

WHY THIS? WHY NOW? WHAT IS THE POINT?

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Why not yesterday? Because it was April 1, and it might have been taken for an April Fool's Day joke — as in fact at least one of my SPS 102 TFs quipped when I mentioned the idea in last Wednesday's (31st March) Teaching Colloquium.

In a more serious vein, it has been a matter of various things clicking together. Especially over the last year, in the relative isolation and introspection forced on me by COVID-19, I've been thinking of how to encourage our Prep Year students to read more, hear more, watch more so as to help them make better progress by immersing themselves as much as possible (or at least, more than they are doing now) in an English-language environment. (Furkan Alpat and I have had occasional conversations about this without pushing the idea enough to arrive at a conclusion.) I myself do a lot of online reading, and as, early in the morning or late at that night, when I am surfing the BBC, the New York Times, the New York Review of Books, the Yale Alumni Magazine or the Harvard Gazette etc, I've frequently found myself muttering under my breath that I should be sharing a lot of this stuff with a broader readership, though I was lacking the means to do so.

Now this blog or diary, whatever you choose to call it, may be of some use in this regard, enabling me to make an introductory mention of some fascinating articles under this "Personal Thoughts" column, and simultaneously to upload them under my related "Recommended Readings" sub-title (including videos and other visuals). A second point is that I know I do a lot of name-dropping in all my courses and classes, not very consciously or deliberately, but simply because my mind works that way; I associate one thing with another, and frequently go into extended side-trips (TR yan pistler) — which must be exhausting for the audience, though hopefully I do recover in time, and remember enough about where I had left off so as to return and pursue my main track. Still, I am left wondering whether at least some of those authors, thinkers, books, films, or other works of art and literature that I have mentioned are actually being picked up by the young men and women that I am talking with, stirring their curiosity, and provoking further exploration. So this is an attempt to expand and prolong that conversation.

A third and related point has to do with manifold questions that inevitably arise during or after class, and which I end up regretting not having had enough time to respond to. Of course I cannot cope with everything, but I will be trying to carry maybe a few of them into these "Personal Thoughts." In the process I would also like to present interesting passages from some of my students' work — both because I have found them insightful, and in the hope that they will serve as "good practice" examples to others.

Definitely to be continued. "See" you, so to speak, probably tomorrow.

