

Wm. Scott Hambrick

August 5, 2015

Dear Aren,

Over the years I've come to recognize enormous deficiencies in my education. My fund of knowledge is far from complete and there are entire areas of thought, philosophy and history that I have almost no awareness of. My readings and other studies have made me face the fact that I lack basic insights and understanding that even mediocre writers and citizens had 100+ years ago. Also, in spite of expending about \$85,000 with Monte Cassino, a Benedictine private school, I saw my children's education was going to be incomplete as well. As a result, Charity and I decided to take control of their education by homeschooling them.

In order to learn to best educate my children, Riley and Evan, I have spent an enormous amount of time studying pedagogy, educational systems and curricula. In doing so, I have found overwhelming evidence that the leaders of thought and progress in the human race have always been educated in the classical liberal arts, namely the trivium and quadrivium. This is widely recognized by the "privileged" as the gold standard for creating powerful leaders and thinkers. Schools like Eaton, Oxford, Harvard, Columbia, Bard's, St. John's and old William and Mary know this and have trained giants for centuries.

Secondly, these thinkers, whether in formal schools or not (Ben Franklin's Junto, for example), have studied the liberal arts via a great books program that is discussed in Socratic seminars. In the Socratic seminar each participant is forced to criticize his own ideas and beliefs ruthlessly until they absolutely know why they believe what they believe AND maybe more importantly, learn how much they don't know. In the Socratic seminar we define our terms and agree on our evidence. We must support our premises, or be shown how we are wrong. It leads to steely intellectual rigor.

This kind of education is what fed the leaders of the enlightenment like Jefferson, Rousseau, and Adam Smith. It creates the mental agility that ideas like those of Newton, Schopenhauer and Darwin require. At its most basic level, classical liberal arts education teaches normal folks like me to be analytical, articulate, difficult to manipulate, and deeply aware of our place in history. (Thousands of years of history, not just history from 1776-1945.)

A trip to Ireland and England in 2013 and another to colonial Williamsburg, VA (the seat of this learning in the new world) last year helped highlight for me how powerful this education can be. I also learned that it is no longer commonly available because it makes normal people far too dangerous to power structures. Ask King George III.

I have recently discussed all of this with a good friend of mine, Jim Furr. He has expressed his frustration with the irrationality, deadly metaphysics and disgusting politics of our era and has expressed his own need to return to classical reason and rationality. He suggested that we form a Socratic seminar ourselves.

So we are.

I've sent this letter to invite you to join Jim and I in studying and discussing ideas, Plato, Aristotle and the other greats in a seminar format with 4-6 others that will meet at my home over the best hors d'oeuvres and drink I can find. We'd love to have you join us for the first meeting on Friday August 28th, 2015 at 7pm. It's certainly not required, but I suggest that you read Plato's dialogue, *Ion*. This is a short reading and highlights how the Socratic Method works. In this first meeting we'll discuss the method, how we might apply it ourselves and decide on what to tackle next. I suspect that we will resolve to meet monthly or perhaps twice monthly thereafter. We'll see what the group would like.

There is no obligation to do the reading or attend further meetings of course. I do believe however, that if you attend the first meeting and really throw yourself into the material and discussions, you'll be hooked. As a result, you'll find yourself learning syntopically. You'll find yourself recognizing the tricks of logical fallacy and rhetorical device everywhere you go. You'll also find that you've made some great friends in seminar.

Date: Friday, August 28th at 7-9pm

Address: Scott Hambrick's home.

Agenda: Our first discussion of the nature of the Socratic Method and Seminars, scheduling our next Seminar. Hors d'oeuvres and drinks will be served.

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RSVP via email

Dress code: As you like.

Lastly, I want you to trust me when I tell you these thinkers and writers aren't "too hard". The anti-intellectualism in our culture has taught us that Aristotle, Bacon, Plato, Sophocles, Nietzsche and the like are inaccessible. To the contrary, they are the best writers the human race has offered and generally give us everything we need to understand them. The key is to go slow, reread, self-examine and stay with the task. Do that with me.

If you have ANY questions, concerns or need more information, please do not hesitate to call me. Feel free to email me. If you'd like me to send you some links to resources on the web that may aid you in your decision.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott". The letter "S" is large and stylized, with the "c" and "t" following in a cursive-like script.

Wm. Scott Hambrick