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MENTOR

JOHN ADAMS ACADEMY ACADEMIC JOURNAL

Modeling What We Teach

John Adams ACADEMY

MENTOR™ is the faculty journal of John Adams Academy. The purpose of this journal is to uncover the tenants of John Adams Academy's American Classical Leadership Education® model, especially as it applies to the role of the mentor participating in that model. Here we hope to explore the alliance between the four pillars of American Classical Leadership Education—the Art of Mentoring, John Adams Academy's Ten Core Values, Classics, and the Liberal Arts, considering how they guide scholars to become servant leaders. As educators and members of an intellectual community that inherit and relate a legacy of truth, wisdom, and beauty, we perceive the abundance in each contribution to the Great Conversation.

We take our name from the complementary sources of the Latin word *mens*, and *mentis* (mind, thought, intention) and the Homeric character Mentor (Μέντωρ), to whom great Odysseus entrusted care of his home and family, and in the guise of whom the goddess Athena gave counsel to the young Telemachus. The former origin recalls our human tradition of sentience, the latter our divine duties of love and loyalty. Taken together, the essence of mentoring is sharing with others the beauty and truth that has fallen to us.

Each issue, *Mentor* invites all John Adams Academy faculty and the larger classical education community to examine how the liberty-based art of mentoring and particular core values, expressed in classic books, histories, artifacts, songs, equations, and theories, guide scholars on their journey to greater light and truth. Whether the themes be humble, aimed for the heart of the youngest child, or rich and complex and intended for the minds of the mature and wise, we welcome your invaluable insights as we seek to better understand what the liberty-based American Classical Leadership Education offers us in our collective journey toward servant leadership.

John Adams Academies are TK-12th Grade, TUITION-FREE public charter schools open to all, currently operating campuses in El Dorado Hills, Lincoln, and Roseville, California, and offering our unique American Classical Leadership Education™ model

John Adams Academy is restoring America's heritage by developing servant-leaders who are keepers and defenders of the principles of freedom for which our Founding Fathers pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor. By combining classical education with servant leadership training and core values, John Adams Academy develops scholars who are leaders in their homes, communities, and country. Through classics, mentoring, and modeling, scholars are inspired to prepare for their unique missions and will naturally hunger for oncoming responsibilities and future contributions to society.

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Core Value #7 – Modeling What We Teach

(As a contextual preface to the following articles, the editors include this extended definition of the 7th core value as it appears on the official John Adams Academy website).

John Adams Academy seeks to inspire all members of our community (teachers, scholars, staff, parents, board members, etc.) to model what we teach by actively engaging in our own classical education —we only ask that which we ourselves are striving to do. Mentors are scholars first. We all actively pursue our own classical education by regularly studying and assimilating classics outside of the classroom, and often outside our own disciplines. Mentoring and learning then become joint pursuits for all members of the community. We also model and pursue growth in the Ten Core Values as we all grow into servant-leaders.

Understanding is facilitated when principles and knowledge encountered in a scholar's studies are modeled in real life situations. To this end, principles and events from classics are coupled with simulated experiences such as mock trials, moot courts, classroom constitutional conventions, historical role playing, and other simulated experiences. Through such guided application, scholars come face to face with the challenges and dilemmas encountered by great men and women of the past. Assimilation occurs when the scholar applies the principles and knowledge learned from a model or simulation to their own lives.

Reading Classics with Scholars Daily

Meghan Muyanja

Assistant Superintendent & Online Director

John Adams Academies

I would like to start my message with an invitation.[1] With all that is affecting our minds and hearts today as educators, I invite you to put Covid, vaccinations, i-Ready and PSAT data, and behavior struggles aside, just for today, and really take time for yourself as an educator to be inspired, to reflect, and to have your cup filled. Just for today, I want you to give yourself permission to set aside your laundry list of tasks and be present with us. I know that if you do you will have more clarity and fortitude going forward.

Now, given this opportunity to reflect on our practice as mentors we can approach it in two ways. One way is like Rabbit in Winnie the Pooh, frantically running about, thinking about all the things we haven't done, all the things we aren't doing well, and all the ways we need to "do more." Or we can approach our reflective time together like Dickens' mother in *The Secret Garden*, a woman who had so much to do with so little means, but who always had time for the most important things. As you spend time today learning, pondering and reflecting I invite you to do so with the lens of putting first things first.

As a mentor, one of our primary duties is prioritizing what is important, what is essential. So, I want you to imagine that at the end of the school year you are going to give a beautifully wrapped gift to your scholars. If you could wave a magic wand and put anything in that box, whether it be a skill, a character trait, or a specific piece of knowledge, what would it be? What is the one thing that you, as your scholars' mentor, believe is essential for their development and ability to flourish as human being servant leaders?

Now, hold that thought in your mind, as I propose one essential thing that, if done with fidelity and consistency, will be the greatest contributor to your scholars attaining the one thing

[1] Adapted from a speech delivered August 2021 to John Adams Academy Staff.

you have in your mind that is essential for their wellbeing. That essential thing is reading the classics daily with your scholars.

Why Our Scholars Think We Should Read Classics

If you've been at John Adams Academy and have known me at all you may be thinking, "Ya, ya, here she goes again." But just give me a moment to prove my case, or rather let my scholars prove my case for me. I asked the scholars in my 4th grade online class why they think reading classics is essential for their development and well being and here is what they said:

- Katie said, "I know from classics that being a servant leader makes things better not just for everyone around you, but also for yourself."
- John said, "Some things that I have learned from classic books are that they are still interesting no matter how many times I've read them. I can learn something new over and over again. Reading a classic book is different than reading a regular book because after reading a regular book, it doesn't leave me thinking about it. When I read a classic book, I usually have questions that make me want to think more about what I just read."
- Lyla said, "Classics expose our proper sentence structure and grammar. The Author is more detailed and strengthens our reading comprehension. Reading classics is important because it enables us to see the world through the eyes of others. It trains our mind to be flexible, to comprehend other points of views. Reading classics increases our vocabulary. Reading classics is the easiest way to learn both history and culture of people and places. It teaches us about life lessons through human history. Classics help us think more critically. We get to know how other people live.
- David said, "Reading classics is important because we learn about the real life sorrows and joys out in the real world. I have learned that people can love and hate but should forgive."
- Jessica said, "Classics are important because they teach us valuable lessons that we can take with us for the rest of our lives. Some things I learned from many classics is that you shouldn't give up hope right when things get tough; you should work hard and never lose hope."

- Xavier said, “Classic books contain a good influence for children to follow. They have good morals and encourage people to do the right thing. Most classic books have challenges and examples of how to overcome them. We may have those challenges later on in life so by reading classics we would know what the right thing to do in that situation is.”
- Cassandra said, “From reading classics I have learned that you should not judge someone at first sight and that you should forgive and be kind no matter what.”
- Zack said, “Through reading classics I’ve learned that love is stronger than hate. And that no matter how badly you hate a person you should still know how to forgive.”

Are you convinced yet? We’ve heard from the mouth of babes, our scholars, that reading classics daily increases their comprehension, vocabulary, and use of the English language. Reading classics daily helps them think, ask questions and reason. Classics teach them love, empathy, forgiveness, compassion, how to problem solve, fortitude, perseverance, that right exists and that they should do what is right, and the list goes on and on. Did anything that these scholars said align with what you chose to put in your scholar's gift box?

Why We Don’t Read Daily with Our Scholars

As teachers we have three justifications we tell ourselves as to why we do not read classics daily with our scholars. First is the most obvious: there is not enough time in the day. Second, classics are too hard. Third, I don’t know how to read the classics with my scholars.

As I said in the beginning, as mentors, one of our primary duties is prioritizing and putting first things first. There is never enough time to do all the things we want to do or things we think our scholars need. That is just a fact. So, what do we do about it? First, we schedule the most important things first and we stick to that schedule. Then we fit the other things around those essentials. Second, we simplify the essentials. Truth, beauty and goodness stand on their own. They don’t need all the bells and whistles we put on them. Specifically, with reading classics, that’s all you need to do--read them. As you read them more regularly questions and discussions will naturally come. Scholars don’t need to understand and comprehend every line of the classic--none of us can do that. One of the aspects of a classic is that it needs to be read multiple times. In my classes we’re reading 10 or more books in the school year. I have a few

classics I've picked where we are slowing down and digging deeper and others that we are reading for just exposure and enjoyment.

The second justification we use as teachers is that the classics are too hard for scholars, we need to read easier things. If you are having your scholars read the classics all on their own, then you're probably right. But with your guidance and help the classics aren't too hard for scholars. Again, the goal in reading classics isn't for scholars to understand, diagram and pick a part every sentence of it. In elementary, just being exposed to the language and the delight of reading something beautiful is enough. In secondary, as the mentor you choose the parts of the classics that are essential for a deep understanding and which parts can function as an exposure to greatness that hopefully inspires scholars to visit the book later for a deeper understanding.

The third justification we use for not reading classics with our scholars is simply that we don't know how, we don't know where to start. Most of us are new to classical education; most of us have never read or even heard of some of these books before. We have reason to be intimidated. But what do you tell your scholars when they say they aren't doing something because they don't know how? Do you tell them to ask for help? To not let the fear of not knowing hold them back from trying and if they fail to pick themselves up and try again? Ask our mentor teachers, ask teachers at your site who you know are good at this. But along with asking for help is doing. Walk in your classroom on Monday, pick up a classic book, open it and read it with your scholars.

Why Parents Think We Should Read Classics

In closing I'd like to share some comments from current John Adams Academy parents about reading classics.

- The Johnsons said, "The classics provide insight to our American heritage and depict values and situations we typically don't see in today's modern literature. We love how the classics we read incorporate the American values and the foundation our country was built upon."
- The Gregsons said, "Classics enrich our children's minds in a way that a regular school course cannot."

- The Scotts said, “Classics are a great way to connect generations - child, parent, grandparent. A lot of the books we read are the same books I read as a kid. It’s nice to share our thoughts with each other and why we each enjoyed the book.”
- The Kirkpatrick’s said, “Every day that I read the classics to Kyle his younger brother Reese, would sit with us. I could not believe how engaged Kyle was with the novels! Kyle fell in love with Charlotte's Web and asked me if we could keep the book so I could read it again! Kyle loved sitting with me and reading. He would cuddle with me and get so excited when certain events peaked his interest. Everyday my goal was to break up the reading with 15 minutes early in the school day and then 15 minutes towards the end of the school day. Many times Kyle wanted me to read longer because the story was exciting to him. It has been a wonderful bonding experience for all of us! In the past we read every night however reading these classic novels to the boys has been a different experience. I can't explain why, I can just feel it when we read. Reading the classics has been such a beautiful blessing and I loved every moment reading to my precious boys!”

Reading the classics is the most important thing you can do each day. It doesn’t need to be for hours, it doesn’t need to be an elaborate lesson plan but it must happen if we are to restore America’s heritage by developing servant leaders. Thank you for being a part of John Adams Academy. Thank you for pouring your energy and heart into your scholars every day. Despite it all, what you are doing and what we are doing as an academy is impacting and transforming our scholars and families.

Five Commitments from a New School Leader

Andrew Carico, Ph.D.

Head Master

Eldorado Hills

Sir Winston Churchill—former Prime Minister of Great Britain and arguably the greatest statesman of the 20th Century—held many leadership positions throughout his lifetime.[1] In fact, he was known not only for *learning* those leadership positions that he held but also *defining* them anew.[2] Likewise, upon entering the position of Headmaster at John Adams Academy in El Dorado Hills, I aimed both to learn the job but also to define the job—to imagine how it might serve as a role that supports teachers, staff, parents, and scholars, while also fostering a sense of excitement and interest in the broader community about our transformative American Classical Leadership Education.[3] In that spirit, I also sought to exemplify the Seventh Core Value of John Adams Academy—Modeling What We Teach.

What follows are five commitments I made to the entire staff at John Adams Academy in El Dorado Hills upon entering the position of Headmaster.[4] John Adams Academy has a mission to "restore America's heritage by developing servant leaders who are keepers and defenders of the principles of freedom for which our Founding Fathers pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor." I believe, as a servant leader, that I should make commitments to those I lead before I expect others to make commitments to me in return. While much of the literature on modern leadership theory is a byproduct of a Progressive Era manifestation that espouses

[1] Adapted from a speech delivered August 2021 at John Adams Academy Staff Eldorado Hills.

[2] See Steven F. Hayward, *Churchill on Leadership: Executive Success in the Face of Adversity* (Rocklin, CA; Forum, 1998), 26. Hayward described Churchill's practice when entering a new position in the following way: "It is not enough simply to learn the job: Define it," 26.

[3] For more on the history of John Adams Academy and the American Classical Leadership Education model, see L. Dean Forman, *John Adams Academy: Leading a Revolution in Education* (United States of America; 2020).

[4] These remarks were delivered to the staff of John Adams Academy in El Dorado Hills, CA on August 5, 2021. This concept of "Five Commitments" by a new leader was modeled for me by Dr. James T. Bradford. See James T. Bradford, *Lead So Others Can Follow: 12 Practices and Principles for Ministry* (Salubris Resources: Springfield, MO, 2015), 13.

inequality amongst leaders and followers,[5] John Adams Academy promotes a leadership philosophy that emulates the leadership modeled by America's Founding Fathers. It is a form of leadership that involves commitment to true principles larger than oneself, principles found, for example, in the Declaration of Independence. Such principles serve as the "sheet anchor of American republicanism," as Abraham Lincoln put it, and also give rise to respect for the equal natural rights of one's fellow citizens.[6] Therefore, my first commitment involves a promise to model the Academy's model and live out the Academy's mission.

First Commitment: To Model the JAA Model and Live by the JAA Mission

The John Adams Academy model—the American Classical Leadership Education Model—coupled with the Academy's mission to "restore America's heritage by developing servant leaders"—both drive the academic environment and culture of the school. A Headmaster, to use the words of Gene Edward Veith and Andrew Kern, must "embody in their soul" the ethos of the institution they lead.[7] For John Adams Academy, that involves modeling our distinctive mission and the American Classical Leadership Education (ACLE) model.

A Headmaster must be *primus inter pares*, first among equals, in modeling "servant leadership." Servant leadership is commonly discussed in contemporary leadership circles, though often misunderstood. According to our Academy Founder, Dr. Dean Forman, "A servant leader is a servant first, driven by an inner compass of virtues or core values, with a natural desire to serve and empower others. This is not about being subservient but about sincerely wanting to help others by identifying and meeting needs."[8]

Thus, the idea of servant leadership involves leading with the right *motive*. It's a desire to lead that is not consumed by self-promotion and the acquisition of positional power, nor is it leading with the goal to serve such that one is then easily manipulated or taken advantage of to

[5] For analysis of how America's Founders held strong reservations about popular political "leadership," along with the Progressive Era promotion of the necessity of popular political "leadership," see Charles R. Kesler, *I am the Change: Barack Obama and the Crisis of Liberalism* (New York; Broadside Books, 2012), 88-102.

[6] Abraham Lincoln refereed to the principles of the Declaration of Independence as the "sheet anchor of American republicanism." See Abraham Lincoln, "Speech on the Kansas Nebraska Act at Peoria, Illinois," October 16, 1854, accessed June 17, 2022, https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/speech-on-the-kansas-nebraska-act-at-peoria-illinois-abridged/.

[7] Gene Edward Veith Jr. and Andrew Kern, *Classical Education: The Movement Sweeping America* (Capital Research Center; Washington, D.C., 2015), 120.

[8] Cited in Forman, *John Adams Academy*, 60.

the point where they never actually *lead* with effectiveness. At John Adams Academy, servant leadership is distinctive in two ways.

First, a servant leader seeks to serve other uniquely created human beings—endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights, as the Declaration of Independence puts it—who have dignity and bring to the table important talents and abilities. Thus, when all work collectively in support of the mission and model, they enhance the entire school. Second, and similarly, it involves a motive to lead in service to the principles of the American Founding, principles for which the American Founders pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honors, and which undergird John Adams Academy as well. A John Adams Academy servant leader thus serves others in adhering and promoting those very principles.

In *The Quill* (The John Adams Academy guide to American Classical Leadership Education), there is a geographical representation—using the idea of ancient Greek architecture with a foundation, four tall pillars, and a triangular roof—of the ACLE model. At the foundation is Liberty, and the four pillars of education emerge from that foundation: Core Values, Classics, Liberal Arts, and the Art of Mentoring (see image below).[9] Atop the pillars sit Truth, Virtue, Wisdom, and—centrally placed—Servant Leadership. *The Quill* states the following:

Figure 1: John Adams Academy's American Classical Leadership Education®

> These pillars of education liberate the scholar by enabling the scholar to discover truth. The scholar is invited to act on that truth and in the process grows in wisdom. It is by thoroughly engaging in the classics and by the examples of great mentors that a scholar is inspired to develop the virtue to do what is right. These are necessary pillars for cultivation of servant leadership of self-governing

[9] John Adams Academy, *The Quill* (John Adams Academy: 2021), 14-15.

> citizens who choose to serve, particularly in keeping and defending the principles of freedom throughout civil society.[10]

As a Headmaster, one should be committed to service, yes, but at John Adams Academy, that idea of servant leadership is rooted in propagating and perpetuating principles larger than oneself, principles that give rise to the ACLE model. A Headmaster must "pursue these causes by courageously applying truth, wisdom, and virtue as he or she leads others through service."[11] Such is my commitment to model the John Adams Academy model and live by the John Adams Academy mission.

A common analogy often used in leadership studies is the "thermostat versus thermometer." As it is often described, a thermometer reads the temperature in a room, but a thermostat sets the temperature. While a grounded sense of humility is important in any leader, it is also true that a good leader has the ability to set the temperature in an organization or, in this case, a school.[12] Through one's own model and example, they set the temperature for what is expected of those they lead. It is another iteration of the Seventh Core Value of Modeling What We Teach.

Therefore, in setting the proper temperature in a John Adams Academy school, and while modeling the ACLE model and John Adams Academy mission, it is important to lead with a sense of historical imagination. At John Adams Academy, American history is not something to be dismissed, chastised, or overcome. Rather, it is to be viewed as a source of wisdom and a guide for helping all citizens think properly about future causes of action. As Winston Churchill once wrote, "the longer you look back, the farther you can look forward."[13]

As a society, there is a desperate need for the ACLE model in our schools and communities. Classical education, especially as it is taught here at John Adams Academy, is a nod to the past that can help our scholars move forward into the future with clarity, purpose, and strength in order to restore America's heritage. It is hard to restore one's heritage if one knows

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[10] Ibid, 15.
[11] Ibid, 10.
[12] For more on this leadership analogy, see Tim Elmore, *Habitudes: Images That Form Leadership Habits & Attitudes* (Atlanta, GA: Growing Leaders Inc., 2004), 13-16.
[13] Cited in Hayward, *Churchill on Leadership*, 9.

nothing about his heritage—if one has not looked back to know what his heritage is and to understand it properly so he can look forward with clarity and purpose.

In many ways, this type of historical imagination involves cultivating what former President Ronald Reagan described in his Farwell Address as an "informed patriotism."[14] What Reagan described was not a blind praise for the country, or a desire to critique America consistently for not living up to its principles. However, what Reagan advocated, and what we stand for at John Adams Academy, is a patriotism anchored "in thoughtfulness and knowledge."[15]

To fulfill such a vision of patriotism, one must be able to distinguish between the country's principles and its compromises. Just because America has not always lived up to its founding principles does not mean those principles should not be understood, as Abraham Lincoln once put it referring to human equality in the Declaration, as "an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times."[16]

Indeed, Lincoln wrote the following in 1859 about Thomas Jefferson's claim in the Declaration that all men are created equal:

> All honor to Jefferson—to the man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document, an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there, that to-day, and in all coming days, it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of re-appearing tyranny and oppression.[17]

Likewise, consider how Martin Luther King, Jr. put it on the steps of the Lincoln memorial in 1863 in his famed "I Have a Dream" speech:

> When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all

[14] Ronald Reagan, "Farewell Address, January 11, 1989," Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/farewell-address-nation.

[15] Ibid. For more on this concept of an "informed patriotism," see Andrew D. Carico, "An Informed Patriotism," *The Public Discourse*, September 11, 2018, https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2018/09/39421/.

[16] Abraham Lincoln, "Letter to Henry L. Pierce and Others," April 6, 1859, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/lincoln3/1:98?rgn=div1;view=fulltext.

[17] Ibid.

> men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.[18]

For the American Founders, for Lincoln, for King, and for many others—the country's founding principles are permanently true and good, and they serve as a guide for the overcoming—as Lincoln put it—tyranny and oppression.

And so, through my conduct and example, I want to set the temperature in our school for servant leadership from the top to the bottom and model a commitment to living out our model of classical education and our mission to restore America's heritage—and the principles of our American heritage—by developing other servant leaders.

As a final thought on this first commitment, consider these powerful words from literary scholar C.S. Lewis, which serve as something of a life mission for me:

> In the older systems both the kind of man the teachers wished to produce and their motives for producing him were prescribed by the Tao — a norm to which the teachers themselves were subject and from which they claimed no liberty to depart. They did not cut men to some pattern they had chosen. They handed on what they had received: they initiated the young neophyte into the mystery of humanity which over-arched him and them alike. It was but old birds teaching young birds to fly.[19]

At John Adams Academy, we have revived a model of education that does not "cut men to some pattern they had chosen," as Lewis puts it, but seeks to empower mentors to pass on to scholars the great tradition that we have received: "initiat[ing] the young neophyte into the mystery of humanity which over-arched him and them alike." I desire to be a school leader who is devoted to our American Classical Leadership Education model and that serves others in pursuit of enhancing their lives as servant leaders and perpetuating our unique American heritage.

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[18] Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have a Dream," August 28, 1963, https://www.marshall.edu/onemarshallu/i-have-a-dream/.

[19] C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: HarperOne, 1944), 60-61.

Second Commitment: To Be a Growing Person, Committed to Pursuing and Ensuring Classical Education

Teachers, especially the good ones, always remain students. Not for nothing did Chaucer say of his scholar in *The Canterbury Tales*, "gladly would he learn, and gladly teach."[20] Thus, my philosophy in this second commitment is simple: I promise to grow as a teacher and administrator in classical education, and I invite those I serve to grow with me.

Above, I discussed the idea of American Classical Leadership Education as practiced at John Adams Academy. That said, the idea of classical education generally proves difficult for many to understand. While there are many definitions of classical education, a succinct yet comprehensive one comes from Dr. Christopher Perrin. He states the following: "Classical education is the authoritative, traditional and enduring form of education, begun by the Greeks and Romans, developing through history and now being renewed and recovered in the twenty-first century."[21] One should also add—as Perrin does—how classical education includes a commitment to the trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (astronomy, arithmetic, music, and geometry). Together, these encompass the seven liberal arts. Moreover, as noted above, the John Adams Academy model involves a commitment to the study of America: learning, understanding, and perpetuating those ideals that inspired our Founding Fathers, as found in Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution specifically.

Part of what makes classical education appealing to so many is that it is an education that can, and should, be pursued for a lifetime. In much of modern culture, education has been reduced purely to the goals of "college and career readiness," as it is often said. Those are important, to be sure, but they are not themselves the proper *end* of education. These are fruits, and they are practical, but they are merely instrumental and not the proper end one should pursue.[22]

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[20] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. A. Kent Hieatt and Constance Hieatt (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1985), 16.

[21] Christopher A. Perrin, *An Introduction to Classical Education: A Guide for Parents* (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2004), 6.

[22] For an excellent analysis on the importance of the intrinsic value of learning (i.e., learning for its own sake), as opposed to the instrumental value of learning (learning simply for outcomes or results), see Zeta Hitz, *Lost in Thought: The Hidden Pleasures of an Intellectual Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 25-49.

The kind of classical education being provided at John Adams Academy is one for the health of the mind and the soul. Yes, it involves a building of the intellect and an ability to perform in college and career. Those are serious and highly pursued endeavors at the Academy. However, education is much more than that. It involves developing a proper love for what is lovely and disdain for what is disdainful. It involves the cultivation of scholars into virtuous human beings who are equipped to live well—nurturing the intellectual, moral, and civic virtues throughout their time in school, virtues which will sustain them for a lifetime of flourishing and contribution towards the common good.[23] In this respect, a classical education puts a scholar on the pathway to human flourishing, relating them to the true, the good, and the beautiful.

At John Adams Academy, we provide a curriculum that engages students both in the mind and in the heart, helping develop the formation of the virtues that can lead to a good life—from stories like *The Little Red Hen* in kindergarten to *Little Bear* in first grade to *Little House in the Big Woods* in second grade. Then students advance to great works like *Charlotte's Web* in third grade, *Pollyanna* in fourth grade, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* in fifth grade, and *Julius Caesar* in sixth grade, amongst many others.

Scholars eventually progress to the wonderful cornucopia of works at the secondary school, such as *King Arthur, The Canterbury Tales, To Kill a Mockingbird,* and *The Real George Washington* in seventh and eighth grades. This is followed by the great works of philosophy and political philosophy in high school, coupled with biographies of great scientists and mathematicians and inventors (in addition to learning math and science itself, of course). Additionally, students read the great works of English literature, history, and the study of languages, such as Latin. It doesn't stop there; scholars engage in a fully classical education in areas such as physical education and visual and performing arts from TK to twelfth grade.

Collectively, these great works in our curriculum—these founts of wisdom that move through the lives of our scholars—are meant to transport both scholars and teachers alike out of their own time and preconceived notions of reality but also elevate them to think, pursue, and achieve greater than ever thought possible. Perhaps this process is best illustrated in Plato's well-

known story of the Allegory of the Cave from his book, *The Republic*.[24] As Plato explains, there are individuals chained inside a cave, and the light available to them emerges from a fire available in the background. The only way they could see anything was by looking at the shadows dancing on the wall in front of them, so all they knew were the shadows on the wall. However, the shadows were not reality; they were distortions of reality. Plato tells the story of these prisoners being released, turning around and ascending up out of the cave, and seeing things as they actually are on their own in the sunlight. In many ways, for Plato, this Allegory serves as a metaphor for education, highlighting the importance of the pursuit of truth. A truly transformative educational experience is akin to the turning of the soul, ascending up out of the cave, and seeing things as they are on their own in the light—no longer in bondage to the shadows displayed on the wall in the cave.

At such a point, a scholar is liberally educated, having achieved—as Robert P. George put it— "*self-mastery*."[25] While a liberal arts education can enrich and liberate a scholar, its purpose is not, as George describes, to liberate them "from traditional social constraints and norms of morality—those beliefs, principles, and structures by which earlier generations of Americans and people in the West generally had been taught to govern their conduct for the sake of personal virtue and the common good."[26] George cogently describes the older, and truer, conception of the liberal arts in the following manner, drawing upon the Platonic conception of a just soul involving reason controlling the passions and appetites:

> According to the classical liberal-arts ideal, our critical engagement with great thinkers enriches our understanding and enables us to grasp, or grasp more fully, great truths—truths that, when we appropriate them and integrate them into our lives, liberate us from what is merely vulgar, coarse, or base. These are soul-shaping, humanizing truths—truths whose appreciation and secure possession elevate reason above passion or appetite, enabling us to direct our desires and our wills to what is truly good, truly beautiful, and truly worthy of human beings as possessors of a profound and inherent dignity…It can help us to understand what is good and to love the good above whatever it is we happen to desire; it can teach

[24] See *The Republic of Plato*, 2nd ed., trans. and notes by Allan Bloom (United States: Basic Books, 1991), Book VII, 193-220.

[25] Robert P. George, *Conscience and Its Enemies: Confronting the Dogmas of Liberal Secularism* (Wilmington, DE: ISIS Books, 2013), 36.

[26] Ibid, 34.

> us to desire what is good because it is good, thus making us truly *masters of ourselves*.[27]

A classical education helps a scholar ascend from the cave, achieve self-mastery, and cultivate—and integrate—truth, both in their own lives and into the broader society.

I commit to be a growing person, joining you in the perpetual, lifetime journey that is classical education—ascending out of the darkness and into the light; never settling and never coasting on what I think I know or have learned in life. In that effort, I commit to reading the great books with you, engaging in the great conversations with you, and learning from all of you—as wonderful teachers and staff—and growing myself as a man, as a husband, as a father, as a friend, and as your colleague.

Third Commitment: To Disappoint You, Somehow, Someway

This will be the one commitment most people remember. Yet, expectations in leadership must be clear, as perfection in this fallen world proves unattainable. This is a lesson taught by the classical model. In studying the classical works, one realizes how much he does not know, and how his life should be devoted—not just during our school days, but at all times—to learning and growing. Likewise, we learn that as fallen human beings, we are not perfect, and we should not expect perfection from ourselves or those around us. The great works and great stories from the Western tradition are filled with such teachings and examples.

St. Augustine's wonderful *Confessions*—credited by many as the first autobiography in the Western tradition—is a story of Augustine's folly as a youth and the power of God in his life, turning his love for the things of this world toward the noble things of God. In the American tradition, consider *The Federalist Papers*—those 85 newspaper articles written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay in 1787-1788 to persuade Americans to ratify the new Constitution. These papers are widely considered America's greatest contribution to political philosophy, and in *The Federalist*, Publius (the pseudonym used by all three authors) anchors the American structure of government with separation of powers, federalism, staggered elections, checks and balances, etc. on the realization that humans are fallen, fallible creatures.

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[27] Ibid, 37.

Here is James Madison famously in *Federalist* 51:

> But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.[28]

The American Founders understood that man had a permanent human nature—prone to do good at times but also prone to do evil—and you needed to structure government in light of that truth. What a powerful teaching on the reality of our human nature right from the American Founding itself.

Moreover, consider Abraham Lincoln, who only held one elected office before becoming president—serving one, two-year term in the U.S. House of Representatives—and lost eight other state and federal elections before gaining national fame through the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates (with Democratic Senator, Stephen A. Douglass from Illinois). In these debates, Lincoln upheld the principles of the Declaration of Independence in opposition to the expansion of slavery. Although Lincoln lost that senate election, it launched him to national recognition. As a result, he attained the Republican nomination for president in 1860 and went on to defeat the very same Stephen A. Douglas for the White House. While Lincoln faced much failure throughout his life, he persevered, and his perseverance helped ensure a new birth of freedom for the American nation.

In the contemporary era, consider the aforementioned statesmen Winston Churchill. Churchill started his life as a famous soldier in Great Britain, and then a journalist, and eventually a politician. During the 1930s, he began to warn about the threat of Adolph Hitler, and those warnings were largely dismissed in the House of Commons. He was exiled into the political wilderness in the years preceding World War II.

However, Churchill was eventually vindicated at the start of WWII and was elevated—at age 65—to Prime Minster as a consequence of his foresight. The night he became Prime Minister, Churchill wrote in his memoirs: "I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all of

[28] Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter, with a new Introduction and Notes by Charles R. Kesler (New York: New American Library, Mentor Books, 2003), 319.

my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial."[29] Yet, fulfilling that "destiny" did not come immediately for Churchill. It took years for him to achieve that level of trust in his own government, and he endured many failures on his way to the premiership.

Churchill, as many know, is a very quotable politician—one who often spoke about the importance of experiencing failure on the road to successes. Once in the throes of World War II, Churchill also stated that "we must learn from misfortune the means of future strength," and at another time, that "success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm."[30] Churchill—like the American Founders and Lincoln—serves as an example of great statesmanship, yes, but also an example of overcoming failure. We must never forget that "in this world we will have trouble," and that no one is perfect.[31]

The list of examples one could share on this point could go on forever: failures of inventors, authors, scientists, musicians, actors, and a multitude of others who failed many times before achieving great success. However, the point to emphasize is this: no one is perfect, including the leader of an organization. A leader should work hard to hone their craft and succeed in leading others, but at some point, and in some way, others will be disappointed by a leader's decisions. However, that is simply a reality of life and leadership. It is also likely that the people I lead will disappointment me at some point as well. When these disappointments happen, we should come together, learn from such experiences, then stand united in support of each other's betterment as part of a collective team anchored in a wonderful mission, and then finally—*move on*.

Fourth Commitment: To Build a Healthy School Culture

I could have potentially placed this commitment as number one on the list because that's how important a healthy "culture" is to a successful school. Dr. Dean Forman, Founder of John Adams Academy, has described school culture in the following manner: "It is hard to overstate just how important this [culture] is to a school. It is even more important than curriculum although the right curriculum is vital to building and reinforcing good culture. It is not an

[29] See Andrew Roberts, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny* (United States of America: Viking, 2018), 2.
[30] Cited in Hayward, *Churchill on Leadership*, 27; 29.
[31] The Holy Bible, John 16:33.

exaggeration to say that culture is everything. It really is. If you get the culture right, everything else works."[32]

There is great truth in those sentences. In fact, a common refrain from John Adams Academy families and teachers is how they love the distinctiveness of the John Adams Academy school culture. Dr. Forman elaborates on these cultural distinctives in his book, including the following:

- Referring to students as "scholars" who are stewards of their own educations, are inspired and passionate about learning, and who see learning as a task designed to influence and improve the world around them.
- Embracing the concept of "becoming," or growing in virtue and in pursuit of excellence and in becoming true servant leaders.
- Believing in moral authority, or being servant leaders directed by an inner compass of virtues or core values that transcend time and place. Such moral authority can give us courage to take on the challenges we face in life, just as it did Mother Teresa, who owned very little in worldly, material terms but carried moral authority like few who have ever lived, able to address major world problems and speak calmly, boldly, and with conviction in the halls of power around the world.
- Encouraging scholars and staff alike to think with vision—seeing what is needed to improve one's life, family, community, and world, and going about the work to bring that change. Great vision can stir our hearts and souls to do more than we ever realized was possible.
- Committing to being an "inspiring" institution, thus building coalitions of people in getting others to follow a particular path or vision.
- Demonstrating a dedication to our American Classical Leadership Education. This means staying committed to the form of education we offer—a structure built around the trivium and the quadrivium, as discussed above. Yet, also ensuring we provide classical content—the classic works of the Western Tradition *along with* the uniquely American ideals and models of statesmen that have shaped our great American heritage.[33]

Now, in addition to the distinctive culture we work to cultivate, Dr. Forman elaborates on how there are also important *programs* and *traditions* that make the John Adams Academy culture distinctive, such as daily flag ceremonies, the emphasis on mentoring, family engagement, "keep books" for scholars to build their personal libraries, the importance of the JAA crest, Veterans Day Assemblies, and the dress code, amongst others.[34] Exploring how this distinctive culture can operate in practice is a topic worth further elucidation.

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[32] Forman, *John Adams Academy*, 100.
[33] Forman, *John Adams Academy*, 83-99.
[34] Ibid, 100-115.

Upon entering the position of Headmaster, I sat down with our leadership team and tasked them with thinking concretely about what a healthy school culture actually looks like—emerging from our mission, vision, Ten Core Values, and programs and traditions. How could we best express this healthy school culture Dr. Forman envisioned? Throughout our discussions, we identified how we, at the Eldorado Hills Campus, could create a healthy school culture within the framework provided by focusing on the overlap of truth seeking, ordered beauty, and good will. It is demonstrated in Figure 2, titled "Venn Diagram of Healthy School Culture," along with the corresponding descriptions in the table below.

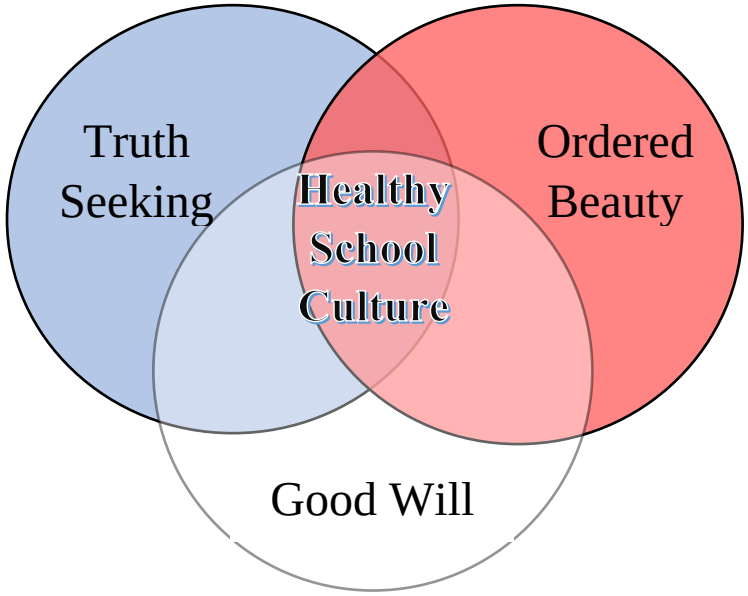

Figure 2: Venn Diagram of Healthy School Culture

Truth Seeking	Beauty	Good Will
*Pursuing our American Classical Leadership Education model along with the three transcendentals: the true, the good, and the beautiful. *Realizing that the very foundations of our country, as stated in the Declaration of Independence, are anchored in "truths" which are "self-evident," such as "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." *Partnering with colleagues and scholars in pursuit of the truth and not settling for second tier answers to large questions of life. *Having an attitude of teachability, and thus being willing to challenge preconceived ideas and conceptions (even if they are found to be true) *Holding forth Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" as a model for us all to follow.	*Building and grounds are clean and kept in good repair—everyone takes part in this effort *Beautiful and patriotic décor, quotes, pictures, etc. (halls and classrooms) *Faculty, staff, and scholars maintain JAA appropriate dress *A noticeable "order," "punctuality," and "cleanliness" throughout the entire school *Beauty in the collective symmetry and execution of individual tasks and duties across the campus *Keep posterity in mind: leave our campus better than we found it	*Faculty modeling amongst themselves a community of learning (Junto's with mentor teachers, reading groups, professional development, etc.) *Friendship amongst faculty/scholars oriented by common pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty *Civility in speech, courtesy in conduct, and generosity in spirit amongst all members of the Academy *Commitment to our Ten Core Values and programs/traditions, as seen in our awards ceremonies, but on a intentional, daily basis (thinking specifically of Core Value Number Ten: Self-Governance, Personal Responsibility, and Accountability) *Clarity on what we appreciate and celebrate as a school. *Increasing scholar and teacher retention rates *Holding to school programs and traditions that fit with our mission and model (flag ceremony, Athenaeum, PIGs, Keep Books, Veteran's Day Assembly, etc.) *Friendship and partnership with our parents and community

It is important that John Adams Academy have a common language that helps all stakeholders describe what a healthy school culture looks like and how it emerges from our mission, vision, Ten Core Values, and programs and traditions. My hope is that throughout my entire tenure as Headmaster, we will (1) cultivate a tangible and real sense of *truth seeking* in all that we do and anchored in our ACLE model, (2) form a resolve for *beauty* – both ascetically but also in the flow of our procedures and policies, and (3) act in a determined, good faith effort of *good will* towards one another, prizing friendship, civility, and charity in our actions with one another and our scholars.

May we continue to be known for our distinctive culture, and when a prospective scholar, teacher, parent, or community member visits our campus, may they be struck by a unique school

culture—specifically our pursuit for truth in our studies, beauty in our atmosphere and actions, and good will towards all who enter our doors.

Fifth Commitment: To Believe With You for the Future of John Adams Academy – El Dorado Hills

The future of John Adams Academy in El Dorado Hills is very bright. As an Academy, we have grown exponentially over the years. Once just one campus in Roseville, California, John Adams Academy is now three campuses with an Online Academy that recently launched. Once just a handful of scholars, we now have over 4,000 across all campuses with thousands more waiting to be accepted. This makes me hopeful for our future.

The classical education movement is really a revolution, as Dr. Forman put it in the subtitle to his book: *Leading a Revolution in Education*. Thus, we should resolve to work hard, but also to understand there will be challenges to the implementation to our model. As G.K. Chesterton put it, "Dead things flow with the current, only living things swim upstream."[35] As a result, we must be upstream classical educators in a downstream educational world, realizing that our model of education is such that—although not the norm in our modern educational establishment—can enliven our souls, and our country, for a brighter day.

In many ways, our model is simultaneously futuristic while also looking to the past. This is how one writer put it describing the role of classical educators:

> Classical educators are hopeful and forward-looking; they seem to think the excellencies of the past are the best preparation for what lies ahead. They all concur that while times change, human nature does not, making books and the voice of our mothers reading to us some of the deepest things we know, and the most profound gifts we can pass on. Classical education turns out to be, at bottom, the love of our children to whom we give the best we have received.[36]

How true that is. I would also add that in addition to believing in the future of our scholars, I'm hopeful for the future of our campus. As we grow and expand in scholars and buildings, we want to ensure we're doing what we can to make our model of education available to anyone who wants it.

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[35] Cited in Perrin, *An Introduction to Classical Education*, 41.
[36] Ibid, 42.

Thus, it will be important as we grow that we stay anchored to our mission and model and that we stay committed to our excellent and distinctive culture that comes from being John Adams Academy. I commit to believing with you for the future of our campus, for the future of our scholars, for the future of our teachers and staff, but to do so with a commitment to who we are, never deviating from the foundation of our mission and model.

Conclusion

As important as it is for a Headmaster to make commitments to a staff he serves, I also think it is important for our staff to make some commitments themselves. These are not to me but to our Academy and to our scholars and families.

The commitments I ask of our staff are the following:

1. **Hold to our mission**—may it guide all that we do as employees, and may it inform our actions and decisions as a staff.
2. **Lean into our model**—trust that our model can have an incredible impact on educating scholars and preparing them for truly good and just lives.
3. **Contribute to our culture**—by that, I mean the various programs and traditions that we have here (Flag ceremonies, Juntos, etc.), but also our overall desire that all staff be seekers of truth, cultivators of beauty, and promoters of good will and charity towards one another and our scholars.

I conclude with a thought expressed by David McCullough in his magisterial biography on the namesake of our institution, *John Adams*. In his book, McCullough tells the story of how a young Ralph Waldo Emerson, just out of Harvard, went to Quincy, Massachusetts to visit the former president, John Adams. It was in 1825, the last full year of Adams' life. Emerson wrote in his journal how their conversation went that day. Adams is quoted as saying, "I would to God there was more ambition in the country." He paused and then said, "By that, I mean, ambition of the laudable kind. To excel."[37]

Wouldn't it be wonderful, if we could reinstate through what we do as parents and teachers, mentors and coaches, and administrators and colleagues, that old, noble ambition to excel. Let that be our charge.

[37] David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Touchstone, 2001), 640.

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The American Synthesis: A Debate

Editors' note:

Throughout the past year, several teachers and administrators at John Adams Academy began an email correspondence regarding key principles of American Classical Leadership Education. This is an edited version of that digital conversation and is a good example of the dialectic—the classical educational method of positing ideas and question each other in search of truth.

November 11, 2021
Shane Schulthies

Fellow scholars and mentors,

I wanted to share a very good article in the most recent Claremont Review of Books.[1]

It is a review of the book *The Crisis of a Strauss Divided,* which is a play on Harry Jaffa's most well-known book on Lincoln. While the essay gives a good description between West Coast Straussians (led by Jaffa) and East Coast Straussians, it brings up key questions: Is reason incompatible with revelation? Is the philosophy of the founders incompatible with Plato and Aristotle? Are the Greek virtues at odds with the Christian virtues? Or, can a golden mean be found between the two sets of virtues—i.e. did Abraham Lincoln embody Aristotelian magnanimity and Christian humility?

It has been over 10 years ago when I was able to meet and discuss some of Jaffa's ideas with him. While the only thing that I read from him were a few unpublished manuscripts that he shared with us, I was amazed at how much his ideas on Lincoln, Shakespeare and political philosophy were very similar to those developing in embryo in my mind. These included the concept that while much of the traditional tensions between faith and reason, Socratics philosophy and Christianity, and our founders and the ancients will perhaps always remain, an amalgamation of these supposed opposites could form an alloy of truth so to speak. As the author of the essay portrayed Jaffa's ideas:

> In searching essays that conclude the book, Robert Kraynak and Michael Zuckert (the latter classifies himself as a "Midwest" Straussian), each in his own way, gently but firmly, argue that Jaffa's thought has moved away from Straussian

[1] See Jean M. Yarbrough, "A Giving of Accounts: A review of *Crisis of a Straus Divided*, by Harry V. Jaffa," *Claremont Review of Books* XIII, no. 2 (2013): accessed July 7, 2022 https://claremontreviewofbooks.com/a-giving-of-accounts/.

> dualities—ancients and moderns, reason and revelation, Athens and Jerusalem, and so on—and assimilated into one great scheme Plato and Aristotle, the Roman empire, Shakespeare, Jefferson, and Lincoln. Or, as Kraynak puts it, Jaffa's *New birth of Freedom* offers a grand synthesis of Athens, Jerusalem, and Peoria. It is difficult to disagree, though both suspect that Jaffa may have deliberately exaggerated the Christianity convergences. For his part, Jaffa insists that Strauss himself began the convergence in his book *The City and Man* (1964).[2]

I think that our approach at John Adams Academy, should recognize the tension, but even more importantly seek for those common truths that built this great country.

Your thoughts are welcome.

Shane

November 11, 2021
Joseph Benson

Thank you, Shane.

I like the notion of America as the grand synthesis of common truths. I see that not only in America at its founding, but America in the present and future—a country that looks to the ancients for guidance on truth, wisdom, and virtue, recognizing they too were looking through a glass darkly. As we stand on their shoulders, we may be able to see down the path a little further. America, as pluralistic a society that has ever existed, can and should stand on the notion that our liberties free us to ever be truth seekers together and that America represents the grand synthesis of common truths.

I joined the Academy in large part because I saw the public education system as a failing system that has for the past 100+ years been on a journey to divorce itself and our children from religion and recognition of God, and that has gotten to the point it has embraced an anti-God, secularist, anti-objective truth, progressive, dogma of its own. This dogmatic indoctrination of our youth stifles the pursuit of truth. This is un-American. On the other hand, when I first joined the academy and explored curriculum with our various stakeholders, it became clear that there were some, if not many, fundamental differences in educational philosophies most of which had their roots in religious differences. I saw this especially pronounced as I attended conferences and got to know various classical schools with their often very different, sometimes acrimonious views of each other. In a religiously free society, I wondered if there could be an educational approach that brought together those with different religious convictions, or if the only response to the secularization of education was a retreat into our various religious strongholds. I began to

[2] Ibid.

think that maybe education is so inextricably connected to epistemology which is so inextricably connected to religion that maybe that is the best approach.

I am and will ever be a supporter of parental choice to send their children to a school that aligns philosophically and religiously with their views. But, I set out to answer that question—is there a model of education that works in a religiously and philosophically pluralistic student body? When I look to our founding from thirteen different colonies, many with very different religious roots, I take courage in our endeavor. America was the amalgamation of thirteen very different colonies. I recognized that this nation was not built despite everyone's differences but because of them, not in a tribalistic way but more in a way of a coming together around common principles of freedom, natural rights. I see an America that did not retreat to tribalism but rather embraced freedom and created the opportunity even the culture of the exchange of ideas. This allowed Americans to choose to come together on commonly recognized truths to build a nation of liberty. In other words, with liberty as a foundation, something magical happened—Americans engaged in free markets of ideas and they naturally chose to associate and work together around commonly recognized truths. Our nation was created out of differences because there were some that believed it could be done and then advocated and even sacrificed greatly to make it happen.

I settled on the answer that we can and should build such a model of education. If the founders could come together to build such a nation, we too certainly can come together in liberty with our different ideas and perspectives to engage in free markets of ideas. As they built a nation on the synthesis of truths from that ongoing great conversation that started with the ancients, we can choose to unite to build a model of education that is founded in liberty and dedicated to the common pursuit and synthesis of truth through the great conversation. That is truly American—an American Classical Education.

Joseph Benson

November 11, 2021
Shane Schulthies

Thank you, Joseph.

Your thoughts and motivations are similar to my own. I think that this is the essence of what a public school means—not a school that rejects religion, or one that rejects ancient philosophy, but one that recognizes the natural tension of different ideas, but also recognizes the consistency and growth of our understanding of truth as well.

Shane

November 11, 2021
Thaddeus Kozinski

Thanks for this discussion. To me, the question is whether classical liberalism is itself, or has led to, not a working and fruitful synthesis of the common moral and spiritual and metaphysical truths of the West, but a privatization, subjectification, and deauthorization of them, and this due to the inexorable logic built into its (Locke's) first principle of "every church is orthodox to itself." This is roughly the thesis of D.C. Schindler and Alasdair MacIntyre (well, the earlier MacIntyre at least) et al. If interested:[3]

> Locke's call for political toleration amounts in fact to a "potentializing" of the ultimate. Locke does not deny the existence of God or the truth of religion; indeed, he affirms these as indispensable, to the extent that atheists have to be excluded from toleration. What Locke does deny, however, is the actuality of religion—in other words, he denies the objective authority of any concrete, historical form that religion might take. But of course a religion cannot exist except concretely in history. If a religion, which means the effective manifestation of ultimate meaning, exists concretely in history, it necessarily makes a claim on me prior to my act of will, because it makes a claim on everything without exception. To recognize this claim is to see that actuality preces potency, and if this is true ultimately, it will be true, so to speak, all the way down. And this will mean that freedom will necessarily have to be interpreted as sharing in actuality, a response to the good that precedes me and makes my choice of it possible; the actualizing of the will in this case comes to mean being brought into an actual world, a tradition, and a hierarchy of goods. Actual religion is therefore incompatible with an interpretation of freedom primarily as active power. Locke can affirm freedom as power only by transforming at the same time the status of religion. It can no longer be a single truth that preces political agents, but it has to become an array of possibilities, any one of which individuals are free to accept, at least within the constraints of political order. Within these constraints, I am permitted to affirm any religion as true and practice it thus in public, as long as I recognize that this has a new meaning that would strike an ancient thinker as confusing, if not simply confused: it is true "for me." Notice that the potentializing of religion in this way allows one to neutralize the implications of the existence of God without having to shoulder the burden of responsibility that would come with rejecting God outright. In short, the precondition for the emergence of the modern concept of freedom is not the denial of God, but the denial of his actual self-revelation in history. Modern liberty, at its core, is a rejection specifically of the incarnation, God's coming in the flesh. (127)

Thaddeus Kozinski

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[3] See Paul Seaton "Metaphysics as Politics?: D.C. Shindler on Locke and Liberalism," *Law and Liberty*, accessed July 8, 2022, https://lawliberty.org/metaphysics-as-politics-d-c-schindler-on-locke-and-liberalism/;

November 12, 2021
Martin O'Hara

Such an important discussion for our work here. All humans want to know what is true. All humans desire goodness. Yet are truth and goodness eternal and unchanging or just human constructs subject to change? The various groups mentioned - the ancients represented by Plato and Aristotle, our nation's founders and Lincoln, and the western religions practiced by the founders - affirm the eternity of truth and goodness. They recognized the human ability to know truth and to seek eternal goodness. Yet, as Aquinas points out, (1) all is done with an admixture of error, and (2) while the human mind can know that God exists and that human life is eternal, the ultimate truths concerning who God is and in what eternal life consists are beyond the reach of natural reason. Consequently, revelation, faith and religion are integral to giving concrete meaning to human life.

In this intellectual tradition, there is a body of truth and goodness accessible to all humans as humans, and a greater body of truth beyond our grasp which is the proper domain of faith. By contrast, the progressive mind denies objective truth and goodness and, in the extreme, denies the existence of God and eternal life. Consequently, as an institution, we find ourselves working in a three-tiered arena.

1. At one tier, objective truth and goodness is denied.
2. A second tier affirms a truth and goodness which all humans can access.
3. The third tier is the domain of faith which is beyond human comprehension yet gives authentic meaning to the human life.

As individuals, one can affirm any one of these positions by themselves, yet affirming 1 and 2 is impossible. Affirming 1 and 3 is possible yet it destroys the intellectual life and renders faith meaningless – faith is the conviction that the unseen is true. The ancients and founders affirmed 2 and 3.

As an institution, we should affirm 2 and 3, and prepare scholars to see the consequences of 1. We cannot promote the American heritage of government that protects inalienable rights given to us by our Creator if we deny God's existence and the human ability understand inalienable rights.

As humans, we believe before we understand. As Americans, faith formation and religion was part of public education for our first 150 year. Prayer and the Ten Commandments where not banished from public education until the 60's. I do not think that human formation without faith formation is the best way to form children; yet a formation that denies the human capacity to know truth and seek authentic goodness is deformation.

Respectfully,

Martin O'Hara

November 14, 2021
Shane Schulthies

Thanks Martin. I agree with your assessment.

Sorry this is so long, but Thaddeus raised some questions on political philosophy and our founding documents that I think deserve exploration and discussion. Especially for those of us who teach political philosophy, but also because this is core to the mission of our school.

If I understand Thaddeus correctly he argues that:

1. Locke's statement that each religion is orthodox in itself leads inexorably to the privatization and subjectification of truth.
2. That this has resulted in the modern "will to power" nation state that we have today.
3. And that the American founding conceived a nation state that synthesized the philosophy of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. That this false conception of the state and man was present at our founding and in our founding documents and has directly contributed to the modern atheistic, relativistic nation state, and its abuses.

Thaddeus, do I accurately understand your meaning?

If I understand *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* correctly, Aristotle saw the Polis as a moral institution supporting and encouraging each individual as he strove for happiness by gaining virtue as a way of being. While not identical, it is similar to Christian teaching. Machiavelli, in large part, argued against this by saying that the purpose of the state was to provide the material well-being of the citizen, in exclusion to his moral development. I say in large part because Aristotle recognized that while virtue is absolutely required for happiness, material well-being, including health, wealth, etc. also facilitated happiness. As a citizen of Florence, Machiavelli experienced first-hand the inability of the small city states to resist the tyranny of France and the Holy Roman Empire, as they were overrun, by first one and then another of the major powers. His solution was to create an Italian nation state, which could more readily defend itself. While he may have been correct that a small city state was no physical match for the major powers of his day, he was wrong (as we are today) to sacrifice morality for physical security.

But I don't think that limiting the state to the protection of the natural rights of life, liberty, and property is necessarily immoral or amoral. In fact I believe it to be very moral. Mainly because I believe that to use political power to enforce a particular religious doctrine or philosophical doctrine is immoral.

Locke stated:

> POLITICAL POWER, then, I take to be a RIGHT of making laws with penalties of death, and consequently all less penalties, for the regulating and preserving of

> property, and of employing the force of the community, in the execution of such laws, and in the defence of the commonwealth from foreign injury; and all this only for the public good.[4]

Should we then use the political power which is the "right to enforce by death" to require that persons adhere to a particular religious doctrine, even if they want to choose another? Is virtue virtuous if it is enforced by the sword? Aristotle states that at least a basic level of voluntary action is required to exercise virtue. While virtuous actions freely chosen are the way one becomes virtuous, virtue is not an action but a state of being. I believe that free institutions are more likely to promote virtue then those enforced by threat of violence.

I will repeat the "liberal story" as Thaddeus puts it, that by limiting government, you leave the people free to create non-force institutions to promote the moral and virtuous principles—by which society is governed by virtuous individuals largely who govern themselves. This is consistent with the numerous quotes of the founders stating that our government was made for only a religious and moral people. In fact, I believe a careful reading of Washington's first inaugural address, and his thanksgiving proclamations, evinces that he goes beyond a social compact, invoking a heavenly covenant, with prescribed punishments for disobedience. Lincoln likewise recognizes this in his second inaugural address and his thanksgiving proclamation.

In his social compact Locke states that no one can give more power to the government than he has in a state of nature. No one in a state of nature can use force for anything except defense and punishment against those who would take away these basic rights. This limits government to the negative role of punishing those who would take ways those rights. Likewise in creating society man does not totally relinquish his power of preservation of those rights, which was our justification of going to war against the British Government. This is in direct opposition to Hobbes' world-wide monarchial leviathan, or to Rousseau's social contract where man is sovereign when voting and thus without restraint and then completely subject to the will of the majority. The Declaration of Independence, which recognizes God's role as Creator, legislator, executive, and supreme judge is a moral document, that logically limits, not only government, but the people's "unjust" exercise of their will. "That to secure these rights governments were instituted among men, deriving the JUST powers by the consent of the governed." (Emphasis added). I see the Declaration of Independence not as a synthesis of Hobbs, Locke and Rousseau, but an acceptance of Locke and a rejection of the other two.

The Constitution's separation of powers, and checks and balances creates as system where the natural aristocrats, using reason not passion, are most likely to make good laws, consented to by virtuous citizens. It likewise puts barriers on the power of the majority to exercise "their will," which is in opposition to Thracymachus' definition of justice (identical to

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[4] John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government* in *Government and Economics Document Book 2nd Edition* (Roseville: John Adams Academy 2020), 2.

Rousseau's) while creating a polity similar to Aristotle's politics. This sounds a lot more like Aristotle, than either Hobbs, or Rousseau.

In addition, consent, representation, and majority rule are not the same thing. Real consent and representation can only occur when something like consensus is achieved by representatives who really know their constituents. By giving only enumerated powers to the Federal government which concern mainly trade and defense, and reserving the rest of the powers to the states and the people, consensus on moral questions is more likely to be achieved, and is more just. So why hasn't it stopped the modern leviathan, of which Thaddeus rightly decries? I believe that it is due to the rejection of the principles found in the Declaration, and the forms found in the Constitution.

First let's look at chattel slavery. Every proponent for slavery (which included none of the major founders), Taney, John C. Calhoun, Jefferson Davis, and Alexander Stevens all either say the founders didn't mean what they said in the Declaration or that they were wrong in saying it. They likewise misread the Constitution to deny with right of Congress to limit slavery to the territories, despite the fact that the Constitution gave congress exclusive legislation over territory owned by the Federal Government and the fact that the signers of the Constitution repeatedly voted for congressional legislation of such territories.

Second, let's look at the progressive movement, which is the ultimate expression of the modern democratic nation states. Herbert Croly, Woodrow Wilson, and nearly every one of the early progressives again say that the principles of the Declaration of Independence are flat out wrong about there being no natural rights, that all rights derive from the social compact, i.e. from government. They are thus Rousseauean not Lockean. They likewise disparage the checks and balances doctrine found in the constitution. The whole administrative state is a rejection of rule by the consent of the people.

Finally, does the Declaration and Constitution eliminate state and local governments from passing laws prohibiting vice? How does this fit in the Lockean model? I think that Blackstone said it best,

> Let a man therefore be ever so abandoned in his principles, or vicious in his practice, provided he keeps his wickedness to himself, and does not offend against the rules of public decency, he is out of the reach of human laws. But if he makes his vices public, though they be such as seem principally to affect himself, (as drunkenness, or the like,) then they become, by the bad example they set, of pernicious effects to society; and therefore it is then the business of human laws to correct them. (Commentaries on the Laws of England, Book 1, Chapter 1)

Therefore, in the Lockean model, public vice is an externality that adversely affects others and can therefore be regulated, and prohibited, albeit at the state or local level.

In conclusion I propose that Locke's principles of equality and natural rights, as *understood by the founders* and tempered by their religious faith, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence are morally consistent (though not identical) with the revealed word of God, and the writings of Plato and Aristotle. They are not perfect, and they have certainly not been applied in our society with perfection. Likewise, as Lincoln powerfully demonstrated, a reliance on those documents is the only sure foundation to avoid democratic despotism. I think that this is what is meant by restoring America's heritage.

Shane

November 16, 2021
Martin O'Hara

Shane,

I would raise two concerns about Locke's political philosophy, both arise from his failure to fully consider the common good.

1. Man does not leave the state of nature to enter a political community, the Polis. "Nature impels all human beings toward political community" (Aristotle's *Politics*). Living in a *just* Polis is the state of nature for man. The individual does not surrender power by living in a Polis. Life in a just Polis empowers the individual - think of The Republic. The Polis produces goods that are out of reach for the individual - self-sufficiency, prosperity, security, justice, and peace are all common goods produced and protected in the Polis. Living in a just Polis allows individuals to complete and perfect their nature - this is the state of nature for man.

2. The powers of the Polis are not the sum of powers surrendered by individuals. The Polis has powers that are qualitatively different from the powers of individuals. As the common goods produced and protected in the Polis are superior and more perfect than the goods of the individual, the powers of the Polis exceed and are qualitatively different from the powers of the individuals. The Polis has the power to make and enforce law because it is charged with the task of producing and protecting common goods. Individuals do not have the power to govern and enforce law. The Polis has the power to exact capital punishment because it has the duty to protect the life of the community and the common good, a good that exceeds the private good of the individual. Outside of self-defense or being deputed by the Polis, the individual does not have the right to intend the death of another.

I think that ignoring or abandoning the notion of the common good is a significant defect in Locke's political philosophy. Our good is a greater good than my good. Our political nature requires and allows us to pursue common goods that are difficult and sometimes impossible to acquire in isolation. Knowledge and wisdom are quintessential examples of such common goods. They are best pursued through collaboration, mentors and by standing on the shoulders of giants.

Respectfully,

Martin O'Hara

December 1, 2021
Shane Schulthies

Martin,

My long-winded response was a combination of the last few missives. In doing so I didn't respond to your comment:

> The powers of the Polis are not the sum of powers surrendered by individuals. The Polis has powers that are qualitatively different from the powers of individuals. As the common goods produced and protected in the Polis are superior and more perfect than the goods of the individual, the powers of the Polis exceed and are qualitatively different from the powers of the individuals.

You may be right; I have waffled back and forth on this one. My approach strictly limits government but may be logically flawed. It has something to do with the whole being different than the summation of the parts. My view might even be a logical fallacy, but I can't remember where I read that. Can you help me with this one?

Much of my view of a very limited government comes from my Georgic upbringing. I relate to Jefferson's comments about virtue and the tilling of the ground. I was raised on a large farm in a town spread over 15 miles, and less than 150 people. The town was unincorporated, and in a neglected corner of the county. It had a private water supply and we took care of each other, to the extent of even building homes for the needy. I think I've seen Tocqueville's township and it works. As part of this, as I understand the New Testament, Jesus gave the Church and its individual members a Divine mandate to care for the poor and needy—not the state. In England that was changed with the confiscation of Church property under Henry VIII and Reformation Parliament.[5]

I don't pretend to be able to change a system in place since the 1530s, but I do like to keep the ideal in mind. That said, Martin, help me understand the logical difference referred to above.

Shane

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[5] (See Tocqueville's Memoirs on Pauperism as well as the "Reacting to the Past" here https://uncpress.org/book/9781469647555/henry-viii-and-the-reformation-parliament/.)

December 1, 2021
Martin O'Hara

Shane,

Let me take a shot at this. I think a ship at sea is a common analogy for the Polis, hence the phrase—Ship of State. The common good of a ship is the safe transport of goods and passengers over the sea. The captain is tasked with procuring the common good while each sailor procures some particular good—the mechanic maintains the engine, the carpenter maintains the ship, a cook produces food and so on.

Does any individual sailor produce the common good? No. Is the common good simply the sum of the goods procured by the individual sailors? Again, no. Safe transport over the sea is achieved when a knowledgeable captain skillfully utilizes the various goods procured by his sailors. The captain possesses architectonic power and knowledge needed to safely bring the ship to port. Individual sailors do not possess that power and need not possess the knowledge. Each sailor possesses the particular power and knowledge needed to procure their particular goods.

Can we agree that the common good is a greater than and different from the sum of the particular goods? (1) Particular goods are for the sake of the common good—making the common good greater (why this is so is an interesting discussion). (2) Collectively, goods produced by individuals for the common are only good when skillfully put to use for the sake of the common good. Since power is proportional to the goods produced, the power of the captain to procure the common good must be greater than the sum of the particular powers of the sailors to produce their particular goods. History confirms this absolute power of captains.

Analogously, the common goods of the Polity are different from and greater than the sum of private goods of citizens. Hence, the power of the Polity to procure the common good must be greater than and different from the sum of powers of the citizens. The common goods of the Polity (self-sufficiency, peace, prosperity, justice, safety from treats and so on) are produced when those charged with procuring them possess the architectonic knowledge and power to do so. This architectonic knowledge and power is qualitatively different from the powers of individuals. Does that make sense?

Martin O'Hara

December 1, 2021
Dean Forman

Thank you all for sharing your inspiring insights. The breadth and depth to this conversation are invigorating.

I went to put my grain of sand on the altar of conversation a few weeks ago, but the discussion had quickly turned in another direction.

Fortunately, I saw Martin at the Thanksgiving lunch and he coaxed a bit out of me on the compatibility of reason and how it relates to revelation for me and perhaps for others. I was able to share a few thoughts surrounding common sense or natural revelation, (which appears to be in

short supply these days). Reason or natural revelation is that which all are imbued with as suggested in the gospel of John KJV chapter 1:9: “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” Some certainly develop this light through learning, thought and discussion sooner and faster than others but we all have it to a degree either in embryo or growing.

The Light or The Truth, being Christ, leads us to the bridge of Divine Revelation. John 8:30-32, says “As he spake these words, many believed on him, Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

When the principle of natural revelation of Truth is obeyed we become liberated and free. We are then in a position to be further enlightened by Divine Revelation and experience a catharsis of thoughts and new epiphanies of mind and soul.

Consider: John 14:16-17 “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” As we yield to natural revelation this bridge of the Holy Ghost is opened to us.

John 15:26 “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:”

John 16:13 “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”

My point in sharing these verses is that as these two forms of revelation, natural and divine, find each other and blend together and our insights to our questions are magnified and multiplied as your are all doing!

This institution understands that natural revelation and reason are both Divine Gifts from our Loving Father. Thanks for sharing. Keep it going.

Bravo! and thank you for emulating giants. We are in good company.

Dean

December 1, 2021
Martin O'Hara

Dean,

Since our conversation, I've found your use of the term natural revelation unique and enlightening. Revelation primarily refers to Divine Revelation – truths God reveals about God and Eternal Life that are beyond the reach of natural reason. Yet, when we recognize (1) that there is a body of truth which humanity can collectively discover by natural reason, and (2) that we come into this world ignorant of this body of truth, this body of truth can be seen as being revealed by the natural light of reason. And, so long as we lack the experience or wisdom to see these truths for ourselves, each one of us must choose whether to accept natural revelation by faith or to reject it. The difference is that with diligent study in a nurturing community, natural revelation can give way to authentic knowledge and wisdom in this life. Divine Revelation, on the other hand, is Wisdom that can only be confirmed in the next life.

Respectfully,

Martin O'Hara

December 2, 2021
Dean Forman

Thanks Martin.

How do you define Divine Revelation?

Dean

December 2, 2021
Martin O'Hara

People of faith believe that God has spoken and speaks to humanity. Divine Revelation is the accepted account of God's communication with humanity, revealing the mysteries of who God is and in what eternal life consists. As these mysteries are beyond the grasp of natural reason, they cannot be part of body of truths which you are calling natural revelation. Does that make sense?

Martin O'Hara

December 3, 2021
Dean Forman

Hi Martin,

This is helping. I think I am following you. Thank you for your feedback.

The prism I default to is putting philosophers in the realm of the enlightened and secular but not being Divine. So I am trying to put them all into their proper order and sphere and the whole spectrum of truth.

Divine Revelation is the accepted account of God's communication with humanity, revealing the mysteries of who God is and in what eternal life consists.Would you say the accepted account of God's communication is then recorded in or as scripture?

How would you define mysteries?

When I look at the word revelation, whether natural or Divine, I think of the Greek word apocalypse, meaning to make known or uncover. Both natural and Divine are forms of revelation, the latter being higher as it can tell us what to do with our natural gifts or excellence once discovered.

Furthermore, that Divine is a higher form of revelation that we can share in a small way with God when we read the words of great prophets, philosophers and poets under the influence of The Holy Ghost. I am suggesting that each person as a spirit child of Diety has a spiritual DNA (Light of Christ), as it were, embedded in them the opportunity to discover and uncover their natural gifts to be and do good by blessing others and be a reflection of "The Light of the World." With this light they then can recognize The Way, The Truth and The Life. But they still need Divine or Providential light of The Holy Ghost to know what to do with it or how to go about it.

My point was also that our discoveries of our natural gifts allow us to see or glimpse what may be possible in our lives. See John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." As opposed to using the greater Divine revelation to enter a higher realm of seeing to understanding and doing.

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5

Yours in the pursuit of truth.

Dean

December 6, 2021
Martin O'Hara

Dean,

I am using mystery, in a primary sense, to be any truth that is beyond human understanding, beyond natural reason. Mystery, however, has more than one meaning. In our conversation, where you divide natural revelation from divine, there will be natural mysteries and divine mysteries. A natural mystery is a truth that we do not understand yet may be understood through reflection or instruction. Mysteries in the primary sense can never be understood in this life, as they surpass natural reason.

For example, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas and various philosophers have discovered many ways to prove the existence of God. To the person who has not studied or does not understand the proofs, the existence of God is a natural mystery. The existence of God is a natural mystery to anyone who does not understand the proofs.

Mysteries in the primary sense arise when we go beyond the existence of God to ask the question, "Who is God?". Many Christians, for example, affirm a triune nature of God - that God is One Being in three divine persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Triune nature of God, if true, is a mystery in the primary sense as it can never be proven by natural reason.

At the heart of this division of truth is not truth itself. The division arises from limitations of human understanding and natural reason. All natural understanding has its origin in sensation and experience. We've heard the scholastic principle, "Nothing is in the mind that has not come through the senses." The problem is that while sense knowledge produces direct knowledge of the material reality that we experience, sense knowledge produces only indirect knowledge of the immaterial domain of God. By reflecting upon the order and structure of the material world that we sense, we can find ways to prove the existence of an Unmoved Mover, an Uncaused Cause, a Necessary Being that is Existence and governs the material world that we sense. We call this Being God. Yet nothing of the material world tells us who God is. Natural reason is limited to knowing that God exists and what God is not – not material, not bounded by time, not finite, not many and so on. Who God is remains a mystery to natural reason.

You've probably heard the classical example used to illustrate our indirect knowledge of God. Imagine walking on an island thought to be altogether uninhabited. If you happen upon a pocket watch, you know that a human was there. You cannot, however, know who the human is.

The primary meaning of mystery is the domain of faith. Each faith has authorities that establish mysteries presented for belief. The Apostles' Creed, for example, contains twelve mysteries of faith presented for belief by the Apostles.

Does that make sense?

Respectfully,

Martin O'Hara

December 16, 2021
Dean Forman

Hi Martin,

Sorry for the late response.

Does this definition of mystery comporting with your understanding or communicated meaning?

> **MYS'TERY**, n. [L. mysterium; Gr. a secret. This word in Greek is rendered also murium latibulum; but probably both senses are from that of hiding or shutting; Gr. to shut, to conceal.
>
> 1. A profound secret; something wholly unknown or something kept cautiously concealed, and therefore exciting curiosity or wonder; such as the mystery of the man with the iron mask in France.
>
> 2. In religion, any thing in the character or attributes of God, or in the economy of divine providence, which is not revealed to man.
>
> 3. That which is beyond human comprehension until explained. In this sense, mystery often conveys the idea of something awfully sublime or important; something that excites wonder.
>
> Great is the mystery of godliness. 1 Tim 3.
>
> Having made known to us the mystery of his will. Eph 1.
>
> We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. 1 Cor 2.
>
> 4. An enigma; any thing artfully made difficult.
>
> 5. A kind of ancient dramatic representation.
>
> 6. A trade; a calling; any mechanical occupation which supposes skill or knowledge peculiar to those who carry it on, and therefore a secret to others.

> [The word in the latter sense has been supposed to have a different origin from the foregoing, viz.] (Websters 1828)

What takes us from belief to the knowledge of truth? Is it the testimony of others (like scripture). Is it intuition or instinct, feelings or desire? Is it abstract reasoning from universal principles? Is it sensory experience? Is it practical activity having successful consequences? Is it logical theory derived from authoritarianism, mysticism, rationalism, empiricism or pragmatism? How would you describe the markers of truth?

Thanks for sharing your understanding and insights.

Dean Forman

December 16, 2021
Martin O'Hara

Dean,

How appropriate it is to continue this conversation as we approach the Christmas Season – the Season of Faith and Love. We are talking about the limits of natural reason, the domain of faith, and the nature of mystery.

"Does this definition of mystery comporting with my understanding or communicated meaning?"

I think so.

"Would you say the accepted account of God's communication is then recorded in the Bible or as scripture?"

There is no easy answer to this. Just as natural reason requires mentors and a community of learners to advance from ignorance or faith to natural understanding and knowledge, the person who lives by faith needs a teaching authority to propose accepted accounts of divine mysteries and a faith community to cultivate a spiritual life.

Ask the tough questions. Why is the Bible an accepted authority? Who is God and in what does eternal life consist? How do you answer these questions? Is the individual the authority that answers them? I didn't write the Bible or assemble it. I didn't discern answers to the divine mysteries. I affirm or deny them by faith or disbelief.

With diligence, study and reflection, we can come to understand that God exists and that human life is immortal. Yet, we can never know, by natural reason, who God is and in what

eternal life consists. A thoughtful person is left in a state of perpetual wonder concerning these mysteries. We either ignore them or we look to faith authorities for answers.

The problem is that different faith authorities offer different answers to divine mysteries. And, just as the truth of our ideas about reality depends upon their conformity to reality, the truth of faith depends upon its conforming to the realities of God and eternal life. Faith is false when it does not conform to the reality about these things (one way or another), it is true when it conforms. Faiths about these realities can differ, yet when contradictions arise, contradictory faiths cannot be simultaneously true, any more than contradictory statements in mathematics can be simultaneously true.

This is like the thought experiment in physics. Imagine we are in space and we see the distance between two bodies changing. We can know that motion is taking place, yet we cannot know what's moving. When contradictions arise between faiths, we know something is false, we can't know what it is. In the physics experiment, we decide what is moving by establishing a preferred reference frame. In matters of faith, the individual resolves conflicts in matters of faith by looking to an authority.

The person of faith (1) believes that an authority (Scripture or the Church) is worthy of belief and (2) believes what the authority proposes to believe. Yet, as St. Augustine argued so well, the grace to accept the truths of the faith is only from God. We look to authorities to teach us in divine matters. We look to God for the grace to believe.

"What takes us from belief to the knowledge of truth?"

In matters within reach of natural reason, rational analysis moves us from belief or opinion to natural understanding and knowledge. Each discipline has a method of reasoning that leads to knowledge. Each method enjoys a different level of certitude. Analytical reasoning, which is employed in natural science, mathematics and metaphysics, produces the greatest certitude. Dialectical reasoning, employed when discovering the principles of science and whenever principles are hypothesized; poetic reasoning, employed in literature and rhetorical reasoning, employed in public life, each in its own way, move us from ignorance or blind belief toward understanding. Liberal education produces facility in these methods.

"Is it the testimony of others (like scripture)?"

I would claim that belief and opinion always precedes knowledge. We believe before we understand. Testimony of those we esteem as authorities establishes belief and opinion.

"Is it intuition or instinct, feelings or desire?"

As we cannot prove everything, intuition plays an important role is seeing the truth of our principles. Intellect intuitively sees the principles of knowledge. Once the mathematician understands what "whole" and "part" mean, he intuitively apprehends that the "Whole is greater

than its part." Once the natural scientist understands what a substratum is, he intuitively apprehends that "matter is the substratum of every natural change" Once the metaphysician understands what being and existence are, he intuitively apprehends that "a being cannot exist and not exist at the same time and in the same respect". The scientist dialectically discovers and intuitively apprehends the principles of his science. Science then uses these principles to prove what is known about reality. This process moves us from faith and opinion to natural understanding and knowledge.

"Is it abstract reasoning from universal principles?"

Natural science, mathematics and metaphysics employ abstract reasoning from universal principle to establish truth in each science. Each science employs its own method. Each science enjoys its own level of certitude. It is a task of education to teach the methods proper to each science that lead to knowledge. St. Thomas Aquinas explains these methods in articles that have come to be called "The Division and Methods of the Sciences"

"Is it sensory experience?"

All knowledge originates in sense knowledge and experience. Intellect is able to abstract from particular sense experience to (1) form universal concepts, (2) make universal judgements concerning truth and falsity and (3) reason from truths that we understand to truths we do not understand. These three operations of intellect look to sensation as their source of information.

"Is it practical activity having successful consequences?"

Conformity with reality is what knowledge is all about both in the theoretical sciences and the practical sciences. Practical activity and experience is how we tether our ideas in the real.

"Is it logical theory derived from authoritarianism, mysticism, rationalism, empiricism or pragmatism?"

I'm not a big "ism" guy. When we successfully discover the principles of the subject we are studying, and we successfully use those principles to explain the way things are, we discover truth. This applies both to natural understanding and to our inferences from divine mysteries.

"How/what would you describe the markers of truth?"

St. Thomas teaches that a sign that a question is well answered is the clarity of the answer and the answer's ability to address all objections. In the end, truth is simple, clear, makes sense of our experience and sheds light on our difficulties.

Have a Joyous Christmas and blessed New Year,

Martin O'Hara

December 28, 2021
Thaddeus Kozinski

Dear Scholars:

The essay linked below is very apropos to our discussion and I think it would be something we could discuss fruitfully in person or online at some point.[6]

This quote from page 84 is, I think, most fundamental:

> The advent of liberalism and of liberal societies is a transitional moment in the death of God in the modern West, a catastrophe from which the Church is not exempt. The "priority of the political" and the power that politics exercises over our vision and imagination are among its most acute symptoms. This is really the heart of the matter, and why my thought, unlike Reilly's, is not in the first instance political. The overarching concern that has motivated all my thinking on these matters is not the political concern to "prosecute" the Founders or, conversely, to hypothesize about the best regime. My concern is what John Paul II and Benedict XVI called "the eclipse of the sense of God and man" in the modern West and, particularly, in the modern Church, the dark shadow of which has deprived us of the light even to recognize our own atheism.

Best,

Thaddeus

January 11, 2022
Martin O'Hara

Thaddeus,

The author is not hopeful about changing the trajectory of liberal influence. What do you think ought to be done? Would you agree that the natural formation of the mind and will that we receive from our parents, our schools and our mentors can dispose us either to reject objective truth, goodness and beauty or to pursue them all our lives?

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[6] https://newpolity.com/blog/the-birth-of-liberal-order?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=what_a_year&utm_term=2021-12-28

As your author affirms, the skepticism, originating in Descartes, grown by the empiricists (Locke, Berkley and Hume) and embodied in Kant is omnipresent in our culture, it defines our culture. These thinkers incrementally established an intellectual custom that denies the human capacity to know truth, seek objective goodness or delight in objective beauty. They rejected the intellectual and moral custom – embodied by Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas – a custom that affirms the human capacity to know the natures of things and the capacity to develop authentic freedom through a life of virtue. The ideas of skepticism define our culture.

This is where our culture is. Yet, as educators don't we have a choice? Should we provide a formation perpetuates the skepticism of these thinkers? Or, should we expend our time and effort rediscovering the intellectual and moral custom the affirms our natural capacity for Truth, Goodness and Beauty?

Do we think that the human mind can know the natures of things? Or do we agree with the mechanistic and quantitative approach of modern science that denies (1) that things have natures or essences and therefore (2) that we can know them? These are fundamental questions at the heart of what we are doing.

Respectfully,

Martin O'Hara,

January 14, 2022
Shane Schulthies

Martin,

While clearly Bacon denies Final Cause, I don't think modern science (as practiced by many believing scientists) necessarily excludes a capacity to know Truth, Goodness, or Beauty. In fact, many scientists know that the natural or even mechanical and reproducible laws of modern science affirm the reality of a great parallel law of our Divine Creator. The physical evidence collected by scientists can be and should be compatible with the "assurance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." Also, a knowledge of God can come from several sources which include experience or empiricism as we pray and feel His Holy Spirit, His love, and His forgiveness, for example.

You seemed to express a sense of fatalism in Hanby's essay. If our founding was fatally flawed from the outset, as Hanby suggests, then a pessimistic view of our future is the likely conclusion. I, however, continue to disagree with much of Hanby's thesis. While the founding was not perfect, I believe it to be inspired of God. Since I have previously expressed my disagreement with this thesis, I would like to focus this missive on potential solutions.

If the founding was our problem, then solutions are hard to find. Even if the founding was essentially flawed, it is a given fact of almost 250 years. Tocqueville proposed, "To instruct democracy, if possible to reanimate it's beliefs, to purify its mores, to regulate its movements, etc." I believe that the founders sought and did do that with the secular state to a great extent and that we should do likewise.

My vision of early America is like Aristotle's polis but seen in the broader aspect of community than the government. Tocqueville described this community as containing several institutions: State (government), Church, Family, Media, Academia, Business, and other voluntary associations. These institutions not only acted as mediating entities between government and the people, they also influenced the coercive power of the state to be practiced according to true principles. Because the people largely believed in Natural Law as divinely expressed in the Bible, the government reflected these truths. The doctrines of the different sects differed, but the general virtues and moral principles were similar: the 10 commandments, judgement after death, the moral teachings of Jesus, etc.

Yes, the nation state has a near monopoly on power, but that power was strictly limited in its sphere. I believe a return to those principles of the founding that limited the government as the solution, not the problem.

Aristotle described the city thus:

> But a state exists for the sake of a good life, and not for the sake of life only: if life only were the object, slaves and brute animals might form a state, but they cannot, for they have no share in happiness or in a life of free choice. Nor does a state exist for the sake of alliance and security from injustice, nor yet for the sake of exchange and mutual intercourse.
>
> It is clear then that a state is not a mere society, having a common place, established for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange. These are conditions without which a state cannot exist; but all of them together do not constitute a state, which is a community of families and aggregations of families in well-being, for the sake of a perfect and self-sufficing life. Such a community can only be established among those who live in the same place and intermarry. Hence arise in cities family connections, brotherhoods, common sacrifices, amusements which draw men together. But there are created by friendship, for the will to live together is friendship. The end of the state is the good life and these are the means towards it. And the state is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honorable life (Aristotle's *Politics*)

I believe that communities like this ideal description have existed from before the founding of America. I think that Tocqueville's description of the township as part of a larger community comes close to Aristotle's description. I was raised in such a community—an unincorporated farming community of about 150 people. We had a voluntary corporation for a city water supply. If a water line broke, a farmer with a backhoe would call the water master, to

turn off that section, would dig it up and fix it. The vast majority of the community gathered together several times a week for worship services of one kind or another. We had regular community recreation events. Through the leadership of our Church, we fed the hungry, we visited the sick, we built and paid for homes for the homeless. I know of a man who crawled into the burning attic of his neighbor and put out the fire with a garden hose. Why would he risk his life for his neighbor's home? Aristotle called this type of service political virtue. The founders called it public virtue. We just thought that's how everyone acted.

I could tell scores of such stories. People volunteered as youth ministers. The women of our town baked goods and sold them to build a playground in our "public" (though privately owned) park. Again, this was done through Church and other voluntary action, with no taxation or other governmental involvement. Religious rites, obedience, and Christian service were acted on privately and publicly. I have personally seen Church leaders tell government administrators that "this was how we were going to handle a particular emergency situation" and the administrators backed down, because the people supported the Church leaders. Despite Supreme Court decisions to the contrary, we held prayer at all school events growing up—even at my high school in a much larger town 20 miles away.

Here in Idaho, local government and public expression of religion are still alive—though with each year it gets harder. Teachers and coaches routinely exhort kids to be chaste while dating. When some kids used their phones to send inappropriate pictures at our high school the principle call parents together. Hundreds of parents came, phone apps were monitored and blocked, and ring leaders were suspended. The local high school still has public prayer at graduation. The whole football team kneels spontaneously in prayer on the sidelines before every game.

After consulting local doctors and looking at the data, the local school district voted to attend live school with **all** activities (dances, sporting events, plays, concerts, etc.) Masks were voluntary only (which no one wore), and no mandatory vaccines. Last school year recorded the lowest level of absenteeism in the school's history. I know this because the school board members are my neighbors and friends.

While these things may be more common in rural areas and in the "fly over zone," I believe that they can exist elsewhere. Nor are these areas perfect. The media bring moral relativism, and secular and pagan false principles into every home—no matter how vigilant.

What's my point? I believe in hope. I believe that in addition to prayer and fasting and living good lives there is much that we can do to elevate churches, and other voluntary associations, and limit government overreach. I believe these thing are in the blueprint of our founding.

I seek to do the following things, and many of you are doing them and others.

1. Get educated to avoid deceptions of the world and educate my family.
2. Get involved in education and teach proper principles.

3. Study and use the Declaration, Constitution, Federalist/Anti-Federalist Papers and other key documents. Use them as the reasons to limit government and keep it in its proper sphere.
4. Get involve in local government. Only at the local level can I have real influence.
5. Support good candidates in office. Work on their campaigns and get to know them. Only if they know me will I have influence.
6. And, practice pure religions as James 1:27 teaches. Social spending by government and religiosity of the people are inversely related. I need to be actively involved in my Church and other voluntary associations. I need to help the poor, and help them become self-sufficient. I need to teach the youth. I need to out liberal the liberals in my voluntary service. Just trying to limit government is not enough, I need to actively build the voluntary associations that reduce government's need—and thus power.
7. Finally, Thaddaeus is right, only the grace of God can turn this around. We are promised that He will, but it will be in His timeframe not ours.

I hope that I didn't sound too preachy but I wanted to raise the tone to one of hope. As Reagan put it in his First Inaugural Address: Government is the problem, but we the American people are the solution. I think that this is what "restoring America's heritage by developing servant leaders" means.

Shane

January 17, 2022
Thaddeus Kozinski

Martin,

Agreed. Yes to your questions. That's why I'm at John Adams. Of course, epistemological skepticism and ontological nihilism are diabolical enemies we must fight. I think what we have now is the next level of descent and probably the lowest possible, the whole scale deliberate, willful, rejection of reality itself, preferring unreality to reality.[7]

Thaddeus

January 19, 2022
Martin O'Hara

Shane,

The perfect, happy, honorable self-sufficing life discussed by Aristotle is the common good at which a natural society aims, and unfortunately Locke ignores. Yet, even if the founders failed to affirm this common good, nature and faith does affirm it. America is strong as long as

[7] https://thaddeuskozinski.substack.com/p/the-plandemic-the-unforgivable-sin?r=jl12o&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web&utm_source=direct

her free citizens pursue the common good affirmed by nature and faith. America weakens as we lose sight of it. I think that America's intrinsic greatness arises from her mechanisms of self-governance and division of political powers. Within these mechanisms, America is only as great as her citizens are moral and faithful.

Martin O'Hara

Individual Freedom or the Common Good?

A Comparison of Thomas Aquinas and John Locke on The Purpose of Politics

Thaddeus Kozinski Jr.

TJ will be attending Franciscan University of Steubenville pursuing the liberal arts with a focus on theology and philosophy. His life goal is to love and serve people in any way the Lord calls him to, whether that be through evangelization, fostering community, or assisting the poor. Through the intellectual life, he hopes to help revive the fire for the Good, the True, and the Beautiful in our society.

This thesis is primarily concerned with the purpose of human life, and how society and the state affect an individual's ability to seek and to find this purpose. The primary question is about the nature of man, his end (*telos* in Greek), and how he becomes a flourishing man who is happy. The answer to this question will be the lens through which we can understand the best society and the purpose of law and government. In short, the nature and purpose of man is the foundation for understanding the nature of his home in society. In this thesis the view of human nature that will act as the lens by which we understand society and the state is essentially theistic. That is, the end of human life is a supernatural one: man is made for God and called to live a life of virtue and obedience to know and love God and be happy in this life and forever. This understanding of the human telos is certainly arguable, but this thesis will not argue or prove this claim. Instead, it will assume it to see what follows in terms of political theory.

This understanding of man and society stems from both the Aristotelian and Christian views. Aristotle (384 BC- 322 BC) believed that happiness was attained through the practice of virtue,[1] and the idea that man was made for a supernatural union with God is the traditional Christian view affirmed by St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).[2] With this understanding being assumed, the thesis will

[1] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D Ross (California: Enhanced Media Publishing, 2017), 23.

[2] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros. edition, 1947), I-II, Q. 3, Art. 5.

take on the questions of how and why the state can and should support this *telos*. We shall explore two rival views of the state as expressed by Aquinas and John Locke (1632-1704), views which characterize the state and its supporting educational system as a leading force in society whose function is to promote the common end and good of man. The two philosophies of the state presented here reflect counter-views of the human person and his *telos*. Aquinas articulated one of the foundational political philosophies of Western culture based upon the conception of man, which we have already mentioned; Locke presented a philosophy of the state with a contrary conception of the human person and the state's relation to him. This thesis maintains if Aquinas' view of man is correct, then his understanding of the purpose of political authority is more conducive to human flourishing in society than Locke's, and if human society is not healthy and flourishing, it is because we have rejected to some extent Aquinas' view.

The main contention between Locke and Aquinas is the natural state man is in. For Aquinas, man's state of nature is to be a member of society under law and government, and to work for the common good of society under the authority of what governs society, the king (in the modern era, the state), for it is in society that we are perfected as individuals. However, for Locke, man's natural state is inherently individualistic. We are born in a natural state of external individual freedom and equality, with no laws or government, in which we order our actions and dispose of our possessions, but we are not born into societies and do not naturally form them.[3] Due to the need for security in our lives and possessions, Locke sees the need to form social-compacts as a means to protect our individual and natural rights to life, liberty, and property.

These two conflicting views on the nature of society, man, and the state evoke some questions: what is the role of society in relation to each man, and if the state's purpose is to be the temporal ordering agent of society, should it not serve the same purpose as society? If Aquinas is right, and man is perfected by obtaining a common good in and through his life in society, not just as an individual pursuing private goods, then the role of the state is to order a society to the common good that brings justice and happiness to each individual and supports him in his *telos*.

[3] John Locke, "Second Treatise on Government." In *A Government and Economics Document Book 2nd Edition*, edited by Steven Lee, (California: Amazon Press, 2021), 21.

The *Telos* of Man: Secular Notions of Morality and Freedom

Aquinas says that "the last end of human life is bliss or happiness."[4] It is not contestable that as we live our lives, we are constantly looking for happiness. We have a deep desire to be fulfilled and happy, and this is something that has been universally seen in every human of every era in every culture. However, what is robustly and widely sought for is the answer to the question: What makes one happy? To even begin to answer the question, one must look at the *telos*, or purpose, of human life. If one fulfills his nature as a human person, happiness is the result.

Consumerism, a foundational part of most modern Western capitalistic democracies, is built on the notion that happiness is attained through a consumeristic-materialism paradigm, persuading the day-to-day consumer that he will be happy if he just had more money and power and external freedom. This view is primarily without a sense of spirituality or higher purpose in man's end. In other words, humans are not viewed as made for something else, or, in Christian terms, made to be one with God; rather, we are simply animals with the ability to reason, but we do not have another side of our existence, as there is not another truth of reality that transcends nature in respect to the concept of the divine or supernatural. We eat, we sleep, we work, and we socialize, but only to the end of eating, sleeping, and socializing well. Out of this conception of man's final cause, individualistic materialism is a logical consequence. Economically, and as another consequence of this materialistic, individualistic "end," the consumerist mentality puts a price tag on everything. Professor Anthony Basile, a sharp critic of consumerism writes:

> The highest and best in man…is swallowed up in the abyss of consumerism. Our senses are packaged and sold back to us: taste is commodified in the mass-produced food we purchase at supermarkets, sight is commodified in TV images, and sound is commodified in pop music… Love is commodified in sex and sex in its mechanical reproduction as pornography. Children are commodified in artificial contraception or abortion…World events are commodified in the news; you won't see it if it doesn't sell commercial time. Time is commodified in interest rates; if you want today what you can only afford tomorrow, you must pay for the intermediate time. Health is commodified in medical insurance; peace of mind carries a cost.[5]

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[4] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Law* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2003), 6.

[5] Anthony Basile, "Crucified Between Two Thieves," *Culture Wars Magazine*, January 1998, https://culturewarsmagazine.com/CultureWars/Archives/cw_jan98/crucified.html.

Aquinas in his *Treatise on Law* states that "the common good is said to be the common end,"[6] which means that man has a common end with others; but in the secularist view, virtue and the good are all privatized, a situation in which the communal good of all is not an objective end which is common to all people but is rather the potentiality of an individual to determine and choose what he thinks will make him happy.

A powerful example of this confusion of common and individual ends is a Supreme Court decision made in 1992 about abortion, in which the Justices state: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life. Beliefs about these matters could not define the attributes of personhood were they formed under compulsion of the State."[7] This is contradictory to the fact that man is a created being and has a nature which he must fulfill in order to achieve happiness, and that this fulfillment also includes just actions toward others in the *same* reality. However, the "Good" in the secularist mentality is no longer objective to all, but radically privatized. This absolute valuing of, not *the* universal Good, but *a* privatized material good has penetrated many American institutions, including education.

Examining a culture's educational institutions is a good way to understand a society and what it values as the ultimate human purpose, for along with religion, education seeks to pass on to its children a society's highest values and the purpose of human life along with practical skills. If we look at the materialist-secularist education model, people are not taught objectively to see beauty, become virtuous, and seek truth because these are all subjective and private things that the individual must decide for himself. Many secular school systems today disregard truth and name it as relative, claiming that to impose truth on people is offensive by making them feel uncomfortable by the claim that there is something that is true and that they must live according to it. They say the institution of a moral code "restricts" the individual's freedom because he is no longer the highest authority for himself; rather, he is subservient to the reality that there is something beyond him. If all conceptions of the truth are relative, the only thing in such a

[6] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Law* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2003), 5.

[7] Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania, et al., Petitioners 91-744 *v.* Robert P. Casey et al., etc, Petitioners 91-902, accessed at The Legal Information Institute, Cornell University, https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/91-744.ZO.html.

radically individualistic society that that can unite humanity is material gain. Thus, the materialist-secular educator simply teaches the individual to take various tests to needed to attend prestigious colleges, not for the sake of truth, but to attain this materialist end. Man's formation is no longer a primary value in secular education, but rather the best means to create scientific and economic progress. However, the question must be asked: Is wealth or power really the end of human existence? Does man really become fulfilled through mere material gain?

Human *Telos:* Traditional Views on Morality and Freedom

In William Deresiewicz's book, *Excellent Sheep,* he explains how many people who have gone the route of the excellent sheep, that is, the ones who seek to acquire the highest paying occupations and put wealth as their end, are led to emptiness, and, for some, even driven to the point of extreme nihilism and suicide.[8] The cultural mindset of materialism, it is maintained, seems to have brought the individual further away from happiness. The question is why? Perhaps a closer look at a pre-modern definition of human *telos* will help. In this definition, the human person is a social creature, and not simply a consumer. St. Thomas Aquinas states:

> Man is by nature a political and social animal . . .This is demonstrated by the requirements of his nature. Nature has given other animals food, furry covering, teeth, and horns and claws… Man, however, is given none of these by nature. Instead he has been given the use of his reason to secure all things by the work of his hands. But a man cannot secure all these things by himself, for a man cannot provide adequately for his life by himself. Therefore it is natural for man to live in association with others.[9]

We need other people to live, and this is true in every aspect of what it means to be human. We do not just need people and society to provide for our physical necessities such as food, water, shelter, and so forth. The idea that man simply needs society in order to care for his basic physical needs was developed by Marx and Engles and failed miserably in the USSR when it was applied practically because there was a conception of man that he was no different from the animals, in the respect that all he needed to be content was things that made survival possible. Rather, the best political system is that which derives its nature from the *telos* of the individuals

[8] William Deresiewicz , *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* (New York: Free Press, 2015).

[9] St. Thomas Aquinas, "On Kingship or The Governance of Rulers," *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics,* trans. and edited by Paul E. Sigmund (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1988), 14.

that make it up. This is friendship, love, marriage, which are the things that bring us outside of our shell into a beautiful union with another person, which calls for us to care for another in a profound way. These relationships must be based on virtue, morality and therefore they have a spiritual aspect to them, or something beyond purely materialistic, survival needs. In fact, they are useless to our survival needs.

C.S Lewis profoundly states in his book *The Four Loves:* "Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art, like the universe itself… It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things which give value to survival."[10] Man cannot be reduced to the likeness of an ape, for unlike the ape, man needs a reason, a purpose, a *telos*, a way in which he can give himself for a higher end. If we do not realize how different man is from the animals, the value that we call friendship, the desire we value the most or at least to a substantial degree, becomes arbitrary and even draining. Friendship requires love, sacrifice, and to put another over oneself, which is counter-productive if one is simply meant to survive. There is a dilemma. Either friendship is merely a means to the end of survival, or it is an end in which all physical, and emotional needs, are put aside for the sake of another. The first view of friendship, more often than not, would seem plausible *prima facie*. The person may simply see friendship as a solution to a problem of loneliness, that he feels from his instinct to survive and needs others to do so, but at second glance we are distraught at the superficiality of such a view. We sink at the moments of witnessing a lack of love, or true self-giving that we hold as truly beautiful and something worth fighting for. We have this desire for something greater that we cannot find in the first view of friendship, but somehow recognize the beauty and the mystery of the latter view. We need, however, to be in a relationship with others to be fulfilled. These relationships are only possible if a person has in him the disposition to be virtuous and ultimately to be driven by love and self-sacrifice. This properly ordered soul is then mirrored in the political order.

In contrast, Plato, in *The Republic*, gives a picture of the disordered soul--the tyrant. The tyrant is run by his desires, "they have intercourse with their flatterers, who are ready to serve them in everything…therefore, they live their whole life without ever being friends to anyone… The tyrannic nature never has a taste of freedom or true friendship… There is no city more

[10] C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, (Project Gutenberg Canada, 2018, PDF ebook), 45.

wretched than one under a tyranny and none more happier than one under a kingship."[11] The tyrannical man is run by his desires and simply objectifies others to get what he wants, and he will never understand true companionship. The man of kingship is the opposite. The soul of the king seeks the good of his fellow men by his virtue and so is happy. It is the contrary view of our societal emphasis on materialism. The great phenomenon of humanity is the paradox that a happy person does not seek the good of himself, but the good of others, and by this forgetting of himself through virtue and love, he is fulfilled. As Cicero says in his book *On Friendship*, "It is virtue, virtue, which both creates and preserves friendship. On it depends harmony of interest, permanence, fidelity."[12] Virtue is what must prevail if we desire to be in relationships with others, relationships constructive to happiness. The question then becomes: what is the role of society in respect to virtue?

The Role of Society

Society can help inculcate in its members the desire to seek truth and virtue for themselves because if truth is not valued in a society, and if the individual is not reflective and does not actively seek truth, then the regime of his soul will only reflect the societal regime, what is presented to him. If a society has in fact put virtue as its end goal, then the individual will see virtue as a value, but this same, unreflective individual is no different from a man who lives in an oligarchy and has put wealth as end value because both individuals reflect the regime they live in; in other words, the man who lived in the virtue-society may take on virtue as a value, but he would be oligarchical if he lived in the oligarchical society and vice versa. This is because, if self-reflection is not also valued, and if we are not taught to seek truth and reflect upon their beliefs, we do not in fact own our belief, but simply inherit our predecessor's belief. Plato describes this in Book X of the *Republic* in his allegory of the afterlife. The afterlife is a punishment or a reward based on how one lived in life, but after the punishment or rewards, the souls are brought before a spokesman to be reincarnated, and are asked to choose what life they are to live. They draw lots on who will choose first and last:

[11] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 576a.
[12] Marcus Aurelius Cicero, *On Friendship* (PDF), https://www.scottpostma.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Cicero-On-Friendship.pdf

> Even for the man who comes forward last, if he chooses intelligently and lives earnestly, a life to content him is laid upon, not a bad one. Let the one who begins not to be careless about his choice. Let the one who is last be disheartened. When the spokesman had said this the man who had drawn the first lot came forward and immediately chose the greatest tyranny, and due to folly and gluttony, chose without having considered everything adequately; and it escaped his notice that eating his own children and other evils were fated to be part of that life… He was one of those who had come from heaven, having lived in an orderly regime in his former life, participating in virtue by habit without philosophy.[13]

One wonders why the person who lived in the orderly regime chose the greatest tyranny. He had lived in a society that had the right values, but he himself was not formed to philosophize and encompass virtue, and because of this he was unable to see beyond the lie disguised in a good that only gave pleasure to his eyes. He succumbed to his vices in the face of temptation and revealed that he was in fact a slave to his passions.

However, the question then becomes how one goes about attaining virtue. Aquinas says: "Man has a natural aptitude for virtue; but the perfection of virtue must be acquired by man by means of some kind of training."[14] In other words, perfection of virtue is not something that we can simply choose, but, in fact, our natural inclinations are often to undue passions. If you place a child alone in the presence of a cookie jar but tell him that he cannot eat any cookies until after dinner, more often than not you will find less cookies in the jar than were there originally. Aquinas then says, "The perfection of virtue consists chiefly in withdrawing man from undue pleasures, to which above all man is inclined, and especially the young, who are more capable of being trained."[15] First and foremost, virtue is something that we see and learn from virtuous people. Of course, only we can choose to follow the life of virtue, but our choice is better informed when we have an experience of virtue through another. This is the reason why we praise certain people as being a good example for the young to imitate. The community as the thing that perfects us is better understood in this light of virtue, and the people that have disposed themselves to virtue. The political order, society, culture and customs do and must all inform and teach us how to follow virtue. However it is not enough just to imitate virtue; we must understand the "why" the reason that virtue is held in such high regard. This is what was meant

[13] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 619b.
[14] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Law* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2003), 74.
[15] Ibid., 75.

in Plato's allegory of the afterlife and is echoed by the great 3rd- century philosopher Plotinus who thought that:

> The highest Virtue consists…not in a rearguard defense, as it were, against the attack of violent emotions and disruptive desires, but rather in a positively active and engaged effort to regain one's forgotten divinity (I.2.6). The highest virtue, then, is the preparation for the exercise of Dialectic, which is the tool of divine ordering wielded by the individual soul.[16]

The individual must come to the truth himself and understand the meaning of virtue, and not just merely imitate, for if imitation is the only cause of his virtue, then he is no more virtuous than the Pelican who harms itself for the sake of it young only out of instinct. He is not virtuous, because it is from mere chance that he be formed by a correct society. Therefore, the reaching of happiness through fulfillment in virtue is two-fold: it starts through imitation and learning in a larger society, and is developed through practice in friendship with others; finally, though, it *is* the choice of the individual to choose "divine ordering wielded by the . . . soul."

To summarize this section, happiness as *telos* or end is best sought in a society that both models and encourages the seeking of virtue and truth, a community that allows, as Aristotle said in *Nicomachean Ethics,* the pursuit of excellence, or virtue: "For that man's life will be happy who has virtue and exercises it"; and "The law has a compulsory power, and at the same time is a rational ordinance proceeding from a kind of prudence or reason."[17] The next question to address is how this end relates to the creation of law in a society.

Aquinas: The Role of The State and Law in Society

If it is true that man's end is found in forgetting himself by love and virtue in order to achieve communion with others, then what is the purpose of the state and laws? Aquinas states in his work *On Kingship*: "It seems that the end of organized society is to live a life of virtue. Men gather together so that they may live well which they could not do if they lived by themselves. The good life is one that is lived in accordance with virtue. Therefore, virtuous life is the end of human society."[18] We gather into societies because it is our nature to do so. A person is perfected

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[16] Edward Moore, "Plotinus," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* https://iep.utm.edu/plotinus/.

[17] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* trans. Harold Peters (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1906), 345, 349. https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/files/Nicomachean_Ethics_0.pdf.

[18] St. Thomas Aquinas, "On Kingship or The Governance of Rulers," *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics,* trans. and edited by Paul E. Sigmund (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1988, 27.

by the community, and it is his community which has influence on who he will be when he is older. If we are loved by others, we are more capable of loving others, but if we are hated by others, we are more prone to contempt. This means that the values of society do not lead man to work for himself in an individualistic manner, but in fact influences to work for his higher end. This higher end of man for Aquinas is the enjoyment of the divine or communion with God:

> We see that only those who are under the same laws in government for the purpose of living a good life are considered to be members of a society. Now, because the man who lives the life of virtue is destined for a higher end which is, as we have said, the enjoyment of the divine, this must also be the final end of human society. The final end of organized society then is not merely to live the life of virtue but through the life of virtue to attain the enjoyment of God… Government is of a higher order when it is ordered to a further end. The one who is responsible to the last end directs those who are responsible for carrying out the things that are ordered to that end. [19]

The state must be ordered to this end in its formation of its laws. It logically follows that if man's end or fulfillment or end is God, and that we achieve this end by a life of virtue, and that society is how we are perfected in virtue, then the government, which is the primary ordering agent of society, must always keep this end in mind. As Aquinas says:

> We must first keep in mind that to govern is to direct what is governed to its appropriate end. A ship is said to be governed when the sailor guides it on its right course safely to port. If a thing is ordered to an end beyond self, as a ship is to its port, it is the duty of the one who directs not only to keep it safe, but to bring it to the goal which is beyond it. But if something did have an end beyond itself, the task of the one who directed it would be to keep it unharmed and in good condition.[20]

The government, if it is the proctor of the ship, must then frame its laws that best preserve a culture from shifting off course. It logically follows that if those who are deemed the responsibility of proctoring the ship are ignorant of the destination or course, then the voyage is bound to fail. However, it is true, of course, that government is not the sole forming agent of society, but a part of society. There is a division of labor primarily in the formation of a person with each part needing to fulfill its respective role, but the government's job is to oversee the common good of the society primarily through the law. How must law then be framed?

[19] Ibid., 27.
[20] Ibid., 26.

Aquinas draws the human law from the natural law. The natural law is our knowing and participating in God's ordering of the universe, which Aquians calls the Eternal Law. Aquinas says the following about the natural law: "The rational creature has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the natural creature is called the natural law… thus implying that the light of natural reason, whereby we discern what is good and what is evil, which is the function of the natural law."[21] The natural law is the objective standpoint by which we call right or wrong, or what C.S Lewis calls the Tao: "The Tao, which others may call Natural Law or Traditional Morality or the First Principles of Practical Reason or the First Platitudes, is not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value judgments."[22] It is not something that we ourselves create for the purpose of establishing order in our society, but is something that if not adhered to will bring about utter chaos:

> If it is rejected, all value is rejected. If any value is retained, it is retained. The effort to refute it and raise a new system of value in its place is self-contradictory. There has never been, and never will be, a radically new judgment of value in the history of the world. What purport to be new systems or…ideologies…all consist of fragments from the Tao itself, arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation, yet still owing to the Tao and to it alone such validity as they possess.[23]

Society, if it is to succeed, must adhere to a higher law, but the law itself cannot be created by man, or else it is subjective to each individual. With all this being said, how does this Thomistic view of society and government contrast with the Enlightenment view as it relates more directly to the founding of our current society, namely the political philosophy of John Locke?

Locke: Origins of Political Society and Human Nature

While Aquinas maintained that the State and the Church, though distinct, should work together to procure the common good of men, Locke saw a need for radical separation of the two. Like many Enlightenment thinkers, he thought that the legal rights of the common man—not his moral and spiritual common good—and what helped procure them could best be secured through establishing private and public authorities, wherein the state provided the security of

[21] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Law* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2003), 15.
[22] C.S Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1944), 43.
[23] Ibid.

basic human rights: the sphere of religion, morality, and man's spiritual and supernatural end was placed into the realm of the private sector. This view looked at the classical and medieval view of politics as an imposition of religion that restricted man's freedom to choose. Locke did not necessarily view man's *telos* as contrary to Aquinas's view, but thought that in order to secure it, there should be a sort of division of labor between the two entities of society in which the state was not at all concerned with man's fulfillment as a creature made for God, but strictly aimed at the preservation of man's rights.

Therefore, John Locke's writings on government and religious toleration describe a different end for political life than the traditional or classical view of politics and government. While Aquinas sees the purpose of government as directly assisting man to his proper end through laws that promote virtuous behavior and punish vicious acts, Locke's view of government is of a contract where men gather into societes in order to protect their individual rights to property, liberty, and life. To understand this concept of contract-society, we must consider what human nature is for Locke. Locke's concept of human nature is implied through what he calls the "state of nature": "To understand political power correctly, and derive it from its original, we must consider, what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of other man" and further, "A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal no one having more than another."[24]

The state of nature for Locke is primarily one without political society. Man is in a state of apolitical freedom to order his life freely, though the state of nature is subject to what Locke calls natural law; when the natural law is broken, "every man has a right to punish the offender, and be executioner of the Law of nature."[25] This means that if the natural law is violated by someone who invades another's natural rights, he has the right to punish the violator. The state of nature then is pure freedom from any societal or legal obligations, that is, men living in solitude with their property. Societies are then formed to protect these natural rights from those who invade them: "The only way whereby anyone divests himself of his natural liberty, and puts on

[24]John Locke, "Second Treatise on Government." *A Government and Economics Document Book 2nd Edition*, edited by Steven Lee (California: Amazon Press, 2021), 2.

[25] Ibid., 3.

the bonds of civil society, is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community for there peaceful living amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties, and a greater security against any, that are not of it."[26] Furthermore, the power to punish the invader of one's natural rights that each man had in the state of nature, is given up to the commonwealth or state: "Whoever therefore out of a state of nature unites into a community, must be understood to give up all the power necessary to the ends for which they unite into society"[27] Finally Locke understands the origin is of a political community to be the consent of freemen in the state of nature agreeing to come into society: "That, which begins and constitutes any political society, is nothing but the consent of any number of freemen capable of a majority to unite and incorporate into such a society."[28] The concept of human nature for Locke is individualistic in comparison to Aquinas' view. For Aquinas, the state of nature of man is to be an intrinsic part of society, not for the end of mere preservation of rights, but to become virtuous and perfected as a human being *in society with the cooperation of others, including the state*. Locke's state of nature implies that political society exists not because it is primarily our nature to be political, but because we need to get out of a violent state of nature. In other words, we come out of the state of nature into society by choice and consent, but we remain essentially individuals.

In summary, we have seen the differences between Locke and Aquinas on the purpose of political authority and its relation to human nature. The question that now must be asked is how each view relates to the classical and Christian understanding of the human telos discussed in the beginning of this paper. In other words, how does each view of politics reflect man's telos of union with God?

Conclusion

The premise that was set as the criterion for viewing the proper understanding of a society was predicated on the notion of human *telos.* The ideal society is one in which man can be perfected as a human person. The view of virtue being the end goal of society for Aquinas was contrasted with Locke's view of a social compact to shed light on the deep moral problems of our society today. So many people are lost, depressed, anxious, and lonely in this age. The

[26] Ibid., 21.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

view of long-lasting relationships and marriage is becoming more and more scarce in our society; it is almost as if people have forgotten what love is. Pornography is teaching not only adults but also children to view people as self-gratifying objects. People are being more and more pushed into their shells of isolation because the culture, in the false name of freedom, has neglected to adopt principles of morality.

It is hard to pinpoint exactly the reason for this moral and spiritual decline in society, but it does appear that many people do not know what is good for them, for they have never been taught their purpose is, what their ultimate good is. People are confused because the culture that forms them is confused. The world of today accepts as equal every view of the good for liberty's sake, but prevents any one view predominating in society, for this is deemed dangerous to individual freedom. The truth, in other words, is what each individual thinks it is. If morality is seen and felt as subjective and relativistic in a society, then it also loses its binding authority. If individuals do not see their *telos* reflected in the society which nurtures them, then they may begin to disbelieve that there exists an objective purpose and good for all men. Private views of morality do not provide an objective authority that can cultivate virtue in a society, and government is only as virtuous as its members, or, as the saying goes, a people deserves the leaders it keeps in power.

Taking into account the arguments above regarding the importance of society being ordered towards the human good, the source of the moral decline in society may be because we have an error in our political order. The culture today presupposes that the individual knows what will make him happy without the support or help of societal and political authority, an "every man for himself" mentality, where society is not ordered to a consensus on the human *telos*, with each person pursuing what he believes to be good by himself or with like-minded people. Locke separated the notion of human *telos* from law and government due to religious division, for if there is no majority consensus on the human good, then the government cannot justly establish a particular conception of the human good through laws and customs. However, if Aquinas and Aristotle are correct about the human *telos* and the need for the political order to be ordered towards this, then it would seem that the morality of society would inevitably decline if society and government do not aid man in achieving his ultimate common good through virtuous behavior in relation to and with others. The communal nature of man, according to the

classical view, requires that this common good be sought for together with others in society, which can only be done if human *telos* is recognized by all. The biggest difficulty is in achieving this recognition. Maybe it is done through good education and men and women modeling what they preach through their actions. Whatever the way is, it starts with willing the happiness of another person in love.

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Modeling Moral Excellence

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Modeling what we teach is an important principle in American Classical Leadership Education (ACLE).[1] It is predicated on the natural law of learning that an effective way to teach others is to demonstrate the skill so they can observe and learn from the example. This natural learning process is perhaps most evident in the linguistic development of children, who are never formally taught how to talk, but simply listen to and imitate the speech modeled by others. Much has been written about the effectiveness of modeling academic skills as a pedagogical approach, which I endorse and recommend for further reading.[2] Showing pupils how to perform an academic skill will keep us teachers honest in what we require of them and inspire them as they see our willingness to learn alongside them. However, because ACLE is concerned with the character of our young scholars as well as their intellect, we recognize that they not only need mentors to model academic excellence, they need mentors to model moral excellence as well.[3]

Modeling moral excellence is predicated on the same natural law as academic excellence—whatever our scholars see us do they will imitate. In this sense, the mantra "we model what we teach" is as much a warning as a declaration—we cannot help but teach through our examples. Our scholars are looking to us all the time to learn what it means to be fully developed intellectual and moral people, and because we are modeling all the time in what we say and do, we should be as intentional about it as we can, lest we model the wrong lessons. Unfortunately, watching our words and actions is not usually sufficient, we must ensure our

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[1] See "American Classical Leadership Education," John Adams Academy, accessed February 16, 2022, https://www.johnadamsacademy.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=2004596&type=d&pREC_ID=2147302.

[2] See Karen Lee, "Modeling: Essential for Learning" *Edutopia* (George Lucas Education Foundation 2013) accessed February 16, 2022, https://www.edutopia.org/blog/modeling-essential-for-learning-karen-lea; "What is Interactive Modeling?" *Responsive Classroom*, accessed February 16, 2022, https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/what-interactive-modeling/; E'Manita Creekmore, "The Power of Modeling," *The Instructional Coach Academy* (2019), accessed February 16, 2022, https://theinstructionalcoachacademy.com/index.php/2019/01/28/the-power-of-modeling/.

[3] See "Vision and Mission Statement," John Adams Academy, accessed February 16, 2022, https://www.johnadamsacademy.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=2106668&type=d&pREC_ID=2147297.

thoughts and feelings are properly aligned as well; for words and actions can act as facades to our thoughts and feelings, and young people are very adept at seeing through adult hypocrisy. To best model moral excellence, we must demonstrate it at each of these four levels of character by thinking, feeling, saying, and doing what we ought, culminating in a genuinely moral way of being.

How we can better model moral excellence, or the proper way of *being* in the world, then becomes the question we must consider, and who better to answer such a question than the great bard William Shakespeare. In *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,* Shakespeare explores what it means to properly be or not to be in the world. Unfortunately, most of the characters model deceitful, covetous, suspicious, and vengeful ways of being, resulting in the demise of the royal court and family. But these characters are not completely unaware of their immoral ways of being. They reflect extensively on their own poor models in the text for us to learn from—if we can. By reading carefully and examining these characters' failed attempts at being morally excellent in their thoughts and feelings, words and deeds, we can align ourselves more closely and transparently with the good we seek to embody and be better models of moral excellence for the young people we teach.

Being **and The Four Levels of Character**

Before examining examples from *Hamlet,* it is important first to ground the abstract notion of moral excellence to a clear definition. Moral excellence, or the proper way of being, consists in developing key character traits to inform human choice and lead an upright life. Key character traits include attributes such as wisdom, courage, charity, and hope, which are to be embodied in the lives of individuals who govern themselves according to these moral principles. The philosophical and religious itemization of these cardinal virtues is extensive, and those interested in that discussion should look further back in the great conversation to figures such as Aristotle and St. Paul for greater depth and insight.[4] For our purposes here, the specific virtues are not so important as are the ways they manifest in our lives and how we can effectively model them for others. Based on a close examination of moral excellence, it is apparent that we

[4] See Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and 1 Corinthians 13.

manifest moral virtues on at least four levels of human experience: *thought, feeling, word,* and *deed*. These are the four levels of character that contribute to our overall way of being.

True moral excellence occurs when all levels of character are aligned with each other—when we think the right thoughts, feel the proper sentiments, say the right words, and do the proper deeds. This alignment of the levels of character may seem obvious and easy at first glance, but because we humans are highly ambivalent and surprisingly contradictory creatures, often working at cross purposes to our own best interest, making the alignment of our thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds is harder than it appears. For example, a young man might participate in a service project with his class while feeling resentful for having to do it out of fear of failing the class—his deed is virtuous, but his sentiments are not. And a young woman might think about complimenting a new girl in class and know it is the right thing to do, but then turn around and gossip about her instead—her thought is virtuous, but her words are not. As humans, we have this unadmirable ability to divorce levels of our character and act semi-independently at each level. We can do a virtuous deed without feeling the proper desire to do it, and we can think the right thoughts, but not say the right words when it comes time to say them. To consider how to align the levels of character and bring them into a unity of thought and feeling, word and deed, it is necessary to examine them more closely at each level.

First, consider moral excellence at the levels of thought and feeling. What we think and how we feel form the bedrock of our character. They are the internal elements of human experience, reflecting both the consciousness of the intellect and conscience of the soul. With our thoughts we can exercise moral excellence by contemplating the best things we know. We can ponder perfection, thereby using this special faculty of the mind for its greatest purpose. With our feelings we can exercise moral excellence by fostering noble sentiments like gratitude, wonder, and love. We can encourage the elevating emotions, thereby using this special faculty of the soul for its greatest purpose. Together, the mind and soul constitute the realm of private virtues, for others can never know what another thinks and feels, only the individual can know how depraved or virtuous she is internally. But just because thoughts and feelings are not outwardly apparent does not mean they have no effect on the person's overall character. As the book of Proverbs states, as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he."[5] This bit of prophetic poetry

[5] Proverbs 23:7, KJV.

appropriately links the heart and mind as symbolic centers of our intelligence and sentiments, which form the essence of who we are. We are what we think and feel because they reflect the most unfiltered version of ourselves.

Jesus spoke to these levels of character in his Sermon on the Mount when he commanded his disciples to be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees by living a higher moral law. The scribes and Pharisees had mastered the outward manifestations of virtue by systematically living by the laws governing speech and behavior, but Jesus emphasized the need to purify our intentions as well as actions if we desire to enter the kingdom of heaven. According to the old law, one simply had to avoid killing and committing adultery to not be guilty of those sins, but Jesus says that "whosoever is angry with his brother…shall be in danger of the judgment" and "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."[6] Recognizing that keeping the spirit of the law is what makes a person truly moral and not just the letter of the law, Jesus, transcends the artificial barrier we put up between internal and external moral excellence and declares both realms to be equally relevant. They are equally relevant because they are equally apparent to the individual, and to an omniscient God who does not look "on the outward appearance, but…on the heart."[7]

The primacy of thoughts and feelings in the development of character, however, does not make moral excellence in our words and deeds irrelevant. It is simply a matter of putting first things first and not fooling ourselves into thinking we can appear good without being good. If we think and feel as we ought, it follows that we will say and do what we ought. Out of the abundance of our minds and hearts our words and deeds will flow.

Words are a powerful manifestation of moral excellence. Whether spoken or written, words communicate the good we think and feel. They empower us to influence others and extend our memory, which increases the ethical significance of words because they have a direct effect on others and can be preserved and transmitted across space and time. But more than this, the process of putting the ruminations of the mind and heart into words formalizes their existence. More often than not, we do not understand what we think or feel until we incarnate them in words. The process of articulating the chaos of our consciousness makes them not only

[6] Matt 5:22, 28.
[7] 1 Samuel 16:7.

accessible to others, but even to ourselves. Thus, the moral power of words is not to be treated lightly. It is no coincidence that the Judeo-Christian tradition equates God with the word, for it is through the formalized expression of thought and feeling that the miracle of creation occurs.[8] In Genesis, when God created the world, He spoke it into existence saying, "let there be light: and there was light" and "let there be a firmament" and there was a firmament.[9] And after God spoke and observed the thing that His language summoned into existence He saw "that it was good"—an important qualifier to His speech and creation, for language can be corrupted and create evil as well. For instance, in John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost,* Satan's original sin is that he spoke "ambiguous words" and "counterfeited truth," which led to his rebellion against God and the formation of a rival kingdom predicated on "Affecting all equality with God, / In imitation of" God's kingdom.[10] Unfortunately, speech, the faculty that defines deity, can also be used to undermine it—true speech can be thwarted by falsehood, and God, who is the true word, is shadowed by the devil, the father of lies.

But words are not the only external manifestation of moral excellence, and there is another surer way to demonstrate goodness. Our actions are the fullest manifestation of moral being, and ultimately reveal our core ethic. Action is such a significant indicator of a person's character because it is the most costly of all the levels of being, that is to say, it requires a person to prioritize their limited resources of time, energy, and material goods in pursuit of what they deem to be most worthy of the sacrifice of these things. We cannot do everything, so we must choose between competing goods, and the goods we end up giving our limited resources to are accurate indicators of the quality of our character. We all have 1,440 minutes in a day. If one person chooses to use the majority of that time productively by improving her skills and abilities, helping others, and making the world around her more beautiful, we might justifiably identify her as a morally excellent individual. Whereas, if another person chooses to spend the majority of her time indulging in pleasurable, but unproductive entertainments, demanding others to serve her, and letting the world around her degenerate into chaos, we might justifiably identify her as morally immature. What we do and how we do it reveals who we really are.

[8] John 1:1.
[9] Gen. 1:3, 6.
[10] John Milton, *Paradise Lost,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2008), 135, 137.

The Epistle of James touches upon this level of character when the apostle urges all to "be…doers of the word, and not hearers only."[11] The word, in this case, is the true word or good news of the gospel, which, as one of Jesus' disciples, James feels called to speak to any that will hear. But having spoken it, he recognizes the limit of the word and implores all hearers to act according to the true words they have heard. As mentioned previously, words do have power to organize and call into being truth and goodness from the internal chaos of the mind and heart, but actions more fully embody those thoughts and sentiments and show the ultimate mastery of them. It is one thing to understand something intellectually or emotionally and explain it to another in a way that makes sense, but it is quite another to actually act out the truth and goodness you think, feel, and speak. It is the difference between a science teacher thinking up an exciting experiment to instruct young scholars about his favorite principle, telling the class about the experiment and why it works, and then actually performing the experiment. The experiment itself is the realest moment in that whole process and usually the hardest part to get right because of the multiple variables that can only be fully accounted for during the experiment. The experiment is enhanced and improved by giving due diligence to each previous step, but in the end, the ultimate reality and proof of understanding lies in the teacher's ability to act out the truth he professes.

Taken together, thought, feeling, word, and action are the four levels of character that add up to a person's way of being. Being is the essence of who we are. It encompasses the four levels of character but is not the levels of character themselves. Thought, feeling, word, and action are manifestations of being, but not being itself. Being transcends these categories and is the aggregated wholeness of an individual who is fully what he is. To be fully human is to use each human faculty virtuously. As teachers, being human is the most important model we can offer our scholars. Within this way of being, our individual disciplines of math, science, English, history, music, art, and athletics each find room for expression, but always within the larger context of our humanity. At times we may be tempted to divorce our modeling of academic excellence from our larger role as models of moral human excellence, in which case we would

[11] James 1:22.

do well to remember the cautionary lessons inherent in Shakespeare's great tragedy, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.*

Hamlet on *Being*

Hamlet begins on the battlements of Elsinore, the royal castle of Denmark. Barnardo, a guard on the night watch, calls out to the shadows, "Who's there?" Francisco, a fellow guard counters the question, saying, "Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself."[12] Though this seems like an innocent enough beginning to a play, this brief dialogue cuts to the heart of the matter of being by establishing the question of personal identity with the accompanying task of explaining who you are to others. The question, "Who's there?", along with its more personable cousins, "Who are you?" and "Who am I?" strike at the heart of human existence. Though we are accustomed to answering them superficially by simply stating our names, the high-resolution answer proves more difficult to communicate. For as Francisco suggests in his response to Barnardo, explaining who we are requires us to "unfold" ourselves to give an accurate answer, which may take considerable time and care to do properly. In fact, *Hamlet* suggests that the improper folding and unfolding of ourselves to others is a major cause of human tragedy. Improper folding and unfolding occurs as the characters try to mask what they really think, feel, say, and do, which, in this drama, tends to be greedy, lustful, ambitious, and vengeful things. Such vices are bad enough by themselves, but are exacerbated when the characters attempt to hide them by appearing virtuous. To this end, *Hamlet* serves as a warning to all readers who think they can separate their thoughts and feelings from their words and deeds, or cover up the vicious things they have done after the fact.

At the beginning of the play, Prince Hamlet seems intent on not obscuring his way of being through his true thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. On the contrary, he seems to despise all those who do, and sets himself up as a model of transparency of being. When questioned by his insensitive mother as to why he "seems" so sad about the death of his father, Hamlet rebukes her saying, "Seems, madam? Nay, it is; I know not seems. / 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother, nor customary suits of solemn black, / …That can denote me truly. These indeed seem, / For they are actions that a man might play; / But I have that within which

[12] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,* (Columbia: John Adams Academy 2018), 260.

passeth show; / These but the trappings and the suits of woe."[13] Here, Hamlet recognizes the difference between the trappings of woe and true sorrow, insinuating that his mother does not feel the proper sentiment at the death of her husband if she can trade her mourning suit for a wedding dress within a month of his passing.[14] He scorns the notion that he *seems* sad, insisting that he *is* sad, and implies that while the Queen and court may be guilty of pretended grief, he is not.

Hamlet's ability to see through the hypocritical personas of others is remarkable and his criticism of it is keen, however, it does not prevent him from constructing his own facade to catch others in their guilt. After Hamlet learns of his father's murder by his uncle, and swears to seek revenge, Hamlet decides to "put an antic disposition on" to conceal his intent from others.[15] This choice to obscure his words and actions with a show of madness is puzzling. When first he learns from his father's ghost that there was foul play, Hamlet speaks bodly, biding the ghost to tell him quickly who the murderer is so "I with wings as swift / As meditation or the thoughts of love / May sweep to my revenge."[16] But after the visitation, Hamlet is plagued with procrastination, and the best he can manage in terms of revenge is thinly veiled insults to his "uncle-father and aunt-mother," which he credits to his madness.[17] In Hamlet's defense, he is dealing with a cunning and murderous man in seeking revenge on his uncle, and he has the hard task of convicting a murderer with only the word of a ghost as evidence. Therefore, it is reasonable for Hamlet to resort to such "indirections to find directions out," but as it becomes apparent by the end of the play, his false show of madness is arguably the primary cause of the senseless deaths that define this tragedy.

With the whole court of Denmark thoroughly involved in a dangerous charade, where no one can trust each other because all have painted over who they really are with false words and deeds, it is with some irony that Hamlet welcomes a band of traveling actors to Elsinore to model for himself and the court the proper way of being. It is ironic because actors are, by definition, acting out a part that is not who they really are, and yet these actors have their levels of character most properly aligned. When they first arrive, Hamlet asks them to show their quality by

[13] Shakespeare, 265.
[14] Shakespeare, 266.
[15] Shakespeare, 277.
[16] Shakespeare, 274.
[17] Shakespeare, 287.

performing a speech. He asks one of the actors to recite the speech Aneas made to the widow Dido about the slaughter of King Priam at the battle of Troy. The actor obeys and performs the speech so passionately that it moves himself and his audience to tears, particularly at the point when he recounts how Queen Hecuba mourned over her husband's dead body.[18] Hamlet has good reason to desire to hear this speech, for his mother fails to provide the proper moral model of a queen mourning the passing of her husband. But having heard it he is more appalled by his own cowardice and inability to act manfully in confronting his uncle than by his mother's infidelity. Hamlet despises himself because he realizes this actor shows greater character in his portrayal of a fiction than he has in his reality, for "what's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, / That he should weep for her?... Yet I, / A dull and muddy-mettled rascal,...can say nothing. No, not for a king…a dear father murder'd."[19]

After seeing this actor's proper moral model, Hamlet recommits himself to think and feel, say and do what he knows he should, but determines first to see if the actors' model will have the same effect on his uncle in rousing his conscience as it did for him. Hamlet recognizes that the purpose of acting is "to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."[20] That is to say, a good actor's purpose is to imitate humanity so well that, whether the actor is imitating virtue or vice, people who watch it will see themselves enacted as though a mirror were being held up to their lives. Hamlet has the actors perform something like the murder of his father before his uncle and he is not disappointed with the results. Struck by the performance's resemblance to his crime, King Claudius calls off the play and leaves rather shaken. When he is alone, Claudius attempts to repent of his murder. Kneeling down he prays for forgiveness, proclaiming his guilt before God and desiring to be washed clean from his brother's blood. In verbalizing his guilty sentiments, it seems Claudius is well on his way to properly aligning the levels of his character with the truth he aspires to. However, his conscience reminds him that it is not sufficient to simply feel sorry or even say sorry.[21] The feelings and words must be aligned with thought and action, which he is incapable or unwilling to do, as that would require giving

[18] Shakespeare, 290.
[19] Shakespeare, 290-291.
[20] Shakespeare, 295.
[21] In the words of a beloved colleague, "Don't tell me you're sorry, show me you're sorry." ~James Haskins.

up his "crown, [his] own ambition, and [his] queen."[22] In the end, Claudius recognizes his failed attempt at being properly repentant, reflecting on how his "words fly up," but his "thoughts remain below. / Words without thoughts never to heaven go."[23]

Throughout all these failed attempts at proper being, Hamlet is distraught and ponders fundamental questions of existences. From his opening soliloquy, we know Hamlet is weary of the world, which he describes as "stale, flat, and unprofitable," and that he wishes he could simply "melt / Thaw, and resolve…into a dew" or even commit suicide.[24] He confesses his depression to himself and to his friends, recognizing that in spite of the goodness he sees in the world and in mankind generally, it seems to him "a sterile promontory" and that he no longer delights in man.[25] Hamlet's crisis of being peaks when, while still musing over his existence, he famously states, "To be, or not to be, that is the question."[26] Is existence really worth all the suffering inherent in being or would oblivion be preferable? Is the struggle to act well in the world by aligning our thoughts and feelings properly with our words and actions worth the effort, when the difficulty could be avoided altogether with a "bare bodkin" to the heart?[27] Hamlet cynically responds with, no, to be is not worth the "heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks / That flesh is heir to" and that to die "is a consummation devoutly to be wished."[28] But we stay, Hamlet reasons, because we do not know what comes after death. Death, he muses, is an "undiscover'd country" that fills us with dread simply because we do not know what it entails.[29] If it entailed non-existence, he would choose it over existence, but because he cannot know he chooses to "bear those ills [he has] / Than fly to others that [he] knows not of."[30]

But this soliloquy is more than just a contemplation of suicide, rather, it is a calling into question the very nature of existence and purpose of being. If it was only about suicide, Shakespeare might have said, "To kill oneself, or not to kill oneself, that is the question," but instead the bard uses the auxiliary verb *to be* independently, inviting the reader to consider

[22] Shakespeare, 303.
[23] Shakespeare, 303.
[24] Shakespeare, 265.
[25] Shakespeare, 286.
[26] Shakespeare, 292.
[27] Shakespeare, 293.
[28] Shakespeare, 292.
[29] Shakespeare, 293.
[30] Shakespeare, 293.

whether to be alive simply means maintaining a pulse through the trials life offers, or if it means maintaining a higher quality of being. This quality of being, Shakespeare suggests, is defined by a bold and confident action in confronting the injustices in the world. But this proper state of being is compromised whenever people are overcome by fear of the unknown, "which "puzzles the will" and "makes cowards of us all."[31] Thus, in order *to be,* one must know the proper course of action and do it confidently rather than timidly, obscuring one's being with purposeless words and procrastination. Unfortunately, Hamlet learns this lesson too late, and pays for it with his life, his family's life and his friends'.

This brief look into Shakespeare's *Hamlet* shows that while Hamlet despises hypocrisy, he fails to correct the tendency in himself, and by willfully obscuring his identity with madness, Hamlet destroys the lives of many innocent people and his own. If he had taken his own advice and only ever spoke and acted "to the purpose," being "even and direct" with all, the tragic ending of the play may have been avoided.[32]

Conspicuous Morality

The tragic lessons from *Hamlet* of people not *being* morally excellent are clear enough and provide sufficient motivation for us to think, feel, say, and do the right things. However, the idea that we, as teachers, need to develop and intentionally display our moral excellence for scholars seems somewhat vain and hypocritical at first glance? Is not the height of excellence (moral or otherwise) characterized by a subconscious incorporation of it into our character? And would it not be self-righteous to hold ourselves up as ideal specimens of rightly ordered souls?

These are valid concerns, especially considering Jesus' singular criticism of the religious teachers of his generation, whom he described several times throughout his ministry as hypocrites who "sound a trumpet…in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men" whenever they do a good thing.[33] In contrast, Jesus counsels his followers when doing a moral deed to "not let thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," preferring secretive anonymity to the recognition of the world.[34] Based on this evidence it seems that the highest

[31] Shakespeare, 293.
[32] Shakespeare, 286.
[33] Matt 6:2.
[34] Matt 6:3.

moral model is the inconspicuous one, and that if we were to make ourselves conspicuous models of morality we would violate the spirit of the law.

Fair criticism always clarifies an idea. As teachers in the ACLE tradition, we must be wary of becoming self-righteous dogmatists of a classical Western ethic, and strive, rather, to be humble followers of the proper way of being. To model moral excellence for the young people around us is not to draw attention to the virtuous thoughts and sentiments we have or the kind words or deeds we share, we must simply do them, often surreptitiously, because it is the right thing to do. The only time it may be instructive to draw attention to our moral example is when it is inadequate, pointing out our mistakes and reflecting on how difficult it is *to be*, even for us. Otherwise, our attention, and that of our scholars', should be focused on the proper way of being itself. As we do so, some public recognition may come as it did for Jesus, in which case the appropriate response is to direct the praise to the proper source—that is, to the ideal Being we are striving to emulate as dictated by our conscience.[35]

Conclusion

Modeling moral excellence is an important element in American classical leadership education. It is important because the proper aim of education is to develop good humans who can use their skills and intelligence to pursue truth and virtue. For that, we need models to show the way and inspire others to follow it. As teachers, we can be effective models to our young scholars by demonstrating moral excellence on the four levels of character, exemplifying the proper way to think, feel, speak, and act in the world. When we are able to align each of these levels of human character properly and direct them towards the pursuit of the highest good we can conceive, then we will be modeling a moral way of being. And when we achieve this way of being, our scholars will notice, for it is very difficult to ignore reality; and a human who is truly being—whose thoughts, feelings, words, and actions are all aimed at the human ideal—is one of the realist things they can encounter.

[35] Matt 19:17.

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Imitating Excellence

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An essay praising imitation might not be likely to get very many modern classical educators excited. When many of us hear the word "imitation," we also implicitly hear phrases like "drill and kill," "how to think not what to think," and "conveyor belt model of education." Isn't imitation the rote, soul-deadening busywork that we in the classical education movement are so often trying to escape? But I believe we *should* be very excited about imitation—in fact, I believe it may be one of the most needlessly neglected tools of classical education today. In this essay, I want to defend and even praise imitation as a method of learning and teaching. Far from being antithetical to it, I believe that imitation must be and always has been a load-bearing pillar of classical education. Imitation, properly understood, is nothing more or less than the education of the soul.

Before turning to that task, let me give a preliminary description of pedagogical imitation: At its simplest, and as the name suggests, imitation adopts a model and copies it in one or more ways. That model might be a person, an action or habit, or a product like a work of art or an essay. Of course, examples of one kind or another are often used in teaching. At first blush, this might seem a very pedestrian method indeed: is imitation no more than the use of examples, which many of us are already doing? It is indeed much more; it changes everything about the drive, intensity, and direction of our use of examples, as we will see. To explain how and why this is so requires rehabilitating imitation as both morally worthy and technically sophisticated.

Rehabilitating Imitation: Upwards Towards Ideals, Not Downwards Towards Counterfeits

Much of our hesitance about the value of imitation comes from its connotations pointing to fraud, fakery, or deception. Merriam-Webster gives four definitions of imitation, and the three last definitions are less than favorable. To imitate, Merriam Webster says, is to "mimic or counterfeit, to appear similar to, or to produce a copy of." All these seem to suggest that there is something deceptive, untrue, or at minimum inauthentic about imitation. Imitation leather, imitation vanilla, imitation crab—it is rare that we use "imitation" as a compliment. It makes us think of counterfeit money, fake copies of famous art pieces, cheap knockoffs, and shallow sycophants who follow shallower leaders.

So, we might be puzzled to discover the fact that imitation-related exercises dominated education in Greece and Rome during classical antiquity and during the Renaissance in Europe. Schoolboys would memorize, alter, re-memorize, and deliver famous speeches. Students would copy exceptional passages from well-known speeches into their commonplace books and then imitate those passages' style, content, or other characteristics. Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans* presents historical and mythic figures as models for potential imitation by students (and in fact his *Lives* is essentially a collection of encomium and vituperation exercises from the *Progymnasmata*, the bread-and-butter literary exercises of elementary-to-secondary classical education). Another *progymnasmata* exercise is called the *prosopopoeia* or impersonation: a student would write a speech simulating what a famous literary or historical figure might have said at a particular moment in their life, or simulating what an abstract idea like Mercy or Courage might say if they could speak as a person. The language of "simulation" also reminds us of our own fascination in the modern classical education movement with simulations of all kinds, which are themselves imitations of their "real-life" counterparts. Benjamin Franklin did at least one classical imitation exercise as part of his education by turning poetry into prose and vice versa in order to sharpen his verbal skills (*metaphrasis*). And of course, all of us in the classical education movement are engaged in a massive, collective imitation exercise of our own: we are trying to imitate great examples of educators and students from the past. Imitation pervades and permeates classical education; it is more than an appendage, it is much more like the nervous system or the circulatory system in its presence and influence.

Imitation as a method of classical education is farther from the three definitions above related to counterfeiting or fraud and closer to the other definition Merriam-Webster gives: to follow as a pattern, model, or example. On a literary level, classical instructors wanted their students to follow the example of great speakers and writers in their choice of style and language. On the level of argument and reason, they wanted their students to learn how to think by seeing how great philosophers reasoned. And on the level of action, character, and leadership, they put models of virtuous and prudent figures before their students so that their students would know how to be virtuous and prudent in their own lives. Classical imitation aimed upwards towards the completed ideal, not downwards towards partial counterfeits.

The etymology of imitation gives us similar insight into why classical educators prioritized imitation in their pedagogy: the hypothesized proto-Indo-European root of imitation is *aim-*, meaning "to copy," and it is the same root word of *emulate* and *imagine*. I will have more to say about the role of imitation in prompting imaginative, creative learning later; for now, let us focus on the word *emulate*, which can have a specifically religious and Christian connotation, and so points us towards character development and moral excellence. The view of imitation that I am proposing is similar to what C.S. Lewis describes in Book IV of *Mere Christianity*, in the chapter titled "Let's Pretend." There, he describes the experience someone might have while reciting the Lord's Prayer, repeating the words "Our Father" and realizing what they mean:

> They mean quite frankly, that you are putting yourself in the place of a son of God. To put it bluntly, you are dressing up as Christ. If you like, you are pretending. Because, of course, the moment you realise what the words mean, you realise that you are not a son of God. You are not being like The Son of God, whose will and interests are at one with those of the Father: you are a bundle of self-centred fears, hopes, greeds, jealousies, and self-conceit, all doomed to death. So that, in a way, this dressing up as Christ is a piece of outrageous cheek. But the odd thing is that He has ordered us to do it.[1]

One might be similarly puzzled by the way that classical and Renaissance teachers of rhetoric prioritized imitation. Those who are unconditionally skeptical of rhetoric will likely see this curricular choice as more evidence of rhetoric's inherent duplicity and fraud. But, following Lewis, I think we can begin to understand the classical preoccupation with imitation as a pedagogical method:

> Why? What is the good of pretending to be what you are not? Well, even on the human level, you know, there are two kinds of pretending. There is a bad kind, where the pretence is there instead of the real thing; as when a man pretends he is going to help you instead of really helping you. But there is also a good kind, where the pretence leads up to the real thing. When you are not feeling particularly friendly but know you ought to be, the best thing you can do, very often, is to put on a friendly manner and behave as if you were a nicer person than you actually are. And in a few minutes, as we have all noticed, you will be really feeling friendlier than you were.[2]

There is the kind of imitation that corrupts; that tries to take what is better and make it worse. But there is also the kind of imitation that aspires; that tries to take what is and make it what it could be. This kind of imitation is homage; in a religious context it is even worship. Imitation is what we naturally do when we see our ideal and try to move towards it. Oscar Wilde famously said that art was the lie that reveals the truth. Perhaps imitation is the lie that, when properly engaged in, *creates* the truth.

Understanding this moral framework of imitation is good, but it does not exhaust the profit that modern classical educators can derive from imitation. After all, in classical education in antiquity and the Renaissance, imitation was more than just aspiration towards ideals: it was a coherent and extensive body of theory, guidelines, and exercises that shepherded students towards those ideals. Having established the proper moral aim of imitation—upwards and aspirational, not downwards and derivative—let us turn to the internal mechanics of imitation: how does it work to bring us closer to those aspirational models we aim at? Can we identify specific steps, procedures, elements, or parts?

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[1] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity: A Revised and Amplified Edition, With a New Introduction of the three Books, broadcast Talks, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality*, (Harper Collins: New York, 2000), 187-188.

[2] Lewis, 188.

Rehabilitating Imitation: Flexible Integration in the *Ciceronianus*

Classical educators in the Renaissance and in antiquity clearly understood the moral valence of imitation described above. In addition, they devoted much thought and effort to the mechanics of imitation; to the practical guidelines that educators and students needed to follow in order to profit from imitative exercises. I tentatively identify four practical guidelines:

1. When you imitate, draw from many sources, and do so discriminately.
2. Aim to surpass your models, not just to match them.
3. Adapt your imitation to your own circumstances.
4. Imitate both specifically and generally, and use each to reach the other.

The combination of these guidelines could be called the *flexible integration* framework of imitation, since the aim of the guidelines is to integrate the best and most useful aspects of our model, make them our own, and do so in a flexible, adaptive way.

All four of these guidelines are addressed in the dialogue *Ciceronianus*, written by the great Christian humanist of the Renaissance Erasmus of Rotterdam. In Erasmus' time, the Roman orator Cicero was seen as the pinnacle of eloquence and the best possible model for budding statesmen to imitate in their writing and speaking. However, in Erasmus' view, this desire to emulate Cicero often led students to an improper kind of imitation, and in the *Ciceronianus*, the character Nosoponus represents this bad kind of imitation. Nosoponus is an exhaustive and assiduous scholar of Cicero; in fact, *too* exhaustive and assiduous. He has made alphabetized lists of every word and phrase that Cicero uses and he uses *only* those words and phrases in his own writing, and he writes in a soundproofed room to avoid being influenced by any non-Ciceronian language. The aim of Nosoponus' imitation is merely to replicate and recreate Cicero, and to do so by imitating Cicero in every particular no matter how minute. For Erasmus, this is a low and inferior form of imitation indeed. Nosoponus is just a cheap copy of Cicero; a fake without a scrap of real genius about him. The character Bulephorus takes up Erasmus' view and tries to cure Nosoponus of his shallow and narrow kind of imitation, and his critique cuts largely along the guidelines I have proposed above.

1. Drawing Discriminately From Many Models

Bulephorus' first criticism of Nosoponus is that he imitates Cicero and only Cicero. In doing so, he fails to acquire all the virtues that other great orators have (but which Cicero does not have) and also unconsciously adopts all of Cicero's vices. In doing so, he also fails to imitate Cicero's own example of discriminating selection of models.

> Has nature yet favored any mortal even in a given field so that he alone excels all others in each particular division; that he has left nothing to be desired; or that he has accomplished so much that he could not be excelled by others?. . . Did Cicero himself draw his marvelous fluency from any one model, or rather did he not by sifting equally together Greek and Latin philosophers, historians, rhetoricians, comic, tragic, and lyric poets, weave and finish that divine style of his? If it

> behooves us to imitate Cicero in every point, why shall we not imitate this example too?[3]

Imitation must be conscious and discriminate, says Bulephorus. We must be awake and alert; we must pay attention. It is rare that a single model will possess all the good attributes we want to acquire, so it is often necessary to look to many models. Among those many models we should choose only the best and most useful, and from each chosen model we should select only the best and most useful traits. The contrasts and harmonies offered by multiple examples often give us the clearest possible picture of what we should be aiming for.

2. Striving To Surpass Our Models

Bulephorus also takes issue with the way that Nosoponus is content to imitate Cicero without striving to exceed him as well:

> [W]hy is it necessary to imitate exactly and always, when often it is better to rival and sometimes easier to surpass?. . .[I]mitation must fail which desires to follow only, not to surpass.[4]

This is a key point: properly understood, imitation isn't a refuge for lazy students, it's a tool to inspire us to explore new ground. Imitation doesn't just invite us to match the vision of our models, it invites us to see further by standing on the shoulders of giants.

3. Adapting Models to New Circumstances

Nosoponus' imitation fails in another way as well: he fails to adapt his model to his own circumstances. Proper imitation doesn't only replicate; it iterates and recreates as well. In doing so it adapts what is best about others and fits it for our own circumstances. In doing so, we are still imitating; but we are imitating on a higher level:

> But suppose we have represented Cicero as successfully as the consummate painter can represent his model, where is the mind of Cicero, where the originality so abounding and happy, where the power of arrangement, where the thinking out of propositions, where the wisdom in handling arguments, where the power of persuasion, the felicity, the memory so fruitful and ready, the versatility, where in short that soul breathing even now in his writings, that genius, manifesting such peculiar, subtle power? If these are lacking, how indifferent will be our imitation![5]

Instead of imitating only specific behaviors, we imitate the "breathing soul" in our models. This is often a question of discerning purpose and intent, not only outwards behaviors. The question of how to imitate Cicero is less a question of examining how Cicero reacted in his own circumstances and more a question of imagining how Cicero would react if he were in

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[3] Erasmus Desiderius, *Ciceronianus: Or, a Dialogue on the Best Style of Speaking*. Translated by Izora Scott, Series Editor Paul Munroe in *Columbia University Contributions to Education. Teachers College Series, No. 21*, (Leopold Classic Library: Las Vegas, 2015), 39, 46.

[4] Ibid., 44, 55.

[5] Ibid., 54.

Nosoponus' circumstances. Adaptation implicitly involves imitation and good imitation incorporates adaptation.

A Side Note on Creativity

The guidelines of surpassing (not only matching) our models and adapting and iterating on their example brings us to the question of creativity. Understood in this light, imitation isn't the enemy of creativity: in fact, it's one of the most potent and easily administered cures for lack of creativity. Whenever we have something before us (a piece of writing, a work of art, a machine, an experience, or a life as a whole), we can ask ourselves how it could be better. In doing so, we are seeking to surpass the model; we are creating something new. And whenever we have something before us and we ask how it could be different, we are iterating on the model and engaging in a creative pursuit. To cite two examples chosen somewhat indiscriminately: J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-Earth legendarium was inspired in part by the Finnish national legend of the *Kalevela*. Tolkien wanted to create a similar "national myth" for England; it is not too far to say that he was imitating and iterating creatively on prior inspiration. Of course, this isn't to say that the Middle-Earth legendarium is merely derivative; quite the opposite. The point is that a work as richly creative and beloved as Tolkien's legendarium employed a variety of imitative patterns as part of its creative genesis. An example from technology and science is George de Mestral's invention of Velcro: returning from a walk, he saw the cockleburs clinging to his clothing and asked himself how they did it. On examination, he saw how the small hooks of the cockleburs clung to the fibers of his clothing, and asked himself if he could copy that fastening mechanism in an intentional, purposeful form. Turning weeds into a popular fastener was an act that was both creative and imitative. The act of seeing clearly what already exists invites us to consider what could potentially exist.

When we engage in imitation properly, the result is something wholly new despite its partially derivative origins. Bulephorus analogizes the classical method of imitation to the way bees make honey:

> Do bees gather the material for their honeycomb from one shrub? Do they not rather fly about all kinds of flowers, shrubs, bushes, with wonderful zeal, frequently seeking from afar what they may store in their hive? Nor is what they bring straightway honey. They fashion a liquid with their organs, and after it is made their own, they give that forth in which you do not recognize the taste or the odor of flower or shrub but a product mingled in due proportion from them all.[6]

In analogizing honey-making to proper imitation, Bulephorus identifies each of the four guidelines named above: incorporating raw material from a variety of sources, making those raw materials fully one's own, and then producing something genuinely new and useful (and note also in passing that these elements map not imperfectly onto the trivium of grammar, logic, and

[6] Ibid., 82.

rhetoric). This view of imitation has nothing fake or counterfeit about it; it is genuinely creative, integrative, and even transformative.

4. Specific and General Imitation

The fourth guideline (using both specific and general kinds of imitation and using each to get to the other) is a more subtle but equally essential point that Bulephorus addresses more implicitly than explicitly. Let me first explain what I mean by specific and general imitation:

When we imitate, we can imitate at a variety of levels of specificity. Nosoponus imitates in a very specific, concrete way indeed: so much so that he will only use words that Cicero used. But one could also imitate Cicero in a more general way by trying to write with Cicero's clarity, force, and logic without using Cicero's specific words or phrases. One could even imitate Cicero in a still more general way by striving to be a patriot, scholar, and public servant—but without being a lawyer or politician as Cicero was (and indeed the world needs many, many such individuals). On this most general level, the person imitating Cicero will do almost nothing that Cicero did, but will still be following his example in a general, abstract way.

Are specific or general imitations better or worse than the other? I think some earlier points I've made could prejudice us to believe that general imitation is better than specific imitation: after all, Nosoponus needs to stop copying Cicero's words and start imitating Cicero's creativity, boldness, and reliance on other writers. He (and we) need to do more than fastidiously copy our models' external form; we need to understand their dynamism; their drive; the principles that underlie their actions. If we rigidly imitate our models, we'll be rigid corpses ourselves. To be "breathing souls" ourselves, we must imitate *as* breathing souls. As Bulephorus says:

> But O Muses! How little of Cicero do those apes bring us, who show us only the surface, or rather the veneer of Cicero by a few words, phrases, tropes, and endings of periods, collected here and there.
>
> And we must learn this, viz., that we may imitate what is the essential in Cicero which does not lie in words or in the surface of speech but in facts and ideas, in power of mind and judgment. For what advantage is it if the son reproduce the parent in lines of face when he is unlike him in mind and character?[7]

But it is just as true that we need specific imitation as well. Nosoponus can't just "imitate Cicero;" if he wants to imitate Cicero, he will need to identify specific traits that he wants to adopt, and this will necessarily lead him to more specific kinds of imitation. How specific? As specific as necessary so that Nosoponus is able to implement it. Nosoponus' error is not so much specific imitation of Cicero; it is that he's content to *stop* there. We need both—and we need to be able to break down general levels of imitation into specific steps, and also see the general purposes beyond those specific steps. Mastery of imitation involves descriptively breaking down

[7] Ibid., 48, 129.

our models, imitating them in small, manageable ways, and using those small, manageable ways as stepping stones towards our final destination.

Practical Applications

In my discussion above, I've painted a very general picture of how imitation can operate as a method of classical education. Because of the way that classical education has always been closely interwoven with language arts and character education, the bulk of the examples above are drawn from writing, speaking, or ethics, and these are the areas where it is easiest to see how imitation can be implemented. I won't give specific suggestions here on how to use imitation for character education: although I think many connections will be obvious, interesting, and useful. But here are a few additional specific suggestions as to how imitation can function in a writing classroom, or any classroom where writing or communication are often the final products (e.g., history or civics):

- A teacher can supply model papers (gather from willing students in previous semesters) for current students to review as they prepare their own comparable papers. Teachers and students might specifically identify what strong points of the model papers they want to use in their own papers as well as weak points that they specifically want to avoid in their own writing assignment. Concreteness is key: it isn't enough to put "good writing" in front of our students; we must help them parse what elements make it good and will be useful to them personally on specific tasks before them.
- Students can collect a few of their own favorite writing samples, identify specific characteristics in those samples, and work to integrate those good characteristics into their own writing assignments. Specific characteristics might be on the level of words and sentences, such as using powerful and fitting verbs, or on higher levels of argument and thought, such as responding respectfully to opposing views.
- Students can identify forms and genres of discourse in the "real world" that they want to eventually master, collect examples of these, and begin practicing them. This can help ensure that the practice work they do in school seamlessly matches and leads into the "real" work they will do later in life. Besides mindfully preparing students for future work, this kind of deliberately imitative practice is likely to help students produce genuinely excellent work during their education.

It isn't nearly as easy to provide specific recommendations on how to apply the principles and practices of imitation to subjects like science and math (and I think many would agree that these subjects seem oddly resistant to classical education; far more so than the humanities). I believe that this is partially due to the history of how these disciplines developed; during the scientific revolution and Enlightenment it seems to me that these disciplines were cut off from the liberal arts (probably to the detriment of both). Whatever the reason, there seems to be a special difficulty fitting certain disciplines into the modern classical education movement. Compounding that difficulty is the fact that, although I've been a formal educator in writing, I

haven't been a formal educator in math or science. So, I must speak from ignorance—speculating and hypothesizing, not providing rigorously vetted solutions. Yet, despite my reservations and despite the difficulty of figuring out how to teach math, science, and other comparable disciplines in a classical way, the urgency and necessity of the task impel me to offer a few thoughts. It's likely they are only seeds, but occasionally seeds do grow and bear fruit:

- Imitation teaches us to be and to become. Math and science are often taught as bodies of knowledge or toolboxes of skills. Who or what should we become as a result of studying math and science? How can we properly integrate the need to teach concrete knowledge and skills into that overarching goal of becoming? Do math and science teachers model a scientifically/mathematically rich life that students can look towards as an example, or are they only dispensing aseptic techniques and knowledge?
- Imitation has many high-level goals, but uses low-level steps and procedures to reach towards those goals. Could we look at certain low-level practices in math and science (say, the standard thirty nightly algebra problems) and ask ourselves what we are imitating and striving towards? Or in other words, when we engage in these low-level imitative practices, what is the high-level synthesis we are implicitly aiming for already? Do students know what they are implicitly imitating, or are they blind copiers like Nosoponus? If they knew it better, would it motivate them or help them learn more deeply and quickly?
- In writing, imitation teaches us to break down a model text into component parts and judge which parts we should select for use—and this use of judgment is one of the most important ingredients in proper imitation. Could something similar be done in math or science, i.e., as we deliver techniques and knowledge, how and where can we teach judgment and selection among techniques and knowledge as well? How would this kind of approach shape the way we teach, say, chemistry or pre-algebra?
- What other schools of thought in education might run parallel to or else intersect with imitation (e.g., Montessori method, unschooling, etc.)? Can imitation give us new insight into how to employ these schools of thought? Can these schools of thought illuminate ways to use imitation?

Conclusory Thoughts

This essay has covered a fair amount of ground. Let me try to briefly summarize what I believe are a few key takeaways:

1. Imitation is a method of education that 1) takes a concrete model worthy of emulation, 2) analyzes, describes, and digests the worthy traits from that example, and 3) generates a concrete product which draws from but adjusts, improves, and/or transcends the original model. It is an integral part of the rich heritage of classical education in the West and merits our study and practice of it.

2. These models for imitation can include products like a painting or a book report. They can also include actions, habits, or traits like shooting a three-pointer or making conversation with a stranger. Models can also be entire personalities or roles: we can imitate our heroes and mentors.
3. Imitation can be done badly or done well. To do it well, we should draw from as many models as necessary, always seek to improve and iterate on their example, adapt the lessons from the model to our own situation, and use both specific and general imitation as interrelated methods.

Above all, we should remember that imitation teaches us to see life as a performance; a creation; an act. It teaches us to build our characters in a conscious and deliberate way. It invites us to emulate our ideals and gives us concrete steps to do so. It allows us to select and sharpen the skills that our chosen roles in life require of us. This cultivation of the self that proper imitation aims at is among the ultimate goals of classical education.

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Call for Submissions

The Editors of *Mentor* graciously invite all John Adams Academy faculty to contribute submissions to this journal. As educators we appreciate how your actions and words contribute to our academic community; as writers, we admire how you see the good in things beyond our view. Whether your main vantage point is a Kindergarten classroom, an administrative office, or places beyond or between, you have valuable perspectives on the ways our Core Values intersect with the curricula of our Academy.

On a rotating basis, *Mentor* will focus on a particular Core Value. The substance of this volume has explored our 7th Core Value: Modeling What We Teach. In the upcoming issues, the theme will be our 8th Core Value: Abundance Mentality.

Contributions to the journal can take many forms, including research essays, book reviews, or creative writing pieces. All submissions should aim simply to explore the 8th Core Value of Abundance Mentality.

All first draft submissions are due by January 13th, 2023, and should be emailed as a word document to Ross Garner at ross.garner@johnadamsacademy.org.

Articles: Write an essay of 1000-5000 words regarding some aspect of John Adams Academy's 7th Core Value, Modeling What We Teach, using classical texts to inform your analysis. Cite and credit all sources according to *Chicago Manual of Style*, including footnotes and bibliography. If citing sources is not your strength, please contact Ross Garner for assistance.

Book Reviews: After choosing a book from John Adams Academy's curricula or other book related to classical education, summarize and assess the book's relevance to the Academy's 8th Core Value, Abundance Mentality in 500-1000 words. Cite the book according to *Chicago Manual of Style.*

Creative Writing: Write a short story, poem, fable, or creative non-fiction piece exploring the Academy's 7th Core Value, Modeling What We Teach. Submissions may vary in length but should not exceed more than 5000 words.

MENTOR

JOHN ADAMS ACADEMY ACADEMIC JOURNAL

VOLUME VI, ISSUE I – SPRING 2022

Appreciation of Our National Heritage

Public and Private Virtue

Emphasis on Mentors & Classics

Scholar Empowered Learning

Fostering Creativity & Entrepreneurial Spirit

High Standards of Academic Excellence

Modeling What We Teach

Abundance Mentality

Building a Culture of Greatness

Self-governance, Personal Responsibility, & Accountability

John Adams ACADEMY

Restoring America's Heritage
by Developing Servant Leaders

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