

Fall 2020

DIALOGOS

(Greek: To See Through To Meaning)

A Magazine of the Institute for the Study of Western Civilization

Wish you were there?



MISSION: To improve our understanding of how we came to be who we are, why we think the way we do and what assumptions about the world and human nature trace back to earlier periods in the 5,000 years of Western Civilization.



From the Director

Homer and Virgil Not Dead Yet

By William Fredlund, PhD

In my last column I attempted to explain what Stanford University was like in 1987-88, and how afterward a number of us organized to start an institute where Western Civilization could be taught even if Stanford didn't want to. I will continue that story for a bit.

When we started here in 2002 with very little money or help, we assumed we were in a kind of holding action in which the rest of America would soon discover what we already knew—how important knowledge of the Western tradition is for American students.

But that isn't what happened.

While we have been laboring here for almost 20 years, the rest of America has more or less forgotten about the Western tradition. Now of course some places like Hillsdale College do a very good job of teaching the Western tradition. And some individuals such as Victor Davis Hanson regularly talk around the United States about teaching the Western tradition. He recently gave a magnificent talk in Monterey titled "Why

Read the Classics." Considering we just finished a year at the Institute reading Homer and Virgil, I think we are doing a good job.

But the rest of the American academic community has basically waved goodbye to the Western tradition. And even the teaching of it in the few small colleges is likely doomed when some hot new dean comes aboard just in from Harvard or Princeton and shuts it down. No major national movement exists to get it back into the universities. Many radio and television shows talk about it. But in state capitals where money is budgeted for education, so far there's no big push to add Western Civ to university curriculum. Take for example our own state of California. There are various movements to teach Marxism and revolutionary studies and other things, but no Western Civ.

So what do we expect to happen? There may be a ray of hope.

It could be that we are now finally approaching a great cardinal point after a whole generation—25

years or more of not teaching this important subject—where many educators are realizing the damage done. Many other disciplines rely on their students acquiring a general knowledge of who Homer and Virgil are. All of this has been obvious to

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those of us who have been insisting it is a vital part of any person's education. It just could be that we are finally seeing some general recognition of these things that we knew back at Stanford in 1988.

One possible signal that suggests change coming is shown in the book titles being published. In all the 30 years since the crisis at Stanford, I have never seen so many new books take up the subject. Books abound about what universities should do, what education should be, what the state should do to help young people, what young people need to proceed in life, and on and on. So many books are coming back to addressing this core truth: To be a full participant in the intellectual life of the great big international world that is now on the

world wide web, we need to know who Aristotle was and who Plato was and who Julius Caesar was.

Niall Ferguson recently said that our time is most akin to the explosive 16th Century world, newly in possession of printing. That was one of the most exciting times for ideas ever in all of world history. And he says our world is exactly as explosive and thrilling with our new kind of printing—the Internet. Thus here we are, at what may be the most electrifying time for ideas ever, graduating millions

of students who know nothing about Homer, Virgil, Aristotle, Mohammed, Benedict, Patrick, Jefferson, Lincoln, Kierkegaard, or Freud.

**Our current world
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Notable Books from the Classroom

Writers in Isolation

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



any people are reporting side effects from isolation

during the prolonged hunkering-down due to COVID-19. These side effects, not all of which can be dispelled with exercise or comfort food, include worry, anxiety, and depression; but can also include a deep sympathy for the sick and the dying, for those who are separated from their family members, those without jobs, and for those in prison.

Many great literary works have been created during or after years of solitude and isolation. There is a long list of writers who suffered from the stress of unrequited love, lost love, or imprisonment during their lifetimes. Here are just a few: Sappho, Petrarch, Boethius, Dante, Cellini, Cervantes, and Dostoevsky.

Boethius, a Roman senator and court official working for Theodoric the Great, was implicated in a conspiracy at court and imprisoned by his enemies in 523 AD. Known for his work translating major portions of Aristotle from Greek into Latin, Boethius wrote *The Consolation of Philosophy* while awaiting

execution. The structure of *The Consolation* is based on a dialogue between himself and “Lady Philosophy” on the search for and meaning of true happiness. He was executed in 524 AD. His work was known to Alcuin at the court of Charlemagne and to Abelard in Paris. *The Consolation of Philosophy* influenced the thought of Thomas Aquinas and was translated into French in the 13th Century and later into English by Geoffrey Chaucer.

Dante Alighieri was born into a well-established Florentine family in 1265 and was baptized in the old Baptistery of San Giovanni. From a very young age he was in love with Beatrice Portinari. He wrote poems and sonnets based on his dreams of Beatrice. He joined the literary community of Florence. In the 1280’s he read Cicero, Boethius, and Virgil. Having no chance to win his beloved Beatrice, he married Gemma Donati around 1286 and began a family. Beatrice married into the Bardi family, and Dante learned of her death in 1290. His poems and other writings from this period were combined as *Vita Nuova*.

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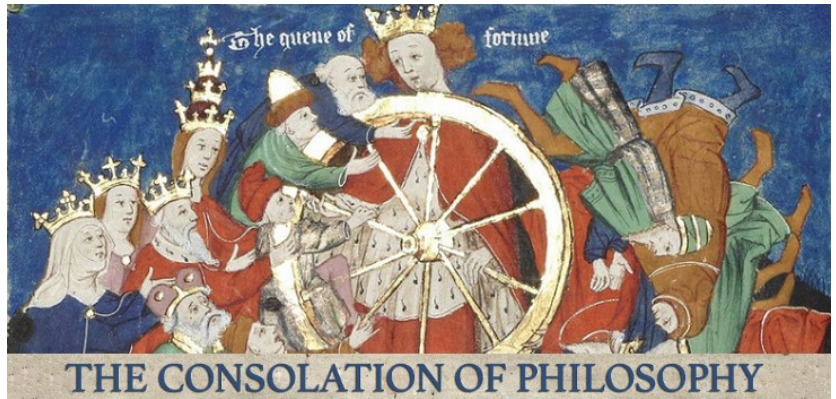
In 1301 Dante traveled to Rome as a member of a Florentine embassy to discuss the threat of invasion by Charles of Valois, an action the pope encouraged as a maneuver to force the Florentines into backing his positions. Dante was against any compromise with Valois.

Someone retaliated with accusations. Dante learned on his way back to Florence in early 1302 that he was exiled.

One could argue that Dante was not isolated. He was welcomed by many great and wealthy friends in beautiful locations throughout Italy: the Mugello, Verona, Padua, Bologna, and Ravenna. He wrote his master work, the trilogy of *The Divine Comedy* while in exile. But in his 2001 biography of Dante, R. W. B. Lewis says that “Dante associated himself with his native city to a degree almost incomprehensible in modern times. Florence was not merely his birthplace; it was the very context of his being.” He was to be forever away from his Florence, and the impact of that bitter exile lasted for the rest of his life. Dante died in Ravenna in 1321 at the age of 56.

What about the reader who attempts to understand the works coming out of such circumstances? Writer and movie critic David Denby returned to Columbia University as a middle-aged man for a full academic year to read major works of literature with younger students. In his 1996 bestseller *Great Books*, he recounts the complaints of the students upon reading *Inferno*, the first book in Dante’s trilogy. They found it dark, dirty, and full of cruel and painful punishments. The effort required to read it exhausted Denby himself.

But they had at least one riveting moment — a reading of the opening lines of *Inferno* by an Italian girl in their class. It is a poem, after all, revered by Italians. Denby writes, “It was like a ravishing melody on a viola, the music arising, unbidden, from the quiet, low tones. No, *this isn’t happening. It can’t be* — *it’s too perfect a moment*. But it was happening; the students were silent, and as she read, her eyes



facing down on the page, her high coloring rose higher, and the music of Dante’s Italian, embedded in the language, effortlessly floated into the room.”

Perhaps the students’ great mistake was in reading only the first book. As with other trilogies, such as Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, the journey doesn’t end until the third book. As *Paradiso* ends, Dante ascends at last to Empyrean and the Celestial Rose, finding “... the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.”

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Western Civ Then and Now

The Civic Wisdom of an Ancient Culture

By Kim Nameny, a student at the Institute. She is a history and language teacher with degrees from Stanford and UCSC. Kim has taught in both California and Italy, most recently at the University of Milan. While a Fulbright scholar doing PhD research in sociology in Italy, Kim “went native” and spent the next 30 years there before returning to the United States. This plus her scholarly pursuits, her professional and family ties to Italy, and her Italian fluency all position her to be an insightful interpreter of one of our favorite countries.

W

hen Italy and the rest of the European Union

reopened their borders to non-EU visitors on July 1 after months of coronavirus lockdowns, the United States didn't make the list of 14 countries allowed tourist entry. This surely crushed the summer travel plans and dream vacations of many of us who study Western Civilization at the Institute!

Why did this happen? The EU's calculus was complicated, but in short, it aimed at reducing the risk of COVID spikes after successful containment of the virus. Sadly, the United States fell into the category of non-EU countries whose COVID situations were worse than the EU's.

To claw our way back onto the list of welcome visitors, we must make improvements in our response to COVID and achieve the following epidemiological milestones:

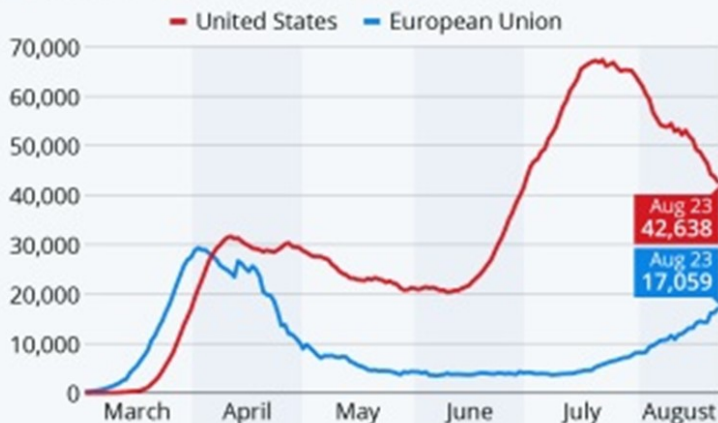
- Bring the number of new COVID-19 cases over the last 14 days and per 100,000 inhabitants **close to or below the EU average as of June 15 which was 16**. [The number in the US on that date was 107](#). As of September 10, the overall number for the US is 165; the EU's number has risen as well.
- Stabilize or decrease the trend of new cases for 14 days.
- Demonstrate an overall positive response to the virus including testing, public health surveillance, contact tracing, containment, treatment and reporting, not to mention reliability of the information.

This list of requirements, reviewed by the European Commission every two weeks since the original decision made at the end of June, still excludes us. But as you can see in the graph, the gap between the US (red line) and the EU (blue line) as measured by new cases is narrowing.

[The New York Times](#) reported that the European Union's decision regarding which countries to allow tourist entry was not made lightly. “European Union officials tried to base their decision on scientific criteria, in part to depoliticize the process and shield themselves from diplomatic pressures.” Many countries, including the US, lobbied hard to be granted entry. And many entities within the EU also lobbied hard to have the travel restrictions relaxed, given the importance of tourism to the economies of many European countries.

EU Faces Second Wave As U.S. Cases Ebb

Seven-day rolling average of newly confirmed COVID-19 cases in the U.S. and the European Union



Source: Johns Hopkins University



statista

This is a new global embeddable map developed especially as a resource for reporters working on stories about COVID-19. It shows coronavirus cases around the world with data for 176 countries, including the United States, plus additional granular state and regional data for 18 countries. We can now compare the same statistic over countries and even dive down into local counties and provinces (for example, Santa Clara County in California or the region of Lombardy in Italy). This tool is called the [COVID-19 Global Case Mapper](#).

Italy and Its Remarkable Feat of Quasi Return to Normalcy

So how did Italy, the country that had become the world's epicenter for COVID in March, become the poster

child for recovery?

The low point was that horrible day, March 27, 2020, when after three weeks of lockdown the civil protection authorities had to announce that 969 people had died in the previous 24 hours. This shocking statistic followed weeks of nightmarish visions of coffins being loaded onto military trucks and driven out of the streets of Bergamo, the Northern Italian town in the region of Lombardy that was worst hit, to remote cremation sites. Those convoys looked more like wartime than anything seen in the past 75 years.

Witnessing such horrors, the Italians persevered with the lockdown, much stricter than anything we imposed on ourselves in the States.

That almost draconian lockdown caught the

Reciprocity is also a consideration, though not the primary one. At the moment, the United States also prohibits tourists from the EU. So even when US infection rates do come under control and are deemed compatible with European travel, the [US "travel ban" against Europe](#), announced March 11, will likely need to be lifted before Americans are allowed into the EU. Once COVID health issues have been normalized, reciprocity problems will likely fall away.

Fantastic COVID-19 Global Case Mapper

covid19.biglocalnews.org/world-map

If you would like to monitor the worldwide trends in the benchmark scientific metric named above, updated daily, please see this wonderful new tool launched on August 10 by Stanford University.



The strangely quiet Central Station in Milan

attention of many Italophiles. It seemed so out of character! As Roger Cohen reported in his insightful article [“The Unlikely Triumph of Italian Nationhood”](#) (NY Times, August 14, 2020), “Then, strange thing, after some initial missteps, Italy did what it has had the most difficulty doing since the unification of the peninsula in 1861: It cohered into a nation and brought a fierce national will to bear on the virus. It went into disciplined lockdown. It set aside, through a unified front, the old slurs exchanged between northerners and southerners, the old parochialism of city-states with longer histories than the nation they find themselves in, the old derision directed at its politics.” What a contrast between Italians and Americans!

Italians stayed home and were only allowed to

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venture out one at a time for essential business (like groceries, medicines or walking the dog), and even then, unless warranted, everyone but the most essential of workers was confined to within just 300 meters of their homes. Like here in the US, people in Italy lost jobs, businesses struggled or failed, and children lost valuable school time as the education system struggled to adapt to online teaching. It was hard, but the images of the dead and dying, the visions of the overcrowded hospitals, the sight of cherished

grandparents dying alone, sparked a deep-felt national grief, a unity in pain of an Italian *popolo* who usually identify themselves not by their national affiliation but by their local roots.

It was indeed a triumph! By mid-August, the rate of new COVID cases in the previous 14 days per 100,000 population had come down to about 8, one of the lowest in Europe, lower even than Germany.

Many of us found ourselves admiring the solidarity and unequivocal compliance exhibited by Italian

households up and down the Peninsula, as they watched fellow citizens fall ill and doctors battle in extremis. We saw that unity of purpose and began to think that perhaps now—almost 160 years after Italy’s emergence as a nation—

2020 will be remembered as “the year Italians were made.” We felt we were witnessing the fulfillment of prophecy as we recalled the 1861 declaration of the statesman Massimo d’Azeglio when he memorialized Italian unification with this pronouncement, “We have made Italy. Now we have to make Italians.”

The sacrifices endured by the lockdown were economically costly. For three months, businesses and restaurants were closed all over Italy, movement was highly restricted, and tourism came to a halt. Italy is expected to lose about 11 percent of its GDP this year as a result—the worst prediction among the 27 members of the European Union.

But when the virus was out of control, Italian officials decided to put lives ahead of the economy, on a national basis. Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said, “The health of the Italian people comes first and will always come first.” He has won widespread respect for his decisive action, his adherence to science over popularity, and his willingness to take responsibility in the pandemic. (“Blame me,” he says.)

On June 3 the Italian government dropped travel restrictions to and from EU member states, Schengen area countries and the UK. On July 1 travel restrictions were further loosened by admitting some countries like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

The prime minister acknowledged that Italy was “facing a calculated risk” by loosening the lockdown. So loosening was done carefully. The situation remained stable, with the epidemic in check for months, until recently.

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Out of the Storm: Rewards Mingled with Caution

On July 23, Italy’s Minister of Health Roberto Speranza confirmed that the hard work had paid off. “I believe Italy has made it out of the storm,” he said. “I think we need to be honest with each other: These have been the most difficult months in the history of the country since the Second World War.” He cautioned however, “The international situation worries me a lot,” noting that globally we are at “the worst moment of the epidemic.”

How had Italians, famously known for their skepticism toward following rules and regulations, managed to emerge so strongly from the health crisis of the coronavirus?

Journalist and author Beppe Severgnini told CNN that it was the very Italian-ness of the Italian people that made it happen. “We coped because we found other resources that were always there—realism, inventiveness, extended families, solidarity, and memories. In Italy, rules are not obeyed or disobeyed, as they are elsewhere. We think it’s an insult to our intelligence to comply with a regulation without questioning it first.” But when the government instituted a draconian lockdown on March 10, Severgnini says that Italians questioned it, then embraced it. “With COVID-19 we decided the

lockdown made sense, so there was no need to enforce it,” he said.

Severgnini, who is familiar with the United States after living here, made a comparison between Italy’s astonishing success in stemming the COVID tide, at least to date, with America’s continuing



Ristorante Panzirone and other eerily uncrowded dining establishments in Piazza Navona, Rome

struggles to flatten the curve. “The United States was born out of a rebellion, and you can still feel it,” he said. “But to rebel, sometimes, is absurd—like during a pandemic.”

Italy Without Most of Its Tourists

Italy’s cities in summer without the tourists who flock to the museums, archaeological sites, cafes, and restaurants are an eerie sight. Streets are silent, squares are empty, and you can even hear the gurgling of the omnipresent fountains in the daytime. Most of the 62 million foreign tourists are missing, 5.6 million of which are travel-banned Americans, the biggest non-European contingent and second overall after Germans.

In July foreign tourist stays in Italy’s hotels slumped

by almost 77 percent. Rome, Italy’s most visited city, reports that 90 percent of hotels remain closed. American dollars are sorely missed, but so too is the “infectious curiosity for our country” that Italians feel Americans bring.

Tourist guides are out of work. Very hard hit is the community of Italian-American guides, most of them married to Italians, stable residents, and very knowledgeable of Italy’s history, art, and cultural traits. For most of them their entire livelihood relies on American tourists.

Museums have lost most of their summer revenue. Americans make up a very large portion of ticket buyers in Italy’s major cities. While the Italian government has rallied to support the critical

tourism sector, which accounts for 13 percent of the country's GDP, individual guides are left in the lurch. The Italian-Americans among them reach out to their fellow countrymen and ask that they make the sacrifices at home that Italians did, do what is necessary to get on top of the virus spread, so that Americans can return to normal life and once again take vacations in Italy. Commercially it is a disaster for the great cities of art like Venice, Florence, Rome, Milan, Turin, Palermo, Naples, and others, usually overrun with foreign tourists but now strangely empty.

Six out of ten Italians decided not to take summer vacation this year, and for four of those six who stayed at home it was the first time ever to give up this yearly ritual. Of those four out of ten Italians who did take summer vacation, 96 percent stayed in Italy.

Outlook and Conclusion

Though the coronavirus has not been defeated, and there are hot spots throughout the world, including resurgences within the European Union and Italy itself that threaten to undermine Italy's hard-won gains, Italy has reclaimed some semblance of normal life. Friends and family in Italy confirm this. They are going out with small groups of friends, sitting in cafes, eating in restaurants, shopping for pleasure, browsing in bookshops, taking vacations at the seaside and in the mountains, exploring nearby destinations of historic small towns and villages (of which Italy is rich) . . . and wondering when they

will be able to take their long-awaited trip to the United States!

Italians are on guard, of course, and wary of the recent upticks in cases due to summer holidays and a relaxation of the observance of protocols among certain groups. They blame young people, in particular, for an overly cavalier attitude towards contagion, as we tend to do all over the world. But even former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, age 83, has come down with COVID as a result of reckless behavior and is hospitalized in Milan. This happened while on vacation in Sardinia. There he met with his friend, the flamboyant businessman, playboy, former manager of two Formula One racing teams, and coronavirus-skeptic Flavio Briatore, age 70. It was a fateful meeting among jet-set friends at home. Briatore himself has contracted COVID after flouting the protocols in his nightclub Le Billionaire, frequented by the rich and famous. The club was shut down in August after he and several employees and clients tested positive. Sardinia, the island known for its beautiful beaches, not long ago had one of the lowest levels of community spread in Italy. Now it has become a COVID hot spot following the summer frolicking there. Liguria, the region of the Italian Riviera, has the worst contagion in Italy right now.

So while Italians are aware of what they have accomplished, they are struggling to preserve it. Despite the regional differences, with seaside vacation destinations showing the most contagion right now, they envision the approach to a

“We [Italians] can be disciplined, but somehow we don't like to admit it, as if it might damage our reputation.”

COVID containment solution not on a local basis but on a national, even an international, one.

Back in March, the Italian strategy of completely closing down provoked criticism that the government was over-reacting, over-reaching, and thereby paralyzing the economy. Yet it seems clear that it was ultimately advantageous to observe such strict discipline rather than trying to reopen the economy while the virus was still raging. This does not mean that the consensus was 100 percent, or that calls for continued vigilance have been immune to mockery, resistance, and exasperation, as elsewhere in the world. There is a nascent and politically motivated anti-mask contingent led by nationalist Matteo Salvini, leader of the populist League Party. He declared on July 27 that replacing handshakes and hugs with elbow bumps was “the end of the human species; don’t even bother greeting me.”

But so far Italy’s malcontents have not been numerous or powerful enough to undermine the hard-won trajectory of success in confronting the virus. What was learned cannot be unlearned, namely the lesson of the effectiveness of crisis-induced national unity. The story of the coronavirus is not over, and disagreements over future responses will undoubtedly occur. But what Italy revealed to itself and to the world is what it is capable of doing, when tested. So it’s hard not to agree with Roger Cohen of *The New York Times* when he depicts Italy’s response compared to ours as “Italy coheres as America breaks apart.”

To a degree unimaginable in our own country,



Milan's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele is now just for the Milanese, some European tourists, and a few lucky Canadians.

Italians looked the pandemic in the eye, listened to the scientists, witnessed their compatriots dying alone in hospitals, looked at their options, and accepted the government restrictions. As journalist Beppe Severgnini summed it up: “From early March to early May, the country found itself with its back to the wall; and that’s a position where we Italians give our best. We can be disciplined, but somehow we don’t like to admit it, as if it might damage our reputation.”

Italians rallied and embraced fear as a form of wisdom. And ultimately, they showed us what a very long history teaches—it teaches civic wisdom.

Who's Who at the Institute: Spotlight on Hester O'Gara



HESTER O'GARA became the **librarian** of the newly-formed Institute in 2003, focusing on library development, and she has served ever since! Under her management, the library has grown from an empty room to a current holding of over 3,000 volumes. Early acquisitions

came from Institute classes, family members, and friends. Surplus donated books are sold in our Book Shoppe, which generates more than \$1,000 a year for the Institute. Hester and her devoted library volunteers hold workshops several times a year to process hundreds of donated and purchased books.

Hester was born in Northern Ireland, grew up in Pennsylvania, and studied fine arts at Queens College in New York. She has been employed in art, television and film production, and law. She has served in civic and philanthropic work, including the maintenance of a law library and the formation of the art docent library at the Cantor Art Center at Stanford University. She loves reading, hiking, drawing and painting, exploring with her grandchildren, and any kind of adventure that takes her around the Bay Area or the world. Hester has attended our classes since 1999 and been a featured artist at Institute art exhibitions.

Hester and her husband Jim have recently established a retirement home in Tahoe, where Hester is busy setting up her treasured personal library and art studio. And although you may often find them kayaking or biking around the lake, they are keeping their ties to the Santa Clara Valley and will be here frequently to visit their four daughters and four grandchildren—and of course, the Institute!

Shakespeare on Demand

[Shakespeare's Globe](#) in London is offering a new digital festival on **Shakespeare and Fear**. Just in time for Halloween, the festival includes a staged reading of **Macbeth**, discussions, and spooky stagecraft workshops. Events encompass online performances, talks, family events, teenage events, and courses. Of particular interest are these timely talks in the wake of the US presidential election:

November 8: [In Conversation: Fear in Our Moment](#)

November 9: [Thinking Through Crisis: Shakespeare and America](#)



In addition, you can watch for free their 90-minute production of [Romeo and Juliet](#), filmed in the Globe Theatre last year and created especially for young people, until February 28, 2021.



Odysseys

Indulging Body and Soul in Prosecco Country

By Patricia Fredlund, travel guide editor

A visit to the Prosecco Country is a dream come true. Every hillside, every turn along the Prosecco Road is another vision. Along this panoramic highway, the town of Conegliano is the gateway to the region. In the hills just above the town, beautiful country roads lead you to scores of magnificent Prosecco vineyards producing some of the best bubbling wines you will ever find.

Sleep

One of the best places to stay in Prosecco Country is at the **Duca di Dolle** winery, which has been owned by the same family for 600 years. Take a good look at the vineyards – they stretch for miles and miles in every direction. Everywhere you look you see prosperity—the rich soil, the lush green vineyards, the healthy people, and the pristine towns. This is a unique glimpse of wealthy Italy! During our 2017 trip that included Dr. Bill, Dagmar Zimdahl, and me, we each had our own room that shared a beautiful balcony where we could look out over the vineyards while we sipped cool sparkling Prosecco. My room





Duca di Dolle

was especially grand with a separate living room, dining area, and kitchen where we could spread out all the goodies we had gathered during the day and indulge!

Visit

After a lovely breakfast at Duca di Dolle, it was time for a drive on the curving mountain roads. I suggest a visit to the **Abbey of Santa Maria in Follina**. The abbey complex is one of the best-preserved and most beautiful monasteries in all of Italy. It has been



Abbey of Santa Maria in Follina

a national monument since 1921 and dates to the 12th Century. In 1146-1148, Benedictine monks were replaced by Cistercians, under whom the monastery reached the height of its power and splendor. In 1915, the Servants of Mary settled here and still live there today. (The Servants of Mary, or Servites, is a Catholic community of women founded in Florence during the 13th Century, called to bring the compassionate presence of God, in the spirit of Mary, to all those they meet and with whom they minister.) The interior of this abbey is breathtakingly beautiful. You will find this exquisitely maintained example of Romanesque architecture just off highway SS635 as you approach the town of Follina coming down the mountain from Duca di Dolle. It is definitely worth a visit! The town of Follina is equally charming and has wonderful restaurant.

Eat

But Bill had something else in mind. He had heard about a very special luncheon spot with a view called **Salis Ristorante Enoteca**, a 15-minute drive from the town of Valdobbiadene. This incredible restaurant



Dagmar at Salis Ristorante Enoteca

lies off a beautiful country road with magnificent views from its terrace. Dining is inside or al fresco. Our table was inside right next to the open window and that was perfect. The food is delicious and the view is fabulous—to say nothing about the endlessly entertaining Hungarian upscale biker gang who were drinking their way through lunch when we were there. This was obviously “the spot” to be seen in the vineyards near Valdobbiadene! (When you travel with Bill, you are sure to find the “action spot”!) The young family that runs the restaurant caters to your every need with a quiet, pleasant attentiveness. The menu is filled with surprises. Just the cheeseboard



they brought us was a work of art. And of course, they offer a wonderful selection of wines from the vineyards nearby. This must be the best place for lunch on a beautiful September day in Prosecco Country. I suggest an adventurous spirit and a precise map to navigate the local roads and tiny little signs to get there. But it is way beyond worth it: We ate all afternoon long!

Duca di Dolle

Via Piai Orientali, 5
31030 Rolle di Cison di Valmarino
Phone: +39 0438 975 809
Email: relais@ducadidolle.it
Website: ducadidolle.it/en

Abbey of Santa Maria in Follina

Via Sanavalle, 14
31051 Follina
Phone: +39 0438 9733
Email: segreteria@comunefollina.legalmail.it
Website: comune.follina.tv.it/home/Vivere/Abbazia-Cistercense.html
Open 7 am-12 noon, 2:30-7 pm

Salis Ristorante Enoteca

Via Strada di Saccol 52
31049 - Cartizze - Valdobbiadene
Phone: +39 0423 900561
Email: info@cantinaborgogno.it
Website: salisristorante.it
Open 12:15-2:15 pm, 7:15-9:45 pm

Fall Lecture Series: The American Revolution

Fridays, 7 pm

With the possible exception of the Civil War, no period in American history has received more attention than that of the country's founding. It was, in many respects, an attempt to realize the ideals of the 18th Century Enlightenment. How did the world's most radical political experiment replace deference to status with an insistence on rights? **Bruce Thompson, PhD**, combines scholarship on the military, political, and social history of the time with close reading of works by its greatest figures.

THE IMPERIAL CRISIS AND BENJAMIN FRANKLIN October 9

BOSTON AND PHILADELPHIA: GEORGE HEWES AND THOMAS JEFFERSON October 16

PAUL REVERE'S RIDE AND GEORGE WASHINGTON October 23

LIBERTY AND SLAVERY: THOMAS PAINE October 30

THE OCCUPATION OF NEW YORK AND ALEXANDER HAMILTON November 6

WASHINGTON'S CROSSING AND GEORGE WASHINGTON November 13

THE WIDENING WAR: JOHN ADAMS AND SIR HENRY CLINTON November 20

**VICTORY AT YORKTOWN:
GENERAL CORNWALLIS AND THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE** December 4

THE CONSTITUTION AND JAMES MADISON December 11

WHAT KIND OF REPUBLIC? JEFFERSON VS. HAMILTON December 18

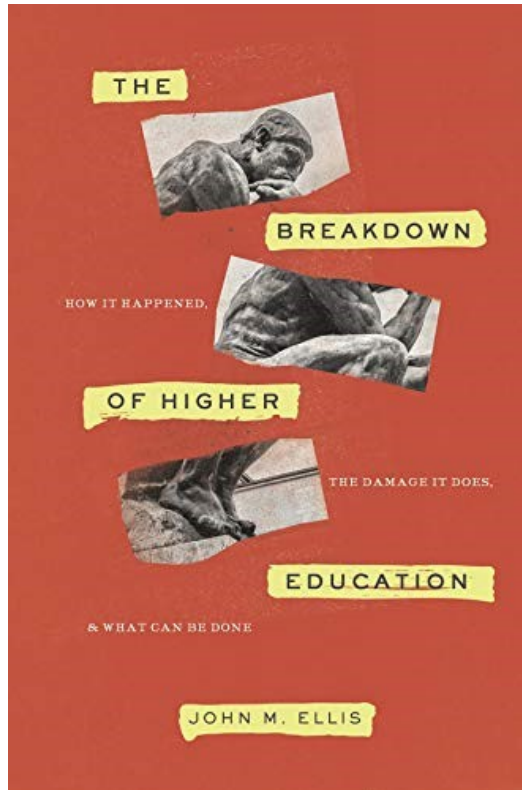
Book Review

Is It Time To Defund Higher Education?

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

Living and working in Silicon Valley, we often hear success stories relating to the region's famous universities. Recent graduates found innovative companies, and famous tech entrepreneurs donate endowments. Therefore, it is surprising and jarring to read the viewpoint of local scholar John Ellis. After 50-plus years in academia as a professor, dean, and author of many books, he argues that today's higher education is corrupt.

According to Ellis, the current breakdown in higher education is directly traceable to the vast majority of college faculty and administration holding one way of thinking and then going the next step of advocating their personal political views in the classroom. By abandoning the previously and widely accepted



The Breakdown of Higher Education: How It Happened, the Damage It Does, and What Can Be Done By John M. Ellis

importance of keeping personal views and political advocacy out of the classroom, Ellis argues that universities no longer teach students but rather indoctrinate them.

Ideally, according to Ellis, universities would teach students to be open to and consider both sides of a question before deciding. To explain the dangers of a one-party, one way of thinking, Ellis references John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (an essay familiar to Instituturs). Mill cautions, "He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that.... It is in a great measure the opposition of the other that keeps each within the limits of reason and sanity." Extending Mill's argument, Ellis writes that the classroom should exhibit "disciplined" thinking, which involves examining relevant previous thinking and historical evidence and assembling key facts that allow a balanced evaluation

before coming to conclusions.

Ellis reasons that the corruption within higher

education has reached such a serious point that the audience for his book is no longer university faculty or administrators but rather the broader public, most of whom still expect from higher education both the disciplined thinking along with the body of knowledge that has been accumulated using this skill.

With historical context, Ellis reviews some key markers in the 1980's—for example, the publication of Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* and the Stanford shutdown of Western Civilization courses following Jesse Jackson's march on campus. (Read more in William Fredlund's column in the *DIALOGOS* Spring 2020 issue.)

What is the corruption's root cause? Ellis answers that “making politics of any kind central to campus life must be damaging because the habits of mind of academic teachers are in so many ways the exact opposite of those of political activists.” He makes the following points:

- “A student's mind must have the freedom...to follow wherever facts or arguments lead.”
- Political activism focuses on “politically desirable results more than process..., wants action, while academic thought seeks understanding.”
- “The most important difference between political activism and academic thinking is that they are polar opposites in the way they deal with alternative explanations.”

He argues that campus closed-mindedness originates with college faculty who no longer behave like academics but rather like political activists.

Why did the corruption arise? According to Ellis, the answer lies with a combination of factors that can only be listed here and not covered in detail:

- “National unrest over the mishandling of the war in Vietnam by the political class.”

- Massive expansion of the universities from 1965 to 1975.
- Morphing of the civil rights movement into a powerful regime of identity politics marching under the banner of “diversity” amplified by the 1978 Bakke Supreme Court decision (5-4), the case which installed the concept of diversity as the key value in academic life. In effect, diversity replaced excellence.

John Ellis' analysis of history also aligns with the arguments in Jarrett Stepman's *The War on History* (see *DIALOGOS* Spring 2020 edition). He observes that “scholarly research must look carefully at complex historical situations that are always made up of many different strands and must do full justice to all the factors at play.”

Ellis concludes with the provocative suggestion that voters and the public remove funding for universities to regain control over them and return higher education to be the training of students and the implementation of disciplined thinking in research and instruction. He makes a sobering comparison with the nation facing a crisis akin to WWII and needing “the extraordinary courage of people like Winston Churchill and the persistence and sacrifice of millions to turn the cycle.” Ellis asks, “Is the Athens of the next generation somewhere on the Great Plains?” My related question is, how and what is the role of the Institute in the revival of the next Athens?

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Editor: Michele McCarthy

Contributors: Patricia Fredlund, William Fredlund, Kim Nameny, Joan Niemeier, Eno Schmidt

Founder: William Fredlund, PhD



The Institute for the Study of Western Civilization

10060 Bubb Road (408) 864-4060
Cupertino, CA 95014 WesternCiv.com