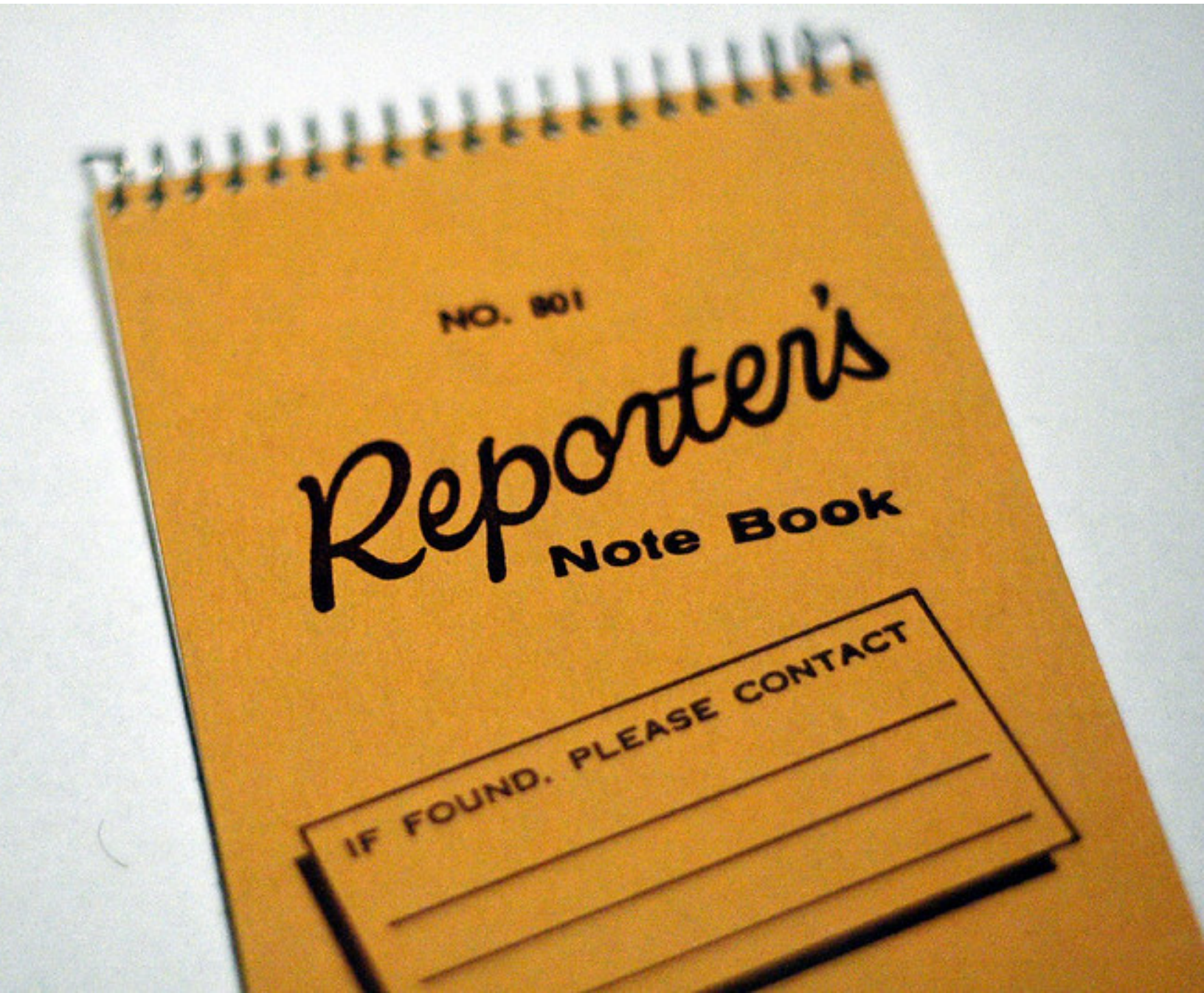


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# PEGASUS

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CAUX ROUND TABLE FOR MORAL CAPITALISM NETWORK LOOKING AT BUSINESS ABOVE THE CLUTTER AND CONFETTI



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# Introduction

Welcome to the November edition of *Pegasus*. In this issue, we focus on the recent elections, with an examination of the role of the free press and elite thought leaders in terms of moral capitalism and the future of our polity and society.

Steve Young writes about the elites and their sometimes-self-serving role as leaders of the culture. “We know best.” He frames the folly of overinvesting in this notion against arguments over kings and potentates of the past, ranging from Europe to China through history. His discussion of Mencius is truly illuminating. In many instances, the elite crowd grew so confident in their rightness that they lost their ability to influence a broader range of people, often talking to one another. Kings lost touch with despotic (they might say “enlightened”) rule, leading their subjects to rebel and in many cases, oust the king or, at least, defenestrate the king.

In his essay, Steve also writes about the importance of a free press to liberty and moral capitalism. This is especially true as it relates to “factions” that divide a nation. Debate about factions came fast and hard during the formation of the United States and, as Steve notes, “liberty” is often the light that dissolves factionalism. In many arguments, the free press played a key role in supporting liberty and driving factionalism down. That’s not to mean the U.S. has not had factions and it certainly is polarized today. But that increased polarization calls for more liberty in order to get us on a better path.

Michael Hartoonian writes about the vital importance of a free press, citing President Thomas Jefferson’s passion for the subject. He also talks about how a free press plays a key role as a “public trust.” Without rigor, the press and free speech dwindle into meaninglessness. “Free speech only works through self-responsibility,” he writes. He adds, provocatively: “There is a notion, loose in the world, that all opinions are valid.” He persuasively argues that’s not the case.

Lastly, yours truly, a journalist since the late 1980s, talks about how the profession has changed during the course of his career, often and more lately, not for the better. He contends that strong, independent news reporting is the lubricant of discourse in a society burdened by deepening polarization. He stresses the importance of an independent press, emphasizing its role in holding various actors accountable, but also in fostering discussion. Similar to Steve’s essay, he sees a strong press as playing a crucial role in lessening the corrosive polarization in our free republic.

Thank you for reading this month’s issue. As ever, if you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact us.

*Dave Kansas*  
*Editor-at-Large*  
*Pegasus*



# AOC Asks:

## People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why?

U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez took to Instagram the day after the election to answer questions and share her thoughts on the outcome. As she was noting the several places she knew of that showed a split between the top of the ticket choice (Harris/Trump) and down ballot (Congressional races like her's) she paused to ask:

*"As a matter of fact, let's do this right now. If you voted for Donald Trump and me, or if you voted for Donald Trump and Democratic down ballot, I would really love to hear from you. This is not a place of judgment, I'm not, like, gonna put your stuff on blast or anything like that or dunk on it. That's, like, genuinely not the the intent here. I actually want to learn from you. I want to hear what you are thinking and I just want to hear from you. So if you did that, I don't know I anyone like that is even watching this right now, but if you are please fill out our little Q&A here and just tell me what your thought process was."*

She posted the responses she received and they are, dare we say, enlightening. We post those she shared below for your consideration.

**I'm LISTENING.**

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

It's real simple... trump and you care for the working class

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

Trump is going to get us the money and let's men have a voice. You're brilliant and have amazing passion!

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

But wanted change so I went with trump and blue for the rest of the ballot to put some brakes

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

I feel like Trump and you are both real.

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

Voted Trump, but I like you & Bernie. I don't trust either party establishment politicians

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

voted for Trump in Arizona butvoted for dem Ruben instead of Kari lake bocz taught he's good handling war

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

Action & Progress >> Stagnation & Excuses. Both of you push boundaries and force growth.

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

I feel that you both are outsiders compared to the rest of DC, and less "establishment"

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

I would have voted for you and Trump but I am in California. I like your style though

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

Will you please share what you learn, I'm baffled by the split votes.

**Listening, continued**

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

I know ppl that did this and it was bc of Gaza.

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

I support you and did this. Felt like I didn't have a choice after Biden's administration.

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

Voted for trump and you, not genocide Harris. Dems need bernie!!

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

He speaks of war as something that is bad. Democrats became the party that supports war

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

But also you signified change. Trump signified change. I've said lately, Trump sounds more like you

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

The responses you got make me want to barf

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

🤢 sometimes you gotta dig in and see it to understand and adapt! Even if it makes you want to barf

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

She was more for rights then the economy & when she talked ab it she didn't have a plan

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

Dems do better job at the local level, but are terrible at the macro level.

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

Heard this from an Ohio voter too

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

You are focused on the real issues people care about. Similar to Trump populism in some ways.

People who support both Trump & me OR voted Trump/Dem, tell us why ↓

loved ones say you're both straightforward and challenging corruption and broken gov

# The World is a School, So What Can We Learn from Donald Trump's Re-election as President of the United States?

Stephen B. Young

*"When we are born, we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools."  
-William Shakespeare, King Lear*

*"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits  
and their entrances."  
-William Shakespeare, As You Like It*

In a stunning rejection of a governing elite, Donald Trump has won reelection to serve another term as president of the United States. What is there of importance to learn from the decision of a small majority of American voters to send him back to the White House?

First, a great many noted commentators drew the lesson that too many Americans are stupid, ignorant, deplorable or, as President Joe Biden said, "garbage." The fault, as Shakespeare might say, was in them – the *hoi polloi* of worry to Aristotle, not in the Democratic Party, not in its vision of transforming America, nor its candidate and her advisors. She spent over \$1 billion in 107 days and still did not win a majority of votes.

A comment by a Democratic Party loyalist writing about why his party failed to gain the support of the American people in the election concluded:

*But because of their own class-inflected blind spots, that continues to be the basic message liberals send to the American people: "You don't get it." And the message in return was, "No, you don't get it." A political party is meant, among other things, to be a system of feedback between the populace and the governing classes. Among Democratic Party leaders this cycle, the feedback mechanism broke – or worse, was deliberately ignored. ...*

*The Democrats, in retreat from any meaningful mandate of popular accountability, have transformed themselves into the party of the establishment: wonks, statisticians, professionals, hectoring nonprofit advocates, celebrities, reformers, lecturers (in all senses of the word), assistant professors, and corporate bean counters. They worship G-men, spooks and generals as minor deities. In a postelection piece for *The New Yorker*, Rachel Maddow lamented that the American people didn't listen to the "experts." That sentence alone tells you everything you need to know.*

The self-satisfying conceit that "we are better; we know better" has, across cultures and over the centuries, been used to defend autocracies and elite regimes. In the Roman Republic, the families which controlled elections to the Senate were known as the faction of the *optimates* – or "the best." or Aristotle, rule of the polis by those with excellence was an "aristocracy" for having the benefit of that personal superiority.

The root word for aristocracy in Greek was *aristos*, which originally meant “most fitting,” derived from the Proto-Indo-European *\*ar(ə)-isto-*, using the root *\*ar* – “to fit together.” In Greek, *aristoi* meant the “best of its kind, noblest, bravest, most virtuous.” Thus, the conviction that some are more fit to rule than others has been with us for millennia.

On November 5, American voters also gave the Republican Party control of the Senate. Trump received significant votes from African Americans, Hispanics and Asians – and women. Did that vote of the people elevate Donald Trump and his Republican colleagues to the status of American “*aristoi*?”



If we want the best to rule – in China, in Russia, in Gabon, in Cuba, in Canada, everywhere – why bother with elections, wherein the people may make a stupid or otherwise wrong decision? Just pick the best among us and give them the police power.

Here, we must consider the question of “Who is to say who is best?”

Who should have the power to decide on rulership? Who gets to say who or what is best? The priests upon examining entrails? The Chinese book of yin/yang hexagrams, the *Yi Jing*? The Oracle at Delphi? Me? You? Elon Musk? Jeff Bezos?

If, as the post-modernists, following Nietzsche, maintain, all our thoughtful conclusions are merely social conventions borrowed from others, narratives subject to whim and fancy or just public expressions of our personal, ego-centric, will to power – our own truth, then asking anyone to decide on what is best is just rolling dice.

A wise answer and a moral one, to me, is to institute a process of decision-making of selecting leaders.

First, use discourse to filter different ideas as to who and what is “best.” Don’t rush to judgment. Put a burden of proof on those who speak up judgmentally for this or that idea or ideal, policy, program, candidate, to support their personal preference with facts and reasoning that persuade others. Put it to a group – put it to a vote.

Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian wrote books on how to be persuasive in discourse. I particularly like Quintilian’s advice that the most persuasive orator is “a good person who speaks well.”

Secondly, use checks and balances. This was the contribution of the framers of the U.S. Constitution. A process of seeking equilibrium, I submit, would be value-added to the political process of any community. Diversify power into independent, but also inter-dependent nodes of authority and office. Argue things out and find points of compromise where the Venn circles intersect and overlap. Don't go to extremes or jump off a bridge – or push someone who disagrees with you off the bridge. Hold to balance and equilibrium (the *mizan*), as the Qur'an enjoins us.

Lord Acton spoke for all of us when he advised that “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

I also agree with Acton when he said that “... remember, where you have a concentration of power in a few hands, all too frequently men with the mentality of gangsters get control. History has proven that.”

Just so did the rising middle class of Calvinists in England decide in 1649 to abolish the office of king:

The Act Abolishing the Office of King  
The Commons of England Assembled in Parliament  
March 17, 1649

And whereas it is and hath been found by experience, that the office of a king in this nation and Ireland and to have the power of in any single person, is unnecessary, burdensome and dangerous to the liberty, safety and public interest of the people and that for the most part, use hath been made of the regal power and prerogative to oppress and impoverish and enslave the subject; and that usually and naturally any one person in such power makes it his interest to incroach upon the just freedom and liberty of the people and to promote the setting up of their own will and power above the laws, that so they might enslave these kingdoms to their own lust; be it therefore enacted and ordained by this present parliament and by authority of the same, that the office of a king in this nation shall not henceforth reside in or be exercised by any one single person; and that no one person whatsoever shall or may have or hold the office, style, dignity, power or authority of king of the said kingdoms and dominions or any of them,...

To avoid an overconcentration of power, spread decision-making among many. Here, the lesson learned from our collective human past is to appreciate the practical advantage of holding elections.

Mencius in China was of this opinion:

When asked about who could choose a king to rule, Mencius replied: “The sovereign can present a man to Heaven, but he cannot make Heaven give that man the throne. A prince can present a man to the sovereign, but he cannot cause the sovereign to make that man a prince.



A great officer can present a man to his prince, but he cannot cause the prince to make that man a great officer. Yao presented Shun to Heaven and Heaven accepted him. He presented him to the people and the people accepted him. Therefore, I say, “Heaven does not speak. It simply indicated its will by [providing for] his personal conduct and his conduct of affairs.”

Zhang said, “I presume to ask how it was that Yao presented Shun to Heaven and Heaven accepted him; and that he exhibited him to the people and the people accepted him.”



Mencius replied, “[Yao] caused [Shun] to preside over the sacrifices and all the spirits were well pleased with them; thus, Heaven accepted him. [Yao] caused him to preside over the conduct of affairs and affairs were well administered, so that the people reposed under him; thus, the people accepted him. Heaven gave the throne to [Shun]. The people gave it to him. Therefore, I said, “The sovereign cannot give the throne to another. Shun assisted Yao in the government for twenty and eight years – this was more than man could have done and was from Heaven. After the death of Yao, when the three years’ mourning was completed, Shun withdrew from the son of Yao to the south of South river. The princes of the kingdom, however, repairing to court, went not to the son of Yao, but they went to Shun. Litigants went not to the son of Yao, but they went to Shun. Singers sang not the son of Yao, but they sang Shun. Therefore, I said, “Heaven gave him the throne.” It was after these things

that he went to the Middle Kingdom and occupied the seat of the Son of Heaven. If he had, before these things, taken up his residence in the palace of Yao and had applied pressure to the son of Yao, it would have been an act of usurpation and not the gift of Heaven. This sentiment is expressed in the words of the Great Declaration: “Heaven sees according as my people see; Heaven hears according as my people hear.” (Mencius, Book V, Pt. 1, Ch. 5)

Centuries later, in the U.S., Abraham Lincoln spoke of the best government as one “Of the people, by the people, for the people.” In that way, to borrow from Mencius, Heaven will act through the people as the people see and hear.

The people, however, are not of one mind. Who, then, among the people, is to be believed? A standard rule is to follow the will of the majority. But as James Madison argued in support of the draft constitution for the new nation, the United States of America, a majority can abuse its power, just as well as can a minority, or a faction, or a clan, or a king, or a president.

The quality of public discourse, then, needs our attention if we are to trust the people with the power to decide on who is to rule.



In the American case, the first amendment of the Constitution speaks to the preservation of quality discourse. Separation of church and state seeks to prevent faith convictions from narrowing the scope of permissive thought and speech. Let there be as many religions as the people want. Secondly, the amendment provides freedom for thinking and speaking. Thought and speech are the mechanism of discourse. Where there are no thoughts and there is no speech, there is no discourse, only a silent void, wherein the moral sentiments and the intellect have no place. Thirdly, the amendment protects the right of the press to freely present and consider the products of moral sentiments and the intellect. Fourth, the amendment provides social and political space for the people to, in public assembly or in writing, present their ideas, ideals and practical concerns to the government to, at their instigation, compel the government to participate in discourse.

Since Donald Trump's first election to the presidency in 2016, the world has seen all these checks and balances at work. There has been freedom to think about and criticize Trump's ideas and ideals. The press has been free to condemn him and to praise him. The people have assembled to support him and to protest against him. For eight years, the American people have used their freedoms in, at times even disparaging and raucous, discourse about his politics and his personality. Thus, can we conclude that the results of the November election reflect a mature deliberation of the American people on the relative merits of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris and their coteries to serve in leadership for the next four years?

But in seeking to learn general lessons from recent American politics, one must not overlook efforts to restrict the quality of discourse. Beginning in 2016, with Hillary Clinton's campaign and continuing in the Biden Administration, those opposed to Trump took special measures to shape public discourse against him. He was accused of collaborating with Vladimir Putin, investigated and impeached. He was subjected to criminal proceedings so that he might be labeled a "felon" and thus denied the stature of one whose words should be received with respect or, if convicted and incarcerated, denied the right to appear in public or participate in politics. Major media provided very one-sided and disparaging reports on his activities and views. He was accused of providing the people with unreliable information and even "lies." Strenuous efforts were made to change the rules of discourse, to tilt the playing fields of thought, speech and media against him.

These activities raise the question of to what extent they were appropriate in a constitutional democracy which seeks to place checks on the power of any faction to use government for its own purposes. Two sayings about discourse come to mind: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" and "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

Some who objected to all this government and elite messing around with discourse started to talk about the U.S. losing its way and becoming just a more normal "third world" oligarchical state.

The open fairness of the 2024 campaigns and the results of the November election found the country, though mired in factional disunity, not yet so governmentally bankrupt.

*(Extra governmentally, there were two assassination attempts on Trump's life – killing him being the most effective way to stop his influencing American political discourse.)*

Another lesson to be learned from America's recent political tensions is an old one. Factions damage communities and can destroy democracies. Factions lead to feuds and feuds lead to oppressions. Consider, in a different context, Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*, a tragedy, brought about by a feud.

The U.S., for some years now, has domestically been victimized by a covertly semi-religious culture war between two rival visions of what are the good and the true. One vision has its origins in the Judeo-Christian Biblical/Greco-Roman tradition of the West and the other in the modern, European Enlightenment Gnostic faith in learning and teaching that knowledge which alone can save us from earthly evils. This second vision, for many, has morphed into post-modernist, faith-based, particularistic, belief cults.

It has been and still is a low-intensity social war between rival moral codes each claiming the privilege of determining the do's and don'ts of American social practice – abortion, gender fluidity, a feminist ethic of care in public policies, teaching of Americanism to the young, hiring and promotion according to race and gender to compensate for past hiring and promotion according to different racial and gender preferences, the authority to be given to an educated elite of experts, the appropriate roles for markets and for regulators, who deserves to become an American citizen, what is the moral imperative to stop global warming and more.

The two cultural factions do not like or respect each other. They call each other names and castigate those on the other side for being “bad,” “heartless,” “toxic” and as such, most unworthy of having a say in what is to be thought and what is to be done. Most importantly for American politics, neither side trusts the other, which escalates attitudinal differences into separatist antagonisms, where each side refuses to socialize with the other and seeks to censor what the other side is permitted to say. It's a kind of tribalism tearing away at national integration. As we know from history, tribal rivalries can turn deadly.

The relativism of post-modern thought, which has come to dominate the education provided by our colleges and universities, even in the sciences, cannot resolve these value and cognitive disagreements among Americans. According to post-modernism, everything – this side and that side – is only narrative and choosing among narratives is just a matter of taste, not of truth, right or justice. “My” truth, “my” right, “my” justice, is always, in my mind, more true, right and just than “your” truth, “your” right and “your” justice. Why should I meet you even half-way?

Perhaps the most cogent discussion of feuds in politics was written by James Madison in the 10<sup>th</sup> Federalist paper of 1787. Madison's judgments have stood the tests of time and space. They apply, as far as I can tell, to all nations, ethnicities, tribes and even within religions. Madison educated us as follows:

The instability, injustice and confusion introduced into the public councils have, in truth, been the mortal diseases under which popular governments have everywhere perished ...

Complaints are everywhere, heard from our most considerate and virtuous citizens, equally the friends of public and private faith and of public and personal liberty, that our governments are too unstable, that the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties and that measures are too often decided, not according to the rules of justice and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority. ...

[The]effects of the unsteadiness and injustice with which a factious spirit has tainted our public administrations....

By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community. ...

Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.

The latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man; and we see them everywhere brought into different degrees of activity, according to the different circumstances of civil society. A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to the human passions, have, in turn, divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good.

So strong is this propensity of mankind to fall into mutual animosities, that where no substantial occasion presents itself, the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions have been sufficient to kindle their unfriendly passions and excite their most violent conflicts.

But the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society. Those who are creditors and those who are debtors fall under a like discrimination. A landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations and divide them into different classes, actuated by different sentiments and views.

The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern legislation and involves the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of the government.

A republic, by which I mean a government in which the scheme of representation takes place, opens a different prospect and promises the cure for which we are seeking. Let us examine the points in which it varies from pure democracy and we shall comprehend both the nature of the cure and the efficacy which it must derive from the union.

The two great points of difference between a democracy and a republic are: first, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater number of citizens and greater sphere of country, over which the latter may be extended. ...

In the next place, as each representative will be chosen by a greater number of citizens in the large than in the small republic, it will be more difficult for unworthy candidates to practice with success the vicious arts by which elections are too often carried; and the suffrages of the people being more free, will be more likely to centre in men who possess the most attractive merit and the most diffusive and established characters.

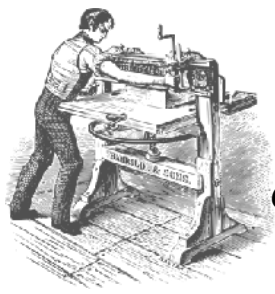
The influence of factious leaders may kindle a flame within their particular states, but will be unable to spread a general conflagration through the other states. A religious sect may degenerate into a political faction in a part of the Confederacy; but the variety of sects dispersed over the entire face of it must secure the national councils against any danger from that source. A rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal division of property or for any other improper or wicked project, will be less apt to pervade the whole body of the union than a particular member of it; in the same proportion as such a malady is more likely to taint a particular county or district, than an entire state.

In conclusion, the most important lesson to be learned from Donald Trump's re-election is the abiding wisdom for all of us everywhere, in our times and in times to come, of James Madison and our Constitution with its first amendment.



By the way, the deliberations of the Caux Round Table Principles for Government ended up with a focus on public office as a public trust and on fair discourse – all very consistent with Madison and Mencius.

*Stephen B. Young is Global Executive Director of the Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism.*



# A Free Press

## *Courage, Contested knowledge and a Public Trust*

Michael Hartoonian



### Introduction

Thinking about the necessary conditions of a society governed by citizens, Thomas Jefferson said that given a choice between having a government or a free press, he would choose the free press, as it is the best bulwark against tyranny. The wise across the world have always known this, but many also know that you can “use” the press to gain and hold personal power. This belief in the fourth estate, however, if it is to foster democratic principles, begs a question: what are the attributes of a free press and more importantly, the character of journalists?

Within the last 10 years, in both Europe and the United States, there has been significant research on the different ways people think about the world and their ability to deal with ambiguities, irony and uncertainty. This is not an indication of intelligence, but a propensity to embrace fear over freedom, certainty over uncertainty and reliance on others over self-reliance. Of course, these categories extend to include journalists. What is altogether true from these findings is that in order to understand concepts like love, courage, happiness and truth, one must be able to generalize from one behavior or event to the higher principle contained therein. Truth, for example, is not the worldview of one culture or tribe. It is a principle that transcends all cultures. The higher principle transcends a particular behavior or utterance. These principles defy measurement and even pictures, but are basic to any and every deep understanding of what it means to be human, that is, the individual’s intension to flourish in community – the only context in which one can. They are learned principles, but learned in a special way and manifested in the people who understand knowledge, conduct and self-responsibility (governance). The questions always to be addressed are: 1) What knowledge is of most importance and of worth for one to understand and act on higher principles? 2) How should I conduct my life in accordance with higher principles? 3) How shall I be governed using higher principles as criteria? This may mean that some or even many people cannot understand truth, love or even courage. Journalists cannot be among that number.

Above all, a journalist must have a built-in crap detector! They must be hungry for content and diligent in their search for truth. They serve no political parity, no individual, no fear of recrimination and have the courage to confront anyone with questions that highlight the tensions and truth of behavior and character. Within a republic, a free press is not to entertain, but to enlighten.

## **A Higher Standard**

Free speech only works through self-responsibility. There is a notion, loose in the world, that all opinions are valid. Values are relative and any government should be run by its own set of opinions. After all, pluralism is real and should be respected. Regimes like Hitler's Third Reich or present-day South Korea are as valid as any. Of course, this is nonsense. Many are confused between pluralism and relativism, between the idea that if an opinion is voted up, it must also be right. Hitler was voted into office. It was once the law in many nations that slavery was legal, that women could not vote and that property could be taken by might. Morality transcends individual laws and cultures and all people who teach/educate, like journalists, must understand the history, the values in tensions and call out lies and immoral behavior and utterances of all individuals and groups that can destroy life and life's meaning. This takes more courage than courage in battle. The journalist understands this and calls out a lie as a lie, as well as the liar's defense stated as a moral equivalent. This is untenable and the journalist calls it out with logic and questions, for all citizens, to search and to find out what is true about us. Do we really want to live without principles? Without love? Without truth? Without meaning?

To the degree that the media generalizes data absent the moral question, to that same degree, it destroys life (please see my article, "The Lamp of Truth: Our Melancholy Search for the Examined Life," in July *Pegasus*).

## **The Courage to Report Beyond Opinion**

Because of the complexities of life and the different ways that people see the world, reporting what is true, valid or right is also complex and demands deep skill sets of critical thinking and research. Perhaps the most important ability is that of stepping outside of the several opinions voiced and aligning speech and behavior with criteria of truth searching. The journalist must put into play the full meaning of what it means to advance deductive, inductive and ontological arguments. And be willing to call people out who simply want to "tell their story or grievance," absent any supportive evidence. It is not, nor has it ever been the case that one opinion is as good as another. Opinions can only move toward truth as they are substantiated. The notion that "God told me to do it" or I simply believe my "ruler/boss" is what a free press can never except. And since, in a republic, the press is to present a higher level of evidence, trying to get as close to the truth as possible, its first responsibility is to the pursuit of that truth and not to its customers. There is much confusion today about who, indeed, does the press serve. Many journalists are so interested in their market share that they sell their souls for profit – the truth be damned. Of course, they say that that's what the public wants. It's clear in cases like this that there is no courage. We hear nothing from you like, "Sir, you are lying." "You are making things up without evidence."

Where is the courage of the press? Who, what, when, where, why and how. Of those questions, WHY must be addressed in depth. The temple of truth can only be entered through the courtyard of courage.

## **It's the DNA of Democracy, Stupid**

The journalist must decide if they live in a market or a culture with democratic DNA. If you cannot put first things first, you are not a professional. You should care for promoting the better angels of our nature. You should care about presenting and representing a model of truth. Truth is uncomfortable. It can even be dangerous, but never as dangerous as lies.

We have been told that it's the economy, stupid. That is so disrespectful of citizens and of the foundations of a republic. No, not the economy. It's the principles of democracy, stupid. Without a conception of the common good, writ large, a free press makes no sense, nor does a free market.

## **It's What People Want**

A professional always knows what, why and how to prioritize elements of his or her discipline. For example, a teacher always puts content first because they know you can only teach what you know. The community and students follow in that order. A physician's first priority is not the patient, but the medical knowledge needed to cure an illness. The same is true in law or plumbing. It's the content and community that matter. The second thing that a professional knows is the responsibility to protect and improve the culture; from teaching about the content of the profession, to improving the content itself. This, of course, assumes that a culture values freedom and innovation and above all, integrity and character.

We might make the claim that where the press is concerned, people are not interested in content. They want to be entertained and read and listen to "news" that fits their ideology or worldview. Does this mean that if someone only wants to eat junk food, the professional should simply go along? What about those who want to remain ignorant? Sick? If I want to be unhealthy, ignorant, amoral or even dangerous to others, should I just ask others to mind their own business? Can one be a citizen of a republic and not take responsibility for self? Is it not the role of the citizen to create wealth for self and the community? What about reciprocal duty to other citizens? I ask, what greater joke can God play on a people than to give them what they want? Republics end when the people believe that it is more blessed to receive than to give.

Thomas Jefferson was clear, as all people who have thought deeply about it. The pursuit of happiness is not, nor was it ever, an individual notion of personal happiness. In point of fact, Jefferson's first draft of the Declaration of Independence read "the pursuit of public happiness." Ben Franklin, who served on the editorial committee, suggested to leave out the word "public" because anyone with even half a brain knows that happiness is a relational concept that demands giving of self to community, family, etc. Like morality, an individual cannot be happy alone. In classical Greece, such individually-minded people were called idiots. A republic cannot suffer idiots or fools and the role/responsibility of a free press is to awaken in citizens their intellectual indiscretions.

*Michael Hartoonian is Associate Editor of Pegasus.*





## **Journalism**

**Dave Kansas**

I started in journalism in 1987, while I was still in college and had more hair. I first worked for NBC Radio Network News, answering phones midnight-to-8 a.m. One freezing day, they sent me out to cover a fire. “Hey, Minnesota guy, you’re on the fire.” I couldn’t race out of the building fast enough and came back with a sheet of ice on my face. I’d moved to college in New York to become a journalist and two months after my arrival, I was doing stories that reached across the country. I found it an honor to inform and empower listeners, readers and news consumers. Delivering fact-based, independent news may not have paid well, but I viewed the work as a moral calling and took to heart the edict to report truthfully, without fear or favor.

After NBC, I worked at New York Newsday, still in college and eventually landed at the Wall Street Journal. I worked three, five-year stints at the Journal and received incredible training. We had high standards. Our standards editor, Barney Calame, was so revered, that when he retired, we all got shirts that said: “What would Barney do?” Our stories had many eyes on them. Objectivity and fact-based reporting were the lifeblood of the Journal. The importance of high standards has always stuck with me.

But journalism seems to have changed since I started in the field many years ago. Points of view and “analysis” sneak more frequently into the news pages. At the national level (the Journal excepted, I would argue), it has become more challenging to discern the difference between news and opinion. Thumbs are put on the scale and younger journalists feel that fact-based, independent journalism no longer really applies. This trend of weakening standards has gone on for some time, but it seemed to accelerate in this recent election.

For moral capitalism to succeed, it requires a strong, vibrant and independent press. Freedom of the press is the first right in the first amendment of the Constitution. Journalism is the lubricant that enables robust discourse about the structure of our government and society. At its best, it informs communities and holds various actors – businesses, politicians and even sports teams, among others – accountable for their actions. It provides the basis for debate and discussion and strengthens the bonds of neighbors and communities.

While politicization of news outlets has become problematic, equally important are the economic challenges facing news operations. Digital dimes have replaced print dollars. Community newspapers, often weeklies, hardly get any digital revenue and depend heavily on traditional print. The challenge of finding new models, an enduring aspect of moral capitalism, has become very important. In some communities, the solution has been to return to the ownership practice fairly common more than a century ago. During that time, rail titans, business barons and other nabobs, along with their families, owned many of the most influential newspapers. That tradition stretched well into the start of my career, with Bancrofts owning the Journal, the Grahams owning the Washington Post and the Chandlers owning the L.A. Times, among others. The Sulzberger family still owns the New York Times. Moreover, up until about 25 years ago, newspapering was a very good business. One wag opined that a rich family should give the dumb kid a newspaper. Couldn't fail. That's obviously changed.

In more recent years, we've had a return to the future. To cite a few examples, Jeff Bezos of Amazon bought the Post. Pharmaceutical magnate Patrick Soon-Shiong has acquired the L.A. Times. Glen Taylor, the richest man in Minnesota, runs the Minnesota Star Tribune. This group of newish rich people are likely to play a growing role in owning papers. That may provide some financial help in the bigger cities and towns, but many smaller papers, which serve vast swathes of the country, are unlikely to receive such largesse. Still, those smaller papers gamely battle on, understanding the important role they play in serving their communities.

In the end, newspapers don't just hold people accountable. They also build trust. The corrosion of journalism standards in recent years has, unfortunately, done the opposite, adding to the polarization that challenges moral capitalism and other vital aspects of our culture and society.

As many evaluate the results and reasons of the most recent election, let us hope that news organizations engage in the same self-examination. When Donald Trump surprisingly won in 2016, many national outlets confessed they didn't really know the country beyond the urban landscapes where they lived and reported on news. They promised to shift their approach. That pledge, however, was short-lived, causing a replay of puzzlement when Mr. Trump won again this year. While it's vital for newspapers to play an accountability role with any incoming administration, it's also important that they help us learn more about one another in order to serve its incredibly crucial role as facilitator of important debates and discussions. When more than half the country votes in a manner that puzzles most journalists, it is most certainly a time for reflection and change.

We need the press, in its best form, more than ever. Paraphrasing President Thomas Jefferson, it is elemental to our future and more important than most other things.

*Dave Kansas is Editor-at-Large of Pegasus.*





# CAUX ROUND TABLE FOR MORAL CAPITALISM

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