

Professor Lupton's talk brings to mind Sidney's *Defense of Poesy*, which my Literary History class discussed just yesterday. As Sidney tells us, poetry has always been about making (citing the Greek *poiein*, to make) – and not just poems, but persons as well. For Sidney, the end of poetry (and, more broadly, of fiction) is not just well-knowing but well-doing. *Gnosis* must lead to *praxis* of the virtues in the world, even though he insists that “poetry nothing affirms.” That is, in fact, the condition on which poets can be said never to lie in their creation of fictional truth. This power of fiction to render truth palpable, resonant and, through readers as practitioners, virtuously active in the world lies in the radical openness of literary works to interpretive possibilities, something we have seen analyzed today in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

This radical openness is also the means by which literature, art, theater remain responsive to our condition of being human, i.e., that at any moment the self remains in development, unfinished, with the potential for becoming something as yet not fully defined or understood, travel/travailing in an uncertain world of moral luck, filled with contingency and terrors, yet beckoning with opportunities as well. In this sense, the practice of everyday life itself rests on the fictional “as if,” – as if at any one moment we “had it all together.” This requires the kind of virtue that comes with skill, which brings us back to what our speaker calls the “animating energetics of virtue as an incipient ensemble of gestures that draw on a repertoire of skills.” Her discussion here highlights Aristotle's notion of *spoudaios*, or seriousness, as something “that contributes to excellence” in performance, say, in the playing of an instrument, or the practice of theater. Such excellence “is a matter of focused and vigorous practice in accordance with standards that are learned, met, and rendered manifest by the practitioner, who integrates reason and passion, body and soul, in the dedicated exercise of her art in concert with others” (7).

There is still a gap, to be sure, between such exercise by the trained musician or actor and the exercise of personal virtues in the politics of communities, given “the imperfect flow of virtue among diverse actors.” And yet, as Lupton suggests, the good life is not lived in isolation; it requires that “the limited justice internal to a practice extend into the virtue ecology at large,” because “virtue is always political as well as

ethical, involving some vision of the common good and the search for paths to realize it" (16-17). This is where we in the arts and humanities have work cut out for us.

Without explaining, let me suggest that this work may consist in the "re-purposing of ethos," whether in the making of poems or persons. I would further situate this work in the space between *techne* (art) and technology (especially in the fields of information and communication), given their differing powers to orient us in the world, for better and worse, and to predispose our capacities for relating to ourselves and others. To this capacitation through *techne* and technology the integration of virtues helps teachers and students alike in (re)purposing *ethos* for a changing world. If Shakespeare's theater had thrived in crossings between oral and literate traditions, and cultures of voices and of print, so does it today traverse with us literacies of print, visual, and digital media.

In this connection, one resource educators have to hand is already mentioned in today's talk: epiphanies. Epiphanies happen in people across time and cultures, through diverse arts, technologies, and media. (And it is the favorite term of analysis students – non-English majors – use in my Introduction to Fiction course). Epiphanies are some of the richest experiences that the arts have to offer, and it works by sparking in the audience a moment of recognition, or re-cognition, that relates the self to itself in reflection. Re-cognition opens us to what happens with a sense that our moments of epiphany have somehow happened before, that there have been so many mirrors and retellings of the stories of our lives, so many "rehearsals for epiphanies" (a phrase Professor Lupton uses elsewhere) that have prepared us, in this moment, energetically to participate in what this play or painting offers. It opens us to the "what you will" with which *Twelve Night* hails us into its entertainment, and releases us again to entertain the possibility of changing the story, repurposing ethos for worldly living, and all that it may entail.

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