

THE EPOCH TIMES *on* Education

THE CASE FOR AN
EDUCATION BASED
ON VIRTUES



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From the Editor



When Thomas Jefferson named the pursuit of happiness as one of our unalienable rights in the Declaration of Independence, he wasn't thinking about a quest for the latest gadget or short-lived pleasures. Happiness, as the Founding Fathers—who were steeped in the classics—would have understood, was about virtue. For Aristotle, happiness, in the most broad-minded sense of the word, was about living a virtuous life.

“Since happiness is an activity of soul in accordance with perfect virtue, we must consider



LAMBROS KAZAN/SHUTTERSTOCK

The Parthenon, a temple dedicated to Athena, at the heart of the Acropolis in Athens. Stories from literature and history offer much for us to learn from. See “What ‘The Odyssey’ Can Teach Us” on page 6.

the nature of virtue; for perhaps we shall thus see better the nature of happiness,” Aristotle wrote in “The Nicomachean Ethics.”

Likewise, Jefferson wrote in a letter to Amos J. Cook in 1816, “Without virtue, happiness cannot be.”

Education these days has become synonymous with a path that presumably leads to a job and, by extension, economic stability. But where has it really led us? Here is our sad lot: students who are riddled with a great deal of anxiety and even

more debt, teachers who are demoralized and burned-out, and schools plagued by disciplinary problems. But more than that, we are seeing the results of a morally bankrupt education, devoid of the moral wisdom that would have laid the foundation for leading a virtuous life.

This special edition takes a look at education and moral wisdom. It examines what happened when we shifted our emphasis from virtues to moral relativity; the disappearance of respect from our classrooms; and the ways in which harmful concepts from communist ideology have

infiltrated our institutions for higher education.

It also proposes ways to reinstate character and virtue in schools: through teaching art and music; through storytelling about exemplars from history and literature; through creeds and rules of conduct; and through reinstating family to its central responsibility as a moral beacon.

We should see to it that virtue guides our young. Nothing less than our future depends on it.

Jasper Fakkert
Editor-in-Chief

About Us

The Epoch Times is a media organization dedicated to seeking the truth through insightful and independent journalism.

Standing outside of political interests and the pursuit of profit, our starting point and our goal is to create a media for the public benefit, to be truly responsible to society.

We endeavor to educate readers about today's most important topics, seeking to

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As an independent media outlet, we use our freedom to investigate issues overlooked—or avoided—by other media outlets. We seek to highlight solutions and what's good in society rather than what divides us.

We report respectfully, compassionately, and rigorously.

We stand against the destruction wrought

by communism, including the harm done to cultures around the world.

We are inspired in this by our own experience. The Epoch Times was founded in 2000 to bring honest and uncensored news to people oppressed by the lies and violence in communist China.

We still believe journalism is a noble vocation, but only when it genuinely seeks to serve its communities and help them to flourish. In all that we do, we will hold ourselves to the highest standards of integrity. This is our promise to you.

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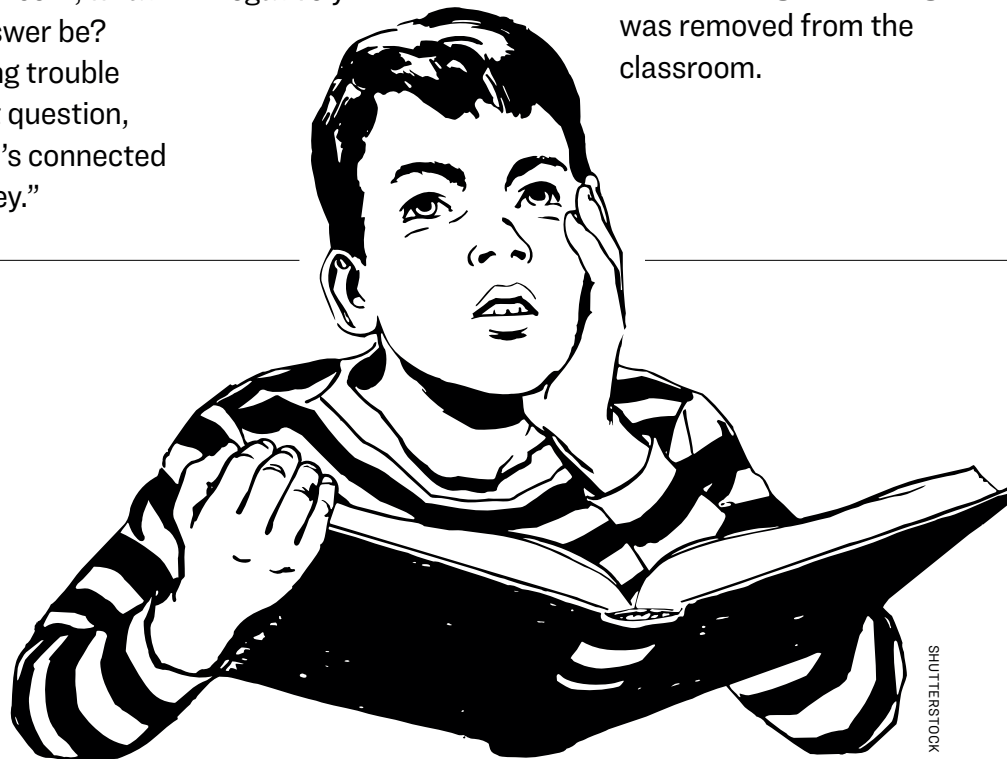
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"The School of Athens" (detail), circa 1510, by Raphael (1483–1520). Fresco.

Virtues, Values, and Education

PAUL ADAMS

You may have read a recent, sadly not atypical story from Canada about a Christian couple who were rejected as foster parents because of their Christian beliefs.

It seemed they had satisfied the social worker who interviewed them that they would adhere to all policies of the Children's Aid Services and would carry out their duties accordingly.

The problem came when they were asked, "Are you one of those churches that still believes that the Bible is true? It was written thousands of years ago and, obviously, the world has changed."

The couple were clear they would abide by agency policies, including those pertaining to spanking and homosexuality, but that was not good enough for the social worker.

The couple's Christian values and beliefs disqualified them, in the agency's view, from being foster parents. As the official letter of rejection said, the "policies of our agency do not appear to fit with your values and beliefs, and therefore, we will be unable to move forward with an approval for your family as a resource home."

The problem for the agency was not the couple's behavior, character, or assurances, but their views.

Virtues Versus Values

The shift from virtues to values relativizes moral thinking. Virtues form and define character. They are habits of the heart that incline us to behave well, avoid the vices that entrap us in sin, and so flourish as human beings, individually and communally.

They imply substantial agreement—as Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman found across major faith traditions in their handbook, "Character Strengths and Virtues." The faith traditions differed in details, but not in the importance they placed on being just and courageous, acting with prudence rather than rashness, with temperance or self-mastery rather than gluttony or lust.

Values, on the other hand, pertain to what we believe and what (we say) is important to us. They tend to the relative and subjective, avoiding the assumption that there are objective truths about what good behavior is, instead of accepting different views: your truth and my truth.

Moral education then becomes about "values clarification" rather than formation of virtuous character.

Our schools and colleges, with few exceptions, do less to form character and educate in the virtues than to inoculate the young against their cultural heritage.

This kind of relativism and subjectivism is first experienced as liberating. It frees us from the traditional moral restraints of law and custom.

The sexual revolution unlinked sex from children, and both from marriage and family. It promoted the liberal ideal of the autonomous, unencumbered self, owing no duty that has not been consented to.

So the bonds, duties, and calls for sacrifice tying us to family, community, and nation seem quaint and outmoded restraints on the individual's pursuit of personal interest.

Modern Education

If there is no objective basis for virtues, then what culture and faith have taught us—through the King James Bible and Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," once a shared heritage of all educated Americans—is reduced to expressions of will and power: what I want and am able to do.

The great texts of our civilization in the West—the works of Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare—are no longer sources of wisdom, inspiration, and moral insight.

As Harvard historian James Hankins puts it with heavy irony: "[The] goal of modern humanities education is to unmask the old authors and expose their writings as the poisoned fruit of a corrupt socioeconomic system, or of racism, sexism, and other approved targets of moral opprobrium. Yes, I know many of you think that, when we read 'texts' for truth or wisdom, we are being at best utterly naive, at worst making ourselves complicit in spreading a hegemonic ideology, perpetuating the interests of the dominant class."

This is how our cultural resources, those guides to virtue, are discounted and disparaged in our institutions of learning. The result has been a loss of internal control, the virtue of self-mastery replaced by not only freedom, but enslavement to vice, and addiction to destructive habits.

Those appetites we learn to temper with the support of culture, custom, family, and church now require formal policing instead—as seen with kangaroo courts on college campuses to adjudicate bad dates.

Ever more state intrusion into civil society enforces the new state religion of sexual liberalism and liberal secularism. Curricular reform is legislated to inculcate the new ideologies of marriage, sex, and family.

The liberalism of our day, promoted in the name of tolerance, inclusion, and diversity, becomes an ever more intolerant exclusion of dis-

sent and difference. But since there is no longer truth—an objective reality to appeal to—orthodoxy becomes a matter of who has the will and power to impose it.

Our schools and colleges, with few exceptions, do less to form character and educate in the virtues than to inoculate the young against their cultural heritage.

So what is the alternative? There are many initiatives and efforts to promote virtues through character education. This is especially true of private and faith-based schools, and of the growing movement among parents to home-school their children. In those settings, the great literature and other achievements of our civilization are subject to respectful study. In many, students even study the Bible.

Educators committed to the classical and Christian tradition have developed curricula for use in such schools and homes, notably the young order of the Dominican Sisters of Mary. Other efforts, such as the Virtues Project, draw from a wide range of faith traditions and have been used even by the highly secular National Education Association of the U.S.

Russell Kirk, in his 1982 essay "Virtue: Can It Be Taught?," notes the depth and seriousness of the problems discussed here and acknowledges the need for reform of schools and churches.

He emphasizes the importance of restoring the role of the family to its central responsibility for the education of its young. Neither the state and its bureaucracies, nor the educational professionals they regulate ever more tightly can or should replace the role of parents who traditionally have had primary responsibility for education.

This is partly a matter of asserting their participation and leadership in policy and governance of schools. It also, irreplaceably, involves teaching children virtues at their mother's knee and into adulthood, by precept and example.

Abandoning the young to professionals and the state, leaving them cultural and spiritual orphans, only reinforces the message given, more or less explicitly, to parents of faith: Send us your children so we can turn them against you and everything you believe!

Paul Adams is a professor emeritus of social work at the University of Hawai'i and was a professor and associate dean of academic affairs at Case Western Reserve University. He is the co-author of "Social Justice Isn't What You Think It Is" and has written extensively on social welfare policy and professional and virtue ethics.

“Telemachus Requests Permission From Pluto to Seek His Father in the Underworld,” 1809, by Bartolomeo Pinelli (1781–1835). Pen and brown ink with brown and gray wash over graphite on heavy laid paper.



WILLIAM B. O'NEAL FUND/NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

What ‘The Odyssey’ Can Teach Us

JAMES SALE

If one were to ask the question, “What—in one word—constitutes the most powerful methodology for teaching and learning in all human experience?”, what would your answer be? If you are having trouble answering that question, here’s a clue: It’s connected to “The Odyssey.”

I do not want to idealize the ancient Greeks too much, or try to suggest it was all a golden age back then, 2,500 years or so ago. Let’s be clear: Some of the Greeks—take the Spartans, for instance—had rather severe ideas of what constituted a real education.

The Spartan male education system, called the agoge, set up by the lawgiver Lycurgus, insisted on a range of things that we might now consider undesirable. At birth, a baby was washed with wine to make him strong, and if the baby was deformed or misshapen in any way, it would be killed; they were encouraged to steal to supplement their measly diet; and—my favorite horror—they learned to read and write, but all books and literature were

The best way to educate anyone is to mentor them, and without mentoring, it is difficult (though not impossible) to be educated.

banned except Homer, war songs, and war poetry. Not what you might call balanced, then.

But in Homer’s “The Odyssey,” a permissible book, we find the word “mentor,” or “mentoring” as the action. And it is interesting that the action is named after the character in the story, for that, too, is an important clue. Education is nothing if not personal, as Mentor was a person.

In a world where everything, including teaching, training, and coaching, is online—where the drive to reduce costs is paramount, so audio, video, and e-learning packages are replacing direct human inputs—we have the person as the heart of a true education.

Who was Mentor and what was his role in “The Odyssey?” Mentor was the wise and older friend of Odysseus who was asked by the hero to look after and educate his son in his absence. Mentor’s success is shown by how Telemachus, the son of Odysseus, rises to the challenges of manhood—and his destiny—as the story reaches its climax.

So the best way to educate anyone is to mentor them, and without mentoring, it is difficult

(though not impossible) to be educated. We need to look closely at what happens in “The Odyssey” to fully understand the scope of this form of education versus what we now have in the Western world.

Now and Then

First, there is the understanding that the personal, and so the subjective, is at the root of a true education. Unless we see learning as personally relevant to us, and subjectively buy into it, then what we are taught is dead knowledge. Contrast this with how impersonal and objective education is in most current Western democracies, mostly fit only for passing tests and obtaining qualifications. Furthermore, true education is wisdom-oriented as opposed to knowledge-based; character-focused rather than exam-based; and experiential rather than academic.

Wisdom means that true learning is always value-laden—that is, it has a moral dimension—rather than being, as the West likes to pretend, value-free (if such a thing could ever really be). And further still—and more contro-

versally—education always respects the gods, whereas in the West, we ignore them.

Put another way, the Mentor-style is open to ambiguity and the mystery of the cosmos, whereas a modern education shuts that down, for even what we don't know becomes a source of commentary on how science soon will.

The mentoring approach, then, is age-led, not youth-focused—the younger generation learns from the older. It is respect-driven, not child-centered; it is rooted in culture, not multicultural; and finally, and perhaps most significantly, it is life-preparatory, not simply utilitarian and job-relevant.

This is a litany of profound differences, and one could comment in much more detail about the effects of these differences, but perhaps the most profound one is the alienation the average person in the West feels, not only from his or her fellow citizens, but from his or her country, and even from the cosmos.

We have become disconnected from each other and from the world, and we can see this reflected in the crime, depression, and suicide rates that continue to rise. And education—supposedly our cure for all ills—is implicated in their manifestations.

But there is something else in the Mentor myth or story that is also important to comment on. So far, the narrative I have supplied has been entirely a male discourse, with no mention of a female poet, Odysseus's mother, or any other woman. However, mentoring, properly understood, is not a purely male phenomenon—far from it.

Male and Female

All parents need to undertake or aspire to mentor. Many do so without consciously realizing they are doing it. However, in the case of Telemachus, a male, it is clear the male needs another male role model in order to cross that bridge into manhood, just as a female needs a strong female role model for her to achieve full womanhood.

But is that the end of the story—that men need men and women need women in order to develop fully? “The Odyssey” implies not.

Fascinatingly, whereas Mentor is the father-figure substitute in the poem, he also dies before the end of it, and his role is taken over by the goddess Pallas Athene, who assumes his exact shape and form, and continues Telemachus's education. Before considering this unusual development, let's briefly consider who Pallas Athene was.

Pallas Athene was the goddess of several things, but most importantly, the goddess of wisdom. She was a favorite daughter of the king of the gods, Zeus. The unusual thing about her was that she sprang from the right side of Zeus's head, fully grown and fully armed (she was also the goddess of war, in terms of how to strategically plan wars, versus Ares, who was the god of war, in terms of how to physically carry them out). She came to be the one who directed Telemachus.

Notice a number of small details here: Wisdom has no childhood; it's fully formed. This reminds us of our own best thinking, which comes not from assiduous and long-winded calculation, but in whole visions that come in aha! moments.

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The mentoring approach, then, is age-led, not youth-focused—the younger generation learns from the older.



SEBASTIAN LEON PRADO/UNSPLASH

She sprang from the right side: the right side, the good side—the moral or virtuous dimension. But the right side of the brain is also the creative side, the deeper side. And wisdom is feminine.

The femininity of wisdom is ancient. Even in the Bible's Book of Proverbs, Wisdom is feminine. And Pallas Athene's mother is Metis, whose name means “intelligence” or “cunning.”

Thus, in the story of Telemachus and his mentors, we see that the whole education of the person is personal, and needs structured inputs from both male and female personalities.

Fulfilling Destiny

In short, what the Greek myth points to is the need for balance, harmony, and a holistic approach that enables each individual to fulfill his or her destiny—and to have a destiny at all. Today, we talk less about “destiny” and more about purpose. “Purpose” is a great word, but still a lesser word than destiny.

Many people have discovered their “purpose,” but it is relatively trivial. A destiny—when one fulfills one's true purpose—can never be trivial, for in this, one is aligned

with the “will of heaven.” Hence, the mentoring involves a mortal (psychological) component and an immortal (spiritual) dimension.

Much more could be said, but it should be obvious from the catalog of differences I have outlined that so much is wrong with the Western approach to education, and that we can still learn from the Greek myths.

Let me leave you with a wonderful observation from English writer G. K. Chesterton on our modern situation—and he was writing this a hundred years ago: “The people who are the right guardians of normal ideas, have been bullied and bludgeoned by bad materialistic education till they are simply stunned and stupefied.”

Has anything improved since then?

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Many grades now reflect good citizenship instead of worthy scholarship.



MYKOLA KOMAROVSKY/SHUTTERSTOCK

The Role of Respect in Education

MARK HENDRICKSON

Respect for others is the key to social harmony and a functioning democracy. It is a check on willfulness and selfishness, as respect recognizes that others have rights and feelings, too, and acknowledges that our own pursuit of happiness does not entail the right to trample on the rights of others.

Respect is a key component of the greatest of all rules for social conduct: the Golden Rule, which enjoins us to do unto others as we would want them to do unto us.

One of the key institutions for infusing respectful behavior has been the public school system. In elementary schools, teachers impose discipline on their pupils. In addition

The consequences of not respecting young people enough to tell them honestly about deficiencies in their work are serious.

to teaching the traditional three R's (reading, writing, and 'rithmetic, for those of you who haven't heard this before) teachers have demanded that their charges learn respect—respect for the person in charge, respect for their peers, respect for social order, and respect for knowledge.

In schools, children learned that their own wants and preferences were not supreme. They were taught that the needs and wants of others deserved respect, too. Teachers imparted the vital lesson that human cooperation requires a certain degree of order to avoid the anarchy of everybody doing whatever they want, whenever they feel like it.

Those of us who have been professional educators for a long time have been dismayed



CENTRAL PRESS/GETTY IMAGES

A class in London, circa 1939.

to see a decades-long trend of the virtue of respect draining out of many classrooms. Pardon the overused cliché, but back when I was a kid in the '50s and '60s, we respected the authority of teachers, whether we liked them or not.

The main reason we did was that if we got into trouble at school and our parents found out, we would be more harshly punished at home than we were at school.

In recent decades, more parents have sided with their children against teachers. I first encountered this phenomenon while substitute teaching in inner-city schools in the early 1970s. There, many of the students openly defied teachers and refused to do assigned work, and they did so with the full knowledge and backing of their parents.

One particular junior high school was so dysfunctional that the windows had been replaced with bricks to avoid yet another smashing, and students tore pages out of textbooks to avoid doing assignments. I asked a friend of mine who taught there full time what he considered a "good day." He answered, "When nobody gets hurt."

Respect for teachers, classmates, and the learning process was close to nonexistent. The result was that this school, like many others I taught in, was little more than an expensive, taxpayer-funded babysitting service—a repository to keep kids out of their parents' hair and off the streets for seven or eight hours a day.

An especially tragic aspect of these broken schools from which respect has vanished is that there are parents who desperately want their children to attend a decent, functioning school where they can receive the education they need to be prepared for the economic opportunities our society offers.

Sadly, the public school establishment—teachers' unions, well-compensated administrators, and progressive politicians—don't respect those parents and children enough to legalize the vouchers and freedom of movement that would allow students to have a choice of schools.

Respect for teachers has sunk to abysmal depths in many non-urban schools, too. Rather than back teachers who demand a certain level of conduct, effort, and performance from students, many parents think, "How dare you teachers punish, rebuke, or (heaven forbid!) give a C to my child!"

Rather than push back against this parental pressure to overlook poor conduct and accept mediocrity, many teachers take the line of least resistance and lower their standards. In doing so, they disrespect their pupils and education itself.

Many of us who teach college have had students confront us with indignation that we would dare give one of their papers a grade lower than an A, on the grounds that they'd always gotten A's before.

They seem unaware that a paper that is poorly reasoned, poorly organized, and riddled with dozens of errors of grammar, punctuation, and syntax cannot be assigned an A if there is to be any integrity to our grades.

The problem of poor writing skills isn't the



Schoolchildren in Leeds, England, in June 1936

Those of us who have been professional educators for a long time have been dismayed to see a decades-long trend of the virtue of respect draining out of many classrooms.

fault of the students; rather, the blame rests on pre-college teachers who found it less stressful to award A's to pupils who punctually completed their assignments and behaved pleasantly in the classroom. In other words, many grades now reflect good citizenship instead of worthy scholarship.

The consequences of not respecting young people enough to tell them honestly about deficiencies in their work are serious. These students march off to college with inflated egos after having grown up receiving participation awards and being told their work was fine when it often wasn't.

They demand "safe spaces" to insulate themselves from ideas that challenge their facile (and often false) assumptions. They self-righteously demand the banishment of ideas they disagree with instead of learning how to engage in systematic, well-reasoned, respectful dialogues.

Too many college students have insufferable senses of self-righteousness and moral superiority because no teacher respected

them enough to point out how much they still had to learn. They think they have all the answers. They act as if they are the first generation of Americans who have yearned to make the world a better place and have embraced false solutions like socialism. (I say that as a former socialist.)

By allowing respect—respect for teachers, authority, order, and our fellow man on the one hand, and for truth, history, and the complexity of knowledge on the other—to drain out of our schools, our society has sown the wind and is now reaping the whirlwind.

Can we recover and reinstate respect to its former status? I don't know if we can, but for the good of our children and our society, we need to try.

Mark Hendrickson is an adjunct professor of economics and sociology at Grove City College. He is the author of several books, including "The Big Picture: The Science, Politics, and Economics of Climate Change."

The Power of Storytelling

Tales from classic literature and history impart knowledge, wisdom, and joy

JIM WEISS

As a recording artist and live performer, I've spent nearly three decades sharing stories from classic literature and history with children and adults around the world. I first began telling stories as a father, then took it up professionally. The same reason applied in both cases: I knew the importance of sharing these particular stories with others, and with our children.

I'd like to share my reasons with you, because they are more timely now than ever.

First, billions of people around the world already know these stories—and refer to them constantly. If your child doesn't know the

stories, he or she is out of the loop. If a journalist reporting a news story mentions "a Trojan horse" or "a Herculean task," or says "This is a question that will need the wisdom of Solomon to decide," anyone not familiar with those references cannot fully understand. Your child needs to know at least the basics, or else he or she will fall behind.

Second, and approaching that same point from a slightly different angle, these stories represent one of the increasingly rare areas of cultural cohesion in our society.

Similarity and Uniqueness

We have all heard of Greek mythology, but we have our own American mythology, too—and I don't mean that our shared stories are all fictional. The honesty and selflessness of George Washington, the profound compassion of Abraham Lincoln, and the tall tales of Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill all are part of what we share.

These stories give us a common foundation of positive examples at a time in our history when the forces of division and disagreement



It is through our stories that we pass along to the next generation what we believe is most important in our society.

The honesty and selflessness of George Washington, the profound compassion of Abraham Lincoln, and the tall tales of Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill all are part of what we share.

appear very powerful.

It is through our stories that we pass along to the next generation what we believe is most important in our society. Different nations, and different cultures, share many of these central beliefs with us—but not all.

The lone gunman who rides into town and saves the day when the powerful cattle baron is trying to drive out the small ranchers and farmers, is an American figure, personifying our emphasis on individual skills. In some cultures, he wouldn't appear in a story that way. Our stories help us see what is unique about our culture.

At the same time, other stories we share have broad universal elements that help us say, "Why, those people over there are not so different from us at all! Maybe they are enough like us that we can get along."

I have told stories from many lands in order to show such common elements. Some years back, for example, I was invited to England to perform for that specific reason. A number of Eastern Europeans had moved to an English city to fill a variety of jobs, but the English "home folks" and these workers did not mesh well because of cultural differences. The English organizers asked me to perform stories



EVERETT HISTORICAL/SHUTTERSTOCK

from Eastern Europe and from England, all in English, to demonstrate what the groups had in common and open up conversations. It worked!

Here's a true, ancient example: In ancient Greece, the two most powerful cities, Athens and Sparta, fought a war that lasted about 27 years, with a few truces. When at last, after terrible losses on both sides, Sparta won, the victors planned to burn Athens to the ground—which might have been the end of democracy in the world, since Athens was the birthplace of democracy.

But the night before the planned destruc-

tion, the Spartans asked some Athenian actors to perform one of the famous Greek plays of the Athenian playwright Euripides. So moved were the Spartans that they decided, "We cannot destroy a city that gives the world such words telling our shared stories." They spared Athens from the torch. Stories hold power!

Inspiration

A third reason to share classic literature and historical stories is that, like all the best stories, they hold within them ethical lessons and examples of how we should behave in our own lives.

One reason the United States prospered from the start is that our Founding Fathers were all great students of history. They referred to the successes and failures of earlier leaders when making their own decisions. Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and the rest acknowledged drawing on this wealth of wisdom from stories they had learned.

Of course, you needn't be a president or senator to unlock this element of stories. If you want to double the impact of the stories you share with your own family, try asking, "Do you think she did the right thing?" or "What else do you think he might have done? Why?" Then prepare for a great, and often surprising, conversation. Suddenly the stories work on a new level, one which provides examples for our own choices and actions.

There is no more powerful or lasting way to teach a moral lesson than through a story that exemplifies that lesson, either positively or negatively. And because we learn the lesson both intellectually and emotionally, we are much more likely to retain it.

I'll note one more reason here to share these stories. Over the years, I have recorded and

performed stories of authors, composers, architects, painters, sculptors, political leaders, scientists, leaders of social causes, and others with different professions and pursuits. I have letters from listeners saying: "I grew up on your recordings. Because of that recording about Galileo (or Michelangelo, or George Gershwin, or Charles Steinmetz), I became so inspired that now I am a (scientist/artist/musician/inventor), just like that person in the story."

I make sure to share stories of gifted women as well as men in my repertoire, and am aware that boys, perhaps even more than girls, need to hear these stories if we are to have a society in which all of our gifted citizens have the chance to contribute, regardless of gender.

You just never know which story will open a lifetime of passionate involvement to your child. That passion is just as important as the factual data in the story. As the great ancient historian Plutarch put it, "The mind is not a vessel to be filled; it is a flame to be kindled." I'll just add that the person doing the telling shares in this gift, too.

These are some of the reasons that the great stories from history and classic literature are so important. Whether you tell them in your own words, read them aloud from the printed page, or offer them in book or electronic form for a child to read to him- or herself, these stories are a treasure that can add immeasurably to your child's knowledge, wisdom, and joy.

Jim Weiss's story recordings have received more than 100 major awards and are staples in households and educational venues around the world. For more information, visit JimWeiss.com



MATROSHKA/SHUTTERSTOCK

You just never know which story will open a lifetime of passionate involvement to your child.

Imagination Is Key to Morality

JUNE FAKKERT

“The moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm. It is given to all human beings in a stronger or weaker degree, as force of members is given them in a greater or less degree.”

—Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to Peter Carr on Aug. 10, 1787

At first glance, imagination might seem to have nothing to do with morals. We are more likely to associate it with creative or artistic endeavors, daydreaming, children playing make-believe, or even being out of touch with reality. But more fundamentally, it is the ability to create an image in our mind’s eye.

Aristotle, who separates imagination from mind and perception, identifies it as “that in virtue of which an image occurs in us.”

At first, this may seem mundane, but it’s a fundamental piece of human cognition. Jim Davies, a professor at the Institute of Cognitive Science at Carleton University in Ottawa, writes: “Imagination is quite possibly a uniquely human ability. In essence, it allows us to explore ideas of things that are not in our present environment, or perhaps not even real. For example, one can imagine the cup of coffee seen the day before, or one can imagine an alien spaceship arriving in earth’s orbit.

“The key is that what is imagined is generated from within, rather than perceived based on input from without.”

So how does imagination relate to morality?

According to Aristotle, our imaginations “motivate and guide action.”

For example, on the physical level, Olympic athletes who employ imagery in their training see very tangible improvement in their performance.

In terms of moral choices, our imaginations are also our guides.

In “Books That Build Character,” William Kilpatrick and Gregory and Suzanne M. Wolfe write: “Imagination is one of the keys to virtue. It’s not enough to know what’s right. It’s also necessary to desire to do right. Desire, in turn is directed to a large extent by imagination.

“In theory, reason should guide our moral choices, but in practice, it is imagination much



LE TAN/UNSPASH

The moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm. It is given to all human beings in a stronger or weaker degree, as force of members is given them in a greater or less degree.

Aristotle, who separates imagination from mind and perception, identifies it as “that in virtue of which an image occurs in us.”

more than reason that calls the shots. Too often our reason obediently submits to what our imagination has already decided.”

So how do we educate the imagination on how to make the right choice?

Plato said exposing children to the right kinds of stories, music, and art will help a child “fall in love with virtue and hate vice.”

It is very important that parents and teachers be good moral examples, child therapist Henning Köhler writes in his book “Working With Anxious, Nervous, and Depressed Children.” This is especially true for very young children who

cannot yet understand stories and art.

“Witnessing goodness, experienced as love in the deeds and words and behavior patterns of others, something in a child responds with deep satisfaction, and that this response, still quite undefined as to content, is a little ‘educated,’” Köhler writes.

For older children, stories become very important sources of moral education as they can expose children to a wider scope of heroes and virtues.

Köhler writes: “Just notice the shining eyes of children listening to a telling of the legend of Good Roland, or of St. Nicholas, or to stories in

which ‘the good person’ rises to heroic stature. Observe the pride and delight with which elementary school pupils react to accounts of ‘good deeds’ done by their parents. Parental misdeeds call forth no such reactions.”

Kilpatrick and the Wolfes give four reasons stories are important for moral growth:

“First, because stories can create an emotional attachment to goodness, a desire to do the right thing.

“Second, because stories provide a wealth of good examples—the kind of examples that are often missing from a child’s day-to-day environment.

“Third, because stories familiarize youngsters with the codes of conduct they need to know.

“Finally, because stories help to make sense out of life, help us to cast our own lives as stories. And unless this sense of meaning is acquired at an early age and reinforced as we grow older, there simply is no moral growth.”

Books Versus Television

According to the authors, books win hands down over television as moral guides for three reasons.

First and foremost, the content of movies and TV shows often lacks moral substance worth imitating.

“Increasingly, television serves up meaningless conflicts that are, more often than not, resolved by violence,” the authors write.

“Precisely because we are outside the action, scenes of violence can’t hurt us; they can only provide us with a diminishing number of emotional jolts. The same syndrome affects the depiction of romantic love and sexuality. In the absence of real, believable relationships on the screen, sex becomes the only means by which characters come together.”

In addition, TV gives us ready-made images that do not require us to use our imagination.

“Television as a medium does little or nothing to extend the imagination,” they write. “Instead of drawing us inside the story in the manner of a book, television forces us to remain spectators outside the action.”

Children will often repeat what they see and hear on TV, but these are more hypnotic than instructional. Research into brain development shows that TV viewing in the early years of life changes how the brain develops and can make it harder for children to develop memory and abstract thinking—i.e., imagination.

“More and more, the songs, stories, and images that play in the minds of young people are the ones that are put there by the entertainment industry. If you have any doubts about the power of images, take a few minutes to observe the mesmerizing effect that TV and MTV have on youngsters,” they write.

Köhler says: “Turn off the TV. It is one of the worst enemies of wholesome imitation.”

He explains that imitation is important because it is the first stage of developing the will and is in and of itself an imaginative and creative process. This is because, in order to imitate, children transform what they encounter in the world around them, first taking in external stimuli via their sense organs, then recreating it through their actions.

For children who can’t concentrate, Köhler recommends imitative games as a therapeutic tool:



HARI NANDAKUMAR/UNSPLASH

Make sure children have enough downtime to use their imaginations.

“**In theory, reason should guide our moral choices, but in practice, it is imagination much more than reason that calls the shots.**

From ‘Books That Build Character’ by William Kilpatrick and Gregory and Suzanne M. Wolfe

“I can assure you from many years’ experience as a remedial worker and medical-educational consultant that there is a striking connection between restlessness and poor concentration in children who, for whatever reason, have done too little imitation in their first four or five years.

“Therapy in the cases of these jumpy, nervous children consists of exposing them to an intensive makeup course in imitation that includes pantomime, recitation, rhythmic activities, copying all sorts of sounds and the like. ... That way, you gradually smooth his path to the deeper creative playing needed in developing concentration and in carrying out his school responsibilities.”

How to Set the Stage for Imagination

So besides turning off the TV, how can parents and educators help children build their imaginations? The following are a few suggestions:

1. Educators can research the practices of Waldorf education, an internationally recognized pedagogy that puts imagination at the center of learning. The pedagogy stems from the sometimes esoteric insights of Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925).

Not everyone may be prepared to delve into the Christian-based “spiritual science” that underlies Waldorf teachings; however, the lessons are not overtly religious and the teaching techniques themselves have been adapted to many charter schools.

For parents, understanding child moral and psychological development, whether through a conventional or Waldorf perspective, can help

you understand how your child’s perception of the world is fundamentally different from your adult view.

This, along with an understanding of your child’s temperament, can save a lot of heartaches and headaches, as it will help you create age- and personality-appropriate expectations and distinguish what might be part of a normal phase versus what might be a concern.

2. Create a clean, uncluttered space where children can play. Simple, natural materials leave a lot of room for imagination to develop. Make sure children have enough downtime to use their imaginations.

3. Expose children to goodness through stories. As mentioned above, elementary school children will appreciate stories about parental good deeds. Waldorf’s early childhood curricula include many fairy tales, and elementary school students learn stories of saints and heroes in history who might inspire them.

4. Expose your children to beauty through music and art, as Plato suggested. Beauty is, of course, somewhat in the eye of the beholder, but Plato gives the guideline that good music is that which gives pleasure to persons both good and highly educated. For young children, lullabies are a good place to start.

5. And last but not least, try to lead by example. Children love and emulate their parents, and seeing you strive to do right will inspire them.

June Fakkert is a full-time mom of two and a health and wellness reporter for The Epoch Times.



Clubs and organizations routinely express their values. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), for example, has its rules about amateurism and competitive balance. (Above) Jalen Brunson of the Villanova Wildcats raises the trophy and celebrates with his teammates after defeating the Michigan Wolverines during the 2018 NCAA Men's Final Four National Championship game in San Antonio, Texas, on April 2, 2018.

Creeds, Rules, and Promises

RONALD J. RYCHLAK

Every time there is a news story about a young person who did something that revealed a lack of moral grounding, the argument is made that prayer or the Bible needs to be brought back into the classroom. The premise of the argument is that children learn their values in school and that religion is a necessary component of that education. That may be an appealing response to a difficult question, but it is not the right answer.

I am a religious person and am very involved in the Catholic Church. I encourage others to join me, or to join another house of worship. My motivation is not solely an effort to bring others to eternal salvation; I think this world would be a better place if everyone regularly prayed and attended services.

Granted, non-religious people are fully capable of being kind, caring, and good

More and more, schools are turning to creeds, rules, and promises to fill the void left when organized religion was removed from the classroom.

citizens. The overwhelming majority of them are.

Regardless of religious background, most people develop their values at home, not in church or at school. It seems, however, that everyone benefits from regular reminders and outward expressions of their shared values. That is why churches and schools can play an important role—they reinforce lessons from home.

Once upon a time, public schools in the United States offered Protestant-based religious instruction. Teachers led prayers, and they sometimes taught classes from the Bible. That is the era many people think of when they urge returning prayer to the schools.

Protestant-based instruction obviously created a problem for Jewish parents, but it also was a dilemma for Catholics. After all, Catholics and Protestants disagreed about which books were included in the Old Testament, the numbering of the Ten Com-

mandments, the text of “The Lord’s Prayer,” and other important issues. The differences were serious enough that Catholics built their own grade schools and high schools across the nation where they would be free to teach their children the Catholic faith. The rise of Islam in the United States, of course, further complicates any attempt to return religion to public schools.

In 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court held that even nonsectarian and non-proselytizing prayer at a public school graduation violates the first amendment to the Constitution. So, for practical and legal reasons, bringing the Bible back into public school classrooms is not a viable option. That does not, however, make it impossible for schools to teach values and morality.

Communities decide what they want to have taught in their schools: math, science, English, history, etc. Each of these subjects has a universal core truth. The same can be said of morality. Other than at the margins where there can be differences, most people agree on substantive moral values.

The thing that has been lacking since the Supreme Court removed religion from the classroom is an authoritative text defining those values. It used to be the Bible, the Ten Commandments, and related Christian doctrine. Since those things do not seem likely to return to school, something needs to replace them. Fortunately, that is not as difficult as it might seem.

Clubs and organizations routinely express their values. Churches have doctrines and disciplines; Boy Scouts have the Scout Oath and the Scout Law; and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has its rules about amateurism and competitive balance. Even “Fight Club” has the “first rule of fight club” (“You do not talk about Fight Club”).

More and more, schools are turning to creeds, rules, and promises to fill the void left when organized religion was removed from the classroom. I have two daughters who teach third grade in public schools. Each year, they go over agreed-upon rules with their classes, and the students promise to conform their behavior to them.

The University of Mississippi, where I teach, has adopted a creed that says the university “is a community of learning dedicated to nurturing excellence in intellectual inquiry and personal character in an open and diverse environment.” It includes a pledge that members of the university community will uphold the values of respect for the dignity of each person, fairness and civility, personal and professional integrity, academic honesty, academic freedom, and good stewardship of resources.

The creed came into play recently when, on the day the U.S. Senate voted to confirm Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, an assistant professor in the sociology department at the university wrote in a tweet: “Don’t just interrupt a Senator’s meal, y’all. Put your whole ... fingers in their salads.

In 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court held that even nonsectarian and non-proselytizing prayer at a public school graduation violates the first amendment to the Constitution.

Other than at the margins where there can be differences, most people agree on substantive moral values.



MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES

Take their apps and distribute them to the other diners. Bring boxes and take their food home with you on the way out. They don’t deserve your civility.”

Americans have the right to free speech, and professors have academic freedom that prevents them from being punished for expressing unpopular ideas, but this seemed to have gone too far. How, however, does a university respond if there is no authoritative text defining the institution’s values?

Because of the creed, and perhaps only because of it, University of Mississippi Chancellor Jeffrey Vitter was able to publicly respond that the post “did not reflect the values articulated by the university, such as respect for the dignity of each individual and civility and fairness.” He urged “all members of the Ole Miss community to demonstrate civility and respect for others and to honor the ideal of diversity of thought that is a foundational element of the academy.”

Some people wanted a stronger response, while others felt the chancellor should not have said anything. What this episode really showed, however, was that a creed, code, or oath that articulates institutional values is important not only for teaching younger students. It can play an important role in articulating standards against which actions can be measured, behaviors can be assessed, and actors can be held to accountability.

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BRUCE NEWMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Some schools, such as the University of Mississippi, have adopted creeds.



Graduates of Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs enter the Cathedral of St. John the Divine for their commencement exercises in New York in this file photo.

The Infiltration of Marxism into Higher Education

MIKE SHOTWELL

A perusal of just about any American newspaper or network news program leaves a large portion of the country with the sour taste of liberal politics that for decades has been forced down their gullets.

Much of the American public is finally coming to the realization that the basic institutions of our Western heritage, both economic and cultural, are under assault: capitalism, our Judeo-Christian foundations, marriage, the family, our legal system, our Constitution, our representative democracy, and our basic civility—all of the institutions that have given

Even more pernicious than the Fabians was the Frankfurt School.

us so much security and prosperity for 250 years.

The biggest engine driving this train has been the steady transformation of the majority of our colleges and universities from institutions that foster open debate and the exchange of ideas into incubators of left-leaning socialism, cultural Marxism, and political activism, shaping generations of young people.

Many reports have shown the leftist tilt among our institutions of higher learning, one being an extensive study published by Mitchell Langbert on the National Association of Scholars website on Apr. 24.

Langbert found that political registration by doctorate-holding professors in top-tier liberal arts colleges is overwhelmingly Democratic, with 39 percent of the colleges in his study being Republican-free.

Aside from actual political party registration, the study found that political affiliation skewed heavily Democratic, with more than 78 percent of academic departments having no politically conservative representation. While exceptions do exist, among liberal arts institutions they are few.

The skewed figures are “most notable in the humanities and social science fields, where the battle of ideas is most important,” Carson

Holloway, an associate professor of political science at the University of Nebraska–Omaha, told *The Daily Signal*.

These numbers beg the question: What has produced this dubious imbalance, especially when the figures do not reflect the composition of the American public? A 2014 Gallup survey showed 38 percent of Americans identify as conservative, versus 24 percent who identify as liberal. As we will see, the ancestors of modern liberal academia come from the highest levels of the radical left.

The Enlightenment

Perhaps surprisingly, the journey's beginnings can largely be traced to the Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, dating roughly from 1685 to 1815. This era saw many positive scientific advances; however, in terms of social reform, changing social and political philosophies fundamentally impacted Western populations, with one example being the upheaval of the French Revolution and its Reign of Terror.

In her essay "Pascal in the Post-Christian World," published in the journal *Modern Age*, Ann Hartle quotes Vincenzo Ferrone regarding the intellectual and revolutionary environment of the mid-1600s through 1800s.

"The Enlightenment was an 'emancipation project' intended to create a 'new civilization' grounded in the autonomy of human reason and the centrality of man. First and foremost, then, the Enlightenment means emancipation from tradition, especially religious tradition, and the elimination of the transcendence of the divine in favor of an 'entirely immanent [human] standpoint,'" Hartle writes.

In 1848, imbued with Enlightenment ideals, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels penned "The Communist Manifesto," an idealist imagining of the oppressed workers of the world uniting in bloody revolution to overthrow their oppressors, namely the oligarchs and capitalists of the world. From the rubble, they would form a new and perfect society governed by a benevolent "dictatorship of the proletariat," after which the scourges of crime and poverty, the need for jails and armies and, indeed, government itself, would melt away.

Marx's political thinking moved powerfully into the idealistic European intellectual strata of writers and artists, subsequently spreading its toxic message into the universities. One eager student was Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the Bolshevik who went on to lead the Russian revolution. Indeed, many of the educated elite in Europe, Great Britain, and the United States became enthralled with the socialist/communist promises of Lenin and Stalin, of a new paradise on earth.

The Fabian Society

In England, in 1884, the Fabian Society was formed to clandestinely interject socialism into British institutions and bring about the demise of capitalism. By the early 20th century, the leaders of the society included H. G. Wells, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and the outspoken playwright George Bernard Shaw.

The Fabians were socialist-Marxist imbued; however, they differed from Marx regarding the need for violent class warfare and revolution. Instead, they targeted established institutions for spreading their influence, utilizing the tools of "stealth, intrigue, subversion, and the deception of never calling socialism by its right name" in order to achieve their goals. Their mascot was a tortoise, representing this slow, grinding methodology.

Bernard Shaw, the undisputed leader of the Fabians, showered praise on Benito Mussolini ("the right kind of tyrant"), Josef Stalin ("a Georgian gentleman" with "no malice in him"), and even Adolf Hitler ("a very remarkable man"). His vision was for a world-wide socialist government headed by a Fabian dictator.

Further penetrating into the educational structure of Britain, the Fabians founded the London School of Economics to promote their socialist economic principles. As an

educational institution, it became the foundation of the British Labour Party. Against the backdrop of the Great Depression of the 1930s, they also found sympathetic interest from their socialist counterparts in the United States.

Beyond the economics and social institutions in Great Britain during the 1930s and 1940s, the scientific arena saw the establishment of the radical science movement.

Its members closely associated with the communist scientific communities in the Soviet Union and China.

Among this group were some of the highest-ranking scientists and professors of Britain's university system, such as J.B.S. Haldane (editor of Great Britain's communist newspaper, the *Daily Worker*), Hyman Levy (Communist Party member into the 1950s), Joseph Needham (pitilessly duped by Chinese spymasters and agents), Lancelot Hogben (Marxist socialist and evangelical atheist), and J.D. Bernal (Marxist and militant atheist with blind allegiance to Stalin).

These figures spearheaded communist intrusion into British academia in their research, writings, and teaching, which would soon after overlap with scientific research in American universities.

The Frankfurt School

Even more pernicious than the Fabians was the Frankfurt School. It was founded in 1923 at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, under the innocuous name "The



JOSH EDELSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A slow march of destructive leftist idealism has resulted in attacks on fundamental free speech.

Institute for Social Research" (Institut für Sozialforschung). Its aim was the development of Marxist studies in Germany.

In the same vein as the Fabians, the Frankfurt School bypassed Marx and Lenin's ideas of violent revolution and instead concentrated on developing alternative and insidious ways to impose its ideology and destroy the institutions of Judeo-Christian, Western civilization.

Cultural Marxism

The movement, distinct from economic Marxism, has become commonly known as "cultural Marxism." The founding philosophers included Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, and Theodor Adorno.

Horkheimer developed a study curriculum labeled "critical theory," a rambling, philosophical ideology in direct opposition to the tenets of Western civilization, which became the Frankfurt School's *raison d'être*.

Critical theory postulated that anyone living under a capitalist society was, unbeknownst to them, enslaved, oppressed, and vulnerable to fascism. Any topic, therefore, that attacked capitalist institutions, was legitimate fodder for critical study and repudiation. It was only natural that U.S. educational institutions would eventually be in their crosshairs.

During the 1930s, the "Red Decade," Frankfurt School members gained increasing importance in leftist pedagogical circles. But with the rise of Adolf Hitler, they realized they would have to leave Germany; the founding philosophers of the school were primarily secular Jews. From the United States, an angel arrived in the form of socialist, Soviet-duped educator John Dewey, the father of "modern education" in the United States.

With financing from the Rockefeller Foundation and other institutions, he brought standout members of the Frankfurt School to welcoming top universities such as University of California–Berkeley, Princeton Univer-

Marx's political thinking moved powerfully into the idealistic European intellectual strata of writers and artists, subsequently spreading its toxic message into the universities.



GEORGE FREY/GETTY IMAGES

sity, and Brandeis University—but the most prestigious recipient was Columbia University in New York and their well-known Teachers College.

Within a few years, Adorno, Fromm, and Marcuse would be “tearing down campuses, vilifying decency, glorifying violence and pornography, and Nazifying the spelling of ‘Amerika,’” wrote journalist and researcher Ralph de Toledano in his book “Cry Havoc! The Great American Bring-Down and How it Happened.”

The prospects for influence were so far-reaching that de Toledano described the naive United States as “a cow mooing to be milked.” The great foundations of America would now be at their disposal, underwritten by “a vast pool of corporate funds set up to avoid taxation ... ready to pass on their millions and billions to those dedicated to destroying the system that provided this wealth ... by a managerial staff that despised the [American] society.”

Thus was born the slow, unrelenting shift to the left for American academia.

Free Love

A major tenet of the Frankfurt School’s philosophy, developed by Georg Lukacs, Adorno, Fromm, Wilhelm Reich, and others, was the sinister belief that unrestrained sex could be a useful and devastating instrument if prompted to run rampant. They promoted “compulsory promiscuity, one-parent households, premarital sex, and homosexuality,” which struck at the heart of the core values of family and child-bearing as mainstays of Western society. Critics were condemned as fascists and accomplices of capitalist depravity.

Lukacs, along with a small handful of intellectual theoreticians at the Marx-Lenin Institute in Moscow in 1922, formulated the outline the Frankfurt School would follow, the goals being the “abolition of [Western] culture” and Marx’s goal for “the ruthless destruction of everything existing.”

As the Minister of Education and Culture in the brief, bloody, Hungarian–Soviet communist government under Bela Kun in 1919, comrade Lukacs introduced the insidious plan to remove children from parental care, while also introducing sex education in the elementary school curriculum—precursors to the Frankfurt School’s development of the philosophy they dubbed “Freudo-Marxism,” even though Freud referred to the adherents as “morally insane” and felt that their ideas were “complete lunatic,” according to Paul Kengor in his book “Takedown: From Communists to Progressives, How the Left Has Sabotaged Family and Marriage.”

During the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, students were being educated within the framework of Fabian and Frankfurt School socialism and cultural Marxism, with the heady mix of open sexuality and anything-goes societal upheaval. They gravitated to Frankfurt School demagogues such as Marcuse, heralded as the “father of the New Left” and the leading academic in the “sexual revolution.” He encouraged not only revolutionary militancy of groups like the Black



Protesters demonstrate at the University of Utah against an event featuring a conservative speaker in Salt Lake City on Sept. 27, 2017.

Members of the Frankfurt School did not stop at the cultural–social science–political door; they also were able to gain a foothold in the arts, Hollywood, and the media—all ripe targets.

Panthers and the Weather Underground, but also inspired widespread agitation, student unrest, and control of campuses.

It’s not surprising that these new ideas were eagerly internalized among the ranks of newly “liberated” young men and women at our colleges and universities. This was the precursor of the stifling political correctness that has set the tone for the cultural and political instability we have witnessed over the past decades.

Members of the Frankfurt School did not stop at the cultural–social science–political door; they also were able to gain a foothold in the arts, Hollywood, and the media—all ripe targets.

Broader Society

In the scientific arena in the United States, beginning in the 1980s, leading professors such as Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin, themselves educated within the Marxist realm, became the leading spokesmen for the fields of anthropology and evolutionary science. From their pulpits at Harvard University, Columbia University, and other institutions, they proudly proclaimed their Marxist beliefs as a credible foundation for their scientific theories.

Together, with their fellow scientific comrades, they freely expressed their socialist–Marxist ideology in radical publications like *Solidarity*, *Science for the People*, and *Rethinking Marxism*. Gould was also on the advisory board for the Marxist Brecht Forum and a sponsor of the New York Marxist School. His impact in the field of science has been profound.

Thus, thanks to the “Enlightenment,” Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the Fabians, the Frankfurt School, the radical science movement, and so much more, the education system in the United States has been indelibly scarred by this slow march of destructive leftist idealism.

The results that are finally being revealed represent a litany of assaults on not only traditional Western values, but attacks on fundamental free speech. Political correctness has become such a commonly used term that it is easy to overlook its fundamental purpose—namely, the stifling of free speech and opposing viewpoints, amounting to tyranny and suppression on campuses and in the public square.

The continual revolution called for by Marx is alive and thriving in the form of constant agitation and division sown by the left, from the springboard of academia. Marx and Lukacs would be gratified at the carnage they have spawned.

But the curtain is finally being pulled back, revealing the true nature that dominates higher education. And when light is shed on truth, the possibility for reclaiming our institutions may at least stand a chance.

Mike Shotwell was raised in a Marxist home and is intimately familiar with American communist history and its effects on the 20th century. He is the author of “Immersed in Red: My Formative Years in a Marxist Household.” He is also a lecturer, a Civil War scholar, and a retired forensic architect who lives with his wife in Atlanta.

Why Teaching Art Is Teaching Character

CATHERINE YANG

It was 1402, and the ruins on the outskirts of Rome were to be avoided at all cost. Locals thought them cursed, or perhaps still diseased, and so the once-majestic columns and vaulted temples, and even the dome of the Pantheon, had no company, save for grazing cows—until Filippo Brunelleschi, a young architect, and his friend Donatello, a sculptor, arrived, and stood in awe.

The two of them ended up spending over a decade sketching and studying ancient Rome's ruins, and what they discovered was paramount to Europe's Renaissance. This period then gave us what is still considered some of the greatest art of Western civilization, and inspiration to last centuries more.

The arts are a living history. More than that, they form the tangible embodiment of a culture, and often a culture's highest ideals.

The music, paintings, sculpture, architecture, poetry, drama, and literature of the Western world sum up our values. They provide a lens into the times of war and times of peace in our history, and into the politics that shaped them. They also remind us of our aspirations.

It's a thread that goes all the way back to the ancient civilizations of the Romans and Greeks, which we can still experience today. But perhaps the thread needs picking up.

Educating the Whole

"Art educates the whole person as an integrated individual. It educates the senses, it educates the mind, and it educates the emotions. It educates the soul," said Alexandra York, founder of American Renaissance for the Twenty-First Century.

It was over two decades ago that York gave a speech announcing her foundation, in which she advocated for including art as the "fourth R." The three R's are what are considered the basic skills to teach in schools: reading, writing, and arithmetic.

"Reading teaches students to comprehend the world and their place in it," she explained. "Writing teaches them to communicate, develop arguments, and persuade. Arithmetic teaches them to measure attributes, grasp reality, and bring the physical universe into perspective."

And art?

"I firmly believe any art, especially the art of dance, is to teach people about life," said Yung Yung Tsuai.

Tsuai heads the dance department at Fei Tian College at Middletown, New York, which has degree programs in both classical ballet and classical Chinese dance—both incredibly comprehensive dance systems with strict foundations of technique.

The rituals of a dancer provide perhaps one half of this character education, Tsuai explained.

The training is precise and detail oriented,



Visitors look at Rembrandt's "The Night Watch" in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam on May 17, 2015.

teaching students to observe, to pick up on different viewpoints, and to mind everything down to the details. Dance is also collaborative, teaching teamwork and communication—both verbal and nonverbal—wherein dancers not only help each other out, but learn to break through difficulty together, she said.

Classes start with a bow, and end the same way, showing respect to the art form, their peers, and their teachers. Tsuai stressed the importance of fostering a culture of respect, where her teachers lead by example, because art may be craft and discipline, but it is also about the inner world. From the moment the dancer gets up in the morning and gets ready, they are aware of this.

The other half comes from creating—the actual making of art.

"I always tell a student, when they prepare a dance, to go inside of themselves," Tsuai said. "See the images of the dance, and portray the images of the dance—that's so they connect both internally and externally to the audience."

Art is about creating, Tsuai added, whether you're painting an image or bringing a story to life through dance. You have to be keenly conscious of your inner world, which in turn instills a sense of personal responsibility and, ideally, the wish to bring good into the world.

This character development isn't limited to the full-time artist.

Music in Schools

Colleen Stewart began her career as a music teacher to primary grade students. She loved teaching in the classroom and the idea of developing young musicians.

She eventually left the position to become a principal, then a school administrator, then the founder of two Success Academy schools, and then a district administrator.



Art educates the whole person as an integrated individual.

Alexandra York, founder, American Renaissance for the Twenty-First Century

said Stewart, who is now the program director for Education Through Music (ETM). "I was very passionate when I was in the classroom about not only developing musicians—which is very much my love—but developing kids who really are able to be successful in any environment."

The curriculum is fairly standard—general music education classes teach aural understanding skills, singing, melody, rhythm, harmony, and so on. The goal is not to develop musicians, but well-rounded humans.

Through music, the students learn what it

means to try really hard, how to overcome frustration, how to work in a team, and how to problem solve, among many other things. They develop critical thinking skills, learn to listen carefully, and become capable of explaining what they think and feel in relation to the music.

ETM is one of those organizations that grew out of a need to fill a longstanding gap. Its founders saw a poorly performing school turn around completely after implementing a music program, and thought perhaps this could be a solution to improve schools more widely. Since 1991, ETM has grown from serving one to 65 schools, providing music education to nearly 34,000 students—schools have seen that it truly does work. It largely serves public schools, but the list includes parochial schools as well.

Self-Actualization

There are other organizations like ETM; during my time as a music reporter, I seldom came across a musician who wasn't involved in an educational program in some way, and more than happy to advocate for it. Everyone has a handful of stories about students who started enjoying school because of music; students who rediscovered their love for learning; students from difficult homes who, through working out a difficult passage on the instrument, learned to harness their emotions; students who developed self-confidence due to learning a skill, and so on.

The arts, in a way, epitomize self-actualization.

"Each lifetime, in its own way, has a 'theme,' an ever-unfolding personal destiny, scripted by the individual. Every good work of art is just the same," according to York.

The artist first has a vision, which they then render into reality. We are the same.

And because every craft is rooted in discipline, these grand visions are tempered, York says, by "purpose, structure, observation, selectivity of essentials, and judgment of execution" into intelligible form.

In creating our own lives, we can learn from the arts. And we can teach our children these arts so that they have in their hands the skills of discipline needed to enact their vision.

Catherine Yang is an arts and culture reporter for The Epoch Times.



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– Cindy McBride, California

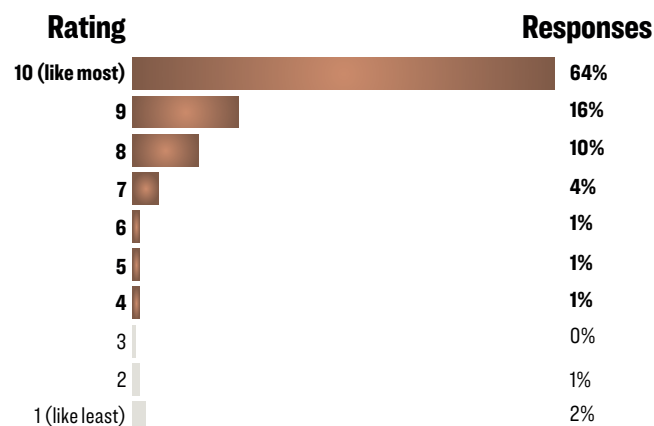
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