

IS MORAL VIRTUE OBSOLESCENT AS THE PRIMARY GOAL OF  
EDUCATION?

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A MORALLY VIRTUOUS PERSON IS ONE WHOSE BEHAVIOR IS WHAT ONE EXPECTS OF A GOOD HUMAN BEING. IT IS THE SKILL OF ACTING AS A CIVILIZED, MORALLY SENSITIVE PERSON TOWARDS ONE'S SELF AND TOWARDS OTHERS. IT IS WHAT MAKES ORDERLY CIVILIZED SOCIETY POSSIBLE.

FOR THE GREATER PART OF HISTORY UNTIL THE PAST 100 YEARS OR SO, PRODUCING THE MORALLY VIRTUOUS PERSON WAS THE MAJOR PURPOSE OF EDUCATION. THIS EDUCATION BEGAN IN THE GREEK ACADEMIES LONG BEFORE THE TIME OF CHRIST AND CONTINUED ON BASICALLY WITHOUT CHALLENGE UNTIL THE MORILL ACT OF CIVIL WAR VINTAGE CREATED INCENTIVES FOR PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES TO ARISE WHERE THE AIMS OF EDUCATION BEGAN TO CENTER ON VOCATIONAL SKILLS, RESEARCH, AND GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL WORK. (17 ms 225)

WE HAVE TAKEN OUR CONCEPTS OF PROPER HUMAN BEHAVIOR FROM THE GREEKS NATURAL LAW AND JUDEO-CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES -- CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY AND JUDEO CHRISTIAN REVELATION. BOTH OF THESE RICH SOURCES OF INSIGHT BECAME THE BASIS OF MANY OF OUR WESTERN SOCIAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE BILL OF RIGHTS, CONSTITUTIONALISM, THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, DUE PROCESS AND REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLES.

THE GREEKS, DEATHLY FEARFUL OF THE COSTS OF SOCIAL

INSTABILITY, INVENTED ACADEMIES TO PRODUCE MORALLY VIRTUOUS LEADERS, LEADERS WHO COULD BRING ABOUT THE GOOD SOCIETY IN WHICH THE DISTINCTLY HUMAN FACETS OF MAN-THE-SOCIAL-ANIMAL COULD MATURE. PLATO'S REPUBLIC PROBABLY THE PREMIER CLASSIC IN WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT ASKS THE QUESTION "HOW CAN WE SO SHAPE SOCIETY AS TO BRING OUT THE BEST THAT IS IN MAN."

AND THE GREEKS BELIEVED ALONG WITH A LOT OF THE REST OF US THAT EDUCATION HAS TO PLAY A PRIME ROLE IN CREATING THAT KIND OF SOCIETY. LET ME QUOTE PLATO:

"WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE GOOD LIFE WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THE GOOD SOCIETY; AND WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE GOOD SOCIETY WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT A SYSTEM OF EDUCATION WHICH CAN BRING IT ABOUT AND SUSTAIN IT."

THE GREEK ACADEMIES AND MOST LIBERAL ARTS INSTITUTIONS TODAY PURPORT TO OFFER A TYPE OF EDUCATION THAT PRODUCES MORALLY SENSITIVE LEADERS FOR SOCIETY. BOTH CICERO AND MILTON SAY THAT THE PRIME PURPOSE OF LIBERAL EDUCATION IS TO TURN OUT LEADERS FOR SOCIETY WHO CAN CREATE THE "GOOD" SOCIETY.

EVEN THE METHODOLOGY OF THE LIBERAL ARTS AIMS AT MODEL BUILDING: QUESTIONS SUCH AS WHAT IS THE "GOOD SOCIETY," THE GOOD STATESMAN, THE BEST POETRY. HOW CAN WE SET STANDARDS TO JUDGE QUALITY PERFORMANCE AND BEHAVIOR? LIBERAL EDUCATION BUILDS CAMELOTS ALL THE TIME, IDEALS. THAT IS WHY COLLEGE TEACHERS ARE OFTEN CHARACTERIZED AS "IDEALISTS."

THIS TRADITION OF EDUCATION AS AN "IDEAL BUILDING" PROCESS

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WAS CARRIED FORWARD TO MODERN TIMES. THE BULK OF ALL PRIVATE COLLEGES WHICH UP TO THE TIME OF THE CIVIL WAR MEANT ALMOST ALL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WERE FOUNDED BY CHURCH GROUPS AND CLASSICAL SCHOLARS. THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THIS COUNTRY ACCEPTED THIS GOAL AS PROPER EDUCATION AND WERE PRODUCTS OF IT THEMSELVES.

JEFFERSON IN SUPPORTING A COMMON SCHOOL SYSTEM TO UNDERGIRD THE NEW REPUBLIC SAID WE HAVE TO PRODUCE IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM NOT PEOPLE OF WEALTH AND POWER BUT OF CHARACTER AND VIRTUE. FEW OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS WOULD GRANT THAT THEIR NEW REPUBLIC COULD BE SUSTAINED WITHOUT A STRONG MORAL SENSITIVITY AMONGST ITS CITIZENS. NO SIZE POLICE FORCE CAN BE A SATISFACTORY SUBSTITUTE FOR CONSCIENCE IN COMPELLING CIVILIZED BEHAVIOR IN HUMAN BEINGS. THAT IS WHY IT IS QUESTIONABLE TO CONSIDER SENDING FEDERAL TROOPS INTO OUR CITIES TO ELIMINATE DRUG CONSUMPTION!

#### ALTERNATIVE GOALS

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE TO MORAL VIRTUE AS THE GOAL OF EDUCATION? TODAY IN MOST EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS JOB SKILLS HAVE BEEN SUBSTITUTED FOR HUMAN SKILLS AS THE FOCUS OF EDUCATION. IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS WE FEAR TO SERIOUSLY DISCUSS MORALS LEST IT IMPINGE ON PUBLIC SENSITIVITY OR EVEN THE FIRST AMENDMENT. EVEN IN MANY LIBERAL ARTS INSTITUTIONS WE UNCONSCIOUSLY PREPARE PEOPLE FOR JOBS RATHER THAN TO FULFILL THEMSELVES AS HUMAN BEINGS. HOW TO MAKE A LIVING IS SUBSTITUTED FOR HOW TO LIVE A GOOD LIFE.

THE EFFECTS ON OUR CULTURE ARE DEVASTATING. WALTER LIPPMAN

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ONE OF THE GREAT JOURNALISTS AND SOCIAL THINKERS OF THIS CENTURY SAYS THAT:

"A NATION LIVES BY THE IDEALS IT WORSHIPS AND IS SHAPED BY THE FIGURES IT EXALTS AS HEROES."

ARISTOTLE PROBABLY GAVE HIM THE IDEA WHEN HE SAID: "IF THOU WOULDST BE VIRTUOUS, BEHOLD THE VIRTUOUS MAN." THIS IS "ROLE MODELING", ISN'T IT???

HOW ARE WE DOING IN THIS RESPECT WITH THE NATIONAL FIGURES WHO ARE SUPPOSED TO BE SOCIETY'S ROLE MODELS IN THE U.S.? WITHIN THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS WE HAVE SENT A VICE PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. TO <sup>Prison</sup> ~~JAIL~~; CHASED A U.S. PRESIDENT FROM OFFICE; FORCED THE RESIGNATION OF THE THIRD MOST IMPORTANT FEDERAL OFFICIAL, SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE; DID THE SAME TO THE MAJORITY LEADER OF THE HOUSE. WE HAVE SEEN 100 HIGHLY PLACED ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIALS OF THE LAST PRESIDENT ACCUSED OF CRIMES OR UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR, A NUMBER OF THEM SENT TO JAIL. WE HAVE SEEN THE SAVINGS AND LOAN SYSTEM OF THE U.S. COLLAPSE DUE TO GREED AND EMBEZZLEMENT; CAUGHT THE WAR DEPARTMENT CONSPIRING WITH LOBBYISTS TO WASTE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS ON WAR CONTRACTS; SENT WALL STREET'S BIGGEST TYCOON TO JAIL FOR EMBEZZLING PART OF HIS \$400 MILLION INCOME LAST YEAR; DENIED THOUSANDS OF POOR PEOPLE DECENT HOUSING BY VIRTUE OF FRAUDULENT COOPERATION BETWEEN GREEDY LOBBYISTS AND HUD. EVEN CHURCH LEADERS HAVE NOT BEEN SPARED FROM CONVICTION FOR FRAUD AND A NUMBER OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERS WERE FORCED FROM OFFICE FOR IMMORAL CONDUCT. THESE INCIDENTS ONLY TOUCH THE SURFACE OF WHAT

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HAS BECOME A "MEEISM" AND "NOWISM" CULTURE.

TRULY, DO WE AGAIN NEED A MODERN DIOGENES, THE GREEK PHILOSOPHER, WHO WENT ABOUT WITH A LIGHTED LANTERN SEEKING ONE HONEST MAN??

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE ROLE MODELS WE ARE PRODUCING AND THE STANDARDS WE ARE SETTING FOR OUR SOCIETY? AND, IF NOT, WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT??

WE CAN START BY RESTORING THE PROPER AIM OF EDUCATION, MORAL VIRTUE. WE NEED TO GET BACK TO THE GREEK CONCEPT THAT EDUCATION IS DESIGNED TO PRODUCE HUMAN BEINGS WHO UNDERSTAND THEIR ROLES IN AN ORDERED UNIVERSE AND TO BUILD A SOCIETY IN WHICH ROLE MODELS POINT THE WAY TO A CIVILIZED ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH PEOPLE CAN LIVE THE GOOD LIFE. MORAL VIRTUE IS NOT OBSOLESCENT! RATHER IT IS THE VITAL INGREDIENT ESSENTIAL TO AN ORDERED SOCIETY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. AND THE UNITED STATES NEEDS IT MORE THAN EVER BEFORE IN ITS HISTORY.