

Winter 2021

DIALOGOS

(Greek: To See Through to Meaning)

A Magazine of the Institute for the Study of Western Civilization

Enlightening Minds Since 2003



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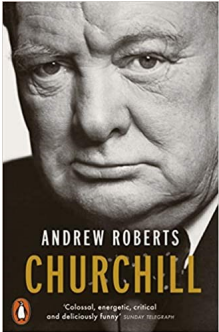


From the Director

Another Clarion Call

By William Fredlund, PhD

We are offering in this issue a long article about Western civilization written by Professor Andrew Roberts (starting on page 8) who is most likely the greatest living historian writing in the English language today. (See his magnificent new biography *Churchill: Walking with Destiny*.) Professor Roberts explains why we should study Western civilization. As you all know, we agree with him, and it is for this express purpose that this Institute was established 20 years ago. Roberts is able to explain why this specific study is so essential to all high school and university students and to the general public. He also makes clear that we face a kind of crisis—that conditions in the universities of both the United States and Great Britain are now so extremely negative about the worth of Western civilization that we all need to wake up and raise our voices in any forum where we have some standing and call everyone to account on our own academic values. One thing that we now know about the ultimate fate of civilizations: Decline can set in very fast; books can be lost; ideas can be suppressed; freedom of thought can disappear almost overnight. Read this call to us all from Andrew Roberts. It is the best essay on the topic from anyone since this all began at Stanford University in 1987.



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From the Editor

Homes for Humanities

By Michele McCarthy

Discussions about the past, present, and future state of the humanities in our culture are perennial here at the Institute, as can be seen in this as well as past issues of *DIALOGOS*. A recent *New York Times* column, “[How To Reopen the American Mind](#),” revisits this question in today’s moment. It asks, “In the midst of an existential crisis for higher education, is it even reasonable to expect the humanities to survive?”

The outlook is not as dire as one might first think, according to the authors.

They offer a fresh look back at some of the tenets in Allan Bloom’s bestseller, *The Closing of the American Mind*, published in 1987. And an appraisal of our current society. “In recent months,” they write, “in the midst of a pandemic, a protest movement and a presidential election season, millions of Americans have gravitated to online reading groups and book clubs, attended Zoom panels on the burdens of history and the meaning of open discourse, watched philosophy lectures on YouTube and flocked to longform, humanistic magazines.

“Expanding the reach of humanistic education, however, means more than broadening the media channels by which we transmit scholarly insights. It also means putting more thought...into creating



opportunities for humanistic reflection in our everyday lives. This could include...valuing continuing education courses as seriously as we value traditional undergraduate education. And it means undertaking those activities not as experts or sages, but as partners in a continuing dialogue about how we should live together.”

The Institute for the Study of Western Civilization is doing just that by bringing curious adults together, outside of academia, to explore why as Westerners we think the way we do and what that means for our lives today. In our little corner of the South Bay, we’re doing our part to reopen the American mind!

Notable Books from the Classroom

What the Dickens?

By Joan Niemeier, an employee and student of the Institute since 2001

“That which we call a rose,
By any other name would smell as sweet.”

These famous lines spoken by Romeo in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* are helpful when talking to your lover. But Shakespeare also humorously said, through his character Mrs. Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, “I cannot tell what the dickens his name is.”

The word “dickens” is most likely a corruption of other words, but is commonly defined as deuce or devil, as in “You scared the dickens out of me!” or “It hurt like the dickens!”

Humans have created names for special times in history, such as the Bronze Age, the Age of Pericles, the Elizabethan Age, the Age of Shakespeare, and the Age of Victoria. Some names have become adjectives. Elizabethan and Victorian are everlasting crowns on the reign of a ruler. Shakespearean and Dickensian sit like laurel wreaths on the heads of writers. Many writers yearn for the term Shakespearean or Dickensian to be applied to their work.

Here is a dictionary’s definition of Dickensian:
“Of or characteristic of

Charles Dickens, his novels and characters, or his literary style.” But which is it? Is it the plot or the characters or the writing style? In his 2009 book *Write Like the Masters: Emulating the Best of Hemingway, Faulkner, Salinger and Others*, William Cane describes the writing of Dickens thus: “No author since Shakespeare has created a cast of characters so vast, so startling in their variety, and so engaging in their many permutations of human behavior. More than this, Dickens regales us, like Shakespeare, not only with engaging stories but also with the music of his language so that even when the story flags, the sound of the words carries us along.”

Admirers of Dickens consider him a compassionate champion for the poor, a critic of government waste and bureaucracy, a writer of energetic language and characterization, a great comedian and performer of his own works at public readings. Critics of his work have called him overly sentimental, prone to convenient coincidences in his plots, long-winded and whiny, even hypocritical. But both sides recognize that Dickens gained valuable experience in

the 1830’s by writing first for serial publication under the name “Boz,” where he discovered several advantages of the format. First, he became quickly aware if his story grabbed the public’s attention because of sales figures. Second, he could continue to add characters to his

“No author since Shakespeare has created a cast of characters so vast, so startling in their variety, and so engaging in their many permutations of human behavior.”

work knowing that they would require coincidences to bring their stories to a successful close. And third, he anticipated and answered his critics by writing a preface to many of his works.

Dickens and his friends, John Forster and W. H. Willis, established two magazines of their own with names derived from lines in Shakespeare. The first was *Household Words* in 1850. It was followed in 1859 by *All the Year Round*. One of the author's "dark novels," *Little Dorrit*, was published during this period. The book form contains more than 350,000 words and over 750 pages with at least 44 characters. It also has a preface, in which Dickens defended his creation of the slow and interminable workings of the Circumlocution Office as based on real-life experience with government bureaus.

Names conjured by Dickens for villains and knaves are unforgettable: Bill Sikes in *Oliver Twist*, Wackford Squeers in *Nicholas Nickleby*, Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield*, Mr. Tulkinghorn in *Bleak House*, Mr. Tite Barnacle in *Little Dorrit*, and Madame Defarge in *A Tale of Two Cities*. If someone calls you a Scrooge, you know what that means. Animator Carl Barks of The Walt Disney Company created the miserly character Scrooge McDuck in 1947, launching the richest duck in the world into cartoon history.

Comedic characters are also memorable: Mr. Guppy and Inspector Bucket in *Bleak House*; Wilkins Micawber and his equally funny wife in *David Copperfield*. And there are simply strange names like Bumble, Fezziwig, Flintwich, Magwitch, Pancks, Pocket, Pumblechook, and Trotwood.

In 2012, for the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens, British actor Simon Callow filmed a short tour of "Charles Dickens's London" (available on [YouTube](#), along with other Callow performances).

He has written a biography of Dickens and portrayed him on stage. In his opinion, the most Dickensian character is Mr. Pickwick. The *Pickwick Papers* was indeed the serial that made Dickens famous, then was published in volume form

when the author was only 25 years old. Callow sees the character of Mr. Pickwick as the true English gentleman, generous and kind, if at times comical.

Biographies of Dickens abound. Besides first biographer John Forster and Callow's book mentioned above, there are books by G. K. Chesterton, Peter Ackroyd, and Claire Tomalin. Books on the history of London detail that important "other character" in the novels of Charles Dickens. But Dickensian London barely exists now. Despite historical markers on buildings and churches, many aging story locations have been demolished, built upon, or obscured in the constant renewal of the city. One exception is Rules, the restaurant in Covent Garden frequented by Dickens and his friends. Rules houses many items of memorabilia relating to Dickens, his characters, and Dickensian London.



Odysseys

The Tragedy and Triumph of Monte Cassino

By Patricia Fredlund, travel guide editor

If you are planning a trip to Rome, I encourage you to take a day trip 80 miles southeast to

Monte Cassino, the Benedictine monastery

established in 529 AD by Saint Benedict. This incredibly beautiful monastery has been built and destroyed four times in its almost 2,000 years of existence. The last time was during World War II, when Allied troops bombed it so that soldiers could safely pass through the Latin Valley below on their way to Rome. The savage fighting at Monte Cassino

is recognized as the worst of the war in Europe. It's estimated the Allies lost 55,000 men while the German defenders lost about 20,000. When the fighting was over, this is all that remained of Monte Cassino:





It took 20 years for the Roman Catholic Church to restore it to its former beauty. Pictured above is the interior of the church today, truly **one of the most beautiful churches in all of Italy!**

The story of its legendary survival is well worth devoting one day of your trip to Rome to tour Monte Cassino and its **museum**. At the entrance to the abbey museum, a black-and-white World War II photo of an Allied plane releasing a bomb over Monte Cassino will break your heart with sorrow for the tragedy of war.

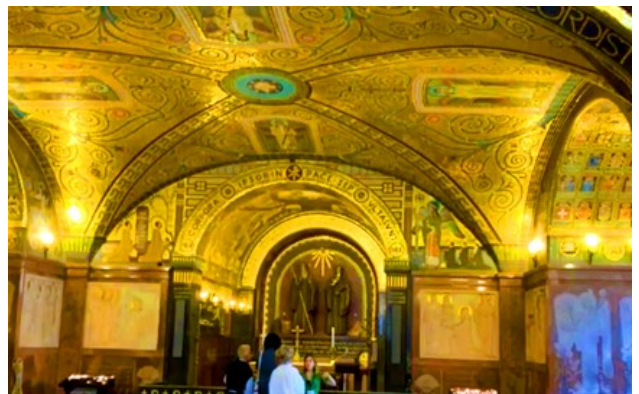
Once Benedict was established at Monte Cassino in 529, he never left. He wrote the Benedictine Rule that became the founding principle for Western monasticism. He died in the oratory of St. Martin and was buried in the oratory of St. John. To the right is a photo of his crypt where he and his twin sister St. Scholastica are buried.

I encourage you to read about Monte Cassino, Saint Benedict, and St. Scholastica, and look at everything you can find on the Internet. Once you begin that quest, you will find a way to visit this remarkable

abbey! I promise it is an experience you will never forget.

You have several options to get to Monte Cassino: Drive a rental car as we did (it's easy to do), schedule a packaged tour, or take the train. However you get there, it is best to plan your route

prior to arriving in Rome. Unless you're going with a tour group, be sure to call ahead to the monastery for a reservation. There's no charge.



Montecassino Abbey

Via Montecassino, 03043 Cassino FR

Phone: +39 0776311529

Email: info@abbaziamontecassino.org

Website: abbaziamontecassino.org/abbey/en

Open 10 am—6 pm (On Sundays and religious holidays, due to services, there might be difficulties to visit the church.)

Western Civ Then and Now

Why We Must Teach Western Civilization

By Andrew Roberts, author of *Churchill: Walking with Destiny* and a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

[Reprinted with permission from National Review. Abridged and edited to fit space here. Read the [original article](#) published on April 30, 2020.]

On Tuesday, December 3, 1940, Winston Churchill read a memorandum by the military strategist Basil Liddell Hart that advocated making peace with Nazi Germany. It argued, in a summary written by Churchill's private secretary, Jock Colville, that otherwise Britain would soon see "Western Europe racked by warfare and economic hardship; the legacy of centuries, in art and culture, swept away; the health of the nation dangerously impaired by malnutrition, nervous strains and epidemics; Russia...profiting from our exhaustion." Colville admitted it was "a terrible glimpse of the future," but nonetheless courageously concluded that "we should be wrong to hesitate" in rejecting any negotiation with Adolf Hitler.

It is illuminating—especially in our own time of "nervous strains and epidemics"—that in that list of horrors, the fear of losing the "legacy of centuries" of Western European art and culture

rated above almost everything else. For Churchill and Colville, the prospect of losing the legacy of Western civilization was worse even than that of succumbing to the hegemony of the Soviet Union.

Yet today, only eight decades later, we have somehow reached a situation in which a preemptive cultural cringe is "decolonizing" college syllabuses—that is, wherever possible removing Dead White European Males (DWEMs) from it—often with overt support from deans and university establishments. Western Civilization courses, insofar as they still exist under other names, are routinely denounced as racist, "phobic," and generally so un-woke as to deserve axing.

Western civilization, so important to earlier generations, is being ridiculed, abused, and marginalized, often without any coherent response. Of course, today's non-Western colonizations, such as India's in Kashmir and China's in Tibet and Uighurstan, are not included in the sophomores' concept of imperialism and occupation, which can be

done only by the West. The "Amritsar Massacre" only ever refers to the British in the Punjab in 1919, for example, rather than the Indian massacre of 10 times the number of people there in 1984. Nor can the positive aspects of the British Empire even be debated any longer, as the

The legacy of our
culture is unsurpassed
in human history; to
ignore it is an
act of rank self-hatred.



Detail of Interior of the Pantheon, Rome, by Giovanni Paolo Panini

closing down of Professor Nigel Biggar's conferences at Oxford University on the legacy of colonialism eloquently demonstrates.

A glance at the fate of Western Civ courses in the United States suggests a deep malaise in our cultural self-confidence. The origin of the concept of Western civilization as a subject is found in the War Issues course offered to students at Columbia University in 1918, just after the United States' entry into World War I. By learning the politics, history, philosophy, and culture of the Western world, students were given the opportunity to understand the values for which they were about to be asked to risk their lives. In 1919, the Columbia course was developed into An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization, which was followed by a similar innovation at the University of Chicago in 1931.

By 1964, no fewer than 40 of the 50 top American colleges required students to take such a class, which, to take Stanford University as an example, had evolved into a core canon of around 15 works, including those by Homer, Virgil, Plato, Dante, Milton, and Voltaire. While the content of the Western Civ courses was considerably more flexible, complex, and diverse than subsequent critics have suggested, the courses did indeed treat Western civilization as a uniform entity. In the last decade, that was derided as so inherently and obviously evil that Western Civ courses had disappeared altogether, miraculously holding out in their Columbia birthplace and in few other places, including brave, non-government-funded outposts of sanity such as Hillsdale College in Michigan and the incipient Ralston College in Savannah.

For all that we must of course take proper cognizance of other cultures, the legacy of Western culture, in terms of both its sheer quality and its quantity, is unsurpassed in human history. We are deliberately underplaying many of the greatest contributions made to poetry, architecture, philosophy, music, and art by ignoring that fact, often simply in order to try to feel less guilty about imperialism, colonialism, and slavery, even though the last was a moral crime committed by only a minority of some few people's great-great-great-grandparents.

As a result, future generations cannot be certain that they will be taught about the overwhelmingly positive aspects of Western civilization. They might not now be shown the crucial interconnection between, for example, the Scrovegni Chapel by Giotto at Padua, which articulates the complex scholasticism of Saint Augustine in paint; Machiavelli's *The Prince*, the first work of modern political theory; Botticelli's *Primavera*, the quintessence of Renaissance humanism in a single painting; the works of Teresa of Ávila and Descartes, which wrestle with the proof of discrete individual identity; Beethoven's symphonies, arguably the most complex and profound orchestral works ever written; and Shakespeare, whose plays Harold Bloom has pointed out, "remain the outward limit of human achievement: aesthetically, cognitively, in certain ways morally, even spiritually." Even if students are taught about these works individually, they will not be

Will our children be taught about the living thing that intimately connects Europe's Gothic cathedrals; the giants of the 19th Century novel; the Dutch masters of the 17th Century; Versailles, the Hermitage, and the Alhambra?

connected in a context that makes it clear how important they are to Western civilization.

We cannot therefore know, once the present campaign against Western civilization reaches its goal, that our children and grandchildren will be taught about the living thing that intimately connects Europe's Gothic cathedrals, which are mediations in stone between the individual and the sublime; the giants of the 19th Century novel, from Dickens to Flaubert to Tolstoy, in whose works contemporary life realistically observed becomes a fit subject for art; the Dutch masters of the 17th Century such as Rembrandt, who wrestled visually with the human condition in a fashion that still speaks to us across the centuries; Versailles, the Hermitage, and the Alhambra, which, though bombastic, are undeniably ravishing expressions of the human will. Faced with the argument that Western culture is no longer relevant, it's tempting to adopt Dr. Johnson's argument, aim a good kick at the nearest neoclassical building, and announce, "I refute it thus."

Mention of the Alhambra in Granada prompts the thought that any course in Western civilization worth its name ought also to include the Umayyad Caliphate, of which Córdoba in modern-day Spain was the capital between 756 and 929. In the wake of the conquest of Spain and the establishment of the Muslim confederacy of Al-Andalus, Córdoba became a flourishing, polyglot, multicultural environment in which religious tolerance, despite Jews' and Christians' being obliged to pay a



The Parthenon Sculptures, also known as the Elgin Marbles

supplementary tax to the state, produced an atmosphere of intellectual progressiveness that made it one of the most important cities in the world. Discoveries in trigonometry, pharmacology, astronomy, and surgery can all be traced to Córdoba. At a certain point, then, a very particular set of historical circumstances produced an equally particular set of intellectual ideas, which had significant material consequences. The study of Western civilization is therefore emphatically not solely that of Christian DWEMs.

In his book *The Lost History of Western Civilization*, Stanley Kurtz places the 1988 events at Stanford (that resulted in abandoning the teaching of Western Civ) center stage for what went so badly wrong later across America, as the skewed thinking behind the deconstructionist, multiculturalist, postmodern, and intersectional movements caused so much damage to education for so long.

Kurtz reminds us that what the Western Civ courses really did was to root a people in their past and their values. The trajectory of Western culture was shown to have run from Greece via Rome to Christendom, infused by Judaic ideas and morality along the way via Jerusalem, but then detouring briefly through the Dark Ages, recovering in the Renaissance, which led to the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and thus the scientific, rational, and politically liberated culture of Europe and European America. “From Plato to NATO,” as the catchphrase went.

At the center of this transference of values across time and space was democracy, of which Winston Churchill famously said, “Many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”

The generations who grew up knowing that truth, rather than weltering in guilt and self-doubt about “false consciousness” and so on, were the lucky ones, because they were allowed to study the glories of Western civilization in a way that was unembarrassed, unashamed, and not saddled with accusations of guilt in a centuries-old crime that had absolutely nothing to do with them. They could learn about the best of their civilization, and how it benefited—and continues to benefit—mankind.

As Ian Jenkins, the senior curator of the ancient Greek collection at the British Museum, put it in his book on the Elgin Marbles with the politically correct title *The Parthenon Sculptures*, “Human figures in the frieze are more than mere portraits of the Athenian people of the day. Rather they represent a timeless humanity, one which transcends the present to encompass a universal vision of an ideal society.” The Parthenon itself set out the architectural laws of proportion that still obtain to this day, and later in the book Jenkins points out how the sculptures “transcend national boundaries and epitomize universal and enduring values of excellence.” It was no coincidence that interest in them permeated the Western Enlightenments of the 18th Century.

Whilst the Parthenon was being built, Pericles

contrasted the openness and moderation of Athenian civic life with the militaristic, secretive, dictatorial Spartans in his Funeral Speech of 430 BC, and this struck a chord with the Enlightenment thinkers 23 centuries

Whilst the transformative powers of cathedrals and concertos are relatively debatable, Nobel prizes for science and medical breakthroughs can be metrically compared.

later, just as it should continue to do with us today, reminding us why Western values are indeed superior to those that actuate the leaders of modern China, Russia, Iran, Venezuela, North Korea, and Zimbabwe. Marxism-Leninism began as a Western concept but was overthrown in the West, whereas it tragically still thrives in other parts of the world.

“Carved around the middle of the 5th Century BC,” writes Neil MacGregor, former director of the British Museum, the Elgin Marbles “are the product of a creative culture that is credited with the invention of such aspects of modern Western civilization as democracy, philosophy, history, medicine, poetry and drama.” Of course, no one is claiming that Oriental, Persian, and Arab civilizations did not have all of those listed—except democracy, which they did not have then and most still do not today—and no one suggests that Aboriginal Australians, South Sea Islanders, the Aztecs and Incas, ancient Egyptians, or the Khmer Empire that built Angkor Wat for the god Vishnu did not have their own worthy civilizations, too.

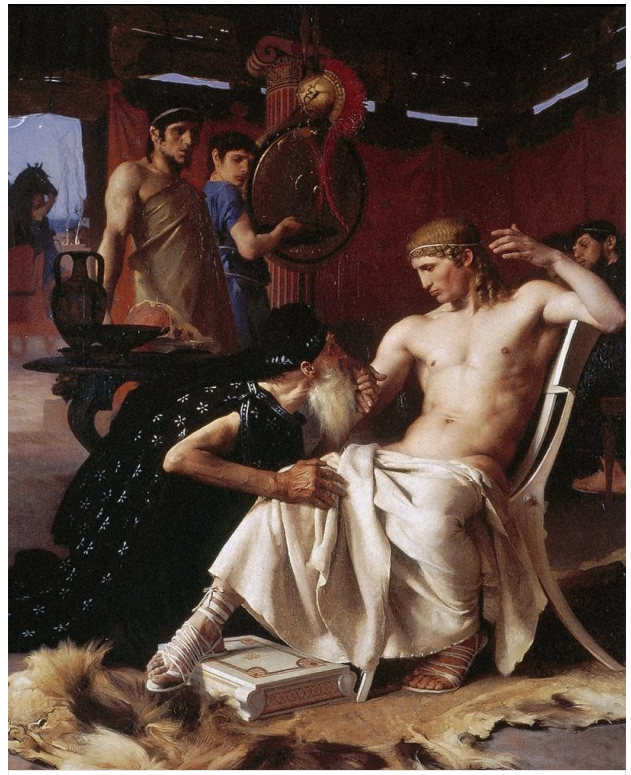
Yet even the very greatest achievements and physical creations of those other civilizations simply cannot compare to what the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian Western civilization has produced in philosophy, history, medicine, poetry, and drama, let alone democracy.

Anyone reading Charles Murray’s superb and unanswerable book *Human Accomplishment* cannot but accept that the contribution made to mankind—the whole of it, not just the West—by DWEMs has statistically

utterly dwarfed that made by the whole of the rest of the world combined. Whilst the transformative powers of cathedrals and concertos are relatively debatable, Nobel prizes for science and medical breakthroughs can be numerically compared, as can the fact that there is no one in any other civilization who can objectively match the sheer volume and density of the poetic and dramatic work of Shakespeare.

“From the constitution drafted by the founding fathers of the American republic to the wartime speeches of Winston Churchill,” Jenkins writes, “many have found inspiration for their brand of liberal humanism, and for a doctrine of the open society, in the Funeral Speech of Perikles.” If Pericles had lost an election or been ostracized in the annual vote of Athenians, he would have stood down from office in the same way that Boris Johnson, Donald Trump, and Emmanuel Macron would after a defeat in a free and fair election in their countries, whereas that is inconceivable in many totalitarian countries not infused by the ethics of the West. [Editor’s note: Remember this article was written in the spring of 2020, before post-US election events transpired.] That is ultimately why we should not apologize for Western civilization, why it should be proselytized around the world and certainly taught as a discrete discipline in our schools and universities.

Western Civilization courses never pretended that the West *invented* civilization, as the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss emphasized in his foreword to the UNESCO *International Social Science Bulletin* in 1951. Considering some of the most ancient sites of human habitation in the world, such as Mohenjo-daro and Harappa in the Indus Valley, he observed straight streets intersecting at right angles, industrial workshops, utilitarian housing for workers,



Priam at the Feet of Achilles by Joseph Wencker

public baths, drains and sewers, pleasant suburbs for the wealthier classes; in short, what he called “all the glamour and blemishes of a great modern city.” Five thousand years ago, therefore, the most ancient civilizations of the old world were giving their lineaments to the new. As a new history of the world by the British historian Simon Sebag Montefiore will shortly demonstrate, the inhabitants of Egypt, China, and Persia were creating sophisticated art and architecture, legal and numerical systems, and literary and musical traditions while the peoples of Europe were still covered in woad and living in mud huts.

What might Homer have to say about being civilized? *The Iliad*, which describes the clash between the Greeks and the

Trojans, is not a description of a conflict between two nation-states. Adam Nicolson characterizes the conflict in *The Mighty Dead: Why Homer Matters* as “the deathly confrontation of two ways of understanding the world.” In this 4,000-year-old scenario, the Greeks are the barbarians. They are northern warriors, newly technologically empowered with ships and bronze spears, who want what the Trojans have got. They are pirates—coarse, animalistic, in love with violence. They are savage, rootless nomads who trade women as commodities and lust after the treasure hidden within Troy’s walls.

The city of Troy is wealthy, ordered, graceful, and stable, and the Greeks covet it. In the climax of the poem, Achilles, the ultimate man of the plains, confronts Hector of Troy, the man of the city. In disarmingly exhilarating and violent poetry, the outsider slaughters the insider. The barbarians have won. Or have they? After the battle, Priam, Hector’s grieving father, visits Achilles in his tent. Troy is doomed but Achilles marvels at Priam’s humility, at his ability to respect the man who has murdered his beloved son. From the “mutuality and courage of that wisdom,” writes Nicolson, “its blending of city and plain, a vision of the future might flower.”

Our word “civilization” derives from the Latin *civilis*, from *civis* (citizen) via *civitas* (city). The city is the locus for human encounter and understanding, for exchange and connection, for the development of communal and peaceful coexistence, for the flourishing of both everyday exchange and

sophisticated arts. Opponents of the teaching of Western civilization object that European countries built their wealth and cultural achievements on the colonial exploitation and enslavement of non-European peoples. Yet as Homer demonstrates, the development of civilization has always been predicated upon darker forces.

The Crusaders of medieval Europe were no more bloody and cruel than the wars of conversion enacted by the expanding Islamic world in the 7th and 8th Centuries. The Ethiopian Empire (1270–1974) was founded upon slavery, as was the Ottoman Empire (1299–1924). If the history of the West needs to be taught critically, then so too does that of the East or the so-called global South. No civilization has been morally pure.

“Competition and monopoly,” writes Niall Ferguson sagely in his book *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, “science and superstition; freedom and slavery; curing and killing; hard work and laziness—in each case, the West was the father to both the good and the bad.” Those early Western Civ courses never tried to argue that it was flawless (Karl Marx sometimes used to be taught in them, after all), but in the 20th Century, students had more common sense and took that for granted, and were not

looking for ever-new ways to be offended.

Christianity, for all its schisms and intolerance, its occasionally obnoxious obscurantism and iconoclasm, has been overall an enormous force for good in the world. The Sermon on the Mount

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was, as Churchill put it, “the last word in ethics.”

Christians abolished slavery in the 1830’s (or three decades later in America’s case), whereas outside Christendom the practice survived for much longer, and identifiable versions of it still exist in some non-Christian and anti-Christian countries today.

The abolition of slavery did not merely happen by votes in Parliament and proclamations from presidents; it was fought for by (and against) Christians with much blood spilt on both sides. That would not have happened without the Judeo-Christian values and the Western Enlightenment that are so central to Western civilization. The Royal Navy ran its West Africa Preventive Squadron for over 60 years with the sole task of fighting slavery, during which time it freed around 160,000 slaves, and an estimated 17,000 British seamen died of disease or in battle achieving that.

When considering “the rest”—those civilizations that did not produce what Western civilization has—Ferguson is unblushingly honest. “We must resist the temptation to romanticize history’s losers,” he writes. “The other civilizations overrun by the West’s, or more peacefully transformed by it through borrowings as much as by impositions, were not without their defects either, of which the most obvious is that they were incapable of providing their inhabitants with any sustained improvement in the material quality of their lives.” For all my earlier concentration on art and architecture, poetry and music, Ferguson is also correct to point out that “civilization is much more than just the contents of a few first-rate art galleries. It is a highly complex human organization,” which is why his book is “as much about sewage pipes as flying buttresses.”

THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY AROUND THE WORLD



In response to the issuing of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the American Anthropological Association released a critique that asked, “How can the proposed Declaration be applicable to all human beings and not be a statement of rights conceived only in terms of the values prevalent in the countries of Western Europe and America?” The question assumes that the 30 articles of the Declaration could not be universal, since universality of human rights was of necessity a “Western” assumption. This was intended as a criticism, not an endorsement.

Yet the West has not stolen these values, as the Greeks stole the Trojans’ gold; it has not appropriated or co-opted them. Rather they are seen as objectionable because they do, indeed, according to their detractors, inhere in Western culture. So, given that a belief in human rights is, apparently, predicated on Western culture, is not that culture worth examining and teaching?

AI

I too often consider of the contribution of Judeo-Christian thought to

Western civilization tends to underplay the first—Judeo—part of the conjoined twins. It is impossible not to spot an enormous overlap—the shaded area in the Venn diagram—between hatred of the concept of Western civilization on one side and at least a certain haziness over anti-Semitism on the other. In America, there are unfortunately still those who believe that Western civilization is at risk from Jewish culture. This view is as ignorant as it is obnoxious. For without the “Judeo” half of the phenomenon, Western civilization would simply not exist. Once again, Charles Murray is invaluable here in enumerating in numbers and places and names and statistics the contribution made in every field by Jews over the millennia, around 100 times what it ought to be in relation to their demographic numbers on the planet.

French postmodern theory refuses to distinguish between high and low culture, attempting to make it futile even to discuss whether this or that work of art is or is not lovely or important. If you want to argue that Kanye West’s lyrics are as good as Shakespeare, or Mongolian yurts are as sophisticated a form of architecture as Bauhaus, then Foucault will support you all the way. But if you want to understand why we do not have child slavery in the West, or disenfranchised women, or imprisonment without trial, or the imprisonment of newspaper editors, you simply have to study the cultural history that produced such an unusual and extraordinary situation in human

history. It is inescapable and not susceptible to postmodernist analysis. It’s not about the aesthetic or literary superiority of certain artworks, but about the unequivocal good of human dignity.

The late, very great Gertrude Himmelfarb identified three separate Enlightenments—English, French, and Scottish—at different though overlapping stages of the 18th Century, with different emphases in different places at different times. Chartres Cathedral was not dedicated until 1260, so there were five centuries between then and the Enlightenments, but they were the moments when people began to throw off superstition and belief in magic and witchcraft, to look at the world afresh, unafraid of what they might find and where it might take them, even at the risk of unbelief. If the Islamic world had had such a moment, it would not have been left behind in so many areas of accomplishment since it was turned back from the gates of Vienna in 1683, with the result that its fascist-fundamentalist wing might not have existed to lash out in such fury and resentment on 9/11.

For far from becoming a Kumbaya touchy-feely place, a truly “Westless” world would be a neo-Darwinian free-for-all in which every state merely grabbed what it could, a return to the world Hobbes wrote about in *Leviathan*. Western civilization should

be taught once more in our schools and colleges. For as Churchill knew as the bombs were falling and London was burning in December 1940, it is worth fighting for.

The study of
Western civilization is
emphatically not solely
that of Christian Dead
White European Males.

Who's Who at the Institute: Spotlight on Sharon Martin

The Institute's vice president of marketing, **SHARON MARTIN**, has been taking courses from Dr. Bill since the fall of 2000, when she enrolled in The Making of the Western Mind at UCSC Extension down the road. She began working at the Institute in 2008 upon her retirement after 23



years as a program manager at Apple. (Sharon was also an elementary school teacher in a former life). She started here as office manager, but now works mostly at home, where she creates our marketing campaigns and collateral and also manages the Institute Scholarship Program. A graduate of Notre Dame High School in San Jose and Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, Sharon also did master's research in empirical psychology at San Jose State University. She is a native of San Jose, as were her parents—her family has been in this valley for over 120 years. Sharon's hobbies are reading, gardening, and cut-throat Words with Friends, and she is a trained singer who sings in the choir and the shower. She has two grown daughters and one lovely grandson who is a freshman at Santa Clara High School. She lives in her childhood home in Santa Clara, which has a very big garden that has been the scene of many parties that mixed Institute folks, family members, church friends, neighbors, old school classmates, and assorted strays. (Photo taken at a June 2019 Institute party.)

Introducing John Immerwahr Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Villanova University and Docent at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Rodin Museum

One of John's current hobbies during the pandemic is producing videos about some of the works at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Check out this webpage —johnimmerwahr.org/projects—to see his various projects as well as his [YouTube channel](#). Featured below is his video that reviews five of the most important 19th Century works at the museum either created by African Americans or tell an important story about African American life.



And here is a tour of some of the great American landscape paintings in the museum, focusing both on their artistic beauty and on what they suggest about nature and America itself.

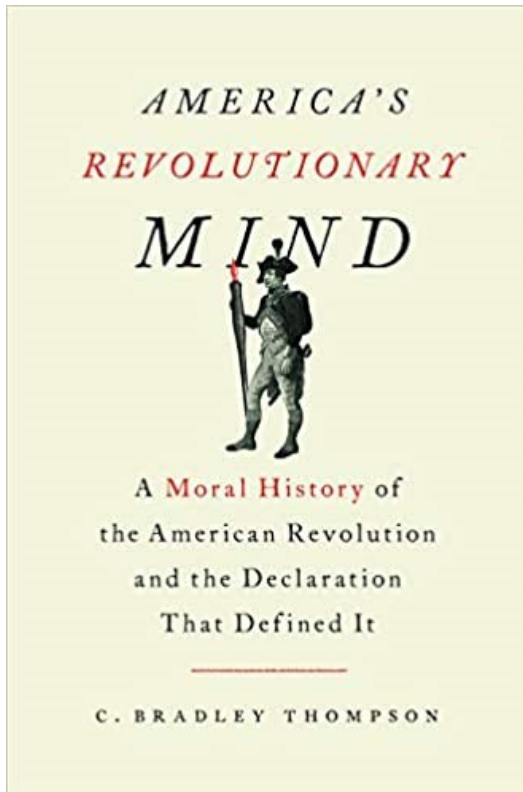


Book Review

Revolutionary Ideas: Roots of Our Politics

Review by Eno Schmidt, a Silicon Valley retired executive and entrepreneur, community volunteer, and student at the Institute

At the time of this writing, in the midst of a national election year and with everyone impacted by governments' management of the worldwide pandemic, what could be better timing for the publication of a scholarly book on the foundation of America's political system? In *America's Revolutionary Mind*, the author, who is professor of political philosophy at Clemson University and scholar of the Revolutionary period, employs a new approach to history writing to uncover what was special about this period. His "new moral history" involves first documenting a series of assumptions that he then uses in writing history. The "moral" element is explored in detail but primarily refers to assumptions about individuals being key decision-makers on moral choices and thereby the drivers of history. Thompson argues that individuals and their



America's Revolutionary Mind: A Moral History of the American Revolution and the Declaration That Defined It

By C. Bradley Thompson

actions should be analyzed as opposed to finding the drivers of history in economic conditions, class warfare, or the "great man" form of history writing. And Thompson does indeed analyze the evidence in a number of ways, claiming to have "read and used virtually all the official documents of the Revolutionary period."

What was "revolutionary" about America's mind? Thompson endeavors to unpack this question through a close reading of the Declaration of Independence, which the Founders saw as the written summary of their reasoning and motivations to form a new government. After the British government denied residents in the colonies the same rights that the Magna Carta and other fundamental British laws extended to residents of England, the colonists reached the revolutionary consensus that their rights arose fundamentally from

nature. The revolutionary element then did not consist only or primarily in the military success of defeating the most powerful empire in the world at

the time, but more importantly, in the general consensus that each and every human being acquires upon birth a specific set of moral principles and rights. As articulated in the Declaration of Independence, the Founders saw these basic universal rights as not granted to individuals by governments, monarchs, or social circumstances, but rather arising simply from being human. Building on ideas in the Age of Enlightenment, especially the thoughts of Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and John Locke, the Founders identified reason, nature, and specific rights as the key bases for their revolutionary way of thinking.

Thompson explains that “the Declaration’s truths can be reduced to just four words: equality, rights, consent, and revolution.” He traces the Founders’ consensus on equality to Locke:

“Equality for Locke means that each and every man is or should be self-owning and self-governing, that is, no one man or group of men has natural ‘jurisdiction or dominion’ over any other man, whatever physical or moral inequalities may subsist between them. This means, then, that no man can or should be ‘subjected to the will or authority of any other man’ without the former’s consent. Locke’s view of human nature was revolutionary, and it had wide-ranging consequences that would forever change the modern world.”

Thompson goes into depth on each of the four key words, but focusing for this review on equality, the timely question is how could the Founders or anyone hold the truth and claim it to be self-evident “that all men are created equal”? To the Founders, equality meant “sharing a common nature with common attributes. It does not mean an equality of attributes.” As Joel Barlow is quoted from 1792, “the science of liberty [in America] is universally understood... all men are equal in their rights.” In fact, Thompson writes, equality in the Founders’

sense “recognizes and is the foundation for inequality rightly understood.” It was this key understanding by the Founders on the equality of common nature that actually put into motion the real revolutionary acts including the separation from Great Britain and ultimately the Civil War leading to the elimination of slavery in America.

Thompson goes on to write,

“The great story of the American Revolution is not that the founding generation failed to end slavery, but rather that it set in motion forces that would lead to the eventual abolition of America’s ‘peculiar institution.’... In the end, how should American revolutionaries be evaluated on the slavery question? To judge and condemn them for having failed to abolish slavery is easy, but it is also to engage in historical anachronism and simple-minded presentism.”

As Thompson eloquently concludes, “every now and then, Americans are called upon to ask whether or not the principles of the Declaration of Independence are true... and so it is with us. We, too, have a choice. We can accept the Declaration’s freedom principles as true, or we can adopt very different moral principles. I hope that this book will inspire its readers to think anew about this fundamental choice.”

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Mosque of Córdoba, Spain:
“In the wake of the conquest of Spain and the establishment of the Muslim confederacy of Al-Andalus, Córdoba became a flourishing, polyglot, multicultural environment in which religious tolerance, despite Jews’ and Christians’ being obliged to pay a supplementary tax to the state, produced an atmosphere of intellectual progressiveness that made it one of the most important cities in the world.”

—Andrew Roberts
(see page 8)

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