In her centennial-tribute essay, *Cultivating Humanity in Legal Education*, Martha Nussbaum, Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago Law School, outlines what qualities make a good lawyer and analyzes whether law schools are doing well to provide students with opportunities to develop those qualities. She concluded that in some areas, legal education is doing well and in others, it is not so well.

According to Nussbaum, there are three abilities that will allow students to effectively advance the pursuit of truth and justice. These are Socratic self-examination, world citizenship, and narrative imagination.

Socratic self-examination refers to "the capacity for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions." An individual who practices this well will not accept any belief as authority without first challenging it. At the base, this is one trait that defines a lawyer, as it is part of the job description. However, Nussbaum’s concern is that "all too often, mere rhetoric and the attempt to sway public opinion dominate over attempts to reason clearly and well." Nussbaum also points out that "because one purpose at least of legal education is to produce lawyers who win," younger lawyers may get the impression that a good lawyer is one who wins regardless of his or her opponent or the truth.

When it comes to law schools, Nussbaum’s worry is that "emphasis is placed on the ability to give quick answers, and to admit to being puzzled—a key Socratic virtue—will not get the student very far." The practical arena does not help much to promote careful reflection because corporations and firms must tailor their services to the clients who want immediate solutions to all of their problems and, most importantly, a lawyer who wins.

The next quality, what Nussbaum calls "world citizenship," is the ability for individuals to "see themselves as not simply citizens of some local region or group, but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern." Why is this quality important? From a practical standpoint, firms and corporations have become increasingly global. Therefore, an understanding of other cultures and societies is necessary for an attorney to effectively advise in policy and/or legal considerations. Additionally, a comparative perspective allows for the evaluation of current techniques, which, upon comparison, may be revealed to be inefficient or obsolete. As such, Nussbaum argues that law schools need to incorporate more comparative material into their curriculum to allow for the development of this quality. However, the problem with attempting to incorporate the additional comparative study is that it might be done at the sacrifice of some of the material that serves to develop the foundational education of law practice.

Finally, the narrative imagination is defined as "the ability to think what it might be like in the shoes of a person different from oneself." Although a separate category, this quality is related to the preceding two qualities briefly discussed in this article. Because lawyers are also counselors to their clients, the development of this quality allows for the lawyer to empathize with the client’s case. As a result, the lawyer will be able to understand the client’s plight and be able to better advocate the client’s position to a jury, for example.

The narrative imagination also allows the lawyer in the global law firm or corporation with the comparative perspective to expand upon that perspective and relate to other individuals. For example, a lawyer who has studied the middle class will be well equipped based on fact to make policy decisions directed towards the middle class. However, if asked to make policy decisions for the poor, an inflexible imagination will not allow the lawyer to make good decisions. Nevertheless, a narrative imagination must be tempered by fact. Otherwise, it leaves...
room for an unrestrained imagination, which will only result in impractical or harmful policies.

Do law schools provide ample opportunities to develop the narrative imagination? Nussbaum does not think so, because the quick, competitive thinking that is stressed in law school does not lend itself to the development of the imagination.

Nevertheless, in light of the beginning of 2006, reflection allows for further development in both the practical and academic arenas. Regardless of how much reflection is done, a small improvement in either is better than no improvement and will allow for better lawyers who, hopefully, will serve the greater good.

---

2. See id. at 269-71.
3. Id. at 269.
4. Id. at 272.
5. Id.
6. Id. at 277.

---

EmploymentCrossing is the largest collection of active jobs in the world.

We continuously monitor the hiring needs of more than 250,000 employers, including virtually every corporation and organization in the United States. We do not charge employers to post their jobs and we aggressively contact and investigate thousands of employers each day to learn of new positions. No one works harder than EmploymentCrossing.

Let EmploymentCrossing go to work for you.