The Three Metamorphoses

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In the summer after my first year of graduate school, I read a passage by Nietzsche that sparked my thinking about pedagogy. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche advises his disciples to become camels, then lions, and then children. Upon reflection, I realized that these three passages compose the basis of a good liberal arts education. Here, then, is how I follow Nietzsche's lead when teaching and mentoring students.

Initially, I help students transform into camels who carry the tradition of Western political philosophy. In my introductory course, I assign books by Plato, Machiavelli, Hume, Kant, Mill, Marx, and Nietzsche. In class, I provide biographical and historical context, discuss key themes and ideas, have students read passages aloud, and diagram arguments on the board. I teach students a few basic questions to consider when reading new authors: What problems do they address? What are their views of human nature and political principles? How do they justify their theories? The exams and assignments press students to memorize details and construct clear political theory essays. I expect students to invest time and energy to learn the history of ideas.

Next, I challenge students to become lions who appreciate the clash of ideas. I structure my courses to stage battles between philosophical giants. We dedicate the first weeks of Introduction to Political Theory to the *Republic*. Then, we read *The Prince*, in which Machiavelli targets creators of cloud kingdoms such as Plato. Subsequently, we read *A Treatise on Human Nature*, in which Hume points to the phenomenon of familial love to rebut Machiavelli's cynical view of human nature. I spur students to replicate this critical disposition toward their predecessors. During lectures, I often pause to ask students—including those with their hands down or in the back of the room—to say what they think about a particular argument. I invite them to join the fray. The best classes end with spirited debates that carry on in the hallway, office hours, and email exchanges.

Finally, I encourage students to see the world through a child's eyes. "The child," Nietzsche explains, "is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'Yes'." The highest aim of a philosophical education is to prepare students to think for themselves. We cannot begin there; we need to master certain skills before we can capture our proto-thoughts and visions. Yet good teaching empowers students to propose new ideas or build novel arguments. One way that I facilitate independent thinking is by dedicating the last class on each author to student presentations. Students discuss what the philosopher under consideration would say about a current political controversy. Recent examples from American Political Thought include Tocqueville and political finance reform, Du Bois and Supreme Court cases on affirmative action, Leo Strauss and the 2008 presidential candidates, and William Connolly and Scientology. This exercise helps students learn the philosopher's theories, identify problems with their ideas, and envision alternatives.

My goal as a teacher is to help students exercise the best facets of the camel, lion, and child. My expectations shift as students progress in their education. Introductory courses require students to master the course material; advanced courses enable students to do original research. This past spring, I supervised theses in which students compared Gilles Deleuze and John Stuart Mill, entered the debate about stem cell research, studied the political fallout of the World Cup, considered how to combat microfascism, and investigated the political virtues inculcated by youth soccer. Each of these essays followed lines of flight beginning in courses they had previously taken with me. These students achieved the end of a liberal arts education: to become capable, brave, and innovative thinkers.

A recent Hamilton graduate, Zachary Kelly, describes in his own words my ability to help students transform themselves in college:

Professor Tampio is one of the most, if not the most, informative and enlightening individuals in the government department at Hamilton College. His ability to teach and analyze political theory is astounding. Not only does he strive to build upon already established theory, but he aids his students in formulating their own ideas and philosophies, never letting one opinion or point of view suffice. He is always looking for a new perspective to help build our understanding of a particular subject.