King on King Lear: Finding Virtue in Minute Particulars

A. Jane Birch
birchbox@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Birch, A. Jane, "King on King Lear: Finding Virtue in Minute Particulars" (1993). Faculty Publications. 1329. https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/1329

This Working Paper is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
King on King Lear: Finding Virtue in Minute Particulars

Jane Birch
February 1993
Department of Instructional Science
Brigham Young University
The following paper is the short version of a report I prepared as part of my graduate studies in the Department of Instructional Science at Brigham Young University. During Fall semester, 1992 I conducted research in a class taught by Dr. Arthur Henry King. The course was offered by the Brigham Young University Philosophy Department and was entitled "The Rhetorical Truth of King Lear." The entire three-credit hour course centered around the text of Shakespeare's King Lear. The class met throughout the semester every Monday and Friday, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m..

King is widely recognized on the BYU campus as a scholar of considerable measure and an exceptional teacher. He came to BYU in 1970 and taught courses here for about 15 years. He has since retired from teaching regularly on campus. After a seven-year absence from teaching, King came back to BYU to teach this course. Due to age, health, and other considerations, this is one of the last classes King may be able to teach. As an educational researcher, I considered this an excellent opportunity to investigate some of the dynamics of his classroom in light of his philosophy and approach to education. My hope was to bring out these dynamics in a way that will be of interest to educators.

Introduction

The social sciences should not exist. And I'm grateful that there are people in the social sciences working to destroy them. This statement might easily be dismissed as rash and unjustified were the author of it not a world-class scholar, the quality of whose life-long study serves as an invitation to consider his reasons for making such a declaration. If, in the end, we cannot concur with Dr. Arthur Henry King's verdict on the ultimate value of the social sciences, might not his analysis of its problems give us a new perspective from which we might reevaluate it? Perhaps there is something in his critique that might lead toward better ways of achieving those ends most precious to us.

Born at Gosport, Hampshire, England to pious Quaker parents, King was raised to love good art and literature, especially the scriptures. Upon reaching maturity, he studied first at Cambridge and then at Lund University in Sweden, graduating with his doctorate in 1941 with the highest possible distinction of "Laudatur." He was the first humanities scholar to receive this award since 1887. His scholarly work has brought him a mastery of literature, philology (the detailed study of language), linguistics, and social history. He is best known for his application of these fields to his comprehensive scholarship on Shakespeare.
Distinctly English by both birth and by temperament, King came to America and to Brigham Young University in 1970 at the already mature age of 60. With a lifetime of serious scholarly study and service behind him, he had yet to embark upon the most important and satisfying work he would do. A late convert to the Church (1966), King found in Mormonism those doctrines, rituals, and (preeminently) the Spirit, which were to give the greatest meaning to his life's work and love. It was, in fact, his scholarly training that led him to first accept Joseph Smith and then the Church, "Upon encountering the extracts of Joseph Smith's personal history and the Doctrine and Covenants," Terry Warner, a colleague of King's, noted, "he perceived straightaway the integrity of the prophet in his words. No hallucinator or charlatan or humbug could produce that kind of writing."iii Said King of the experience of reading Joseph Smith's writings,

When I read his story, I thought to myself, this is an extraordinary thing. This is an astonishingly matter-of-fact and cool account. This man is not trying to persuade me of anything. He doesn't feel the need to. He is stating what happened to him, and he is stating it, not enthusiastically, but in quite a matter-of-fact way. He is not trying to make me cry or feel ecstatic. That struck me, and that began to build my testimony, for I could see that this man was telling the truth.iv

King came to Brigham Young University first as a visiting scholar and later as a full-time faculty member. Although not well-known by Mormon scholars before his arrival, his talents did not remain unnoticed long at BYU. Terry Warner, commenting on the assertion of Rosemond Tuve, a well-known Renaissance scholar, that "we shall go no further in the assessment of literature until we have more fundamental and thorough-going work like Arthur King's" wrote that his work in his specialized discipline is "so comprehensive and life-consuming a discipline that no one has yet matched his achievement."v Another colleague, Thomas Hinckley, noted that "Were we to manage to publish Arthur's work it would be the first work to come out of BYU that would be found in every major library in the world."vi

His students praise him for his assiduous scholarship and his devotion to teaching. He feels most alive in the classroom among students, where his demands are rigorous and potentially life-changing. Says one of his former students, "Now if you are willing to spend two hard semesters with Brother King, you can learn [the tools of learning]."vii These "tools of learning" are grammar, logic, and rhetoric, the tools Dorothy L. Sayers claims are needed to become an educated man or woman. But more importantly to King, without these tools "we have lost the power not simply to read the great classics, but also to read the scriptures,"viii and without this power, we are worse than uneducated.

His long-time students are not the only ones to praise this man. One young student wrote the following statement in a class-assigned response paper after King visited and spoke to his Philosophy 110 class on a single occasion:

I signed up for philosophy 110 thinking it was a great substitute for freshmen English. I imagined never having to learn about grammar...Well
just after the drop deadline [the teacher] introduces the grammar chapter to us. My heart stopped beating...I thought to myself, woe is me, who thought I could avoid English grammar...When I went to class last Wednesday, I sat and listened to a delightful older man named Arthur give a lecture...just listening to the sounds [of] Arthur's beautiful accented voice reading from Shakespeare's play was unbelievable. But Arthur's reading was not all that struck me, but the little sayings he tossed about...Maybe it wasn't so bad that I was tricked into taking philosophy classes, this lecture made it all worth it. And all that tuition money I paid, and all the rinky-dink homework I've done this year—all worth it, even the grammar, just to hear Arthur, a humble, amazingly talented and witty man with an accented voice, tell me how to live a life given to me by God.\textsuperscript{ix}

A Prophet of God, Ezra Taft Benson, remarked simply, "I thank the Lord that he is one of us."\textsuperscript{x}

King's life-long study and love of linguistics and the humanities would seem to at least partially explain his disdain for the social sciences, until one realizes that he is just as critical of his own discipline, and for much the same reasons. In an essay entitled "Mechanization," after chastising the social sciences for their simplistic, dehumanizing portrayals of man and their "denial of individual responsibility," King writes:

\begin{quote}
I come now to linguistics and the humanities. Modern linguistics has fallen into the same errors as the social sciences. In the nineteenth century, people thought we could have a scientific study of language rather like the study of the universe...They were, of course, mistaken...because language is a human thing and cannot be tilted in that way any more than psychology, sociology, or economics can. They cannot be scientific.\textsuperscript{xi}
\end{quote}

One of the issues here is the tension between the study of concrete details and particularities and the creation of theories that reify generalizations and abstractions. Of linguists, King writes, they "impose their own grids, their own generalities. They are anxious to prove theories. The virtue of a good philologist is that he is never anxious to prove a theory."\textsuperscript{xii} His reasoning is that

\begin{quote}
When we introduce schemata, when we introduce generalizations and abstractions, when we introduce hierarchies, archetypes, and so on, we are replacing what we are studying with something else...There is a deep wish to simplify, and that deep wish to simplify manifests itself as a deep wish to reduce to law. There seems to be a pleasure in precision, a pleasure in reducing to law, which is extensive among natural scientists and usually creeps most effectively into those pseudo-sciences which are trying to follow the path of the natural sciences. But to endeavor to reduce the universe to human law and not recognize that we are just dealing with observations is a process of great arrogance. The tendency to generalize is, ultimately, an assertion of the personality of the generalizer and may be accompanied by some form of sado-masochism...what is ignored when
\end{quote}
this takes place is some profound effect on the total man and on his emotions and on his way of feeling about things. We need to remember that there is always something which we have not caught in our rational explanations, which the gospel has and which the Lord has and which the example of the Lord has, so that we are able to live with one another in that total way. We don't live with one another ultimately by reason. We live ultimately by faith.  

Despite this sound denunciation of the generalizing tendency, King finds in this process some legitimate and worthwhile purposes, within limits, of course:

It seems to me that to try to reduce something to order, even though it is human order, is not a wrong process, provided that we recognize that what we are doing is playing games. And I suggest to you that outside the gospel, human endeavor does consist in playing games of that kind. We should reduce things to law if we can (and the expression "reduce to law" is significant: we don't raise or edify things into law, we reduce them to law), but remember that the cases in which we can do so are limited. We should order what we can, but we should not presume to order something else that we cannot by making it analogous to what we can.

In contrast to the scientific method which strives to reduce complex phenomena to generalizations and abstract laws, King advises his students to look to the details of a text, to study these details with meticulous scholarly discipline, so that out of these details the rich totality of the work can be brought to light. King suggests that, ultimately, the two are intimately connected, "The totality is in all the particulars and every particular reflects the totality."

The Rhetorical Truth of King Lear

_Virtue resides in minute particulars_

It is rare to find an undergraduate English course on the Brigham Young University campus which focuses on one author, much less a single work of a single author. But King is a rare teacher, and it would come as no surprise to those who know him to learn that he selected the text of Shakespeare's _King Lear_ for the entire focus of his Fall 1992 course, which he entitled, "The Rhetorical Truth of King Lear." One day, about halfway through the semester, King confessed,

When I first came to BYU, I was told I would teach six plays in one semester. I told them that I was used to teaching one, at the most, in a semester. They told me that this is the only exposure some students ever
get to Shakespeare. I told them, "Then why not teach in such a way that the students will want to continue reading Shakespeare for the rest of their lives? (FN 10/9/92)"

After observing King's method of studying a text in a classroom setting, it is hard to imagine how much more than one text could be introduced in this time frame. The disposition to compact the content, speed the pace up, and cram a lifetime's study into a single course is absent from his class. Unlike most college-level courses, speed reading is not a requirement, nor even a useful skill. Rather the opposite, as King avows, "My...job on campus is to try and persuade people to read slowly—slowly enough to have some understanding of what they are reading." Because the average English course attempts to cover so much in so short a time, the emphasis must invariably be in the broad strokes, the larger themes and generalizations one can make about an author, genre, period, or theme in literature. But King finds the delight in scholarship to be in the careful attention to the concrete details and particulars of a text. The modern inclination to privilege generalizations is a mystery to him:

Nearly every reader nowadays goes for the premature whole and passes on because studying the parts is boring. I don't know why. Perhaps they haven't learned to study the parts. It is the most fascinating of studies."

And this attention to detail, is not, in King's analysis, a task only for the scholar. He states emphatically, "The reading of the most important texts in the world by the ordinary educated man, not simply by the specialist, requires attention."

The tension between concrete particulars and generalizations of all kinds is lively in many areas of thought. Consider this example taken from Wendell Berry's The Gift of Good Land,

Wally is trying to redeem the damage done to the land by miners with the use of a bulldozer. Think of the bulldozer as a generalizer:

The worst part of it, Wally says, was that from the driver's seat it is virtually impossible to see what you're doing: "I remember the first time I pushed dirt...I'd push ten feet or so, then hop down and look around front to see what I'd done." He still seems a little awed to think that so large a machine has to be run so much by guess—but that, he says, is the way you run it. "I'll always remember that old bulldozer roaring away and me sitting there trying to do something with it, and learning to guess."

It is hard to imagine how you would undo the damage of big machines except by a big machine, and so Wally has necessarily reconciled himself to the bulldozer. But he remains in a kind of conflict with it too. It is a powerful generalizer, and tends, just by its size and power, to work against his own governing impulse to take care of things, pay attention to details. It is too easy to be lazy when you are on the dozer: "It'll move anything. It's hard to save a log or a tree. I have to keep telling myself: 'Get off of this thing.'"
This example serves as an analogy for the attitude King takes toward the work of "generalizers" in academic disciplines. Like Wally, he recognizes the destructive power of working in generalizations, at the same time that he acknowledges the value: "I believe in details, not in totalities and in subtotalities. I am dubious about putting all of the details together, although I like it when others do, so I can read what they have to say" (FN 8/31/92). But if it is done right, King suggests that the study of details will illuminate the larger picture:

Philology is a way of saying, "I will deal with the words. I will take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves." In dramatic terms it is, to the dramatic director, "If you produce a play of Shakespeare with the proper attention to all the details in the play, Shakespeare will look after himself and his totality will appear on the stage. But if, like the arrogant fools of today, you try to impose a slant on Shakespeare or say, "I will use Shakespeare as an exposition of my own personality," which even some of the best of our producers seem to do, then of course you won't get Shakespeare. xxii

Getting at the particulars, then, is the only way to actually get to Shakespeare:

For me the detail replaces the general, that is to say, you can imply the general from the detail. I don't believe in talking about a theme in a play, or themes in a play. I believe in concentrating on the detail of the language and then the theme, since Shakespeare has written it, gives itself (FN 1/15/93).

But this must be done in some way other than trying to impose a type of grid, or system, over the layers of details:

Remembering that we are dealing with the particulars of a work of art, which means that there is something organic about those particulars, we must consider how to tackle those particulars. This is a problem of the kind of analysis. The linguists impose their own grids, their own generalities. They are anxious to prove theories. The virtue of a good philologist is that he is never anxious to prove a theory. xxiii

The details form the roots for further analysis, but we must not let that further analysis lead us away from those roots. For it is the roots that provide the nourishment essential to any strength that the generalizations may contain. Speaking of the connection between these particulars and the generalizations one can derive from them, and considering the work of the historian, King suggests,

Let us further contrast generalization and wisdom. Generalizations are generally valid for general purposes; they are not valid for specific purposes. We may induce a generalization from a number of specifics, but when we have done so we find that it does not completely apply to any of them. Perhaps in natural science it could (or could it?), but historically it will not. Any generalization to be valid has to be, not a generalization
inductively arrived at over many instances, but one arising totally from a total specific situation.

This is where the word "wisdom" comes in: We read history in order to gain the great historian's wisdom. In him we encounter a unique historical situation alive in a living, interfusing and blending individual, the historian. And we discover in the nature of that unique totality something of the nature of all other unique totalities—something which cannot be expressed in any list of generalizations, however lengthy...social scientists should not ignore the fact that literature has given them far more subtle exemplars of human behavior than they themselves describe.xxxiv

King seems to make a distinction between generalizations about a work and the totality of a work. The totality seems to be that which the generalizations attempt to capture. These generalizations may be valuable, but as attempts to capture the totality, they always fail. Nevertheless, the totality is there. It is there in terms of all of the particulars. But it is not that each minute part added together creates this totality, for, each particular contains the totality. But each particular is what it is in terms of the whole. It must, therefore, be studied in terms of the whole:

Just as in modern anthropology they say, "The details must be understood in terms of the whole culture," so the philologist has to say, "in this work or that work, the words have to be understood first in terms of the whole work." That is the most fundamental thing I have to say about the relationship of the particular to the totality.xxxv

"Most general discussions," King observed, "are useless" (FN 1/15/93). But one can also err in the other direction. There is no need to try to wrench every last bit of meaning out of every last bit of detail in the text. In response to one student who wondered if the word "nothing" being discussed in connection with a particular passage was an echo of the same word used earlier, King replied,

That's the thing I leave to judge because modern criticism seizes on every single passage and wants to make something of it. But when you realize, as I have done over the years with the computer, how much there is, you must be able to distinguish between what is a genuine echo and what is not. If you use every "nothing" in the play as having something to do with the "nothing" that goes on between Cordelia and Lear, you are pitching it wrong. You have got to exercise discrimination. I wouldn't have thought there was anything particular about this "nothing" (FN 9/14/92).

By exercising discrimination at the level of details, one is more likely to be able to discern something of real value, as well as escape the hollowness of generalizations with their attendant effect on our thinking: "The more generally we think, the less near we are to getting any thought at all. That's the fundamental of my teaching, really: concentrate on the details and the rest will follow" (FN 1/15/93).
**Taking Care of the Pence**

How does this come to pass in his classroom? Obviously the selection of a single text helps to provide the resource of time needed, but this, in itself is not a guarantee that attention to the details of the text will constitute the primary focus of the class. For there are many ways to study a text that may not concentrate the same degree of attention on the concrete details presented in the text itself, i.e. analyzing themes, periods, characters, and archetypes; examining scholarly criticisms; dealing with gender and racial issues; or relating the themes to current personal, social or historical problems.

All of these may be important topics of discussion, but in King's class, they are always contingent upon the even more important analysis of the text itself. For more general interpretations cannot emerge *ex nihilo*; they come out of the details of the text or they do not come out from the text at all. King notes, "The microcosms reflect the macrocosm, and the macrocosm encloses, in itself, the qualities of all the microcosms.”

In order to facilitate this detailed study of the text, careful thought and preparation went into the development of the structure of the entire semester, as well as each class period. The class meet twice weekly throughout Fall semester, yielding a total of twenty-seven class periods. All but the last class period was devoted to the study of a specific segment of the text. Before the semester began, King divided the text into twenty-six segments of roughly equivalent lengths to be studied during these twenty-six class periods. The Riverside edition of the *King Lear* text was used to determine these segments. Because this edition of the play contains 3235 lines of text in total, the average length of each segment turned out to be approximately 125 lines, the shortest segment containing 60 lines and the longest segment, 183. Each segment of the text was studied in order, as they appear in the text, i.e., the first day of class began with Act I, Scene I of *King Lear*.

Many college courses may try to cover an entire play in just one week, or worse, in a single day. But covering 125 lines of text during an hour and a half class session, did not, in King's opinion, leave sufficient time to adequately cover even the most important elements he wished to bring forth in that segment of the text. So, in order to further facilitate a more detailed level of study, King selected an even smaller segment of each of the twenty-six segments for special attention. He called each "sub-segment" the *nucleus* of the section. The number of lines selected for each nucleus ranged from 11 to 41 lines in length, but the average number of lines came out to be about 26. In total, the nuclei covered 662 lines of the total of 3235 lines of the text, or approximately 20% of the text. The nucleus of each segment of the text was not isolated for special attention and discussion on the same day that the larger segment of the text was discussed. Rather, it became the first topic of discussion for the class period immediately following the day in which the larger segment associated with it was discussed.

The class meet in a seminar room conducive to quality thinking: the Humanities Conference Room on the ground floor of the main part of the Jesse Knight Building. It is
a beautiful room, and comfortable—the floor is carpeted and the walls are lined with wood paneling and quality art work. The table is long and oval and made from beautiful wood, nicely finished. The chairs are covered with quality dark-printed fabric. The windows which cover the east wall of the room look out onto the BYU campus and the nearby mountains; their sills are lined with plants. There is an unusual chair carved out of light-colored wood in the room that looks like it is patterned after an old, foreign throne. I often thought of King Lear when I looked at it.

On the average sixteen people were present each class period, but of these, only three were officially enrolled. The others came to participate without class credit. Those who attended the class fairly regularly included four undergraduate students, six graduate students, five BYU faculty members and three individuals from the community. In addition, there were over a dozen other people who came to sit in on at least one class session during the semester. The individuals who participated in the class came from a variety of backgrounds. Almost half of the participants had extensive experience in studying Shakespeare before this class. Some of these individuals had even taught Shakespeare in classes of their own. Other participants had very little experience with Shakespeare. The participants came from a variety of departments on campus—less than half were associated with the English department. In this report, all of the participants are referred to as "students."

Bowed with age, King walks slowly and carefully, cane in hand. A recent fall prevented him from being able to drive himself to the BYU campus, so students in the class took turns driving King to and from his home in Orem. He invariably arrived 15-30 minutes before class began, ready to begin any topic of interest with anyone else who arrived early. As is his custom, he usually came to class dressed much more formally than the students. Not just his clothing, but also his manner, gave him a very dignified appearance. On a typical day of class, he might wear a quite formal suit, with a white shirt, a patterned, conservative tie, and a fine tie clip. His glasses are connected to a little gold chain that goes around the neck. With his new black shoes, he often made quite a cutting figure for his age. He invariably sat at the north end of the table, often with his elbows resting on the arms of the chair and with finger tips pressed together in front of his face. His face, with its gray, bushy eyebrows and full mustache, was usually expressive, revealing, as the case might be, deep thought, marked delight, puzzlement or confusion, enthusiasm and excitement, or great pleasure at a good joke (especially his own.) His keen wit and sense of humor saved the class from ever becoming dull.

Class time concentrated around the study of the nucleus specified for that day followed by the next scheduled segment of the text. But in addition, there were several other elements that regularly formed a part of each class period: 1) prayer; 2) a vocal reading of the nuclei performed by students; 3) class business; and 4) a viewing of two different film productions of the main segment of text to be studied that day.

With some minor variations, the class proceeded in the following order. (The times noted are merely approximate and usually varied quite a bit—unlike the actual content and order.)
• 3:30 sharp. Class began. A student was invited to offer the opening prayer.

• Previously selected student(s) performed the vocal reading of the nucleus to be discussed during this class period (approximately five minutes).

• This nucleus then became the topic for lecture and discussion (approximately 30 minutes).

• Class business, when appropriate (approximately five minutes).

• Two different (video-taped) films versions of the next segment of the text were shown (approximately 20 minutes).

• This segment then became the topic for lecture and discussion (approximate 30 minutes)

• Class officially ended at 5:00.

In addition to the information conveyed to students in the classroom discussion, King prepared written notes between each class period for each section of the text. These "section notes" were given to the students after the students had read the section on their own and discussed it in class. The section notes varied in length between 1 to 34 pages, becoming increasingly lengthy as the semester progressed. The average length of the section notes was 14 pages long. The class notes were meant to supplement the class discussion, giving further notes on the text that King felt he did not have time to discuss in the classroom itself.

All of the students were expected to obtain a complete, annotated copy of Shakespeare's work with line editions, preferably the Riverside edition. Students also had copies of a glossary of the literary terms King uses frequently in his study of texts, and two chapters from Camille Williams's *Reading and the Language of Shakespeare*.

Further resources were made available to the students through the Harold B. Lee Reserved Library. These resources included (unpublished) students aids written by King, along with resources commonly used by students and scholars of Shakespeare. In addition, students were encouraged to make use of Spevack's *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* and *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

Each of these resources (the classroom discussion, the section notes, and the library copies) have a common element: the focus on concrete details. But, as one student in the class noted, "It's not just the details—it's the layers of details" (FN 9/4/92). These resources provided a wealth of information to allow students to get at the layers of details in a variety of ways. But more than providing them with an encyclopedic list of facts, they provided students with multiple concrete examples of how to study the text at the level of detail King considered necessary for understanding the text. It also enabled them to study the text on their own at a similar level of intensity.
**King in the Classroom: Not a One-Man Show**

This study of details is, of course, hard work. The tendency to brush over the details with broad generalizations, whether they completely fit or not, is a temptation easily resorted to, especially when one is face-to-face with the exhausting nature of tedious, detailed work. It is a temptation that I, for one, have much experience with. King understands that this is hard work, and yet he insists, "I do not see how ...you can divorce true education from a certain amount of grind and insistence on detail and accuracy."xxvii

King has paid that price. His words began when he was young, reading voraciously from the time he learned to read. Later, his studies in primary schools prepared him for more strenuous study at Cambridge, and then further graduate studies in philology at Lund University in Sweden. This education uniquely prepared him to study texts in such a rigorous fashion. Of this training, King comments:

I learnt the hard way in Sweden...what philology could be. Eight years hard grind in Old English, in primitive Germanic, in Indo-European, in Old Norse, in Medieval Latin, all these as necessary tools for the philologist to approach English, and rightly so...xxviii

This training combined with King's love of Shakespeare led to his unique scholarly work which concentrates intense attention on the details of the works of Shakespeare. Finding a format in which to publish this type of work has been difficult. In fact, to handle the output of his studies of Shakespeare, he has increasingly turned to the use of computer technology. Thomas Hinckley notes,

We have been forced to invent not a mere electronic page-turner, but an electronic polymer capable of building non-linear chains of linked ideas and making those idea-chains into fibers/yarns/threads/whole-cloth capable of capturing the nuances and complexity of the fabric of Shakespeare's work. For the programme to be successful it must allow the scholar to follow any single chain of ideas from a specific to possible generalizations or picking up a generalization show its specification. Metatext forces the computer to work like a scholar.xxix

So, when King enters the classroom, he comes fully prepared. He brings to the students in the classroom a wealth of both details and general understanding. In fact, when King enters the classroom, it would appear that the stage is fully set for action, and one might expect the performance to become a one-man show. It is easy to envision the stereotypical college classroom: the ancient professor situated in front, just behind a massive podium, but dimly aware of the students attentively poised in the gallery below, pens in hand, prepared to capture on paper the cascade of information pouring forth from the mind of the scholar. It is an old educational philosophy—the professor is the one with the bucket full of knowledge, facts, and information—the students are the empty vessels, devoid of form, waiting to be filled and formed by the professor. Yet while it is a stereotypical picture, it is also an educational philosophy still very much in circulation,
and if not politically correct as theory, then unfortunately, still popularly established through practice.

Such could have been this class, if the "ancient professor" were someone other than Arthur King. Just when one might expect that the stage is set for an exceptional performance of a one-man show, King, the might-be solo actor, insists on bringing the other players on stage with him and further expects them to play their part as seriously as he does his. And who are these other players? The students, of course.

Despite the difference in training and experience that existed between King and the students, King fully expected and looked forward to the full and active participation of all of the students in the creation of this class. No typical lecture hall, with stiff chairs pointing fixedly forward toward a lone podium, was considered adequate. King insisted on a seminar room with a large table. There may not be room for every person to have a seat at the table, but at least everyone would have a better chance of being able to see and discuss the text eye-to-eye. And for those who could not find a seat around the table, there would be places along the wall. Sensitive to potential anxieties of younger members of the class, King suggested (with a chuckle at the end),

We should have the undergraduates seated at the table. They will be taking the class for credit and shall need more room to write. The others will be seated around the wall. That way, the juniors will be more likely to speak out than if it were the other way around—thinking back to my undergraduate years—what awe I had of some people. Though I can't imagine it of myself now (FN 8/25/92).

But more important than the physical arrangement of the classroom, was the spirit King brought to it. From the very start of class, it was evident he expected a conversation. He was not there to "lecture" us, even if we wanted it. "Class time" for him meant "discussion time" not "lecture time." If the conversation lulled, he might step in with a unusually long soliloquy, but just as frequently, he would prod the class on for their comments: "Comments of any kind? This is to be a free for all" (FN 8/31/92). If he made a point, he wanted the students to not simply absorb it, but react to it: "Well, I'm expecting a certain amount to be said about that, instead of a dead silence" (FN 11/30/92). A visitor who sat in on the class during one class period noted:

One of the things that really struck me was the way he expected people to contribute. For example, when he opened the class. There was silence, and he sat there expecting others to speak. He encouraged them by saying something like, "Come along." Then [someone] made a comment and then everyone else started joining in with things to say. I could tell that the students' questions were real questions—not that they were all really deep questions or great insights, they seemed to be normal questions asked by normal people—like, "What does this word mean?:" I could tell that the students felt comfortable asking questions. King would encourage people to speak by saying things like, "Well, what have you got to say on this?" (FN 9/21/92)
King's intent was not so much to get students to speak for the sake of speaking, rather, his concern was for them to first have a reaction to what was going on so that they felt they had something to say. To this end, he used a variety of methods to enable students to have and become aware of thoughts and feelings they could share. One of the major vehicles he used was the films. One of the major functions of the films was to help students to have a personal reaction that they might be able and willing to share with others. Another method King employed was the bringing up of interesting or controversial points to spark students' interest. In addition, class structure was not so fixed that he was not eager to change it if it would help the conversation stay alive. After providing opportunities for thought, if he found he was still doing too much of the talking, he might resort to gently prodding the students: "It would be lovely to hear someone else's engine purring up with something to say" (FN 11/6/92).

What was just as evident as the fact that King expected a conversation was that he was not encouraging it for the student's sake alone: it was plain that King enjoyed conversing with the students. If the students were grateful to have a teacher, he seemed just as grateful to have students. It was for him (in his own words) "a great pleasure" and "happiness to be able to share the discussion...because I don't like putting my nose to the text and going on all by myself all the time. I've learned to talk to myself to some extent but it's a little monotonous."

Upon learning that class time was to be only an hour and a half each class period, King looked visibly disappointed: "I do wish that the [class] was longer. In Europe people thought nothing of meeting for five to six hours, then having lunch and then having a post-seminar and go until midnight—in Europe we don't do a thing with a extraneous purpose, we do things for their own sake" (FN 8/25/92). Consequently, King announced the first day of class: "I can't use my method on the complete text and hope to get through in an hour and a half. Speaking of method. I will use the German method. We will start on time, but I am prepared to stay after class as long as there are those who would like to talk" (FN 8/31/92).

True to his word, class officially ended at 5:00, but the conversation usually continued for at least an hour more, and one had the feeling that it might well extend until midnight if King had his way. Students were welcome to go at 5:00 (or as soon as King realized it was past 5:00), but it was obvious that they were even *more* welcome to stay and continue the discussion:

We must end now because some people want to get out—though I warned somebody yesterday that I wasn't able to contain myself enough and we'd probably run...over time regularly...so anyone who feels they need, can feel that the class is officially ended now if they need to go...those of you who want to stay and go on talking can do so and those of you who want to go, or need to go, which is perhaps the politer thing to say, go (FN 9/14/92).

And, if students desired, the discussion need not end at the classroom. King made his home available to any student who wanted to work with him further. Students arranged time to meet with him when they felt the need, but he occasionally encouraged specific
students to take up this offer. After two students had been assigned the reading for the next class period, King told them: "You're welcome to ring me up and come and see me if you like and I'll go through it with you" (FN 9/14/92). Students who took up this offer might end up spending two to three hours working with him in his home (FN 1/18/93).

Not only did King expect and enjoy discussions with the students, it was also evident that he fully expected and looked forward to learning from them, just as they expected and (hopefully) looked forward to learning from him. Though a life-time student of Shakespeare (and particularly of King Lear), it was evident that King did not believe that he had learned all there was to learn about the play. In fact, appearances revealed that he was even more anxious to learn more about the play than the students were. And he expected to learn more, not just from his own continued insights, but from the students themselves.

During the entire semester, it impressed me to see that King always came to class eager to learn. He seemed to listen to the students with an open, expectant attitude. He often received student comments as though they are fresh to him, yet I had to assume he had heard the same type of comments many times before in the many other Shakespeare classes he had taught.

At times, student comments coincided with things he was thinking over himself. In response to one student, he noted: "That is one of the most important things. I was brooding about that myself this morning" (FN 9/18/92). And to another: "I've wondered about that. Because both of us thought of it, it is possible" (FN 9/18/92). And to another: "I've wondered about that several times. You can't be sure" (FN 9/21/92).

King did not need to feel the security of appearing to his students as the one who had seen, and heard, and read everything—the one unlikely to be surprised. In fact, not infrequently, he would express delight when things turned out differently than he expected: "I hadn't expected that, one can always be pleasantly surprised" (FN 10/19/92). And he was much more likely than anyone else in the room to note when he learned something new: "We've had several points here that I've never heard in the criticism" (FN 12/4/92). King often responded to the students' vocal reading with an observation that some point of the interpretation was new to him. He might note, for example, that he had never heard it done that way before, but that "it is right" (FN 9/4/92). Or, as on another occasion, he observed: "There were five cases where I hadn't noticed that a certain stress improves the dialog" (FN 9/18/92). But, just as often, he expressed greater understanding as a result of a discussion among all of the students. For example, after one intense discussion, he prefaced his opinion by stating, "I think that I have found the answer from listening to what all of you have said" (FN 10/30/92).

Too often, students sense that a teacher's participation in a discussion is not thoroughly genuine, that the questions he or she asks are merely to prod the students into giving the answers that the teacher knows full well. It comes as a shock to some students to hear the teacher express genuine puzzlement over an important problem. In King's class, however, students are hard pressed to compete with the eagerness with which King himself pursues greater understanding of the subject at hand. Not infrequently, his
questions contained that tone of earnestness that expressed genuine desire for enlightenment—as in one class discussion where his puzzlement over a problem drove the conversation along in response to his almost pleading requests for answers: "What does this mean? I can't understand it...Who 'hath borne most'?...I can't make it out" (FN 12/4/92).

I never heard King ask a question in class that didn't seem genuine. He didn't ask questions in such a way that made me feel he was merely testing the students: he took the questions seriously because they were important to him. He gave me the impression that none of the issues being discussed have been fully settled by anyone and that he is just as (or more) interested in coming to a greater understanding than we are. When he asks, "How old is the Fool?" he really wants to discuss the matter. He doesn't seem to be hiding the "correct answer," withholding it until the end of the conversation when he can pull it out to clinch the discussion.

And, perhaps because he fully expects the students to be able to contribute, the classroom discussion are most often lively and intense. A visitor to the class shared these impressions with me,

I noticed that everyone, or almost everyone in the class made at least one comment...at first I was too afraid to say anything, because I was so awed by King and everything. I was afraid he might say something like, "I don't like the words you are saying. They are not worthy of the course." But later I warmed up and wanted to say something" (FN 9/21/92).

The class conversations manifest a sense of "realness" about them, a genuineness that comes from the mutual interest and desires of the group as a whole. One felt the questions asked were intriguing, that the problems posed were important, and worth dwelling on. Students didn't seem to make comments for the mere sake of making comments. Discussions actually contained content—they were real interchanges. Students seemed to listen to each other and respond to what the others said. And unlike many classroom conversations where the movement of the discussion runs disjointedly from one topic to another as though no one were listening to what the last person said and felt no need to connect their statement with the statements made by others, there seemed to be a unaffected flow and natural rhythm to the conversation.

Despite these positive characteristics of the class discussion, it was certainly true in this class, as in most classes, that certain individuals dominated the conversation. Those that felt most comfortable, or had the most to say, or enjoy talking the most, joined in the conversation much more readily than the rest. The participation of the individual members was very unevenly distributed. Some class members, particularly some younger members of the group and those with less experience, were much more hesitant to speak out. Not everyone in the group felt that their own contributions were equally valuable or desirable. Though the tone of the conversation was always courteous, fully void of any type of biting criticism directed toward particular members of the group, yet little was done to insure that everyone felt the same degree of security and acceptance. All students were shown respect, but not everyone's contribution was eagerly sought after. While
King frequently expressed encouragement to the group as a whole to make their contributions heard, he rarely seemed to make a special effort to encourage the quieter members of the group to more fully participate in the discussion. Yet, one could sense his hopes that everyone would readily share the insights they were experiencing.

Although the class met late in the afternoon at a time when students are often exhausted by an already full day, it was rare to see the bored or tired faces so common in many classrooms. The students generally always appeared alert and attentive—expressing the enjoyment they felt in this experience. They spent the class period alternatively staring intently into their text or absorbed in the conversation. Though conflicting opinions surfaced frequently, no one's contribution was totally ignored or taken up as completely wrong. In general, students expressed a great desire to share their feelings. As one student noted: "I have found in this class that you need to share in order to get the most out of an experience. It is not enough to experience something by yourself, you learn when you share with others" (FN 12/7/92).

Refining Sensitivity: Students as Real People

*Art is there so that we may live better, not simply that we may look at it and have a private aesthetic and mystical experience.*

As the semester progressed, it was evident that there was a lively and interesting relationship between the two themes just developed in the sections above: the focus on details of the text and the emphasis on classroom discussions. I believe this connection most accurately clarifies why, in the end, the details are so important to King. A superficial understanding of King's method might lead one to suppose that his concentration on details reflects, above all, the love of the scholarly study of texts and the philosophy that the illumination of texts is an admirable and worthy purpose in and of itself. This is certainly an old and venerable tradition in the academic world. But I believe it reflects a shallow understanding of King's purposes. For even greater than the love of the word, I found in King the love of the individual, the human individual. If his *method* is an intense concentration on the text, his *purpose* is to bless human lives. And this appears to be the justification for the method. King sees that there is much more than the intellectual growth of the students' minds at stake—it is their moral and spiritual growth that matter most.

For King, it is not enough to delight in the intellectual and emotional pleasures of the scholarly or aesthetic life, as rigorous and demanding as such a life might be. For we do not have the luxury of living life free from the responsibility of making moral decisions to which we are held accountable before God. So we must do more than explicate; we must judge.* We must judge from right and wrong in the text just as we must judge from right and wrong in our lives:

There is a great difference between the points of view scholars have on Cordelia. They range from ascribing to her the greatest type of love to making her into a great rhetorician with an ability to manipulate people
through her craftiness. There is the whole gamut of reactions. But what is justified by the text? This is the way I want you to work—look to the text to find your ideas. Is the idea right or wrong? There is always a right and a wrong, though we can't always know (FN 8/31/92).

In the class discussion of Act I, Scene I we saw in the text the way Cordelia spoke to her father. King urged us to consider: "How should we speak? how should one speak to one's father?" (FN 8/31/92). The greatness of works like Shakespeare's is the fact that they can help to show us the way to judge. Good and evil are portrayed in Shakespeare, and King appeared to be constantly evaluating the things going on in the text in terms of right and wrong. He saw the complexity of the texts and characters—within the same speech he would note both good and bad and various shades thereof. He continually asked, What should happen? What does happen? What should we feel? How should we respond? Discerning these characteristics and learning to make wise judgments about them takes more than gut-feeling reactions; it involves the work of scholarship and focused concentration on details.

Developing this attention to detail is the hard work of a classical education, but if King's method and philosophy of education is as rigorous and structured as that of a man like John Locke, it is decidedly not because their understanding of either education or human nature have anything in common. In his students, King manifestly does not see what Dr. Locke purported to see: *tabula rasa* waiting to be written upon by the hand of the teacher. Just the opposite. King assumed his students were coming to him with a depth of inner maturity and understanding obtained, perhaps, not just in this life alone.

I was struck by the obvious trust and respect that King has in his students. This is not a trust that assumes the students are necessarily hard working, diligent, extraordinary intelligent, creative, or even competent. It is a trust that seems to go beyond these categories: an understanding that these individuals are children of God, with the potential to be all that God is. That potential may not be developed, the student may not even be aware of what he or she is capable of being and becoming, but for King it is manifestly there. These are not students for him to create after his own fashion and liking, but children of God, for whom God has purposes much larger and more divine than any human teacher could possible define.

If King does not attempt to dump bucketfuls of information into the minds of the students, if he encourages them to have their own responses to the text, to develop their own ability to discern, and to participate in the social experience of refining this ability through conversation and dialog, it seems the purpose goes beyond adherence to a mere teaching methodology. King seems to understand something about his students that they may not understand about themselves: that they have an innate sensitivity to all of creation, whether that creation is man-made or divine. This sensitivity is an ability that may lie in the students in a rather dormant stage—one that has not yet fully matured. But in its essentials, it is a capacity no less than divine, and one that is infinitely worth developing. For this sensitivity ultimately is the ability to divine good from evil. He claims that:
One of the things that I'm trying to inculcate, probably the most fundamental thing that I can inculcate is this: what carries us through life successfully from a spiritual point of view is sensitiveness, sensibility. Sensitiveness to changes of voice, changes of attitude, gesture, sense of what other people are like; and that sense is improved above all by being soaked in the scriptures but also by reading extensively and intensively other literature which is good. It enables one, either instinctively or deliberately, to understand better all the time what's happening between good and evil.xxxiv

This sensitiveness is not something presently devoid in students. It is something that, in many ways, they are already adept in. This sensitiveness is a definitive quality of being a social being, an ability each of us use daily in order to get along in the world. "When you converse with your friends, your relatives," says King, "your mind makes instinctive judgments the whole time about what is being said."xxxv But while this sensitiveness is innately in us, it is most likely there in the rough. And it can be refined:

By education and by culture, we can refine that judgment, and above all by the gospel we can refine it. This training may be the most important thing about our education—which goes on forever—the refinement of our ability to distinguish between good and evil.xxxvi

The development of this ability to discern between good and evil may be the ultimate value of the close, painstaking attention to the concrete details of the text. Becoming more discerning at the detailed level of textual analysis inevitably must include developing finer judgments in discerning between right and wrong. The discrimination between right and wrong applies justly to the level of concrete details rather than the level of abstract generalizations. For unlike abstract generalizations, the details of the text are manifestations of the concrete reality of life itself. And if man is to be saved, it is not through illusion, dreams, or wishes. It is through the face-to-face confrontation and ability to respond to that which is real.

The study of great literature and other fine art can help us to refine our ability to be sensitive. This refinement may certainly help us to develop an acute aesthetic awareness, but ultimately, King asserts, it is developing a sensitivity to other human beings that is the most meaningful and precious result of refining our sensitivity (FN 9/14/92). Developing this sensitivity inevitably involves a certain amount of toil and even drudgery. But, whether it is sensitivity to art or to individuals, it can be developed to the point that it becomes a spontaneous part of us. It is not just our minds that change; it is the whole soul that must be transformed. The end result is a righteousness manifested not merely through the exertion of one's mind, but as a natural part of the person one has become: "That when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (Mor. 7:48). This end result of the refinement of sensitivity occurs through the discipline of work. As King notes,

It's like a ballet dancer learning complete spontaneity by hard work over years, or the musician learning how to play his instrument with freedom by
intensive practice over years, and so on. It's a paradox, but it's a very important paradox. Hard work produces a situation in which you may receive joy. The hard work is ultimately the hard work of being righteous. There's only one thing I think one can really try to do in one's life and that's to be righteous from moment to moment. And that is an all-absorbing preoccupation, which ultimately becomes a spontaneity of righteousness...Joy then comes to us. But it is predicated upon righteousness. It is predicated upon right living.xxxxvii

To lead a moral life means hard work. Hard, hard work. But as time goes on, you get rewarded more and more for that hard work until you can be what the Lord is throughout in the gospel—spontaneous. Every time the Lord speaks, it's spontaneous. Every time the Lord has a solution or has a remark in a situation, it's spontaneous. It belongs to that situation and yet it's eternal. It's appropriate to that situation. It is always the right thing. And so you see, we have in the Lord an example of what I'm talking about—this righteousness at every moment. It isn't a matter of following principles. It isn't a matter of following ideas. It is a matter of following a person, an individual. The eternal value of the individual. What is the ultimate value in the ultimate reality in this universe? A loving individual. And the ultimate reality of the loving individual creates other loving individuals in order that he may love and be loved. And that is the history of the universe.xxxviii

So it must needs be that the responsibility for this type of education essentially lie on the student. King cannot produce it, no matter what his training and background consists in, no matter how many facts he provides the students, no matter what his desire is. Learning this sensitivity, learning to respond with greater awareness and discernment, can come from the detailed study of the text, but the students must be full and equal partners in this study if the refinement is to come. King urges his students:

Don't trust the author, trust the work. And what is the work? It is your impressions of the work. The work does not exist apart from your impressions. And because impressions are never-ending, the work does not come to an end (FN 11/9/92).

King cares about the students' responses because he is trying to help them to refine those responses. He is not trying to obliterate them so that he can replace them with his own. He wants the students to respond and to feel deeply so that they are aware of what is happening inside them and so he can help them to have better responses but not necessarily responses like his own. He warned the students the first day of class, "My job is not to introduce you to my ideas, but to help you to build up your own ideas" (FN 8/31/92).

After this first day of class, one student told me, "I have noticed that King really works with the students to draw things out of them" (FN 8/31/92). King used many different approaches to try to "draw things out" of the students. At times, he simply asked students
for their responses: "What do you think?" (FN 11/9/92) or "I'd like to know how you feel about that?" (FN 9/25/92). The students, who were not all used to being expected to produce their own responses, often needed extra encouragement to respond with their own thoughts and feelings. King felt it necessary to admonish the class one day:

I want to say something about contributions in this class. Some people come to my classes who just want to hear what I have to say and not what other people have to say. But we are a group here and it is not a matter of what I have to say alone. You must try to forget about the hierarchy that is around this table. If you think of something, out with it! There are no stupid questions (FN 9/14/92).

In addition to asking students questions, King would often withhold his own opinion on a question, hesitating to express it for fear that it would unduly color the student's own response. While recognizing the need for teachers and the natural dependence students initially feel on the ideas of their teachers, he consciously worked toward helping the students become more independent of him: "The less I do the sooner I don't do it. The more you do the better. It is better for you to have your own ideas before you get bogged down in mine" (FN 11/6/92). King, more than anyone else in the room, obviously delighted in sharing his own opinions—and he certainly shared them quite regularly, not infrequently at great length—but it was just as obvious that he was often concerned that his own feelings and ideas were exerting too strong of an influence on the minds of the students. I could often see he was waiting for the students to respond before he gave his opinion, and at times he verbalized this intent: "I have my own opinion about which version did it the best, which I will not release at this time" (FN 9/28/92).

King emphasized the point that he did not consider himself the authoritative voice on all matters of discussion: "I'm particularly anxious for me to not impose my views on you in this matter," he noted on one occasion (FN 11/16/92). He did not want students to take his opinion as the final word. In response to a question about the correct interpretation of a passage, King replied, "You shouldn't take what I say as authoritative unless I tell you to do so, and I think you'll find that I haven't told you yet this semester" (FN 11/16/92). Though King seemed to be quite knowledgeable about literally everything, he also never seemed to try to cover any personally-felt ignorance. When we studied particularly difficult parts of the text, parts that he did not have definite opinions of, he tried to make this clear to the students:

We will look closely at the Fool and at Tom, but you must realize that here scholarship fails us. I'm determined that we shall consider the Fool and Tom, but we will not be talking on the same scholarly level, so you are at the same level as me. I will give you my opinions, but you are not to accept them, but to decide whether you like them or not (FN 9/21/92).

King often expressed a desire that students would vigorously challenge his ideas. He encouraged opposition: "I hope that we will get into some opposition during this semester, that you will disapprove of some things that I say. That is to be hoped for" (FN 9/14/92). He enjoyed encounters with students who proved to have their own thoughts on
the issue at hand. In response to one student who was having trouble understanding a particular passage in the text and doubting King's assertion that it did "make sense," King went on at length trying to explain his interpretation and show why he thought it made sense. He concluded his remarks by asking the student to respond to his explanation. The student, obviously unconvinced that his interpretation had cleared the matter up, replied, "Well, I am at least beginning to believe that maybe there is some sense in it." To the delight of the students, King responded to this remark with a great smile on his face, and, pounding his fist on the table, declared: "There, that is exactly the tone I want in this class" (FN 9/28/92).

Perhaps more important than any particular type of encouragement King gave to students was the attitude he appeared to have toward the worth of their responses. One sensed that he felt the students' own, personal reactions were valuable because they themselves were individuals of worth. "We are glad to have undergraduates, glad to have graduates, and glad to have professors," King remarked,

but this is not a class, it is a seminar. Like the Scandinavian or German seminars, it is not authoritative. In these countries the professor is aware that his future is in the room. You are the future, not that you will replace me as a professor, but you are future human beings; your children will succeed me as human beings (FN 9/21/92).

King's class made me reflect on my own educational experiences. I came to realize that during most of the years I spent in elementary, secondary, undergraduate and graduate schools, I was not encouraged to have my own reactions. My personal responses were not considered valid. My own understanding was always either grossly inferior to the teacher's or, more commonly, simply wrong altogether. The teacher was the one who knew. I was sure that I could not know what the texts meant—how could I, with so little experience and maturity? And yet, now that I look back on it, did the teachers? Even if the teachers I had did possess a depth of comprehension derived from maturity understanding, so often the class was conducted on such a broad level of oversimplification—glossing over things, pronouncing sweeping generalizations, dismissing personal feelings and insights—that I rarely had a chance to develop the ability to analyze texts on my own or have any confidence in my ability to do so. I can see that this has worked to my disadvantage—as it has undoubtedly worked to the disadvantage of many students: I often don't trust my own perceptions; I look for what I think the experts say, or await the experts' pronouncements. In contrast, King seemed to have a respect for the students' own reactions, and a respect for how they wanted to deal with their understanding of the text: "I don't want to force you into these decisions. These are personal decisions" he noted about one problem under consideration (FN 11/9/92).

Ironically, it is often hard for students to know what they feel—they have been denied the validity of their own reactions so often, and encouraged to absorb the opinions of the teacher so frequently. In reply to one of King's requests for questions, one student declared, "I'm not sure what kind of question to ask!" "The kind of questions you should ask," King responded, "are the kind you want to ask. I'm not expecting any type of
question" (FN 9/25/92). As frustrating as it might be for some students, he continued to encourage them to keep open, to not predetermine their response to the text. "What do I look for?" asked one student. "You are not to look for anything," King answered, "I never aim at anything, because if you aim at something, you'll not get there" (FN 9/28/92).

To his disappointment, and despite his encouragement to do otherwise, students too often relied on King's interpretations. On one particular day, we had just enough time to view the film segments scheduled for that day before the class officially ended. King observed that the discussion of the films would have to be put off until the next class period. To this fact he added, "You will have the lovely experience of seeing both films without my coming in between them, so you will be able to come to your own ideas for the first time next time, which you were meant to do all along. But you have preferred my muddy estuary to your clear streams up in the hills" (FN 11/9/92).

Somehow, King sensed that if students could learn to use their whole souls to respond to the text, they would discover that they were capable of producing ideas and feelings of great worth: "It is not merely a matter of 'trailing clouds of glory' when we come, we continue to trail them" (FN 1/15/93). When students gave that more total response, King was quick to express his delight. In response to one inexperienced student's reading of the text, King noted that the student had managed to escape from a particular difficulty in the text because of the way she read it, "and [you] did something as a result that amused me and interested me a good deal...[you] produced an interpretation which I've not seen before but is interesting" (FN 1/15/93).

Experiencing Literature: Experiencing Life

The question is how do you react to the text, not what does it mean (FN 9/25/92).

My Shakespeare classes sometimes get into trouble because they try to find out what reactions I want them to have. I don't want them to have any particular reactions. I want them to have their own, nobody else's. They expect to be taught how to respond. I can't teach anybody how to respond. I ought not to. A great deal of damage is done by people who say, "You ought to respond to a thing in this or that way." It is a satanic job to do that. What I can teach people, and what anybody else can teach them, is techniques by which they can discipline their own responses: ways for them to find out more about the work before them, so that their experience of it may be a more profound one.

It is this experience of the literature that the study of details should bring us to. It is this type of study that allows the work to come alive. Refining our sensitivity is not for the purpose of creating technically brilliant scholars with minds rivaling the most powerful computer and hearts no warmer than the same machines. This refinement should enable us to truly experience art, to feel the depth of it. Upon viewing a segment of one of the films, King noted that quite a bit had been cut from the fool's speeches and suggested, "I
suppose it is because the director thought the audience would not understand them anyway. But the important thing in life is not to understand things in the first place but to feel them" (FN 10/23/92).

To merely intellectualize a work of art is simply to deaden the spirit and to diminish the richness of this experience: "The only thing that embraces the play as a whole is the play itself, how you are when you walk out of a performance. Theory doesn't work. It is only a narrow slice" (FN 10/26/92). The demanding work of scholarship, with its attendant attention on details, is not for the purpose of creating an intellectual totality out of the minute parts. King admonishes us to,

Remember what symbols are—they are not there for you to explain—they are there to have an effect on you. If you think you have explained the symbol, you have lost most of it: let...all its significance reverberate in you.xl

But its significance cannot "reverberate in you" if you insist on trying to lock its significance up within the small capacity of your intellectual mind. Yet, this is what some so-called scholarship attempts to do. This attempt seems part and parcel of the effort of modern man to make himself: in a world without God, there is no one to save man, but man himself. But what can man make of himself? What indeed does the concept of a self-created self amount to when we compare it to even one of God's creations? The self is a concept King finds to be, at best, quite dubious:

The self is a construct, it's something you make of yourself. It's something that you go to [an expert] to learn how to do or how to build. That kind of thing is nonsense. You can't build yourself in that kind of way. You're not a building. Let yourself alone and do the Lord's work and he will then do the work of making you. After all, he made you to start with, he knows what he wants. That's the answer to Descartes. Not cogito, ergo sum; "I think therefore I am"; but "I am because the Lord made me." And isn't that a much more splendid thing to be able to say? It's an almost incredible thing to be able to say, "The Lord made me, and therefore I am." "I think, therefore I am"? what a miserable thing thinking appears to be in the limitation. Not the action of a soul, not the action of a total soul.xlii

We can turn to art to connect to a much larger world than the small world we of ourselves can make of ourselves. For King, it is the world's great art (in all forms) that can best serve this function of connecting us to this larger world. But this art must be something that we experience, not just intellectualize:

Music is sovereign in that sense that a musical experience does not have to be translated. Now all the time when we are experiencing literature that is how we also ought to experience literature. But we don't. What we do is to philosophize it or sociologize it or idealize it in other ways so that we abstract from it.xliii
Great literature must be experienced. And above all, the greatest literature, the scriptures, must be experienced. It is the experience of living with the scriptures that provides us with a standard of truth:

You can judge what you ought to read of other literature by what the scriptures show you; because the scriptures...are the best works ever written or spoken...Great writers tell us much truth; but only the scriptures tell us the whole truth. What goes for literature, the power to see what is good in literature because you are soaked in the scriptures, goes for the other arts as well.

Of course, turning to the scriptures is no guarantee that we will experience them. The temptation to intellectualize the scriptures, to reduce them to the level of abstract generalizations and principles, is strong. But if we approach the text, not to distill an abstract concept or be infused with a fuzzy feeling, but in a way that focuses on what is really there, the details, the concreteness and the particularities, we will see in the scriptures much more than mere principles or sentimentality. Christ teaches us not in hollow words abstracted from living reality, but through the life we see He lives in the experiences related to us. King notes that "we cannot reduce what Christ did on any particular occasion to a moral principle." What is the difference between an abstract and a living principle? he asks, "It is the difference between being reasonable and being wise...one of the invidious things people still do to the gospel is to erect it into rigid principles.

As with all great literature, it is in the concreteness of the details and particulars of the scriptures, as they stand in their rich and vibrant complexity, that they have the greatest ability to give us those experiences that we can reverberate in. When we reduce the richness of the scriptures to the paucity of generalizations, we lose the concreteness they contain, their living, eternal ability to work in us. A profound example is the parable of the Prodigal Son. It is a favorite of King's:

The parable of the Prodigal Son is like a musical composition. It is something that plays live again and again to each of us if we have our ears open. People who deal with ethics, people who deal with the social sciences, people who deal with philosophy define in the abstract certain qualities. But though they may be imagining that by so doing they are being more scientific, they are being less scientific than the arts because the poet can give in careful, distinct nuances what the philosopher cannot give in his formula. We pull out of the parable of the Prodigal Son a principle of repentance or a principle of forgiveness or even, bearing in mind the elder brother, a principle of envy. We do wrong to do it. For who ever was persuaded to repent by studying an abstract idea of repentance? Who ever was persuaded to forgive by studying an abstract concept of forgiveness? Christ made that parable to touch our hearts, and it touches mine so much that I cannot possibly read the story through aloud; I always break down at the same spot, and I think you know what that spot is. That is what the parable is for. By feeling forgiveness, we may forgive; by feeling
repentance, we may repent; and that is what literature is there to help us do.\textsuperscript{xlv}

The parable of the prodigal Son is given to us to experience it. King claims that if you aren't feeling that you need to forgive when you read this story, then you haven't read it. There must be a "soulful reaction."\textsuperscript{xlvi}

We read the parable of the Prodigal Son and we are even taught to abstract from it a principle of forgiveness, or a principle of repentance. But the object of the parable of the Prodigal Son is to enable us to experience forgiveness and to experience repentance, and unless we have that experience, we have not got the ontology of our religion at all: we have something of ethics, we have something of philosophy, we have something of theology; but we haven't got the ontological fundamental fact, which is of course the love of God.\textsuperscript{xlvii}

\textbf{The Word: Never a Closed Book}

\textit{Philology, then is the love of the word and we in our religion can regard that word 'word' as meaning all that it can mean. And indeed it can't mean anything as a small letter unless it means something with a capital letter: Love of the Word.}\textsuperscript{xlviii}

In the sections above I discussed one connection between the study of detail and the importance of class discussion in King's classes: helping students refine their sensitiveness and learn to truly experience the literature. There is a second connection between these two themes that I want to discuss in this section. In addition to his desire to help his students to refine their own experience (and connected to it), there is another important reason why King does not attempt to simply take the knowledge of details he has acquired and pump them into the students' minds. While the understanding many educators have about the nature of knowledge makes the "pumping" approach to education a very popular approach to teaching, King avoids it because he devoutly disagrees with the distorted view of the world that it supports.

The educational methodology that encourages educators to attempt to pour whatever amount of encyclopedic knowledge they believe they have stored in their minds into the minds of their students reveals a profound misunderstanding about the nature of both knowledge and reality. For King, knowledge is not something one can "have" and then give to another. Knowledge is not a "thing" one possesses. And the nature of reality is not such that "knowledge" (in the sense of facts and theories) can contain it. The world is much larger than our understanding of it, not because our understanding is still inadequate (though this may also be true), but because "understanding" is only one small part of the way we can relate to the world, and it is not the most fundamental way.

For King, there is no set picture of the world that he believes he "has" that he is trying to "give" to the students. The reason for this is not that King has failed to gather all of the
facts himself (though this may also be true), but that his understanding of the nature of "facts" precludes this way of talking about them. For him, the world is not the type of thing that can ever yield to one definitive interpretation of it. In fact, the world is no type of a "thing" at all: it is not a substantive with definitive attributes that can be nailed down after X amount of study about its facets. Nothing, for King, is ever set and sealed, decided once and for all. There is no understanding that we are done understanding, for the nature of anything to be understood is never finite or static; our understanding of it can never come to an end. The "thing" itself (if we must call reality a "thing") is ever growing and so, then, must our understanding of it be ever growing:

Reading Shakespeare is never complete, as long as there are people to respond to it. You have to be content never to finish because we never have and never shall. And yet it is always complete in each instance. The wholeness is always reconstituting itself all the time (FN 10/9/92).

What we now believe about the world, we will not believe tomorrow. This is true not just for the disciplines of the humanities, where the activity of interpretation is much more obvious; it is equally true of the sciences, both the social and the hard sciences:

Myth is what I want above all to stress, because books and theories are myths in themselves. What's true of the social is true of the natural sciences. The science of yesterday (Newton) is the myth of today. The science of today (Einstein et. al.) is the myth of tomorrow. The science of tomorrow is the myth of today.¹

The purpose, then, for the intense concentration on the details of the text and the classroom discussion is not for the purpose of coming to a final, intellectual grasp of the ultimate truth of the text. For that shall never happen:

The smaller the detail you deal with, the more likely you are to be able to say something about it and do something about it, but what carries for the whole universe, namely the microcosm and the macrocosm—the further you go into the microcosm, the further there is to go, and the further you go into the macrocosm, the further there is to go—applies to any statement by anybody at anytime; it has those infinite dimensions (FN 1/15/93).

King's study of Shakespeare, his delight in learning as well as his delight in sharing, is not with the desire of coming to a closure on that need for study or the desire to arrive at the final, correct interpretation of Shakespeare's plays. In fact, King is quite dubious about the analyses set down with any tone of finality because they tend quickly to turn to concrete and become stumbling blocks for future students. To emphasize this point to the students, he began class one day by reading a passage to us from a short article. The passage was in French, but his translation of it went something like this, "In all of the arts, we must be careful of deceptive definitions by which we dare to exclude all the beauty which is unknown or which we have not yet discovered" (FN 11/9/92).

Take, for example, the literary categories of comedy and tragedy. These are categories already well established in the literature of ancient history. Long tradition has reified
them to a point that goes beyond their originally intended usefulness. King reminds his students that these categories are not real: tragedy and comedy are irrelevant, superficial categorizations. There are reasons why we do not want to catapult the distinctions between these categories into ontological reality:

By making a definition, you hamper successive generations by shutting possibilities out. When a "tragedy" was defined, then future dramatists could only with great difficulty create plays that deviated from the definition. Rather than definitions we should have responses, collections of facts, connotations, no denotations (FN 11/9/92).

King suggests,

you can't use such simplistic terms as comedy or tragedy to say what it is. In great art, comedy and tragedy may be both there, in fact may turn out to be the same thing: "tears of joy." In the highest art, we find that we have no critical tools to handle it. Life is more complex and rich than our critical tools (FN 10/12/92).

When we insist upon this distinction,

It precludes one from seeing their deep percolation, which is why [neither] the comic nor tragic are more profound than the superficial category of traditional literary scholarship. And as Mormons we should be handling the real and not the fictive. Or if we do handle the fictive we should demonstrate its invalidity by means of the use of the religious aspect.

One might anticipate King's disapproval of categories since they tend to be the type of abstract generalizations antithetical to his interest in details. But interestingly, what he says about the categorization of generalizations he applies equally to all levels of analysis. There is no more "completeness" and "finality" about individual words than there are about generalizations. After giving students an assignment on looking up some definitions in the Oxford English Dictionary, King warned:

A word is not clean cut. It drifts across like a jelly fish in water, not mechanically, biologically. A word has no existence separate from its use. It is as it is in use. The effort to tie words down makes sense only in the logical. We don't need to be tied to the logical (FN 9/25/92).

There is no static literary level. There is nothing at any level of analysis that stays the same through time. "Every linguistic event is unique," he says, "and the uniqueness of the linguistic event has a deeper sense when we focus, not on the phonological, but on the semantic, and consider the change of context." He uses the following passage from King Lear to illustrate this point:
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never.

(*King Lear* Act V, Scene iii, lines 307-309)

King comments:

Lear has a line of five nevers: when he says "never" the second time, the second time incorporates the first, the third time incorporates the previous two, and so on. The number of ways in which that "never" line can be said is infinite; so is the number of interpretations.

Beyond considerations of the textual context of the words of the play, and perhaps more important, is the context in which the play is read or performed. Each context of the play is new and asserts a new impact on the interpretation. As long as there are people to react to the play anew, the play itself cannot remain static. Thus, a play is never "complete."

Says King,

There are no complete works of art because they are not complete until the last human contact with them is accomplished, but this is never. The number of reactions is always infinite. You can take out of a symbol forever. Shakespeare is in all of us reading him. We are part of the rhetorical truth of Shakespeare.

The intense study of the details of the text, if done well, does not help us to converge upon a single definitive interpretation of the text—just the opposite—the rich vitality of the details serve to guarantee that no such definitive interpretation can ever be set in stone. When these details are allowed to live, they resist any overarching interpretation that will keep them in their defined place. If this seems ambiguous, it may be a virtue of the text, not a vice. King says,

Nearly all of Ibsen's endings are ambivalent, and people always ask me what I think about which is the interpretation to take, and when I'm asked it I always say the same thing—both—if there are two. There are sometimes more than two.

Clarity is not the goal, for the attempt to make everything clear, especially the ambiguous, is not a virtue:

I'm now going to go through the play and point out things for note. I'm not going to give you any clear interpretations about this because I don't believe in clear interpretations. If you are clear on the surface you can become even more muddled further down, because if you are clear on the surface and you get down to the depth you don't know where you are; but if you leave the surface alone as it is and get down to the depth, you may be more at home and realize that it's feeling—it's intuition—it's how you feel about these people.
At a deeper level, this striving towards clarity, so characteristic of the modern frame of mind and so much a part of American education, may also reveal a modern tendency toward hypocrisy. King warns his students against this hypocrisy:

Think of the struggle towards objectivity here on campus. Think of the effort towards objectivity readily becoming hypocrisy. What happens when you come here, very often when you're being taught to write? You're taught to be as clear as you can. You're taught to be clear, to be clear, to be clear. But is it right to be clear? Or may it not mean lying to be clear when you're not clear? Isn't that sheer hypocrisy? Are you not invited to hypocrisy every time you write an essay towards clarity, if the clarity is not there?lvii (emphasis added)

The richness and depth of great literature enables it to serve as an inexhaustible well to enrich our understanding of life on many levels. But it is the well of concrete details that makes this richness of interpretation possible. This well is drained through the process of boiling these details down until their supposed essence is revealed in crystal clarity. This process is seen, for example, in the attempt to abstract a clear "moral lesson" from a wide swipe of rich historical events. Not that history is not replete with moral lessons, in fact, King asserts that a historical situation "serves as an inexhaustible fund for moral lessons,"

Yet it is not didactic in any ordinary sense of that term. Only a history that in the first instance tried to abstract out the moral content of a past situation would in the second instance be compelled to try to reimpose it in the form of cautionary conclusions.lviii

Each historical situation is unique, and it can only be "captured" in its uniqueness. Each layer of generalization distances the creator from the meat of the situation, the details that keep it alive. But when the details are attended to, the moral significance of the work can come out:

A situation captured in its uniqueness has moral relevance because it is a whole situation like our own situation. We are free to see it in any of indefinitely many ways, including those most instructive for us. But when the historical situation is subsumed under a generalization, it is seen in just one way, and we can easily exclude ourselves from it. Many similarities between that situation and our circumstance are artificially suppressed.lix

King gives as an example of this type of analysis: the story in the New Testament of the woman being taken in adultery. He makes this point,

The climax is not set out in detail and the moral point is not put in a proposition: it could not be. We cannot even say that the story shows the moral point, i.e., the punishment for adultery and murder. That is too cut and dried and limited a characterization, for the punishment does not "fit the crime": the crime's consequences are its punishment—to be an adulterer is the punishment for adultery. Instead, the history's moral point
pulsates throughout the whole of it, as through a parable, and cannot be abstracted from it.\textsuperscript{lx}

These points on the richness of the text, as revealed through the study of its details, combined with an understanding of the inexhaustible interpretative possibilities, help us to further understand the necessity for the student's active participation in the class. The teacher cannot reveal "the truth" of the text to the student if there is no set truth to reveal, and if the student's own responses to the text are an essential element of the interpretation, the teacher cannot assume this responsibility on himself with success, no matter what the desire to do it may be. The details of the text are alive only through their interaction with living individuals, and the students must be alive to the details of the text in order to allow the interpretation to fully live.

It is at this point that I believe we come to an important understanding of King's methodology and purposes. For his concern is not so much with the life of the text as it is with the lives of the students who study the text. The text does not come to life unless the students are alive to it. Therefore, he sees one of his major tasks as a teacher to help his students come alive, not just to the text, but in all dimensions of their lives. He reminds his students that the future and the past do not exist, "Only the present exists, and if we are not living now (all of you—those of you who may be inclined to be asleep at the moment), we are not living at any other time—we are not living."\textsuperscript{lxii}

Life is not something that one person can simply hand over to another. It must be a creative act for each individual. This creativity is not something reserved for those special areas of our life that society has labeled "creative,"

The whole of our life has to be creative. There is no such thing apart as "creative literature" from this point of view. Whatever you write, may be creative or not creative, according to your testimony. Either we live creative lives in which we speak creatively, or we live uncreative lives in which we do not speak creatively. And from the whole of the society in which we live there is tremendous pressure on us to live uncreatively, to live without effort, to live passively, to enjoy ourselves at the least expense. These are the major drugs of society...These are the influences in our society which prevent us from living vigilantly, vitally, creatively, and therefore speaking, and writing and reading creatively. There is only one ultimate defense, and that is the gospel.\textsuperscript{lxii}

King's understanding of the importance of creativity works against modern philosophies that urge us to "take control" of our lives and our work. At the same time that this admonition toward creativity reaches into our study of literature, it also expands out to our understanding of the way we live our lives: "Whatever you do will be different whenever you do it and whatever you do will not be in your complete control. And one [should] never, I think, attempt control of that kind" (FN 1/15/93). King urges his students to remain open, alive to the ever-changing, growing nature of life, whether it is in their interaction with literature, or with other human beings. To simply follow the
crowd, absorb the information given to us by a teacher, or blindly follow any pattern set out for us, is to cut short the life we could be living instead. He warns,

Taking thought for the morrow means substituting an imagined tomorrow for the one that is really going to be there. And as we do not know the one that is really going to be there we prepare ourselves for a number of hypothetical tomorrows that will never come. We do this instead of being ready, by merely being ourselves, for any tomorrow that will come. When we wake up in the morning, we don't readily pick up the thread of the day that awaits us, for we have determined in advance where it will be and therefore we do not see where it really is. Alas for Benjamin Franklin, planning his day at 5:00 a.m., how he will manipulate various Philadelphians! He must compulsively and obsessively try to extrude many threads, to manipulate many clues to the labyrinth in order to convince himself that he is on the right track. And Franklin's kind of planning for the future is simply the mirror image of the self-serving historian's planning for the past. The generalizations the historian has convinced himself are the right guidelines for interpreting history preclude him from discovering new patterns in the history he encounters; he is only able to gather more details.

Above all, King understands the importance of remaining alive to that thing of the greatest import—one's religion. He says,

If you're used to your religion, you've lost it. It's got to be new all the time. It's got to be new daily because otherwise you've lost it. To be in the habit of religion won't do. You have got to be in the experience of religion which has got to renew itself all the time.

There is much in academia that works against this tendency; in each generation there is the tendency to work towards finalization, completion, a thorough working out of a theory or discipline. There certainly may be some value in this movement, but ultimately it is a movement toward a type of final death. Fortunately, scientific revolutions continually insure that this death does not take place. Today's sciences become tomorrow's myths, insuring the continual renewal of knowledge. But even greater than the effect of these revolutions in our lives, is our ever-changing understanding of our religion, and the way that this religion can work in our hearts, continually renewing our spirits and the life within us. King suggests hopefully:

The gospel rescues us from this predestinatory mechanical world and every effort in society to bring it back in order to quash our individuality or to dampen our enthusiasm, any effort to make us optimists or pessimists is to be condemned. The gospel wants us to do something else, more difficult to do and yet more simple to understand and that is, to live its life, the life of love. And then everything is right and it doesn't matter what happens to us. It doesn't matter what happens to Lear and Cordelia once they are reconciled. The atonement is all.
Being a Teacher: Being Alive

Being alive is being unique. Students who are mere replicas of their teachers are not fully alive. A teacher's job is not to try to create his students after his own image, thus narrowing the possibilities of their lives to his own limitations. Rather, it is to help them to become fully alive in their own uniqueness. The teacher can further this process not by telling the students who they should be, but, by being fully alive himself. King says of being a teacher,

There's a conspiracy of trying to maintain that if a person can't teach you can teach him to teach. You can give him a certain number of pieces of advice. Most of them are pretty simple. But the qualifications that are required for teaching are the following: 1) To love the Lord. 2) To love the subject you are teaching. 3) To love the people whom you are teaching it to. If you love, you are enthusiastic,—"seized by the Lord." If you have that quality, you will teach. And if you haven't got it, you won't; because the difference between the two things is the gospel and the experience of the gospel.

King does not give students the impression that he clearly sees a "whole picture" and that he will communicate to the students so that they can memorize it and "have" it for their own. Rather, he seems to see that there is an experience that all of us can participate in, and participate in not just once, but over and over again. He concentrates on the richness of the detail in order to help everyone more fully understand and appreciate that detail, so that their own responses to the text can be more true, more rich, more alive. And when this occurs, he learns as much from their reactions as they do from him.

Despite the fact that King has spent many years of his life studying the text of King Lear; has seen many performances of it; has taught many classes; and has written extensively on the play, there was no one in our classroom who appeared more excited about studying it in greater depth that semester. He spent long hours in preparation for the class, and even longer hours preparing for each class period during the course of the semester. Despite old age and ill health, he managed to devote between 20-40 hours a week in preparation. Of course, in terms of the course, much of this had to be over-preparation. "I've got a lot of material," he confessed, "it is too full. I will need to cut back. I've decided to talk about very, very little of what I am prepared to talk on" (FN 8/25/92).

Of all the individuals assembled in the room, King appeared the most enthusiastic, indeed, the most alive to the text. Of course, his extensive study of King Lear made it difficult for him to come to the text fresh, but he made an effort to insure that he would come to the text as fresh as possible:

These notes [I have prepared] are my penultimate effort on Lear. When I prepare for class, though, I do not look at them. I look at the text afresh to preserve my purity, then I look at the notes to see if I have to do them all over again (FN 10/19/92).
Perhaps because he tried to come to the play afresh, it was not uncommon for King to note that something surprised him. The films helped here and were a common source of surprise for him. In response to one performance, he noted, "Kent's kneeling came rather startling to me" (FN 9/4/92). In another segment of the film, he observed Edmund in the background of a dialog between Regan and Goneril and remarked, "Edmund is there, gathering what he can. That's a new piece of business. I have not seen that before this version" and added this comment about the segment as a whole, "I was pleased with it because it was new" (FN 9/11/92).

The students may not have written extensively on the text, but many of them had read the play before. King urged them to also try to come to the text afresh. "It is hard to read a play anew each time you read it," he observed, adding the suggestion: "One way to get more of this is to read something that is contrary to your views—it makes you think anew" (FN 9/14/92).

Whether this technique was the one that made the difference for King or not, it was certainly true that this class provided an occasion for him to continue to expand his knowledge of this play. It was obvious that King, even at his age, was still very much a learner; still very involved in this piece; still coming up with questions; still excited with the opportunity of learning and sharing what he learned. He always appeared engrossed in the play and the questions it was producing. It was obviously serious work to him, and as a consequence, he was always learning: "My own mind is clarifying considerably more and more as we go along on Edmund, for the first time" (FN 10/26/92). At one point, he commented on the length of the notes he was giving us. "The notes are increasing," he observed, and then explained, "I'm thinking more and more as time goes on" (FN 9/25/92). He often had to apologize for typing errors in these notes. He confessed that the errors "are not the fault of the typist, but because I give them to her too late, because I keep having ideas" (FN 9/25/92).

An interesting example of King's continuing drive to learn more about the play manifested itself in the current work he was trying to do on the speeches of the fool in King Lear: When the class got to the point of analyzing the fool's dialog, King noted there is "no scholarly work on some of this," and then added, "I am willing to stick my neck out and be a fool if necessary" (FN 9/25/92). He also told us:

I spent four solid days [this week] struggling with the fool because I am determined to have something to say about everything he does. No one has done this before. So I am going to put forth my theory, my hypothesis, but that means that you should criticize it. These are views I am taking so that I can find out if there are better views as a result of discussing them with you. So, take them seriously, but not too seriously (FN 9/18/92).

While observing King's class, I reflected on the many teachers I have had and realized that my favorite teachers were similarly very much alive in their learning. And it seems to me that because they were alive in their learning, they naturally drew students into the subject matter through their enthusiasm. With these teachers, I did not have the feeling that the subject was dry and settled, that all the important questions had already been
asked and answered. Instead there was the exciting realization that there are more questions that need to be asked and many more things to be worked out still—and the pleasure of seeing that the teacher was still earnestly engaged in that process.

Though ill health often seemed to make him tired, I was continually impressed with the energy and excitement King brought with him to the classroom: an enthusiasm that you could see in the twinkle of his eyes and feel in the energy of his comments. At points, he would get so excited about the things we were discussing, that he would burst forth with his viewpoint (FN 10/12/92). Listening to him do readings of passages from the text was one of the most delightful parts of the class. The strength and feeling he put into his readings made them exhilarating experiences. He often read parts in dialect, and when he would get to points in the text where he felt the speech was exploding with energy, he too would explode forth with a great burst of energy and sound. His understanding of the details of the text, enabled him to read the text in a way that drew from me a very emotional reaction. He read with such feeling, that I had to feel along with him. He urged his students to also read the text with feeling. After one student finished a reading of a passage, King noted that it was accurately read from the point of view of stress, then added, "But, you need to learn to throw yourself into it. Forget! Forget! Forget! Make a fool of yourself!" (FN 10/16/92).

Perhaps in consequence of King's enthusiasm, and the student's susceptibility to it, I observed that there was a spirit of genuine interest in the classroom discussions. Even though many of the students had studied King Lear previous to this experience, they too were not willing to settle for a final interpretation of the text. And they appeared to be, if anything, more interested in figuring out the text than students who had little experience: their experience gave them more questions rather than fewer. King listened to their comments with great interest. Oftentimes, when they said something striking to him, he would appear to be in deep thought. He might utter a thoughtful "humm" then check in his own text to find evidence for or against what they were saying. He seemed ever learning and willing to change his opinions, even in response to the less experienced statements of his students.

King himself made a comment one day in class on the role of the teacher. He noted that it is problematic for a teacher to either act superior to the students or to try to come down to the level of the students. Both of these acts, in his opinion, are self-conscious acts to be avoided. "What is needed," he asserted, "is that the teacher and the students work together in enthusiasm, without any self-assertion" (FN 11/30/92). Terry Warner observes in the preface to King's book,

Arthur King...despises behavioral objectives in education because, he believes, they are manipulative and encourage humbug, conformity and deadly self-regard. He preaches, and teaches, slow reading in which one gradually discovers every facet of an author's intent. He labors in long tutorial hours to draw out the best students have in them, imposing his own style not at all. He loves diversity of approach, reveling with delight and appreciation in objections to his views. He is ferociously intolerant of any vulgarity, sexual or otherwise: he sees in it the tragedy of people
betraying themselves. Even at his age he is not sure what he thinks about a subject until he hears what he has to say about it. And he is as ready to change his mind about it then as anyone I know, because there is not self-assertion in it when he says it. Perhaps it is his Quaker background—I don't know—but he seems to have no self-image to assert and not time to assert it for preoccupation with expressing the joy of the sacramental life that he has found in the gospel.

His class is full of details, full of opinions, even full of generalizations, but King uses these to point beyond himself, to a world much more rich than his own (comparatively) limited richness. Thus, it is not their acceptance of his understanding of the text that he urges on his students. Instead, he labors to help his students develop their ability to interact anew with the world, to bring about an even greater complexity and depth of experience than existed before. His purpose is not to create carbon copies of himself, but to assist students in seeing the path they might take to the Lord, for the Lord can make of these students something infinitely richer than a mere copy. Terry Warner observes further,

This has been the pattern with Arthur's students, of whom I have known many over the past fifteen years. He teaches them to write, but none of them writes like him or like each other. That is as it should be. A substation of Christ's radiance does not simply illuminate the darkness so that others can find their way. He inspires others to resonate with that radiance. Thus, if we read this book aright, we will honor the Lord in our response to it, as its author, and its editors, have honored him by preparing it.

People say that when they study with Arthur, it changes their lives (FN 12/15/93). But King declares emphatically,

I don't change your life. You change your own life. I wouldn't dream of thinking of having such responsibility as that. People tell me that I've changed their lives, but it's not for me to know that or to think so either. If they think so, that's their business, but I would say, you don't do that, because each of us is responsible for themselves (FN 1/15/93).

**Conclusion: The Importance of the Individual**

*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.* (Matt. 10:29-31.)

Perhaps we have now come to the point of understanding King's antipathy toward the social sciences. His love of details is a reflection of his love and understanding of the uniqueness of the human individual. It is just this feature that is most readily obscured in
the work of the social sciences. In their attempt to boil human experience down to generalizations that will hold true across the wide variety of human experience, the human individual, the particular child of God, is often lost. Says King,

Things that generalize from human experience don't work. That's why the social sciences don't work and have no right to exist. But particularly in a Mormon university, they have no right to exist, because it is the gospel that must be the basis for our dealing with human affairs. Nothing that generalizes human conduct applies to any individual human being. When Christ, in the gospel, deals with people, they are always individuals. And what he does for them is individual...we are individuals...art is not concerned with classes, it's concerned with individuals."

King is firmly convinced that Latter-day Saint scholars can do better, indeed, must do better. We are in the world, but we are called to be not of this world. We must do more than blindly follow after the ways of the world. King testified in class,

What the Lord said to Brother Joseph was, "They are all wrong." And if He condemned all the churches of his time, you may be quite certain that He condemned the total culture at the time, because the religion is always the basis of the culture and in condemning the churches, the culture was condemned also. We are still in a society which is wronger than ever. The whole of it is wrong—wrong—it's in the wrong direction. There are individuals, and there's another matter; I'm talking about society as a whole. And this Church has been given the responsibility by the Lord, in His absence, not merely to live the life of Saints as we do at the moment, but responsibility for changing the arts, changing the philosophy, changing everything in accordance with what happened in the 1830's and the 1840's in the new dispensation. We are the bearers of that new dispensation. We are the bearers of the post-Descartes, post-Bacon period. We are the bearers of the post-scientific period. We are the bearers of the period in which the humanities and the sciences must again come together in a different way than before (FN 1/15/93).

It is easy to seize upon the details King presents in class as bucketfuls of information to be digested, but this is to miss the point entirely. Whether he is speaking of details or speaking of generalizations, he is speaking from the heart, not to persuade others toward agreement, but to encourage them to likewise speak from the heart. In the preface to King's book, Terry Warner summarizes this point in these poignant words,

If these talks of Arthur's are taken to be informational, they will be completely misread. It would be wrong to suppose Arthur to be saying, when he comments about a subject, "This is the way things are." It does not matter whether we agree with what he says (certainly it would be of no concern to him); what matters is that in this text we observe this educated individual devoting his thinking to the Lord. What matters is that we see a
man using his mind reverently, and that as a consequence we will want to
go and do likewise.
Notes

i Arthur King, "Response to 'The Ophelia Syndrome.'" [Lecture given to BYU class taught by Dennis Packard, Fall, 1991]. Notes taken by Laura Barksdale.

ii Giles Florence, "The King's English," This People Magazine, April 1985: 68, 71.


vi Thomas K. Hinckley, "If There Be a Restoration: Geburtsfest for Arthur King," [Given at King's 80th birthday celebration, August 10, 1990], 2-3.


ix Tim Rand, [homework assignment for class taught by Dennis Packard, Fall 1991], 1-2.


xii King, The Abundance of the Heart, 256.

xiii King, The Abundance of the Heart, 257-258.

xiv King, The Abundance of the Heart, 257-258.


xvii FN is an abbreviation for field notes and indicates that the quotation was taken from the notes (research material) I collected during the class session of the date indicated. A
very few of these field notes were transcribed from tape recordings of class sessions. Most were written down by hand during the class session.


xxvi King, "Learning Shakespeare's Language," 4

xxvii King, "The Discipline of the Mother Tongue," 66.


xxix Hinckley, "If There Be a Restoration: Geburtsfest for Arthur King," 3.

xxx Arthur King, [Class discussions at a seminar, Fall 1989, BYU]. Unpublished transcript, 97.


xxniii King, [Lecture given at BYU Forum, March 10, 1981], 2.

xxniv King, "Response to 'The Ophelia Syndrome,'" 18.

xxnv King, "Response to 'The Ophelia Syndrome,'" 37.

xxnvii King, "Response to 'The Ophelia Syndrome,'" 37.


xxxix King, The Abundance of the Heart, 168.


xli King, "Response to 'The Ophelia Syndrome,'" 41.

xlii King, [King I, II, and III, June 24, 1986: Conversations with Camille Williams], 4, 5.


xliv King, The Abundance of the Heart, 121.

xlv King, The Abundance of the Heart, 122.


lii King, [Lecture given to BYU English 510 class, October 8, 1981], 8-9.


liv King, [Lecture given to BYU Philosophy Club, February 28, 1991].

lv King, "Rosmersholm," 3.

lvi King, "Rosmersholm," 4.

lvii King, [Class Lecture, Nov. 29, 1990], 9.
lxi King, "The Child is Father of the Man," 11.
lxii King, "The Discipline of the Mother Tongue," 70.
lxiii King and Warner, "Talent and the Individual's Tradition," 495, 496.
lxiv King, [King I, II, and III, June 24, 1986: Conversations with Camille Williams], 4.
lxvi King, "The Lord's University Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," 15.
lxvii C. Terry Warner, Introduction to King, "The Child is Father of the Man," 1, 2.
lxix King, "Response to 'The Ophelia Syndrome,'" 38.