Books classics. It's still too soon to determine whether this illustrates some sort of literary Gresham's Law, or whether it means that Great Books will grow in two directions simultaneously. Will the Great Books Foundation continue to keep ahead of the groups by knocking out a new series in the nick of time each summer? Or will the groups be put to the acid test one day when they're confronted with the choice of a classics list or nothing?

New reading sets soon available. Two sets of newly chosen readings will soon be ready for Philadelphia area groups. One set will be comprised of works on the philosophy and methodology of science; the other set will be drawn from the Twentieth Century "classics" nominated not long ago by Mortimer Adler, editor of Great Books of the Western World. The Philadelphia Council's Book Selection Committee consists of Aaron Bechtel, Eva and Emil Bix, Sibyl and Henry Cohen, and Anabel Lindy. They'll add the new sets as replacements of sets no longer published by the Foundation. For listings of new titles, contact committee chairwoman (hmmm) Eva Bix, 408 Old Farm Road, Wyncote, Pa. 19095 (215-887-7190). She'll also provide names of book distributors outside the Philadelphia area.

Spring Seminar. The Philadelphia area will hold its 19th Annual Great Books Seminar on Sunday, May 21, 1978, at the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science. The price is \$11.25 per person, including books, hot lunch and refreshments. Seminar theme: Man — Good, Bad Or Indifferent? The readings: The Revolt Of the Masses, Jose Ortega Y Gasset; and Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley. Reservations via Harold Moll, 7657 Wyndale Ave., Philadelphia, Pa. 19151. Fill out, detach and mail reservation form below.

Name(s) First and Last

Address

City

State

Zip

Phone

Name of your Great Books leader (if any)

Emil Bix in defense of the Great Books classics:

New discussion groups are sprouting everywhere, and old groups are growing like Topsy. The popular appeal of the Foundation's "Search For Meaning" titles knows no bounds. Why carp at group growth when our frenzy for proliferation has on occasion driven us to print up bumper stickers and to cast our message on the limitless air-waves?

Socrates spoke of spotting an angry Plato amidst the throng at his trial. He knew full well what made Plato angry: Socrates was dodging the charges of corrupting Athenian youth. Without naming the baby, he elected instead to repudiate the accusations leveled much earlier by Aristophanes in "Clouds" – that philosophy catered to an elitist fringe, and that its teachings became palatable to mass audiences only when sugar-coated in the form of the performing arts.

Socrates' defense of selectivity spells out our lesson: the privilege of participating in Socratic exchanges of ideas belongs to the few in quest of learning. We bid a hearty welcome to you who were introduced to the round-table discussion method through the new readings; welcome to the next Socratic challenge of probing the books that have radically altered man's view of himself and of his world; welcome to embarking on your continuing education through the classic Great Books.

Not only intellectual growth, but growth as a whole person is seen by one discussant in the traditional readings: One cannot read "Areopagitica" or Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" without becoming a more thoughtful, reasoning person. One cannot drift down the Mississippi with Huck and Jim without becoming personally involved in the human rights issue. One cannot join Ishmael in religious fellowship with that glorious pagan, Queequeg, without learning something of tolerance – or suffer betrayal, shock and anguish to the point of madness with Lear without becoming more sensitive to the lives of others. Voltaire, Cervantes and others remind one that man's indomitable laughter cannot be drowned in his tears.

New searchers and conventional Great Bookers alike – let's continue to examine our lives through study of the great works of the ages. Let those who would take the same trouble join us in reaping the rewards. Let's provide the readings that will enable them to share our goals of universality in adult education. Let quality prevail over quantity in a Great Books program true to the principle in which it was conceived.

Boston News

One-Day Spring Institute. The Boston Council's one-day event will be held on Saturday, June 10, at Regis College, Weston, Mass. Cost for the total program is \$12.50, which includes books, lunch and refreshments. Regis College has superb facilities and an ideal setting. The scheduled readings are: Grendell, by John Gardner; and Hegel's "Philosophy of History." Boston area Great Bookers will receive a notice and application form. For further details write Eleanor Jensen, 255 Marlboro Street, Boston 02116. Her daytime phone is 236-3121.

Fall Weekend great success despite hurricane. The Boston Council's Fall Weekend, October 14-16, 1977, drew an impressive attendance of 100 at the Red Jacket Inn on Cape Cod. Even a hurricane and threats of waves washing ashore and into the Inn proved no obstacle to the Great Bookers, some of whom came all the way from New York and Philadelphia. Discussion centered on three readings: Rollo May's "The Courage To Create;" Plato's "Symposium;" and Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra."

Advanced leader training evening. A well-attended advanced leader training session for group leaders was held last November 15 at the Holiday Inn, Newton. The reading was a selected esthetic work: Yeats' "The Second Coming." The discussion focused on "the first question" posed by leaders in discussion of an artistic work. Leaders, having previously read the selection, submitted their own "first question," and these were analyzed by the group as a means of launching momentum for a discussion by any Great Books group. Similar sessions have been scheduled for the future.

Winter event. The Boston Council is holding a winter concert event sponsored by, and held at, Temple Israel, Boston, on Sunday, March 19, at 3 PM. The Chorus Pro Musica of Boston, directed by Alfred Nash Patterson, will sing Leonard Bernstein's **Chichester Psalms** (commissioned for the 1965 Festival at Chichester Cathedral, Sussex, England.) This will be sung in Hebrew and accompanied by organ, harp and percussion. The text includes excerpts from Psalms 2, 100, 23, 131, 133. Also on the program will be Ernst Bloch's **Sacred Service** (Advodath Hakodesh). Completed in 1933, this was the first large-scale choral-orchestral composition written for Jewish worship by a major composer. Dr. Herbert Fromm, an eminent sacred music composer and scholar, will join the Great Bookers after the program and lead a discussion about the program.

Long Island News

Fall Pep Rally. Fifteen leaders participated in a discussion that highlighted the Fall Pep Rally. Karl Gisler led the spirited exchange on "Why I Dislike Western Civilization," an essay by Arnold Toynbee. A key quote from Toynbee: "Since I have been grown-up, the West has produced two world wars; it has produced Communism, Fascism, and National Socialism; it has produced Mussolini and Hitler and McCarthy. These Western enormities make me, as a Westerner, feel insecure." Other of Toynbee's dislikes of the contemporary West include callousness toward the aged, advertising, standardization, sexual indulgence, and mechanization. Toynbee's conclusion: "But I have just enough faith in Western man's political common sense to expect that he will not liquidate himself."

What makes a good discussion group? We're listing here 12 requisite skills for an effective participant, and 7 no-no's (adapted from "How To Get Things Changed," by Straus and Stowe.) Many of the first 12 are leadership skills, but they're also displayed when participants themselves take on responsibility for helping their group to explore and understand the book. The no-no's can turn discussion into chaos, shattering the common interests of the group. Here they are:

To facilitate the progress of the discussion:

- 1) Question what a statement means.
- 2) Ask about an overlooked viewpoint.
- 3) Question the course of the discussion.

To make the discussion more penetrating:

- 4) Ask a question that initiates thinking.
- 5) Try to use logic in attempting to follow an author's meaning.
- 6) Separate what the book says from the opinions and assumptions brought forth about what it means.
- 7) Try to integrate different ideas put forth.

To improve both the discussion and group solidarity:

- 8) Listen.
- 9) Draw others into the discussion.
- 10) Build on the contributions of others.
- 11) Support others, and give them recognition.
- 12) Change your position when warranted.

The no-no's that pamper base personal needs:

- 1) State feelings destructively.
- 2) Ask non-pertinent questions.
- 3) Hard-sell your viewpoints.
- 4) Interrupt.
- 5) Talk excessively; reminisce; tell stories or carry side conversation.
- 6) Try to impress or compete with others.
- 7) Repeat yourself.

Mailing list. If those of you in the Long Island area who've been receiving our Great Books mailings, would like to have your name removed from the mailing list, please return your address label from this issue of the Tricorn to: June Ferrara, 14 Bay Second Street, Islip, New York 11751.

Spring Institute. On May 7, a One-Day Institute on "Revelation" will be held at the Bryant Library in Roslyn. The readings will be selections from **The Koran**, and the play (plus preface) **St. Joan**, by G.B. Shaw. The cost of \$9 per person includes the books and lunch. Make checks payable to the Long Island Great Books Council and send to POB 821, Port Washington, N.Y. 11050.

One-man launching of a one-day institute. Jesse Plutzer is one of the Great Books leaders on Long Island. He leads his own group at the Reform Jewish Temple in Neponsit, a largely Jewish community. About mid-summer of last year he decided to set up a special one-day institute based on the theme, "Jewish Identity," a concept he felt would spark sure-fire interest and participation. His goal of an attendance of 100 seemed realistic, especially considering that his own group had a nucleus of some 40 members. The readings were selected: **Bitter-Sweet Encounter**, a sociological study by Weisbrod and Stein, relating to the historical encounters between Jews and Blacks in our country since its inception. And also Philip Roth's short stories in **Goodbye Columbus**.

Jesse proceeded with his idea whose time, he was certain, had come. Confidently, he ordered 100 sets of each book. Now began the campaign to attract 100 participants. The first target was the Temple luncheon of the Ladies Guild, with 90 women in attendance. Flyers about the Institute were placed under the plates of all. But at the end of the luncheon and the departure of the ladies, the flyers were still under the plates or strewn on the floor. Number of sign-ups: zero. Said one of the ladies sympathetically in departing, "Mr. Plutzer, could be, you know, too many intellectuals in the Ladies Guild you don't have."

Jesse persisted. But notices in the local papers went unnoticed. A mailing was made from the Colby and Philadelphia lists. Time was running out, and hardly a dent had been made in that pile of 100 book sets. Then, reservations began to dribble in, one or two at a time. Then gradually by fives and tens. October was immediately in sight, and suddenly the floodgates opened. The 100 mark was passed. And soon it was 140, requiring additional book sets to be ordered. At this point, despite continuing reservations, Jesse had to call a halt, for the Temple's facilities were already overtaxed.

What happened to abruptly convert a seeming debacle into a spectacular success? Jesse and others offered a dozen possible answers. But one thing he was sure of: his one-man, one-day institute was, according to participants' response, a sensational hit — even to the chicken soup (which required shopping for 180 pounds of chicken). Will Jesse do it again? He replies, "We're already under way for a repeat performance in 1978. Even the books are now on order. But this time come early and avoid the rush."

Views From The Wilderness

Are the liberal arts and classical education becoming extinct? Certainly it's becoming one of the endangered species in American (and European) education. And a growing number of educators are viewing it as an ominous trend, a return to primitive utilitarianism. Since 1970, some 80 liberal arts colleges have gone out of business, no longer able to convince students, parents, donors or prospective employers that a classical education is relevant to today's society, technology or the job market. One is no longer educated but "trained" to make it in a professional career or occupation. At Harvard and Radcliffe there were 626 English majors in 1970, but today only half that. Berkeley's humanities enrollments have dwindled in the same way, while economics majors have risen by 70% in the past five years. Students themselves are terrified that they won't find a niche in a highly competitive, technical world. And with good reason. A recent survey by Michigan State University cited that 60% of the employers or job recruiters who came to the campus to conduct interviews, were simply not interested in seeing liberal-arts or social-sciences graduates.

Liberal arts and social science teachers or professors are being released, while teachers of "practical" subjects or courses are being sought. The colleges and their faculties themselves have succumbed to the pressures for "relevant" education in order that their institutions may survive at all. And when the college presidents welcome the new graduates "to the company of educated men and women," it is uttered, tragically, with the knowledge that many of these graduates still cannot write, read, spell, or think, except on barely elemental levels. It is conceivable that we are in a society concerned more with developing trained seals than trained minds. The true educators are worried. Their long-honored profession and the tradition of scholarship appear to be fading out of style. The future appears to belong to a new elite of occupational trainers and trainees.

Your Tricorn Editor breaks his fast of silence. An editor is supposed to remain objective, impartial, and personally non-committal. But there are limits to self-restraint and confinement. So, shedding his editor's robes for a moment and speaking strictly as a fellow Great Booker, here goes.

I believe that our gradual turning from the traditional classics of Great Books and the movement toward "lighter" contemporary readings is a sign of demise of the once high standards of Great Books. I do not believe that the "popularity" of certain readings should be the criterion, or that it is a suitable substitute for excellence. Granted, we cannot blame the Foundation, for it has its own survival at stake, and self-preservation supersedes self-denial. But, in my opinion, the superb tradition of Great Books is being compromised. And while realities require that we compromise much of our lives and behavior, the one thing that humans, no matter their state or condition, refuse to compromise is the **idea** of principle, the **idea** of ideals, the **idea** of aspirations.

Great Books cannot be compromised in its slide away from the classical concept and still remain Great Books. At some point we must recognize that Great Books is not for all, but for those select few who succumb to its magic. The ballet, opera, symphony, etc. — each has its mesmerized devotees, but none has a mass audience, nor ever will. But the "revised" Great Books program is, apparently, seeking a mass audience, or at least a much enlarged one, by forfeiting the concept of the classics in favor of the newer, simplistic, popularized offerings. We are thus sliding from a discussion-of-great-ideas program into a literary society. It is only one small step further to the garden club.

True, Great Bookers can find discussion even in the Yellow Pages. But that's not the point. Talk is cheap. It's what we talk **about** that matters, that sets the value not only on the discussion, but on the minds involved. And what one talks about emerges from the quality of what one reads and is stimulated to think about beyond the superficialities and compromises of everyday life. Great Books isn't entertainment. It isn't a substitute for a movie or a circus. It isn't escape. Great Books is

transcendence; it is the exhilaration of soaring, an exploration of new planets of mind and spirit – the probing of the infinite world of ideas where one can fashion one's own ideal kingdom and rule it, too. Take the classics from us and you deny us this profound adventure. Substitute soporifics and palliatives and you lull us with the placebos of bread and circuses. Reach for the common man and you lose your grip on the uncommon man. I feel that the throb of the heart of Great Books is slowing in pace and the heart itself diminishing in size. And, sadly, I sense a drain of the Great Books spirit within myself.

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