



# A PHILOSOPHICAL MANIFESTO ON HOW TO ESCAPE THE TOTALITARIAN MADNESS

*Posted on September 1, 2021 by Peter Redpath*



On 16 July 2000, in the inaugural issue of Classical Homeschooling magazine, as part of the founding of the Angelicum Academy Homeschool Program, of which I was Founding Chairman of the Board, in response to the 1962 [Port Huron Statement](#) (a manifesto penned by Tom Hayden and presented by the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society]), I wrote two articles.

I did so because I was convinced that the Port Huron Statement was essentially a rationally incoherent first principle and essential cause of the national and global cultural and educational madness that had ensued since that time. To save the West and the world from its disastrous effects, I thought I had to pen a counter manifesto, the content of which is contained in these two presentations. I entitled the first paper, "[A Philosophical Call to Renew American Culture: The Homeschool Renaissance.](#)" I called the second, "The Homeschool Renaissance and The Battle of the Arts."

On 08 April 2008, in Warsaw, Poland, to mark the establishment of the [International Étienne Gilson Society](#)—of which I was co-founder and became president—I wrote a third entitled "[Why Gilson? Why Now?](#)" to move this Philosophical Call to an international level.

I mention these three articles at the start of issuing a 2021 Philosophical Manifesto to establish my credibility to commonsense cultural, political, and educational readers as an authority on commonsense ways to escape from international global madness.

For over thirty years, I have been predicting and describing with accuracy the coming of this madness. In fact, I first predicted it in 1990, shortly after the crumbling of the Berlin Wall (9 November 1989), as concordist euphoria was sweeping Western Europe's New World Order leaders, who were *giddy with Joachitic enthusiasm* over the prospect of finally being able to fulfill Francis Fukuyama's idea of what was supposed to be "the end of history"—worldwide spread of secular liberal democracies, victory of free market capitalism over Communism, the end of human sociocultural evolution, and the generation of the last and perfect human government.

With the dismantling of Soviet Communism toward the tail end of the 20th-century, this was a time celebrated by Western Liberal Elites in which enlightened, secular liberal democracy would finally transcend the transitional period of Communist dictatorship and eradicate from the world the influence of backward religious consciousness.

I made my prediction in a paper I delivered at a prestigious, historic international colloquium in Treviso, Italy, related to the meeting topic, "Transition in Eastern Europe." This was the first international congress of global leaders assembled after the Berlin wall fell. Attendees at this meeting included heads of different European parliaments, university dons, and international corporate leaders, including the president of the Bank of Rome. Security for the meeting was exceptionally tight. It included police carrying machine guns, accompanied by German Shepherd dogs. It was co-sponsored by the most prestigious Catholic philosophical organization in Europe and a highly respected German Foundation.

I was the only American invited to be on the program, representing, as its vice-president, the American Maritain Association. The topic about which I was asked to speak was the future of the West. Being young and naïve, and mistakenly thinking at the time that all the conference organizers would be interested in what I had to say about the matter, in my paper (which I had entitled, "The New World Disorder"), I told them what I thought Jacques Maritain would have told them at the time.

Following Gilson's thinking, which I knew Maritain would have shared, I maintained that, for centuries, a Cartesian conception of human nature had been infecting and weakening Western cultural institutions. I indicated that these institutions had come into existence centuries before Descartes, and had been rooted in an entirely different understanding of human nature and the human person than the one Descartes proposed. I claimed that, by this time in Western history (1990), this weakening of our cultural institutions had become so severe that these misunderstandings were "causing a death rattle within these institutions" that could not be stopped by charms, amulets, contemporary economic theory, or politics of Left or Right. I argued that, instead of being signs of growing world concord, the transitions then occurring in Europe were "readily recognizable as convulsions within the Western conception of man."

Instead of attempting to restore the West through such misguided means as economic theory and politics, I said that only a complete purging of Western cultural institutions of the Cartesian understanding of human nature would be able to restore Western culture to health. If this view of the human self continued to dominate Western culture, I predicted that: (1) the West would "self-destruct in a cultural collapse," and (2) "this collapse will, in all probability, be ushered in by new and more exotic forms of fundamentalist-political perversions of the totalitarian state, attempting to unify human society around monolithic myths of race, mechanistic reason, blind evolution, materialistic progress, and so on."

At this point, the man who headed the German colloquium organization could restrain himself no

longer. He set upon me like a wild beast, as if to tear me to bits, immediately standing up, screaming at me several times to “shut up,” and cutting off my speaking time. Not until after the conference was coming to an end and I had started to mingle with audience members did I realize why he had behaved so despotically, and confirmed to many members of the audience the truth of what I was saying. To my pleasant surprise, they surrounded me and congratulated me on my presentation, even though I had [totally ruined](#) the first supposedly post-Communist international colloquium co-sponsored by New World Order elites!

Realizing this fact, I decided I had better continue. Hence,

- my co-founding the International Étienne Gilson Society, in Warsaw, in 2008;
- my retirement in 2010 from a full-professor faculty position at St. John's University, in New York;
- the establishing of the [Aquinas School of Leadership](#) (ASL);
- between 2014 and 2018, co-sponsoring through the ASL, 5 [international world congresses](#) on Renewing the West by Renewing Common Sense
- authoring and co-authoring 6 books related to these topics;
- and, in 2021, establishing a Commonsense Wisdom Liberal Arts Academy (CWLAA) and Commonsense Wisdom Executive Coaching Academy (CWECA) to replace the failing secular and religious, Enlightenment colleges and universities that are [presently collapsing all around us](#).

In regards to this latest venture, the concept for these academies came to me most precisely recently, as I was doing research to prepare to deliver the 2021 [Jacek Woroniecki Memorial Lectures](#) for students at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, in Lublin Poland. These lectures, which were subsequently published under the title, [How to Listen and How to Speak: Standing on the Shoulders of Giants to Renew Commonsense and Uncommonsense Wisdom in the Contemporary World](#), grew out of an idea related to the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, which he inherited from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle—that the intellectual virtue of *docilitas* (docility/teachability) is a necessary condition for being educated. St. Thomas maintained that the moral virtue of prudence—which, he held, is a species of common sense—causes *docilitas*.

Before being taught outside the home, children generally learn some docility from parents and from their individual conscience, which, according to Aquinas, is the habit of prudence acting as judge, jury, witness, and prosecution of personal choices. In learning docility, we all acquire some common sense.

Common sense is simply some understanding of first principles that are causing some organizational whole to have the unity it has that causes it to tend to behave the way it does. It is an understanding common to anyone who intellectually grasps the nature of something, the way the parts (causal principles) of a whole incline to organize, to generate organizational existence and action. Strictly speaking, common sense is the habit of rightly applying first principles of understanding as measures of truth in immediate and mediated judgment, choice, and reasoning. Considered as such, it is the first measure of right reasoning.

Contemporary Enlightenment colleges and universities are essentially designed to drive out common sense from the psyche of students, and convince them that the only species of understanding (common sense) is mathematical physics. In doing this, it causes students to become anarchists, unteachable, people, out of touch with reality, who cannot tolerate to listen or speak to or with anyone who disagrees with them; and they become people who cannot lead any healthy organization in any healthy way.

Presently, increasing numbers of people who have never researched the nature of common sense, including politicians, are, all of a sudden, starting to realize the crucial import of this notion, for cultural, national and international, peace and sanity. And they are asking for money from others to help them. I have a better idea. They should start to listen to and read the decades of work colleagues of mine and I have spoken and written about related to this subject. It is time for them to donate money to us!

The only method that can possibly work to correct this problem is the one these academies essentially use. This is not because these academies are proposing them, but because they are evidently true to anyone with common sense about human education – such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas.

For those seriously interested in saving the West and the world from contemporary madness, this Manifesto welcomes you to join us at the educational academies most capable of generating tomorrow's world-class colleges and universities:

Please [spread the word](#) to others.

---

*Peter Redpath was Professor of Philosophy at St. John's University. He is the author/editor of 17 philosophical books and dozens of articles and book reviews. He has given over 200 invited guest lectures nationally and internationally, and headed many prestigious organizations. He is the only non-Polish scholar to hold the Laudatio Achievement Award for attainment of intellectual and organizational wisdom, from the Department of Philosophy, Culture, and Art at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, in Poland. More information is found [at his website](#).*

---

*The [featured image](#) shows, "By Candlelight," by Konrad Krzyżanowski; painted in 1914.*

