

Treatises on Public Discourse

And Convention

Much has been said about the current state of public discourse within our Republic. There are those who argue that there has never been such freedom—to include freedom of speech—as there exists now. Certainly it is true that if one observes the daily operations of our society, one could conclude that freedom of every kind exists at every “turn”. People may *express* themselves by whatever means they choose; so long as the public peace is kept. This “freedom” now also includes those expressions that were formerly deemed criminal: pornography, profanity, lewdness, various sexual acts, acts and statements once considered treasonous etc. *ad nauseum*. One notable exception is sedition—publicly stated—which involves intent to harm government officials. While not all of the aforementioned are *publicly* manifested, all have been decriminalized. These expressions are, of course, reflective of the contemporary mores which govern our Republic—both legally and socially. Upon closer inspection, it is evident that despite the “liberalization” of former conventions, not all is as it seems. Our generation has confused *freedom*, as defined and understood by the Founding Fathers, with *license*. With regard to public discourse, however, one finds that *speech* is ever more *limited* by the current state of affairs. In examining our current public discourse and convention(s), it is necessary to delve into our own Republic’s history and those who established it, and the respective rhetorical philosophy they engendered.

Our Founding Fathers were men of great learning, products of the Enlightenment, and inculcated with the knowledge of the Classic Civilizations i.e. Greece and Rome. Having as their example the despotism of the English monarchy, the absolutism of the other European monarchies and the hegemony of the Roman Church, they strived to form a republic based on the best egalitarian ideals of Athens and the Roman Republic. As such, they were also well versed in the inherent weaknesses of each civilization. In addition, most all were products of the Reformation and well apprised of the recent history of the Roman Church. In truth, 29 of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence had seminary or Bible school degrees. They were desirous of founding a republic that was unencumbered by a *state* religion i.e. denomination, *but one that had a strong Christian foundation*. The veracity of this statement is well documented (and not the purpose of this writing); the organic record of the Founding Father’s writings is unequivocal regarding this intention. The *raison d’être* for this statement *is* germane to this writing, however. The Founding Fathers understood the difference between *freedom* and *license*. Furthermore, they understood that a democratic republic would not succeed if the people were not educated and *moral*. To quote John Adams (in a Presidential address to the military in October of 1798):

“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

Thus, the first public educational institutions in the Republic were all dedicated to the proposition that education *is* religious in nature and that the precepts of Christ be taught in all schools at all levels. The public school system was originally designed as a vehicle to promote responsible citizenry in accordance with these principles. At the university level, one need only read the charters upon which the institutions of Harvard, Yale and Princeton (to name but a few) were founded as evidence of this truth. Daily reading of the Holy Scriptures was *mandated* for the student as an integral part of education.

The survival of our constitutional Republic is incumbent upon the morality of the people. Freedom, by definition, is the ability to act and live as one chooses. The Founding Fathers understood that doing so, without moral restraint, involved serious consequences—both in ones’ personal life, and, by extension, for the Republic itself. They emphasized the concept that unrestrained actions lead to *lesser* freedom personally and tyranny politically. This is a lesson that our generation would do well to learn. Having dismantled the legal and social bulwarks that protected our Republic in former times, we now witness the demise of our civilization unabated and unhindered. Laws are passed to curb and regulate our behavior and society. Increasingly, the infringement and incremental encroachment upon our collective freedoms is facilitated by a government that is more than happy to increase its power under the guise of retaining law and order.

License, defined, is having the *legal* right to act in a particular way. Again, since the moral, and in turn, legal foundations of our Republic have been compromised, all manner of vice has been legitimized. There are those among us who, as a result, consider themselves *free*. What they fail to see is their own *bondage*. The unbridled practice of license leads to enslavement. A cursory perusal of our current state is a veritable cornucopia of societal servitude. Addictions of every kind are endemic: drug abuse, alcoholism, sexual deviance of all types, larceny, malfeasance, gluttony, and avarice, and corruption, perversion of justice, institutionalized debt etc. *ad nauseum* proliferates. To this, a verse(s) from the Bible (which once was the cornerstone of American education) is emphatically applicable:

“For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, **proclaiming freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved**”. (2 Peter 2.v 18-19 NASB)

Many of us are indeed *overcome* by our own moral corruption. In addition, societal *dishonesty* is endemic. A man's *word* was paramount in times past; a reflection of his character and consisting of a stronger bond than anything written. Many of the above-stated vices are inextricably linked to a fundamental dishonesty within our culture. Timeless institutions such as marriage are threatened because the *vows* are no longer sacred. The result of just this one "moral compromise" has resulted in the weakening of the family unit and, in turn, a host of societal ills that are hardly quantifiable. Contemporary society is overwhelmed with legal documents designed to ensure the "keeping of one's word". While all of the aforementioned vices are part of *human nature* and man's current state, these can be greatly mitigated in those societies adhering to the tenets of *natural law* and Divine Scripture. The Founding Fathers, knowing well the meaning of *true* freedom, built the Republic upon the twin-layered bedrock of Religion and Morality.

There are those who opine that the Founding Fathers intent was actually much more secular—that religion was, in essence, a very pragmatic way to control a population. Regardless of the "well-spring" of their true motivation (hidden in their hearts), the resultant social order of the Republic would be firmly rooted in Christianity and acclaimed based on its own merit.

There is, however, at least one remaining vestige of the liberal arts that we inherited from Athens and Rome that remains an integral part of our persona, and partially, our educational system, which continues unabated—the art of rhetoric. The Founding Fathers employed the "nobler" aspects of rhetoric to aver their philosophical *Weltanschauung*. In its more nefarious form, rhetoric is referred to as the art of sophistry. In our generation's vernacular, we refer to it as "spin". The purveyors of *spin* we call "spin doctors". In contemporary society, sophistry is the hallmark of *most* public discourse.

The classical sophists were prominent in Athens in the 5th century B.C. and were an integral part of a marked change in Athenian education. Previously, young Athenian (citizen) boys collectively participated in a standardized educational system that culminated in spending two years in the *gymnasium* at the age of eighteen. This was followed by military training at the *ephebeia*. By the 420's, the wealthy scions of Athens were being taught by the sophists. The sophists were travelling lecturers skilled in esoteric subjects such as anthropology, mathematics, linguistics, antiquities and, especially, rhetoric. Sophists such as Gorgias of Leontini, Protagoras of Abdera, Prodicus of Ceos and many others were highly sought after—chiefly for their prodigious skill of manipulating the written and spoken word. They charged high fees and were avowed skeptics and moral relativists. They prided themselves of being able to argue two opposing viewpoints (i.e. black is white and white is black) with equal validity. Needless to say, then as now, those engaged in politics were *most* keen of availing themselves of the sophist's teachings. Although they were contemporaries of Socrates, Plato (Socrates' protégé) regarded them with scorn.

The legal profession is the *one* contemporary vocation that is *predicated* upon being adept in rhetoric. And because the American jurisprudence system is dependent upon the determination of guilt or innocence *according to the letter of the law* and argued using the same, superior manipulation of the word is imperative to the adjudication of a matter—even paramount. Is it any wonder that the vast majority of politicians in the United States today are lawyers?

The public discourse today is far more limited than during the times of the Founding Fathers despite the other *freedoms of expression* (or the perception of such—already discussed) currently prevalent. This is due to the limiting of media venues (with the exception of the internet—although recent action expanding the powers of the FCC may effect this venue also), licensure, and *political correctness*. Popular media outlets, political apparatus, and legal venues (the courts) are also compromised through the selective use of the *Hegelian Dialectic* by parties with a vested (moneyed) interest in a matter. The representatives of these parties are the so-called *spin doctors*. In addition, the plenitude of rhetorical (sophist) devices employed in the public arena severely impedes *real* discourse in most subject areas.

The use of licensure effectively facilitates the control of information. In universities, the granting of doctorates is a very *political* process, as is the allocation of research funding. The overwhelming majority of university faculty in the United States is *left-leaning* and overtly humanist in their philosophy. One can surmise that this is no coincidence. Tax-exempt educational foundations were created in the early 1900's by some of America's wealthiest business men. The stated goal was to effect policy and philosophical change in the contemporary educational paradigms which were still largely conservative, religion and morality-based. Throughout the twentieth century, the American education system was changed to reflect an emphasis on vocational training from one that was designed to produce good citizens. Furthermore, aspects of our religious heritage and the history that recorded it were deemphasized, and ultimately, revised. This could not have been accomplished without the limitless funds provided by the foundations created for this very purpose. Private funding at the highest level (university) affected educational philosophy, pedagogy, and governmental policy. The "trickle down" nature of private funding is now monumentally influential in the *public funding* of education. The efficacy of the stewards of these foundations to infiltrate and manipulate the American educational system cannot be understated. During this same era, profound changes in our legal system and Constitutional law would become manifest. Commencing in the 1920's, the Supreme Court incrementally overturned 130 years of case law and precedent. The issues addressed included expanding powers enumerated to the central bank (established by Congress in 1913), separation of church and state, redefining the nation as a *religious* one (previously defined by the Supreme Court as *Christian* until 1948), restricting freedom of speech, and eliminating gold as legal tender (and forbidding private ownership thereof). In addition, the power of the executive branch to regulate commerce through international treaties et al was increased. These actions—often against the will of the American people—coincided with the fundamental changes being made to education and caused a

revolutionary paradigm shift, both intellectually and existentially, in contemporary American society. The “theft” of the Barnes Collection is a current, “textbook” study on how tax-exempt foundations are utilized by wealthy and/or corporate interests to peddle influence and gain control of a given objective (in this case, an Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art collection valued at between 25 to 30 billion dollars).

Today’s universities, once bastions of academic freedom, are now used to indoctrinate the younger generation in a globalist worldview and create a thrifty and diligent working class. The *licensing* of current and future educators, already actualized at the university level, is now predicated upon subscribing to certain moral, religious and political views. Although education is the field highlighted in this writing, licensure transcends all professional vocations to include, of course, law and is liberally used to silence debate. If one is not licensed in a given field one is not allowed a dissenting opinion from the prescribed majority view. Simply stated, if one is not a state-licensed biologist, one is disqualified from giving an *opinion* on the *theory* of evolution. If one *is* a licensed biologist and offers a dissenting view, he is quickly threatened with loss of funding as a researcher, loss of licensure, or both. It is not difficult to “connect the dots” between how education is funded, licensure, and the control thereof.

Political correctness defined, is “relating to or supporting the use of language or conduct that deliberately avoids giving offense”. Unfortunately, the inherent problem with political correctness is a) *who* decides what is offensive and b) *what* language or conduct gives offense. In our society, there do not seem to be ethical, rational, or even balanced criterions that define this standard. There does, however, seem to be bias in its application to the public discourse.

It is perfectly acceptable in our society to denigrate Christianity, traditional family values, and conservative ideals. Being licentious, however, is “value neutral” and a matter of “personal choice”. Those who espouse the former and question the latter are considered to be hateful, judgmental, and intolerant—and therefore, politically incorrect. Other religions do not suffer the same indignities as Christianity in the public discourse. Perhaps this is due to its unyielding and uncompromising moral standards and dogma. Ironically, Islam, in its orthodox incarnation, is the most virulently intolerant religion in existence. One need only examine the societies in the 57 Muslim countries (and those European states where large Muslim minorities are present) to assess the veracity of this claim. To state so publicly, however, despite being demonstrably factual, is considered to be *xenophobic*, hateful, judgmental, intolerant and therefore—politically incorrect. Unfortunately, to those who venture into the public discourse arena and subscribe to a more *traditional* paradigm, the attacks (professional and personal) are relentless and proceed unchecked.

We are far removed from the noble Republic that was forged with great sacrifice and the Constitution (ratified in 1787) that guaranteed our liberties and set the framework for our government and law. The moral degeneration of the United States has accelerated with a

rapidity and degree unparalleled in the history of civilization. It took imperial Rome over 400 years after the fall of the Republic to attain the level of debauchery and corruption now extant in our society. A mere 100 years ago, it was considered scandalous for a woman's *ankle* to be visible in public. Just 56 years ago, Elvis Presley caused a sensation by provocatively swinging his hips during his singing. The older generation considered his music degenerate. In the early 1960's (on the relatively new medium of television), it was not even permissible to show a married couple *fully clothed* to be in the same bed together. These depictions seem rather quaint to our generation. Nowadays, the "primetime" shows on *network* television regularly make references to masturbation, oral sex, uninhibited promiscuity and homosexuality etc. *Quaint* indeed! The premise whether individuals in our Republic are *less* moral now than in former times can be debated. But it is certainly evident that the public *standards* for decent and acceptable behavior have been greatly compromised.

Media outlets such as radio stations and local newspapers, once fairly independent and under local control have been acquired by large conglomerates. These entities have corporate interests that can, and in many instances do, conflict with the public good or the correct ethical course of action. Furthermore, they promote those ideas and paradigms that are most conducive to their profitability. In order to protect their assets legally, and their reputation publicly, the content of news, and the portrayal of said content, is censored.

Those issues in the public discourse that are still fluid and political, affected by litigation, and discussed in the media, are manipulated using the Hegelian Dialectic by individuals and organizations with a vested interest in a matter. The Hegelian Dialectic's implementation is ubiquitous and transcends policies, paradigms, philosophies, and politics. Modest samplings of issues in dispute are abortion, border control, immigration policy, capital punishment, medical marijuana, and any and all litigation involving the Bill of Rights and the Constitution in general. The Hegelian Dialectic *politically* defined, is simultaneously supporting (thesis) and opposing (antithesis) a matter in order to manipulate a pre-conceived and desired outcome (synthesis). The implementation of this tactic is actualized by the use of agents and spin doctors acting on behalf of a given protagonist. Once a desired goal is conceived by the protagonist, instructions are given to agents to support and oppose a matter. Provided with apt funds by the protagonist, the agents (and their money) are readily accepted by the groups they infiltrate. In turn, because of their generous financial support, the agents are able to influence the policy of said group. The public discourse is carried out by the spin doctors acting on instructions of the agent. This, of course, serves to give the *appearance* of legitimacy to a debate. The *agent provocateurs* reap the benefit of being perceived as consensus builders and objective "pillars" of the community. The end result is a pre-conceived resolution (synthesis) agreeable to the protagonist and his ilk. The "fruits" of these machinations are self-evident.

The modern sophist, just as his Athenian predecessor, is a rhetorical mercenary. Unbridled by moral constraints or considerations, he "plies his wares" to the highest bidder. These sophists

are not immoral, but *amoral*. Their moral relativism and pragmatic ethos is quintessentially Machiavellian in *spirit* and application. The rhetorical devices employed by these practitioners of deceit are varied and effective. The sophist and his benefactors will “disqualify” an adversary through the use of licensure and funding (previously discussed). If this tactic is insufficient, they will denigrate, deride, label and categorize an opponent. They will exploit any weakness or character flaw, and, when necessary, resort to character *assassination*. In doing so, they seek to elicit strong emotional reactions from the public and potential allies. Public sentiment, once aroused, is rarely objective and is oftentimes easily manipulated. An angry mob is not judicious in its dispensation of justice. Finally, if the opponent is able to avail himself against these tactics, the Hegelian Dialectic is employed to undermine his position. The entire aforementioned are designed to divert attention from the matter in dispute and results in arresting any meaningful discourse. Of course, the degree and ferocity of tactics employed against an opponent is commensurate with the relative degree of importance a matter has for its protagonist.

Is all public discourse sophist in nature? Certainly not; but much of it is. Is every corporate acquisition nefarious in nature? No; but there are many instances where the desire for corporate profitability undermines the public good thus making sophistry imperative. Have the fundamental moral conventions once prevalent in our Republic been compromised? Unequivocally yes; but they may yet revive. Through the morass of contemporary society, our citizenry may yet rediscover the intrinsic value of character and virtue. The Author of *natural law* awaits our return to those principles which gave rise to our great Republic. Our failure to do so will turn our multitude of blessings into a curse—a process already underway; albeit hopefully reversible. Our children’s future will be scripted according to our decision.

With regard to the public discourse, it is incumbent upon every citizen to watch and listen with critical eyes and ears to the *content* and *tone* of public discourse. We must endeavor to ascertain and discern, whenever possible, the motivation and monetary interest, the speaker (or writer) has in a given matter. And we should resist, despite all *instincts* to the contrary, those rhetorical devices that would seek to enflame our passions to action beyond *righteous indignation*, careful consideration and *wise* reaction.

Vincit Omnia Veritas

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