

In this Issue

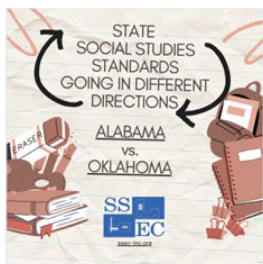
We hope the holidays were a time to recharge from an eventful fall, and that the new year has begun well. This issue highlights a range of member and organizational activities, including publications and milestones. We have a new publisher now - Emerald Publishing Ltd in the UK. Our Outreach Committee has organized a most timely webinar series on artificial intelligence in the social sciences. One outcome of a past conference is highlighted in "News from Morocco." The annual National Civics Week is set for March, with one entry offered by SSEC. The issue concludes with a guest essay from Michael Hartoonian. We would be pleased to publish other member thought pieces in future newsletters.

Charles White Stepping Down As Executive Director

Executive Director Charles White informed the SSEC Board of his intention to step down from that position no later than the end of August of this year. Shortly after the fall election, his wife Debbie was diagnosed with Stage II clear-cell ovarian cancer, which will take considerable time and attention away from his work as ED. The Board has established a search committee and will be advertising the position shortly.



Charlie was selected to serve as SSEC's fourth executive director at the beginning of 2018, following his management of the 2017 annual meeting in Salem, MA. He took over for Jim Davis, who served as executive director from 2001 to 2018. Ironically, Jim was hired by the Board when Charlie was serving as SSEC president. As you know, Jim continued as SSEC Treasurer until shortly before his death in 2023. Stay tuned for updates on the search.



QUICK TAKE

TWO ROADS DIVERGED IN A WOOD . . .

Check out how the standards debate is unfolding in different directions. Compare, for example, [Alabama](#) vs. [Oklahoma](#).

Annual Conference

2025 DETROIT June 17-21, 2025

The 2025 annual conference will return to the US. It will be a notable year – 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of SSEC's incorporation. The time-period for proposal submission ended on January 25, and we have received a healthy number of session proposals, including many submitted by prospective Early Career recipients. We will be continuously updating information on the [SSEC Annual Conference](#) page as it becomes available.



If you have questions, please feel free to contact Dean Vesperman at conference@ssec-inc.org.

SSEC LAUNCHES WEBINAR SERIES ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The SSEC Outreach Committee has organized an important series of webinars that take on the issue of artificial intelligence (AI) and its implications for history and social science education. From January to March, colleagues within and beyond SSEC will explore AI in History Education, in Geography Education, and in Civic Education. For each webinar, presenters will upload materials to a Google folder for participants to access for continuing use. If you miss a webinar, it will be recorded and uploaded to SSEC's [YouTube channel](#), with ancillary materials remaining available. Click on the graphic above to register for one or more via EventBrite.



Click above for registration

First up was on January 30 – **AI & History Education**, led by **Prof. David Hicks**, Professor of History and Social Science Education at Virginia Tech University. This is followed on February 18 by **Terence Day's AI and Geography Education**. Dr. Day is professor of Geography, Earth, and Environmental Science at Okanagan College in British Columbia, Canada. **Michael Berson** (Professor of Social Science

and Elementary Education) and **Ilene Berson** (Professor of Early Childhood) at Florida State University present the third webinar on **AI and Civic Education** on March 10, as part of iCivics National Civics Learning Week.

Award

SSEC'S 2024 EARLY CAREER SCHOLAR IN MOROCCO RECEIVES THE 2024 NCSS AWARD AS ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER OF THE YEAR



[CLICK ABOVE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)

Kate Van Haren (Doctoral candidate at Penn State University) followed her June 2024 Early Career Award from SSEC with another honor: NCSS's November 2024's award as Elementary Social Studies Teacher of the Year. Lots of her colleagues are recognizing Kate as a rising star in the profession and a strong advocate for elementary social studies. See her brief NCSS interview [here](#).

Kate introduces herself to her students' families as follows (from her school's website):

Welcome to fourth and fifth grade! I teach 4th grade Wisconsin History, 5th grade US History, and 4th grade Reading. I am currently starting my seventh year teaching in the community. I am originally from Stevens Point, but have lived in many different places around the world. It's hard to pick a favorite place, but my most memorable experience was living in Macedonia for three years as a Peace Corps volunteer. I graduated with my undergraduate teaching degree in Elementary Education from Northland College in 2009. I completed my Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Penn State University in 2019. In addition to teaching, I am the Pittsville Elementary Play Director and the Junior High Forensics Coach. When I'm not teaching, I love traveling and talking about all the interesting places I've seen. I love continuing my own lifelong learning, especially topics that relate to history and world cultures.

In Other News

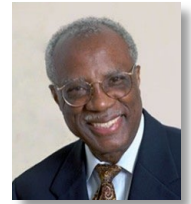
Past President Dean Vesperman is serving as the Faculty Advisor for the NCSS Preservice Teacher Community. He recently moved from the University of Wisconsin – River Falls to the university's La Crosse campus. Dean is one of SSEC's Publications Editors who guide book publication and explore ideas for a future SSEC journal.



Member Publications

Dr. James A Banks edited the fall 2024 issue of *Daedalus* (the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences), which focused on "The global quest for educational equity."

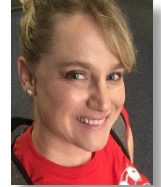
Daedalus is an open-source journal available at <https://www.amacad.org/daedalus>.



Whitney Blankenship, Anne Aydinian Perry, Matt Missias, and Dean Vesperman were recently published in the book *Socio-Cultural STEM for middle school: A model for student engagement and teacher collaboration* (Pryor & Kang, eds.). Their chapter is entitled



"Contextualizing socio-cultural STEM through historical figures and events." Its focus is teaching about historical events of the Gilded Age and how those events shaped STEM history. Included are lessons on teaching about the connections between counting machines, the Census, and the birth of computers, a lesson on Typhoid Mary and the balance between individual rights and collective security, and a lesson on the history of food preservation.



Citation: *Blankenship, W. G., Aydinian-Perry, A., Vesperman, D. P., & Missias, M.T. (2025). Contextualizing socio-cultural STEM through historical figures and events. In Pryor, C. R. and Kang, R. Socio-Cultural STEM for middle school: A model for student engagement and teacher collaboration (pp. 81-105). Rowman & Littlefield.*

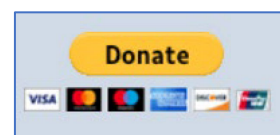
Eric Claravall is lead author (with Elizabeth Isidro and Robin Irely) of "[Historical Reasoning among Middle School Students with Learning Differences: Exploring the Use of Multiple Sources in Writing](#)." The research article appeared in *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 2024, 40(4), pp 352-376.



Donations

Since August 12, 2024, SSEC has received \$1,125 in donations from members, including from participants in the Morocco conference. Benefactors included:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| • JoAnn Wood | • Tim Monreal |
| • Kate Van Haren | • Maia Sheppard |
| • EunJung Kim | • Charlie & Deborah White |
| • Ryan Knowles | • Sara Demoiny |
| • Faculty of UM6P (Morocco) | • Scott Durham |



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SSEC Publications

EMERALD PUBLISHING GROUP BUYS INFORMATION AGE PUBLISHING

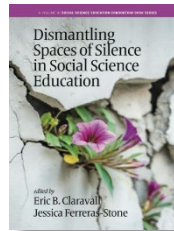
On Friday November 22, 2024, Information Age Publishing (IAP) was purchased by [Emerald Publishing Group](#) based in the UK.



Click logo for background

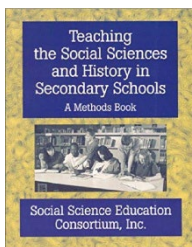
IAP's publisher George Johnson emailed us, saying that we can assure you that you will be in great hands and that all of the past and future projects will be handled with the upmost care and atten-

tion. This new team will be a great team to work with and I believe they will welcome your interest to continue the development of the partnership we have created over the years." Current contracts and agreements with IAP will be honored by Emerald, including book discounts. We expect there will be some initial bumps and delays, but you should know that we have submitted the shipping order for **Dismantling Spaces of Silence** book.



Click for information

Social Science Education for Just and Sustainable Societies is the working title of the annual book based on the 2024 Morocco conference. The editorial team include Sara Demoiny (Associate Professor, Auburn University), Alex E. Chisholm (Assistant Professor, University of Georgia), Adil Bentahar (Associate Professor, the University of Delaware, currently on sabbatical in his native Morocco and co-chair of the conference). We expect a fall 2025 publication date.



The revision of **Teaching the Social Sciences and History in Secondary Schools: A Methods Book** has been assembling planned chapters at various levels of completion, including initial drafts to nailing down authors for a couple of chapter. The editors are aiming for completion in the fall, but they are still investigating the best platform to make the book available. Contact [Matt Missias](#) for more information.



Click image for more information

News from Morocco



A New Journal Amplifies the Voices of the World's Underrepresented Languages

Elmouhtaker Mohamed kamal
PhD Student
Université Cadi Ayyad
Marrakech, Morocco

The idea of the **International Journal of Underrepresented Languages (IJURL)** started during a presentation I gave at the [SSEC Marrakech Conference in June 2024](#). The presentation was about Université Cadi Ayyad faculty members' attitudes towards the use of English as a medium of research and publications. Discussing the linguistic challenges non-native speakers of English face in academia, I pointed out the glaring lack of academic journals dedicated to mother tongues. The present audience agreed and found common ground for starting an international journal for underrepresented languages. Connection took place, mainly with **Professor Robert White** of St. Francis Xavier University in Canada, and here we are with a huge project to take place. As a doctoral candidate, I opened a discussion with Professor Mohamed Jaafari - my research advisor at Cadi Ayyad University - who agreed and called for joint efforts to make this come true. Soon a broader network of linguists and scholars convened online to explore ways to address this gap. Professors from Morocco, Canada, Zanzibar, and Ireland took the burden to set up the journal's first steps.

A series of collaborative meetings have taken place to answer IJURL essential questions related to the journal name, vision, and mission, as well as templates that suit various underrepresented languages. Visit <https://ijurl.org> for more details. These discussions laid the groundwork for IJURL's role as a platform for research and advocacy, emphasizing inclusivity, accessibility, and practical applications for language preservation.

With the first issue to be published, IJURL is open to contributions from linguists, educators, and researchers. The journal's website and flyer outline opportunities for engagement—whether as reviewers, contributors, or editorial board members. Together, we aim to make IJURL a vibrant hub for preserving and promoting linguistic diversity.

Join us in amplifying the voices of the world's underrepresented languages. Visit our website: <https://ijurl.org> to learn more and get involved.



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Call for Volunteers

To put into action our goals, SSEC relies on volunteers to serve on the various committees established by the Board of Directors.

We are also looking to add members to the following operational committees, which involve a one-year renewable commitment.

[Outreach Committee](#) organizes and administers the three to four webinars that SSEC organizes each year. The committee also explores strategies for increasing SSEC membership. This committee actively collaborates with the Social Media Committee.

[Conference Committee](#) works with the Executive Director, in consultation with the Board, to develop and implement arrangements for the annual SSEC conference, from location selection to local logistics.

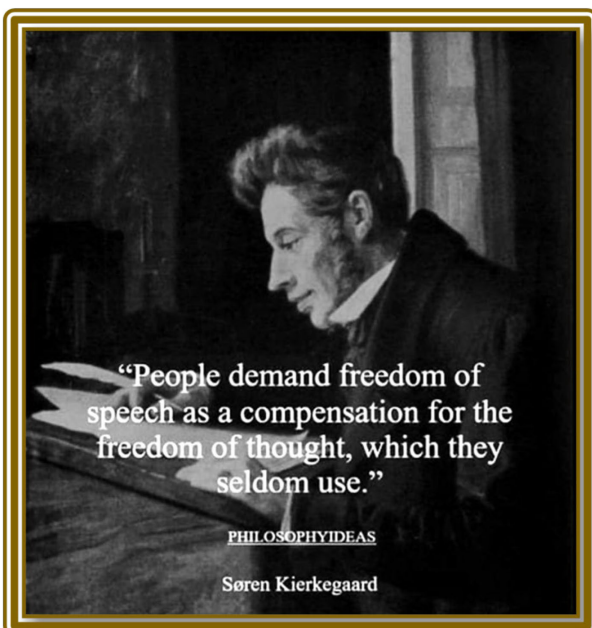
[Social Media Committee](#) maintains a consistent schedule of posts to increase SSEC presence on various social media platforms particularly in highlighting SSEC publications and presentations.

[Grants Committee](#) works actively with SSEC Board to pursue grant and contract opportunities for SSEC to pursue, including materials development, professional development, and original research.

[Awards Committee](#) makes recommendations to the Board for recipients of the annual Early Career Award and the Irving Morrisett Award for Excellence in Social Science Education.

[Partnership Committee](#) is composed of liaisons who represent SSEC with our external partners and collaborate on projects that are of mutual benefit in terms of organizational mission. Current partnerships include: CivXNow/iCivics (US), Lithuanian College of Democracy/Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania), Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship, Dublin City University (Ireland), and the Moroccan Center for Civic Education/Cadi Ayyad University (Morocco).

We hope you will consider joining us in committee work. For more information, contact Pres. Amy Allen at allenamy@vt.edu.



Guest Essay



The Moral Synergy of Nature and Reason: Toward a New Global Ethic

Michael Hartoonian
Associate Editor of *Pegasus*

(January 2025. Reprinted w/permission)
Available at <https://bit.ly/40NQINb>

*As man advanced in civilization
And small tribes united into larger communities,
The simplest reason would teach each individual
That he ought to extend his social instincts
And his sympathies to all the members of the same nation,
Though personally unknown.
This point being once learned, there is only
An artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending,
To all people.*

-Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 1871

Introduction

The operational metaphor presented throughout this essay is one of a flowing river with attending tributaries, where the river is human history and the tributaries flowing into the main stream ideas of technical and moral significance continually defining and redefining the nature of being human within (and absent from) community, culture and civilization. The flowing river is beautiful, terrible and never ending. The Garden of Eden is a dim memory and so like the journeys depicted in Homer's "Odyssey" and Virgil's "Aeneid," we look to go home again or build a new home in a new place. But the questions remain: what is our identity? Who are we?

Perhaps, like Darwin, I'm an optimist. But from where does such optimism come? From literature? From stories told within families? Certainly not from history. The history normally told of the human past is filled with pain and blood, interspersed with short periods of peace and progress. It has been argued by many that at any time in human history, you can count at least fifty wars going on across the globe semiannually. In this essay, we will take a closer look at some periods of tragedy and triumph, with an eye on the changes in human intellectual constructions and the philosophical questions raised, particularly as people attempt to bend the arc of history toward morality. From my evidence, that bending is real in that people have over the last 5,000 years continuously behaved in a more harmonious way toward both the environment and each other (see for example, Low, Bobbi, 1996; Edgerton, Robert, 1992; LeBlanc, Steven, 2003).

But today, given the scale of populations, the advent of AI and the awakening of a new and untethered/contentless tribalism, it's time to admit that we are at the end of an epoch that we once called the age of reason.

The end of a philosophical epoch comes when we run out of real questions and engage in philosophizing meaningless arguments about the difference between entertainment and amusement, between liberal and conservative or between needs and wants. More importantly, as we can plainly see today, all philosophical periods confront the second law of thermodynamics – everything is (always) going to hell. As an

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aside, it is the case that natural entropy is tied to gravity (a closed system) and has been increasing over millions of years, foreshadowing the end of earth and our solar system. Philosophic epochs are not tied to gravity, as they have the potential to be open systems, but are tied to the natural desire of the human being to be in community, as well as the ability to create or destroy community. The second law applies to the destruction of community and is fixed to the vicissitudes of the human spirit that complements “the natural human animal.”

At such “times between the times,” as we are living through today, our natural selves demand a correction in our cognition so we can create a new philosophical system that attempts to expand freedom of will and an inclusive understanding of nature, community and reason.

As an example of this cognitive correction and while there are many such examples throughout time and place, we will look at such a time in the 18th century – what was called, in Europe, the Enlightenment, the time of the scientific revolution, the Age of Reason because it is that cognition of reason that has pretty much been destroyed. But first things first.

Two Hundred Years of Religious Wars

A new technology, the printing press, opened the 16th century and from 1517, when Martin Luther published his 95 Theses attacking the Church’s sale of indulgences, the Protestant Reformation and then the Catholic Counter-Reformation began throwing Europe into two hundred years of religious conflict, war and profane ideologies. From the early 1500s until the late 17th century and with the continuing growth of Protestantism, religion often became a proxy for political conflicts, as leaders used religion to extend political power. This logically led to a great deal of social instability, as religious conflicts coincided more and more with social, economic and class tensions. Even issues like inflation and immigration took on a religious overtone. With religion as your path to all truth, you didn’t need evidence or reason. You could just insist that it is God’s will. This worked well with uneducated people and with those whose chief motive was to further self-interest or help build political stability to serve the powerful few. However, “blind faith” always leads to certainty and intolerance, which leads to violence, persecution and war. And with the second law in full control, Europe had aggressions and bloodshed. Almost one-third of the population died in “religious” wars. After decades and decades, these wars did get tiresome, but not until the Age of Reason – the Enlightenment

– helped many see the absurdities in blind faith and certainty. Faith and reason only work with uncertainty, as if you are certain about everything, there is no need for faith. Most church leaders could not understand this simple truth. It took empiricism and reason to clear the mind and awake people from a long nightmare.

Nature’s God and the Tension between Reason and Blind Faith

With the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th, there was great push back on science and reason. There was the Second Great Awakening (1800–1840), Romanticism (1800) and most influential, a book read around the world, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818). By the late 1820s, it became a worldwide best seller and sparked conversations about science run amok. The arguments among reason, empiricism and religious faith continued throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and well into the 21st. At different times, different worldviews held sway. But the entropy of scientific thought allowed illogical and illiberal minds to take over political thought and economic policies. Twenty-five years into the 21st century, we are still only dimly

aware of the end of the Enlightenment and now must turn our attention to crafting a new philosophic epoch that will not separate reason from nature, but develop a synergy between them.

Toward a New Global Ethic: Connecting Human DNA with Human Freedom and Inclusion

What happens at the beginning of a new philosophical epoch? Simply stated, ideas from the wisdom of the past are paired together. Here, we will pair human nature with ideas that are fundamental to freedom, inclusiveness and stewardship.

It is tricky to talk about human nature, our DNA and our record of benevolence, accounting for the influence of the community and the values that drive it. If the human being is “hard wired,” what is he or she hard wired to do? To think? To be? There is no evidence of this creature because an individual living apart is not and never was. We might say that an argument made without evidence can be dismissed without evidence. We also know that survival is based on belonging to a “community.” But if that community becomes a closed system, it will atrophy. The community only survives if individuals are moral agents made possible through being free (free will), innovative and willing to join in concert with others to create community harmony, with the understanding that “I’m better off if the community is better off.” This is the genius of the liberal (arts) society, where civic virtue is nurtured.

As we look around the world today, we see dictators, oligarchs, deniers of science and religious teachings and individuals simply interested in self-amusement, the accumulation of wealth and power and proud of their lack of learning. They simply kick problems down the road, leaving their children to “suck-it-up.” As a result, in our schools, we are witnessing more and more children who have little interest in learning and more interest in style rather than character. To be sure, there are many, many people who want to be good neighbors and citizens, but you can only be a citizen within a democratic, inclusive, merit-oriented and peaceful society. A felon cannot govern a republic and a leader of character cannot govern a community of felons or anti-civic virtue individuals. It should be clear that quality of life, understanding that humans are social, as well as rational animals, is based on both human nature and the constructed community of virtue.

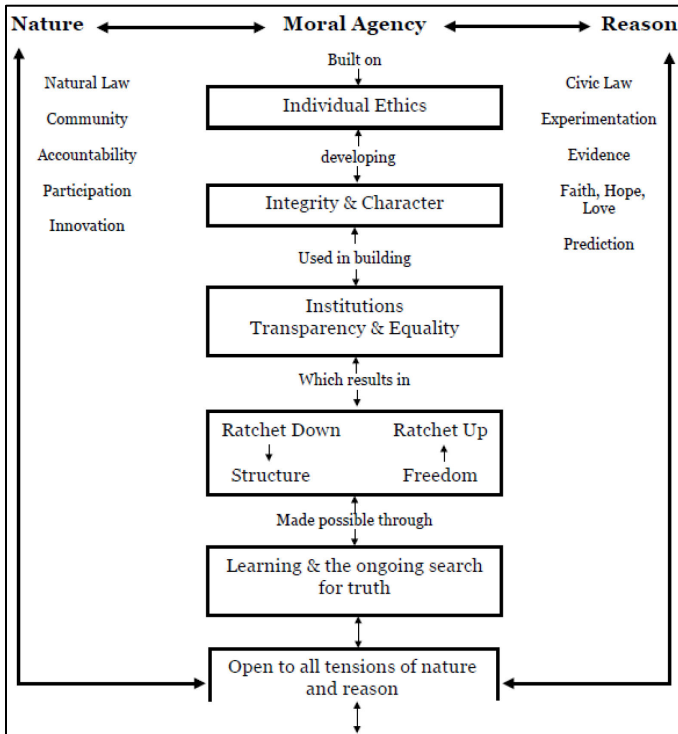
Virtue is taught by the community and is learned by citizens. From this synergy, we study, debate and implement standards of knowledge, behavior and of governance.

A Framework for Developing a New Global Ethic: Concept and Their Flow

The engaged concepts of a new philosophic epoch and its attending ethical framework cannot be created out of whole cloth. It must rely on human DNA augmented by the changing context and content of psychological evolution and our ancestors’ actions and reactions to the building and destroying of community. Over time and the study of many cultures regarding how values of personal autonomy, rule of (community) law, attempts at justice and equality, more successful attempts at monied and political dictatorships, education and innovation, closed and open societies, we know that there are moral sensitivities that work. I will list the most fundamental ideas from our understanding and go on to place those ideas onto a flowing or dynamic, open system. This system will present and represent the discussion starter for a new global ethic – a new philosophic epoch. What we believe is most basic here are the debates that must ensue

over the natural and learned reason/virtues of human beings. Such a basic list would include, but not be limited to: love, aesthetics, truth, justice, equality, goodness and freedom. These concepts form the ethical framework of our discussion. They are the invisible moral superstructures upon which grace must depend. All good things, including the good life, come by grace and grace comes by these basic values and these ideas do not come easily. The creation of a new epoch is hard work, but in the end, it is worth it. Will we get it right this time? This is the wrong question. The better question is: do we have the courage to dismiss egos and get to our common work?

The following chart/framework brings together the elements of nature and reason in a flow that can, with education, writ large, create a new philosophical epoch and a new ethic.



We start with moral agency as the interrelationship of reason and nature, which is built on individual ethics, which develops personal integrity and character. Character is in play to build institutions with transparency and equality, which results in all institutions ratcheting down structure and ratcheting up freedom. This condition is made possible through education and the ongoing search for truth, which, in turn, is open to all tensions of nature and reason. The system is open! Through interactions and learnings from nature, we are able to understand and use natural law, the good community, accountability/stewardship, participation and innovation. Through the learnings (and behaviors) from reason, we are able use civic law, experimentation, evidence, faith (hope and love) and prediction.

Returning to the metaphor of the river, we see in the above framework the power of flow. This is the operational energy needed to understand how we move to a new philosophical epoch and toward a new global ethic. The head waters of the mainstream are formed by the intersection of nature and reason (see Steven Pinker’s Enlightenment Now), while the tributaries add human and natural synergies such as law, experimentation, community, accountability, faith,

innovation and prediction. These flow into the main river to form the dynamics of institutions, learning, character, personal ethics and moral agency, the heart of the new global ethic.

Conclusion

The end of a philosophical epoch comes with the exhaustion of its motive concepts.

-Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 1942

Occasionally, a radical break appears in the continuity of time that shakes the foundations of society and its traditional values, declaring those values irrelevant to the vagaries of the present. Those breaks in time are the “times between the times,” one of which we are in now and trying to decide if we should embrace the historical fracture with all its fears and opportunities or ignore it, even at great peril.

Minor breaks in time and value orientations are often related to changes in technology and demographics. Major value transformations and breaks in time, however, are related to changes in relationships. As an example of the latter, consider the time in western history at the end of the 15th century. This period saw the high point of the Renaissance, experiencing the birth pangs of the Enlightenment and the start of the modern global age. Innovative technologies and migration patterns began to point Europe in a different direction, complete with its old set of questions that suddenly needed answers in a new reality. The different and separate worlds of Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas started to move together in awkward, yet irresistible patterns, as food, dress, government, church and business began to change in form and function. All of this notwithstanding, the break in history that produced this time between the times was the realization that questions had to be raised about relationships and their attending values.

Consider the questions:

- What is a human being?
- What is my relationship to God?
- What is my relationship to the state?
- What is my relationship to my mother? Father? Children?
- What is my relationship to the earth (the environment)?
- What is wealth? Knowledge? Justice?
- What is a state?
- What is a church? What is a school? What is a family?

When these or other relational or ethical questions are posed, we can be assured that a philosophical epoch is about to end. Before a break in time, the questions need not be raised, for everyone tacitly knows the answers and raising questions would be seen as heresy, deviant behavior or worse. And now, five hundred years later, that epoch is, indeed, ending and we find ourselves entering a new break in time. The old, yet contemporary relationships that we once created with the earth, with the state, with God and with each other and their attending ethical claims have long receded and simply are not working. Our economic well-being is in jeopardy and we don’t know why or what to do about it. We watch as our social systems seem

to be breaking down. They aren’t working, not because the questions, ethical claims or relationships are inappropriate – not at all. The questions must be asked again, but we need to understand that the knowledge needed for their answers is so different from that time five hundred or even fifty years ago, that a whole new conversation or civic discourse must be started. That discourse might start with issues of energy, healthcare, immigration, war and jobs, but the conversation

and debate must focus on relationships and value (virtue) claims. If we can't do that, the republic will not get through this uncertain time. If we can debate and act on these questions in a way that will reclaim our moral authority, we will emerge with our principles and lives intact.

Consider:

- How will we live?
- Where will we live?
- What will our life's work be?
- What is knowledge?
- What is truth?
- What is the highest good of being human?
- What is the proper relationship between the individual and family, God, society and the earth (understanding that there is a reciprocal duty among all of these)?
- What is happiness?

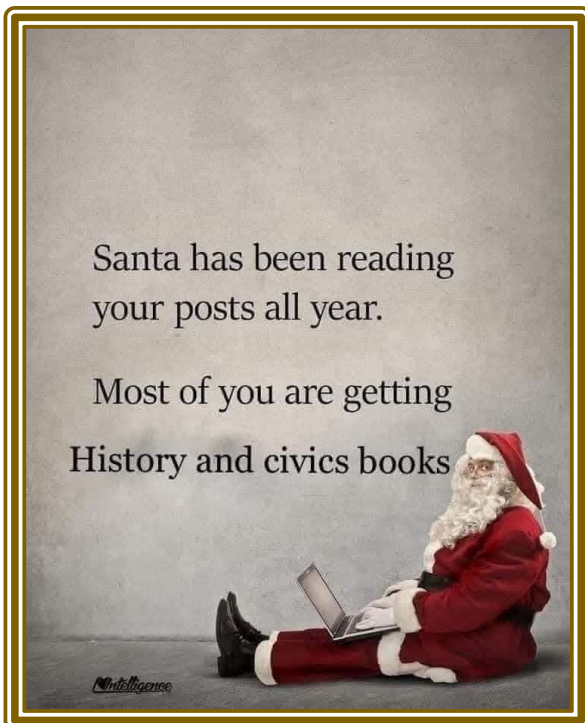
These are not just philosophical questions that would be nice and interesting to discuss in a classroom, in the media or over the internet. These are necessary inquiries that will determine our future. The first three questions, particularly, demand a careful study of morality and the synergy between nature and reason.

I would simply ask that those who can learn, debate and teach the flow of a new philosophic epoch, a new global ethic, look at the open system of moral agency presented here as a discussion starter.

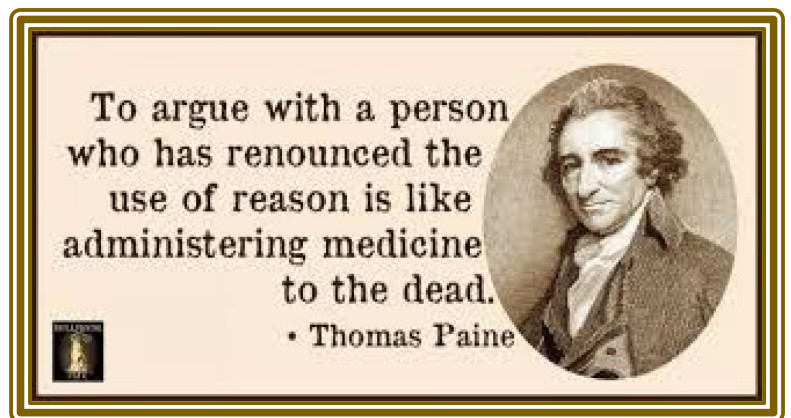
Michael Hartoonian is Associate Editor of *Pegasus: A Newsletter for the Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism* January 2025. Volume XVI, Issue 1, pp. 12-19.



Timely memes



Post-election, November 2024



Excerpt from Thomas Paine's *American Crisis*, 21 March 1778



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