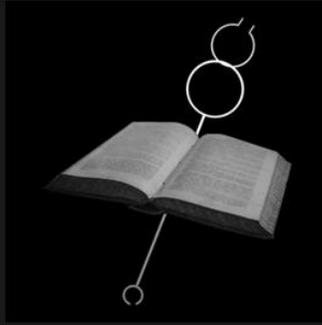


EDUCATION

AND

DIGITAL LIFE

FOUNDING DOCUMENT  
OF THE LYCEUM INSTITUTE



INQUIRERE

ORDINARE

MEMORARE

EDUCATION  
AND  
DIGITAL LIFE

FOUNDING DOCUMENT  
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CONTINUUM PHILOSOPHICAL INSIGHT

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*This brief document outlines the vision of the Lyceum Institute: the cause which it answers, the good which it seeks to provide, and the means, stated in general outline, by which it seeks to accomplish these ends.*

# 1. THE NATURAL HUMAN GOOD

“All human beings, by nature, long for knowledge.”<sup>1</sup> They are familiar words—the first line of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*—and have righteously inspired reflections on human nature, operation, and the good at which they aim for millennia. To long for knowledge: not merely to want it for some ulterior motive—such as making money, or power, or defeating your enemies—but for its own sake. We want to know because knowledge is fulfilling for us. This is what Aristotle meant, and this fulfillment by knowledge, indeed, is what we long for by nature.

Many, it is sad to say, have had this natural longing diverted by the proliferation of easy and lesser pleasures—why read, when you can watch a documentary; and why watch a documentary, when you can watch a comedy—as well as by institutions of learning which diverged from developing or fulfilling the desire for *knowledge*, towards conveying standardized sets of information. Rather than learning to discover *what is* through their own efforts, students are taught to receive and retain pre-packaged information about *what is*; information discovered, interpreted, and arranged by others.

Is this knowledge? Is this learning? We desire to know; is that the same as receiving information? The current common reductionist view of the universe—which posits that the most-elemental parts of matter are the truest reality, such that all other phenomena are merely various configurations thereof—holds that knowledge is, indeed, nothing more than an organization of information; that our ability to know consists in the right configuration of parts in our mind, and what we signify by “information” is a certain abstraction of this configuration. Per this view, what is contained in a computer’s hard-drive and a human’s mind are simply two different configurations of the same thing. Computers themselves were once explained as being like electronic brains; now, brains are conceived of as organic computers; a reversed metaphor that has succeeded in not only

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<sup>1</sup> i.348-30bc: Μετά τα Φυσικά, 980a21.

spreading a misunderstanding of what the brain is or does, but more importantly which has reduced “mind” to “brain”.

That is, the brain is indeed essential to our cognitive lives—as is well demonstrated by the cognitive deficiencies exhibited in those suffering damage to the brain—but likewise are *all* the organs by which we sense, and the things that we sense, the environments in which we live, and the *ideas* we encounter; ideas which are irreducible to these material beings towards which they orient us. If the brain’s essentiality to the existence of the mind means that the “mind is what the brain does”,<sup>2</sup> as some have infamously claimed, does that mean that the mind is also what the body does, and the objects operating on the sense faculties of the body, and the ideas conveyed to us by language—in short, anything without which we would not think as we do—should also be said to have their activities constituting the mind? Is mind “what the brain, body, and world around us” does? Perhaps that is true, in some way; but it is not very helpful for understanding what the mind really is.

No. The mind is something more than any of its contributory sources or necessary, integral parts, and—certainly better than by an enumeration or description of parts—we know anything best by discerning its characteristic action.

The mind **seeks** knowledge; and knowledge is nothing other than a relation to the truth of objects themselves—the relation whereby is grasped the intelligible, articulable reality of *what is*. This seeking unfolds through observation and a questioning of what is observed; that is, the recognition that the things observed have explanations, *causes*, beyond what the observations themselves entail, and the attempt to discover those causes. The phenomena of our experience, in other word, are not self-explanatory, and what we mean by “knowledge” is such explanation: the grasp of the causes not merely incipiently but in a manner that it can be expressed. These explanations must be worked out with trial and error, with continued recursion to certain principles—which themselves must be discovered with

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<sup>22</sup> Steven Pinker 1997: *How the Mind Works*, 21.

some difficulty—with experimentation, reflection, and most of all a habit of *inquiry*; to continue questioning, again and again, seeking always to better understand what we have revealed, always seeking better to grasp the **relation** between cause and effect.

In the first quarter of the twenty-first century, the in-itself character of this good—the good of understanding—has been all but lost. After the gradual diffusion of vague belief, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the unquestionable merits of progress, of advances, of technological mastery and material benefit—belief that persisted despite the grave tragedies it rendered in the two World Wars—the truth that human good consists in something belonging to a stable human nature can hardly be grasped. The atmosphere of our culture suffers a miasma of purposeless purposes: acquiring wealth, products, status, jobs, careers, degrees, honors, reputation, celebrity, accolade, success, “love”; defining one’s image, one’s brand, elevating one’s profile, curating personas, cultivating cultures of infinitely regressive self-reference—for outside the self, there is no believed-in source of meaning that appears itself to be firm. Knowledge thereby becomes only a means to some further end, which end is sought for the sake of serving some purpose invented, rather than discovered. But the ability of human beings to sustain such fabricated purpose inevitably weakens.

That we have purpose as an enduring end for ordering the operations of our lives requires that it be discovered, unveiled in some reality not so fragile as those of our own making. This truth ought to appeal to any common-sense reflection upon the world and our lives within it: things are principally what they are, of themselves, and not of our making. Whatever ordering we put into natural materials, to turn them to some purpose other than that towards which they were originally ordered themselves, depends upon what is in those things in the first place. That a thing could have a *purpose* not due in some regard to, or at least coherent with, its own natural being, but purely from our own arbitrary imposition thereupon, would require of us the ability to constitute that purpose *ex nihilo*. It would require us to think truly *original* thoughts—thoughts that have not come, somehow or some way, from beings outside of ourselves. Yet, while we are responsible for the conjoining and

dividing of concepts; for putting together or tearing asunder the thoughts we have, at no point do we *create* thoughts. Just as we cannot transform some natural being into an otherwise-purposed artificial product unless the natural being has some properties that would allow for this repurposing, so too we cannot even conjure the most perverse of purposes for the objects of our experience unless they have a nature to be treated perversely. That a thing *not* be put to perverse purposes requires that we discover and understand that nature, and subsequently see to what purposes it may *fittingly* be ordered.

This relation between discovery and ordering applies also to ourselves.

That is, we cannot but *misuse* our own faculties, and the faculties of others, if we fail to understand ourselves. We do not understand ourselves—nor anything else, for that matter—by default. Though there may be a certain natural aptitude, given our own nature, for us to discover the truth of the natures of any things we do in fact encounter, this aptitude does not develop automatically; and it may be diverted, obscured, and blunted by the aforementioned malfeasance of educational institutions or diffusion of false ideas throughout society. (Indeed, even our unique access to our own experience—being the ones who *have* the experiences—becomes distorted as a source of knowledge, most especially when it is deemed sufficient or even superior for gaining self-understanding.) Because we are not pure intellects, pure minds, we may be led through countless confusions and contortions in our bearing towards the good.

How do we attain the good, unless we know what it is? How do we know what is good *for us*, unless we know ourselves—and what, therefore, we need, what we desire, what *fulfills* us, in the highest part of our nature and as a whole and not simply this or that part of ourselves? We may think ourselves not to want truth but simply to want the good, that is; but we cannot know what the good is without the truth. Thus, the truth is necessary to the attainment of any good.

But, moreover, the truth itself *is* a good, and not only because it informs of the good of other things, but because it fulfills itself *what* we human beings

are. We want *truth* because it is good, and it is good not only because it entails the truth about other goods. Why? To *know*—this endures. To *understand*—this enlarges us. Knowledge expands the world we inhabit; it deepens the colors we see, the flavors we taste, the odors we smell; it turns a touch into a sign, and a sign into a symbol. It brings the knower and the things known into a unity greater than either alone.

The greatest knowledge of all receives the name of wisdom: which is not simply knowledge of some object, but knowledge of the *highest principles*—and subsequently, implicitly, of those things whereby all others are ordered. We consider some persons wise in metaphorical respects when we see, for instance, that they know not only the tools and tricks of a trade, but how to fit it all together in a variety of circumstances; when and how and where to use what, together with what else. There is a kind of wisdom in the master carpenter in contrast to the apprentice, insofar as he has a profound knowledge of principles in the respect of the trade. But those who know the highest principles of *all things*—even if that knowledge is but a meagre grasp—have some insight into all things, and especially toward what all things should be ordered, at the very least in a general manner. Thus, no breadth of knowledge, no expanse of comprehension, is ever complete without wisdom, and no community of knowledgeable persons, no matter how numerous, will use its knowledge rightly in the absence of wise persons.

All human beings, indeed, long for knowledge—and, most of all, for wisdom; for the knowledge that makes sense of all other knowledge, for the knowledge that knows the good of knowing.

## 2. TRAINING OF THE MIND

To gain knowledge, and most of all to gain the knowledge of wisdom, is a matter not simply of studying, of receiving information, of reading or listening, but a matter of *habit*, and a habit of pursuing the truth with an actively-inquisitive approach: which is to say, a habit of humility before one's own ignorance. One does not acquire such a habit automatically or by

default, or by mere exposure to knowledge, nor in a short time, and struggling to attain it by one's lonesome will demand of the individual Herculean effort for even minimal achievement.

Rather, we ought instead to seek out a community of the like-minded, where we may receive some training, and especially that training which sharpens the mind's own natural propensities for discovery. Consider these wise words of John Henry Newman, from his sagacious *Idea of a University*:<sup>3</sup>

Truth of whatever kind is the proper object of the intellect; its cultivation then lies in fitting it to apprehend and contemplate truth. Now the intellect in its present state, with exceptions which need not here be specified, does not discern truth intuitively, or as a whole. We know, not by a direct and simple vision, not at a glance, but, as it were, by piecemeal and accumulation, by a mental process, by going round an object, by the comparison, the combination, the mutual correction, the continual adaptation, of many partial notions, by the employment, concentration, and joint action of many faculties and exercises of mind. Such a union and concert of the intellectual powers, such an enlargement and development, such a comprehensiveness, is necessarily a matter of training.

We may walk around an object, look at it a thousand times, and yet see it anew when someone tells us to look at it a different way, in a new light, with an awareness of its history. To continue from Newman:

And again, such a training is a matter of rule; it is not mere application, however exemplary, which introduces the mind to truth, nor the reading many books, nor the getting up many subjects, nor the witnessing many experiments, nor the attending many lectures. All this is short of enough; a man may have done it all, yet be lingering in the vestibule of knowledge: — he may not realize what his mouth utters; he may not see with his mental eye what confronts him; he may have no grasp of things as they are; or at least he may have no power at all of advancing one step forward of himself, in consequence of what he has already acquired, no power of discriminating between truth and falsehood, of sifting out the grains of truth from the mass, of arranging things according to their real value, and, if I may use the

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<sup>3</sup> 1852: *The Idea of a University*, Discourse VII, 109-10.

phrase, of building up ideas. Such a power is the result of scientific formation of mind; it is an acquired faculty of judgment, of clear-sightedness, of sagacity, of wisdom, of philosophical reach of mind, and of intellectual self-possession and repose, — qualities which do not come of mere acquirement. The bodily eye, the organ for apprehending material objects, is provided by nature; the eye of the mind, of which the object is truth, is the work of discipline and habit.

This process of training, by which the intellect, instead of being formed or sacrificed to some particular or accidental purpose, some specific trade or profession, or study or science, is disciplined for its own sake, for the perception of its own proper object, and for its own highest culture, is called Liberal Education; and though there is no one in whom it is carried as far as conceivable, or whose intellect would be a pattern of what intellects should be made, yet there is scarcely any one but may gain an idea of what real training is, and at least look towards it, and make its true scope and result, not something else, his standard of excellence; and numbers there are who may submit themselves to it, and secure it to themselves in good measure. And to set forth the right standard, and to train according to it, and to help forward all students towards it according to their various capacities, this I conceive to be the business of a University.

What Newman describes—this training of the intellect to discriminate between truth and falsehood, to sift out the grains of truth, this scientific formation of mind through discipline and habit—is a perennial need for the human being. It requires, moreover, a *tension*: between carrying out the training with rigor and with flexibility, between adopting attitudes of seriousness and of levity, between being stern and being joyful. All training and especially that of the mind becomes, at one or another point, tedious, difficult, a challenge not simply because the things being studied are hard to grasp and hold on to, but also because we ourselves are prone to distraction and dissuasion, by lower pleasures and easier routes. It is easy to take a break from, for instance, studying a language—and never return; it is common to say we will begin reading that book tomorrow—and to always leave it for tomorrow; to intend, but never act.

Thus, we have long relied upon institutions, such as the University, to encourage us in, and to structure for us, the pursuit of education. So much of education, that is, relies upon the help of others; not only in the ordering of and transmission of knowledge, the demonstration of causes and their relations to effects, the leading toward wisdom; the rigor and flexibility, the seriousness and levity, the sternness and joy; but also the **atmosphere of common purpose**. All things are easier believed in and thus pursued, including the merits of truth and wisdom, when there are others with us who believe in and are pursuing the same ends, who uphold conviction in their value just as we do ourselves. Most especially is this true when the beliefs concern ends difficult to attain. We take courses, within degree programs, or core curricula; we befriend classmates, form study groups; attach ourselves to professors and mentors. We strive for degrees as signs of completion, of having learned *enough*.

But the University itself, considered generally in the various institutions claiming the name—with some exceptions, of course—has fallen far from the vision which Newman described: having slipped off that lofty height of cultivating the mind to apprehend and contemplate truth and into the narrow trenches of particular and accidental purposes, specific trades and professions, studies and sciences—trenches choked with the seldom-impaired growth of bureaucracy, institutional hubris, and individual ego. Many of the universities as they presently exist, and perhaps even the University itself, may sadly be beyond redemption. Yet the ideals outlined by Newman are not; and while we cannot yet *displace* the University, nor supply all that it once did or yet does, we can still seek the intellectual virtues which Newman held in such high esteem—and in a way the University could never have provided, for that matter.

### 3. ENVIRONMENTS AND TECHNOLOGY

The University, that is, came into being with constraints of time, place, the needs of physical upkeep, residential life, and has suffered the increased

cost—financially, psychologically, and teleologically—of attempting to maintain itself under such constraints in recent decades. Increasingly, it has tended towards vocational training and job- or career-specific, and therefore narrow and not at all liberal, education, as what is demanded and sought after in society today. The rise of such instruction—and the fall of the humanities—has not simply been the result of greed, or “modernization”, or “progress”, nor of some collective and arbitrary pivot in social goals, but rather is, not exclusively though primarily, the consequence of paradigmatic shifts in the *environment*.

An environment is not only the things surrounding an animal, but also how the animal holds itself toward those objects. How we relate to things constitutes just as essential an element of the environment as do the things themselves to which we relate; and the *means* through which those relations are accomplished—our senses, or percepts, our concepts, and our media—play a reflexive role as well, such that the more we use those means, the greater the effect is had on us; most especially when we use them unquestioningly, without any critical awareness of what they are or what they do to us..

The environment we inhabit today is mediated predominantly by the technologies of the internet: that is, the ubiquitously-present and accessible worldwide network of digital devices. We use it every day—perhaps nearly every waking hour. We rely on it for news, for business and personal communication, for connection with others of all kinds; for inquiry and discovery of facts and information, for entertainment. It appears on all our screens, through all our devices—extending even into the “internet of things”.

But what is the internet? Do we truly know? I do not mean the underlying architecture—ports and gateways and IP addresses and fiber optic cables—but rather what the internet does as a cultural phenomenon. In the early days of its commercial existence, it was immediately a tool for business and especially for business communication, and quickly it grew into commerce, personal communication, and curiosity; but it took on a dramatic shift with the advent of social media and the smartphone. As self-narration and self-

curation took hold through social media platforms, familiar tendencies of the human psyche found room to grow in the digital age: the seeking of fame (being “followed”), popularity (being “liked”), fortune (“monetizing”), and reputation (being “noted”).

But these tendencies first became so deeply rooted in the human psyche in the first place through their predecessor technologies of the electric age: namely, radio and especially television. They are tendencies of the ephemeral, the fleeting, the passing moment, and most especially the tendencies of **fantasy**: that is, of portraying the unreal as real and the unrealizable ideal as possible, attainable. The arts of self-narration and self-curation consist principally in making one’s experiences *appear* as desired.

This pervasive falsity, however, no longer beguiles us today as readily as it did in the age of the television; for there is no centralized control, no guiding ethos which preserves or excludes from digital presentation. One may find any theory espoused, any belief professed, any lunacy made to sound credible and any credible theory made to sound ludicrous; one may easily learn to deceive and inveigle audiences just as well as anyone else, today—thereby shattering deep belief in the illusions we observe, knowing as readily we do how they are created. In the television age, we all clustered around the narratives of the charismatic and remote personality whom we saw in and heard from our TV sets (but who barely acknowledged us), to hear the same stories and see the same images, and marvel at what we were told. But this centralized authoritative voice has been abandoned, its authority rejected, and, as the digital nomads wander across the paths of cyberspace, new ideas and habits accrue, and everyone else seems all the stranger and—for the moment—all the more threatening. Digital tribes form; squabble with each other; squabble within themselves; dissolve; re-form anew and start the process all over again, speeding erratically, chaotically, down different pathways of the information superhighway.

Is this our best digital life? Is this the best that we can do with the internet?

No. We have fallen into this way of living online because it is the way which has been placed before us and we, unthinkingly, have walked it without

looking around to see which other way we might go; or, as it turns out, where we might stay. That is, we are all online running after... something: followers, likes, opportunities, theories, ideas, groups, attention; from one page to another, one tweet to the next, endlessly scrolling after—something. We have followed and expanded and individualized the centralizing tendencies of television into the digital age—flipping through channels, waiting for the next episode, the next best fantasy—without yet realizing what the digital itself is, what it is doing to us, and what we should be doing with it.

For all our technologies affect not only the mediation of our actions, but, further, the mediation of our **habits**: that is, the typical attunement of our psychological faculties towards objects, through which environments are constituted. This habitual affectation results in a culture becoming more *visual* or *auditory*, more *recollective*-oriented or more *fantasy*-oriented, more *intellectual* or more *carnal*—and typically, in a complex relationship between what belongs primarily to **sense**, to **perception**, to **intellection**, and to the **whole human person** as constituted through these varied cognitive faculties.

The transition from one dominant technology to the next always results in psychological and subsequently sociological upheaval, as the medium painfully re-aligns the habitual orientations of the faculties. The transition from the *televisual age* to the *digital age* follows this same pattern. While there is a continuum underlying both, every transition from one form of technological life to another occurs only through the brute force of the irrupting technology. The habitual patterns ensuing upon television are currently being disrupted—with a rapid and painful escalation—by those the digital nature insists we form.

That is, the televisual age ushered in what Marshall McLuhan famously named “the Global Village”, though which he later renamed “the Global Theater”: which, with the usual obtuseness of the 20th century, was misunderstood to signify a growing singular ethos of the world wherein we

would all soon be happily pursuing the same common goals in life; that with the commonality of information would come a commonality of purpose:<sup>4</sup>

But the village—whether global or provincial, ancient or modern—is not a preserver of precise truth, but of legend, of myth, of story and narrative made memorable precisely because it is larger than life. We tend, in a village, towards fantasy. We tend, in an industrial village which worships the idol of control, towards a comprehensively planned-out fantasy of unlimited self-actualization, of self-set destiny. We tend, in an electric industrial village worshipping the idol of self-supremacy, towards delusion. This is the syntax of our society.

The only important commonality of purpose which developed, however, was the endless drive on to the next thing: the next news clip, the next story, the next scandal, sensation, drama, comedy; to let fade what had occurred so that we could move onto the next, the new, the different, the exciting, the greater and bigger fantasy. The global village did not make us one happy family, but it did make us one ignorant populace—ignorant of all but the stories told to us by our village elders: the news anchors, the reporters, the experts and elites, all those who routinely denounced the validity of arguments from authority from their own authoritative platforms and positions.

Digital technology—irrupting into the televisual age at the speed of seldom-checked capitalism—has caused a mass diaspora from the global village. We no longer hear the same news, the same stories, the same theories, the same ideas: we no longer have authorities and experts in whom we trust (few of whom were worthy of trust in the first place, when we did have trust in them), but hear instead no fewer than a thousand different voices saying, “Follow me: I know the way!” But these nomadic leaders of the diasporic villagers know far less than they claim, and sooner or later, all seem to become lost in the wilderness, despite their asseverations of continued progress, or their tired declarations that this unpromising landscape is where

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<sup>4</sup> Kemple 5 February 2019: “Leaving the Global Village” at *Lapsus Lima* <<http://www.lapsuslima.com/leaving-the-global-village/>>.

they intended to arrive after all, or that they have a plan, a trajectory, a purpose towards which their works are building. The visions they proclaim are only new fantasies; just as hollow as the old.

But while the internet has opened doors previously kept under tight lock and key in the televisual age, the habit of rushing through them, following our deep habits of fantasy down the new paths, has led us to miss what *else* the internet and the underlying architecture of digital technology allow and, even more fundamentally, encourage by their very nature: namely, the archival retention and categorization of all the information that has been made available. So attuned are we to the televisual way of being that we hardly even know where to begin in answering the question of how to live digitally.

I am not here to say I have all the answers, and certainly not to promise a *solution*. But I had an idea and one I believe worth pursuing. The state of culture today is comparable to the days following the dissolution of the Roman Empire (only on a timeline where centuries are compressed into years or even months). The central culturizing influence—the television—has lost its authority, and bits and pieces of what once was have been carved up and distributed among the various tribes, who fight over their claims to authenticity and ownership of beliefs. What withstood this chaos and not only preserved culture but grew learning in the centuries following the Empire's fragmentation was the monastery.

The monasteries—especially those of Ireland—sprung up as bastions of holiness and stability in a darkening world; a world where order and safety collapsed in the absence of Roman discipline. In our day of ideological and cultural but not societal collapse, we need something similar and yet different; for we are not in a society where intellectual flourishing stands far off, but rather—*especially* given our digital technologies today—is at our fingertips. Truth in the fifth and sixth centuries AD was threatened by the ubiquitous loss of societal infrastructure; in the twenty-first century, it is threatened by obfuscation, by “information”, by atrophied abilities of interpretation, by a new scientism, and by the worst habits of humankind exerting a ubiquitous influence. Our ideological situation is as fragmented as the world after the fall of Rome; but our intellectual situation is much more

akin to that of Athens in the time of Plato and Aristotle. That is, we lack a clear perception of truth not because it is obscured by the darkness of a renewed primeval state, but rather by the rainbow-colored clouds of sophistry and licentiousness.

The present state of technologically-mediated life, therefore, is one of pervasive chaos: that is, not only in the “content” but much more so in the psyche; chaos not only in the world, but much more deeply in the faculties of the human person. We have not yet abandoned the fantasy-attuned habits of the televisual age, nor have we yet embraced the retentive and categorical habits of the digital. That these latter habits will develop seems inevitable—sooner or later, though with no guarantee that they will then be directed virtuously—but our concern is with the *here and now*; with the lives of the current generation. How can we live good digital lives?

That is to say, we have an opportunity; an opportunity to become conscious of our habits of fantasy and, becoming conscious of them, shed them; to form new, better habits: habits of recollection, habits of categorization, habits attuned to gaining knowledge and growing in understanding; habits of a philosophical nature which will be necessary to ensuring that the digital life is a good one—that is, most of all, habits of living inquisitively.

## 4. THE LYCEUM INSTITUTE

Thus, the idea was born for the Lyceum Institute: an online environment wherein the members could collectively, voluntarily, pursue the instillation of better habits, especially those of careful thinking; and thereby contribute to not just the preservation of truth, but its strengthening. The Institute is not a program, a course, a certification process, a substitute for the University, nor simply a platform on which to find content for passive consumption. Rather, it is something to become a part of one’s life: a digital environment wherein everything is ordered towards the development of perfective human habits, rather than deviant ones; habits of humility, generosity, insightful interpretation, willingness to hear, ardor for the truth

and deepening one's understanding, security in forming one's beliefs, contentment, and worldly detachment. The Institute is an enclave for thinking, differentiated from the world "outside" not by viewing it through a lens of gnosticism, but by instilling and maintaining a dispassionate devotion to the truth. It is where one may go after having observed the chaos, the disorder, the blind ideological adherence, and the sophisticated machinations of the wider "intellectual" world, to learn, study, think, and most of all converse with others following a common path. It seeks the improvement of individual understanding through communal effort in fostering philosophical habit.

In all but rare exceptions, continual education has been out of the reach for most people: one would go to school or receive a home education until old enough and capable enough for an occupation. But in recent decades, engagement with one's occupation has (for many, though far from all) become decreasingly time-consuming, while distraction has diverted our energies from much of anything that truly matters. We may still work 40-hour weeks, but we do not *work* 40-hour weeks. We have nothing but time to kill, and yet no time to spare—we say, as we browse the streaming selections, scroll through the social feeds, open tabs to nowhere and windows to nothing. We do not do what we ought with all this time, in other words; we do not seek the truth by means of which we may know and discover the good.

But digital life allows for unique educational opportunity. For one needs to do more than merely read books or blogs or articles to become educated: education always being a matter of a certain *training*, which entails not only reading or passive consumption of information, but the interpretative processing of that which is received and—perhaps most importantly of all—a critical conversation with others through which that interpretation may be refined and improved. No mind lives and thrives all on its own, and while reading the works of great writers is an encounter with their minds, it is one-directional only. Something more is needed—other persons, who bring not only their own minds, but all the minds they have read, all the minds they have encountered, in some way to your own. We attain an exponential

increase of intellectual exposure through involvement in a community; we gain **conversance**: a knowledge and awareness which goes beyond the superficialities of informational accumulation by penetrating to the causes which explain reality.

In other words, what Newman conceived to be the business of the University, I conceive to be that of the Lyceum Institute. By taking advantage of the opportunities provided through the digital technological medium, the Lyceum is growing into a community of persons committed to the collaborative pursuit of intellectual, discriminating, reflective habits, and to living a more philosophically-rich life in all the things we do.

The Lyceum Institute is open to all-comers: graduate and undergraduate students, professors, clergy, the philosophically-seeking general public, and so on. Experts and novices alike profit from the community of common purpose and the mutual support in the pursuit of bettered habits.

## 5. INQUIRERE, ORDINARE, MEMORARE

The pursuit of these bettered habits is enshrined in the core principles to which all members are exhorted in the three parts of the Institute Motto: *Inquirere, Ordinare, Memorare* – to Inquire, to Order, and to Remember.

Why these three actions as principles?

The Lyceum Institute, being a *digital* environment, is adapted to fit and fructify the habits enabled by the nature of networked digital technology—which, at its core, is *archival*. That is, the very nature of digital architecture is to receive and retain bits of information that can represent nearly anything. Anything done online can be archived: captured in an arrangement of data and saved for posterity; it thus extends our *memorative* habits and capacities. Where prior technological environments emphasized the ephemeral and pushed us toward the continually new, the retentive capacities of the ever-expanding digital archive will lead us continually towards recalling what has been said and thinking about what has been

done—which are retained indefinitely in archives to which we may always find access.

But consequently, for this archivality to be rightly leveraged, digital technology demands a habit of categorical consideration—a habit of **ordering**: as any good archive must be well-ordered, and approached with an ordered mind, for it to be used properly. What good is retention if we cannot navigate that which has been retained? Thus, we may retain all things in digital representations, but we must also discern *what* they are to know best *how* we may organize those retained representations and thereby search through them, to find that for which we are looking.

Furthermore, this demands of us an improved capacity for **questioning**; that is, no quantity of archived information, no matter how well it is organized, can tell us what we need to know if we do not even know how to ask the right questions. Moreover, what to do with that information requires not simply "the" right question, but a habit of knowing how to formulate those questions and pursue the answers. Questioning itself is a habit which requires practice, and the ability to formulate good questions an art

In order that we best utilize what the digital environment provides us, then, we need most foundationally of all this habit of questioning: a habit improved and fructified in its correlated habits of ordering and remembering.

## 6. ENDLESS LEARNING AND RESEARCH

These habits are not for completing a course of study or attaining a certification, but for the fulfillment of our natural desire to know—a fulfillment that expands our desires even as it satisfies them.

That is, it is a popular but true adage that the more one knows, the more one becomes aware of how much more one has yet to learn. And yet do we allow ourselves but a fragment of our lives to be spent in formal educational situations. The standard course for a bachelor's degree of arts takes four years; a master's, two; and a doctorate between three and six. Yet the

majority of persons do not gain advanced degrees; certainly not in the philosophical sciences—here meaning literature, history, philosophy, and theology—and what exposure most persons have to a liberal education likely comes either from a handful of classes or from outside one’s formal college education altogether.

Many who *do* gain an advanced degree continue immersion in the world of academia—though not all—but for a relatively large percentage who do continue this immersion, they find themselves far-flung, taking jobs where they are offered; far from good research libraries and communities which support the life of learning. Students are reluctant; colleagues are jaded; and administrators actively discourage straying outside the bounds of an approved curriculum or using more than a pittance for travel and lodging in attending conferences or otherwise promoting a culture of extra-curricular learned discourse.

Even for those whose lives continue in an academic trajectory after their undergraduate education, that is, insufficient support is given for the fructification of the intellectual life. We become ever-more aware of how little we know but are typically given less and less means to study those things of which we know ourselves to be ignorant.<sup>5</sup> Does a doctor of philosophy truly know enough never to need further elucidation another person? Are we “beyond” the need for further classes and seminars? Do papers heard at conferences once or twice a year, with subsequent ten-to-twenty minute question and answer sessions suffice to satisfy the innate desire to grow in knowledge? Do we not need to know better what is going on in disciplines other than our own—most especially if we are seeking wisdom?

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<sup>5</sup> Except in rare and difficult to obtain situations: being appointed, that is, to course-load reduced tenured positions and most especially those endowed for research—but even these are not guaranteed to allow one true expansion of the mind, as often there are expectations of increased publication.

In the *Reconocimientos* (Acknowledgements) to his massive history of philosophy, *Four Ages of Understanding*, a work written in a few weeks but revised and updated over years, John Deely wrote the following:<sup>6</sup>

When you live on the fringes, such a task [writing and revising a scholarly book on the whole history of philosophy] is not easy, for it requires not merely the assistance of a research library (there is no other kind of library in fact; only good and inferior research libraries), but of a research library so excellent that it does not even exist in one place. Not even the legendary library of Alexandria, had it survived intact, would have been sufficient.

Deely goes on to acknowledge those whose efforts aided him in the completion of the work—not only with accessing and utilizing the capacities of literal research libraries, such as interlibrary loans, but with their own knowledge, their own corrections, suggestions, and objections. The point should be well-noted—at the time of this writing—some two-plus decades later: if we want to understand anything well, to grasp it comprehensively, we need always more resources than we have. More books. More papers. More thoughts. More eyes. More discussion. More time. We cannot do much of anything at all that is worth doing if we attempt doing it alone. Yet we have a far greater technological capacity for collaboration and mutual support today, no matter to which fringes we have been thrown, than was had even a single decade ago—let alone two, or twenty.

Thus, the Lyceum Institute aims to be a perennial source for those who would grow in knowledge and understanding, regardless of background, station in life, geographical location, professional circumstances, or stage of career: to allow all an endless pursuit of learning and research.

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<sup>6</sup> 1998: “Reconocimientos” in *Four Ages of Understanding* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2001): xxvii.

## 7. MISSION STATEMENT

In accordance with the aforesaid, the Lyceum Institute adopts and pledges to uphold the following mission statement:

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The Lyceum Institute provides a digital environment dedicated to fostering the philosophical habit—of questioning the truth of things and the good of life—in all its members, as we collectively pursue the never-ending education of a truly mind-liberating nature. Much of education depends upon the atmosphere in which we immerse ourselves, and, in the twenty-first century, we all inhabit a digital atmosphere. The Lyceum Institute seeks a continual, communal, and thoughtful ennobling of that atmosphere.

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And may we all seek, know, and love the Truth,  
with an ever-deepening, ever-spreading ardor.