

The unexamined life is not worth living; which is why we need to be vulnerable, honest, and omniscient as we take intense moral inventories of ourselves. Nietzsche, recorded over a century ago, a dramatic proposition which remains relevant in the present-day: “It requires, to be sure, a more penetrating eye, a more favorable inclination to advance what is imperfect and evolving than to see through it in its imperfection and deny it.” The quote affirms the importance for oneself to examine their life, and with a critical eye. An eye that looks beyond superficiality and disregards hubris. According to Nietzsche, when we willingly scrutinize our lives in pieces, particularly our flaws, we will be less likely to suffer the consequences that come from looking past them.

Nietzsche’s proposition applies to almost, if not all, social conflicts. Social conflicts are majorly superficial because humans are humans. We are unsurprisingly far more similar than we are different. The good thing is that we can alleviate the fire and fury by understanding the insignificance in our differences, and expanding on our similarities with one another. The differences lie in the realm of superficiality such as cuisine, tradition, clothing, dances, art, and religion. But regardless of the shape, size, type, or form, the idea of all previously stated “differences” are universal in its purpose. An eastern couple may sing and dance differently than a western couple, but I doubt their reason to perform the activity changes with the geographical location. Traditions may be different from place to place, but the idea of having a tradition is universal: to create social cohesion. We may believe and worship differently from religion to religion, but the purpose of religion and religious activities are universal as well: social cohesion, communication with the gods, be a good person, and the like. The similarities are the metaphysical things that matter to all people, such as respect, reliability/ trust, compassion, companionship, safety, sense of belonging. Finding commonalities may seem like a difficult task, but in

reality, it is not. All you have to do is examine yourself, take moral inventories with a critical eye, and give yourself a reason to understand others.

So, If we wish to one day live in an era of world peace and universal social cohesion, it starts with mending the disunities that hinder universal cohesion starting from the origin: each individual. Once we take the time and willpower to understand ourselves, we can go on to understanding one another. Perfection is the acknowledgment of what an individual does not know, which is undoubtedly difficult for the eye of the beholder to do. But it is a must because the epidemiological effects of hubris, and inability to self-reflect can cause the mind to play host to a sickening pathogen that seeks to replicate itself.

Dr. Glaude talked about how independent schools have diversified “for the sake of diversity”. This fact manifests itself in the Taft Community, and it undoubtedly affects students of color and other traditionally marginalized groups. But the less apparent reality is that those who are comfortable where they stand at the moment, and choose to remain ignorant to other heritages/cultures will not succeed in today’s new normal. Diversity is no longer a faddish concern for managers and institutions; borders are imaginary lines that separate geographic territories, not moats; the fine line between minority and majority is rapidly diminishing; the curtains which conceal the tyrannies of merit are wide open in light of the pandemic; the tectonic plates of international relationships are shifting; the Vegas rule is no longer applicable; foreign markets must be understood to remain competitive; and inequality is still the root of most affairs -- there is a glimpse as to why you must understand the world in order to succeed in it.

Taft should be largely responsible for a large portion of each student's attainment of this 'understanding'. Clubs and arrangements such as affinity clubs are hollow and surface-level which benefit/ contribute, zero, to affiliated/ non-affiliated students alike.

Yes, each individual naturally finds comfort and respite where they can speak the same language, share similar ideas/ passions, and the like. So to break this comfort is difficult, who wants to leave the state of comfort? But the truth is, the process to becoming successful is not comfortable, and those unwilling to take on this "daunting" task have no alternative to reside in the realm of ignorance. Moreover, when an individual stays with their kind, they remain ignorant to the heritages outside of their understanding. At Taft, you have to really make an effort to meet, and understand, different ideas and opinions; but because it's so difficult, it doesn't happen. Yet, with policy and administration, it is very possible.

A few examples of Reflecting (Taft Student Perspective):

Firstly, everything is connected, everything is deterministic. Students at Taft have not done much to deserve what we all have at this moment; not many individuals realize this. This is also the reason why we must give back to those who are not as fortunate as us. The truth is, many of us were utterly dealt a privileged, and advantageous hand, which includes the opportunity to be here at Taft, play sports, feel safe, access to clean/hot water, and everything else -- again, none of which we deserved to have or earn. In effect, we should appreciate and treasure our blessing to a greater extent; at times, this obligated gratitude can be forgotten in the midst of other activities we have going on.

Secondly, Micheal Sandel says that the Tyranny of merit, is when meritocracy instigates negative social cohesion by widening the gap between winners and losers. In other words, the winners inhale too deeply in their success, forgetting about their advantage in the first place, which lowers the esteem of the less fortunate, creating a wider inequality gap.