

# Ardet

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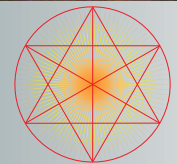
## 'Beauty adorns virtue'

Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of Ginevra de' Benci hangs in the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC. It is one of the most sublime portraits in the history of art, perfectly placed in the Gallery. Crowds flock to see it during the school holidays. The back of the portrait has another painting, with a Latin inscription, "Beauty adorns virtue." The juniper in the centre also features in the portrait. "It is a symbol of purity, while the laurel and palm represent intellectual and moral virtue." Juniper sounds very similar to Ginevra's name so the two paintings in the one frame inform one another.



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## IAMSCU/NAMSCU — Global Perspectives

I recently attended the 2011 IAMSCU Conference, International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities. It was held as a joint meeting with the parallel American National Association. The venue was Washington, DC.

It opened with a service with not a little pomp and circumstance, in the National Cathedral. The Cathedral musicians of brass, timpani and organ played memorably. When we got to the Conference speeches they were no less memorable. The Conference theme was educating effective leaders for global perspectives.

In most respects, the initiatives being talked about in the Conference confirmed the hard choices already taken by Trinity College Council. Even though Trinity College is a micro-sized organisation compared to seminaries and universities in the Americas or Asia, nevertheless it has developed cutting edge initiatives and programmes.

Perhaps the most telling comment of all from a range of significant speeches came early on. Dr Hiromi Nagao, from Hiroshima Jyogakuin University, Japan, told of the suffering as the tsunami and nuclear disaster unfolded. She sits on a national committee for higher education in Japan.

She reported that after the critical events, expert scientists offered a plethora of critical comment on television but few stepped up to the mark to help the power company. A moral vacuum had occurred, when criticism was cheap but lives were being lost.

As a result, Japanese politicians and educators realised that they had produced a generation of highly educated scientists full of knowledge but lacking the essential

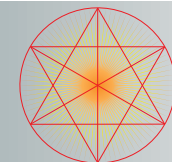
qualities of leadership. As a consequence they are reshaping the entire educational model around core values.

Throughout the Conference a consistent theme emerged: education without a moral compass is not a full education. Effective leadership is the result of a full rounded character. The Under-Secretary General to the United Nations made exactly the same point as he challenged Methodist educators to make a difference in educational processes to improve the health and security of our interconnected world.

In its own small way, Trinity College through its courses and programmes asks people to this kind of commitment. But it cannot do it under old models of education. The days of what Trinity College has long outlived their usefulness. The College has to serve the present, and the commitments of the present day ask folk to be informed, to seek information in our open learning environment and to promote teaching and learning values for God's new day.

For a brief reflection on what this kind of principled leadership can achieve in the hearts and minds of others, go to our main website to see Dr Diana Chapman Walsh. She argues persuasively—as did speaker after speaker—that the online educators have changed the nature of the enterprise from exclusive, hierarchical models to inclusive, radical learning communities. The DNA has changed, and those who nurture values, service and spirituality in these new learning communities are the game-changers. But her challenge was, can we be the leaders we need our students to become?

A full text of this address will soon be available.



### Can Our World Be Sustained? What Role Should Higher Education Play? Dr Anthony Cortese

Is it possible for all IAMSCU members “to make healthy, just, and sustainable action a foundation for all learning and practice in higher education?”

This question was given a sharp focus in Conference by Tony Cortese. He is a leading expert in environmental studies and the application of sustainability in the public sector with a special emphasis on educational institutions.

A number of IAMSCU Colleges have achieved carbon neutrality with clear economic advantages. The Conference resolved to ask all members to commit to that goal over a two year period. What might that mean for Trinity College Council? It presents us with a unique opportunity to look at our practices through very different lenses. The Council will keep Ardet readers up to date with progress as it tracks the carbon footprint in all of the College’s life and work.

A highly significant fact has emerged for Colleges that have achieved carbon neutrality. Over 70% of all students making a choice about where they will study have indicated carbon neutrality is essential in coming to a decision.

Young people are worried about the future as climate change impacts on their lives. They are far less likely to study at institutions which do not care about environmental impact. Students now come to tertiary study saying ‘your generation has blown it - how are you going to help us change it?’

In fact, this point caused me to think most deeply about the ebbs and flows of College life. We have taken some steps in recent months to encourage

young people into College life, but clearly much more thought needs to be given to understanding their motivations. Greenmountain College, for example, changed its curriculum to include all staff and students taking much greater personal responsibility for maintaining the sustainability programme.

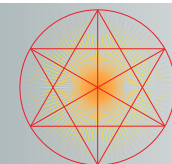
Other questions posed by Tony Cortese highlighted the seemingly impossible contradiction posed by working towards a just and equitable world in which poverty is eliminated as well as maintaining sustainability. If everyone alive on planet earth today had the same equity of resource for sustainability five more planets would be required. The solutions we need to find are most likely to come from the tertiary education sector, and universities, colleges, and seminaries and their respective curricula need to emphasise that humanity is part of nature not apart from it. “How do we create a decent quality of life for all current and future humans on a planet whose capacity to support life is precarious?”

The stage is set for enquiry based learning both on campus and in wider communities: an enquiry into the new human story, which is value based. Theological students used to reading Genesis at depth will have little problem with the new human story, in which science and faith are in mutually modifying interaction.

Not surprisingly, the new human story has the hallmarks of responsible stewardship. Sufficiency, cooperation and collaboration educate for needs over wants. The challenge is for Trinity College to adapt itself to be this kind of institution, modelling sustainability as a fully integrated community.



International participants at IAMSCU were given an opportunity to visit Mt Vernon, the farm of George Washington. Overlooking the Potomac River it gives an insight into the history of the American revolution.



## Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books Dr Azar Nafisi

The dynamic presentation of Azar Nafisi was, for many, the high point of the Conference.

An Iranian academic she spoke from the experience of the oppression of women under religious fundamentalism. That it happened to be Islamic was of no consequence whatsoever, for all religious fundamentalism lays a foundation for abusive systems.

The challenge for Azar Nafisi was how to live the life she knew was her right in a nation under the rule of clergy. After the Iranian revolution, academic freedoms were dismantled, although she worked tirelessly for the rights of young women.

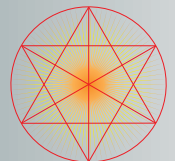
She created a new curriculum based on human rights education, only to find herself expelled from the University of Tehran for refusing to wear the veil. Yet she speaks not with bitterness but with conviction that education can and must change thinking. Her book *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* is a witness to the fact that literature can transform personal situations. It was named as one of the 100 best books of the decade 2000-2009.

Issues of gender and culture are Azar Nafisi's *raison d'être*. These same issues are very much alive in our Church and in need of passionate, committed dialogue unless we wish, as a Church, to stagnate.

The new human story is at odds with culturally conditioned, conservative theological thinking. Once again, it is vital to identify the issues which confront young people in society and construct a framework for their participation and our future.



Raphael's Madonna with Jesus and John is also found in the National Gallery of Art



## A Life of Protest Outside the White House

For the last thirty years Concepcion Picciotto has lived across the road from the White House, in Lafayette Park.

Talking briefly to this weather-beaten old lady was quite inspirational. She has lived full thirty years in a tent in Lafayette Park, literally at the East Side gate to the White House. She has lived through bitter Washington DC winters, and oppressive, brutal summer heats.

Protestors require permits to erect small protest stands for a few hours, but in her case a mistake was made in filing the original forms, and no expiry time and date was recorded, provided she occupies the site virtually continuously. And she has.

Her signs tell truths, such a “Civilised people do not Nuke Fellow Human Beings”. She welcomes photo-opportunities. We strike up a conversation. She asked my nationality. “Oh, New Zealand. Two small islands. Bad earthquake. Not so good. People suffer.”

Very astute for an 80 year-old, who survives on a few McDonald’s meals, coffee, and croissants that people bring her, sometimes some cheese and fruits and nuts for the squirrels which feed from her hand. She takes an occasional shower at a night shelter.

In Lafayette Park homeless people die every year, either from the heat or the cold, but Mrs Picciotto has survived not just these but also assaults, verbal abuse from the public, harassment from the police, and is threatened by homeless people.

I ask her, “Are you a living saint?” She smiles her toothless 80 year old grin, mumbles with her thick accent, and says, “Just an ordinary human being with a job to do.” The interview is over.

