

many questions. Galileo was persecuted by the church because of his invention of the telescope and subsequent discovery that the earth rotated around the sun.

The Dark Ages (a period from the fall of the Roman Empire to the early 1500s) was a time when ancient scrolls were burned and learning was actively discouraged. The Renaissance ushered in an era that welcomed open inquiry. The Royal Society of London, one of the early societies devoted to the cultivation of scientific knowledge, adopted as its motto “in the words of no one else.” This motto meant that science would be based on experiment, rather than the citation of authority. The commitment to scientific progress has made possible dramatic improvements in human life expectancy, freedom to travel, ability to communicate, and general quality of life.

Academic freedom is important in nonscientific areas as well. In his 1859 work *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill describes the importance of a “free marketplace of ideas.” Mill argues that the best way to discover truth is to allow all ideas to be entered into the public forum. Any effort to shield some cherished ideas from criticism would be counterproductive, producing only “dead dogmas.” By allowing all ideas to be placed into competition, truth would best be appreciated.

Most American colleges and universities have pledged a commitment to free inquiry and academic freedom. They do this out of a commitment to the advancement of knowledge. In practice, this means that professors who have met certain threshold requirements for the quality of their scholarship should not be fired based on the unpopularity of their viewpoints.

*Beauty*: Poet John Keats’s poem “Ode on a Grecian Urn” contains the following famous line: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” The importance of the arts has been recognized as an important societal value since at least the time of the ancient Greeks. The arts inspire creativity and provide an important source of pride and unity for any community. In his speech at Amherst College on October 26, 1963, President John F. Kennedy said the following: “I see little of more importance to the future of our country and of civilization than full recognition of the place of the artist. If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his/ her vision wherever it takes him/her.”

A community loses a great deal when it fails to see the value of music education, art education, or support of theater arts. Each of these types of education can (and has) been defended on the pragmatic grounds that it results in improvements in academic achievement as measured by standardized tests. Yet many educators argue that any effort to justify the arts by pointing to their practical value is misguided. The arts are worthy in and of themselves in the way they elevate the human spirit.

*Democracy*: The word *democracy* comes from the Greek *demos* meaning “people” and *cratos* meaning “government.” Literally, therefore, it means government by the people.