



a new way, because through his paintings he had helped me to see it.

Everything we learn has the potential to affect and enrich us as we experience the world. Learning helps us to notice the world and to love it as we should. Browning says, "God uses us to help each other so, lending our minds out." Isn't that a marvelous image? We lend our minds to each other, because what I have been able to see and to notice and to learn will be different from what you have been able to see and to notice and to learn, but when we lend our minds to each other we extend our vision and our ability to delight in the world. Lending our minds is what teaching is all about. It's an act of generosity and hospitality, letting other people share our perspective on the world.

I saw a very odd movie a few months ago which illustrated that process for me. It was called *Fast, Cheap and Out of Control*, and if you haven't seen the movie the image which is probably conjured up in your mind by that title is certainly more exciting than the movie itself. It's a documentary about four rather eccentric men who pursue unusual careers. One of them, Ray Mendez, "is fascinated with hairless mole-rats, tiny buck-toothed mammals who behave like insects." When you first see these hairless mole-rats on screen, they are truly repellant little creatures. But by the time the film was over, I had come to see them with a certain grudging affection, because Ray Mendez is so delighted by these hairless mole-rats and communicates his delight with such enthusiasm that it's infectious. He has lent out his mind during the course of the film and helped us to see something marvelous we would never have noticed otherwise.

This world "means intensely, and means good." As Christian knowers, we start our search for understanding with the faith that God made everything which is and made it good, and that all truth ultimately leads toward him. Our natural desire to know is a desire he has given us, and it is meant to draw us towards him, to make us restless with any knowledge short of seeing him face to face. The book of Colossians tells us that "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ." When we pursue wisdom and knowledge, we are pursuing him. We may not know that's what we're doing, but the goodness which is the world's meaning is the same goodness which finds full expression in Jesus Christ. Every truth is a step toward the one who is the Truth. So every time you help a student see some of that goodness and meaning, every time you help a student understand something true, you have brought that student into contact with Jesus Christ, who in his grace lends his mind to us. "God uses us to help each other so, lending our minds out. . . This world's no blot for us, nor blank; it means intensely, and means good. To find its meaning is my meat and drink." May it also be your meat and drink in this coming year.