

Jefferson AND Milton

Integrated Wisdom

Brock Institute for Mega Issues Education



Erie's Think Tank for Community Progress

***Celebrating Five Years of
Educational Programming!***

Charles and Carolyn Brock: From Erie to England to Erie



Reverend Charles Brock, an Erie native, is an Emeritus Fellow, Chaplain, and Director of Ministerial Education, Mansfield College, Oxford, UK, where he taught for 35 years. He currently serves as the Director of the Institute on the American Dream at Penn State Behrend, where he teaches for the politics and religion departments. Rev. Brock is acting minister of The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Girard, PA and he is a Founding Member of the JES. Rev. Brock will serve as the Director of the Brock Institute for Mega Issues Education at the Jefferson Educational Society.

Mrs. Carolyn Brock is a musician, having conducted five choirs in Oxford for 40 years, and was organist of Mansfield College and Wheatley United Reformed Church. Like Charles' mother, she is an Oberlin graduate and also received an M.Mus. from New England Conservatory. She has conducted the Erie Renaissance Singers since 2000.

THE BROCK INSTITUTE FOR MEGA ISSUES EDUCATION AT THE JEFFERSON EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

Dear Friends:

Thomas Jefferson and John Milton each earned their place in history under different circumstances, but ultimately, they are revered as two of history's greatest thinkers. Jefferson and Milton insisted that higher education should be concerned with the **major issues** of the day and be taught in an integrated way. Drawing on the wisdom of these brilliant thinkers, the **Brock Institute for Mega Issues Education** aims to develop methods for universities and think-tanks to encourage students to learn on a broader scale in order to understand and respond to the many issues affecting America and the world today.

The issues confronting the world are neither simple nor one-dimensional. Rather, the issues are **mega**; they are complex, complicated, and involve aspects of politics, economics, history, law, social studies, art, music, education, literature, philosophy, religion, and science—all at once. Addressing these issues is essential to the future of the many global relationships in the world and requires a depth of knowledge, not a specific area of expertise.

Today's higher education system tends to focus on specialized interests and encourage expertise in one area of study instead of many. As such, students know too much about not very much, thus limiting their ability to address problems or issues from a holistic point of view. An integrative approach to learning immerses students in an enriched academic environment that reflects the complexities of the world because it encompasses not one area of study, but many. The Brock Institute will be charged with advancing the growth of holistic, issues-based integrated learning in higher education institutions in Great Britain, Canada and the United States by publishing books, yearly reports, and newsletters discussing the state of integrated education, hosting conferences featuring top thinkers from around the world, and developing lectures, discussion groups and other programs that exhibit the mega issues affecting the world.

It is my hope that the Brock Institute will serve as a catalyst for reconnecting the methods of learning used by Jefferson and Milton with education today to develop a system that will fully encompass the many issues affecting America and the world today. Only through integrative education can we fully understand the issues at hand.

Sincerely,

Charles Brock

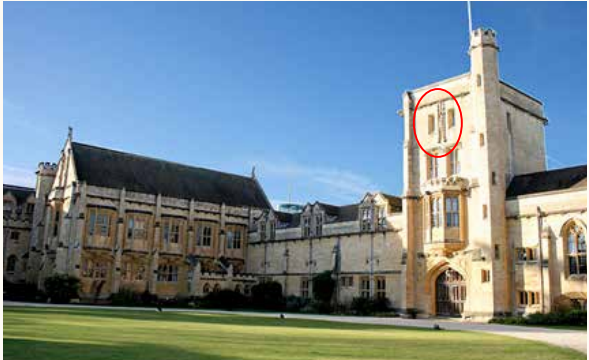
Director, Brock Institute for Mega Issues Education

Personal Reflections of Charles Brock

My wife and I are involved with several projects that are wedded to educational outcomes that are issue-based and integrative. The first major project is at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College and is called the Erie Art Metal Fellowship in Integrative Humanities – a major mouthful describing its intention and the old family firm, where the money originated. My mother, Arloween Zurn Brock Knobloch Todd ,and the Zurn family have had a long and warm connection with Behrend. Teaching there is a great privilege. Here is a view not far from my office:



The next gift was initiated on February 22 at Mansfield College in Oxford, where I taught for 35 years.



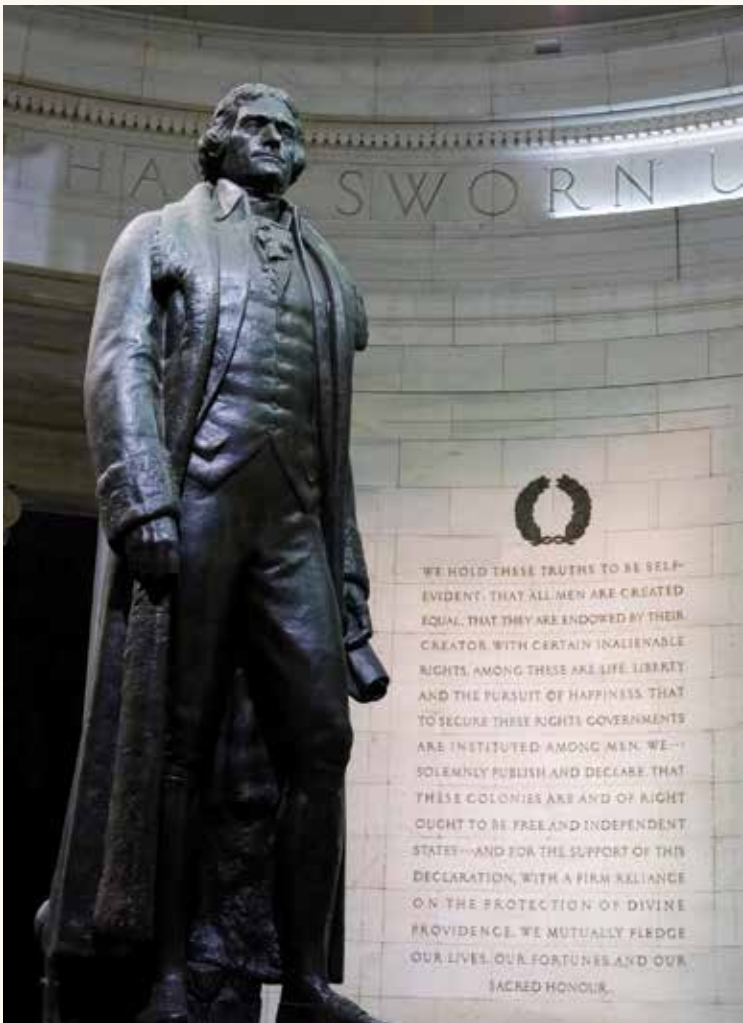
Soaring above Mansfield's quad and my old office, and overlooking the city of dreaming spires and the home of lost causes, is a statue of John Milton, extraordinary poet, inspiring revolutionary, far-reaching social thinker, and subtle theologian. His own work in political theology was seriously radical. He was a spur for the Independent clergy and a scourge for the self-satisfied. Nationalism was part of his being and England was one of the chosen nations: "Why else was this nation chosen before any other, that out of her, as out of Sion, proclaimed and sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of reformation to all Europe?" Reformation was to be both religious and political. Milton was the forerunner of John Locke's major ideas of government in that Parliament, not the monarchy or the Lords, should be the seat of power. Then ideas fostered the beginnings of modern democracy in the West. Locke is the godfather of the American Constitution.

Milton is important for America, where I have been teaching this past 15 years. For example, George Kennan, the author of the communist containment policy that helped keep some of the over-moralistic 'rollback' types from starting World War III, claimed that Milton was his favorite interpreter of Christianity. He also said that Jefferson and Madison learned much political theory from Milton (which often is not stressed enough by American historians), and the lesson was simple: America must be righteous – it needs a providential purpose that is beyond making money, but it must not be self-righteous, thinking it is the only chosen nation. His educational theories were revolutionary too. He wanted university students to know something about the major issues of the day and treat them with integrative tools.¹

The third project is the Brock Institute for Mega Issues Education based at the Jefferson Educational Society in Erie. There is another highly intelligent and crucial figure for education with mainly Welsh, rather than English. When a descendant of the Emerald Isle welcomed forty-nine Nobel Prize winners to the White House in 1962, John Fitzgerald Kennedy said, "I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent and of human knowledge that has ever been gathered together at the White House — with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."

¹ google Milton's *Of Education* – a short introduction to his educational theories

Milton and Jefferson had much in common. They were both political and religious revolutionaries, believed that the people should be sovereign, not the monarch or the Lords, understood Jesus as a religious as well as a political agitator like themselves, and wanted a broad education for all. They could write wonderfully – Milton’s sublime poetry and Jefferson’s powerful prose - and they knew that the power of the pen was mightier than the sword.



As a lawyer, Jefferson wanted legal studies to include awareness of history, biography, math, astronomy, geography, natural philosophy, ethics, religion, anatomy and agriculture, which not only markedly creates a wiser and more interesting person, but also forms better lawyers because they have a wider view of the world. Jefferson said that the study of history in particular would serve as an early instiller of morality and enable students to judge the future.

Both Milton and Jefferson assumed education included training in virtue, which is a “no-go area” in most education today because teachers are unenthusiastic about taking on that responsibility. But can we do valueless teaching? I haven’t seen it yet in my 50 years of instructing. It is important to face ethical issues critically. We can be open vessels. Rather than hiding behind a false “objectivity,” we want people to be engaged with current affairs and willing to say what they believe and why. Naturally they should be open to argument and not be childish defensive.

Jefferson’s stated heroes were Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and John Locke – notably sympathetic to Puritanism and Jefferson’s own radical thoughts on government and religion. He knew one had to relate history, politics, economics, and theology together to get a good revolution and subsequently a good government. His own output was prodigious. He was an architect, a musician, a gardener, a historian, an economist, and was the founder of the University of Virginia at age 77. In his writings he integrated those fields. He wanted a broad education for everybody, though he was not adverse to some specializations.

Most presidents, especially the Founders, Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, and college presidents Woodrow Wilson and Dwight D Eisenhower realized that issue based integrative education was the key to individual success and America rose from an insignificant country to world leader largely through its schools, colleges, and universities. There is always opposition. When Woodrow Wilson wanted to reform and broaden the Princeton curriculum and social life, a foppish student got up and said in disgust: “OMG! Wilson wants to turn us into a damned educational institution.”

There are many others beside Milton and Jefferson and the American presidents who are integrative in their thinking about mega issues, and they cross racial, gender, and national categories. Here a few examples:



Albert Schweitzer



Miguel de Unamuno



Gandhi



Ida Tarbell



Martha Nussbaum



TS Eliot



JP Sartre



Charlie Chaplin



Leo Tolstoy



Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich



Isaiah Berlin



Giambattista Vico

We should follow their examples today because the need for change in education is profound. Universities are producing hordes of people **who know too much about not very much**. Instead we need a back-to-basics approach, similar to those taken by the American Founders. If we expect excellent leadership for the city and country we need people well versed in civics that goes beyond mere political mechanics.

The main point of the BMI is to promote awareness of the big issues and how their constituent parts are related. There will be objections from those who want a rigorously concentrated narrow education, by my response to this would be: How can one be an educated person today without knowing who really runs our countries, why are we at war, awareness of the difference between Keynes and Hayek, why does the UK and USA allow for the huge wealth gaps we have in our societies, why is there a 1 in 5 child poverty rate UK & USA? Scientists need broadening too. As former Mansfield Principal David Marquand says: "Scientists, trained in the exact measurement of quantifiable data and engaged in a search for Truth with a capital 'T' are apt to make heavy weather of the uncertainties and ambiguities of political life." But it is worse if they never face the life and death issues that science causes. Schweitzer, Einstein and Oppenheimer did that, but too much criticism by some who were benefiting in the short term from the cover-ups that are helping to destroy the planet.

Here is a good example of how this works. Remember Ike's warning about the military-industrial complex? It is actually written on his gravestone. Today the issue now is the military-industrial-academic complex, as, for example, about half of Penn State's research money comes from the Defense Department. To look at this issue we must examine history, politics, law, economics, business practices, roles of lobbyists, purposes of universities, government funding for science, and ethics because Eisenhower linked them all together in his thinking, and rightfully so. So this style of thinking does happen at high levels, and we would be in really bad shape without it.

One might wonder what a theologian has to do with all this. The answer is that good theology is integrative and deals with the big issues of the times – or else it is esoteric. My teacher, Paul Tillich, taught modern art, history of psychoanalysis, philosophy, Zen Buddhism, cultural comparisons, and politics. My other Harvard teacher, Reinhold Niebuhr, taught both for the theology and politics faculties. Oxford's

Isaiah Berlin dealt with literature, philosophy, politics, science, and religion.

They were not detail freaks, but taught the big questions. We also should consider Eastern religions not only because they help us understand our main military and industrial competitors, but also because they have much integrative wisdom to impart. They understand the need for personal, social and economic balance far better than we do and they aren't so horribly binary as we are in the West. In the Girard church there is a picture of the Buddha, Confucius, and Lao-tze standing together and smiling at each other. Where can one find the equivalent with Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad?

But it isn't only professors to have for our mentors. We need colleagues from industry, finance, unions, nurses, doctors, carpenters, miners – you name it. When former Congresswoman Kathy Dahlkemper and I taught a mega issues course at Behrend and the Jefferson this past year, the response from the students was tremendous. The administrators were enthusiastic and very supportive. So let's begin again and become part of this educational burst. We need all of you taking part in our schools, colleges, and universities to help set the world alight.



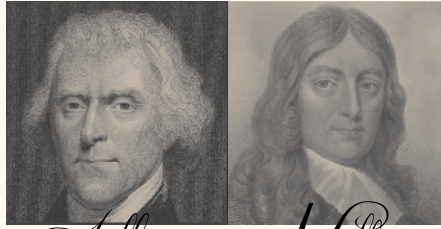
PENNSTATE



Erie The Behrend
College



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Jefferson AND Milton

In summary, Milton and Jefferson pointed the way forward suggesting an educational agenda stressing **freedom, equality before the law, awareness of the greediness of power bases and humans generally, helping the poor, building a broad education, and a reappearance of a radical theology.** Ending his book *“The Experience of Defeat – Milton and Some Contemporaries,”* former Master of Balliol Christopher Hill wrote that in 1644, Milton saw England as a nation of prophets. In the last sentence of his book Hill asks: **“Where are they now?”** Well, let us energetically work for the time when they, the prophets of this time period, will be emerging from colleges in the US, the UK, and across the world, if we reform our basic ideas of education.



Brock Institute for Mega Issues Education



JEFFERSON
EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

Erie's Think Tank for Community Progress

3207 State Street
Erie, Pennsylvania 16508-2821

Thomas Jefferson believed a citizenry that was educated on issues and shared its ideas through public discourse had the power to make a difference in the world.



The Jefferson Educational Society of Erie is a strong proponent of that belief, offering courses, seminars, and lectures that explain the ideas that formed the past, assist in exploring the present, and offer guidance in creating the future of the Erie region.

814-459-8000
www.JESerie.org