

MEMO FROM EMMETT MAYOR GORDON W. PETRIE

SUBJECT: IS IT TIME TO RETURN TO A CLASSIC MODEL FOR EDUCATION?

Part II

” There's no use trying,’ she said: ‘one can't believe impossible things.’ ‘I daresay you haven't had much practice,’ said the Queen. ‘When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.’” – Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll

In this edition, we examine how classically-educated K-12 students learn to spot Big Lies and live happy lives. Today, the typical college student will never read Plato, learn about Socrates, or explore Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, let alone his *Rhetoric*. Nevertheless, classically-educated K-12 students will.

Let that sink in. When it comes to discovering the origins of Western culture, classically trained K-12 students have a better education than PhD's in (U-pick-the-minority-victim) studies. Moreover, there exists a motive for colleges opting out of the classics. We often hear that “truth” is the first casualty in a war. Well, there's a corollary to that when one fights neo-Marxism. That's when one's cultural foundation is the first KIA.

The very canon of the Western culture producing the greatest advances in science, medicine and self-government inconveniently cuts against the fabric of academia's delusional diversity pandering, its victimology printing and reinforcement, and its academically dishonest (and essentially debunked) critical race theory that now infects everything from the hard sciences to the softest of social studies in academia. Clearly, those purporting to be the most tolerant refuse to tolerate any cogent argument or debate against their fraudulent and failed notions of how society should work.

In today's Alice-in-Wonderland world of Progressive (so-called) higher education, everything wrong is attributable to—you guessed it—those NOT having membership in the pre-set minority-victim list. Hard-left academicians operate essentially the same as radical Islamists: no opposing views, no honest debate, one simply adheres to the accepted doctrine of who wins and who loses. This destructive dynamic, AKA identity politics, is currently unraveling the very fabric of our great Republic. That today's United States could rationally be considered a systematically racist country is the big whopper, unless one means the systemic racism and sexism of the radical Left.

In last month's Memo I suggested that if one wants to ferret out systemic racism, look at institutions like colleges or universities. Right on cue, Princeton's president, Christopher Eisgruber, published a letter acknowledging Princeton has and "continues to be shaped by" systemic racism. Instead of BLM or Antifa proclaiming absolution for Princeton's sin, Eisgruber's confession initiated a federal investigation.

Based upon the school's written admission, for decades Princeton had been excluding people based on race, gender and religion. As I argued, this constitutes a clear violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Accordingly, that argument stands. The "systemic" racism the Left rails against is not due to a governmental system—federal or state. In fact, the sin of racism is committed on a personal or corporate level. Racism is not the official, implicit, de facto policy of the United States. Our laws systematically condemn and punish systemic racism, which Princeton will soon learn about if its "confession" is found to be valid! This is not hard for the rational mind to grasp.

Happily, classically-trained students learn not to fall for the Big Lies or half-truths that neo-Marxists toss about today. Having studied Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Ethics*, they already grasp a clear sense of the "beautiful", particularly when it comes to speeches or other communication intended to persuade (rhetoric) or what comprises a just society. (It's very much the Golden Rule.)

As a plus, they learn why Plato (hence, Socrates) hated the sophists. These two philosophers considered rhetoric standing alone to be nothing more than sheer flattery or false advertising. Aristotle, on the other hand, made an honest effort to reform the sophists through his *Rhetoric*. To constitute correct persuasion, three elements had to be present.

First, Aristotle lists *ethos*, that is, the character of the speaker. Indeed, to him, *ethos* comprised the most important element. Second, *pathos*, or the emotions of the listener, had to be elevated by the speech. Frankly, that's why most persuasion today attempts to appeal to our emotions, contra Plato and Socrates. Finally, Aristotle touts the *logos*, the logic of the argument. In his view, the speaker must lay out the argument in little bites, step by step, showing clearly how we go from "a" to "b" in order to arrive at "c".

Lincoln's famous Cooper Union Address serves as the gold standard for the correct use of all three elements. By exhibiting his knowledge of history, using historical documents and quoting the Founders, Lincoln established his ethical appeal, aroused the emotions of his audience; thus, by this technique, Lincoln logically carried his hearers to the conclusion slavery should not be

established in the Western Territories. Ironically, students typically view Cooper Union as a model for something else; namely, Lincoln's uses of the phrase, "That is cool."

Classically-trained students also learn the complete list of logical fallacies—from "Ad Hominem Argument" (personal attack) to "Zero Tolerance" (Even one is too much!)—in fact, they learn fifty-nine (59) more in between! Why? In order to more easily identify the "Big Lie". (Note, classically-trained students learn Political Correctness is considered a logical fallacy due to its design to end debate or rational discussion.)

Just as important, classically-trained students learn how to be happy. It's too bad that today's high school generation wasn't around in the sixties when Rocky and Bullwinkle were on in prime time or on Saturday mornings. They would have learned Mr. Wizard the Lizard's secret for happiness by following the adventures of the Lizard and his friend, Tooter the Turtle.

Tooter would get into a mess and Mr. Wizard would bail him out. But Mr. Wizard's admonition at the end was always the same: "Tooter, Tooter, Tooter...be what you iss; not what you iss not! Folks that do this, are the happiest lot!" (Shame on former FCC Chairman Newton Minow for calling American television a vast wasteland!) According to Mr. Wizard, then, we are happiest when we function simply as we were designed to function. How do we discover that? We obtain a basic familiarity with the classic philosophers, or, as the USAF puts it, aim high!

Aristotle and the Lizard were in sympatico, then. The former summarized happiness as the activity of the soul that is excellent in all ways where humans think and act. Hence, classically-trained students learn the importance of good character. They learn that one's character comes from a long-body of work in making choices. To be happy, accordingly, classically-trained students learn to make good choices in order to develop a virtuous character and to give others what they deserve in the highest sense (the Aristotelian definition of justice).

Happiness comes about by activity that comports with virtue, lived in a life to its fullest capacity. Yet, one can only know this concept if one remains true to the canon that developed it, not one that teaches to hate America first. To preserve these basic notions of what a civilized society is, so that we might pass them on to each succeeding generation—as done for two-and-a-half millennia—Socrates, Plato and Aristotle would put America first. So, what's in your student's curricula?