

## This I Believe

### Fostering a Core Principle in our society – Dialogue

I believe in order to provide a good means to enjoying life, not just enduring it, fostering dialogue among the citizens of our country, especially our 50+ year old citizens, is valuable. With millions of people retiring in the next few years, a new adult “Grand Conversation” Idea could be the idea for our times. “This I Know...through certain Reading and Dialogue” is an enhanced idea in which a whole group, community or nation is thinking and acting on the idea. A “Fostering Dialogue Idea” that is a daily lives, reason-based, eternal “forms, essences and qualities” idea. It is a conversation with a purpose which can provide a way of putting meaning into the chaos of our daily lives and discovering how to pursue a happy life.

This everyday reasoning idea is in the sense of discussing ideas we face every day in our lives that are everybody’s business. Not the elite’s or scholar’s business. Conversational ideas that have a purpose and not just for fun, which have the ability to blossom into “big talk”. Also, conversational ideas that are philosophical, philosophical in the sense of rationale, commonsense discussing the problems everyone must try to solve. Problems regarding family, love, happiness, good habits of the mind and body, life and death, liberty, government, and peace as well as courage, temperance, justice and prudence.

Dialogue has its own problems. It’s obvious by watching radio and television talk shows that we are so bent on debate, proving our point and challenging others, that other possibilities have no place. Discussion participants are saddled with their memories. Memories affected by factors influencing one’s strength, ease and adequacy of recall. Or memories burdened by forgetting, avoidance of the disagreeable, and false memories. Sometimes participants easily, emotionally and with strength opine about everything. However, they tend to divorce themselves from reasoning, wise thoughts and prudent experiences indispensable to sound judgment and decision-making.

Our society has tended to move away from truth-based inquiry and systematic reasoning. Critical thinking is not valued. Instead we are relying more on untested opinion and conclusions. Other problems are: our emotions, agendas and thinking that are already set so when we encounter new situations we don't know what to say, we react with emotionally over-determined behavior and we don't listen. Instead we cling to one-sided or prejudicial positions.

It is necessary to go beyond our memories or reflections as the source of our ideas...or as recollections of our past habits of thinking and knowing to new acquired habits of the mind that lead to new knowing. Go beyond our fancy or fantasy to creative imagination...the kind of creative imagination that changes the role of our imagination in thinking and knowing from empirical representative images to intellectual concepts. Go beyond our opinions as an act or source of knowing with probability to knowledge... knowing with certitude.

Eternal "Forms, Essences and Qualities" involve not only the substantiality of thought, but the perpetuity of thinking and knowledge. The kind of eternal "Forms, Essences and Qualities" that are: exemplar models; indwelling causes or principles; constituting order; perpetuity of truth; divine ideas; timeless and immutable; imperishable; universal; and the essence of being, becoming or knowledge. The kind of knowledge that is good for all people, at all times and at all places.

It's noticeable to me, after many years of facilitating an adult, no-charge "Great Ideas" reading and discussion group in a public library, men and women, when they reach 45-50 years of age, start wondering why, not just wanting to know what, and develop a hunger for dialogue. However, few people, by themselves, properly read, interpret and evaluate what great men and women have authored. A clearer understanding comes through dialogue with other individuals. The late philosopher Mortimer Adler was right when he said "Solitary reading is like solitary drinking, you ought not to do it."

A question is: under what conditions does fostering "Grand Conversation" flourish? There are at least two conditions that are required. First, ranked based thinking is out and peer based thinking

is in, whereby everyone comes to the discussion as equals and each one fosters collaboration in which individuals cooperate with or willingly assist others who is not immediately connected. Second, is to make the best approach to fostering dialogue most likely, a blending of dialogue skill concerning practical reason, morality, and wisdom needs to occur. Furthermore, a synthesizing of ethics; intellectual, practical and theological virtues; as well as philosophical, political, natural and supernatural wisdom.

The best approach methodically is the Socratic question and answer method because it is the most relevant sort of dialogue and the closest to perfection. The vitality of the Fostering Dialogue Idea depends on the constant stressing of how one should conduct himself or herself.

The reason why the fostering of the “Daily Lives/Eternal “Forms, Essences and Qualities” Dialogue Idea needs to exist is: philosophical roundtable dialogue provides stability in people’s lives. It is a way of imposing meaning on the chaos of our daily concerns. But, moreover, it is a way of discovering how to seek the good life. It must be the beginning-game to enjoying life, not just enduring it.

The end-game is personal development to good conduct over the course of one’s lifetime and a well stocked mind at death.

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