

Leadership Foundation, Inc.

Vol. 13, No. 40b

May, 2011

DRIFTING TOWARDS DUMBNESS Part Two

In the last issue we looked at an excerpt from Phaedrus by Plato in which Socrates addressed the importance of proper learning. In another book by Plato, his seminal work The Republic, he speaks through the philosopher Socrates. Using the dialectic method of teaching, Socrates explores how to create utopia. To do this, he proposes that what we have on earth is an image of the ideal. The non-material abstract forms (also called ideals), and not the material world of change known to us through sensation, possess the highest and most fundamental kind of reality. For example, our lives are governed more by the idea of justice or fair-play than they are by the tangible jobs we go to each day. We will quit the job if the job infringes upon our sense of justice. This being the case, the ideal state exists in the world of ideas, and our job is to discover what it looks like and then create it.

History teaches that people naturally assume all men are motivated by their own interest. "Justice is the interest of the stronger...in all states here is the same principle of justice, which is the interest of the government."^[1] Socrates argues that the ideal state cannot be created on such an assumption; rather, rulers must be properly trained to create utopia. Altruism is the ideal in any ruler, and to create utopia the state must select the brightest and the best of its young men and rigorously train them to act in an altruistic manner. This includes teaching:

- 1 – The philosophical mind always loves knowledge...not varying from change and corruption.
- 2 – The true lover of learning must from his earliest youth, as far as in him lies, desire all truth.
- 3 – He must be temperate and the reverse of covetous.
- 4 – There should be no secret corner of illiberality; nothing can be more antagonistic than meanness to the soul...
- 5 – ...he who has magnificence of mind and is the spectator of all time and reality.^[2]

Having developed the perfect pattern of justice, beauty, and truth, these philosopher kings then are ready to take upon themselves the affairs of the state.

Socrates' vision has captured the imagination of intelligentsia through the centuries and has translated into an attitude that "if [the intelligentsia] were in control, we could create a perfect world." Through the years academia has developed the conviction that their job is more than educating the students in the various disciplines; they are to inculcate into their students a proper worldview. Once shaped, the students will see the wisdom of allowing the philosopher kings to make the decisions on the role of government in people's lives.

This is the same reason that most educators are against homeschooling. They perceive that the state should mold the thinking of students, conforming them to the agreed-upon philosophy of life. Liberals are broad, tolerant, and accepting, while conservatives (and especially evangelical Christians, those who typically prefer homeschooling) are narrow-minded, intolerant, and bigoted. Regarding morality, earlier this year, Ohio University announced a new pilot program for gender-neutral housing, which has become all the rage on college campuses. The program allows people of all sexual preferences to live together in the dorms.

A recent article by Janice Shaw Crouse shows how the intelligentsia desires a separation between the child and parent for the express purpose of academia controlling the child's thinking solely within intelligentsia's environment. She noted:

This week, the New York Times advised parents of incoming college freshmen to drop their kids off, "back off," "walk away," and "move on" so that their "students can develop independence." In the article, parents who don't hop in the car, return home and consider their parenting over are dismissed as "super-involved" or "over-involved" and are described as "velcro parents," "helicopter parents," or "baby-on-board parents." Some colleges join in the derogatory attitude toward parents, going so far as to advise limiting phone calls and text messages. Some provide not-so-subtle indications that parents are not to "meddle." According to the New York Times, the University of Minnesota holds a separate reception for parents so that their sons and daughters can meet their roommates and negotiate dorm room space without the parents around. Grinnell College has the new students sit on one side of the gymnasium and the parents on the other with all speakers talking to the student side — a symbolic way of putting parents in their place.

To correct the ills of society, the philosopher kings must train people on how they should look on life and then provide for their needs so that they will happily divide the common good with the common man. If the government guarantees your standard of living and provides for your retirement, then you have no reason for resisting their desire to control your income.

Dostoevsky clearly saw this when he wrote "The Grand Inquisitor," a chapter from his book The Brothers Karamazov. One of the brothers, Ivan (who is a skeptic) tells the story of Christ returning to a marketplace in Spain, only to be arrested and jailed by the Grand Inquisitor. In the following passage, the Grand Inquisitor is talking to his prisoner about why Christ is no longer wanted or needed by the Church:

Judge Thyself who was right - Thou or he who questioned Thee then? Remember the first question; its meaning, in other words, was this: 'Thou wouldst go into the world, and art going with empty hands, with some promise of freedom which men in their simplicity and their natural unruliness cannot even understand, which they fear and dread - for nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom.

But seest Thou these stones in this parched and barren wilderness? **Turn them into bread, and mankind will run after Thee like a flock of sheep, grateful and obedient, though for ever trembling, lest Thou withdraw Thy hand and deny them Thy bread.** But Thou wouldst not deprive man of freedom and didst reject the offer, thinking, what is that freedom worth if obedience is bought with bread? Thou didst reply that man lives not by bread alone. But dost Thou know that for the sake of that earthly bread the spirit of the earth will rise up

against Thee and will strive with Thee and overcome Thee, and all will follow him, crying, "Who can compare with this beast? He has given us fire from heaven!" **Dost Thou know that the ages will pass, and humanity will proclaim by the lips of their sages that there is no crime, and therefore no sin; there is only hunger?** "Feed men, and then ask of them virtue!" that's what they'll write on the banner, which they will raise against Thee, and with which they will destroy Thy temple. Where Thy temple stood will rise a new building; the terrible tower of Babel will be built again, and though, like the one of old, it will not be finished, yet Thou mightest have prevented that new tower and have cut short the sufferings of men for a thousand years; for they will come back to us after a thousand years of agony with their tower.[3]

In my lifetime we have moved from agreeing that young people should abstain from satisfying their appetites to condoning promiscuity and accepting homosexual behavior as normal. I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but you will soon see people affirmed in the practice of bestiality.

The intelligentsia, who wish to rule the people, believe that the masses wish security more than freedom. Dostoevsky's story perfectly displays the modern attitude, where the Grand Inquisitor argues for giving men the freedom to sin, but allowing the institution to determine everything else. As long as men are well-provided for, they will be happy. Brainwash the people into believing that they exist for the common good, so long as the philosopher kings are allowed to define what that common good looks like. "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" (President John F. Kennedy). For this reason, people are not challenged to think critically. Entertain them and allow the philosopher kings to do the thinking; offer them distractions rather than quiet reflection.

I am old enough to remember the Great Depression of the 1930's. As a young boy strangers came to our home begging food. My mother would invite them in to sit at our dinner table and then give them a bed for the night. The next morning they would move on elsewhere. My sense is that such a thing cannot happen today for two reasons: First, people do not feel safe allowing strangers the freedom of their homes. Second, if the same unemployment and poverty existed today, the people would riot. Look at how the Greek populace rioted when the government tried to move the age of retirement from 60 to 62 in order to address their bankruptcy! In the past 70 years we have shifted from assuming that individuals are responsible for themselves to believing that their problems are the fault of the government.

I both grieve and fear a great deal these days. I grieve because of the pain people take upon themselves when they refuse to train their minds to think biblically. I fear because if the Bible means what it says, many who are secure in their disobedience will find that they face the awful Judgment of God. And I fear because we may have already entered upon the "road of no return;" it may be too late to do anything about it.

Scripture clearly teaches that God does not want man to solve his problems; by His grace He will not allow man to create utopia. The Lord insists that His people be just, but this must be done in an unjust world. God never commissioned His people to

correct the ills of society or to fight for the cause of justice. To the degree that man perceives that he is making progress in solving such problems, to that degree he drifts further and further from God.

In the last book in the Bible, Revelation, the nations do not fear and worship God as the result of gradually coming to Christ, nor by social action and solving the temporal ills of the world, nor by legislation and clean government. **The nations worship because of Judgment.** They have to: “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (Isaiah 45:23) – those knees will bow whether they want to or not. This is the only solution for the fallen condition of the world.

Refusing to believe this, the philosopher kings insist that if the people will allow them to meet their temporal needs and control their lives, thereby freeing the masses to pursue their appetites any way they wish, they will create utopia.

We do well to remember that entitlement destroys gratitude, and ingratitude is the source of all sin, as Romans 1 so graphically teaches. When we look to any source other than God for the meeting of our needs – whether it is parents, spouse, the church, or government – we guarantee ingratitude, and from this flows all manner of sin. For example, why do people steal, fornicate, and divorce? Obviously it is because they do not believe their needs are met, and seek to step outside the parameters of God to meet them.

A person cannot learn to think biblically on these matters without protracted time studying and meditating on Scripture. If he learns it from his parents and the milieu in which he is raised, his culture will soon conform him to its way of thinking. It must come from hours in the Word of God, begging the Holy Spirit to “transform him by the renewing of his mind.”^[4]

Walt

[1] Plato, The Republic, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1926, pp. 19-20

[2] Ibid, pp. 231-234

[3] Dostoevsky, Fyodor, The Brothers Karamazov, “The Grand Inquisitor,” Great Books of the Western World, Adler, Mortimer, Associate Editor, Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago, 1952, pp. 130-131

[4] Romans 12:2