# CLASSICAL EDUCATION

## PHILOSOPHY & CULTURE

The current interest in classical education is, in large part, a response to the deconstruction of Western culture, which is sliding towards socialism in the economic order, totalitarianism in the political order, and chaos in education (it is already dis-integrated in most schools). Parents and educators are quite understandably looking to the past for an educational model that works—that is effective, efficient, time-tested, properly ordered, integrated and will prepare students for the challenges they will face in today's world. That model is classical education, properly understood. As educational reformer Dr. Mortimer J. Adler noted in 1992:

> *A culture is not killed by political conflicts, even when they attain the shattering violence of modern warfare; nor by economic revolutions, even when they involve the dislocations of modern mass uprisings. A culture dies of diseases which are themselves cultural. Cultural disorder is a cause, not an effect of the political and economic disturbances which beset the world today.*
>
> *The health of a culture, like the health of a body, consists in the harmonious functioning of its parts. Science, philosophy and religion are certainly major parts of Western culture; their distinction from one another as quite separate parts was certainly the most characteristic cultural achievement of modern times. But if they have not been properly distinguished, they cannot be properly related, and unless they are properly related, properly ordered to one another, cultural disorder, such as that of modern times, inevitably results.*[i]

While numerous erroneous "*isms*" crowd the field of causes of modern educational disorder, three in particular, stand out regarding education: 1.) *Scientism*, the doctrine that empirical science alone can discover truths about the world and reality, which is simply the affirmation of truths established by empirical science and the denial of any truths advanced by philosophy and/or religion; 2.) *Skepticism* carries the error of scientism a step further, to the denial that any certain knowledge (truth) is attainable, even by the methods of empirical science (moderated skepticism allows for the possibility of some truths to be discoverable, in some areas [much like scientism], but only with great difficulty and uncertainty); 3.) *Relativism* ends the continuum of doubt with the doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist only in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and so there are no absolute truths – ironically, it is an absolute form of subjectivism.

What the foregoing *isms* share—apart from their derivation from false philosophy—is that they limit or deny the ability of students to discover truth. They are therefore serious obstacles to students seeking truth, and for many they discourage the pursuit of truth altogether. It is therefore necessary to inoculate students from these intellectual errors as early as possible. It is part of the role of education to do precisely that, lest it fail in all else. One of the key intentions behind learning the *trivium* and the *quadrivium* is to learn how to distinguish between reality and fiction – truth and

falsehood. However, this article is intended to be a guide to addressing such harmful *isms* on the practical order, based on the assumption that the readers already are aware of these problems, and wish to consider or adopt elements of classical education as a remedy.

Due to the foregoing serious problems with public and much parochial education, and many others, there is a rapidly growing interest in alternatives, one of which is our focus, "*classical education*." One might imagine it would be fairly easy to describe classical education, however there are numerous notions regarding what classical education was or means today. The matter is further complicated as the demand for a classical education alternative has resulted in educational programs and schools of all sorts indiscriminately marketing themselves as "*classical*," much like the general misuse of "*new*" and "*improved*" for many products which are neither.

In light of that situation, we need to start our consideration of how to make pedagogical and curricular changes towards an authentic classical education. We begin in the scholastic tradition of defining our terms – especially *classical* and *classi*c. But first we need a good idea of what education itself means.

## EDUCATION

The Greek word that comes closest in meaning to the English "education" is *paideia* (py-dee-a) (whence pedagogy and pediatrics), which is, however, a word much broader in scope: it includes aspects of *civilization, culture, tradition, literature* and *education*. The *upbringing* of a child is perhaps as close as one English word can approach it, though "education" is not too far off.

The word education is derived from the Latin verb *educare*, which means to rear, nourish, bring up, and not from the Latin verb *educere* (to lead, bring forth or out), as is commonly supposed.[ii] For our purposes, which relate to formal, Catholic education (as ought to be provided by schools or educational entities and homeschool programs designed as such) we will adopt the following definition by some Catholic scholars, as its precise definition is not relevant to this article:

> *"Education is the deliberate and systematic influence exerted by the mature person upon the immature through instruction, discussion, example, discipline, and harmonious development of all the powers of the human being, physical, social, intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and spiritual, according to their essential hierarchy, by and for their individual and social uses, and directed towards the union of the student and his Creator as the final end.* [iii]1

## CLASSIC AND CLASSICAL

The similarities among many different European and South Asian languages inclined etymological scholars to conclude that they are the continuation of a single prehistoric language referred to as *Indo-European*. The reconstructed historical root of the word "*classical*," apparently comes from

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an Indo-European word *to shout* or *summons*: *kei*, becoming *klad-*, or in suffixed form *klad-ti-*..[iv] The descendant Latin word, which is *classis*, means a division of citizens for military draft, hence the *summons* to that group to service in the army or fleet; thence any division, in general.

Descendent from the Latin *classis*, the English "*classic"* and "*classical"* are interchangeable, as adjectives, in some of their senses. Among these are senses pertaining specifically to ancient Greek and Roman culture, though *classical* is more common in that respect. *Classic* is always the choice to indicate, in a general sense, highest rank (and thus to connote respect)."[v]

***Classical*** used as an adjective relevant to this discussion means: 1.) of, pertaining to, or in accordance with the predecessors of ancient Greek and Roman art and literature; 2.) Pertaining to or versed in studies of antiquity; 3.) standard and authoritative rather than new or experimental.[vi] [Classical music is a special case].[vii]

Closely related are the terms: *classical Greek* – the form of Greek used in the classical literature of ancient Greece,[viii] and *classical Latin* – the form of Latin used in the classical literature of ancient Rome.[ix]

***Classic*** 1.) Of the highest rank or class; 2.) Serving as an outstanding representative of its kind; model: 3.) Having lasting significance or recognized worth; 4.) Pertaining to ancient Greek or Roman literature or art; 5.) Of lasting historical or literary significance; – *noun*: 1. An artist, author, or work generally considered to be of the highest rank or excellence. 2. *Plural*. The literature of ancient Greece and Rome.

***Classicism*** n. Aesthetic attitudes and principles based on the culture, art, and literature of ancient Greece and Rome and characterized by emphasis on form, simplicity, proportion, and restrained emotion. 2.) Classical scholarship. 3.) A Greek or Latin form or idiom.[x]

From the foregoing definitions, one is justified in concluding that to be "*classical*," education must include as important and essential content, *the studies of antiquity, including the literature of the highest rank and historical or literary significance, of ancient Greece and Rome.*

## THE LIBERAL ARTS

What were the "*studies of antiquity*" referenced above? They developed throughout classical antiquity but began with Pythagoras (*c.* 570 – 495 B.C.) and his interest in number. Pythagoras learned a great deal from the ancient Egyptians and eventually after hundreds of years and various contributions this knowledge became the four mathematical disciplines or arts (the *quadrivium*) of astronomy, arithmetic, geometry and music.

By the 4th century B.C. in Athens, language became more important in human affairs particularly in governing the Greek city states (*polis*). So, education also began to include instruction in how to listen, speak, read and write well. Again, over hundreds of years and with numerous contributions

these “arts” became formalized as the three language arts (the *trivium*) of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric.

Thus, the origin of this list goes back to ancient Greece, developed in the works of Plato (*Republic* II, III, VII) and Aristotle (*Politics* VII, VIII). That they are arts, even in a modern sense, may be recognized by their close relation to calligraphy, drawing, novel writing, poetry, singing, opera – all recognized as arts rather than knowledge *per se*.

The ancient Greeks did not use the term “*art*”, rather they used the word *techne* (τέχνη – whence *technique*) to refer to *making* or *doing* (from the Indo-European root “*teks*,” meaning “*to weave*” also “*to fabricate*”), as in a craft, skill or applied practice. In contrast, *episteme* (ἐπιστήμη – whence epistemology) was the Greek word used to refer to knowing, understanding or being acquainted with. Plato contrasts *episteme* with *doxa*: common belief or opinion.

The list of seven liberal arts passed into the classical Roman curriculum, detailed in the 5th century book by Martianus Minneus Felix Capella (*fl.c.* A.D. 410-420), *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* ("*On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*"), also called *De septem disciplinis* ("*On the Seven Disciplines*"). The book is an abstract or compilation from earlier authors. The classical Roman curriculum was then to pass—largely through Capella's book—into the early medieval period.

## EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND CLASSICAL EDUCATION

St. Paul (Ephesians 6:4) and St. Ignatius of Antioch in his *Letter to the Philadelphians* (A.D. 200-210) taught that children were to be instructed in the discipline of the Lord and scripture, as well as a practical trade. Early Christians assimilated Greco-Roman culture and classical education and brought Judaic respect for learning and tradition to education so that literacy would enable study of scripture. Early Christians in general highly valued classical education, with some caveats.

Tertullian's notion[xi] required strict separation from pagan culture. But in *De Idolatria* he allows students to attend pagan schools because there was no other option, while forbidding Christians to teach in such schools. But Tertullian was unusual among early Church Fathers in his anti-intellectual approach. The emphasis was on religious and moral instruction at home. Like today, early Christians lived in a largely pagan world of literature, philosophy, and culture. St. Chrysostom in his *Address on Vainglory and Right Way for Parents to bring up their Children* reflected this approach. However, he, and Sts. Jerome and Augustine were educated in pagan classical schools of grammar and rhetoric but warned against undue attachment to pagan literature. Nonetheless, St. Jerome taught Cicero to his students in Bethlehem.

Most other Fathers were educated in pagan schools and supported the same because they contained some truth, and they were useful preparation for study of scripture and theology. St. Basil the Great (A.D. 330-379) in his address "*To Young Men On How They Might Derive Profit from Pagan Literature*" – likens such study to a bee which draws from flowers only what it needs. St Gregory Nazianzen (A.D. 329-390), a friend of St. Basil, like him was a master of classical erudition, and

opposed the apostate Emperor Julian's forbidding Christians from teaching pagan literature because they rejected its beliefs.

St. Augustine in *De doctrina Christiana* analogized that as Israelites who in flight from Egypt took their taskmaster's riches, so Christians should make the best of pagan culture their own. In the Catechetical School of Alexandria under St. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215) and his successor Origen (A.D. 185-253) – a school of scientific theology in a pagan center, the curriculum included a broad study of Greek philosophy and science. St. Clement, in his *Protrepticus 9*, envisions enlightened pagan poets and philosophers as part of an orchestra under the direction of the Word, and also analogized: *the river of truth is one, although fed by many streams*.[xii]

After the barbarian invasions of the 5th century and following, classical knowledge and curriculum survived mainly in the monasteries that survived, such as in Ireland, and was gradually re-transmitted back into continental Europe by Irish, Scottish and English monks.

Charlemagne (*c*. A.D. 800) began a revival of classical education led by Alcuin and other monks from the British Isles, however it was somewhat premature, and the Carolingian Renaissance of classical learning collapsed under the weight of further barbarian invasions. However, it did help spread and preserve the classical learning and curriculum. Yet, it would take another three centuries for the barbarians to be fully converted and for classical education to revive in the early medieval period, mainly in texts passed down from Plato, and later from Aristotle via the Moslems and Greeks, and Capella's book, mentioned above.

Clerics and government officials wanted or were required to learn classical knowledge, and so they gradually gathered around cathedral schools and monasteries, and "masters" in the seven liberal arts, to learn from them. Thus began the first medieval universities in the 11th century A.D., at Bologna (est. A.D. 1088), Oxford (est. A.D. 1096), Paris (est. A.D. 1150) and so on—tertiary education. Higher faculties in law, medicine and theology (the liberal professions) were soon added.

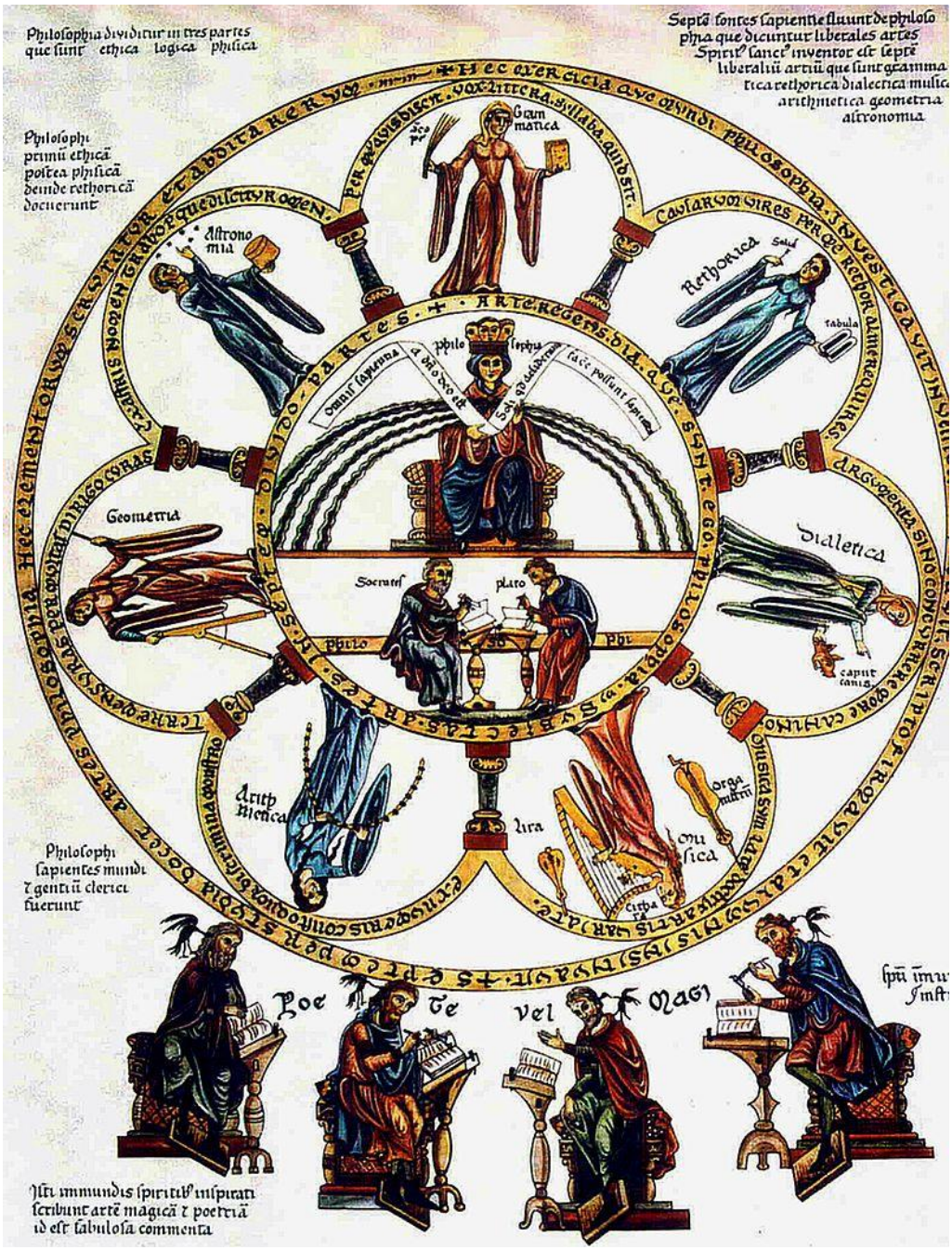
## MEDIEVAL UNIVERSITIES

Medieval universities thus received the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*—the seven liberal arts. Logically, students should be taught *how* to think, before being asked *what* they think about anything, or before participating in public life. By training the mind *how* to think—instead of *what* to think—this method provides teaching of the art and the science of the mind, as well as the art of the science of matter.

Medieval universities gave institutional form to a *hierarchical* notion of knowledge, which they inherited from antiquity: a basic education which comprised a grounding in elementary grammar, literature, music, and arithmetic, and which prepared the way for the advanced study of mathematics, philosophy, and finally (added in the Middle Ages) theology as their final end and the source of their guiding principle, whose object was Holy Wisdom, the supreme end of knowledge.

Late medieval education aimed at bringing the theoretical and practical together. As Dante put it, so "*that the theoretical intellect by extension becomes practical, its goal then being doing and making*". It was intended to be both a mental and practical education, which by the time of the Renaissance realized a many-sided individual.

With the Renaissance and then the Enlightenment, the fields of human knowledge expanded, and thus so did the *trivium* and *quadrivium*. By the end of the 18th century, in addition to the *trivium* and *quadrivium* of the Middle Ages, the definition of "*classical education*" had been expanded to embrace the study of languages, literature, poetry, history, and philosophy. Additionally, "*art*", meaning approximately the same thing as the Greek word "*techne*", or in English "*skill*", the fine arts and drama were added under the aegis of the arts of the *trivium*, since like the language arts they too were means of expression and communication. Music was one the arts of the classical *quadrivium*.




Perhaps the most famous image of the Liberal Arts is *Philosophy and the Liberal Arts* from the *Garden of Delights* (*Hortus deliciarum*) which was created in the 12th century. In the image one can see the seven liberal arts arranged around the Queen Philosophy who sits above Socrates and Plato. Theology, law and medicine were considered professional, higher studies, to be undertaken after a liberal arts education.

## MODERN UNIVERSITIES

Modern university education, where not primarily or entirely vocational or specialized, takes place in "*liberal arts colleges*" or in the first two years of university education, based on the medieval concept of the liberal arts or, far more commonly now, the liberalism of the Age of Enlightenment (which lacks the hierarchical structure of the medieval universities). It has been described as "*a*

*philosophy of education that empowers individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and a stronger sense of values, ethics, and civic engagement ... characterized by challenging encounters with important issues, and more a way of studying than a specific course or field of study."*[xiii]

Because man naturally desires to know, liberal education includes a general education curriculum which provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines, addressing man's desire for universal knowledge. But some liberal arts colleges also offer in-depth study (specialization – majors) in at least one academic area (which contradicts the foregoing).

The aim is a return (fully or partially) to the liberal arts tradition in education, as a corrective to the extreme disciplinary specialization, and random elective systems, common within the academy. Liberal education was advocated in the 19th century by thinkers such as St. John Henry Newman.

Liberal education is education for its own sake and personal enrichment, with the teaching of morals (often mistakenly reduced to vague "*values*"). Liberal education properly understood is holistic, integrated and hierarchical; it includes all levels of education from the most basic or elementary through the secondary and is propaedeutic to advanced or higher learning and specialization, which should take place in tertiary education.

A liberal education is regarded as a system or course of education suitable for the cultivation of a free (Latin: *liber*) human being, which finds its modern orientation in democracy. Modern totalitarian states banish such education and replace it with merely memorized indoctrination into their intellectual errors; similarly, slaves were historically kept uneducated and ignorant.

However, liberal education became central to much undergraduate education in the United States in the mid-20th century, being conspicuous in the movement for "*general education*", which took hold mainly in the first two years of college. The "*arts and sciences*" core of a university, is like the medieval curriculum of the seven liberal arts of the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*, derived from classical education, as noted above.

The most important part of the curriculum for liberal or general education is now commonly referred to as the humanities. In an extended sense, it is the equivalent of the Latin *humanitas* (whence "*the humanities*"), signifying the general learning that should be the possession of all human beings. They are an expansion of the medieval *trivium*—the three subjects of *grammar, rhetoric*, and *dialectics or logic* —which constitute the language of the humanities, to include *language studies, literature, poetry, the fine arts, drama, history, philosophy,* and sometimes *theology* (often reduced to comparative religion or a "*philosophy*" course in more secular universities).

Mathematics is the language of the sciences. Eventually, the "*quadrivium*" or "*sciences*" also were extended, to include higher mathematics, the natural sciences, and sometimes also the human (or "*soft*") sciences. But even today, practical, vocational, technical or professional activities such as agriculture, business, engineering, pedagogy or pharmacy are excluded from the liberal arts. The

liberal professions include only professions which require propaedeutic liberal arts education at university, traditionally law, medicine, and theology.

In the U.S., liberal arts education is still restricted mainly to the children of those who can afford to pay significant tuition to attend expensive liberal arts colleges. Across Europe liberal arts education is now far more affordable with some universities explicitly stating that it can now "*be enjoyed by everyone*." However, many high schools now offer a host of courses for college credit, thereby significantly reducing the cost of a college degree.

## *"THE BACKBONE OF A LIBERAL EDUCATION"*

We have heretofore discussed the liberal (or "*learning*") arts and their classical origins and history to modern times. We now need to relate the relationship between the seven liberal arts (as expanded), and liberal education as a whole. Frequently, the two terms are conflated and used to refer *only* to the learning skills associated with the seven liberal arts enumerated above. Because of that, we have delayed addressing their relationship to this point to avoid confusion, referring to the liberal arts as if learning the skills of how to read, write, speak, listen, and to calculate, measure and estimate, constitute the liberal arts and liberal education.

In articles promoting the study of the liberal arts, there is generally little to no mention of the vital importance the *materials* such learning arts or skills are to work with are, to achieve the purpose of liberal education. *How* to read is taught, but not *what* to read—this makes them fair game for publishers of all sorts – good and bad. This is rather like teaching someone how to string a bow without mentioning arrows, or how to use a gun without mention of ammunition, or of any stated or understood purpose. Students need guides for their reading, both to avoid the evil and to discover the excellent.

## LIBERAL ARTS AND LIBERAL EDUCATION

This omission is due to the common confusion about the terms *liberal arts* and *liberal education*. Many articles about classical education use both of them when discussing only the learning skills of the *trivium* (reading, writing, speaking, listening), and sometimes of the *quadrivium* (calculating, measuring, estimating) as well. Here we will quote the great, Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain to explain the proper meaning and relationship of the two terms:

> *"The traditional expression 'liberal arts' must be correctly understood. In this expression the word "art" does not mean art in its strict sense, as distinguished from 'knowledge' or 'science'. On the contrary, it relates to the liberal achievements of the mind in general, comprising both art and knowledge. Thus, in the Middle Ages, the mathematical sciences (arithmetic and geometry) and the physical sciences (astronomy and music, that is, acoustics) were the main arts of the quadrivium.*

> *Therefore education in the liberal arts is not only an education in the practical or 'artistic' rules of good thinking, or in a perfect sharpening of the teeth (that is to say, an attainment of indispensable means), it is also and mainly an education in knowledge and insight, and in a real grasping of truth and beauty (that is to say, an attainment—proportionate to the universe of thought of the youth—of those ends of the intellectual effort which are the various subject matters.''*[xiv]

Maritain's correction is against making a distinction between the liberal arts and liberal education caused by misunderstanding "*arts*" as used in *liberal arts* in a strict sense, reducing them to mean only the learning skills (or "*tools*") which are merely instrumentalities *preparatory* to a complete liberal arts education. Learning the liberal arts skills alone (*i.e.*, reading, writing, *etc.*), results in mere functional literacy, useful for reading street signs, instructions and menus. It would confer almost no knowledge beyond the bare learning of those skills. Without a complete liberal education (which is the same thing as learning the liberal arts understood fully and properly), as explained by Maritain above, including the learning skills of the liberal arts *and* using or applying them to study excellent intellectual materials, one runs the risk of escaping illiteracy without ever achieving true mental cultivation—the goal of liberal education.[xv]

The ancients were persuaded that education and culture are not a formal art or an abstract theory, distinct from the objective historical structure of a nation's spiritual life. They held them to be embodied in literature, which is the real expression of all higher culture.[xvi]

What is missing in an education consisting of learning the liberal arts (in the strict sense)– the arts of learning – or the ancient languages in which they were originally taught, is not a discreet discipline, nor a specific collection of facts or knowledge such as might be imparted in a textbook designed for that purpose, or to teach a specific subject. What is missing is what was described above as important and essential content of classical education: the study of the literature of the highest rank and historical or literary significance of ancient Greece and Rome, but *also* carried forward through the millennia, in the same pattern of study, thus including in addition the great works of the Middle Ages and modern periods, to our day.

Consistent with that conclusion, the ancient Greeks, such as Aristotle, did not neglect to study the great works of their predecessors, nor did the ancient Romans neglect the study of the great works of the ancient Greeks before them. For example, the works of the ancient Greek playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides all cite the works of their great predecessor Homer – the author of the first Greek classics: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Herodotus in turn cites Aeschylus and Homer; Thucydides cites Herodotus and Homer; Plato cites all of the former authors mentioned (save Herodotus); Aristotle cites all of the foregoing, and so on. Turning to the subsequent ancient Romans' studies, Epictetus cites 16 of his predecessors including all of the foregoing Greeks as well the ancient Romans authors Marcus Aurelius, Galen, Lucretius, Plutarch, Tacitus and Virgil; Augustine cites 12 of the foregoing and the Bible.

This pattern of study and learning from the great works of their predecessors did not end with the ancient Romans but continued among the authors of the great literature of the West, right to our day. For example, Montaigne cites 27 of his predecessor great authors; Bacon cites 17; Boswell cites 30; Freud cites 25; Whitehead cites 43; and so on. This is often referred to as "*standing on the shoulders of giants.*"

This inter-connectedness, referencing, comparing, alluding to, building on and refining the works of the earlier great authors of the West, all of whom in turn relied in part on the literary and intellectual labors of their own predecessors, spans the entire period from approximately 750 B.C. (i.e., beginning with the earliest Greek written texts—the epic poetry of Homer and Hesiod)[xvii] to the present day, and was dubbed *The Great Conversation* by Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler in 1952. This was the main pattern of higher learning in the West, from antiquity to recent times. According to Hutchins, "*The tradition of the West is embodied in the Great Conversation that began in the dawn of history and that continues to the present day.*"

No ongoing dialogue comparable in duration or breadth exists in the East. Pope Benedict XVI has mentioned that Western civilization has become the dominant civilization because of its closer correspondence to human nature. In his 2006 Regensburg lecture he noted that there exists a real analogy between our created reason and God who is "*Logos*" (meaning both reason and word). To abandon reason and hence the dialogue which is both its natural expression and necessary aid would be contrary both to the nature of man and of God. The cumulative wisdom of the West is preserved and transmitted in its great music and art but most particularly in the study of its great books which record the results of nearly three millennia of dialogue guided by reason concerning the most profound ideas with which we all must grapple such as existence, life, love, happiness, etc.

Through the internal dialectical process found in the great books—the references, discussions, critiques and responses to the thought of their wise predecessors, referred to as the "*Great Conversation*"—we may closely follow the development of the investigations conducted by these sages, scholars and saints into the great ideas they have pondered and about which they have written. This manner of study has always been the normative approach to wisdom in the West. Mortimer Adler wrote:

> *What binds the authors together in an intellectual community is the great conversation in which they are engaged. In the works that come later in the sequence of years, we find authors listening to what their predecessors have had to say about this idea or that, this topic or that. They not only harken to the thought of their predecessors; they also respond to it by commenting on it in a variety of ways.*[xviii]

Plato viewed study of the classics as important to guide men to contemplation. Augustine viewed them as important to the study of Sacred Scripture, Christian wisdom, and also to contemplation leading to the love of God. Four relevant quotations by Descartes, Maritain, Peguy and Hutchins, respectively:

> *"The reading of all good books is indeed like a conversation with the noblest men of past centuries who were the authors of them, nay a carefully studied conversation, in which they reveal to us none but the best of their thoughts."* – Descartes, *Discourse on Method, I.*

> *"The direct reading and study of books written by great authors is the* ***primary educational means****…Nothing can replace "pure reading," as Charles Peguy put it, of a "pure text." One cannot emphasize too much the educational role of great books.*[xix] – Maritain (bold font added).

> *"Until lately the West has regarded it as self-evident that the road to education lay through great books. No man was educated until he was acquainted with the masterpieces of his tradition...they were the principal instruments of liberal education…The goal toward which Western society moves is the Civilization of the Dialogue. The spirit of Western civilization is the spirit of inquiry. Its dominant element is Logos."* – Hutchins

As Papal biographer George Weigel has noted:

> *The West has devised no better way of forming the character of the young than by immersing young men and women in the classics of Western civilization, so that their lives become a practice of the ecumenism of time – and their journey is enriched by having as partners along the way, Homer, and Plato and Aristotle and Virgil; Augustine and Aquinas; Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, and Cervantes; and those moderns who were themselves steeped in the classic liberal learning in the West.*[xx]

The controlling purpose of the study of the Great Books is to learn how to read critically and think reflectively about basic ideas and issues, not just in school and college but throughout one's life. Again, Adler:

> *"Reading the Great Books had done more for my mind than all the rest of the academic pursuits…it is the best education for the faculty as well as for the students; the use of original texts is an antidote for survey courses and fifth-rate textbooks; and it constitutes by itself, if properly conducted, t****he backbone of a liberal education****."* (bold font added)

It is interesting to note that—as it is often misunderstood today "*classical education*" omits this essential element of study of the great works of the past, up to the present, or mentions it only tangentially—which is, in fact, the very heart of classical education, as well as its penultimate goal. Instead, "*classical education*" as it is often used for marketing various educational programs today, refers almost exclusively to the study of the learning skills—the learning apparatus—of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, of the seven liberal arts, aptly called *tools of learning* in a famous essay by Dorothy

Sayers.[xxi] That very essay, famous for reviving interest in the *trivium* and *quadrivium* (i.e., classical education), itself largely suffers from this same omission.

It is true that the skills or learning arts of the liberal arts are as necessary to a comprehensive modern curriculum as they were in antiquity and in the Middle Ages. It is also certainly true that they are neither the whole of formal, *classical education*, nor its most important part, nor the primary means to the supreme end of education – wisdom. They are, however, essential to it and had a propaedeutic role, in that they were viewed as necessary to learn, not in and for themselves, but as preparatory to higher learning.

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## ENDNOTES

[i] Adler, Mortimer J., *A Second Look in the Rearview Mirror*; Macmillan Publishing Co., NY, 1992, p.27
[ii] Thus, Quintilian wrote: *Si mihi tradatur educandus orator*. Cicero: *In dedecare natus, ad turpitudinem educatus*. Also, Plautus: *Ille homo homines not alit, verum educat, recreatque*.
[iii] Redden, John and Ryan, Francis. A *Catholic Philosophy of Education.* Bruce (Milwaukee,1956) p.23-24
Note: we have added discussion and example, to complete the definition, for reasons which will appear.
[iv] (in possibly extended zero-grade form *kid-*), Pokorny, Julius; Indegermanisches *Etymologisches Wortenbuch* (Bern, 1959) 6. *kei* 548. American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Houghton Mifflin Company (Boston), 1976. p.1521
[v] Ibid, American Heritage Dictionary p. 248
[vi] Ibid
[vii] Ibid Pertaining to or designating the European music of the latter half of the 18th century, as that of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, as distinguished from Baroque, Romantic, Modern, popular or folk music.
[viii] Chiefly Attic-Ionic, Doric and Aeolic
[ix] Ibid, American Heritage Dictionary
[x] Ibid, American Heritage Dictionary
[xi] Tertullian, Chapter 7 of *De prasescriptione haereticorum*
[xii] St. Clement, *Stromata 1, 5 (Miscellanies)*
[xiii] Ibid, Redden, John and Ryan, Francis. A *Catholic Philosophy of Education.* p.23-24
[xiv] Maritain, Jacques, *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, Inc., 1943), p. 71.
[xv] "*The Great Conversation Vol I.*" *Encyclopædia Britannica Inc.1952.* Hutchins, Robert Maynard *The Great Conversation: the Substance of a Liberal Education. Encyclopædia Britannica*. Mortimer Adler: *The Great Conversation Revisited*, in *The Great Conversation: A Peoples Guide to Great Books of the Western World*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., Chicago, 1990, p. 28.
[xvi] Redden, John and Ryan, Francis. *A Catholic Philosophy of Education*. Bruce (Milwaukee1956) p.23
[xvii] Though also first written down at about the same time—750 B.C.—the first five books of the Hebrew Bible—the *Torah* or Pentateuch—traditionally ascribed to Moses, was translated from the Hebrew into *koine* Greek in the mid-3rd century B.C. This translation was called the *Septuagint* (after the "70" or *septuaginta* scholars who made the translation) and were in wide use among the Jews during the Second Temple period as few could read Hebrew by then. The remaining books of the Greek Old Testament were probably translations of the 2nd century B.C.
[xviii] Ibid. Hutchins, Robert M., *The Great Conversation* Vol I. p. 28.
[xix] Ibid, Maritain p. 70-71
[xx] Weigel, George, *Evangelicum Catholicism*, (2019) p. 214
[xxi] Sayers, Dorothy L., *The Lost Tools of Learning*, Essay E.T. Heron (1948) Oxford