

## Introduction to *Zeal* 2/2

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I am delighted to take the editorial reins of *Zeal: A Journal for the Liberal Arts*, a journal committed to robust discussions of the liberal arts and their role in contemporary higher education. To foster these conversations, *Zeal* is an open access journal; and we are grateful to King's College (PA) for providing the financial and technical resources that allow readers from around the world to access these articles.

*Zeal: A Journal for the Liberal Arts* publishes a variety of interdisciplinary forums; to date, our issues include such forums as Author Meets Critics, Transformative Teaching, Ethics in Focus, and Liberal Arts Starts & Circuitous Routes. This issue includes our second Ethics in Focus forum, curated by Associate Editor Joseph D. Strubeck, on the understanding of “Christian tradition” proffered by David Bentley Hart in *Tradition and Apocalypse: An Essay on the Future of Christian Belief*.<sup>1</sup> The four respondents plumb Hart's essay in myriad ways that underscore Strubeck's observation that the academy—and our classrooms—are “a distinctive place for both serious engagement and serious disagreement, thereby creating new avenues for understanding.” Future issues of *Zeal* will include additional forums, such as Powerful Expressions (investigating how the arts engage social questions, give voice to the unheard, and foster understanding), Overheard in the Academy (discussing controversies over curriculum, conditions of employment, and other topics in the politics and economics of higher education), and Reappraisals (offering reconsiderations of settled scholarship, especially—though not only—when it might benefit from the contributions of currently underrepresented scholars). I welcome proposals for any of these forums from our readers.

This issue also includes three Provocations & Occasions essays, pieces that are in some way misfits with standard disciplinary journals. Two of these essays address the lived experiences of faculty in these precarious and extraordinary times in higher education. In reflecting upon her own working conditions over the past decade, Emily Hamilton-Honey urges us to do better: “to make the academy a kinder and more sustainable place of learning, one where we can all not just survive, but thrive and become our best selves.” Stiliana Milkova Rousseva examines the delicate balance of accommodation and accountability needed to command the presence—both

the physical and the intellectual—of undergraduate students in our brave new COVID-19-impacted classrooms. Finally, Regan Lance Reitsma presents neurologist Oliver Sacks’s well-known 1984 essay “The Lost Mariner” as a philosophical conversion story, one that finally reminds us of the “new avenues of understanding” available when we do the serious intellectual work of metaphysics. I welcome submissions of Provocations & Occasions essays—from academic humor to manifestoes to (inter)disciplinary interventions—at [zeal@kings.edu](mailto:zeal@kings.edu).

Conversations about the liberal arts and its place in our colleges and universities are critical in our contemporary moment. As David C. K. Curry writes in “The Gutting of the Liberal Arts” in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, “The liberal-arts model promotes education, not just for career but also for citizenship and life. Yet...education is no longer geared toward good citizenship but is conceived of as a series of hoops folks must pay to jump through to get ‘certified’ for some particular job or another.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, as Ruth O’Brien astutely observes, “economic growth does not invariably generate better quality of life.”<sup>3</sup> And as Martha Nussbaum argues in *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, without the humanities and the arts fostering creativity, critical thinking, empathy, and self-reflection, our institutions of higher education will produce “[n]ations of technically trained people who do not know how to criticize authority, useful profit-makers with obtuse imaginations.”<sup>4</sup> *Zeal: A Journal for the Liberal Arts* offers a space to enact the values of the liberal arts through rigorous debates about new ideas and reevaluations of the old. So, please, join our conversation.

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<sup>1</sup> David Bentley Hart, *Tradition and Apocalypse: An Essay on the Future of Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> David C. K. Curry, “The Gutting of the Liberal Arts,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 8, 2024, [https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-gutting-of-the-liberal-arts?utm\\_source=Iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=campaign\\_9596705\\_nl\\_Academe-Today\\_date\\_20240417&cid=at](https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-gutting-of-the-liberal-arts?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=campaign_9596705_nl_Academe-Today_date_20240417&cid=at).

<sup>3</sup> Ruth O’Brien, foreword to *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, by Martha Nussbaum (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), xi.

<sup>4</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 142.