

The good society, the "I have a dream" speech rang into our ears, is one that judges people by "the content of their **character**, not by the color of their skin." How does this first new word in Thinksheet 2 relate to the words in Session 1 (morality, ethics, action, reflection, goal, motivation, intentions, vision)? Using at least some of those words, + any others you may choose, write a definition of "character."....Now let's hear one another's definitions, and talk a bit about them....

Since character is essential in the good citizen, the good society encourages the development of character. Education in the 5 Rs--readin', writin', 'rithmetic, righteousness, & religion--being essential to character, the good society will provide all children with opportunities for basic education. Item: Since a noisy classroom denies children the right to learn, a good society has quiet classrooms, & a bad society permits noisy classrooms. Since most inner-city classrooms are noisy, inner cities are bad societies, producing citizens lacking the educational dimension of character--thus, bad citizens. Bad citizens only in the inner cities? No, bad citizens wherever classrooms are unruly, but inner-city classrooms are notoriously unruly. One place to begin to improve the character of the citizenry is to lower the classroom's decibel-level. Do we know how to do that? Of course. How? (1) By using only genius-level teachers, of whom there are almost none. (2) The nonutopian, practical way is by physical persuasion, but here the laws severely restrict, indeed cripple, teachers & principals. Can the laws be changed? Of course. They must be, & will be if our society is not to suffer what I call **creeping a-ism** ("a-" being the Greek alpha privative, negative): a-n-archy (unsubmissiveness to authority), a-nomie (lawlessness), a-c-cidie (care-lessness, don't-give-a-damn indifference), & a-pathy (low affect, inability to feel guilt-shame-empathy-compassion-sorrow-penitence-grief-joy; the psychopath or sociopath). Are such pathetic & terrifying monsters on the increase in today's society, or is it only that the media now do a better job of impressing their presence on us? Both. And white-color whites are among the monsters....Am I blaming the whole mess on the public schools? Of course not. I mention the noisy classroom as only one of many places we may begin to make the necessary changes to switch us from being a bad society to being a good society. But what do you think of beginning by lowering classrooms' decibel-levels?....Or adding the last 2 Rs to public-school education (& if so, how?)?

1 You are an **artist**, a painter of your life. God has given you everything you need for your work, & leaves you to figure out how to proceed. Sometimes you've a goal, an envisioned painting, in mind, & you get yourself organized to achieve it. Sometimes you're just slopping on the paint in the prayerful hope that something will come of it, that some pattern will emerge & will then evolve into a goal. The thing is, you must paint, must keep the action-reflection-action cycle going, or you are a dead painter, dead as a painter. Let's call the cycle the art of living....Using this analogy, how would you speak of our nodal words "character," "vision," etc.?

2 **Cultures** are social pictures (paradigms) of how to paint, how to live (behave, & think about behaving & everything else). The easiest way to describe a culture is in terms of its goal, which is the arrowhead of what it itself thinks it, & life, & the world are all about. The goal's tone is called its spirituality, & the culture's religion is the specific repetitive actions it takes to celebrate, reinforce, render impressive, & tradition (ie, pass on to the next generation) its goal. What then is the culture's morality? It is the nonreligious behavior implicit in, indicated by, & inferred from its religion ("nonreligious" meaning only all behavior other than specifically religious behavior here called "religion")....But isn't it possible for the religion to change & not the morals? Only transitionally, because (as we can see in Paul's letters, & Sextus) the new religion pressures its converts to new behavior in both religious & moral praxis....And isn't it possible for a culture's morals to deteriorate while its religion goes on as before? Sadly so....And isn't it possible for a religion to be largely abandoned but the culture's

morals to continue? Only briefly....And isn't it possible for a culture's political order to survive the disintegration of both its religion & its morality? Yes, but only by tyranny, as in the case of Imperial Rome, whose religious & moral confusion was even worse than America's today. (I.R.'s greatest historian, Tacitus, was ca.10 years old when, ca.AD/CE65, Peter & Paul were executed in Rome. His whole oeuvre aimed to teach how to live under tyranny, & to that end he sought to keep alive the memory of virtuous acts [as models] & vicious acts [as warnings].)....And isn't it possible to separate religion & morals so they can be taught & practiced separately? It's never worked, but the U.S. public schools persist in trying it. Look at it item by item. Take "equality." Wouldn't pushing it produce democracy? No, tyranny (as in the case of the French Revolution). But "equal under God" (the last two Rs, righteousness & religion) is radically different from "equal" (the value & virtue theoretically producible without religion). The radical premise of the former is that we are all inferior, & God wants us to learn to be inferior together, under our common Superior. Obedience to God or to tyrants is the way Wm. Penn put it.

3 Can many cultures survive & thrive--as multiculturalism preaches--within one **civilization**? Only if the civilization (Latin for the culture of "cities") is strong enough to "civilize" the "citizens" of all the included cultures. The old antonymic for the uncivilized, those the civilization has failed to civilize, is "barbarians." When the social force of the barbarians is greater than that of the "citizens" (ie, the civilized), the civilization implodes, collapses from within without any barbarian invasion. (Up to & after, Gibbon historians of Rome have argued which was the greater force in the Empire's death, inner rot or northern invaders. Rodney King's plaintive question, "Can't we get along?" was asked by many thinkers during Rome's decline, & the answer was, "No." The answer in our case will be yes only if we "civilize" our populace into "citizenship." If we fail, we'll choose tyranny over anarchy, a choice only delaying anarchy. Culture historians are, necessarily, a gloomy lot.)

4 **Creeping barbarism** at all levels of opportunity in our country today can be documented by declines in honesty, loyalty, mutuality, magnanimity, & non-chauvinistic patriotism (love of, & care for, one's country). What's one's country? Yes, the geography (so tragically now in dispute in many areas of the former U.S.S.R. & Yugoslavia). But also the nation with its common tradition--Anglo-Saxon, in our case: no other cultural-political tradition is common to us all; & to whatever extent we fail to engender it in all, we fail as a nation--and as a culture, for cultures are embodied in nations--& as a civilization, which can cohere only insofar as the nations within it engender its--their common root...."Can we get along?" in loving & engendering our common Anglo-Saxon ethos of honor, law, & government as embodied in our founding documents? At the moment, there is low-to-no will to teach this in our public schools, whose current emphasis is cultural diversity (multiculturalism), not the unity that can come only by "civilizing" the children....For us Christians, our course's question is, "What morality does the Bible teach?" The root question in our country's moral crisis should be, "What morality should we Americans teach?" And our answer, if our culture-civilization-nation is to survive, must be, "Anglo-Saxon morality (with its biblical, British, Hellenic-Hellenistic, & Enlightenment elements)." Yes, to enrich our developing civilization, we should graft in other elements--Jewish, Amerind, African, Asian. Indeed, the American cultural genius has been the willingness, sometimes even the eagerness, to graft in new elements. Our present cultural crisis is twofold: (1) The fading of belief in the founding root, & (2) The refusal of non-Anglo-Saxon ethnics to accept their graft status, insisting that they are themselves separate plants in the American garden. (Notice my analogical shift from metallurgy ["melting pot"] to horticulture ["grafting"]).....The insidious new fact here is the proud teaching of prejudice against the common root (against WASPM [white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, male]--by stressing how these categories have been bad news, instead of fairly pointing out how they've been both good & bad news). IRONY: This teaching of prejudice goes on while preaching against prejudice! I see no light at the end of this tunnel.