Grandiosity at Play, a Legacy in Motion

The term “education” has been object of a conflict between the opposing sides of my brain. There is a part of me --with a certain fondness for textbook definitions-- that hangs on to the established ideas of education as a systematic sharing of knowledge and concepts. This inclination, brought on by a desire to think and act “all grown up,” gives me a very structured sense of human living. Everyone is supposed to learn something to contribute to society and to provide for themselves, and it is through education that we realize how to best interact with others to find our place in the world.

But feeling like an adult only goes as far as my right brain allows it to, and is usually overtaken by a fiercely frenetic passion for discovery and learning. Though I may enter a class with a serious attitude and professional demeanor, I am soon swayed by the tales of great historical eras, the rhetoric of classic authors, or the genius behind complex mathematical concepts, and I end up leaving the room with an excitability that makes it impossible to keep my thoughts together. Whenever I allow myself such indulgent daydreaming, the meaning of education splatters all over my mind like paint-filled balloons thrown at a wall; and the knowledge still so vividly impressed on me takes me to another plane of thought, leaving my body to roam the campus with an absent look of childlike enthusiasm and curiosity. It is there that I dream of a new world, where everyone is actively involved in building a globalized society that dwarfs the glory of Ancient Greece or Renaissance Florence.

I wasn’t much of a social butterfly as a child, and to escape my solitude, I would crawl inside a cardboard box and come out transformed into the most daring adventurer, inquisitive scientist, or resolute warrior. It had little to do with the box, I’m afraid, but it was an essential portal nonetheless.
In education, I found a new, adult-sized portal, through which I find treasures that guide and awake me to a new reality. Because unlike the empty box, the passageways of education are adorned with magnificent frescos, resounding with soul-lifting melodies, and brimming with published works of immense variety. Grandiosity has a special place in my heart -- if it wasn’t already clear by now -- but that grandiosity was put to the test through my academic experience. I will painfully admit that as I started out here at BCC, I held this institution in disdain, the motives behind the educational pursuits of many of my classmates to be far distant from my idea of academia. Here I was dreaming of a society full of future renaissance men, while the people around me were majoring in Nursing, Criminal Justice, and Engineering.

As I grew older and less arrogant, however, I became to truly appreciate the diversity of my community. I realized that coming out of their own cardboard box were individuals who were just as dedicated to that same legacy I fantasized about, regardless of whether their name would go in the annals of history or not. It is obviously a generalization, but I found that among Nursing students were champions of sanitation and health; among Criminal Justice majors were modern day paladins; and among Engineering students were masterminds of public life.

When I entered my portal as a kid, I did it because it would take me away from a struggling environment, offering me a new reality that made me feel less inadequate and alone. Going to this college, I realized that there is a deeper meaning to education, one that is as true for the famed explorers of the sixteenth century as it is for single moms taking night classes: hope. Have we not for millennia looked at the stars and the abyss, traveled to every corner of the world, for the purpose of feeling less alone and scared of the unknown in this universe? Whether we are figuring out timeless mysteries or how we will pay the rent at the end of the month is irrelevant, knowledge is the only reliable instrument we can use to
navigate through the unknown. And today, that becomes all the more encouraging for me knowing that I can rely on a collective that recognizes this, and comes together to share and gain knowledge. Thought it was not always so, I now look at my educational future with the same excitement I looked at the world in my youth. It is certainly no game, and already it has challenged like never before in my life. But if crawling through a plain brown box could beget such incredible journeys, I can only begin to imagine what a glimpse into the miracle of the human experience will inspire.