



## **HUMANITIES IN ACADEMIA: THE GLASS BEADS GAME, A BREAKTHROUGH TO THE ULTIMATE REALITY (WHATEVER IT MEANS) OR FOLLOWING THE CURRICULUM?**

**Tatiana Suprun**

*Moscow Lomonosov State University, Russia*

University teachers of humanities will probably agree that there are fundamental questions which normally lie dormant in periods of social and academic stability, but in turbulent times rise from some deeper layers of consciousness and start demanding answers or at least some attention. This seems particularly true for teachers of languages to students of non-linguistic specialities as the issues of existential character are not normally included in their syllabus. We seek to define three of the possible approaches to foreign language teaching and assess their value in the current academic and social environment with particular regard to students of economics and management. The approaches are described as pragmatic, philosophic and what can here be called Alexandrian, to avoid the term *post-modern*. The choice of the approach depends on whether the faculty deem it necessary to use language training for the purpose of raising students' cultural and ethical or even moral awareness, thus becoming part of a broader issue of humanizing higher education. An attempt is made to show that in most cases students best respond to the approach here called Alexandrian, in the sense that it uses elements of literature, art and philosophy in order to build behavioral models to be discussed as well as generate novel insights into the experience they have already acquired.

### **INTRODUCTION: WHY?**

One irresistible lure has been haunting some university professors of English as a foreign language since the beginning of the new millennium, when quite a few students coming to Russian economic schools showed much better knowledge of the language than they had usually done before. It was no longer necessary to spend so much time on grammar, basic vocabulary and elementary speaking skills - fluency levels had noticeably risen. The administration certainly cut hours (or credits?) – but it was not fast enough: teachers had already developed a taste for the kinds of activities not exactly typical of economic faculties of the Russian universities. They found they had time for, e.g. watching a good film together and discuss concepts and values – “talk about stuff” as one British author called it. Or learn to dance folk dances, sing songs and take part in Christmas concerts. Some went as far as organizing courses to learn Esperanto or Gaelic (Maria Koroleva, MSU). Not to mention literature – it was possible to have proper home reading!

Today that moderately universal character of language learning seems no longer affordable; this coincides with the general political trend when administration are at best irritated by any

forms of activism among those they are supposed to educationally and/or civilly serve. This coincidence, being quite understandable, often causes disgust and resentment maybe because universities are still perceived as islands of freedom (however curtailed) in the seas of corporate totalitarianism (R. Coarse, D.H. Robertson) and governmental authoritarian inadequacy.

There may be doubts about the nature of this disquiet among the faculty: it can originate from the desire to stick to the things teachers find interesting and gratifying; it can be caused by genuine concern about the outcome of educational efforts or, most likely, here we as usual have a combination of at least these two, with different proportions in each individual case. It is probably worth thinking about whether this drive can and should be used productively and in case of the positive answer, how.

It is important to note that, however egoistic might be the motives, the anxiety is real and so is the desire if not to reverse the deleterious trends – at least try and resist the social entropy which appears to be gaining ground. Several aspects seem to require particular attention. Firstly, there is a need to restore or, as it is often the case in Russia, create anew the social and interpersonal links, which in relation to students often means attempts to slow down their flight into solitary worlds of the internet reality making them not only work together on score-generating projects (this has been an accepted practice for quite a while) – but also develop genuine interest in the opinion of the neighbor even when the matter in question is outside the sphere of one's research or study.

Another issue is the moral dimension of higher education. Although opinions differ, it requires outstanding boldness to openly and unconditionally reject the relevance of moral element in the teaching/learning process. In practice, however, as teachers do not want to be preachers (for various reasons) they happily abstain from trying to remind their students about what is right and what is wrong in the moral sense. It is easier with ethics, which tends to turn into meta-ethics and is probably necessary – but is it sufficient? For a country that is being eaten up by corruption the answer seems to be obvious: it is not enough to teach young people to behave correctly, particularly in the universities supposed to be elitist. It may be argued that the imprinting of moral values is the function of schools and families – but they fail too often; and we should remember that young people at the age of 16-22 are still susceptible even to the “correct” ideas, if properly presented.

Faculty and administration agree with that, sometimes officially, but they are reluctant to introduce changes into already extensive curriculums. That is why it might be a good idea (not very original though) to incorporate elements of moral education in other courses. The question, again, is how.

The third point we would like to bring up here may be considered too personal – but in fact it is not, as it has to do with what I could call the continuity of cultural attitudes and perceptions. It comes with age – you suddenly realize that nobody around can understand your allusions or at least remember what book or film the characters mentioned come from. It seems to be necessary to try and learn to make students interested in the cultural matters that are more or less in tune with our own aesthetic and philosophical preferences – in order to have somebody to talk to in the future. It is excruciatingly sad to hear people saying that so many friends are gone and the new generations, even of colleagues, are so different that there are so few people they can talk to – meaning people ‘you can share your ideas with and generate something which is new to both of you.’ This means we should keep fit in terms of passing on ideas, tastes and preferences – and the ability to talk to the young.

**What?**

Now when, hopefully, it has become reasonably clear that beside the immediate linguistic goals, there may exist others which seem to be very important as such but which do not seem to fit in with any other subject on the university economics or science curriculae except – probably – English (provided the students have the sufficient starting level of language knowledge and administration agrees to allocate enough time for the classes) - now we can formulate these goals in the following way:

- ✓ to develop social skills of undergraduates, make them communicate at the “human” level, not only business or professional;
- ✓ to raise their moral awareness;
- ✓ to widen their cultural outlook;
- ✓ to enhance their artistic taste

All this looks and sounds trivial and this triviality might scare us off the subject. Still, trivial issues are sometimes those which keep requiring new decisions, and every generation again and again has to work them out. Assuming this to be true, we will naturally ask the sacramental question:

**How? Pragmatism and Truth-seeking.**

Another trichotomy can be offered: we may approach the issue as, first, pragmatists, second, truth-seekers (or philosophers in the Platonian sense of the word) and third, without an excessively earnest attitude to either ourselves or the matter in question – “beautifully, delightfully, whimsically if you like”- try and in a way follow Hermann Hesse’s idea of uniting several cultural melodies into a new symphonic entity. Enhancing the element of art in the teaching process so to speak...

The first approach, here called pragmatic, means that the top priority for the teacher is to make sure that students get all the skills and knowledge necessary to pass their exams. To achieve the objective it is necessary for the teachers to stick to the curriculum. It doesn’t mean that they reject the importance of the points presented above – they use everything the books on programmes offer, which is quite a lot: course books in General English cover wide ranges of issues in various ways connected with life and work, and great job can be done while discussing them and writing essays. The problem is that in many cases students are not involved emotionally. They get prepared for their exams – but this rarely affects their values.

The second approach – the working name is “the search for the ultimate reality” – implies that issues, both of general character and strictly professional, are taken seriously. Teachers of general English who favor this approach tend to be fond of “proper home reading” and of watching films. They offer their students more or less serious stories and organize discussions of the questions raised there in order to elicit (and if possible to some extent shape) students’ opinions in the course of these discussions. Among the most favored authors are S. Maugham, G. Green, J.Grisham M. Ridpath, B.Shaw. As for the films, quite popular ones have been Dead Poets Society, Elisabeth, Forrest Gump, Wall street, Other People’s Money, The Battle of Ideas and.

For those doing professional English (in our case it is the language of economics and business) the focus is on research work: we help them master the right kind of language and

create opportunities for exchange of thoughts and opinions. The situation is very convenient; the groups are formed according to the level of English and students who come from various programmes can get some idea of what their course mates are doing. Another advantage is that teachers of English do not find themselves in the right position to make judgments on the research content of the materials presented: unlike their professors in economic disciplines we don't criticize this content. Any ideas are welcome and criticism, if there is any, comes from the peers which is much less inhibiting. Our function is to help them prepare listenable speeches and keep discussions civilized: left to themselves they tend to get agitated and end up arguing heatedly in the native language – because they are not just playing linguistic games but are indeed trying to find answers to questions and if they think they have found them – persuade one another that it is their answer which is correct, not the one suggested by the neighbor.

In this way they learn to communicate on both the professional and human level; the moral issues can be naturally integrated into the discussions. The distinctive feature of this approach consists in the attitude that can be very well seen in the book by one American author: “We need a revolution in our approach to education, to empower ourselves and our children to think, to question, and dare to act...”

Ask yourself then questions... What course will I take to end needless starvation, and make sure there is never again a day like September 11? How can I help our children understand that people who live gluttonous, unbalanced lives should be pitied but never, ever emulated, even if those people present themselves, through the media they control, as cultural icons and try to convince us that penthouses and yachts bring happiness? What changes will I commit to making in my attitudes and perceptions? What forums will I use to teach others and to learn more on my own?

These are the essential questions of our time. Each of us needs to answer them in our own way and to express our answers clearly, unequivocally” (J. Perkins, 12-210)

This approach seems to successfully meet all our objectives; it allows to enhance communication, in some degree teaches interpersonal skills and no doubt widens the outlook. And yet, there is a difficulty here: the teachers have to have a very special personality – enthusiastic, earnest and willing to communicate in this particular style; they should firmly believe in the power of words to open hearts and minds (*ibid.*, 218). There are such people and they use this approach quite often – in moderation, as we are protected by the commendable humility of non-native speakers forever falling short of proper language practice and experts in nothing but linguistics.

The prevalence of ironic set of mind, however, leaves little opportunity for economic or existential pathos. That is why a different quotation from a different author will probably have greater appeal:

‘As a wizard, I must tell you that words have power.’

‘As a politician, I must tell you I already know’ (Pratchett T., 16-79)

### **How: Glass Beads Game**

For those who do not hold many strong views or whose views are too strong to be discussed; for teachers overloaded with cultural baggage and for the young and green, only beginning to actually read, look and listen – there is another approach, the third one. In our classification it is called the Glass Beads Game approach – or Alexandrian.

The main reason why such a complicated term was chosen is the wish to avoid being accused of eclecticism which would probably not be fair as it is not the styles that are combined, but symbols and meanings, like in that awesomely sophisticated book by Herman Hesse – “Glass Beads Game”.

The word ‘Alexandrian’ is used here, because the epoch it primarily referred to was the first in the history of Western civilization when education as such began to acquire greater value, museums and libraries appeared, and the preservation of the artistic, literary and philosophical heritage became a priority, which was accompanied by attempts at coping and adapting earlier styles. Some researchers point out that in that period creating wholly original literature gave way to collecting and codifying. People must have felt that everything worth creating had already been created and they could only seek for new combinations of the already existing elements. This perception, however arguable it might be, seems to provide some grounds for associating the terms Alexandrian and Glass Beads Game when thinking about the ideas and principles underlying the third approach to teaching described in this publication.

The idea is to establish connections between related or seemingly unrelated topics and/or study the existing but not always obvious connections between the elements skillfully combined by the authors driven by what we can call the Alexandrian spirit.

## **CONCEPTS**

The first step will be to select and introduce the topics. Two ways are most obvious in this respect. In one case it is the students who select the topics, in the other – the teacher. We have tried out both (albeit so far not very consistently).

In the course of 2010-11 academic year third-year students majoring in economics or management and during their English lessons mastering the art of public speech were asked to make a short presentation on any subject they were interested in. Out of 14 persons, four chose topics related to their economic research, while the other ten, being probably a little tired of the main academic disciplines preferred to acquaint their group mates with something totally different. What did they choose to speak about?

- 1) History and architecture of a native town
- 2) Celebration of New Year in different countries
- 3) A new style of dance
- 4) Making and playing a special kind of toy
- 5) The Japanese art of Origami
- 6) Mystery o Mona Lisa Gioconda
- 7) Effective public speech
- 8) Activities of the Church
- 9) Camels in Australia
- 10) Totalitarian religious sects in Russia
- 11) Royal weddings
- 12) What is mafia

What we have here is a random combination of topics and, possibly, ideas. It might be considered to be in bad taste as there seemingly is no underlying principle. To paraphrase

another literary character, we are relatively high on content but obviously low on the unity. But even this random mixture might prove of some value. The point is that according to some experts in the area there are broadly four major conditions that are likely to increase the probability of generating innovative ideas. New ideas emerge: 1) from an inventive combination of already existing ideas; 2) when there is a serious conflict and social demand for new things/ideas that could generate emotive energy; 3) when a target audience appear; 4) when there have been created institutional bases and networks allowing for the dissemination of those ideas. While the last two conditions are more or less beyond our reach, the first two are indeed relevant because this is exactly what we are aiming at: combination of ideas (hopefully unexpected) and emotional involvement that will hopefully evoke the spirit of enquiry and boyish keenness.

In this way we might be able to make some contribution, however small, to the resolving of one of the major problems of our time – rationalistic apathy and lack of emotional drive. It certainly is very small-scale and with no immediate consequences for macro-level, but, as G.K. Chesterton once wrote, enormous things do often turn upon tiny and insignificant ones.

As we can see the range of topics is quite broad and the outlook is sure to be widened. It is good for the general kind of erudition and should enhance the interest in life which is already valuable in itself; it may also develop their social skills if properly organized. However, the moral awareness in this case is likely to be neglected and we can hardly expect much in the way of improving their tastes in perception of arts and literature.

For quite a while I have felt an acute shortage of proper humanitarian knowledge in my students. Funnily, one day in the past we were totally happy when the routine question about the sources of Marxism, requiring a quotation from the communist scriptures – Lenin's writings, remained unanswered. Smart 17-year-old intellectuals were looking at us earnestly, unable to understand what was expected from them. This happened in 1992 and caused a big celebration in the staff room. But when a few years later students massively failed to recognize some immortal (for us) quotations or showed glaring ignorance about some basic philosophic concepts – it was by no means a nice surprise. They could not explain the dual nature of light (the wave and the particle), and had difficulty to remember the plot of a novel that should be an indispensable part of the minimum cultural baggage of a well-educated Russian; now they may have trouble memorizing, for example, the meaning of the word 'inhibit' because they never paid attention to the basics of chemistry and do not know the term for substances that slow down chemical reactions. For my generations these are the symptoms that something has gone very wrong in the whole system of school education. Narrow specialization does make sense, but for people who in future are likely to have jobs involving serious decision-making in the economy, the ability to understand links between various elements of the system seems to be important. Humanizing the humanities also involves respect to other types of knowledge: financial specialists and government officials in my country tend to be broadly ignorant and largely arrogant – and this often means incompetence... So why not try and do something about it?

The principle of glass beads game may be of some help. And if we, teachers, figuratively speaking, take the reins, what shall we be able to offer? Combinations being countless, one example should give a general idea of the whole matter.

The first step is to select the theme which is supposed to meet the four objectives presented above as well as correspond to the artistic and intellectual interests of the teacher. In this case the beads to be played include: first, the idea of probability (students of economics and management have probability theory on their curriculum); second, concepts of space and time; third, as the latter make it logically inevitable - relativity theory; which in turn will take us to relativism as

philosophical persuasion and from here ad obviously infinitum: at this stage the leading role can be passed on to the students.

## AUTHORS

Probability theory seems to be a good choice as many of them are likely to use it in their future work: quite a few aspire to join investment banks and risk management departments of big companies and such like. They may be happy to contribute to the mathematical part. As for the literary one – there are at least two contemporary authors who seem completely fascinated by the ideas of time, space, probability. The first is Douglas Adams with his Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy. The other is Terry Pratchett, a most prolific writer. The Thief of Time appears to be suitable for the initial part of the course and/or Science of the Disk World, which can help in passing on from literary-scientific-philosophic matters to moral issues, values and ultimate questions.

Next comes Amazing Maurice, where we have a witty model of the moral code generating process and it is also possible to include Guards! Guards! – if we feel like shifting the stress to the civic matters. In fact, the plan of the course can be presented as a kind of labyrinth, Borges-style, only instead of lives of characters we will have topics and ideas. When business-related issues attract greater interest, Going Postal or Making Money or both will be an appropriate choice. Michael Ridpath with the clear dilemmas of his characters may also be helpful.

Politically and economically-minded persons might then prefer to switch to something closer to the historic reality – like Winston Churchill's biography or the History of Goldman Sachs. A doze of philosophy might be indicated in all cases, and then students' contributions will be most welcome in all possible forms (presentations, mini-lectures, debates, round-table discussions, even theatrical performances – you name it). In this way we may get a chance, when meeting these students years later at a course-mate party, of having something to speak of – apart from careers, families and the rare funny episodes during the lessons.

## ORGANIZATION

The next step is selection of students. As the course is not directly (or even indirectly) related to any economic discipline it needs special 'advertising' and slightly unorthodox selection of participants. On the one hand, they are supposed to have a sufficiently clear idea of what they are going to do, on the other it is desirable to have elements of surprise throughout the course. So, candidates receive a task before they decide whether to sign up. If they later feel enthusiastic about going on with the process – they come and start participating. If it is not their cup of tea – then it is better not to have them in the classroom, at least when the premier performance takes place.

This pre-course assignment involves this passage from Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy:

*“To be fair, though, when confronted by the sheer enormity of the distances between the stars, better minds than the one responsible for the Guide's introduction have faltered. Some invite you to consider for the moment a peanut in Reading and a small walnut in Johannesburg, and other such dizzying concepts.*

*The simple truth is that interstellar distances do not fit into the human imagination.*

*Even light that travels so fast that it takes most races thousands of years to realize that it travels at all, takes time to journey between the stars. It takes eight minutes to journey from the star Solo the place where the Earth used to be, and four years more to arrive at Sol's nearest stellar neighbor, Alpha Proxima.*

*For light to reach the other side of the Galaxy, for it to reach Damogran for instance, takes rather longer: five hundred thousand years.*

*The record for hitchhiking this distance is just under five years, but you don't get to see much on the way.*

*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy says that if you hold a lungful of air you can survive in the total vacuum of space for about thirty seconds. However, it does go on to say that what with space being the mindboggling size it the chances of getting picked up by another ship within those thirty seconds are two to the power of two hundred and seventy six thousand seven hundred and nine to one against.*

*By a totally staggering coincidence that is also the telephone number of the Islington flat where Arthur once went to a very good party and met a very nice girl whom he totally failed to get off with – she went off with a gatecrasher'.( )*

The task consists in identifying the points connected with the idea(s) of time, space and probability, and then find and bring some relevant information to the first lecture. If they do this task properly, they come with information and/or contemplations on the following:

1. power of improbability
2. time and space as forms of the existence of the matter
3. how the concept of probability is utilized
4. Theory of Indetermination

and many other things. After some information sharing and exchange of ideas they get their next assignment which involves the reading of the book itself.

Many of these scientific, physical and mathematical issues can be related to philosophical, political and linguistic questions – the variety may be huge. It is here where the Alexandrian principle comes into play and the resulting combination may indeed feel like a glass beads pattern (not always though).

Among the philosophical issues that are likely to arise there are two of particular interest for our purposes: morals and the meaning of life. We start discussing them with M. Douglas, but later we might need a different author and my suggestion is Terry Pratchett. The transfer is logically and stylistically easy, it can be made from the concepts of space and time through the theory of relativity and with the help of the question of evolution; both authors seem to be ardent adherents of Darwin's theory.

The majority of young people in my country are normally reluctant to discuss such questions – and have always been so, even in Soviet times. (I have always wondered why, it seems so interesting, but probably in this area people tend to side with Gwendolen from 'The Importance of Being Earnest' who believed that all metaphysical speculation has no relation to reality whatsoever).

Anyway, this is a dangerous ground to be trodden as it involves personal religious or/and quasi-religious views people are very sensitive about. That is why it is hardly advisable to approach issues of this nature in the way that we call ‘search for ultimate reality’. You need a good degree of detachment – and possibly humor. Glass Beads method allows it.

To introduce moral issues I would suggest Pratchett’s *Amazing Maurice*. In that book a colony of rats and a cat accidentally acquire the gift of articulate speech (or, as Mr Higgins put it, the divine gift of articulate speech). Very soon after they start working out moral principles. The description of the process is fascinating; this can be illustrated by the episode in which the most spiritually advanced rat has just formulated the commandment equivalent to the well-known ‘do not kill’ and is sharing the idea with her companions:

*‘No rat to kill another rat.  
‘But supposing you have to?’  
‘Then you have to. But you shouldn’t.’ (58-59)*

The passage is also very good in terms of teaching grammar, the use of the modal verbs ‘have to’ and ‘should’; students tend to be impressed.

Here, again, we will need philosophy. Interestingly, when we had the Soviet Union and the Communist Party (which I used to heartily detest and despise with all the passion of a teenager dissident) – the basic philosophical knowledge was given to most children already at school. At university, too: of course, they did their best to teach Marxist philosophy, but in many cases failed in the job, evoking interest to any other system except Marxism.

We can consider the episodes where characters have to make moral choice as attempts of modeling reality and ‘knowing the true things by what their mockeries be’ (4)

Since in this particular case we have in mind students of economic and business disciplines who constantly use and build models, it may be psychologically helpful to introduce the term ‘modeling’: the awareness that what they are dealing with are ontological ‘models that bridge subject and object, consciousness and existence, theory and empirical data’(Clifford Geerts Groenevald)1960:98) may give an additional cognitive incentive to the students – and an interesting turn to the way in which the course is unfolding.

As we have already noted, metaphysical speculation in most cases does not seem to attract students; rationalism and pragmatism prevent them from taking it personally and this leads to some deficiency in both perception and expression, to a certain lack of depth. It may not affect their future careers but makes work and correspondingly life less interesting for teachers which is not to be tolerated. Besides, it helps when students have some idea about the concepts of relativism, determinism and some others: they remember the vocabulary much better. *Amazing Maurice* gives an excellent opportunity to talk about the relevant and the absolute, about values and principles.

Another feature in the young (and not only young) people in today’s Russia is their (or our) political apathy. Out of one hundred students barely 10 will be at least mildly interested in politics. Whatever the causes this apathy has to be dealt with despite the fact that government and university officials frown upon attempts at independent political activity of more or less any kind. There are quite many books on the issue but they are so serious that in them things either look like ideological propaganda which provokes idiosyncratic reaction – or appear to be totally hopeless which is maybe even worse. With Pratchett’s ‘Guards! Guards!’ it is possible to talk not only about political matters, but also about the good and evil in people. Pratchett’s brilliant formulas stick in memory and give food for thought and, I believe may really influence one’s

behavior, provided that attention has been timely drawn to them: ‘people who will follow any dragon...’

So, from Pratchett’s books we can move in three directions: 1) philosophical; 2) political; 3) literary (involving the above and a lot of other things as well).

There will always be an element of surprise. The teacher may throw in an extract from Bill Bryson quoted in the beginning of this paper and thus open a completely new direction – travel, cultural diversity, national characters, history, etc., etc.

Organization of the course may vary, mostly depending on the number of students. In the beginning all of them work together, as one group. If the whole number of participants is not very big (say, up to ten) they can continue that way. When there are more, it will be sensible to form two or more smaller groups and allow each of them to create their own route. It is highly advisable that they make a map of their intellectual travel – not as a PowerPoint presentation, but a real map on a large (at least 30x50) paper sheet. It can include photographs, pictures, quotations from the books, names of participants, ideas generated and conclusions made by students –you name it.

Points, words and images on the map can be indifferent colors (students greatly enjoy discussing what color goes with which subject: should philosophy be purple? Travel orange or green? And what color give to politics? And economics? The final product can be a map or a painting made in symbolic colors or, in fact, a concert, - and a short oral report explaining the visuals, from seven to fifteen minutes. It can also be a full-blown presentation with slides and everything, but I believe the choice should be made by the participants.

This course if properly organized meets all our targets: it widens the outlook, both students’ and teachers’, can improve all important academic skills, raise the moral, environmental and any other kind of awareness; it probably even develops taste for research. Only one point remains questionable – the literary taste (and taste for arts in general).

University people on both sides of the professor desk tend to consider the lower genres with a degree of contempt. I have a friend whose father and mother are top university professors in mathematics and Oriental studies respectively. She only read books by Alexandre Dumas or Jules Vern when her own daughter was approaching her teens and she herself was in her thirties because her highbrow parents had not encouraged that reading – they said it was mass culture and as such not worth paying attention to.

Similarly, today’s students get surprised when they find out that their professors read detective stories. They themselves, if read at all, prefer what they think to be more serious literature. It is very good: it means that the young people feel the need to resolve some fundamental issues and they look for certain inputs to further process intellectually. They have not learnt to see the material in their own life and environment so they and, besides, have difficulty understanding how it is possible after reading kilograms of *chez-d’oeuvres* enjoy stories about police inspectors.

As the attitude described seems to persist, it will make sense to explain why this ‘lighter’ kind of literature is sometimes worth reading and studying.

Of course, there are thrillers and thrillers. We are talking about books written in good language and valuable both in terms of students’ mastering the language and getting information about various aspects of life in the countries and communities described. Some books meet both criteria (like Dexter with his inspector Morse or Bill Bryson); others may not be exactly reliable about the realities of life, but they score high on language and ideas (like Adams and Pratchett).

Anyway, for adult people, who more or less have worked out all the most important answers and questions, serious speculations about life are no longer exciting (except maybe some

absolutely extraordinary cases.) Besides, they have already learned to see real things in the life around and often cannot afford to spend their energy and resources of empathy and sympathy on fictitious characters. We need tales that do not involve us emotionally.

On the other hand, if a teacher is young and/or fond of some other kind of literature they can base their courses on something closer to the school /university literature programme. But as far as my colleagues are concerned humbler genres appear to be more appealing.

The question of taste thus remains open which is quite natural: *de gustibus non disputandum*, within certain parameters. I don't think we should be too rigorous provided there are barriers to outright rubbish.

There usually remains one more issue to be resolved: whether the dean's office will give consent to payment for this course. But maybe, 'all things considered , and taking the long view and one thing and another', the consent may materialize.

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Innovations that allowed real-time communication beyond the range of a single human voice. Popular culture often lionizes the stars of discovery and invention. A century ago, this meant the Wright brothers, Edison, and the auto pioneers; in the Eisenhower years, Jonas Salk and Wernher von Braun; and in the past generation, first Bill Gates and then Steve Jobs. But about technology's onrush in general, cultural and political attitudes have been mixed at best. For each writer or thinker or government leader who has enthusiastically welcomed whatever changes technology might bring, there has been a counterpart warning of its dangers.

@inproceedings{Suprun2011HUMANITIESIA, title={HUMANITIES IN ACADEMIA: THE GLASS BEADS GAME, A BREAKTHROUGH TO THE ULTIMATE REALITY (WHATEVER IT MEANS) OR FOLLOWING THE CURRICULUM?}, author={Tatiana Suprun}, year={2011} }. Tatiana Suprun. University teachers of humanities will probably agree that there are fundamental questions which normally lie dormant in periods of social and academic stability, but in turbulent times rise from some deeper layers of consciousness and start demanding answers or at least some attention. This seems particularly true for teachers of languages to students of non- Is the ultimate reality up against other realities? Sure seems so from the way the question is structured and from the vast majority of the answers. For example, the answer that it is The One, suggests that that comes as opposed to a reality where there Continue Reading. Loading. For example, it is taken to mean the most real, indisputably real, or the highest, the most transcendent, the most fundamental. Is the ultimate reality up against other realities? Sure seems so from the way the question is structured and from the vast majority of the answers. For example, the answer that it is The One, suggests that that comes as opposed to a reality where there is not-one (but perhaps two or three or many), but ultimate reality is The One and the many.