

lest anyone be confused, let me translate: Villaraigosa

sense to make the problem worse. The businesses we see

bureaucracy doesn't grow

invest in new business startups,

one way to start restoring

Equalization. For more information, visit boe.ca.gov/Runner.

A liberal arts education — the foundation of freedom

WHERE I STAND

KENT BARTEL

FORMER ASSISTANT HEADMASTER
ST. ANDREW'S ACADEMY

A number of years ago, while I was touring a certain university with some of our students, the tour guide mentioned, "When I first came to this university, I didn't know what a liberal arts college was. Since then I have learned that a liberal arts college requires me to take classes such as history and biology along with my business major courses, so I can have a well-rounded education." This answer amused me, and I was also amused that the St. Andrew's students I had with me could probably have

explained it more thoroughly than this college student. A liberal arts education is far more than taking science and history.

But what is it, then? The phrase "liberal arts" is common in our culture, but, as this tour guide demonstrated, we do not have a very precise idea of what it means. The liberal arts are truly foundational to our Western culture. If we value our culture and civilization, we need to refresh our knowledge of them, and their implications for us.

So then: according to one scholar, "The liberal arts are the learned habits of thought and speech considered essential for a free man." They are the acquired skills that are

required for a free person to live well — though not perhaps wealthily — and to remain free.

Those who went before us, those who built the culture we now see in decay, did not presume that a free person naturally knew how to live well. Our inclinations lead us downward, to gratify our desires immediately, to trade our birthright to fill our stomach. The habit of self-denial for the sake of a larger good must be learned; it is not naturally occurring. This is the real task of a liberal education — teaching the young person to see truth and wisdom and to love living by it. A society that does not understand this principle will find itself

becoming less human, less free, less beautiful. To be human is to be free, but free from what? The self is a tyrant as powerful as any. To indulge one's impulses, to be governed by one's passions, is to be enslaved. The habits of mind and speech must be trained in better directions.

How did this happen in the past? First of all, the seven liberal arts of the Middle Ages were divided into the Trivium (three paths) and the Quadrivium (four paths). The Trivium was language-based and consisted of grammar, logic and rhetoric. The study of these subjects taught the individual to think clearly and to express himself well — skills a person must have

if he is not to be a slave — but they secondarily taught the student how to approach further learning. For these reasons, the study of the Trivium remains the foundation of education at schools such as St. Andrew's Academy.

The subjects of the Quadrivium were arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and harmony (or music), and the study of these were only to be undertaken after the student had proficiency in the Trivium. It is important to note that these four subjects touch on ideas of beauty and form. For example, the study of form in numbers is arithmetic, of form in space is geometry, of form in time is astronomy and of form in

sound is harmony. These subjects taught how to find and create beauty in the physical world and are therefore more sublime than we generally acknowledge, especially in contemporary education. If one understands beauty, then his actions and his life are more likely to be beautiful.

The recovery of liberal arts education is vital to the preservation of the blessings that we have thus far enjoyed in America. Institutions labeling themselves as "liberal arts" need to be held accountable to all that the title implies, and encouraged in whatever ways possible. We have been entrusted with a great heritage; let us protect it.