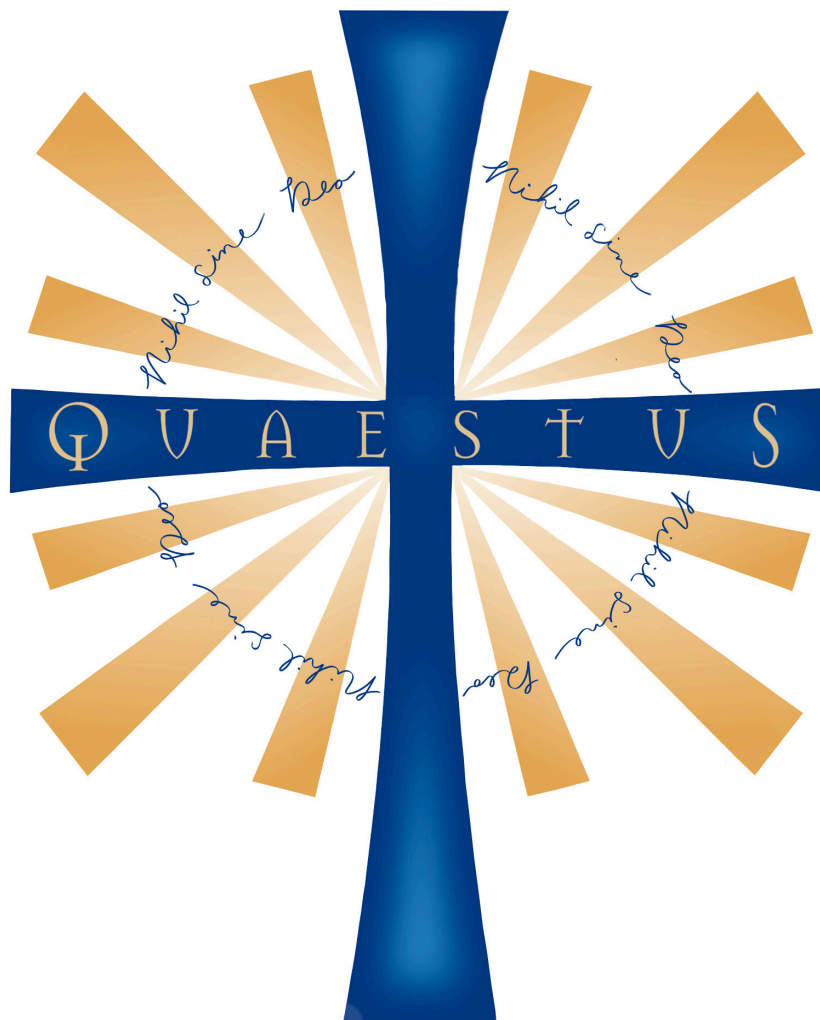


QUAESTUS

LIBERTY | FAITH | ECONOMICS



EROSIONS OF FREEDOM:
VOLUME IV NO. II

APRIL 2023

Table of Contents

Mission and Vision.....	4
Editorial Board.....	5
Who We Are.....	6

Student Essays & Other Works

Unthinkable: The Eliminative Power of Language Control on Human Thought by: Isaiah Mudge, Editor-in-Chief.....	7-14
The Destructive New Definition of Woman by: Anna Young, Business and Marketing Editor.....	15-18
Faith in the Face of Tyranny by: Ben Dubke, Senior Editor.....	19-22
An Unconscionable Practice by: Harrison Hulse, Publication Editor.....	23-26
Reflections on Dr. Anne Bradley’s Visit to Concordia University Wisconsin by: Harrison Hulse, Publication Editor and Dr. Scott Niederjohn, Quaestus Faculty Advisor.....	28-32
Speech, Not Amplification by: Samuel Boehlke, External Affairs Editor.....	33-35
Civil Discourse in Relation to Man’s Ontology and Freedom by: Ambrose Shaltanis, Senior Editor....	36-39
Madmen: Truth in a World Where God is Dead by: Ella Mudge, Contributing Author.....	40-43
Towards True Civil Discourse: How Humility Can Heal Our Nation by: Ezekiel Potts, Contributing Author.....	44-47

Our Mission

Quaestus is a student-led journal presenting ideas about Liberty, Faith, and Economics from a Christian perspective in order to promote human flourishing.

Our Vision

We aim to inspire the next generation of Christian thought and leaders by addressing global issues with sound moral and economic principles.

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Mark 8:36

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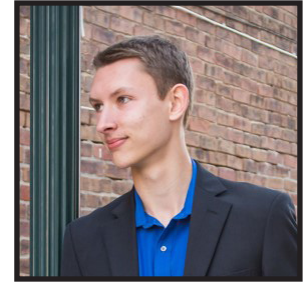
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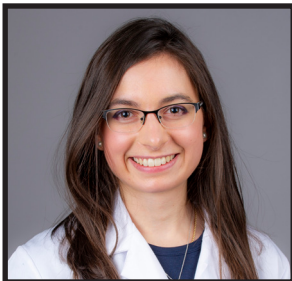
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So... What is Quaestus?

A Letter from the Editor

The following periodical includes a series of articles discussing erosions of freedom. Articles were submitted by students and professors; each article underwent peer review by a student editorial board.

Quaestus (*Kway-stus*) is a group for students who want to get people talking on important topics. Together, we form an editorial board of between five and seven undergraduate and graduate students who are advised by Dr. Scott Niederjohn and Dr. Daniel Sem. We run two writing contests, one in the fall and one in the spring. Student editors are either chosen from the winners of these contests or invited by the current editorial board after demonstrating writing ability.

Quaestus Serves Two Main Functions

First: we publish two periodicals a year, one each semester. The fall periodical involves transcriptions from speakers at CUW's annual Liberty, Faith, and Economics summit. The spring periodical includes articles by students, faculty, and Quaestus editors. Any CUW student or faculty member can publish articles through Quaestus, although they must be accepted and peer-reviewed by the editorial board. The idea is that people can read the fall periodical for inspiration, then write articles for the spring periodical based on the themes of the one from the fall. Themes generally relate to free speech, economics, healthcare, and politics.

Second: we develop and lead forums to promote conversations on contentious topics. Our general model is to select one or more experts to speak on an issue. If we can, we will invite speakers with opposing perspectives. Our speakers will present publicly on the topic, demonstrating to the student audience that a healthy and productive conversation on this topic is possible. Students always get a chance to question our speakers at the end of the forum. In the past we have led forums on racial relations, *Roe v. Wade*, educational issues, climate change, transgender ideology, and the like.

For the members of the editorial board, Quaestus serves as an excellent opportunity to practice writing, editing, and publication. There are also opportunities to interact with leading experts in various fields, as well as chances to attend and present at national and international conferences.

Ultimately our goal as an institution is to practice fruitful conversations and careful thought. Quaestus, which means profit in Latin, emphasizes ideas that are profitable for us to be thinking about and discussing. As you read the following articles, we hope you will be inspired by them into further questioning of our world, conversations about truth, and perhaps even to step into publication yourself.

Isaiah Mudge
Editor in Chief

Unthinkable: The Eliminative Power of Language Control on Human Thought

Written by: Isaiah Mudge, Editor-in-Chief



Introduction

Have you ever noticed that the First Amendment references both speech and belief together? Take a look: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech,” (U. S. Const. amend. I.). The founding fathers knew to enshrine civil discourse in the United States Constitution because they recognized a connection between language and freedom. That is, if language is controlled it results in a limited capacity to think, eroding access to freedom of belief. This paper will demonstrate that artificial controls on language—limiting, redefining, or eliminating specific words—leads to altered or reduced capacity for human thought. Finally, it will be demonstrated that while dictatorships have previously used language control to limit or alter thought, controls on language are currently being perpetuated in the United States by non-governmental groups.

George Orwell and Specific Language Control

Language control can occur either by suppression of speech or by specific alteration of words. Most frequently, language control occurs in cases where a group of people, usually a government, prevent discourse between members of a community. An example of this would be a government preventing its citizens from discussing certain topics. In such cases discourse is suppressed and prevented from occurring at all. It is also possible to control language by altering the meaning of words on a massive scale. In such circumstances specific words are selected and their meanings are limited, redefined, or eliminated. For instance if the word “love” is

eliminated or the meaning of the word is changed, then the idea of love becomes very difficult to discuss. One may not even be able to think of it. Changes in language lead to changes in thought. In this manner civil discourse is not suppressed but rather altered by removing and changing the very subject-matter which conversations can be about. This limitation, redefinition, alteration, and elimination will be called Specific Language Control (SLC). SLC will be the focus of this paper, and it will be demonstrated that SLC can effectively control populations of people by limiting capacity for thought.

George Orwell’s concept of Newspeak in 1984 demonstrates how SLC eliminates thought capacity. The government in 1984 uses SLC to exercise language control. For example, words are reduced to simple roots: ‘Bad’ becomes ‘ungood.’ ‘Excellent’ becomes ‘plusgood’ or ‘doubleplusgood.’ Names and meanings are also separated or reversed: Slogans such as ‘freedom is slavery,’ are used. ‘The Ministry of Love,’ is the name of the ministry in 1984 responsible for torture and correction of citizens. ‘The Ministry of Truth’ is responsible for disseminating Newspeak and ensuring publications do not spread information against the will of the government. The word ‘Newspeak’ itself is produced as a SLC tactic to frame language control as something new, good, and progressive. However, the whole goal of Newspeak is to reduce the range of words which exist, limiting capacity for thought. As Orwell states in 1984, “the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought[.] In the end [it] shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it,”

(Orwell, 1961, p.52). As groups of people become accustomed to new and narrower uses of language, their capacity to access ideas becomes limited to the range of vocabulary which they possess. In another essay, *Politics and the English Language* (1946), Orwell comments on specifically political language. He concludes that, “political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness.” There is, in Orwell’s mind, a direct connection between politics and SLC, between the attempt to govern humans and the attempt to control them.

One may argue that controlling language does not control human capacity for thought. It is true that one can think without language, but this form of thought is usually relegated to perceptions such as memory of a prior event. To illustrate the effects of SLC, imagine two close friends. Now imagine that neither of them have names. Instantly it will become difficult to define them. One may think of attributes that each has or remember how they visually appear. Yet it will feel that each friend has lost definiteness. SLC is used in a similar way, but rather to attack abstract ideas such as freedom, truth, or love. Removing words for these abstract concepts does not eliminate the human capacity to feel them, but without names they become indefinite. Furthermore they may be redefined. “Truth,” may refer to nothing but propaganda, “love,” may refer to torture and correction, “freedom,” may be redefined as “slavery.”

[When the very concepts which these words represent are skewed, the human capacity to understand the original idea falters.](#)

If these philosophical concepts are unconvincing, consider the historical usage of SLC to alter human thought capacity which is demonstrated in the next section.

Specific Language Control in Dictatorships

Specific Language Control has been a primary tool used by dictatorships for the

purpose of controlling thought, not just quelling conversation. This section will discuss various historical examples of SLC eroding freedom, as well as related control-tactics noted by Orwell.

Nazi Germany

The premier example of SLC and the example which inspired 1984 is Nazi Germany. At the time of Nazi takeover in 1933, the German constitution contained clauses which protected freedom of speech and press. Shortly after takeover, the Nazi regime disestablished these laws and set up a new ministry, “the Reich Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda,” (Nazi Propaganda and Censorship, n. d.). Note the use of ‘Enlightenment’ in a ministry set up to reduce freedom of thought. This reversion of meaning is classic SLC. As enlightenment becomes associated with loss of freedom, it becomes increasingly difficult for people to understand the original concept of enlightenment as attainment of truth.

The Nazi’s most effective strategy for SLC was to control education. Textbooks were removed from classrooms and remaining works were either altered or replaced with textbooks that encouraged obedience to the Nazi Party, love of Hitler, and hatred of Jews (Nazi Propaganda and Censorship, n. d.). Orwell notes control of education in 1984 as well, saying “The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron – they’ll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be,” (Orwell, 1961, p. 53).

The goal of Orwell’s concept of Newspeak, which is identical to SLC, is to destroy any literary or linguistic anchor to old understandings of words. The whole body of literature, popular usage of words, and the general public usages must all be streamlined to enforce the ideas which the government desires the populace to think. The alteration of these texts do not need to convey an opposite understanding of the original text, they must simply be rewritten or reinterpreted in order to reinforce the desired outcome for SLC. In the case of Nazi Germany, language was streamlined

in support of the Nazi party. Dictatorships have aimed not only to use SLC to alter language as it is spoken, but they also abolish and change the corpus of literature which exists in their nations. This action of SLC in education systems works to corrupt capacity for free thought by elimination of the written works that inspire it.

It is important to note that while SLC was utilized during the Nazi regime, it did not have enough time to become entirely effective. Although the Nazi party attempted to reorient the meanings of words and alter literature and education, there were certainly still Germans who held to the classic meanings of words. For SLC to be truly effective, specific words must be altered, limited, or replaced so thoroughly that their original concepts become lost.

North Korea

North Korea is the most terrifyingly successful nation in its implementation of SLC. Yeonmi Park, a North Korean defector, describes her education like this: “Our classrooms and schoolbooks were plastered with images of grotesque American GIs [...] We could never just say ‘American’—that would be too respectful. It had to be ‘American bastard,’ ‘Yankee devil,’ or ‘big-nosed Yankee.’ [...] Likewise, any mention of the Kims had to be preceded by a title or tender description,” (Park, 2016, p. 49). SLC is working here to reinforce predispositions, to encourage positive or negative thought just as Nazi Germany did. Once again, education is being used as a vehicle to push specific use of language. The specific language being reinforced is supporting the pattern of thought which the North Korean government desires its populace to have.

North Korea’s greatest success has been in its elimination of ideas. As Yeonmi Park said in an interview with TIME, in North Korea “There was no word for liberty, human rights, or even love. Because if you don’t have the words to describe something, you can’t understand the concept,” (Park, 2015). As noted above, one may still experience what love is like without words for it, or desire something akin to liberty or rights. However without language to describe these concepts one will not be able to define or

understand them well enough to think about them or discuss them. Through SLC, North Korea has wiped basic ideas out of existence.

These Specific Language Controls in North Korea reflect Orwell’s prediction that the ultimate purpose of Newspeak—which is SLC—is to eliminate ideas and control thought. As Orwell states, “the literature of the Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like ‘freedom is slavery’ when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now,” (Orwell, 1961, p. 53).

China

China has demonstrated a recent predisposition towards supporting internal SLC as well as specific examples of SLC in its broadcasts to outside nations. In 2016, for instance, President Xi established a new Chinese media policy. The policy states that “All the work by the party’s media must reflect the party’s will, safeguard the party’s authority, and safeguard the party’s unity,” being aligned in “thought, politics, and actions,” with the party (Xu & Albert, 2017). While the policy does not express redefinition outright, it does lay the groundwork for specific linguistic requirements as well as elimination of specific words. Since the Chinese government requires language which intellectually serves it, it is practicing SLC. The goal of such Chinese government policies is to ensure that certain words and ideas are not expressed, preventing these ideas from being considered.

A specific example of SLC is evident in China’s explanation of Uyghur detainment to outside nations. An article in The International Interest notes China’s description of the “forced detention of up to two million Uyghurs,” as trips to “Vocational Education and Training Centers,” (Pajunen, 2019). The description given by Chinese media describes these camps as positive for the Uyghur people. In contrast, Mihrigul Tursun, a woman who spent over six months in these training centers, described terrible conditions to CBS. She reported that, “she and other inmates were forced to take unknown medication,

including pills that made them faint and a white liquid that caused bleeding in some women and loss of menstruation in others,” (CBS, 2018). Tursun also described experiencing torture by electrocution. Due to media censorship and Great Firewall control it is difficult to uncover how China may be using SLC to alter perceptions of Uyghur incarceration with its own citizens, but in discussions with other nations it is quite evident that forced detention and torture camps are being labeled “Vocational Education and Training Centers,” for the purpose of redefinition and obfuscation. This use of SLC does not involve specific redefinition of words in order to change the thinking of China’s own populace. Rather, there is a propagandistic use of language which labels something (that is, a detainment camp) what it is not (a Vocational Education and Training Center). China’s language use is false redefinition intended to alter how outsiders are thinking about its treatment of the Uyghurs. This is SLC.

Orwell was right. His examination of SLC through the concept of Newspeak is evident in practice through historical dictatorships.

Each of these regimes utilized control of specific words, redefining them, eliminating them, or reversing their meanings in order to alter thought.

Each of these regimes used SLC to control the thoughts of its populace. In each regime, it worked. Two out of three of the examples above are still under the rule of dictatorship.

Specific Language Control in the United States

This paper has thus far examined the process by which dictatorships have limited, redefined, and eliminated language in order to control thought and render certain ideas unthinkable. The most effective tool they have used to accomplish this is not simply prevention of discourse between citizens, but specific alteration or elimination of words: Specific Language Control. SLC has been demonstrably effective in numerous historical dictatorships, eroding freedom

of thought by altering the ideas which it is possible for their populaces to access. This phenomenon is occurring in the United States, but rather than being motivated by those in legislative power, it is being willingly self-imposed by U.S. citizens acting through U.S. organizations.

American opinions demonstrate that although freedom of speech is considered virtuous, Americans are actually very willing to suppress it. A massive plurality, 90%, agree that “protecting free speech is an important part of American democracy,” (Cision US Inc, 2022). However, “About a third (34%) say colleges should ‘prohibit offensive speech that is biased against certain groups,’” (Ekins, 2017). Across political grounds, 51% of democrats support forced use of preferred pronouns, 58% of democrats believe an employee should be punished for an offensive post, and 47% of republicans support bans on building new mosques (Ekins, 2017).

Although not all of these polls qualify as support for SLC, they do demonstrate that while Americans say they support freedom of speech they are not intellectually honest. American citizens on both sides are dangerously accepting of specific ideas being banned or controlled so long as their worldview is being supported. This is not evidence of SLC itself. Rather, it indicates an underlying trend which makes the idea of language controls palatable to Americans who claim to support free speech. That is, many Americans are willing to cease supporting the free speech of others in order to promote their own intellectual ideology. It is this same predisposition, simply applied to a government, which leads government into SLC. The following specific examples demonstrate perpetuation of this trend by non-governmental groups in the West.

SLC in operation is evident in the media. Consider the language is used in The Guardian’s headline, “George Floyd killing: peaceful protests sweep America as calls for racial justice reach new heights.” Numerous other U.S. based media companies posted similar headlines. Meanwhile the Police Chief Association publicized that

2,000 officers were injured in these protests, 574 were declared riots, and 72% of police agencies experienced officers injured during them (Casiano, 2020). This real headline was posted by BBC in 2020: “27 police officers injured during largely peaceful anti-racism protests,” (Baker, 2020). That one might need to read this any more than once to notice jarring conflict between “27 police officers injured” and “largely peaceful” is itself evidence of SLC in American culture. It and similar headlines seem unobtrusive because ‘peaceful’ has been used in conjunction with ‘protest’ so much that it has become invisible. Were the headline to read “27 police officers injured during largely peaceful armed robbery,” the reader would be deeply confused. This example is equivalent to George Orwell’s ‘freedom is slavery’ noted above. Violence and peace can be used in conjunction to such an extent that one has difficulty noticing conflict between them.

United States media companies are engaging in SLC because they are utilizing specific language choices in order to alter thought. It is true that the majority of protests during 2020 were peaceful. That said, the objective of media companies has been to associate the idea of peacefulness with the idea of protests, whether or not the protests were peaceful. This was an attempt to alter the meaning of “protest,” such that it could be made to hold the connotation of being peaceful. SLC is not only elimination, but also usage and redefinition. The attempt to exclude any violent connotations from “protest,” and replace them with only peaceful connotations is an SLC attempt to alter and control the understanding of the word “protest,” such that it is no longer associated with any possible violence. Rather than being done by government edict, however, this SLC is being practiced by non-governmental corporations within the United States. The results are not as drastic as demonstrated in Germany or North Korea, but the intent is still to alter the way a populace thinks by altering the language which it uses.

The APA guidelines for inclusive language in writing offer another example of purposeful

SLC redefinition without government authority. These official guidelines published by the American Psychological Association exist to, in their words, to “further infuse principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion,” into American culture (Akbar, n.d.). The intent to alter belief by altering language should be evident in such a statement.

For example, the APA guidelines instruct writers not to use “the term ‘preferred pronouns’ because this implies a choice about one’s gender,” (Akbar, n.d.). They also provide the following outline (top of next page). These suggestions imply an underlying ideological conflict which is surfacing as SLC. The American Psychological Association evidently promotes one ideology regarding ideas of sex and gender, denoted by the suggestion of gender being unchosen and sex being assigned. To fight ideas of determinate sex (birth sex) or decision-based gender, the APA has opted to encourage that specific language be used in accordance with its own ideology. Over time, should “assigned sex” entirely take the place of “birth sex,” sex will become viewed as something that is assigned. This may seem minor compared to elimination of ideas like love and liberty in North Korea, but the idea is the same. It is an attempt to eliminate language over time in order to encourage trends in thought.

One may argue that speaking of protests as violent or sex as determinate are both factually wrong, and that United States media and the APA are simply attempting to correct falsehood, rather than alter general thought in some subliminal way. It is true that language does change over time to reflect the culture or general belief of a population. This process has included printing and publication for several centuries, so it is not unusual for publications to posit ideas and argue for them. What is reflective of SLC in the above media and APA publications is the attempt to alter or manually adjust meaning of words. U.S. media companies have engaged in massive and broad attempts to create associations in accordance with a narrative. The APA has linguistic authority as an authoritative writing format. It has used it to alter linguistic choice by others in accordance

Sexual orientation and gender diversity: Terms to avoid and suggested alternatives

Term to avoid	Suggested alternative	Comment
birth sex natal sex	assigned sex sex assigned at birth	
born a girl, born female born a boy, born male	assigned female at birth (AFAB) assigned male at birth (AMAB)	

with its beliefs. In either case specific alterations are being made to linguistic use in an attempt to change not just the opinions of a populace, but the foundational way a populace thinks. It would be acceptable if these organizations were making arguments in support of their beliefs. Instead SLC is being utilized in an attempt to alter human thought through linguistic redefinition and elimination.

Conclusion

Use of language in the United States is at a point where it is highly susceptible to SLC elimination, alteration, and redefinition. American citizens are united in defense of their First Amendment Rights yet they fail to recognize when they themselves are impeding them. SLC has been used by dictatorships to redefine language, change ideas, and alter capacity for thought.

Human freedoms have been eroded and the capacity to think and believe has been worn away. This is slowly occurring in the United States, but now with full approval of portions of the U.S. population.

This is concerning since U.S. citizens will not fight language controls which they accept. That is, language control is more difficult to detect when it confirms beliefs which one already has, but it is still language control. If the trend is not stopped, SLC in the United States can and will render some ideas unthinkable over time.

The first solution is to realize that freedom of speech applies to all people, it cannot be

used selectively, and it forces people to confront difficult ideas. It is important to note that free speech can protect thought by ensuring that language is not artificially controlled. This leaves the pursuit of truth to conversation between people, rather than government edict. However, if freedom of speech is only used to protect the ideas with which one already agrees it loses its power. The effectiveness of free discourse in society is its power to force everyone to struggle and reconcile with new and uncomfortable ideas. The attempt to alter beliefs by altering language itself bypasses confrontation with other ideas. It is the height of arrogance for it assumes that one must be right about one's own beliefs. By engaging in discussion and interacting with different ideas one is forced to acknowledge that he may be wrong. This paper may be wrong, but in presenting ideas honestly it gives anyone who disagrees the opportunity to refine it with opposing thoughts.

The second important solution towards defense against SLC is to recognize SLC's effectiveness and to practice critical thought. Especially for organizations which have some sort of governance or power over the way in which language is used, the temptation to flex control over linguistic use is strong. It is easier to sway massive populations by controlling the way they think than it is to honestly persuade them. It is important to recognize that SLC exists and to approach ideas critically, especially in areas related to media and language dissemination. Practice critical thought by questioning word choices and the accuracy of statements. It is even more important for one to do this to ideas that

he agrees with. Finally, emotional attachments to ideas make them difficult to examine. It is neither necessary nor always healthy to abandon these attachments, but especially with emotionally driven ideas one must be able to discuss them with another. Discourse and critical thought allow for two people to help each other and to mutually grow.

A society resistant to falsehood and tyranny is a society capable of discussing difficult ideas in the pursuit of truth. There are dangerous trends occurring in the United States, but it is not too late to stop them. Fight for truth and be uncomfortable. This nation has been privileged to think freely for so long that it has forgotten the dangers of losing that privilege. Ideas are not guaranteed, so struggle with them. They may someday become unthinkable.

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The Destructive New Definition of “Woman”

Written by: Anna Young, Business and Marketing Editor



Womanhood is a holistic experience. It is more than dresses and heels. It is more than make-up and a higher pitched voice. Stereotypical qualities, although popular among traditional women, do not make up what a woman is at all. The definition of “woman” according to the Merriam Webster Dictionary is, “an adult human female” (Woman Definition & Meaning, 2023). Biologically, a woman has two X chromosomes, determined from the moment of conception. In addition to her biology, a woman is gifted in unique ways in comparison to her male counterparts. A woman’s emotions, often seen as her weakness, guide her to deep friendships and nurturing relationships. A woman’s physical weakness is brought up as a topic of conversation in athletic circles, but her strength is never doubted after 27 hours of grueling labor and a traumatic birth. Where men falter, women often stand strong. That is the beauty of her biology and complementarian design. Women are often found with high amounts of emotional intelligence, offering wise counsel, educating, encouraging, and providing support and hospitality to those in need. Where men may be regarded as the stronger sex, women have a quiet strength that raises, encourages, and blesses those around them. Many women are given the task and opportunity to influence the most impressionable of minds, children, and raise up generations.

A woman today has opportunities her great-grandmother only dreamed of. First and Second Wave feminism fought for a woman’s right to vote. Feminists fought for a woman to receive equal opportunity and pay in the work-

place, to participate in the gift of higher education, and to play sports at those educational institutions. However, all these successes are under attack. In fact, it looks like everything women have fought for is regressing in a dangerous way. Fourth wave Feminism, which includes transgender ideology, has brought the very definition of womanhood under attack, claiming that anyone can be a woman if they so choose. The transgender movement believes womanhood can be manufactured through hormones, changes in physical appearance, or surgeries that mutilate reproductive organs. However, the truth is crystal clear: womanhood is a lifelong experience, not a choice.

Doreen Denny, Senior Advisor for Concerned Women for America, spoke on many of the issues that the transgender movement poses to biological women at a recent Quaestus event, saying, “Men may want to wear our heels, but they will never walk in our shoes.” She explained when biological men are included in the definition of women, it is not inclusion in the slightest. It becomes the exclusion of biological women from their own sex—losing out on potential opportunities. The transgender movement is fighting to strip biological women of all that the early feminists fought for: their titles; their scholarships; their trophies; their locker rooms; and most of all, their unique identity. They do this in the name of “women’s rights” and “equality.” The erosion of women’s freedom and rights is happening on multiple levels: in the sporting arena, in pop culture, and on the national stage under the current administration.

Biological males who self-identify as women have certainly ruffled feathers from high school to collegiate to professional level sports. It is no secret that biological males hold an inherent advantage over biological females in categories of strength, muscle mass, lung capacity and overall athletic performance. Lia Thomas, formerly known as Will Thomas, is a Division I Swimmer for the University of Pennsylvania. Thomas's collegiate swimming career began on the UPENN men's team. Thomas was ranked in the mid-500s nationally for the men's 200 freestyle. After only one year of hormones, a changed name, and a new self-identity, Thomas joined the women's swim team at UPENN. In 2022, Thomas took the national title for 200-freestyle at the NCAA Division I Women's Swimming and Diving Championships (Gamber, 2022). Sports have always been set up as a binary to accommodate for the inherent biological differences between biological men and women. Allowing the lines to blur of this biological binary makes women the victim, not the victor, time and time again. The biological woman that came in second at the national championship deserved that trophy that Thomas brought home. Women deserve a fair sports experience where the best woman may win. It becomes impossible when a man is thrown into the mix.

It might come as no surprise that the incorporation of biological males into women's categories has been prevalent in pop-culture for almost a decade, as pop-culture is known for pushing the boundaries on what is socially acceptable and drives narratives that eventually seep their way into the minds of everyday people. In 2015, Caitlyn Jenner, a biological man formerly known as Bruce Jenner, received Glamour's Woman of the Year Award. (Caitlyn Jenner's Glamour Women of the Year 2015 Award Acceptance Speech: Read It Here, 2015). Although this award may seem insignificant, it is important to notice the reality of what truly happened in 2015. For the first time in history, Glamour made the statement that best example of womanhood was found in a biological male. Because Caitlyn received this award, a biological woman did not. However, it does not end with magazine award titles. In March of 2022, Admiral

Rachel Levine, U.S. Assistant Secretary for Health of the Department of Health and Human Services and the head of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, received the title and award of being the nation's first sworn in female four-star officer, yet was born a biological male (WKRC, 2022). The issue is not with Rachel's success and service to country. The issue is that when a biological woman does become a sworn-in four-star officer, it will not matter. A biological male has already taken the credit. These are just a few examples of where biological women have been disenfranchised, invalidated, and left out.

The issue of the inclusion of biological males into women's categories is deeper than losing a swimming competition or not receiving an award. The Biden administration released its proposed changes to Title IX, a title initially implemented to prevent sex-based discrimination. Title IX requires equal educational benefits and opportunities for students "on the basis of sex." The U.S. Department of Education officially released the Biden Title IX Rule for public comment in the summer of 2022, and the changes proposed are more detrimental to the future well-being of biological women than anything seen before because it denies the very definition and identity of women. The new Title IX rejects the truth that "sex" refers to a biological male or biological female. "Discrimination on the basis of sex" now extends to "discrimination on the basis of sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, pregnancy or related conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity," (Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation, 2021).

If implemented, schools would be required to affirm and accommodate all "gender identities." Biological males would be allowed into all previous female-only safe spaces. This "gender identity" mandate extends to all activities and programs, including locker rooms, restrooms, rape crisis centers, housing, athletic programs, and more.

Additionally, female students would lose their legal right to a fair sports experience. Protecting biological females would conflict with the “gender identity” mandate, giving biological males self-identifying as girls the right to take their place on the podium. The reality is that when biological males are allowed to compete with biological females, biological females lose. Finally, if implemented, any student or professor who believes in the scientific meaning of sex or believes that womanhood is strictly for biological women could be charged with sex-based harassment. Those in support of changes to Title IX claim that it is an inclusive change. However, excluding biological women from opportunities and safe spaces is not inclusive in the slightest. More importantly, these changes violate the rights of biological women to speak freely to defend themselves on this difficult and delicate subject.

There are only a handful of female athletes across the country that are challenging the proposed Title IX changes, protesting the NCAA, and demanding fair sports to return. Most high-school and collegiate level female athletes are not standing up due to fear of being labeled “transphobic,” being canceled, losing their athletic scholarships, or even putting their own safety at risk. If the proposed Title IX changes are implemented, biological women will lose their right to truthfully speak up for their own sex and rights entirely. When a society weaponizes language, it shuts down civil discourse. Carl Trueman explains why this is the case in his book *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*:

“A highly psychologized era will accord increasing importance to words as means of oppression. And this represents a serious challenge to one of the foundations of liberal democracy: freedom of speech. Once harm and oppression are regarded as being primarily psychological categories, freedom of speech then becomes part of the problem, not the solution, because words become potential weapons.” (Trueman, 2020)

On an issue as fundamental and important as this, the answer should be more speech, more discourse, and more conversation. Freedom of speech is necessary for women’s rights to be

protected. It was only because of the conversation being legally possible that women gained suffrage in the first place. Unity does not happen through stifling free speech. Our society is grappling with the issues of gender identity and gender dysphoria. These are serious issues that deserve the space and freedom to be discussed without repercussions. The Title IX changes prioritize the right of a man to say he is a woman over the fundamental right of a woman to exercise freedom of speech to speak truthfully about womanhood and her own identity.

It is important to speak and act with compassion surrounding those who identify as transgender and suffer with gender dysphoria. It is equally as important to protect biological women and ensure that their opportunities are not stripped away. One cannot solve discrimination with more discrimination or exclusion with more exclusion. If the government or the highest court of law include biological males in their legal definition of “woman,” its laws will not have the capacity to protect a woman. If the right to freely discuss womanhood and gender identity is taken away, womanhood will not survive. The reduction of womanhood to outward appearance, use of hormones, or a changed reproductive organ is not only biologically impossible and factually false, but dangerous to the survival of a civil and moral society. The future of womanhood is on the line. Womanhood is a lifelong experience, not a costume to be tried on. Doreen Denny’s quote deserves to be said once more: “Men may want to wear our heels, but they will never walk in our shoes.”

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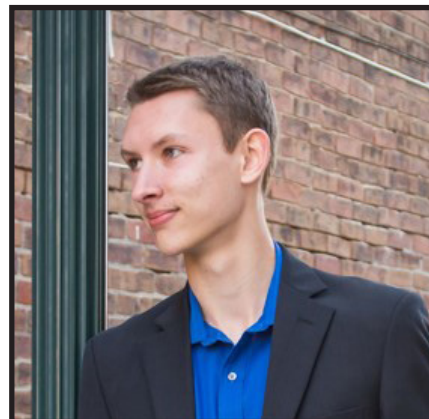
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Faith in the Face of Tyranny

Written by: Ben Dubke, Senior Editor



Introduction

The twentieth century was marred by human atrocities at a massive scale. Several authoritarian regimes committed severe human rights abuses which came to be described by a newly coined term: genocide. The foremost example is the Holocaust, but when the Nazis first came to power, no one could have predicted the evils they would perform. The focus of this essay is the experience of the Christian church under Nazi Germany. The goal is not to draw direct parallels between Nazi Germany and contemporary debates, but to investigate the history of the 1930s German church in order to learn how the church should react when the government infringes upon foundational freedoms. In short, we will discover the importance of separating the church's eternal message from political entanglements and of courageous Christian leaders who are committed to Christ above all earthly agendas. Due to the breadth of the source material, this essay will focus on the German Protestant churches.

Church-State Relations

To understand the struggles between churches and Nazi government which unfolded during the 1930s, we must begin with some background information about the existing religious situation in Germany. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Germany was divided into "Land churches"—Protestant church bodies of regional territories. Unlike the vast hierarchies of the Catholic and Orthodox churches, the Land churches inherited a tradition of local church

governance reaching back to 1555, when the Peace of Augsburg established that territorial princes would decide the religion of their principalities (Helmreich, 1979, p. 23).

For centuries, church operations in Germany had been intertwined with civil government. This relationship was dramatically different than the modern American idea of separation of church and state. For example, state governments supported the Land churches with direct subsidies, making the churches reliant on the civil government for daily operating expenses. In later years, Hitler's regime would exploit this relationship by withholding salaries from pastors who resisted the spread of Nazism in the church (Herman, 1943, pp. 167-177).

Another way Hitler gained control over the Land churches was by influencing church elections. In 1933, he pushed for the creation of a nation-wide organization known in English as the Reich Church, to be overseen by a single leader, the Reich bishop. With Hitler's support, Ludwig Müller, a Nazi, was elected as the first Reich bishop (Helmreich, 1979, p. 135). The Reich Church operated as an arm of the Nazi government, exerting pressure on Land churches to support Nazi policies. One way Müller accomplished this was the "muzzling decree," issued in 1934, which banned pastors from addressing political issues in their preaching (Green, 2007, pp. 91-92). The Land churches' close-knit relationship with civil government left them vulnerable to tyrannical infringements on

religious freedom.

By contrast, the American church today is positioned well to preach to the state. Some Christians lament the separation of church and state, but this arrangement provides the leverage the church needs to wield moral authority in society. Since the church is free from state control in America, the church can more effectively criticize the state when necessary. The church should never stoop to the level of a mere political actor, but it must remember its responsibility to proclaim scriptural teaching against the government when it oversteps the bounds of God's law by violating God-given human rights.

Governmental Attitudes Towards Christianity

At the beginning, most church leaders thought the Nazi government would be friendly toward Christianity. Hitler's administration even restored religious instruction in schools, reversing a trend of school secularization (Green, 2007, p. 59). The Nazi Party platform since the 1920s had promoted "Positive Christianity," meaning the general Christian faith rather than a specific sectarian confession.

Over time, however, Nazi rhetoric revealed that they viewed the church as nothing more than a tool for unifying the German people behind their political agenda. The vague term "Positive Christianity" morphed into a nationalistic religion with the Führer at the head. Stewart W. Herman (1943), a pastor who experienced the church struggle firsthand, summarizes, "Religious faith is, in Nazi eyes, merely a political instrument for controlling masses of people," (p. 98). The Nazis outwardly promoted Christianity, but it was a version of Christianity that was private, between the individual and God. As seen in Müller's muzzling decree, the Nazi version of Christianity had no authority or leverage to address matters of public policy.

The American church today should view political entanglements with caution. For much of American history, Christianity has existed in an uneasy alliance with American government, as

evidenced by patriotic hymns, American flags in sanctuaries, and the ubiquitous concluding remark of political speeches, "God bless America." But these tokens of American civic religion bear only superficial resemblance to confessional Christianity. These symbols do little harm when they express a general sense of patriotism and national pride, but the danger is that political actors will be tempted to use them to co-opt the cultural power of religion for their own temporal ends. In reality, the Christian faith is eternal. It transcends national borders and political agendas. The church should be wary that any association with political causes does not reduce its confession of faith or distract from its ultimate purpose.

Education

Hitler's focus on the hearts and minds of German's youth was another reason he was so successful in gaining the people's loyalty. For instance, in 1936, the Nazis made membership in the Hitler Youth compulsory for all German young people. By 1938, the government had banned church youth programs, private schools, and homeschooling, subjecting every German child to Nazi indoctrination through public schools. As Lutzer (2010) summarizes, "Hitler believed, quite rightly, that he who controls the youth controls the future," (p. 99).

Herman (1943) reports in his account that the Nazis developed nationalistic rituals meant to displace traditional religious ceremonies. In place of Christian baptism, the Nazi baptismal ceremony included an infant's father certifying the child's Aryan ancestry and dedicating the child to the German nation (pp. 22-23). The government also instituted a "Pledge Day" to take the place of confirmation. This ceremony featured nationalistic hymns and readings, culminating with the fourteen-year-olds pledging loyalty to Hitler and the Nazi Party (pp. 26-29). These rituals were part of the Nazi attempt to direct a person's life from cradle to grave.

Today, education and ceremony remain powerful methods for influencing the broader culture. As American culture becomes increasingly hostile to faith, what

better way to raise up the next generation of Christian leaders than to educate them in Christian schools?

Beyond formal education, young people can be integrated into the life of the church through youth programs and events. A healthy approach to religious ceremonies like baptism, confirmation, and weekly worship will train children to appreciate the Christian faith as something which transcends any earthly organization or political movement.

Individual Resistance

Some Christians heroically resisted Nazi influence in Germany. Many today remember the efforts of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor and professor, is famous for his response to the 1933 church elections which brought in a wave of Nazis, including Ludwig Müller as Reich bishop. He preached a sermon urging the church to stand firm in its beliefs even in the face of persecution, culminating with the rousing words, “Church, remain a church! . . . Confess, confess, confess!” (Bethge, 1970, p. 228).

Bonhoeffer became a leader in the Confessing Church, an organization of Christian churches in Germany committed to resisting the Nazis and standing on the truth of God’s Word. The Confessing Church established an unsanctioned seminary, and Bonhoeffer began to teach there when the Gestapo banned him from lecturing at the University of Berlin (Sifton & Stern, 2013, p. 51). As the years went on, hundreds of Confessing Church pastors were imprisoned when they refused to comply with restrictions (Sifton & Stern, 2013, pp. 54-55).

Bonhoeffer’s brother-in-law, Hans von Dohnanyi, is less well-known. Dohnanyi was a lawyer who worked as an administrator in the Nazi military-intelligence service. His means of resistance was to secretly record detailed documentation of the government’s crimes, with the purpose of facilitating legal proceedings against Nazi leaders after their eventual defeat (Sifton & Stern, 2013, pp. 46-47). Both

Bonhoeffer and Dohnanyi later became involved in an unsuccessful plot to kill Hitler. They were eventually imprisoned, sent to a concentration camp, and executed on Hitler’s orders just weeks before Germany surrendered to the Allies.

Like Bonhoeffer and Dohnanyi, Christians today are called to resist tyranny and defend freedom from within their vocations in life. The institutional church risks diluting its message when it enters the political sphere, but this only heightens the responsibility of individual Christians to engage in political resistance, according to their conscience. Just as Bonhoeffer resisted the Nazis by preaching, teaching, and writing, Christian pastors should preach the Word of God and provide spiritual counsel to those who suffer from abuses of freedom, even in the face of persecution. No less than clergy, ordinary Christian laypeople like Dohnanyi can find creative ways to serve their neighbors and resist those who would encroach on foundational freedoms.

Conclusion

Lutzer (2010) describes the conflict between Christianity and governments which set themselves up as false gods:

“On the one side is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who died on a Roman cross, executed for the sins of the world. On the other side are any number of lesser gods and other crosses that promise a false salvation. These other gods are almost always embodied in the state; they most often come to us dressed in the garb of Caesar. And in the end they are committed to crushing religious freedom,” (p. 11).

Biblical teaching and the historical example of the German church struggle agree that Christ cannot be combined with earthly agendas. He stands alone as King of kings and Lord of lords. When civil governments or cultural movements become opponents of freedom and human rights, they become opponents of God, the source of human dignity and freedom. When these enemies arise, the church’s first concern is to remain loyal to Jesus as Lord by confessing the biblical faith, even if threatened with persecution.

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An Unconscionable Practice

Written by: Harrison Hulse, Publication Editor



The existentialist is not a new kind of philosopher by any stretch of the imagination. Beginning back in the 19th century, more than a handful of curious minds have dared to speculate about the nature of human existence as one which springs from within rather than given from people or institutions without. As of late, however, our Western social consciousness has become fascinated with a particular remaking of the self, known most commonly as transgender ideology. The transgender movement has blazed across our societal institutions with fervor such that even the healthcare industry has been transformed by its tenets and adherents. Transgender-identifying people commonly desire to correct the mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and gender identity by altering their physical bodies and appearance. Sometimes, one will change their legal name, personal pronouns, clothing, and haircut to accomplish this. Often, many transgender people go further and seek out body altering hormones and surgeries to capture their true nature for everybody else to see them as they see themselves. In the West, the healthcare industry has enthusiastically facilitated this process for all who desire a new identity with great consequences to its mission of healing and care.

For instance, the United States government currently compels health insurance providers to cover transgender affirming procedures for fear of discrimination charges. If women can be prescribed hormones for birth control or breast reductions for appearances' sake, then they must also be available for anyone who desires to change their gender, says the government. Many healthcare professionals in the United States are forced into providing this care by mandate from the government even if they object to the practice

on account of their moral convictions about transgender affirming procedures. Robert George defines these qualms, which he calls rights of conscience, as “the right to do what one judges oneself to be under obligation to do, whether one welcomes the obligation or must overcome strong aversion to fulfill it,” (George, 2013). George argues that our society cannot exist without the ability for individuals to exercise their right to pursue moral action and abstain from immoral action. This right, however, is currently under threat for healthcare workers who are required to capitulate to the demands of even our children, who have been swept up into the transgender movement at a rapid pace and do not understand the far-reaching and harmful implications of their requests for a new identity. Therefore, I will argue that on the basis of this right of conscience, healthcare professionals should not be compelled to conduct any transgender affirming procedures and should be barred from doing so for children.

In his great work *Conscience and its Enemies*, Robert. P. George has synthesized the core component of any right of conscience from the great ideas of Aristotle and Kant, writing that “...The natural human capacities for reason and freedom are fundamental to the dignity of human beings—the dignity that is protected by human rights. The basic good of human nature are the goods of a rational creature—a creature who, unless impaired or prevented from doing so, naturally develops and exercises capacities for deliberation, judgment, and choice.” (George, 2013). At the fundamental level, rights of conscience help man to determine what is best because they harness the innate, rational powers he possesses in order to judge his course of action before the rule of what he knows to be true about the world’s order. A power with such

awesome potential for the good of many suffering children today can only be helpful if the health professionals who must make these judgments are allowed to exercise it through their rights of conscience. Transgender affirmation procedures fail to muster any credibility under this sort of scrutiny, and in order for doctors and pharmacists alike to best care for their patients, they should be allowed to deny them the devastating consequences that lie within.

The recent explosion of transgender identification has led to an equally unprecedented expansion of transgender specific procedures in the United States, which cause severe damage to the people who receive them, especially children. It is critically important to recognize that the disastrous consequences and outcomes for children are plentiful and evident after only a few years of this practice. First, the physical consequences of hormone treatments in pubescent children cause irreversible damage to their developing bodies, including permanent infertility and a host of other serious health concerns. The reportedly safe “hormone blocker,” which is used to stop the normal growth patterns in a transgender-identifying child, is otherwise known as Lupron, the choice drug of law enforcement when chemically castrating sex offenders and cause of “osteoporosis, loss of sexual function, interference with brain development, and possibly suppression of peak IQ” in children who are subjected to it (Shrier, 2021). These side effects are significant complications for a growing child and present serious problems for the rest of his life. These he cannot see, and it is the duty of the presiding physician to shield him from a vantage point of knowledge, reason, and experience as a healthcare professional. When the government removes the professional’s ability to fulfill this duty, it has restricted the capability for good to occur and failed to look out for the best interests of those transgender people it hopes to benefit.

After hormone blockers, replacement hormones usually follow in the standard treatment plan for medical transition. These batches of testosterone and estrogen are far beyond what human bodies would normally produce—on the

order of ten to forty times—and drape another layer of health complications over those brought about by hormone blockers, including “muscle aches, painful cramping due to endometriosis, increased sweating, moodiness, and aggression, and increased risk of diabetes, stroke, blood clots, cancer, and heart disease,” (Shrier, 2021). Adding gasoline to a raging fire only fuels its destructive potential, and cross-sex hormones similarly exacerbate the issues of hormone blockers on a child’s rapidly growing list of long-term medical complications. Since a child has little capacity to look past their immediate desire to the dreadful consequences of this kind of hormone therapy, a good physician overseeing the treatment must be enabled to analyze and properly adjudicate the situation in the child’s stead for his protection.

Transgender surgeries damage children’s bodies and minds even more than drug therapy. Beyond the internal horrors that a drug can induce in a person, external surgeries are wielded to mold the “transgender” child’s body into an approximation of the opposite sex at great risk to the child’s well-being. When a young girl has her breasts removed, she loses more than just two lumps of flesh on her chest. She loses a complex system of healthy tissues which may later allow her to serve her children’s needs through the milk they can provide—in other words, a part of her body with proper biological function. Doctors who then provide this removal on the aesthetic request of their patients definitionally injure their patients, work in violation of the Hippocratic Oath and practice medicine in a manner which, in any other case, would be forbidden in medicine across the board. Until very recently, this part of the transition process was commonly reserved until adulthood (18 years old), but new reports have revealed that this bar is lowering as low as 13 years old in places such as California, where young teenage girls can now choose to surgically remove their breasts with little to no parental oversight. If a woman visited the doctor and reported that she had been cutting herself in response to a depressive disorder, a doctor would never be allowed to facilitate her self-harm by wielding the knife itself. In much the same way, transgender surgeries are also destroying

children who undergo them because they, for an unjustifiable reason, inflict physical injury upon a child innocently seeking care who needs not affirmation, but true concern and attention for his or her identity crisis.

But what happens when transgender procedures appear to be the only antidote in the face of potential tragedy? Many proponents posit that transgender procedures have shown to dramatically reduce the risk of suicide for the children who undergo them and should therefore be encouraged. The studies that would vindicate this claim, however, instead call it into question. A 30-year study on adult transgender people in Sweden concluded that transgender treatment does not reduce suicidal ideation. In fact, their results showed that, on average, participants had tripled their risk for death by altering their bodies in this way (Dhejne et al., 2011). More recently, a 2019 report revealed that even puberty suppression for adolescent natal girls did not decrease their likelihood of self-harm or suicide (Tavistock and Portman, 2015).

Transgender procedures create a false sense of recovery or healing and don't seem to fully address the core issue, acting as a rough bandage that hides a deeper, more serious health concern. If healthcare professionals are obligated to seek out the best interests and provide the best care for the child, they should not be forced to stop at a method which fails to solve even its principal concern.

Alternatively, proponents of transgender procedures also argue on the basis of the autonomy of the children involved, elevating their sense of self and ability to determine it to the level of an immovable right. Yet children while they are children do not have full autonomy over their lives, and need the special consideration and guidance of the adults in their lives to help them. Children lack the fully developed prefrontal cortex that enables one to be autonomous through effective long-term, monumental decision making (Anderson, 2019). In layman's terms, Ryan T. Anderson asserts the same idea: Even the loudest

proponents of transgenderism admit that children are different from adults, so then why should we treat them as adults in this specific category? We restrict the autonomy of children in many other ways for the same reason we don't allow them to drive, purchase drugs and alcohol, or anything else which will certainly harm them due to their development. The same principle of beneficence for children, therefore, should be applied equally in this case, too, even if the circumstances deal with internal factors instead of those we can see.

Beyond the injury and error of the transgender procedures themselves, the doctors who perform them are also in gross error because their actions do not abide by the common conscience of the medicinal practice, enabling them to fall into poor practice and enact the grave injury and error in transgender procedures. In principle, the common conscience of medicine holds that the caregiver will first concern himself with the best interests of the patient in his healthcare-giving capacity, which has led many skilled professionals to give great care to patients in dire need of precise and thoughtful treatment. The codes of care across medicine run with this theme, including in particular the ethical obligations of the pharmacist. The pharmacist should seek to use their knowledge of medication to help their patients achieve the greatest possible quality of health in a trustworthy manner and keep their patient's well-being as their highest concern (Kaebnick, 2016). Hormone blockers, as we have seen, create lifelong issues for the patient when a pharmacist knowingly prescribes them for the sake of gender transition, and thus, means that the pharmacist is in violation of the medicinal conscience: the professional fusion of conviction and duty.

The same duties appear again in the Hippocratic Oath, which is the oldest and most widely recognized treatise on medical ethics. In it, a physician swears the following:

"I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures [that] are required, avoiding those twin traps of overtreatment and therapeutic nihilism.... Most especially must I tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given me to save a life, all

thanks. But it may also be within my power to take a life; this awesome responsibility must be faced with great humbleness and awareness of my own frailty. Above all, I must not play at God.” (Practo, 2015).

The declarations listed contain promises that ring with the same sound of the pharmacist’s duties. Physicians pledge to benefit the sick, preserve and value life most highly, and never act as though they can imitate God and His incredible creative powers. With these words, the physician assumes a kind of humility and deference to the greater responsibilities of his calling. Thus, it follows that the physician will, by this vow, act to cure any malady and protect the health of his patient in all that he does. Therefore, a doctor cannot abide by his duty to the Hippocratic Oath and also perform surgeries like double mastectomies that intentionally deprive the sick of their healthy body parts and act as though he can actually change the gender of his patient on a superficial level, or in other words, play the part of God. Considering the great danger transgender procedures pose to children who do not understand the ramifications of these decisions, they must be protected from such dangers as a matter of the doctor’s duty and their adherence to the right of conscience expressed in the medical field.

Finally, the medicinal conscience of care has historically promoted effective and humane treatment by providing a simple, objective baseline for professional judgement. Gilbert Meilaender illustrates how this works by explaining established guidelines for refusing any sort of treatment to a patient. In this section, he focuses on the criterion of efficacy: “First, a treatment may be refused if it is useless.... In any case, no one is obligated to pursue treatments that are not expected to be helpful, and to refuse such treatment is exactly that: the refusal of a treatment, not the rejection of the gift of life,” (Meilaender, 2020). This means that if a medicine or treatment would not help to cure the patient’s ailment, or if an ongoing treatment ceases to work as a patient’s condition progresses, then the physician may refuse to continue treatment of the same kind on the grounds that doing so would no longer count as care for their patient. Since transgender

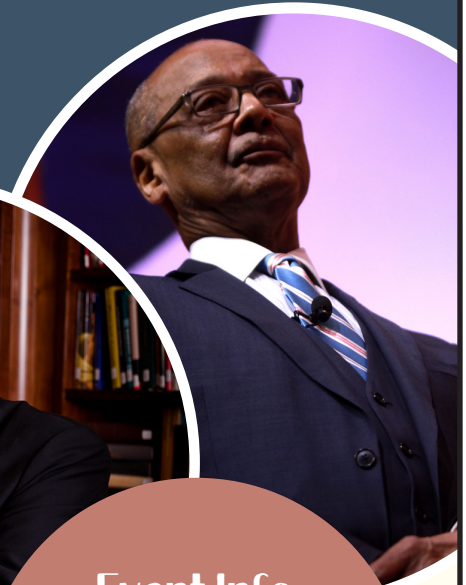
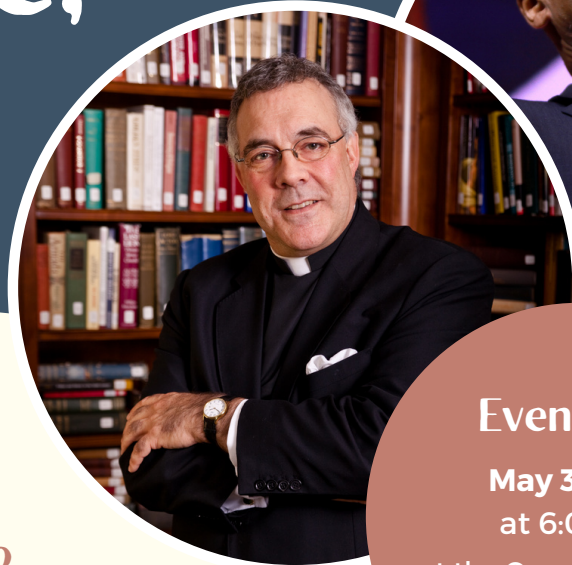
treatments for children actually harm them severely in the long term, physicians ought to be able to refuse them by the criterion of efficacy or utility, which is ultimately drawn from the conscience of care native to medicine. It is clear that the common conscience of the pharmacist and doctor dictates that care for and treatment of someone’s health undergird the pharmaceutical practice. Healthcare workers who provide treatments that do much greater harm to children than good to a vulnerable population in fact fail to care for their patients, violate its terms, and must be given the option to do the greater good for the children given into their care.

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An Evening of Hope,

Because Hope is Everything.



Hosting Father Robert Sirico & Mr. Robert L. Woodson

The Freedom & Virtue Institute and the Free Enterprise Center of Concordia University cordially invite you to an evening with two American heroes, Father Robert Sirico, founder of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Freedom in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Mr. Robert Woodson, founder of the Woodson Center in Washington, D.C.

Father Sirico and Bob Woodson will present on topics concerning the common good of our society, including how to address poverty and bring racial and social reconciliation. They will also engage in a dialogue together and with the audience.

Attendance is free. This event will benefit the Milwaukee expansion of the Self-Reliance Clubs operating in middle and high schools in the area. We are partnering with the Free Enterprise Center in pursuit of creating a movement for freedom, with young entrepreneurs at the helm. If you choose to make a donation toward the expansion, it will be greatly appreciated.

The Self-Reliance Clubs engage students at their schools and support their entrepreneurial initiatives. Students sell products they create to meet their educational needs. The idea is to assist them in becoming the protagonists of their own stories of success, instead of remaining as scenery in the drama of our good intentions.

To register, visit: cuw-hope.eventbrite.com

Event Info:
May 3, 2023
at 6:00 PM
at the Concordia Center
for Environmental
Stewardship

Is Christianity Compatible with Economic Freedom?

Reflections on Dr. Anne Bradley's Visit to Concordia University Wisconsin

Dr. Anne Rathbone Bradley, an expert in the relationship between systematic biblical theology and economic freedom, gave an engaging talk at CUW on March 1, 2023.

Dr. Bradley is Vice President for Academic Affairs at Washington D.C.'s The Fund for American Studies. Her talk was part of the "Economics, Politics, and Philosophy on The Bluff" speaker series presented by CUW's Free Enterprise Center. A recording of the entire lecture is available to view at cuw.edu/cfec.



This essay will reflect upon the ideas presented in Bradley's talk using a dialog between Dr. Scott Niederjohn and CUW student Harrison Hulse. Dr. Niederjohn serves as the director of the CUW Free Enterprise Center and as Professor of Economics.

Harrison Hulse, an Applied Theology and Theological Languages student and pre-seminary candidate, is publication editor of Quaestus.

Dr. Niederjohn: Harrison, what did you think of Dr. Bradley's approach to the first three chapters of Genesis?

Harrison Hulse: I thought it was fascinating and well founded. Dr. Bradley started with the proper portrait of humanity as found in those Genesis passages. She emphasized the scriptural approach to what makes us human; we are made in the image and likeness of God. From this follows how we are to be human; service to care for God's Creation and one another. Lastly, of course, sin has complicated our interpersonal affairs; work to serve is now difficult, but still mandated by our image-bearing identity even as it is distorted by sin.

Dr. Niederjohn: How does this relate to our world today, where identity has seemingly become so important?

Harrison Hulse: For better or for worse, to so many people today, identity has become man's purpose-defining metric in all his affairs. In this new setting, Christians must have a sound understanding of who God created them to be in the ontological sense. I thought Dr. Bradley's presentation excelled at showing the consequences of such an understanding. She followed the logical trail that starts with man's understanding of himself as an image-bearer designed to carry out the service with which God has charged him.

Dr. Niederjohn: In Dr. Bradley's worldview, that becomes an organizing principle for life, doesn't it?

Harrison Hulse: Yes, certainly. It colors the manner in which we view all our actions, forcing us to ask regularly, "Am I merely seeking my own pleasure and comfort at the expense of others around me, or do I have a higher calling that inverts my selfish desires towards my neighbor and God Himself?"

Dr. Niederjohn: What did you think of Dr. Bradley's treatment of the features of humanity?
Harrison Hulse: It was an effective way for her to engage with Scripture beyond Genesis to reveal subsidiary truths about human nature that give us

insight into how we tend to act. She underscored four different features of humanity (human dignity, agency, reason, and uniqueness) which the Bible testifies to all throughout. This highlighted some positive and some negative elements of how we function. She connected these human attributes to show how free markets account for them in ways that promote human flourishing.

Dr. Niederjohn: How does this understanding of human nature affect our call to service?

Harrison Hulse: In whatever way God calls each one of us to serve, this understanding remains invaluable because we can anticipate and account for wrinkles and pleasant surprises we may encounter in human relations. For instance, if I understand that humans have agency and reason in order to make decisions, and that we are fallible by virtue of original sin, then I can better see how people can and do often come to flawed conclusions about what they must do.

[The right understanding of human nature that Dr. Bradley draws from God’s Word and summarizes in her presentation empowers us as Christians to deal with one another as we actually are and structure our many and various interpersonal relations with true beneficence.](#)

Harrison Hulse: Dr. Niederjohn, economics is usually thought of as a secular discipline. How did Dr. Bradley’s lecture address that point?

Dr. Niederjohn: Dr. Bradley made a number of interesting points that straddle the disciplines of theology and economics. This intersection, I believe, made her lecture particularly poignant for students at an intentionally Christian university like Concordia. Her emphasis on human flourishing as an ultimate goal, rather than maximizing output, nicely tied the economics and theology together.

Harrison Hulse: How does all this relate

to the basic framework of economic analysis?

Dr. Niederjohn: Dr. Bradley explained that the classic problem that the field of economics seeks to address is scarcity. There simply aren’t enough resources for everyone to have everything they desire. Because of this, a system is needed to determine what to produce, how to produce it, and for whom to produce. That is, choices must be made. This insight, Dr. Bradley pointed out, also has implications for Christians, as we are called to love others as ourselves in a Christ-like way. Our ability to care for others, however, is also limited by the scarcity of our time and resources.

Harrison Hulse: Was Adam Smith, the founder of economics, a theologian?

Dr. Niederjohn: No, his field was moral philosophy—but his economic thought certainly had theological implications. In his 1776 treatise *The Wealth of Nations* (Smith, [1776] 1981), Smith explored the nature of human economic behavior. Dr. Bradley placed emphasis on one particularly enduring legacy of this book—a sophisticated understanding of self-interest, in keeping with the opening verses of Philippians 2. Smith pointed out that while humans tend to act in their own self-interest, it turns out, unintentionally, that society also frequently benefits from these self-interested actions. In Smith’s day, it was his realization that bakers, brewers, and butchers produce their products to support their families. Yet it is “as if” they are doing it to care for their customers. Today’s entrepreneurs invent amazing products to enrich themselves; we benefit, however from the striking new technologies that make our lives better.

Harrison Hulse: What does this view of Christianity imply for economic systems?

Dr. Niederjohn: Dr. Bradley showed how the call for Christians is to encourage economic systems that promote caring for others and human flourishing. She cited the Biblical concept of “shalom,” often translated as “peace,” but actually meaning a more comprehensive state of well-be-

ing or flourishing in humans. What type of economic system provides the incentives to produce goods and services for others at reasonable prices (rather than steal and plunder from others)? What type of economic system allows the poor to thrive and the masses to live long, healthy lives (rather than the grinding poverty that was pervasive for most of human history)? The answer, according to Dr. Bradley, is societies with large doses of economic freedom. It turns out that when societies embrace the rule of law and secure property rights, limited government, reasonable regulations, and free trade, they tend to be prosperous. Adam Smith was aware of this all the way back in 1776, writing:

“Little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest barbarism but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice: all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things.”

Harrison Hulse: So in Dr. Bradley’s view, economic freedom is not a necessary evil but a positive good?

Dr. Niederjohn: Right. Dr. Bradley used a striking map based on the well-known Economic Freedom of the World report (Gwartney et al., 2022) that correlates economic freedom with higher incomes (both for the population as a whole as well as the poorest 10 percent of the population), longer lives, less poverty, more political and civil rights, less infant mortality, and greater life satisfaction, happiness, and tolerance of others. The places in the world with greater economic freedom achieve these important outcomes. For anyone who cared about human flourishing but not maximum output, there would still be a strong case for economic freedom. If we take seriously Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves, an effective way to do that is to encourage an economic system based on individual liberty, mutually beneficial trade, and largely free markets—commonly referred to as capitalism.

Dr. Niederjohn: Harrison, what lesson could religion and pre-seminary students learn from Dr. Bradley’s approach to Scriptural application?

Harrison Hulse: Dr. Bradley provided a nice demonstration of how to take the principles of God’s Word and apply them consistently to economics—an extrabiblical subject of great importance because we live in an economics-driven world. Here’s the lesson I drew from her approach: When approaching a topic that Scripture does not directly address, build your understanding from the foundational truths of the Bible. Don’t read Scripture in order to prove a preconceived notion you have picked up from the world around you. If you try to wield the Bible as a stamp of approval for ideas that it never endorsed, you are not using Scripture as the guiding principle and instead are leaning on the “weak and elementary principles of this world instead of Christ,” (Colossians 2:9) who endures forever as the very Word of God Himself. Instead, approach the extrabiblical things from within the timeless words God has given to us. You’ll find that the way you think and the way Scripture speaks will grow closer, which will help you see life through the guiding light the Bible was meant to be.

Dr. Niederjohn: So you’re encouraging your fellow religion students to study widely?

Harrison Hulse: Yes. I’d say this: Don’t neglect fields such as economics and other important areas of study as you build your knowledge of God’s Word. For a servant in the church, one of the sobering realities of ministry is that money, finances, and economic literacy are critically important skills for effective maintenance of a congregation—even more so when considering outreach and expansion. Churches are already vulnerable to seasons of economic drought, but without a basic understanding of money and markets, the risk to their well-being rises drastically. As you study God’s Word, take some time to learn a bit about economics and the other fields which spring from our foundation in the Bible. We have

a wonderful faculty here who teach this material from a Christian perspective and very accessibly, too. Profit from them (and other professors in other disciplines!), so to speak, while you have access to them now so that you can be versatile as you serve God shrewdly and carefully in whatever role He places you.

Harrison Hulse: Dr. Niederjohn, is there a tendency for economists to neglect the moral implications of their findings?

Dr. Niederjohn: All too often, yes. Under the influence of Adam Smith, economics clearly began as a discipline concerned with both positive and normative considerations. Over time, however, economics became more “scientific.” The normative analysis of the morality questions was crowded out in the way the discipline is generally taught at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Unfortunately, when economists dismiss the moral dimensions of their discipline, they leave the field to others. These non-economists have an endless supply of pronouncements on the morality of economics in general, and the market order in particular, that are as logically appalling as they are publicly appealing.

Harrison Hulse: Do you have in mind any current examples?

Dr. Niederjohn: Yes. Consider how popular high school curricular materials have eroded confidence in capitalism and free markets. Tens of thousands of American students are now subjected to the Pulitzer Prize winning New York Times’s 1619 Project, which blames the institution of slavery primarily on capitalism. Of course, even a rudimentary understanding of the free-market system makes clear that capitalism is the inverse of slavery, relying upon private agreements free of coercion. Instead, it is socialism—which forces man to work for others without remuneration and expropriates private property—that is akin to slavery. Moreover, popular high school history books distort the role of markets and freedom. Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History* (Zinn, 2015) has sold more than 2.5 million copies and may be found in

virtually every school district, university and local library. This text portrays the English settlers of Jamestown, Virginia and Plymouth, Massachusetts as perpetrators of genocide and American participation in World War II as an effort to advance the nation’s imperial interests.

Harrison Hulse: So, with all that said, how can we best make the moral case for a free market economy?

Dr. Niederjohn: The practical answer to this question relies on the empirical evidence that market-based economies produce wealth and alleviate the suffering that comes from poverty. One could also investigate how free markets are consistent with the notions of individual liberty and also freedom in sharp contrast with other collectivist systems like socialism or communism. Dr. Bradley’s lecture also made it clear one can explore the kinds of virtues that are rewarded in a capitalist system. These include cooperation, honesty, discipline, tolerance, courtesy, and enterprise.

Concluding Reflections by Harrison Hulse and Dr. Scott Niederjohn

We found Dr. Bradley’s lecture to be both thoughtful and thought-provoking. She focused her presentation on the question “Is Christianity Compatible with Capitalism?” and proposed that, given what we know about humanity from the Bible along with our understanding of free market economies, we can firmly answer yes to this fascinating question. She started with Scripture, showing how the Creation account in Genesis shows us who God made us to be while the New Testament affirms that identity in the teachings of Christ. She then moved into realities of human nature and economics to establish what kind of agents and what kind of system we mean when using these terms, so we can properly assess their compatibility. Lastly, Bradley concluded with remarks on the great advantages of capitalism. She connected its root values to our purpose and design to show that this system is, in fact, compatible with humanity because it allows for the service of man while mitigating the worst of our fallen tendencies.

We believe that we can best understand ourselves and our interactions with others by what God's Word tells us about human origin, purpose, and nature. Economics, ethics, politics, and many other disciplines ought to be shaped by what we know to be true from God's revelation to us. We encourage the entire CUW community to use the opportunity we have to learn from great Christian minds at work in their respective fields of study. In this way we can better understand the world around us and fulfill our common calling to serve God and love our neighbors.

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Speech, Not Amplification

Written by: Samuel Boehlke, External Affairs Editor



The scene is as old as humanity: a man standing in a toga or a suit, in a hemisphere of stone or cement, with row after row of people hanging on his every word. From the theater of Delphi to the stages of an auditorium or conference center, the amplification of speaker to a gathered audience has been a familiar part of human existence. Less familiar to history would be the image that cannot truly be seen in the same way today: everyone in the world, at various times and in various attitudes, with the potential to hear anyone else in the world. Only a few, of course, are able to make themselves heard in this virtual stage of constant commotion. The loudest voices are amplified by different algorithms according to what each platform determines is worthwhile for the greatest number of people to see. This has led to a unique tension: on the one hand, people are freer to speak to audiences than ever before. On the other, the intensity of that freedom has made everyone more keenly aware of when it is possible they are being silenced. The right to free speech has remained unchanged through all of these scenarios; the accessibility of an audience has not.

Freedom of speech in America has held a uniquely protected and almost sacred place. The recent Twitter/Musk crisis has been exemplary of a growing problem with the American understanding of what this place truly is: to many social media users, equity in amplification has been conflated with freedom of speech. They believe that if a post exists, it should have the same equitable chance to be amplified regardless of its quality. “Free speech absolutism” has become a catch-all term for this belief that on

internet platforms everyone should have the same chance to speak to the same audience. The internet debate of the past few months has raged over this idea.

In order to clarify these debates it is best to first clarify the underlying premise: what is free speech? In short: “freedom of speech, right... to express information, ideas, and opinions free of government restrictions based on content” (Britannica, 2023). Key to this definition is the word “government.” Other definitions use the language of legality or punishment, but the premise is the same. Freedom of speech is a right first codified in the First Amendment of the American Constitution. It is directed at ensuring Congress or any other government allows people to freely and publicly express and defend any position about any issue. As many people seem to have forgotten, social media is not a governmental body. Freedom of speech does not apply to any of the current debates about media companies and their preferences.

In the powerful new theater of social media, expectations have not aligned with the premises of free speech. Humanity is discovering that social media is the most convenient place to express their opinions on every subject imaginable, communicate with friends and family, discuss politics and hobbies with strangers, and consume the entertaining, educational, or journalistic content they seek on a daily basis. For good or ill, social media has become a unified location for whatever communication and content

people want. Most Americans, the new Chief Twit included, seem to expect the same protection from companies that provide this online space as that which is dictated to the government which protects physical reality. According to reports from The Hill, “Twitter owner Elon Musk publicly slammed Apple on Monday for suspending some of its advertising on the social media platform, asking if leaders of the tech company “hate free speech” (Folmar, 2022). This exemplifies an ongoing conversation between Musk as a representative of popular opinion and other leaders of media companies. Musk is not the first to combine free speech and amplification, although he is the first leader to bring out the latent hypocrisy in that assumption. Meta (2019) has been conflating speech and amplification since 2019, and Google ran ad campaigns in response to EU restrictions the same year (Taplin, 2019). Four years later, expectation and reality are in open conflict, and the people of the free world (including the 5th Circuit Court) expect free speech rights from private companies (NetChoice v. Paxton, 2022).

As large and vested with a public interest as media companies often are, their place is not to permit but to amplify speech. Similarly to physical theaters, social media platforms are built around promoting the voices of those approved by their peers. Fostering quality content is key to the success of any mass communication platform. Social media companies, in contrast, give anyone a chance to compete for the amplification of that speech to the world. Congress cannot make a law restricting what people can and cannot say in the arena of politics, nor could they reasonably make a law regarding who is allowed to post on a social media platform. The existence of amplification is therefore protected from the government by the right to free speech. Inherent in the same premise is that private individuals or organizations may amplify what they choose.

“We the people” are still free from the government to say whatever they like, even on social media; that same protection prevents private companies from having

to amplify or associate with content they deem to be low quality, disagreeable, dangerous, or which they otherwise cannot support.

It may be fair to expect openness about content moderation principles. It contradicts the actual right of free speech to demand that companies must amplify and thereby associate themselves with all content spoken in their theater. It is certainly not right to demand that they conform to a hypocritical vision of amplification equity.

The power at our fingertips indeed seems greater than the power any Greek orator ever could have experienced. What any person says, anywhere in the world, has the chance to be amplified to anywhere else in the world within seconds. A commensurate increase in scrutiny on the stage owners of social media platforms is quite reasonable. That scrutiny cannot come at the cost of our conception of free speech. Speech is free from the government, not the individual or organization deciding whether another individual’s content is worth amplifying to the world. In order to be truly aligned with free speech, all people must understand that it is someone else’s choice to repeat what anyone else has said, especially if that repetition and amplification are their entire purpose. Amplification is not free; speech is.

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Civil Discourse in Relation to Man's Ontology and Freedom

Written by: Ambrose Shaltanis, Senior Editor



Man, ever since the fall, has been in constant conflict with sin, his own flesh, and other men. This conflict rejuvenates time and time again, with examples being seen all throughout the history of the world. Wherever virtue is present, evil is also there lurking, manifesting itself in other men clamoring for power in order to assert their will over others. This dichotomy of virtue and vice has existed for millenia, and persists even into modernity. Today it can be argued that man is less free than he has ever been. This problem first requires a diagnosis before a solution can be reached, which is what I will attempt to enumerate here.

The thesis that I will be presenting is this: that the suppression of civil discourse dehumanizes man according to his ontological nature, resulting in an erosion of his moral, religions and economic freedoms. This has been seen historically and in modern day, as the ontological nature of a human is timeless. While methods of dehumanization may have changed and evolved, the result of their actions remains the same. One additional note is that I am not making a moral judgment against the suppression of freedom, but instead demonstrating the cause and effect relationship between suppression and erosion of freedoms linked by dehumanization.

In order to understand how this erosion comes to pass, it is important to define key terms. To recognize how one is being dehumanized, one must first understand what a human is. A human is composed of two parts, the body and the soul. St. Augustine offers that man is a “rational soul with a mortal and earthly body in its service” (Augustine, 388, 27.52). Augustine elaborates on the

characteristics of the soul, saying that it is rational, and also has a will. He says “It is sufficient for our question, why free will should have been given to man, to know that without it man cannot live rightly.” (Augustine, 395, 2.1) Thus, a human is a creature with a mortal body, a rational soul, and the capacity for a will. These constitute the necessary aspects of man's ontology, which is the nature of his being as a rational and created creature. Will and rationality are both important components of man regarding his freedom, but still proceed from one more part of man, which exists as a prerequisite to the will.

This part of man from which both will and reason proceed is the relationship he has with language. Man's use of language makes rational expression and the desire of the will possible. Nothing rational, nor any desire of the will can be articulated or expressed without man's ability to use language. In short, without this particular relationship with language, one cannot effectively exercise their free will in practice through their actions or expressions. Martin Heidegger makes this relationship man has with language very clear when he says “The ability to speak is what marks man as man. This mark contains the design of his being... We are, then, within language and with language before all else.” (Heidegger, 1959, 112). This precedes an even bolder statement, which eloquently elaborates on the first half of my thesis: “Man would not be man if it were denied him to speak unceasingly, from everywhere and every which way, in many variations.” (Heidegger, 1959, 112). This intrinsic capacity for language is a necessary part of man's ontological being, that is, the unity of substances that compose his essence. Expression of his reason and will,

according to Heidegger, marks man as man. Man possesses his rationality, linguistic capabilities, and capacity for will, which separate him from all other created beings. The culmination of all these aspects working to their fullest potential is in the act of expression. While man may retain the same nature substantially if his expression is removed, he is not properly utilizing these traits to their highest form. Man is at his fullest and the closest to his perfect nature when all the signs of his being are collected into a singular demonstration of this being: expression.

The next key term of the argument that must be defined is 'freedom'. The Oxford Dictionary defines freedom as "the state of being able to do what you want, without anything stopping you." The Constitution of the United States of America promises certain rights to its citizens that the Declaration of Independence calls 'unalienable'. These rights include, among others, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The first amendment of the Bill of Rights explicitly states the right to freedom of speech and expression. This is in alignment with Heidegger's view on man, with both parties acknowledging that the freedom of expression through language is necessary to man's being. To put it succinctly, this first amendment does not guarantee additional rights to man, it promises that man can live according to his ontological nature. It promises that man can be himself, for without this expression, he would not be what he is fully meant to be.

Man's concordance with language and freedom is in agreement with Scripture as well. God gave man libertarian free will, which is free will "where the choice originates with the agent". (Menuge, 2014, 145) This is the freedom to choose, to make decisions according to the nature of the rational soul. Man is promised agency over his actions, and the ability to express these decisions through language. This is one of the characteristics that separates man from other entities like angels. It is important to note that this free will given to man is not absolute. Man is free to have agency, but he is not free from consequences. He is free to make decisions based

on reason and act accordingly.

An important component of freedom is the expression of ideas, giving man the freedom to live to his fullest. The suppression of this expression removes the most important freedom from man, and subsequently many others.

It removes the ability to express religious, moral, political or economic freedoms. This removal of the expression, which results in a removal of man's truest being, translates into a reduction of his actions due to the inability to function as he ought to.

While the previous argument effectively demonstrates philosophically how the removal of civil discourse can erode man's freedoms ontologically, there are also numerous examples that demonstrate this fact, both historical and contemporary. Historically, almost no other contention has been as impactful to western heritage as the issue of religious freedom. The Christian Church has been persecuted for centuries, and even after its legalization, underwent suppression by authorities in the church. A prime example of the suppression of civil discourse occurs in the protestant reformation, when Luther condemned the Catholic Church for their unbiblical teachings. After publishing the ninety-five theses, Luther was outlawed and excommunicated. His voice and publications were suppressed, effectively denying him the opportunity to express himself. This inability to live according to his nature resulted in a personal attack on Luther's being, which was only resolved by a civil discourse. When summoned to the Diet of Worms, Luther asserted that he was unconvinced by Scripture or by right reason to go against his conscience when disputing with the Roman Catholic Church, and that this Church should not have absolute authority to govern the hearts of men. Upon this statement, his enemies forced the Edict of Worms, which "Declared Luther an outlaw, forbade anybody to shelter him, or to possess his books, and ordered him delivered to the government." (Eels, 1933, 35) This blatant attack

on the expression of his ideas led to his exile and hiding for a year in Wartburg. While Luther ended up ultimately victorious in spreading his message, the fact remains that his freedoms were attacked and removed. His ability to express his will was revoked, essentially nullifying the ability to live in full accord with his essence, creating an effective dehumanization. A staunch turning point for the protestant reformation was at the Diet of Augsburg, where the Augsburg Confession was presented, and attacked by the confutation, leading to the Apology of the Augsburg Confession. This Diet allowed for a civil discourse to take place, and helped create the founding documents of the Lutheran Church. Despite attempts by the Roman Catholic Church to demonize Luther and remove his freedoms, his expression of will remained unconquered, and his ideas remain firm centuries later.

Another example of the lack of civil discourse curbing freedom is seen in the buildup to the founding of the United States of America. The very fabric of the country is built upon a religious dispute with the king at the time. The lack of freedom to express ideas of worship and religion caused the colonists to leave and embark upon creating a nation that is built upon these principles of freedom. This was not done purely because of a religious quarrel, but the principles of that quarrel, leading to an erosion of freedoms to behave as man, both religiously, morally and ethically. This feud would even reach an economic level, when the same country that imposed the religious restrictions encouraged taxation without representation. The very principles of capitalism are built upon natural law and an 'invisible hand' guiding the economy. This natural law exists as something harmonious with the will of man, which in turn is only recognized by language. By attempting to remove the economic freedoms of fellow men, those imposing themselves on others are directly attacking parts of their being. One cannot meddle in the natural law that guides the economy without resulting in a sequence that devalues man's will. The lack of religious, moral and economic freedoms came from the inability to settle things civically through discourse. It is for this reason that freedom of speech is the first right

guaranteed to citizens of America.

In addition to these historical examples, the stripping away of civil discourse in contemporary times has led to an erosion of freedoms unprecedented. With the advent of the internet and of social media, the outlet for expression has increased to allow for a much more efficient way for man to engage in civil discourse. Unfortunately, this media is a two-edged sword, allowing those in power to remove the ability for man to participate in this civil discourse much more effectively. Social media has become one of, if not the primary outlet for human engagement. It provides man with the freedom to express himself openly and efficiently, but not unceasingly. Tech giants and corporations, such as Facebook, Twitter and Google all have the ability to restrict anyone from the platform, at any time, for any reason. This has become more prevalent as time passes on, with Twitter even restricting the sitting president of the United States from using the platform to express himself. This lack of an unceasing expression is characteristic of Heidegger's claim that man would cease to be man.

These same companies have also become cemented in modern society, with much of the world relying on their use to function. Now, one can argue that private companies can do what they want when allowing people to use their platforms, but this is not the issue up for contention. The fact remains that by denying man the ability to express his will, these corporations are effectively dehumanizing him, whether it is in accordance with the law or not, as there are universal principles of being that lie outside of the law. Once again, if man is not free to exist according to his own nature, he is certainly not free morally, religiously, ethically or economically. Man cannot make effective choices to express his will if he is denied the means by which he is able to express it. This does not only apply with social media, but with all facets of life. If one is denied the right to speak according to his will in any circumstance, it takes away the ability for him to live in proper harmony with all his unique substances, resulting in a deficiency of the fullest being.

The most egregious example of the removal of civil discourse taking away freedoms was seen in the coronavirus lockdowns in 2020. The entire basis for the economy shutting down, jobs becoming remote, and restrictions on the ability for people to go where they choose was based on the apparent danger of the virus. The CDC and Dr. Fauci declared the event a global pandemic, and when actors speak against it, they are attacked relentlessly. A particular example of this is with Dr. Robert Malone, who was highly involved in the creation of the mRNA technology. He was banned from Twitter for speaking his opinions, and major news outlets such as the New York Times wrote hit pieces on him. One article talks about him saying “In many of his appearances, Dr. Malone questions the severity of the coronavirus, which has now killed nearly one million people in the United States, and the safety of the coronavirus vaccines, which have been widely found to be safe and effective at preventing serious illness and death.” The article later goes on to attack his credibility, suggesting that he was not at the center of the creation. This was a result of him challenging the established narrative regarding the danger of coronavirus. These attacks and bannings are done in the stead of civil discourse, with censorship of speech taking place rather than a deconstruction of ideas.

Perhaps if people like Dr. Malone were allowed to engage in civil discourse, there would be fewer impositions made during the pandemic. There is a direct link between the suppression of those attempting to engage in civil discourse about coronavirus, and the freedoms of citizens being taken away.

Religious freedoms were taken away when churches were ordered to be shut down to stop the spread. Economic freedoms were taken away when jobs moved to an online operation, and harsher restrictions on the workplace and hiring process were implemented, causing the economy to stagnate and recess. Each of the suppression of these particular freedoms correlates to a particular instance where man is being dehumanized. In the case of the churches, the ability to act upon his

free will is taken away. The recessions indicated were the result of an unnatural stumbling block in the natural law that guides economics. As alluded to above, this interference with the natural order disrupts the relationship between this natural order and the will of man. Natural law either works in accordance, or in opposition to man’s will. If natural law itself is mangled, it cannot sufficiently provide an anchor for the will, thus rendering it arbitrary and therefore ineffective.

These examples, both historical and contemporary, demonstrate how the removal of civil discourse is a precursor to the removal of freedoms. This removal of civil discourse dehumanizes man according to his ontological nature by removing the ability for him to express this conglomerate of attributes: language, rationality and will. There is a direct link between authorities restricting civil discourse, as seen with the protestant reformation and the coronavirus pandemic, and the suppression of man’s freedoms. In these cases, the general populace suffers on account of the inability to engage in a rational discussion. In short, the suppression of civil discourse frequently precedes the erosion of moral, religious, ethical and economic freedoms, both ontologically by dehumanizing man according to his nature, and practically, as seen by historical and contemporary examples.

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Madmen: Truth in a World Where God is Dead

Written by: Ella Mudge, Contributing Author



Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher and cultural critic, anticipated the decline of belief in God through his Parable of the Madman. Written at the end of the 19th century, Nietzsche uses his short story as a metaphorical tale to explore loss of religious ideology and its implications on Western society. In the parable, Nietzsche depicts a man running through the streets of a city, terrified at what he believes is the death of God. He screams, “how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun?” (Nietzsche, 1887). The fact that he is described as a madman illustrates the scorn which the Madman’s culture has for his fears. Nietzsche, however, is validating them. The Madman asks how people can orient themselves in the world without a belief system. God creates order because He represents a distinction between good and evil, truth and falsehood. If God is real then truth is found through belief in Him, for he is the creator of truth. He is the measure of all things. By removing God and destroying the measure of truth, people are left directionless and truthless. The earth is unchained from the sun, the horizon is wiped away, and anything can be the source of truth. This article will demonstrate that Nietzsche was right. Ideological changes that unchain truth from God are growing in the West and causing people to believe that truth is located within them. This results in a worldview that renders discussion between people pointless, and modern technology is making it worse.

First, it is important to note the consequences incurred by the death of God. A worldview is necessary to orient and structure one’s

thoughts, and the void left by God leaves no standard for truth or meaning as existing outside oneself. The Western idea of God is a being with total moral authority. Without this, every man is left as a law unto himself, with no greater power to determine objective truth. Therefore, whatever fills the God-void is ultimately destined to fail due to its subjectivity. Nietzsche recognized this and illustrated it through the character of the madman. Without God, the very idea of truth in the West is disturbed to the point that the sun may as well come unchained from the earth. Nietzsche predicted that this was inevitable, that God was dying in the West.

Modern statistics demonstrate the truth of Nietzsche’s prediction. The ideological shift that he noted is verified in the decline of Christianity in America. A report from the Pew Research Center regarding religious adherence in the generations of the last century illustrates this well. Most notable is the difference between the Silent Generation, which was 84% Christian and 10% unaffiliated, and Millennials who are 49% Christian and 40% unaffiliated (Mitchell, 2020). In fact, the number of people in the US who identify as religiously unaffiliated has increased by nearly 30 million between 2009-2019 (Mitchell, 2020). As the worldview that dominated the West for centuries declines, something must rise to fill its place; something must rechain the earth to the sun.

As God dies in the West and Christianity dwindles, people turn inward to find truth. Because some structure or idea of truth is necessary to understand the world, people replace God with other ideologies. These ideas are faulty because

they do not use an objective measure of truth, thus any individual has equal claim to what is true. Without objective truth, people are made to look for truth inside of themselves instead of in God. This attempt to replace God with a subjective vision of the world creates a place where anything is allowed because there is no divine boundary. In the words of Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky, “If God is dead, everything is permitted,” (Dostoyevsky, 1880). If God is dead, society is not protected from pathogen-like ideas which take root and spread, growing within the decay of God’s body, throughout the emptiness where truth once was. When every man has the power to chain his own sun to his own sky, he loses the need to discuss his ideas with another. He becomes his own god, his own source of truth, which in turn creates a splintered society that lacks an impetus to have discussions. Any such idea which roots truth within man rather than outside of man will be called a pathologized ideology. In the absence of faith in God, the West is becoming overridden with these diseased belief structures.

The increasing ideological division in the United States is demonstrative of its growing refusal to discuss ideas on account of pathologized ideologies. A Pew Research Center report on political polarization in the US found that Republicans and Democrats are “more divided along ideological lines – and partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive – than at any point in the last two decades,” (Geiger, 2021). Animosity between parties has also substantially increased over the same space of time. In each party, the portion with a “highly negative view” of the opposing party has “more than doubled since 1994,” with the sentiment that the opposing party’s policies “are so misguided that they threaten the nation’s well-being,” (Geiger, 2021). As demonstrated by the trends in this report, people are becoming more divided than ever before when it comes to issues of ideas. This reduction of conversation between people results from the rise of pathologized ideologies and impacts the quality of discourse which is pivotal for the investigation of ideas in the individual.

The decline in human discourse resulting from the idea that man is the measure of truth is exacerbated by technology use. The average person spends about 7 hours every day captivated by their phone, computer, or TV. For 49 hours a week and 2,555 hours a year, they are consuming content online (Howarth, 2023). With copious streaming platforms, videogames, the convenience of online shopping, and more sinister things like pornography at one’s disposal, people choose less frequently to seek company with each other. Before screens, people often used leisure time to build relationships with others, but now, each hour spent with a device is one not spent in conversation with another person. This trend in conjunction with the rising rates of reported loneliness -60 percent of people in the U.S report feeling lonely on a regular basis- further solidifies that people are experiencing a decrease in social interaction (PBS NewsHour, 2023). Since for 2,555 hours out of one year of the average American’s life is devoted to online engagement, it follows that people are spending less time in conversation with each other, aggravating the disinterest in finding truth through discussion that rises from pathological ideologies.

Technology has also reduced two-way dialogue, allowing for input of ideas without output of discourse. Healthy dialogue facilitates constant evaluation of one’s own perspective in relation to the words of the other speaker. During a conversation with another person, both interlocutors are required to listen and respond to each other. This creates a give and take relationship where both people are taking in the words of the other, but also putting out their own ideas, which in turn receive a response. Interacting with online platforms like YouTube, Tik Tok, Instagram, etc. involves a lot of consumption of messages with little critical thought. Because the consumer is not asked to state a response, as they are in a conversation, the necessity of pondering what they take in is removed. Thus, people become inundated with ideas from media and are not made to reflect on them. When people only eat ideas, they become intellectually obese, swollen with all the thoughts they have eaten and never digested. To cut the fat off one’s mind requires careful processing of all

the messages they are flooded with. Constantly gorging on messages is especially harmful given the absence of God, or absolute truth. This trend of technology facilitating input of ideas without output of discourse exacerbates pathologized ideologies.

When people believe that they are the locus of truth and they need not confer with others, they are highly susceptible to the input of ideas with no criticism. This provides no opportunities for such a person to be challenged on the beliefs they hold, simply confirming and furthering their beliefs that they are the measure of truth.

One could argue that people do engage in discourse online; however, these interactions further distance humans from each other in a pathologized culture. There has been an attempt to replicate community through chat forums, multiplayer games, and social media. Yet, these online interactions remove the human aspect because they are filtered through technology. In fact, the internet allows people to engage in behavior without the same social repercussions, effectively removing the responsibility that is innate when two people interact in real life. Technology has changed the way that people relate, with an emerging body of research finding that the features of the internet can promote online disinhibition, whereby people act, think, and feel differently online when compared to face-to-face settings (Stuart, 2021). People cannot witness each other's reactions when speaking through a screen, which creates a distance between people and a lack of responsibility because one is less aware of the pain that they cause another. Online, people can easily treat each other without humanity, which does not create a healthy, constructive place for people to converse. A loss of face-to-face communication leads to a culture ill prepared for civil discourse. This combined with the ideological shift to where truth seeking is individual results in no need to practice conversational skills. This damages society because discourse is foundational for developing

one's ability to investigate their thoughts.

Especially in the United States, openness to conversation is necessary for a healthy society. A democratic republic style government like the US functions on conversations, and extensive social and political damage occurs in its absence. Therefore, citizens need to speak to each other. Discourse molds belief and the ideas you attempt to speak are sharpened by those who listen to them and respond. The exchange of thoughts through conversation compels both speakers to contemplate their own beliefs as they attempt to explain them, while also receiving feedback from the other person. Citizens who participate in discussions are more likely to think critically about their own thoughts and the opinions of others, improving their ability to make informed judgements about issues facing society. The ability of the citizens to do this is directly reflected in the success of the government because a democracy is run by the people. However, a nation of people who assume that truth is located within them will not gravitate towards conversation, thus damaging the core of society and government.

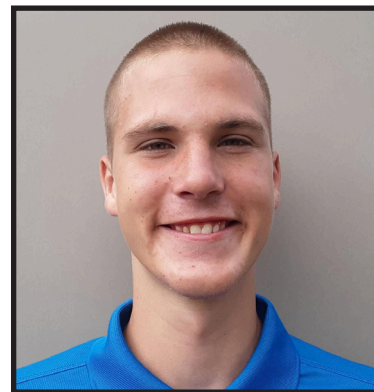
While all this may seem alarming, it is truly nothing new. The death of God which Nietzsche pointed out in the 1800s had been happening since the beginning of creation, since the Fall of humankind. When man first disobeyed God's command and sinned, he chose to replace the divine absolute truth of God with something else; his own will. Mankind has been usurping God ever since, filling the void with man's personal truth which becomes pathologized ideologies. God did not leave humans unequipped to battle sin and falsehood, however. He made humans in His image and gave them the ability to speak, and to seek out His truth in doing so. The power of speech is at the root of the world. After all, God spoke when he rendered the earth, He did not gesture or think silently. If man can speak, he can protest the broken world that vies for the death of God and the destruction of truth, he can cry out like the madman against the unchaining of the sun.

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Towards True Civil Discourse: How Humility Can Heal Our Nation

Written by: Ezekiel Potts, Contributing Author



It does not take a long look at the world around us today to realize that true civil discourse does not exist in many situations. Civil discourse is, broadly speaking, the exchange of ideas between multiple people. For the purpose of this essay, civil discourse will be broken down into smaller categories of conversation and speech. Speech will be defined as the presentation of ideas without listening and thus is a pseudo-civil discourse. On the other hand, conversation includes both speaking and listening from all parties engaged. True civil discourse aims at this second definition and involves both speaking and listening. This paper will posit that true civil discourse under these definitions is rare here in America while also offering some possible solutions to move towards a true civil discourse.

In America, the First Amendment to the Constitution protects freedom of speech, yet there are many times when this free speech is not respected. With the words “Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech” (U.S. Const. amend. I), we have the constitutional right to speech as previously defined. For the sake of this essay, free speech will be referred to as civil discourse. Civil discourse still can be, and often is, limited here in America. There are two main ways that free speech can be limited according to David Braddon-Mitchell and Caroline West (2004). The most obvious way is to limit the distribution of communication by blocking news outlets or other communication forums (p. 446). Yet, there is also another way to limit free speech which Braddon-Mitchell and West (2004) point out using the thought experiment:

“Consider...the dictator who uses a sound obliteration device to absorb words after they have been successfully produced. Controversially, this is a case of limitation on the distribution axis. But suppose she discovers a yet more ingenious and covert way of silencing dissidents: let them produce and distribute as many sounds and symbols as they like, but prevent those sounds and symbols from bearing their intended meaning,” (p. 446).

In other words, civil discourse can be limited by stopping communication which is the most obvious way and the way protected against in the Constitution. However, civil discourse could also be limited by preventing the hearer from understanding the message. In this situation, nothing is limiting the freedom of speech in the sense of something stopping the distribution of the freedom of speech. However, something is missing here when it comes to true civil discourse. Braddon-Mitchell and West (2004) point out what is missing saying, “[Civil discourse] also requires some degree of comprehension on the part of receivers” (p. 447). Without comprehension, an exchange of ideas has not been successfully completed.

This example can be further illustrated by defining the two ways to prevent the hearer from understanding the message—externally or internally. An external prevention of understanding would involve a situation like the one pointed out by Braddon-Mitchell and West where there is someone like a dictator who distorts the meaning. Internal prevention of understanding, however, is prevention when the hearers themselves ignore or distort the message and thus do not participate in civil discourse. Internal prevention of understand-

ing will be the focus here.

This discussion requires a slight discourse on positive versus negative rights. Alen Gewirth (2001) defines negative rights by saying, “Negative rights entail negative duties, i.e., duties to forbear or refrain from persons’ having the objects of their rights” (p. 322). An example of a negative right then would be the right to life which is a right that requires others to not take a life. With negative rights, there is no additional strain put on others. If they keep living their life as normal, they will be in line with negative rights. Positive rights are another story and are defined by Gewirth (2001) as rights which “entail positive duties, i.e., duties to help persons to have the objects of their rights” (p. 322). The right to education is an example which Gewirth gives of positive rights. The right to education requires others to provide resources so that all can have an education. It should be mentioned here that this essay has no intention of discussing whether education should be a right, or whether all rights should be positive. This essay will focus purely on positive rights as they apply to civil discourse. According to the Constitution, every American has the right to free speech or civil discourse as it has been labeled here. Inherent in the definition of true civil discourse as stated above is the requirement for both listening and speaking. The listening aspect of this especially implies the idea of positive rights. This is a hard thing to require of people, yet it is extremely beneficial to society when people listen.

Speech as defined here does not truly constitute civil discourse in the sense that no one is truly getting their point across. In the thought experiment above, there was an example of civil discourse being limited by preventing the words spoken from meaning what they are intended to mean. This internal prevention of understanding is what limits others by not listening or prejudging based on social or political lines. In doing this, true civil discourse as defined by conversation is not able to exist. Instead, civil discourse has been prevented in that others are saying as many words as they want, but the meaning has become incoherent.

There are many examples of speech, as defined above, without true civil discourse today in America. For example, shouting matches over politics, commonly called protests, are frequent. Consider the protests in 2018 over the death of George Floyd or the Capitol protest of January 6th. Protestors do not feel they can be heard in any other way than through shouting and tearing down buildings. This is largely a result of not having true civil discourse through conversation. Instead of talking and listening, people are protesting and building up anger on both sides. The anger that has built up over a lack of true civil discourse through conversation shows how necessary it is to return to true civil discourse. There is so much yelling, so much anger, so much division, and no true civil discourse. This has led to a significant divide in America. The division is so deep that in a poll taken during the 2020 Presidential election, 90% of Trump supporters thought if Biden was elected it would bring lasting harm to America and 89% of Biden supporters thought the same about Trump (Dimock & Wike, 2020, para. 3). These points have not even touched on social media wars which involve people making comments but not reading responses, or people watching only news outlets from one side of the political spectrum. All of these points, as well as many others that can be clearly seen in society today, show that true civil discourse is rare here in America.

Conversation, as defined above, is imperative for America. Implied in this definition is the necessity that both sides speak and both sides listen. After all, one cannot gain an understanding of what someone else thinks without hearing what that person thinks. In this, free speech can truly happen. Going back to the thought experiment above, true civil discourse requires that words both be heard and understood. When we listen, we do not apply the internal interference that is common in shouting matches. Shouting matches do not offer any benefit and only adds anger which leads to all types of social evils. Conversation leads to further understanding which can remove anger and provide a safer and more utopic society. This is why it is so imperative to reach true civil discourse. Instead of mere speech, the goal of con-

versation is to allow the ideas behind the words to come through and to have true understanding through true civil discourse.

Unfortunately, from a theological perspective, the source of this anger and lack of listening can be understood as a result of the fall recorded in Genesis 3. The pride of Adam and Eve led them to turn away from God, and it is that same pride that continues to drive people today to look to themselves as the ultimate arbitrators.

The inability to listen stems from the fact that people do not want to admit that they are wrong and that there could be another way to look at something. From this perspective, true civil discourse will never exist completely here on Earth.

Yet, this essay would not be complete without offering a few solutions. One possible solution is an example given by Patrick Boyle (2022):

“A painfully divided America can return to civil discourse only if people on all sides of the civic divide make themselves vulnerable to being challenged on their convictions, adopt the humility that they might be wrong, and respect the humanity of those who disagree with them,” (para. 1).

To calm the anger in America one of the most important things we can do is simply listen. Listen to what other people have to say and respect them as people who may have different opinions but are still people. Further, it was mentioned earlier that the right to civil discourse includes listening. Yet, do not use that as an excuse to start more shouting matches about how other people are not listening. The best place to start is with the one person you can change, yourself. Listening to other people is the first vital step toward true civil discourse. Even further, as Patrick Boyle illustrated in the quote above, this listening should be from a place of humility. The fall into sin caused by pride makes it very difficult for anyone to have humility. In truth, no one is God. Everyone has flaws and no one has a complete understanding of everything. Listening with this humility in mind

would go a long way in calming the anger that has taken a hold of society.

Further, the idea behind true civil discourse is also to gain understanding. Jennie Sweet-Cushman (2022) sums this idea up perfectly saying, “The objective of civil discourse should be to expose different ideas, not to make more cerebral arguments” (p. 180). It is not necessarily the goal of civil discourse to persuade the other person. A person using civil discourse does not seek to persuade or be persuaded of anything but the truth and therefore must be open-minded to the idea that he may be wrong. All of this is a lot easier said than done. Certainly, this is no encouragement to back down from convictions or be swayed by the wind. Rather, it is an encouragement to speak and listen with humility. To realize that none of us have everything figured out and to be convinced by the truth rather than applying internal interference to what is being said. This is the key to start moving toward true civil discourse and away from the shouting matches that we have today. Ultimately, the goal is to begin to heal the great divide we have.

Humans have been filled with pride since the fall and will always look to themselves. It is hard to listen and admit faults. Yet, listening with humility is essential to true civil discourse as understood in the word conversation. On this side of heaven, there will always be people who listen to their pride and there will never be true civil discourse. That fact is what has led to much of the anger we have in society today and the disastrous consequences that can follow from that anger. Conversation with listening is the key here to calming that anger. Speech in shouting matches is prevalent in today’s society. Let us be the difference and seek to listen with humility as we move towards true civil discourse.

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