

*The Case for Delight in the Humanities: a View from Te Whanganui-a-Tara*

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Countless arguments sensibly argue for the value of the humanities for reasons of economy, societal enrichment, pedagogy, and empathy. This presentation stems from my having been persuaded by these arguments on an intellectual level, yet not finding within them resonance with my own motivation for pursuing a path in the humanities.

Amidst humanists' eagerness to justify our fields from a basis of utility, we should not forget the importance of simple pleasure to be derived from our subject. For many of us, the delight we discovered in our discipline was a catalyst for us to choose to make a livelihood from the humanities. In my own case, I pursued a doctorate in theology despite knowing that a career in academia, or any other career for which my studies were a condition of entry, was not for me. I pursued graduate studies out of pure love of the subject matter.

I now find myself working in Treaty of Waitangi settlements in Aotearoa New Zealand (the government's provision of redress to indigenous Māori as acknowledgement of its historical injustices). This field gives no preference to those with doctorates, especially not those whose studies focused on early Christian martyrdom! My position is, I hope, an interesting one from which to assess the significance of a humanities education. I maintain that the primary good my DPhil served was the pleasure I derived from being immersed in academic theology. If I take up a career in secondary school teaching later in life, inspiring this same enjoyment in my students will be my chief motivation.

In this presentation I will share my perspective on my time in graduate humanities studies, with the benefit of two years' distance and a richer life experience. I will explore the ways in which my education in the humanities features in and enriches my extra-academic life. Arguing from a basis of personal experience, I will also draw from scholars' ideas surrounding of the good of 'play', as well as other sources the convenors may recommend.