

The liberal arts are intrinsically related to democratic principles. The roots of liberal arts can be traced back to the great thinkers of ancient times. Aristotle clarifies in *Nicomachean Ethics* that the goal of education is not to teach what virtue is, but to mold students into virtuous individuals. The virtue of the individual is of vast importance in a democratic government because it is “a government of the people, by the people, and for the people”(Lincoln). If the people are virtuous, democratic government thrives and the best interests of the nation are served. If the people are not shaped by virtue, the nation crumbles under the corrupt, self-serving rule.

With this in mind, it is of vast importance that every citizen have critical thinking skills and virtue instilled in them in order to make intelligent and virtuous decisions regarding policy and electing representatives. Democracies grant power to their citizens. However, this power is limited by a citizen's ability to communicate ideas in a public forum. One could have the keys to unlock the mysteries of the universe, but if they are unable to articulate, those ideas lay dormant. If knowledge and virtue cannot be perceived, they cannot influence reality. The liberal arts seek not only to shape the mind and soul, but also to educate the tongue to articulate through rhetoric.

In representative democracies, it is essential that the leaders elected have a liberal arts education. The liberal arts open the door to higher-level thinking and problem solving. This enables a leader to make policy decisions based off of a synthesis of lessons learned from history as well as an understanding of the current problem. Most forms of education encourage students to reach Bloom's Taxonomy's first two levels of thought—knowledge and comprehension. The liberal arts encourage students to enter the realms of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation enabling them to formulate creative solutions to problems.

Representative leaders instilled with the virtue gained through liberal arts can lead with an appreciation of the separation of powers established maintaining a democracy that operates for the benefit of its people and not of its rulers. Rulers without virtue will hunger after power and breach separation of power. When citizens have liberal arts educations, they can hold their representatives

accountable for their actions.

In ancient times, a lot of the motivation for a liberal arts education stemmed from the necessity to defend oneself in a court of law and serve on the jury. Currently, juries reflect the population's perception of justice and decide the fate of individuals. If they do not have the ability to carefully process information and articulate their understanding of the issue, the democratic justice system will fail. The liberal arts not only form better students, but also form better people giving individuals the tools to think critically, live virtuously, and articulate artfully. Without a doubt, the liberal arts are essential to the function of all realms of a democratic system “in order to form a more perfect union” (Preamble).