



Heritage Academy's

INDEPENDENCE

Winter 2015

VIRTUE

OUR MISSION

Thomas Jefferson stated, “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.” It is the goal of Independence and Heritage Academy as a whole to keep our nation from a state of ignorance. To accomplish this, Independence will promote learning through the essays of Heritage Academy scholars.

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS:

You are reading something beautiful. Twenty years ago, Mr. Earl Taylor founded Heritage Academy to teach America's youth the principles upon which their country is founded. Now, Heritage has three campuses, and its message of founding principles has reached thousands of scholars. But we, those fortunates who are learning of the genius of the Founders, and of the exceptional nature of America, believe this message must reach farther. The ideas of self-government and independence should be sung from sea to shining sea. Only then can this, the last true bastion of freedom, be preserved.

So as you ponder these words, don't simply agree and move on, don't simply dismiss them as the ramblings of idiot teenagers. Learn, realize, apply, and live these principles, because you are reading something beautiful. Join Heritage Academy in saving America and building her heroes.

Thank you, and have a Merry Christmas!

THE NATURE OF FREEDOM

TJ MENLOVE

In the creation of the United States of America, many ideas, both new and old, were revisited, revised, and reconsidered. Some of these ideas made their way into the Constitution, and some were excluded, or even specifically avoided. Today, many of the people of the country work off of technicalities and misinterpretations of laws to get what they want. Others attempt to avoid the law altogether by evading authorities. These unvirtuous actions are becoming more and more prevalent, showing a decrease in the overall virtue of a population. These force the virtuous population and the government to bind the hands of those who would abuse the system. In this gradual decrease of the virtue of the people, more laws and more control is required of the government, which eventually leads to a totalitarian government, where all aspects of civilian life must be determined by the government in order to ensure that goals of a country can be met. If the people could recapture and retain their virtue, the slide towards a totalitarian government could be halted, and freedom could again be functional. The ability for freedom to work depends upon not necessarily just upon the form in which it is administered, but also in how virtuous the people who run the system are. As Benjamin Franklin said, "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become more vicious and corrupt, they have more need of masters" (Franklin 297-298).

Many scholars of the past have spoken on the ways of nature and how it governs men. In the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, it states, "he [the king of Britain] has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him..." (Jefferson 41) In this excerpt, we can see how, in this

time, the nature of humans was seen as God-given rights and attributes, which are sacred and cannot be taken away by others. The founders of our country found these rights to be the most sacred of all. In fact, most men find it to be sufficient reason to dissolve the political bands which had connected them with Britain. John Locke, another scholar that is famous for influencing the Founding Fathers, spoke upon the state of nature. In his Second Treatise of Government, he states:

The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions... (Locke 44)

In this statement, natural law is synonymous to that of virtue, and it is stated that those who care for their virtue, or natural law, care for life, health, liberty, and possessions of others. Therefore, in order for freedom to be an attainable and functioning form of government, citizens

must care for the rights of not only themselves, but also for those rights of others. In this quote, Locke also shows us that nature teaches that all men are equal and independent, further solidifying the idea that in order for a people to maintain a working freedom they must care for each other's rights, or else they would fall into anarchy or into the hand of despotism; for without a bond between independent persons, whether that bond be by virtue or by totalitarian rule, only anarchy can exist. By this pattern, without virtue freedom cannot succeed.

Ralph Waldo Emerson had an intellectual and insightful look on not only the nature of man, but also specifically on the nature of scholars. In his speech The American Scholar, Emerson explains,

*"Only through
the virtue of men
can freedom
succeed."*

"In this distribution of functions, the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state, he is, Man Thinking. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker, or, still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking" (Waldo 130). Emerson states that men have a "right state" of being, and a "degenerate state" of being. In the "degenerate state," which is a "thinker," a scholar merely thinks and does not act upon those thoughts. To think and not act would be to run through the motions of being a mere thinker. As Emerson continues on in his speech, he outlines what a true scholar in the "right state" would be. In short, a scholar should never just recite other's thinking, never just think, and never just intake information. Instead, they should learn the thoughts of others, reflect upon these thoughts and add to them, and then act upon these thoughts.

The best place for scholars to learn about the nature of men, according to Emerson, is from nature itself, because human nature is in a similitude to the nature of the universe. Thus, the best way to learn of human nature is to learn of nature itself. The virtue required to make freedom work can be found in the nature of the universe. Many counterparts must all work together, some may not be as appreciated as others, but all are

important. The awesome life-giving power of the sun might seem much greater than the protection of Jupiter; however without either, the earth would be unsuitable for our habitation. If Jupiter was as apt to the same degenerate forms of human nature as many of us are, it might be jealous that the sun gets all the attention whereas the protection that it provides for us is casually overlooked. Jupiter, thankfully, has none of these qualities; it has only its job to do, and it does it. If we, as humans, could master the same virtue of humility, and focus on our own responsibilities, we could more easily succeed in a free society.

In each example, and in each truth contained herein, the pattern of the nature of freedom shows through. Thus we can clearly see that only through the virtue of men can freedom succeed. Without it, either a totalitarian government must take control, or else anarchy will ensue. In order to prevent this, we must know what virtues are necessary; We can learn of these virtues by observing the nature of the universe. We must be wary, though, not to fall into the trap of becoming a mere thinker by not acting upon our thoughts. We must learn, think, and act, or else be doomed into despotism or anarchy. Such is the nature of freedom.

SELF-ENSLAVEMENT MELODY VALVERDE

We Americans are permitted the capacity to make our own decisions and to pursue them as we please. Favorably, the Constitution, along with its amendments, obstructs external oppression. However, one significant right only we can justice ourselves with is the freedom of mind. This necessary ability is something that no overbearing being can remove. Unfortunately, it has been unknowingly disabled by ourselves at times. Although it is dire to be without subjection, it is of even higher importance to not restrict our unalienable right of thought by limiting our minds.

While there are innumerable forms of mental obstructions, one of the most crippling includes

submission to anxieties. Despite the difficulty, we must stand firm against our fears. If we remain shy of bold actions and allow our angst to determine our ways, we can never progress. We must aim to conquer cowardice, which can be done through the extension of knowledge.

It is declared that "free should the scholar be,--free and brave. Free even to the definition of freedom, 'without any hindrance that does not arise out of his own constitution.' Brave; for fear is a thing, which a scholar by his very function puts behind him. Fear always springs from ignorance" (Emerson 135). Gradually, fear may be extinguished. Gradually, we may be free. In

relation to America's trials on their way to freedom, we must endure our own battles to diminish our distress.

Along with fear, addictions intensely enfeeble the mind. An addiction is defined as, "the state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or to something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming, as narcotics, to such an extent that its cessation causes severe trauma." Whether emotional or substantial, the dependence and obsession from an addiction binds your mind.

Thomas Jefferson best explains that, "dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition" (Jefferson 111). When you become reliant on an addiction for something, you aren't free. These detrimental crutches consume your thoughts and can cause you to become irritable and lose control of your actions. It confines you and only allows calamitous emotions to seep through. You permit yourself a tyrant, who cannot be reasoned with. They distort your mind to the point of believing you're free as you're bound with chains. While under the deceitful rule of a tyrant, it may feel comfortable and safe; it seems it wouldn't be worth the risk to rebel. As an addiction plays a similar trick, people must recognize and defeat its destruction.

As access to media grows, it becomes increasingly more difficult to avoid feelings of

inadequacy. Social ideals envelop the lives of many. While humans feel a natural inclination to be accepted, it is not a desire that should guide and limit your every action. When you become overly self-conscious, you become robotic. It controls your thoughts, alters your behavior, and subdues who you are. It desolates your pursuit of happiness. Without the freedom to be your own, creativity dwindles. When there is a lack of individuality, there is a lack of development.

Just as any fear can be beaten, the fear to stand out or to stand alone can be defeated. Being both an external and internal battle, social acceptance highlights your weaknesses while also revealing your strengths. When your personality is in shackles, you must not allow those bonds to not dim your spirit.

In this country, we are said to be free. Freedom, however, is the furthest thing from being free. While there are those who physically fought for our rights, we must continue the war each day with our own minds. We cannot betray such crucial rights for feelings of comfort or feigned peace. If freedom encompasses the ability to think, speak, and act as we desire, then why are we only permitting ourselves the joys of the last two? If men must be in the dictate of their own conscience, their conscience must not be a dictator.

IF MEN WERE ANGELS

DANIEL PANG

(...)

Among the elements which the founders of our nation prescribed unconditionally essential for the preservation of liberty, prevailing morality among the people was the capital necessity. While the Founders disagreed on many topics, on the absolutely vital nature of the moral values of charity, industry, diligence, frugality, temperance, and integrity, there was unanimous concurrence. Evidence of this belief abounds in the words and writings they left behind. The one we are probably most familiar with is the quote by

Benjamin Franklin: "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters" (Franklin 41). A few similar sayings include: "neither the wisest constitution nor the wisest laws will secure the liberty and happiness of a people whose manners are universally corrupt", by Samuel Adams (Adams 47); "I thank God that I have lived to see my country independent and free. She may long enjoy her independence and freedom if she will. It depends on her virtue", by Richard Henry Lee (Lee 46); "Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a

wretched situation. No theoretical checks, no form of government, can render us secure. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people, is [an imaginary] idea”, by James Madison (Madison 44); and “Purity of morals [is] the only sure foundation of public happiness in any country”, by George Washington (Washington 738). Clearly, the Founders recognized a vital necessity for morality and virtue in the preservation of liberty.

Why this incessant emphasis on virtue? Why, with the tumultuous conditions they faced in both political and military matters, did they take the time to impress upon their posterity the value of values? Why is it of consequence? Although the Founders left us no detailed illustrations of it, as they did with the ruler’s law/people’s law spectrum, it may reasonably be conjectured that they uncovered a spectrum of equal importance respecting the intimate relationship between moral capital in a people and extent of liberty and prosperity consequently available to them. Envisioning it, one may imagine something comparable to the ruler’s law/people’s law spectrum; flip it onto its side, so that the line is vertical rather than horizontal, and caption the top and bottom “angelic morality” and “no morality”, respectively. On such a depiction, the vertical level on the line represents the extent and power of morality in the people, the top representing a people who are all utterly perfect in every aspect of morality, ethic and intelligence, justly called “angels”; the bottom represents the grim opposite, which needs no description. Attach, then, to the top caption the aside, “no government needed”, and to the bottom “absolute government needed”. Thus we have two vastly opposite peoples, the first being so good as to not need government, a perfect embodiment of James Madison’s famous quote, “If men were angels, no government would be necessary” (Madison 48), and the other so utterly “corrupt and vicious [as to have] need of masters” (Franklin 41). Obviously, the probability of either of these polar extremes actually occurring is doubtful, but it is certain that all peoples fall somewhere between the two. The object, therefore, is to ascertain where we are on that spectrum and determine in which direction we are moving. Unlike with the ruler’s law/people’s law

spectrum, in this depiction the object is not to discover a balanced center, but to attain the highest level of virtue, and consequently freedom and prosperity, possible. Why do a people benefit from a higher standing on this spectrum? How does morality ensure liberty and prosperity? Let us consider one of the extremes we discussed before, “angelic morality”, and observe the blessings of a perfect people. In economy, not only would they, by means of the awesome power of industry and innovation united with perfect frugality, be an extremely wealthy and advanced people, but nearly all regulations and licensure, which are among the greatest obstructions and handicaps in commerce, would be done away with, for a perfectly responsible people need no checks. Also, they would receive the benefits of perpetual integrity in dealings with each other, as George Washington said in his farewell address: “Who can doubt that, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such [integrity] would richly repay any temporary advantages that might be lost by a steady adherence to it?”(Washington 92). Perhaps capping all other advantages would be that the people would not need to bear the weight of numberless, expensive government agencies, which suck up funds like a ravenous tornado. Secondly, in matters of liberty, the freedom of the people would never be threatened by oppressive government, for a perfect people would not select any but the most perfect among them to assume the service of public office. The people would never allow a despot to rise to power, as they would all be diligent, wise, and watchful of their leaders. On this topic, George Washington reflected, “The federal government... can never be in danger of degenerating into a monarchy, oligarchy, an aristocracy, or any other despotic or oppressive form so long as there shall remain any virtue in the body of the people”(Washington 802). Thirdly, there would be far less civil strife and less need for government to involve themselves in the people’s lives, for almost every conflict or trouble in American history which has resulted in government intervention is traceable back to a fault of character in an individual or group of individuals. Considering that all these natural blessings and advantages arise simply from adherence to morality, is it not obviously worth the effort? Granted, a

society such as has been described is somewhat unrealistic, as we are limited by our human nature, but we would do well to approach as close to it as we can. In the meantime, let us be thankful that we have a Constitution, a form of government which can grant us blessings similar to those of an “angelic society”, without having to achieve it altogether. Nevertheless, we the people still have to maintain a significant level of morality for the Constitution to function truly, as Calvin Coolidge wisely remarked: “The people have to bear their own responsibilities. There is no method by which the burden can be shifted to the government”(Coolidge 72).

(...)

Our beloved Constitution is a divinely inspired masterpiece of government; it cannot be matched by any document contrived by men alone, and its worth cannot be measured either with dollars or with prayers of gratitude. Yet it alone cannot provide us with the blessings of liberty, for as with any people, liberty, without virtue, is dead. It may appear with the decline in morals that our nation’s course is irreversible. It may seem the bright, golden days of our nation, enlivened by the light of domestic virtue, are ebbing on a yellow horizon. It may appear that such decline is as inevitable and incessant as the sun’s path in the sky, and that to resist would be both simple and futile. Not so. Do not underestimate the power each of us, as individuals, through our labors and our steadfastness in virtue, can have to change the future. For example, imagine how different our history would be if George Washington, the

Father of the United States of America, had not been a man of such tremendous moral courage and virtue. What would have become of us had he been a man of vices, greed, and lustful ambition? We would not be here. We could not possibly have won the war without his moral character at our head. It is conjecturable that we owe our very presence here today, our nation, and our liberty to the morality of one man. We may not all hold such critical positions as General Washington did, but the influence we do have is far greater than we imagine. Each of us, throughout our lives, will touch the lives of thousands; let our influence inspire virtue. Probably the greatest opportunity we will have to impact the future will be in how we teach morality and virtue to our posterity, as generation after generation will be affected by how we teach our children and how they teach theirs; let us prepare for that responsibility. The peace and tranquility bought with righteousness is more difficult to maintain than that which is demanded by tyrants, but it is the only sure means of preserving liberty; let us be bold in doing the right. The true American patriot is he who will give all for the sake of liberty, and in the words of Samuel Adams, “He therefore is the truest friend to the liberty of his country who tries most to promote its virtue”(Adams 47). Let us, like the Founding Fathers, choose to have peace of conscience, knowing that we have done all we can to preserve liberty for our posterity, having lived lives of virtue and diligence. It is our American duty, noblesse oblige.

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Back Cover

Benjamin Franklin, In letter to George Whitefield, 1764.



**“ONLY A VIRTUOUS PEOPLE ARE
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“Building America’s Heroes”