
2. For example, many well-intentioned defenses of liberal education highlight the earning potential of graduates of liberal arts colleges and the numbers of CEOs with liberal arts degrees.

3. For an excellent example of a defense of liberal education that sticks closely to the lived experience of that education, see Talbot Brewer, “What Good Are the Humanities?” *Raritan* 37, no. 4 (2018): 98–118.

4. The John William Miller Fellowship website has an excellent biography and collection of work by and about Miller. See https://sites.williams.edu/miller/.

5. A great starting point for someone interested in Miller is the anthology *The Task of Criticism* (New York: Norton, 2005).

6. Though there are several studies of Miller’s work, I find the following two the strongest and very interesting reads in their own right: Vincent Colapietro, *The Fateful Shapes of Human Freedom: John William Miller and the Crises of Modernity* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003) and Michael McGandy, *The Active Life* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005). I suggest starting with these titles as they both, albeit in different ways, offer an excellent overview of Miller’s philosophy and its significance.

7. McGandy makes the point in *The Active Life*: “In the case of Williams College, Miller was not captivated by a philosophical figure or school. He was transformed and redefined by teaching” (ix). I agree, and this book attempts to demonstrate what it means to be transformed and redefined by teaching.
8. As such, I won’t try to be exhaustive in my references. I will use references as invitations to further reading, not as a way of covering ground.

9. Defenses of the liberal arts are legion as are books that aim to give practical guidance to teachers and professors. As I hope to show in this book, Miller’s thinking on the liberal arts offers a great, and unique, contribution to these literatures. For other examples of a lived defense, see Brewer, “What Good,” and Mark Edmundson, Why Teach? (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).


11. This may be an unhelpful tangent, but when I try to contextualize this talk historically, I am struck by the timing. If anything, the early 1950s can be pointed to as a time when colleges were doing extremely well. (For a discussion of this point, in an admirably interesting essay about liberal education, see Robert Pippin, “Liberation and the Liberal Arts,” University of Chicago, website, esp. 5 ff. Retrieved from: https://aims.uchicago.edu/sites/aims.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/pdf/2000-Aims%20Address-Robert%20Pippin.pdf. See, also, Ernest Boyer, Campus Life: In Search of Community (Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990), xi). Large numbers of students could attend college because of a growing economy and the GI Bill, and prospects for jobs after graduation and jobs in higher education for PhDs were strong. The unrest brought to college campuses by the Vietnam War and civil rights era were still on the horizon. Why, then, would Miller worry about the morale of college students?


13. Emerson is a touchstone in Miller’s published and unpublished works. Though the connection to Emerson is not a major focus in the extant literature on Miller, I think the Emerson–Miller connection is especially strong around education and teaching, so it makes sense that it would come out more strongly in this case than in the existing studies. More, we can see from the very title of this Hobart address that Emerson was on Miller’s mind when he thought about education.


15. Hocking also notes that the morale of America going into the first world war was similarly superficial. We didn’t really know what we were getting into, but we were energized to enter the war. In a way, this seems like a bit
of self-criticism, as Hocking wrote a pamphlet on morale to be used by the military in the first war. See: William Hocking, *Morale and Its Enemies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1918). As America confronted the reality of a second world war, the question of morale once again arose (see Goodwin Watson, *Civilian Morale* [Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1942] for an anthology on this issue). Hocking was once again responding to the need for morale in a time of war but placed far more attention on the *quality* of morale and its philosophical implications than some writers who just wanted Americans to have the morale necessary to sustain the war effort.


17. This balance is explored beautifully in Vincent Colapietro’s *The Fateful Shapes*.


20. For an excellent, recent discussion of how liberal arts colleges can and should cultivate student well-being, see: Donald Harward, *Well-Being and Higher Education* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2016).

21. Found in the Miller Papers, housed at Williams College, box 27, folder 27.

22. It is thus slightly ironic that college buildings (and an entire college) are named after Emerson.


24. Nowhere is this belief clearer than in “The American Scholar,” where Emerson writes, “I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art, or Provencal minstrelsy; I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into to-day, and you may have the antique and future worlds” (Emerson, *Essays*, 68–69).


31. For a reflection on some of these issues, see Jeff Frank, “Resisting Locker Room Talk,” *Groundworks* (Philosophy of Education Society, Committee on Professional Affairs, 2019). Retrieved from https://docs.wixstatic.com/udg/c8f5fb_1561e7e65c444787805954559f9aefe1.pdf
32. When I read Dorothy Allison’s beautiful Tanner Lecture, I was glad to see that I was not alone in this feeling (found at https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/a/Allison_02.pdf, see esp. 321 ff.). Ted Cohen’s story “Ethics Class” offers dark humor on doing ethics divorced from feeling. See his *Serious Larks* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).
33. For an excellent discussion of the ways the Socratic method has been distorted, see Avi Mintz, “From Grade School to Law School: Socrates’ Legacy in Education,” in *A Companion to Socrates* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009).
34. I’ve found that having students read Meira Levinson and Jacob Fay’s *Dilemmas in Educational Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2016) is one way to help them appreciate how beliefs inform policy and practice in education.
35. In relation to this point, I especially appreciate Judith Shklar’s discussion of her own teaching. She writes: “The reason why I teach political theory is not that I just like the company of young people, but that I love the subject unconditionally and am wholly convinced of its importance and want others to recognize it as such. It has therefore been quite easy for me to avoid becoming a guru or substitute parent. I really only want to be a mother to our three children, and do not like disciples. And I fear that the students who so readily attach themselves to idols lose their education along with their independence.” Retrieved from https://publications.acls.org/OP/Haskins_1989_JudithNShklar.pdf.
36. For an excellent discussion of this point, see David Hansen, *Exploring the Moral Heart of Teaching* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001).


41. Found in the Miller Papers, housed at Williams College, box 22, folder 14.


43. For a discussion of this non-heroic heroism, see Jeff Frank, “Love and Work,” *Ethics and Education* 12, no. 2 (2017): 233–42.

44. I return to the idea of reverence in the final chapter.


47. Emerson, 492.


52. Though I cannot explore the connection further here, I see a similarity between Miller’s position on accepting that one is placed as a means to developing integrity and the position developed by Raimond Gaita in “Moral Understanding” found in his *Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991).


55. This is Miller’s note. He is very likely referring to Ellwood Patterson Cubberley, *Readings in the History of Education* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920).

56. For one of the most complex and interesting defenses of the great books, see the work of Eva Brann. Brann’s position is far more complex than the caricature of the worshipper of books that Emerson critiques, but it does offer a picture of commitment different from Miller’s and Emerson’s. For a starting point, see her “The American College as the Place for Liberal Learning,” *Daedalus* 128, no. 1 (1999): 151–71.


60. Emerson, *Essays*, 57.

61. Here I especially appreciate Michael Roth’s *Beyond the University* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015) because it draws on American philosophy and philosophers to develop an approach to liberal education in America.

62. Roth, *Beyond*.

63. Here it is interesting to note Alfred North Whitehead’s defense of business education in *The Aims of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1929), especially chapter 8. I think Whitehead’s way of understanding the multiple purposes of a university education frees us to see how something like business can be taught liberally.

64. It would take an entire book to discuss the status of teacher education at liberal arts colleges. Though I believe teaching can—and should—be taught liberally, the bureaucratic requirements teacher education programs are put under, and the types of assessments that someone must pass in order to become a certified teacher, make it hard to see how teacher education programs can exist at liberal arts colleges. The irony here is that we are making it easier in some ways for people to become a teacher—fast-tracks and alternative routes—and yet deeply constraining what small liberal arts colleges can do. Again, this is a topic for another book, but it strikes me as important for people who would defend teacher education at liberal arts colleges to address how the aims of liberal education can coexist with certification requirements that seem antithetical to the mission of liberal education.


67. I can’t tell you how frustrating it is when textbook salespeople tell me that they can offer me a package that includes all my lectures and assessments. This is not liberal education.

68. I choose Emerson’s language of self-reliance, but one can see parallels between my concerns here and concerns, emanating from Kant’s work on education, about how education for autonomy is possible. For an excellent, recent discussion, see Kyla Ebels-Duggan, “Educating for Autonomy: An Old-Fashioned View,” *Social Philosophy and Policy* 31, no. 1 (2013): 141–61.

69. The literature on Kant is extensive and very interesting. I offer a thumbnail sketch of Kant’s thinking here. Most of my conversation will revolve around his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). For a discussion of Kant’s influence on Miller, which I don’t pursue here in detail, see Stephen Tyman, *Descrying the Ideal* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Press, 1993).


71. Here I must sidestep debates about how Kant feels about animals and humans with cognitive impairments. I feel Elizabeth Anderson addresses these problems squarely while also holding on to Kant’s important insights on value. See her *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).


74. I can’t pursue this line of thinking here, but there is an important connection between reclaiming “leisure” as a way of speaking back to the way time is commodified. Liberal colleges can do more to help a student value “free” time. For a nice discussion, see Kevin Gary, “Leisure, Freedom, and Liberal Education,” *Educational Theory* 56, no. 2 (2006): 121–36.

75. For an inspiring discussion of fear and how we must wrest ourselves from

76. Again, this language may strike some readers as too overzealous. I worry, though, that we are not zealous enough at times. We are outraged by events that are often outside of our control, but the world we inhabit—the life-changing world of the classroom—is ours, and the passion we bring to it remains transformative. For a similar perspective on education and our place in the world, see Marilynne Robinson, *What Are We Doing Here? Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2018).

77. For an excellent discussion, see Callard, “Liberal Education.”

78. I see important and interesting parallels between this argument and Adrienne Rich’s argument in “Claiming an Education,” found in her *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence* (New York: Norton, 1979).

79. This, as we know, is one of the most gratifying experiences in teaching. A student comes into college thinking they will never find a job and leave with a calling.

80. The sense of power I use here can be confusing. Like the price/value distinction, the power liberal education makes possible is power in the realm of appreciating and cultivating value, though it may not issue forth in power in the normal sense of the word. I use the term “creative power” to gesture toward the sense of power Miller has in mind and that is cultivated by liberal education.

81. Though I’ve already cited Stanley Cavell’s important and influential reading of Emerson, I am often most moved by Richard Poirier’s Emerson, because Poirier appreciates how Emerson’s work works to unlock the energy of thinking. For more, see his *The Renewal of Literature* (New York: Random House, 1987) and *Poetry and Pragmatism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).


83. When teaching first-year students about the liberal arts, I am always surprised by how surprised they are that there are other standards of success than merely material ones. In our current political climate, it seems we are willing to forgive abhorrent moral beliefs if the person holding them is rich or promises to make us rich. For a good guide to discussing this issue with students, see Mark Roche, *Why Choose the Liberal Arts* (South Bend,


85. I feel I would be remiss if I didn’t mention Richard Eldridge’s excellent work at some point in this book. In addition to writing excellent work on liberal education, Eldridge’s book *Images of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) offers an excellent discussion of how the question of what it means to be a free person will always be a question for us. It is also worth noting that Stanley Bates was Eldridge’s mentor when he was a student at Middlebury College.

86. For more on Canada, see his less-known, but excellent, book *Fist Stick Knife Gun* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 2010).


91. See his *Freedom and the College* (New York: Century Company, 1923).


93. For an interesting discussion of some of these points, see Mark Edmundson, “Does Sports Build Character or Damage It?” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2012). Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/Do-Sports-Build-Character-or/130286.

94. Even at highly selective liberal arts colleges, students spend much of the year—in season and out—training for their sport. Though there is data that demonstrates students involved in athletics have higher GPAs than their
non-athlete peers, the message of sports can be that academics are instrumental to athletics; an important hurdle, but not really the central focus of a college education.


96. Cohen, *Serious Larks*.


98. This is a controversial topic, but I find myself agreeing with Jeremy Waldron that hate speech is an attack on a person’s dignity, and this should give us reason to consider what role hate speech should have in educational institutions where we are concerned with upholding the dignity of students so that they can undergo the difficulties of liberal education. See his *The Harm in Hate Speech* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

99. The conservative attack on students as snowflakes is really a boldfaced attack of thinking. Students who question our treatment of minorities, marginalized populations, and the ways we talk about them are not scared: they are forcing the powerful to look at injustice, and this makes the powerful afraid and lash out with a label that has, unfortunately, stuck.

100. I think a great example of work that is deeply difficult—asking us to question fundamental assumptions about who we are—but at the same time mindful of leading a reader through the process of thought without attacking them is Marilyn Frye’s *Politics of Reality* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1983). Again, it is wrong to say that thinking must be argumentative or confrontational in order to be transformative, as Frye very clearly demonstrates.


104. For a philosopher, Miller is notably averse to argument. See section 1 of Miller’s *Task of Criticism*, especially the essay “Style in Philosophy,” for his thinking on why argument is not the whole—or even the heart—of philosophy.


106. For a very insightful and interesting contemporary discussion of this fact, see Akeel Bilgrami, “The Visibility of Value,” *Social Research* 83, no. 4 (2016): 917–43.

107. Here, I see connections between Emerson’s idea that self-reliance will bring
us into community with others, but unlike Emerson, Miller doesn’t have a
divine backstop to offer certainty that this will come to pass. As well, it is
worth noting that the idea of the fateful experience of freedom is central to
Vincent Colapietro’s wonderful book on Miller, The Fateful Shapes of Human
Freedom.

108. In addition to being influenced by Emerson on this point, I have to think
Miller’s thinking on community is shaped by Josiah Royce, especially The
Problem of Christianity (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America

109. For an excellent example of free thinking attempting to keep pace with sci-
entific advances, see Owen Flanagan, The Really Hard Problem (Cambridge,

110. Here I am reminded of the excellent study of education reform in America,
David Tyack and Larry Cuban’s Tinkering toward Utopia (Cambridge, MA:
Harvard University Press, 1995).

111. The rise of MOOCs is well-documented; for personalized learn-
ing playlists, see https://www.npr.org/2018/11/16/657895964/
the-future-of-learning-well-it-s-personal.

112. For a recent example, see Nellie Bowles, “Dark Consensus,” New York Times,

113. For an example of resistance to this type of technological colonialization,
see Nellie Bowles, “Silicon Valley Came to Kansas. That Started a Rebel-

114. Sadly, this rarely happens in education. The very things that people advocate
for “other people’s children” are not pursued for their own. See David Berliner
and Gene Glass, 50 Myths and Lies that Threaten America’s Public Schools (New

115. In James, Writings.

116. It is important that one of the originators of “Visible Thinking” wrote a book
called Intellectual Character. For an overview of visible thinking, see http://
www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/visible-thinking and Karin Morrison, Mark
Church, and Ron Ritchhart, Making Thinking Visible (San Francisco, CA:

117. For more on this, see my book review of Building a Better Teacher, Education,

118. See: Hansen, “Person and Role in Teaching.”
119. Saying this, the use of robotic teachers may be more common in the future. For example, see https://www.axios.com/robot-ai-teaching-college-course-at-west-point-98ce5888-873b-4b72-8de5-0f7c592d66b0.html.


121. Susan McWilliams makes the very insightful point that noted political thinker Sheldon Wolin’s deep commitment to democracy was likely fostered through his experience of liberal education, as embodied by Oberlin College. See her “Teaching Political Theory as Vocation,” The Good Society 24, no. 2 (2015): 191–97.

122. I feel tremendously lucky that I had Jim Alouf and Holly Gould as colleagues as a new professor at Sweet Briar College. Their devotion to the art of teaching and to their students was deeply educative.

123. This theme runs through most of Dewey’s work; it is seen very powerfully in his Democracy and Education in Middle Works of John Dewey, Volume 9 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008).

124. This policing of thought is not limited to any one type of college: it occurs whenever a teacher does not allow students to experience the transformative power of thinking. For a good, recent discussion of this type of thinking, see Alan Jacobs, How to Think (New York: Currency, 2017).


126. Though I use the term trustee of value in this book, I think this is a nice parallel between thinking that we should educate doctoral students to see themselves as stewards of the discipline. For a discussion, see Chris Golde and George Walker, Envisioning the Future of Doctoral Education: Preparing Stewards of the Discipline (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

127. For a discussion of this point, see Jeff Frank, Teaching in the Now (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2018).

128. For any reader who has dreaded committee work, it is hard to imagine we are being permissive by obligating students to do this work.


131. Here, I appreciate how Michael Oakeshott describes liberal education as a conversation. See his The Voice of Liberal Learning (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1989).

133. For an excellent discussion of related points, see Scheffler, *Equality and Tradition*, especially “The Normativity of Tradition.”

134. Here, again, I think of Emerson and Royce’s thinking on the great community. I am also reminded of a wonderful line from *Souls of Black Folk*, where Du Bois sees the ends of our striving to be educated as the desire to be “co-workers in the kingdom of culture.” W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, in *Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1987), 365.


136. I worry that at times, especially when discussing higher education administration, that I get too defensive. I think the best response to problems around the administration of higher education is to build administrative capacity around the central mission of liberal education. As touched on briefly, book studies about liberal education should be a part of orientation and ongoing professional development at liberal arts colleges.


139. I see this sense of circling as central to Robert Frost’s philosophy of education, a topic of my dissertation and touched on briefly in my review of Robert Frost’s notebooks for the *Teachers College Record*. Retrieved from: https://www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?contentid=13835


141. Emerson, *Essays*, 266.

142. Implicit here is that grading and feedback are not the same thing. For a nice primer on giving effective feedback, though it is geared toward younger students, see Susan Brookhart, *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2017).

143. For an excellent discussion of this sense of being placeless, see Wendell Berry’s work. One can find this theme running throughout his fiction, poems, and essays. For a good starting point, see *Our Only World* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2015).

144. Richard Rorty spells out the philosophical implications of contingency clearly and dramatically in his *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge
University Press, 1989). Though I feel as if I disagree with Rorty’s thinking on contingency—I feel an acknowledgement of contingency can still lead to loyalty, not ironic loyalty, but strong loyalty—I don’t have time to expand on this point here. One might contrast Rorty’s thinking on irony with Bernard Williams’s thinking on confidence. For an excellent discussion, see Miranda Fricker, “Confidence and Irony,” in Morality, Reflection, and Ideology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

145. Here we can think about Josiah Royce’s thinking on loyalty and how this influenced Miller’s own thinking on local control. See Josiah Royce, Philosophy of Loyalty (New York: MacMillan, 1914).

146. Miller, Midworld, 191.

147. Miller, Midworld, 191.

148. For example, some college campuses make it difficult to do good work. In these cases, one should look for opportunities to teach at places that are supportive of liberal education, even while one also tries to keep the spark of liberal education alive for students.


150. See, for example, Jason Stanley, How Fascism Works (New York: Random House, 2018).


153. To which a defender of campus protest may assert: but the other side is full of hatred and violence, we are fighting for justice. I think we can usefully sidestep this debate altogether by considering what allows for the type of thinking that will build a foundation capable of sustaining the difficulty of liberal education. Populism does not strike me as the foundation from which we should build. For an interesting discussion of related points, see Alan Jacobs, “Wokeness and Myth on Campus,” The New Atlantis 53 (2017): 33–44.

154. One can see this pressure coming from groups like Reedies Against Racism. For an overview, see “Students Said a Keystone Course Was Racist,” in Chronicle of Higher Education. See https://www.chronicle.com/article/Students-Said-a-Keystone/243095. Right-wing critiques of liberal education make it appear that these types of protests are normal at liberal colleges, supported and encouraged by faculty, and indicative of their illiberal nature. This is not
true. But explaining why it isn’t true is something that college communities should talk about more regularly than they do.

155. For a really excellent discussion of a related point, see Rebecca Hanrahan and Louise Antony, “Because I Said So,” *Hypatia* 20, no. 4 (2005): 59–79. Hanrahan and Antony make the important point that a feminist teacher is an authority in the classroom, but this is completely consonant with the teacher’s belief in the liberatory power of feminist thinking.

156. I see similarities between this line of thinking in Hannah Arendt’s philosophy of education. For an excellent discussion of Arendt’s philosophy of education, see the special issue Chris Higgins edited for the *Teachers College Record*. The table of contents can be accessed at https://www.tcrecord.org/Issue.asp?volyear=2010&number=2&volume=112.

157. For an excellent defense of the power of poetry in politically difficult times, see Clare Cavanaugh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

158. For an excellent discussion of the place of piety in Miller’s thinking, see Colapietro, *Fateful Shapes of Human Freedom*. 