Tyler Allen

IH 852 – The common good

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In the book “Botany of Desire” by Michael Pollan the author spends quite a bit of time talking about the American hero Johnny Appleseed. In the apple essay he tries to get at the heart of the man who was John Chapman. Through this essay clear picture of who he might have been starts to become clear such as which ideals that he may a line with. Good old Johnny can be summed up as an extension of an extension of Dionysius who believes in reproduction by way of seed and who opposed reproduction by grafting.

For some clarification Dionysius was a god from the Greek pantheon who was the god of grape-harvest, winemaking, wine, and of fertility. In one iteration of the story the author found in his quest to track down the reality of how john really is had Johnny bringing apple cider seeds. Much like Dionysius, to quote the book, “Johnny Appleseed was bringing the gift of alcohol to the frontier.” The other part to Dionysius’ title is being the god of fertility, which is a trait that John embodies in a slightly different way than usual. He was said to have “a sixth sense for where the next wave of development was about to break.” He would end up planting apple seeds in these areas beforehand giving birth to apple trees. He made the use a fertile land for the apple seed and for the future settlers.

The trait of fertility is the ability to produce and grow offspring, in John’s case the apple tree was what he was producing. He produced these children of his solely through