

Stephen Balch: It's very hard to say what to do now because many of the problems that we have are very entrenched. One thing that we should do, I believe, is re-examine the way in which our educational system operates. I think we have to look again at the degree of insulation that so many of our educational institutions and the people who have run them have achieved. It's not so much financial insulation—they can feel the brunt of diminished supply of, say, state revenue and things like that—as much as intellectual insulation. Having become, kind of, ideological monopolies wedded to certain points of view. The best way of dealing with that is through more competition. Different kinds of institutions differently placed, more sensitivity to market demand. And by market demand I don't really mean market demand for a less costly, more efficient delivery system, but market demand for a broadening of the perspectives represented in education. An education that was more in the marketplace than it currently is in the sense that other types of institutions are in the marketplace, I think would be a healthier education. There is also the question of transcendence. Through most of Western history, and this is true for other cultures too, but through most of Western history, people believed that there was something greater than themselves. They had religious convictions that allowed them to think outside their own immediate needs and think of themselves as people who had some kind of debt to pay; maybe to their creator, maybe to history, maybe to the republic in which they live: the ancient Roman sort of stoic philosophy. But they felt that their life had to be charted by a course that was more than the sum total of all their private desires. I think, to a large and alarming extent, we have lost that sense of a larger purpose, a purpose beyond ourselves. Too much of life has come down to day-to-day enjoyment. And I think that's deadly for citizenship. It's deadly for the sense of stewardship that ordinary people should have. The ideologues and the Utopians who retain this sense of larger purpose, but in a perverse way, shouldn't be allowed to monopolize discourse. They should have, as part of the great colloquy of the republic, *interlocuteurs* who are part of ordinary life, who represent the day-to-day task of getting things done, but who can see beyond those tasks. Who have a sense of themselves being involved in something more important. And I think the things they'll tend to see themselves involved in that are more important will often be more sensible than the ones that the intellectuals see themselves involved. So, that would create a kind of balance. When America was much more churched than it is nowadays, I think ordinary folks would have looked more skeptically at some of the nostrums that they are presently offered, would have had some sense of grounding, that they don't have anymore, when these various pitchmen come up to give their spiels. So, that might be something else. I'm not quite sure how we might recover that. You know, religion provides that; other things can provide that. I think we've lost that, and I think that's a problem as well.

Stephen Balch: The thing individuals can do is to be involved in their little platoons as Burke told us, those little societies in which they have much more influence than they're likely to have over a big society and try to get things right there. Their family, their social networks, their churches and neighborhoods, their local communities—things like that. It's hard to expect people to devote big parts of their lives to those things, but developing an attachment to them being more mindful of what's going on, being more active within them and reflecting, not stopping education after you get out of high school or college, but continuing to read; continuing to read not only about world affairs, but about history; to continue some contact with good literature because, I think, that gets you a certain lively sense of what some of the fundamental issues are in any society and in your society..