The Value of a Liberal Arts Education

A Fundamental Premise of Saint Angela’s Vision and of Ursuline Education

Mary Virginia Orna, OSU
Outline

- Saint Angela’s Inspiration: Saint Ursula
- Saint Angela: Life, Times, Character, Educational Philosophy
- The Ursulines: Creative Heirs of Saint Angela’s Legacy
- The Trivium: The Basis of a Liberal Education
- Discussion: Goals of Ursuline Education
- The Règlements: A Reprise
- Of Schools and Schooling: What is Education for?
- Back to the Trivium and the Purpose of Education
- A Way to Make a Difference
Saint Ursula

Saint Angela’s Inspiration
Saint Ursula

- A saga of spiritual quest
- Fearlessness in confronting the powers-that-be
- Formation of a company of women
- Nobility of spirit
- Perseverance toward a goal
- Clearly defined values
- Faithfulness unto death
- Patroness of education and of the University of Paris
Virginity

- Dedication to God
- An act of treason in the Roman Empire
- Countercultural
- Freedom from oppression or an enforced mode of life
- Vulnerability
Saint Ursula

Patroness of:
- Catholic Education (especially of girls)
- Educators and Teachers
- Schoolchildren
- Students
- British Virgin Islands
- Cologne, Germany
- Holy Death

Honored in many ways:
- Geographically (Virgin Islands, Cape Virgenes)
- Artistically (Hans Memling, Benozzo Gozzoli, Vittore Carpaccio, etc.)
- Musically (Hildegarde of Bingen, Michael Haydn Mass)
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Specifically, to understand Angela Merici’s contribution to spirituality, we must look at:

- the period in which she lived
- her vision of service & piety described in her Writings
- the role this vision continues to play in the 21st century
Keeping in mind her qualities of spirit as Cabrini Durkin so beautifully reminded us in her presentation, Wise Guide on the Path of Life. Angela Merici’s guidance for leadership is grounded in
• personal integrity
• spiritual rooting
• authentic relationships
This foundation for life is the most important solid foundation for leadership of all kinds.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Died</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1451</td>
<td>Christopher Columbus</td>
<td>1506</td>
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<td>1452</td>
<td>Leonardo da Vinci</td>
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<td>1460</td>
<td>Vasco da Gama</td>
<td>1524</td>
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<td>1473</td>
<td>Nicolaus Copernicus</td>
<td>1543</td>
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<td>1474</td>
<td>Angela Merici</td>
<td>1540</td>
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<td>1475</td>
<td>Michelangelo Buonarroti</td>
<td>1564</td>
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<td>1483</td>
<td>Martin Luther</td>
<td>1546</td>
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<td>1491</td>
<td>Ignatius of Loyola</td>
<td>1556</td>
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<tr>
<td>1515</td>
<td>Teresa of Avila</td>
<td>1582</td>
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Angela’s life and vision – her pilgrimages, spiritual discoveries, pedagogy – place her not just chronologically with the men who charted unknown seas, but also with those who challenged the Church, & those who stretched the imagination through the arts and sciences. Her vision and accomplishments, like theirs, have survived four centuries and have had significant influence on the future.

From «Handing on the Torch» Part I
We must never forget, however, that Angela’s world was

- Wartorn
- Extremely unstable
- Dangerous, especially to women
- One in which women were not valued
- One in which women were not educated
- One in which women had few options (only two at the time)
Also, let’s not forget that Angela did some dangerous things:

• She went on pilgrimage – more than once!
• She left her home in Desanzano
• She became virtually homeless in Brescia
• She relied on the charity of others
• She placed herself between warring factions
• She did not seek the normal XVI century protections for women
• She said ‘no’ to the Pope
Angela herself was

- Self-educated
- Literate: she was able to read
- Well-read
- Had a knowledge of Latin
- But apparently could not write

Given the circumstances, she was a very remarkable woman! She was also something else...
Angela Merici was a mystic. She navigated the surprises and the obstacles of her life living in divine union and guiding others to the brink of the precipice, to the verge of divine union.

Mystics are persons who have undergone a transformation from which they emerge in the realized oneness of God, ourselves and all things.
Mystics bear witness to this realized oneness with a sense of
• respect and love for all things
• freedom from fear
• a sense of peace in the midst of difficulties and fragmentation
• without dependence on the outcome of one’s efforts
• in the realization that all is sheer gift of God.
And so in 1535, after many years of prayer and reflection, she found a third option:

- She founded the Company of St. Ursula
- She dictated a Rule
- She left her Counsels
- And her Testament

(These writings can all be found on the Roman Union Website, www.ursulines-ur.org under «Resources» in French & English)

But she did not give a mandate!
No mandate!
Curiouser and curiouser....
The 2013 Edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia says that she founded the first school for girls!!!!!!
We even heard the priest say last January 27 that she founded the school in her own home!!!!

While it is nice that Saint Angela gets all the credit it is unfortunate that these misunderstandings are perpetuated. Saint Angela’s interest in education centered around her daughters......
A theological exploration of vocation not only anchors identity, but also provides hope, creativity and courage.

*Liberal Education 2014, 100(1), 10*
Her Vision of Service and Piety Described in her Writings
Angela’s main concern in her writings was the formation of her "daughters" – this was her educational concern. From her writings, we can extract an educational philosophy, and as a matter of fact, this was done by the City of Desenzano to include in their tourist literature. Here is what they came up with entitled as "Angela as Teacher"
In order to educate, first of all one has to respond to the more urgent material needs since it is not possible to preach sublime truths to those who lack even the necessities. Angela recommends that material necessities and not only the spiritual needs of her "daughters" are taken care of.
Real education is not possible without love.
Education surpasses the strengths of the teacher: hence one must do one’s best to obtain from the Lord the necessary graces, which God never refuses those who believe and trust in him.
The teacher must respect her students because without respect there is no love and without love there is no education. The love which Angela demands from those who educate is a mother's love: this is the characteristic aspect of her charity. A teacher must love, as a mother does, naturally; they must love each and every student in particular; help each one with the same disinterest of which only a real mother is capable.
The love that Angela demands from educators must also be a joyous love. Educating means helping to grow; and all forms of growth need time and patience. To form young people, the educator must look after them, consider each one individually and guide them according to their temperament.
How can all this be done? Through frequent meetings and loving motherly visits, not inspections.

If Angela wants her "daughters" to be educated with tenderness, this certainly does not mean weakness: those responsible for them are "mothers" but they must strive for the real good of each and all. So they will need to know how to reproach and if necessary, punish, as long as the punishment is born out of love. This requires sensitivity, kindness, discernment, and emotional self-control.
AIM

The real aim of education is to form enriched personalities and to prepare the young to live fully responsible lives – and in Angela’s vision, how to liberate women, and how to treat young women in a world in which they had no value...
And in the Ursuline tradition, fully responsible lives are also lives of SERVICE....Serviam!
Intellectual
Cognitive
Rational

Spiritual
Material
Emotional
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So, we have looked a bit at
• the period in which Angela lived, and at
• her vision of service & piety described in her Writings
• Now we have to turn our attention to the role this vision continues to play in the 21st century
But first a little history:

- Recall that the Company did not have a mandate, much less a teaching mandate.
- They were gradually “co-opted“ by the institutional Church by being placed in convents.
- So by the late XVI century, they were becoming enclosed like any other monastic community.
The history of the Ursulines and their educational tradition is marked by stages, events, and decisions. Their role was in constant evolution. Some unique characteristics for the time were:

- Adaptability
- Constant openness to innovation
- In dialogue with different cultures
- Response to the needs of the times and of the Church
The Ursulines
Creative Heirs of Angela Merici

These responses were in perfect accord with Saint Angela:
And if, according to times and circumstances, the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice.  Last Legacy, 2

In France, Ursulines were first asked to be catechists
This moved quickly to filling other needs, namely:
Reading, Writing, ‘Rithmetic – the essentials of the Trivium
The Règlements – late XVI C.

- Reading
- Writing
- Arithmetic
- Spelling
- Grammar
- History
- Geography
- Literature

- Science
- Geometry
- Law
- Etymology!!
- Handicrafts
- Embroidery
- Tapestry
- Home management
Approaches to the Content

- Active pedagogy
- Exercises in thought and reasoning
- Adapted to the student
- Communal dimension
- Reformulation of knowledge acquired
- Compare
- Deduce
- Analyze
- Synthesize

- Peer explanation
- Personal expression
- Creativity
- Responsibility
- Regular scheduling
- Proper use of time
- Work/relaxation alternation
- Freedom
It is reasonable to assume that no student of the Ursulines would have heard the following admonition:

![Image of a man and a cat. The man is saying, "Never, EVER, think outside the box!"

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The Basis of Liberal Education

Traditional Basis on the First Level:
“Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?”

Mary Oliver

The question: human identity, purpose and direction

A question St. Angela ultimately addressed....
The Basis of Liberal Education

Traditional Basis on the Second Level:

The arts of reading, writing, reckoning

- Each constitutes a field of knowledge
- Each is also a technique for acquiring that knowledge
The Basis of a Great Education

The Trivium:
The arts of grammar, logic, & rhetoric

The «Three Ways» have come together: knowing, questioning, communicating
The Seven Liberal Arts

Trivium: The three arts of language pertaining to the mind
- Logic: art of thinking
- Grammar: art of inventing and combining symbols
- Rhetoric: art of communication

Quadrivium: The four arts of quantity pertaining to matter
- A – discrete quantity or number:
  - Arithmetic: theory of number
  - Music: its application
- B – continuous quantity
  - Geometry: theory of space
  - Astronomy: its application
The Fine Arts

- Architecture
- Instrumental Music
- Sculpture
- Painting
- Literature
- Drama
- The Dance

The Utilitarian Arts

- Carpentry
- Masonry
- Plumbing
- Salesmanship
- Printing
- Editing
- Banking
- Law
- Medicine
- Computer Programming
- Textiles & Stitchery
Comparison

• Intransitive Activities
  • Immanent
  • Action begins in the agent
  • Action ends in the agent
  • The agent is perfected by the action
  • The agent is not paid for one’s work
  • Usually, the agent pays the teacher

• Transitive Activities
  • Transient
  • Action begins in the agent
  • Action ends in the object produced
  • The agent produces works that serve the wants/needs of humanity
  • The object often has a commercial value; the agent is paid
The Liberal Arts

- The effect of studying these arts stays within the individual & perfects the faculties of the mind and of the spirit
- They bring fruition to the possibilities of human nature
- They enable one to rise above the material environment to live an intellectual, a rational, & therefore, a free life in gaining truth

The Servile Arts

- Enable one to be a servant of another person of the government of a corporation of a business
- Enable one to earn a living
Extended Liberal Arts

- Languages
- Oratory
- Literature
- History
- Philosophy

- Mathematics
- Branches of Science: Physics, Chemistry, etc.
- Number Theory: Algebra, Calculus, Equations; Music Theory: Harmony; Analytic Geometry, Trigonometry, Geography, Surveying, Engineering

Trivium: Appropriate matter

Quadrivium: Appropriate Matter
Augustine as Educator

- The pulpit approach works somewhat, but is limited
- The grammarian approach works with simple words, but fails as complexity increases
- Augustine’s approach – Adopt Plato’s idea of education

- Lead the truth out from within, rather than
- Pushing it in from without
- Awaken what is already in the student’s mind
- Begin with the familiar
- Move on to what is unfamiliar
- Actively engage the students
Art vs Discipline
(from Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Illiberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended</td>
<td>A body of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawn from opinion</td>
<td>Based on argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of different outcomes</td>
<td>Only one outcome or meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to possibilities</td>
<td>Closed to follow one path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages mindsets that are creative, open to challenge, and able to change</td>
<td>Encourages mindsets that respond to fixed outcomes and to a limiting list of assessment criteria</td>
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Again, it is reasonable to assume that no student of the Ursulines would have had occasion to make the complaint pictured here:

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So...What are the goals of Ursuline Education?
How do we want our students to be when they leave school?
What should our educational approach look like?
Digression - Viewpoints on Law

- Legislates the ideal
- One has to reach for the ceiling
- Example: There is a law of the Church ‘to hear Mass on Sundays and Holy Days’. Roman Law: Wouldn’t it be ideal if we could manage this from time to time?

- Legislates the minimum
- One has to keep one’s feet firmly on the floor
- Example: If I have to miss Sunday Mass except for a grave reason, I’m in trouble – best to try to go every day
What challenges do we face in our “deviation from ideality”?
So how do we want our children to be when they leave school: open to possibilities or closed to follow one path?
Our Western cultural tradition chose to situate education in the liberal arts rather than the disciplines. The mantra that the Trivium delivers is one that enables free thinking – its essence is creative.
So, how should our educational approach look?

- Liberal
- Open-ended
- Drawn from opinion
- Variety of different outcomes
- Open to possibilities
- Encourages mindsets that are creative, open to challenge, and able to change
  - Variable outcomes vs

- Illiberal
- A body of knowledge
- Based on true argument
- Only one outcome or meaning
- Closed to follow one path
- Encourages mindsets that respond to fixed outcomes & to a limiting list of assessment criteria
  - ‘Correct’ outcomes

Art

Discipline
An aside.....

The SAT
“Even at its most challenging, the exercise is superficial. Critical thinking was never called for, let alone curiosity or imagination. Success on the SAT essay is closely correlated with length; details are valued over factual accuracy. All students are in its thrall.”

New Yorker, March 3, 2014, p. 41
I don’t have to be smart because someday I’ll just hire lots of smart people to work for me.

So, as a result, many students are tempted to have this attitude.
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Back to the Règlesments...
What is their place in the Trivium and Quadrivium?
The Règlements – late XVI C.

- Reading
- Writing
- Arithmetic
- Spelling
- Grammar
- History
- Geography
- Literature

- Science
- Geometry
- Law
- Etymology!!
- Handicrafts
- Embroidery
- Tapestry
- Home management
I’d like to suggest that they had their roots in the university educational philosophy of the XII century or even earlier....
Hugh of Saint Victor (c. 1096-1141)

- Proposed that secular learning was a necessary foundation for religious understanding
- Wrote that the purpose of the ‘liberal arts’ was to restore God’s image in us
- Learning enables us to aspire to something beyond the particular, something more than ourselves
- Study is a restorative, a way of finding God within us
- Fulfills our potential, allowing us to be(come) more than who we think we are
• Noted the power of the Trivium to create independent learners
• He said: ‘Those to whom the Trivium has disclosed the secrets of all words...do not need the help of a teacher in order to understand the meaning of books and to find the solutions to questions’
• Grammar, dialectic and rhetoric are arts because they delimit the self: they nourish, they enable us to grow, they strengthen the mind towards wisdom – all of which results in our **LIBERATION**
Continued Contact with the Jesuits

- The Jesuits derived their educational practice and philosophy from the Trivium
- The Ursulines of Paris and in other locations were very much influenced by the Jesuits
- Saint Marie of the Incarnation in setting up her schools in Québec adhered to the Jesuit tradition
- The *Réglements* of 1705 and the Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum* of 1599 are tightly linked
Autodidacticism

- The art of teaching oneself is something we all need to be able to achieve

- It amounts to motivation

- It amounts to having knowledge, processes and criteria by which to judge what is yet to be learned

- The TRIVIUM is a way of learning rather than just the what of learning
A caveat....

- Plato’s aim of education was for the good of all
- That it should be for its own sake and should result in freedom
- But freedom for whom?

- For men, not women
- For free men, not slaves
- For citizens, not foreigners

- Education was a privilege for the privileged few
Thus the liberal arts became associated with a privileged education for the independent elite...

...a schism that abides to this day.
So what shape should our schools assume or aspire to in the XXI century?

Let’s look at Saint Angela again
Ninth Legacy, 5-8

In this matter I do not want you to seek outside advice. You decide, only among yourselves, according as charity and the Holy Spirit will enlighten and inspire you, directing everything towards the good and spiritual benefit of your [students]
• Last Legacy, 9-14

• Believe it
• Do not doubt
• Have firm faith that it will be so
• I know what I am saying...
• If you faithfully carry out these and other similar things as the Holy Spirit suggests to you according to the times and circumstances, rejoice!
Some suggestions....for discussion

- Breadth of study
- Not purely academic
- Engagement in a craft in which the authentic experience of doing is as important as thinking
- Our schools should produce as many good bricklayers as book authors
- The academic ‘superior’ arts should not be reserved for the well-to-do
- Nor should the poor be steered toward the ‘inferior arts’
- Education should enable one to spend his/her free time in worthwhile activities and the pursuit of higher culture
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Of Schools and Schooling:

- Schooling is reflective of our civilization and our values
- Schools are not places which absolve us of our responsibility for the education, care and behavior of all our citizens
- Schools can help shape the future, but not without the help and examples set by all
What balance do we require?

- The idea that schooling prepares our students for college or university presupposes some kind of progression, a learning journey through which one moves from simplicity to complexity, from facts to wisdom.

- Danger – if these stages can only be reached through formal education, students leaving school early on will lack the tools to the next stage
Therefore, every stage of schooling should prepare students for becoming wise, knowledgeable, and virtuous.
Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)

- Reason is the highest state of being
- All of our knowledge of the world comes from reflecting on our experience
- The great contribution that he made was he set the mind free
- He allowed people to explore their humanity while at the same time holding on to their faith
- His work was condemned by the universities of Oxford and Paris
- Oxford never revoked its condemnation
Aquinas’ overarching concern was for the common good.

For him, virtue was both outward looking as well as an intrinsic good.

He described the cardinal virtues: courage, justice, prudence & temperance.

And the secondary virtues: art, science, understanding and wisdom.

You become a good artist or thinker through the latter, but a good person only through the former.
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Thomas’ idea of the virtues reaching outward is inherent in the idea of rhetoric: it is in community that we are most human, and it is in conversation with humankind that we reflect most upon ourselves.

As we see happening today even in the earliest years.....
I know it’s just a political buzzword, but the idea of “community” really resonates with me.
Beyond Aquinas

• XIV c. Ockham’s razor was applied and science and philosophy were set free from theology and became part of mainstream thought....

• The liberal arts tradition began to thrive

• National grammar schools sprang up (at least in the U.K.)

• Students arrived at college better prepared than ever

• This allowed students to spend more time studying at a higher level

• Petrarch (1304–1374) brought on the Renaissance by uniting the intellect, the imagination and the spiritual

• He resurrected Pythagoras, influencing Copernicus (1473–1543) to use mathematics to measure the world.
The Renaissance

- shifted humankind towards exercising the critical faculties for uncovering greatness and universal truths, but these were now the truths of humanity rather than of the gods
- This attitude led to a revitalizing in poetry and grammar

- 1517. Sir Thomas More wrote to his daughter:
  - ‘I see you have not left aside any of your usual pursuits, either in exercises of logic, in the composition of declamations, or in the writing of verse.’
XVI C. Evolution

- Erasmus (1466–1536) – the ‘Schoolmaster of Europe’ re-established the sway of grammar
- Rabelais (1494–1553) – attacked Petrarch’s curriculum, claiming that there was so much content in the course of study that students would have no time to think. For him, education meant liberation.
- Montaigne (1533–1592) – agreed. Wanted to educate the whole person with an emphasis on understanding, rather than simply knowledge
The Trivium retains this debate at its core:

- The balance between what and how much to learn – can legislate for ideality or reality
- How much time for thinking and criticizing
- How much for developing your own ways of communicating
- How to be a free-thinking citizen
- In other words, we have the eternal compromise between free individuals and the demands and mores of the community
We arrive at John Milton (1608-1674)

- He wrote ‘Of Education’ not too many years after the Ursulines of Paris took a Fourth Vow of Stability (you see how far they had moved away from Saint Angela’s original idea – but they did not stop THINKING)
• Milton expounded on his ‘journey of education’ – learning that progresses from sense experience (concrete) through the abstract (formal) to citizenship (predates Piaget by several centuries!)

• Milton believed that logic was especially ill-served by poor teaching.
The Rise of the Rational & the Fall of the Trivial

- Nowadays, education is almost wholly a ticket into the world of work
- Attainment of wisdom or living a good life is out – the focus has shifted from educating for your leisure to educating for your wallet
- The liberal arts have become disciplines
- Education is dominated by systems, subjects, and skills aimed at achieving high test scores in a global marketplace
So what is education for?

- Do we want our students to be indiscriminately accomplished in technology?

On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog
Do we want them to be proficient in discerning logical outcomes with or without the necessary data to make a correct judgment?

The real reason dinosaurs became extinct
Do we want them to be skilled in induction, abduction, deduction, and inference?

Howard, I think the dog wants to go out.
Do we want them to be mature enough to exit the system on their own without getting a push from us?

No need to push, Mother. I’m going.
Do we want them to be so skilled in rhetoric that the grammar and the logic get lost in the shuffle of trying to communicate effectively?

I regret that my poor choice of words caused some people to misunderstand what I was saying.
Do we want them to recognize their inevitable errors and to learn gracefully how to accept criticism or reprimand?
Do we want them to grasp the full meaning of ‘Carpe diem,’ and take advantage of opportunity as it presents itself whether it be for intellectual or economic improvement?
All joking aside...we come back to the all-important question: what is education for?
All joking aside...we come back to the all-important question: what is education for in the XXI century?

• Skills in one or two areas?
• Study of hard traditional subjects?
• How to use times tables and know the use of the plural possessive?
• To have perfect certainty?

• Polymaths with wide and adaptable expertise?
• Proficiency in soft, modern subjects?
• Skill and training in empathy and of working in teams?
• To question and doubt?
Often referred to as **false dichotomies**, these choices are very much part of modern educational discourse.

They are urgent because widening access to knowledge has completely changed what and how we should educate our young people.

There is no doubt that technology has inexorably altered our lives.
Some argue that the XXI century is so different from previous periods, in terms of its fast-moving culture and technology, that it requires a completely different way of educating our young people. The challenge is that information is no longer protected by gatekeepers of knowledge.

Instead, the new gatekeepers such as Wikipedia and Google have democratized knowledge.
The skill of finding out has become easier. A more trivial way of learning has replaced the traditional methods that required making an effort to access a particular body of knowledge through books, libraries, lectures or courses. Lots of stuff is now available on a device that you can carry around in your pocket. All we need to know are the skills of accessing knowledge; we don’t need to know anything else.
• Is this so? Melissa Benn, author of ‘School Wars’ (2012) has this to say:

• When I hear people in debates say that there is no need to teach knowledge because you can just look it up on Google, I think that is profoundly wrong. Knowledge has to have roots. You have to feel it matters and to know why it matters, to know why knowledge is important. I don’t think the Google paradigm does that at all. It’s not about simply accessing something. It’s about it being part of the beginning of your understanding of the world... if you don’t have any basic knowledge, you’re into a very different kind of thing, living in a moment that has no meaning, has no passion, and goes nowhere.
Other Dissenting Voices (from the past)

- Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) – he saw culture as a civilizing agency that would enable one to leave the world a better place
- Paolo Freire (1921-1997) – he saw dialectic as a way to go beyond the ‘truth’ of accepted cultural practices into the higher and authentic truth of *logos*
- Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) – we are engaged participants creating the world around us and then understanding it
The decline in educational standards is not the fault of the teachers – they work only too hard already. The combined folly of a civilization that has forgotten its own roots is forcing them to shore up the tottering weight of an educational structure that is built upon sand. They are doing for their pupils the work which the pupils ought to do themselves, for the sole and true end of education is simply this: to teach men how to learn for themselves; and whatever instruction fails to do this is effort spent in vain.

- Dorothy L. Sayers, Oxford, 1947
‘There is a crack in everything –
that’s how the light gets in.’

Leonard Cohen, *Anthem*

If we can shine a new light on our culture and our educational system, then through their imperfections we should start to see the way to make a difference.
Outline

- Saint Angela’s Inspiration: Saint Ursula
- Saint Angela: Life, Times, Character, Educational Philosophy
- The Ursulines: Creative Heirs of Saint Angela’s Legacy
- The Trivium: The Basis of a Liberal Education
- Discussion: Goals of Ursuline Education
- The Règlements: A Reprise
- Of Schools and Schooling: What is Education for?
- Back to the Trivium and the Purpose of Education
- A Way to Make a Difference
So where do we go from here?

- What we need is the ability to filter out what is trivial, in the modern sense, and concentrate on acquiring our own wisdom.
- We do not need a new model; our system already has the capability to improve our existing educational landscape.
- This is truly radical: it is from the root and also progressive.
- It has been the Ursuline model from 1535.
• We pass on our culture to our young people in a way that is respectful, but open to criticism. If we are receptive to others reinventing the world, we will welcome the criticisms of our young people. They are making new sense of what we bequeath to them – just as we did.

• Each generation has to adapt, reject, or re-model its view of the world in order to take full stewardship of it. As they embrace the culture we transmit, warts and all, we need to help them have a collective idea of what is important and valuable, what needs changing, what could be changed, and how they establish their ownership through change.
The individuals with the most to offer in the future will have:

- Ability to adapt across disciplines, including those not yet thought of
- Ability to adapt the knowledge of the past to shape the knowledge of the future
- Ability to aspire to be the best they can be
- Ability to take part in experiencing, learning, and conversing about culture confidently
- Wide vocabulary and wide experience through immersion in the ‘classics’
- Ability to communicate about a variety of forms, subjects, ideas, artifacts
The job of grammar in the XXI century is to make certain that we have a core, a place where valued authority, culture, knowledge, and skills in our society can reside. Grammar is our collective memory. It needs to be mature enough to recognize the degree to which it deals in uncertainty and is liable to change. It should be a modest art, reasonable and open to negotiation like all true liberal arts.
What about Logic and Dialectic?

• Learning to question, debate, discuss and argue – think and strategize like Sherlock Holmes
• Learning to value doubt and imagination
• ‘If we dispense with doubt and imagination, we do so at our peril because both are essential to scientific thinking, to the making and creating of art, and in the pursuit of knowledge itself.’ Karl Popper, *The Myth of Framework*
For Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

For us, knowledge should be the power to share, disagree, and grow strong bonds of community.
Critical Thinking about Critical Thinking

In 2012, the Platform and Rules Committee of the Republican Party of Texas published the following two policy statements, in the run-up to the Presidential election:

• We support objective teaching and equal treatment of all sides of scientific theories. We believe theories such as life origins and environmental change should be taught as challengeable scientific theories subject to change as new data are produced. Teachers and students should be able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these theories openly and without fear of retribution or discrimination of any kind.

• We oppose the teaching of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), values clarification, critical thinking skills and similar programs...which focus on behavior modification and have the purpose of challenging the student’s fixed beliefs and undermining parental authority.
A Revealing Dichotomy....

- Critical thinking is OK when it challenges scientific assumptions that these Republicans question,
- But not when it challenges societal assumptions that Republicans hold dear
- Clearly, critical thinking is an area of controversy; you could argue that that is part of its purpose
We finally arrive at Rhetoric

- ‘The modern academic view of rhetoric deals with the whole study of creative discourse. It studies the basis of all forms of effective communication.’
- We have here at the College of New Rochelle a Department of Communication Arts
- What are these arts?
- Changing by the hour............
Another look at our goals?

• Are our goals teleological, deontological, or eudemonic?
• Teleological – the process of being directed towards an end or a goal (the end justifies...)
• Deontological – sticking to the rules and codes; denying what we want to change in order to do the ‘right thing’
• Eudemonia – lifelong pursuit founded on wisdom, practice, and excellence; it is about human happiness and flourishing
• All three can be brought together: we have aims, responsibilities, and a need to flourish
We’ve come a long way from 1535 and the XVI C. Réglements.....

• ....or have we?
• Can we examine our roots in the light of our trunk and branches?
• What do we find?
• What we call the beginning is often the end
  And to make an end is to make a beginning.
  The end is where we start from.
• We shall not cease from exploration
  And the end of all our exploring
  Will be to arrive where we started
  And know the place for the first time.

• T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*
Eternal God, who are the light of the minds that know you, the joy of the hearts that love you, and the strengths of the wills that serve you: grant us so to know you that we may truly love you, and so to love you that we may fully serve you, whom to serve is perfect freedom. Amen.

Saint Augustine
Rule VIII, 14

Above all, obey the counsels and inspirations which the Holy Spirit unceasingly sends into our hearts.
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“All you have to do is contemplate a simple grain of sand, and you will see in it all the marvels of creation.”

Paulo Coelho: *The Alchemist, p.127*

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