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**INTRODUCTION:  
VIRTUS NOBILITAT**

*Virtue, virtus*, signifies a strength of character, enabling us to face the vicissitudes and harshness of this world's tribulations. It is courage, resilience, insistence to stay on course, and restraint over one's emotions. Such a virtue has little to do, at least overtly, with reason or intelligence. It can reside both in good and bad, wise and silly. It plays itself in a given situation, beyond our will, and demands a particular behavior. Virtue can be abused, it is after all a subjection to a force not subjected to rational consideration, it is a reflex to act as one has to act, and may support an order which is both good and evil. But without virtue no great civilization could ever be created, no existential challenge to a society and personal life could be met with courage. In other words without virtue life would become an endless chain of opportunistic behavior, more and more prone to a fleeting moment of desire, rationally justified. That is why the visible and lamented erosion of virtue in Western civilization, and the corresponding rise of moral autocreation that is a substitution for it, constitutes a colossal change in existential situation, a challenge which the West has to confront in modernity.

Modernity is an enemy of virtue, by the very fact of making an endless autocreation of one's own life not subject to any limitations, let alone limitations which are based on a definite hierarchy of values, the very definition of human existence. This process began in the West with a gradual dissolution of *Christianitas* in Europe and a new redefinition of human nature. Nature began to be treated not as a constant moral entity to be searched for and then approximated by a moral

training, but more as a definite object of experimentation to be shaped according to exigencies of time and place, with the overwhelming aim of attaining not definite moral behavior but, first of all, social peace, material well-being and happiness individually defined. Such was a tone of the first great modern thinkers, despite fundamental differences between them, like Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes or Jean-Jacques Rousseau, or later, for instance, by the great philosophers of disenchantment Karl Marx, Frederick Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, to be followed at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the postmodern wave of philosophers.

America has always been a modern nation, the first modern nation collectively and individually, created at once, not gradually as in Europe, with the latter's elites' slowly spreading their ideas through a post-aristocratic, post-feudal society. At the same time, America has nevertheless been a modern nation with its own distinctive history, cultural code, and a political "proposition", the features which, although belonging to a modern paradigm of thinking, gave Americans a different character and a different view of the modern world. America was forced also to create the first modern intellectual tools to deal with the anomie of modernity. It has attempted successfully to tame it and has suggested some ways of attaining a moral virtuous life, collectively and individually, without this melancholic, debilitating mood of the European civilization, that modernity and virtuous life in a traditional sense of the world were irrevocably acting at cross purposes, or at least were utterly inconsequential. For this reason Alexis de Tocqueville, in his *Democracy in America*, could discern some features of this new arrangement of modernity and virtue and define it as a predicament of the entire modern, democratic world. He did that despite the fact of this arrangement containing within itself the seeds of self-subversion, a process which began in America at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has accelerated since the 1960s. Suddenly the question began to be asked whether America did have a moral character, or it was merely the locus for the play of freedom understood as self-interest.

With that the issue of virtue in a republican society came with a gusto. Was the United States axiologically entirely modern, or not modern, constituting, to put it in symbolic terms, a post-Machiavellian entity or not? Were the philosophical foundations of the United States sufficiently pre-modern to maintain a tradition of justice and freedom, in other words was the United States capable of containing within its distinctive culture and its political system a tradition of virtues which transcended the narrow interests of self-obsession of the commercial culture. In other words still, was the United States capable as a civilization of sustaining questions over Being, and because of that were they still people of a pre-modern, classical and Christian type of virtue, expressed in a civil piety going beyond the immediate urges of egotistical desires?

This type of civil piety, which requires a certain heroic attitude towards reality, asking individuals to be better than they themselves are, the civil piety of that sort which is absolutely immune to any disenchantment, civil piety essentially of

a religious type.<sup>1</sup> The problem thus amounts to a question: does America as a civilization have a moral character? Or is it merely the locus for the play of freedom understood as self-interest? This question may be rephrased in constitutional terms as follows: Does the American constitutional system, the first modern system of constitutional government, contain deeper principles, which amounts to a suggestion that to live under such a constitutional government one automatically encounters deeper principles going beyond the immediate constitutional text, and grapple with a particular moral reasoning which ultimately forces one to confront a need for justification? If so, then laws and concrete policies, institutions such as courts and Congress, elections and eventually the very consent of the governed must be rooted in the fundamental, deep reality of American rights and obligations as moral agents. If not, then such rights and obligations in fact have no rightful claim on the obedience of citizens, who get a license to focus solely on the in autonomous lives moral autcreation as demands thrown against the community.<sup>2</sup>

If the answer is positive, and America has a constitutional moral character, something which Harvey Mansfield named a “constitutional soul”, then the question of the ultimate moral justifications – that is, one may say, virtues going beyond the immediate utilitarian, egotistical demands converted into positivistic claims – has to be recognized as standing at the very center of constitutional government, and American constitutional government in particular. In such a case the rule of law and the grounds of all legitimate government lie beyond the immediate positivist claims; they go to “deep principles” which need to be recovered, constitutionally exposed and culturally sustained, and be considered essential for the well being of the people and the constitutional government created by them. This issue comes to the attention of the American people every time there happens to be a dramatic realization of a betrayal of the United States “proposition”. Such was the case with the Civil War and the eschatological interpretation of America by Abraham Lincoln. Such was the case again with the civil rights revolution and its meaning as given by Martin Luther King. Both men were, not incidentally, morally obsessed and tormented Christian souls and the best sons of America.

This approach does not mean that it is enough to define the positivistic aims of the constitutional system and to elevate them into a higher constitutional principle, as for instance is the case today with a concept of universal humanity, or dignity of man, or rights as inherently justifying that dignity. Such higher moral entities may be just self-creations of humanity itself, kind of a justification of the moral autcreation of a particular time and place in history, rationally post-factum justified, a disturbing reality today of the otherwise laudable European Union. If the aforementioned approach means anything, it should mean that these deeper principles, or moral virtues, are rooted in a universal, ontologically sound and ju-

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<sup>1</sup> D. B. Hart, *Religion in America: Ancient and Moderns*, “The New Criterion”, March 2004.

<sup>2</sup> See on that recently: H. Arkes, *Constitutional Illusions and Anchoring Truths: The Touchstone of the Natural Law*, Cambridge 2010.

stified morality outside of history, time and moral autocreation, which in the American context could lead us to the Christian roots of God's will and the limitations of all earthly powers.

In such a context the United States constitutional system and the society which created it would be beyond understanding, if such roots were removed or put beyond the pale of discussion about its moral nature and its virtues. As an astute observer of America Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the heroic anti-Nazi Lutheran pastor executed in 1945 remarked, the federal constitution was rooted in a sense of original sin and "American democracy was founded not on humanity or the dignity of man, but on the kingdom of God and the limitation of all earthly power".<sup>3</sup> The issue, then, is whether Americans understand their freedom as connected with its moral structure and its subsequent understanding that a human person needs not merely a free society, but a virtuous society as well, to be legitimate and lasting. Only then can people defend themselves from this scourge of modernity, two utopian, ultimately deadly dreams – the dream of justice without freedom and the dream of freedom without truth, the first leading to totalitarianism, the second to nihilism calling for such a government as well. We may somehow enlarge Bonhoeffer's observation, and say that American constitutionalism has been obsessed from the beginning with the very question of freedom, that is the limits of power, which is ultimately the question of virtue, or in other words the question of the existence of God's Almightly wrath.

This issue of virtue in contemporary America has become especially paramount since the 1960s, when the very idea of virtue began to be perceived within American liberal culture increasingly as synonymous with oppression. Hollowed out managerial liberalism gradually became an intellectual and cultural ally of the New Left concept of "liberation" from any authority, that is ultimately from any virtue. This attack on virtue in America came easily, since it was taking place and perversely identified as necessarily to do away with the contemporaneous, dramatic sins which ravaged the United States.

The denial of civil rights to blacks, the ill-devised, if justified, Vietnam war, a support for which was defined as a perverted form of patriotism, a rebellion against capitalism with an endless toil to no end, and assorted issues, real or imagined, connected Americans' imagination with "oppressive" America. The virtues of America and in America lost their positive connotations. The very word "virtue" was tarnished, associated with, at worst, symbolic violence justifying injustice, at best, false consciousness, a failure of the rational power of analysis, splitting American consciousness and igniting culture wars without end. But the solid American cultural foundations of virtuous behavior and thinking had been eroding culturally for a long time before the 1960s, for a variety of reasons. One was the ascent of psychotherapy as a challenge to a predominant Protestant culture. Psychotherapy became almost the second best substitute, a longing for innocence which allegedly once was and was destroyed by a repressive Protestant morality, soon giving way

<sup>3</sup> Quoted after: E. Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, Scarborough 2010.

to the mass culture of psychotherapeutic sport of Americans. Nowhere else was its message visible more strikingly than in popular works of such social scientists, in large part modern charlatans, such as Margaret Mead or Alfred Kinsey, and later Timothy Leary, William Ryan and Carlos Castaneda, peddlers of “liberation” from civility in all forms. Psychotherapy in America, essentially beginning from noble principles, reflected at the same time a radical break with Protestant individualism, termed repressive and intolerant towards other communities. It focused instead on individualism of an autonomous “self”, trying to adjust it to the new conditions of disintegrating traditional communities in a rapidly accelerating industrial civilization.<sup>4</sup>

This focus on the modern “self” was defined sometimes as a prominent virtue of a “liberated” man from the shackles of moribund culture, an idea visible in such diverse personalities as a poet Walt Whitman on the one hand and an educator John Dewey on the other. True, all such attempts were responses to cultural and political contradictions of democracy mixed with advanced capitalism, and a growing helplessness of mass society increasingly looking to a responsive democratic government. Tocqueville in the 1830s observed this democratic-individualistic march as historically inevitable and potentially dangerous as well, but was not willing to let democracy become a cannibal, as Russell Kirk remarked, “he would resist so far as he could, the sacrifice of democracy’s virtues upon the altar of democracy’s lusts”.<sup>5</sup>

The very responsiveness of democratic government to the popular could corrupt the popular will, of course. The more that government tried to satisfy the appetites of particular individuals and groups, the more appetites were inflamed, endangering in this process the very virtues that American democracy presupposed, such as individualism, self restraint, self-reliance and a duty to things higher than a simple desire of consumption of a moment. And that was exactly what was happening in an accelerated form at the end of the nineteenth century with the disintegration of communities, individual helplessness in the face of an industrial monster and the corresponding help of government taking on responsibility in a process of progressive reforms à la Herbert Croly, psychotherapy focusing on the individual, unrestrained “self” cleaned of contaminations of “false” culture”, and the democratic education of John Dewey, all proceeding with the more or less self-conscious approach that there is a human core which is essentially good, and a discovery of that “goodness” would enable then a reconstruction of “good” individual and a “good” society.

There was here a fundamentally optimistic streak à la Rousseau, combined with a clear renouncement of character formation which must be based upon a clear notion of individual virtue developed within an unapologetic context of right and wrong, the context which cannot be derived from an “autonomous” self, unless one presupposes it to be “good” by nature. Such a context of right and wrong, of virtues, must be drawn from traditions outside of the self or from nature conta-

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<sup>4</sup> See: A. R. Heinze, *Jews and the American Soul*, Princeton 2004.

<sup>5</sup> R. Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, Chicago 1986.

ining principles which were put there by a transcendent Being. In America this new anthropology of the combined approaches of social sciences, psychotherapy, new education and the new administrative state began to corrode inculcated virtues, or were a response to the new situation of corrosion. Virtues began to be treated as possible to be explained away by a process of a proper adjustment of psychology, social science, administrative policies, all tending to a liberated “self”, cleaned of “false consciousness”, shaped by tradition and religion, in wit the very basis of culture operating in a civil society guaranteed by the American constitutional structure. This new anthropology made an individual a helpless creature in need of “liberation” and adjustment within the new “scientific”, rational scheme of modern democratic society, a colossal effort at socialization to a society, the image of which, inescapably, had to be imposed by the elites in charge of all such processes. Cultivation of character was reduced to a cultivation of its personal features, which could guarantee only a utilitarian advantage.

Virtue ceased to be treated as its own reward since virtue in a traditional sense was useless; the gnostic impulse of scientific correction of the “fallen” world was to do the trick of human excellence. Excellence meant essentially an adjustment to the world at large in a process of seeking happiness, equated increasingly with consumption and a benign self-satisfaction based on fulfillment of bodily pleasure. The meaning of human existence, the questions of good and bad, of life and death, of love and suffering, sin and redemption, was to come somehow automatically out of such an adjusted personality, which meant they were to be nullified as inconsequential, as wallowing in false consciousness, disturbing debris of repressive civilization. What counted was a proper socialization and “liberation” to a “good” self, the utopia described in Huxley’s “Brave New World”. Rationality of a particular time and place took over virtues as connecting people to mystery and existential *angst* which has refused to die, and which could only be coped with by proper anthropology and the virtues geared to sustain it in this world.<sup>6</sup>

But in America this multilayered process of change began to destroy the very culture in which virtue could effectively be born, that is the civil society of autonomous institutions, close to people and thus the only one capable of teaching

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<sup>6</sup> When Anna Freud, a daughter of Sigmund Freud, visited the United States right after the war, to practice pilot-type psychotherapy, which meant essentially psychotherapy among the aristocracy of the rich, she was asked whether her last psychotherapy session with Lady Astor had been of any good. To which she replied memorably, and surprisingly wisely for a representative of her profession: “She does not need psychotherapy, she needs forgiveness”. Anna Freud, one should assume, still thought of religious, transcendental, forgiveness, towards which psychotherapy was mute and deaf, exhibiting an understanding that psychotherapy without proper metaphysics is a road to nowhere. But this defect was soon rectified with psychotherapy getting into the business of “feeling good” about oneself, and forgiving oneself, a move as narcissistic as naïve, or towards neurological experiments excising such “bad” feelings with proper medications and relaxation exercises. It turned subsequently into a disturbing modern habit of exhibitionistic confessions and demands for an outright expression of guilt, repentance and a corresponding demand of forgiveness from the ones we wronged, an empty ritual beyond conversion of the soul, sentimentality defined as empathy so as to feel good, another way of symbolic violence defined as a way towards humanistic, well adjusted society of “good” people. One can recall the statement of Blaise Pascal that the heart knows better: “The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing”.

them virtues of sacrifice, magnanimity, courage, self-reliance, philanthropy, caritas and ultimately love. They cannot be taught in abstracto in a process of socialization at the general level of the society because what is needed an element of trust, personal contact, intimacy and finally unquestioned authority based on them to follow. The administrative, psychotherapeutic, educational welfare state can do none of this. But such virtues are necessary for a proper enjoyment of freedom as expressed in rights and obligations. They teach what they are and why one should use and obey them as part not of knowledge, but of an inculcated character. Americans were traditionally people of the civil society, people from the roots looking upward, and in that process people of work, self-reliance and service, *homo faber*, men as creatures improved and infused with responsibility towards Being and the other, to wit men of courage, creativity and humility at the same time towards life, essentially religious people at that.

American practical life, which gave way to their only true philosophy of pragmatism (apart from baseball, which is essentially the only non-universal philosophy existing, accessible and understood by no other people), could dispose of the “God question”, because the “God question” was taken for granted as sure as the sun rose and set. A lack of Reformation in American Protestantism was real, but essentially non-consequential from the existential point of view, barely consequential from a theological, intellectual view. But people who live their faith do not theorize about it, since if something is intimately felt and true, it does not need concocted arguments. A subsequent rise of the fundamental Protestant movement in America – powerful, democratic, and adjusted to the modern world – is absolutely congruent with modern civilization, and if it needs any theological justifications it can always count on theological, orthodox Catholicism.<sup>7</sup> Such features built the American civilization and gave its people a dynamic unmatched in the world.<sup>8</sup>

But that civilization of virtue in the civil society began to fall apart the moment all the above forces were pushing it into insignificance both in the modern world and in the American constitutional scheme.<sup>9</sup> Americans realized their lives and virtues in such a civil society, the private sphere of life which, of course, meant that the public sphere was not their mission. But that did not mean that Americans were not people interested in politics; they made their politics through a process of filtering their independent civil society initiatives and autonomous organizational life into politics representing them in a larger sphere. They were suspicious of it and

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<sup>7</sup> This might sound ironic and facetious, but one has to observe that such a move was predicted between the lines by Tocqueville, and the common theological statements between conservative Protestants, including slowly the Evangelicals, and conservative Catholics in America is a phenomenon of great importance, somehow fulfilling Murray’s unexpressed hope that Catholicism might be the best explicator of the truthfulness of the Declaration of Independence and, by other route, the way to Protestant America, including the fundamentalists.

<sup>8</sup> This dynamic of in the entire culture of Americans was captured best by a memorable passage of Edmund Burke’s speech about the colonies in Parliament in 1775.

<sup>9</sup> Barack Obama’s duel with Americans, represented by such populist movements as Tea Party, is just the latest instance of this process of pressuring civil society within the context of federalism into the abyss of the administrative welfare state.

guarded their independent life, for the simple reason that their virtues, although republican, did not fulfill the meaning of good life, or – to put it another way – public life was not all there was to good life, which is essentially a very good, common sense, or Christian at the same time, point of view. But it was true that if we look at American history and its expression in literature and philosophy we find this elevation of civil society, private pursuit into, a mystical level.

Nevertheless, what we experienced in the twentieth century was a slow decomposition of this role of civil society as a paramount province of American life, but with no corresponding inclusion of Americans in the public sphere. This decline of civil society, something which Robert Putnam captured with a nostalgic phrase “bowling alone”, resulted more with a greater intrusion of government into peoples’ individual lives. What we have is a decline of civil society as a repository of virtues and an intrusion of government as a provider of goods and rights and virtues giving way to entitlements. This delicate balance between the civil society and the government, the glory of the American constitutional system, seems to be precarious at the moment, but without that balance to be preserved virtues simply have no place to be cultivated at a larger scale, with government institutions, or institutions sponsored by it, providing sociability, not character.

The 1960s were a turning point here, because they launched a train of thought which in fact delegitimized character and any institution which would try to cultivate it, and gave way to such concept of life which was to be against any authority, in pursuance of an incessant authenticity of the self. Virtue was identified with nothingness and emptiness of the set ways of life, which was to produce only social and personal calamity. “Liberation”, “emancipation” from such virtues was a goal of the rebellious, with moral autocreation treating virtue as solely a matter of personal choice, subject to constant redefinition at will, in opposition to virtue as an aim to be inculcated, the Aristotelian good. In such a situation the American self-definition of people based on a certain “proposition”, the people who were essentially virtuous, a message as expressed by the most culturally founding document, the Declaration of Independence of 1776, a view so much visible in Abraham Lincoln’s message or Martin Luther King’s fight for civil rights, began to be treated as a problem. With that the very essence of virtue as a necessary ingredient of liberty was questioned. An American was to be someone who did not follow a “proposition”, an American was someone who followed his or her inner self-expression.

This has been one of the major fronts of so called the culture war in America and this volume of “*Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe*” is devoted to diverse aspects of virtue as connected with liberty in America. The issue, not incidentally, is published in honor of Harvey C. Mansfield Jr., one of the most prominent and versatile scholars and teachers in liberal arts in America today, for whom this issue of virtue as a necessary ingredient of free life in a republic is to be or not to be of the very existence of the Western civilization itself. It is this very issue which permeates his whole gargantuan opus, whatever the subject matter of his thinking



and writing. Mansfield is been a great scholar and his opus is as enormous as it is diverse. But he has also been an outstanding teacher, remembered by countless generations of his students with gratitude, for the intellectual and moral gravity with which he treated them and the subjects they studied. At this particular time, the late hour of the West, when universities are becoming more and more utilitarian providers of workers for a market, with liberal arts in general treated as an inconsequential addition to a plate of choices for a student as a consumer, and with teachers of humanities becoming just officials of a useless, even if pleasant genre, akin to cooking or another hobby, Mansfield is a treasure.

It is difficult to treat liberal arts seriously in a modern, progressive liberal culture which has officially degraded all quality distinctions as discriminatory, and where hierarchy of values rooted in an objective metaphysical order has turned into moral autcreation, that is subjective choice. Universities have always lived in a tension between preparing for a profession and a mission a role, which the Anglo-Saxons captured by a phrase “liberal-arts education”, or, as Coleridge named this process, “clerisy”. This mission has always been close to Humboldt’s idea of the university as a community [*universitas*], of scholars and students, committed to searching for knowledge about the world and man, knowledge understood as bringing up to wisdom [*paideia*] and truth, without focusing on the immediate utilitarian aims, the very condition of a civilized, self-conscious civilization. This was a dream which Cardinal Henry Newman put forth in his culturally important *The Idea of the University* of 1875, or which inspired Matthew Arnold’s notion of culture, in which such an idea of the university was a necessary ingredient.

The traditional, knowledge-, wisdom-oriented idea of the university has been dramatically weakened by utilitarian expectations, and with that the idea of a teacher has lost its significance. A process of education has taken over knowledge and wisdom. That process was noticed a long time ago and in America it was captured by a short conversation by one of Ernest Hemingway’s heroes in the 1930s, who said: “Education is an opiate of the people” and when asked “You do not believe in education?”, answered “No, I believe in knowledge”.<sup>10</sup> But great teachers transcend this approach, and they are needed more than ever at this particular point of liberal civilization. They are depositaries, “the last saving remnants” of a humanistic culture that once was and in which politics was a province of the moral world, not a province of sheer power and utility. It is this role which Mansfield has performed ceaselessly for over half a century, educating his students in political philosophy which refuses to treat power as unrestrained by any moral, virtuous considerations. Thus, he has tried to cultivate moral sensibilities of his students in this sea of utilitarian, economizing and essentially deterministic higher education.

Great teachers can recover meanings and tap in to the greatest emotions of truth, beauty, reason and law. This is a dream – as it turns out times and times again

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<sup>10</sup> E. Hemingway, *Szuler, zakonnica i radio*, [in:] *49 opowiadań*, transl. M. Michałowska, J. Zakrzewski, B. Zieliński, Warszawa 2003, p. 587.

– which refuses to die. It refuses to die because it corresponds to this indestructible, innermost kernel of human eternal nature, becoming at the same time a proof that it exists. Human nature and its immaterial soul, yearning against all odds for something which it can conceive of, but not attain. But in this process, it can make all of us capable of crossing a threshold of finitude, of sheer animality, of senseless cosmic contingency and ultimately of death itself. Giving us a glimpse, the intimation of something beyond time and history, and ultimately beyond sheer matter itself, an intimation of something, or, better to say, Somebody, who can save us from the insanity of senseless life in a treadmill of futile finite endeavors.

Mansfield is such a teacher, igniting in his students and all readers who ever have come within his orbit this wonder of intimation of things better, more beautiful and more lasting. A liberal would wince and ask: “better than what?”, “more beautiful than what?”, “more lasting than what?” To which the answer is simple and eternally the same: better than oneself, better than our immediate desires pushing us constantly to be lower than what we can possibly morally attain. That can be a lasting legacy for young people, entering a more and more soulless and arid modern life and with it modern utilitarian university as well, and secretly yearning, as Paul Claudel once said, not for hedonistic but for heroic life. Mansfield has performed such an excellent service for countless young people. It has been an achievement that is lasting and Aristotelic in scope. There has been behind this activity a great humility, gratitude and magnanimity towards those who were before us, that is towards Tradition. As he stated unequivocally: “we must study the tradition that has been handed down to us”.

Mansfield does have neither the intellectual arrogance of someone who knows more than his contemporaries, nor the conceit of modern intellectuals who have this childish ignorance of thinking, that with them history and human thought of this particular place and time found their final fulfillment. His approach to the world is full of wisdom, that is that kind of knowledge which teaches us that we are just humble gardeners adding our little bricks to a construction of human thought and knowledge which it is not in our capacity to fully possess, let alone subvert. He works in a classical and Christian tradition of seeking the truth of human existence through particularities of human endeavors. And seeking the truth is always a task which forces people to look not inside themselves, but at others, which is essentially the meaning of a reasoned argument. With that comes another feature of wisdom, silence. Silence in the face of this vast intractability of human existence, its wonderful complexity and metaphysical mystery, harnessing our egos and subjecting them to a ritual of humility and gratitude towards the world and the others who came before.

As for us, his students and friends, there are plenty of reasons why it is a great pleasure and worth reading his works, let alone being around him. But an intellectual feast is not all we owe him. Maybe more important is a gratitude that we have been blessed with encountering someone who elicited from us an urge to seek

and distinguish what is important in life and what is unimportant, what is trivial and passing, and what is eternal, what is heroic and what is merely animal consumption. Someone, who surreptitiously was capable of instilling in us an instinctual hatred of false gods sold by the modern peddlers of intellectual “snake oil”. Someone for whom reason was a way of imposing gravity on things immediate. Last but not least, someone who, being more knowledgeable and wiser than we are, has granted us this privilege of being not just his students but also his friends, intellectually and personally. He has been an outstanding teacher in the greatest tradition of learning. He has been an outstanding teacher because, to paraphrase somehow the Catholic political philosopher James V. Schall, he has been immensely influential, and he has been so influential only because he has led us not to himself, but to the truth, to something not just passing and ephemeral but to this which just eternally *Is*. What a feast of life. We are all from him.