

**The Right Questions. Hard Facts. Tough Choices.  
Public Policy, Social Science, and Political Judgment**  
*Richard L. Gelwick Lecture Series*  
*In Ethics and Public Policy*

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University of Houston  
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**I'd like to begin by thanking the Gelwick family for bringing this lecture series in honor of Reverend Gelwick to the Hobby School of Public Affairs.**

*And I'd also like to thank Jim Granato, my friend and Director of the Hobby Center, as well as Renee Cross, the Associate Director of the Center, and the staff of the Center, for arranging all of the events connected with the talk.*

I had an opportunity to speak with the Gelwick family—Barbara, Allen, and Jennifer—over the phone recently, and it was from that stimulating conversation that I drew the first part of my title, “The Right Questions.”

Allen told me that his father had always insisted on the importance of “asking the right questions.” And I would say, after many years of teaching, *knowing what the questions are* simply is about 80% of a good education.

And what struck me in reading some of Rev. Gelwick's work—particularly his studies of the man of whose thought he was a leading exponent, Michael Polanyi—was that *Rev. Gelwick was always willing to ask questions*: hard questions and yet humane questions, about our purpose as human beings and about the nature or character of our situation; questions about how we can live well; and, even more remarkably, questions about the relation between faith and knowledge in human affairs.

It takes both courage and humility to ask the kinds of questions Rev. Gelwick asked.

In one sense, those questions will seem far from what I am speaking of today. Perhaps I do not have Rev. Gelwick's courage! But more to the point, the questions important to Rev. Gelwick may seem far from what I am speaking of because I will be speaking about public policy and therefore about political life.

And at first blush, it may seem that the kinds of choices that confront us in political life require that we put to the side questions of ethics, at least sometimes, and certainly that we put to the side questions of faith.

Such a view is in no little tension with Rev. Gelwick's understanding of human life and especially of certain Christian principles that so much informed his thought.

Nevertheless, by the end of my talk this evening, I hope to have shown *why* the kinds of questions that Reverend Gelwick asked *cannot* be put to the side—even in the hard knock world of politics and especially when we think about public policy.

So I am hoping—even praying—that Reverend Gelwick’s spirit is somewhere close by and that while he might disagree with some of what I say, he will not be disappointed by the questions I ask.

*I should add that my talk is not going to be very “academic”—much to the relief, I’m sure, of many in the audience.* But the talk is based on many years of work and thought in the Academy.

This work and thought have been possible only because of the existence of the Academy and of the extraordinary institutions of higher education at which I’ve been fortunate to find employment, first Houston and now Notre Dame.

Especially given the number of politicians and taxpaying citizens in the audience, I want to emphasize how much I consider it a privilege to belong to the Academy, even on my worst days, when students in my classes stare at me uncomprehendingly—to use an expression I once read, with the “ophthalmic equivalent of gone fishing signs”—or when I receive a nasty review, or when a colleague proves yet again what an undergraduate teacher of mine once told me: “Never trust an intellectual” To which I replied, “Aren’t you an intellectual?” Which he was, but he’d been saved by the fact that he’d been in the U.S. Navy and done his stint in Vietnam.

Still, my talk isn’t academic, particularly in the following sense: it makes a great deal of use of stories or anecdotes, and its main argument crosses disciplinary boundaries in contending that the best thing the Academy can do if it is to inform public policy is to bring together the best of the social sciences with the best of the humanities—whereas for all their talk of interdisciplinarity, the universities are still mostly a series of siloes or foxholes.

In this regard, too, my talk is going to be somewhat different from what even my pal Jim here expects: Jim expects that I will speak about the importance of “value judgments” in public policy and in public policy research.

There *is* a very deep sense in which I will speak to this question, but even Jim, who’s seen and heard almost everything, may end up being surprised about the manner in which I approach it.

*To put flesh on these bones, let me begin with an historical anecdote—a story—and since my area of expertise is Classical political philosophy, it seems best to me to lead with my strongest suit: a story of an extraordinary Athenian military and political leader, named **Themistocles**.*

This story about Themistocles comes from the works of two Greek thinkers of the Classical period (the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE):

First, the work of Herodotus, sometimes called the “father of history,” but also, since historians are known to embellish the truth, the “father of lies”; and second, the work of Thucydides, who is considered the first scientific historian—that is, the one who gives us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

This story about Themistocles occurs in the year 480, when the Greeks are facing conquest and even annihilation by the Persian Empire. The Greeks have had a ten year respite from the first Persian attempt at conquest by the Great King Darius in 490. That was the year when the Athenians had stood firm in the defense of Greek freedom against the Persians at the battle of Marathon.

**But now 10 years later, the Persians are back *in even greater numbers*, under Darius's son Xerxes.**

At the point of time at which we pick up the story, the Spartans have just been defeated at Thermopylae in Northern Greece, despite a noble three day stand by “the 300”—yes the 300 of movie fame—along with several thousand other Greeks. According to Herodotus, the Spartans faced down over 2 million Persians invaders. Modern estimates put the number closer to 200-250,000—not quite 2 million but still no small force, particularly if you are counting your own numbers in the hundreds or low thousands.

At this point too, the Athenian navy, which had been battling the Persian navy also in the north—around a place called Artemisium—has retreated, by order of the Athenian commander, Themistocles. The Greek navy had fought several sea battles against the Persian navy, some even successful. But in Themistocles' judgment, discretion was now the better part of valor if the Athenians were going to live to fight another day.

*Needless to say, the situation did not look good.* In fact, things were so desperate that in the south, the Athenians chose to abandon entirely their own city of Athens and take refuge on their ships and on a nearby island called Salamis, as the Persians continued their invasion from the north and burned every city in their path.

The Greek cause looked truly lost. Even the courageous Spartans of movie fame, concerned that their own home on the Peloponnese was in jeopardy, wanted to retreat behind a great wall on the Isthmus between Attica and the Peloponnese to stand against the Persians: a strategy that was doomed to failure given the differential between the Greeks and Persians in infantry numbers alone, and more importantly given the existence of the Persian navy, which had the advantage of being able to attack Greece from several different points along the sea.

When the Greeks *then* heard that Athens too had been burned, they were ready to cut and run, but in doing so, they would spell their absolute ruin.

**And the Greek cause likely would have been lost had it not been for the wily and daring leadership of this one man, *Themistocles*.**

For it is Themistocles who sees that victory will depend first and foremost on defeating the Persian navy and, further, that the only chance for the Greek navy is to fight the Persian navy in the narrow straits of Salamis, off the coast of the Isthmus, where the smaller and lighter Greek ships will have the advantage against the bigger and heavier Persian ships. It is also Themistocles who comes up with the plan by which he not only tricks the Persians into fighting on his terms but also tricks *his own Greeks*, who are desperate to run away, into remaining at Salamis to confront the Persians in the straits.

And the Greeks *do* fight the Persians in the straits of Salamis, and they *do* win an extraordinary victory—a victory that some historians argue was pivotal in determining the future of what we have come to call “the West” and the rise of a distinctively Western view of democracy and democratic freedom.

Now, the story is even more complicated than I have said, but it remains the case that had it not been for the *intelligence and daring* of Themistocles—and for what I will call his impressive *political judgment*—the cause of Greek freedom likely would have been lost.

And, if I were to continue the story or history, Themistocles’ political judgment proves to set in motion the rise of Athens as the great power in the post-Persian war period: The Athens that is seen today as the birthplace of democracy and of democratic freedom, not to mention, of Western literature, art, and philosophy.

***But let me stop here and ask a question that gets to the central theme of my talk today:*** What gives Themistocles the capacity to see—to judge—precisely what is to be done in the midst of the confusion and fear that reigned among the Greeks—in the great fog of war?

To be sure, he is pretty clear on the facts (and he has several spies who help to extend his vision, so to speak). As a result, for example, he know the following things:

1. The numbers on the field—army and navy—and their movements.
2. The size of ships and Persian and Greek naval tactics.
3. All the arguments in favor and against various strategies.

***But here’s the rub: so do the other Greek commanders.***

So let me offer the following précis of the gifts that distinguish him: What makes Themistocles so unique and so much needed at this point is that in addition to knowing the facts,

1. He is very smart—he is a quick study, we would say—especially in grasping precisely what is at stake at this particular moment of the war in either staying put or cutting and running (and, as we have seen, he is not in principle against retreat—“running away”—if the circumstances call for it).
2. He keeps his head in the midst of the panic.

*And I would three more gifts to the list.*

1. He understands with his mind and his heart that there are risks and what the risks are.
2. He is willing to take those risks—that is, he has the daring to do so.
3. He understands both *that* and *why* it is worth taking these risks in this particular circumstance.

This is no small feat, and brought together, these qualities make possible Themistocles’ unique political judgment. In forming his judgment, moreover, these gifts or abilities are more than the sum of their parts. They come together in such a way that, even in the fog of war and the threat of imperial conquest, Themistocles is able to see exactly what is the right thing to do in the circumstances: what decisions and actions must be taken in order to preserve Greek freedom.

**Now, you might say that in looking to Themistocles, a 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian general, we are a far cry from our own time and, it would seem, from questions of *public policy*, which mostly have to do with the thankfully more mundane matters of peacetime.**

*But I beg to differ and as evidence, I am going to use a couple of anecdotes from the career of a certain longstanding Lieutenant-Governor of Texas who happens to be in our audience today—*

A man whose friend Saralee Tiede likened to his own hero, General Sam Houston, in writing that Bill Hobby approached politics in the manner of Sam Houston, about whom Hobby himself wrote: “Houston was a frontier fighter. He was not one for the romantic, futile, and fatal gesture. Houston was not one to die for a cause. He was one to get the other fellow to die for his cause.”

Indeed, so it was *also* for *Themistocles*, who had ordered the retreat from Artemisium even as the Spartans were dying nobly in the battle of Thermopylae and who, even in taking the risks he did at Salamis, made sure that he secured his own future, along with that of the Greeks of course, when he tricked the Persians and Greeks into his plan.

And with all its conflicts and turns of fortune, good and bad, political life IS a great deal like war:

The German military strategist Clausewitz famously said that “War is the continuation of Policy by other means.” But it is also true, if unfortunate, that, in many respects, politics itself is “the continuation of war by other means.” Hence, we can see, why *Machiavelli* is a perennial favorite among politicians and, I’m afraid to say, my politically ambitious students.

***Now, if any political leader in Texas history understands public policy and has been successful in promoting good policy, I think it’s fair to say that Governor Hobby ranks up there with the best—even his enemies, of whom he has very few of course, grudgingly admit that.***

And even something as “mundane” one might say as *school finance* proves to be a matter, which if it is not an actual blood sport, has moments of high drama and even of life and death. In his book, *How Things Really Work: Lessons from a Life in Politics*, Gov. Hobby writes:

School finance reform in Texas is like a Russian novel. The story line runs across generations, the plot is complex, the prose is tedious, and everybody dies in the end.

And regarding the state’s efforts in the early 1980s to reform education, Gov. Hobby recounts his confrontation with the leaders of certain teachers’ unions in his office.

At a certain point in the conversation with these leaders, he tells us, he lost his temper—well, “exploded,” is his own word—and threw the leaders out of his office. He quotes one of the witnesses, Sen. John Montford, describe the meeting as “*like the Alamo, but without the blood.*”

Now, it is *also* true, as Ms. Tiede points out in her Introduction, Gov. Hobby is a *well-known lover . . . of Statistics*, I hasten to add:

He once gave out T-shirts with the saying of George Bernard Shaw, “The mark of a truly educated man is to be moved deeply by statistics.”

Of course, on the other side of the shirt, if he’d had room, he might have added Mark Twain’s famous passage in his autobiography:

Figures often beguile me, particularly when I have the arranging of them myself; in which case the remark attributed to Disraeli would often apply with justice and force: “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics.”

In fact, when we speak about “the hard facts,” we are referring most of the time not to facts but to “*data*.”

In the social sciences, this means data that we’ve collected and statistically analyzed. In the best case, it is true, we try to come as close to the facts as possible, and we use statistical analysis to draw out trends and relationships that are relevant.

And we do want to find data that is relevant, which is not always so easy:

A famous example in social science is the strong correlation between murder rates and ice cream sales in large American cities. There is, in fact, a very strong correlation between these two things, but simple common sense would tell us that perhaps we ought to look elsewhere to explain the seasonal rise and fall of murder rates, not to mention ice cream sales.

In other words, in collecting data and combing through it, already one has to “*think*.” For many years, at the University of Michigan’s Political Science department—for a time, the mothership of empirical political science—there was a Political Theorist there, I am told, who liked to walk around the department with a button pinned to his shirt that said: “*Data, Data, everywhere and never a thought to think*.”

But combing through the data—*figuring out what’s relevant and what’s not; what’s missing; what’s odd*—already takes thinking.

If there are really 2 million Persians on the way, and you have a force of, say, 300, that’s good to know. If there are 200,000 Persians on the way, and you have a force of 7000, the odds are better—not greatly so, but perhaps significantly so, depending on how well-trained one side is as compared to the other.

We also have to ask what the data is telling us and not telling us:

Lately, for example, the well-known Harvard psychologist and linguist Steven Pinker has been arguing that there has been a significant decline of violence in the modern world—part of his case for the superiority of the modern world—and he has some impressive data to support his claim, including casualty rates in battle.

But much depends on what the data *is* reflecting and what not. A colleague of mine at Notre Dame, Nisha Fazal, points out, for example, that Pinker’s definition of a battle casualty includes only battlefield *deaths* and not battlefield *injuries*.

As she points out, battlefield medicine is now infinitely superior than it has ever been. And what this means is that many more soldiers today are surviving injuries that would have killed them in the past—even, that is, traumatic ones. This is a data point that also has real importance for things such as the public perception of war as well as public financing of the VA.

**And I should add, we haven’t yet even discussed the difficulty in social scientific research of identifying “causes,” which we most dearly want to know but which are very hard to pinpoint.**

Think of the vexed public discussions of the causes of crime, the causes of poverty, the causes of political corruption, the causes of war and civil conflict.

The great difficulty is that in promoting one view of the problem over another—and so one policy over another—many times, perhaps most times, we are led by our fears and hopes, and by our prejudices, when we should be led not only by our careful ferreting out of the relevant facts or data *but also by our thought and by certain principles*: principles that attend to the question of what is best for the common good.

But *neither* of these facets of decision-making is easy:

Our hopes and fears obscure the facts—or worse, we massage the data, to make it say what these hopes and fears counsel. And our thinking and principles become somewhat confused or shaky in the heat of political battle: *we become more like Falstaff and less like Hal*.

**But if we are at all people of character, shouldn’t we ask hard questions of ourselves?:**

1. What are the “facts”—what are we conveniently leaving out or “massaging?”
2. What are our principles, and what should they be?
3. And how far are we willing to bend, as we might have to do, in order to achieve a real public good?

As any politician who has been in the fray will tell you, the first casualty of political life is frequently the truth, and *even Christ* tells his apostles, after all, “*Be ye as wise as serpents.*”

Yet all the more reason, I would say (and although I really shouldn’t speak for Christ, I think he too might tell us) that we should know where we stand—what the truth is, and what lines we are willing to cross and not willing to cross to achieve our end.

As Christ says next in the Gospel of Matthew—“*and be ye also as pure as doves*”: *pure*—the word in Greek means “incorruptible”

To illustrate my meaning, I turn back to story-telling, with two stories from our own revolutionary war. For the first, I will read a passage from Benson Bobrick's *Angel in the Whirlwind: The Triumph of the American Revolution*.

The time is near the end of the war and Bobrick is commenting on the American dependence on and indebtedness to the French. He writes:

Congress had instructed its plenipotentiaries in Paris to insist on the recognition of American independence but otherwise to follow the direction of the French. In fact, the last paragraph of the instructions had actually been dictated by the French ambassador to the United States: "You are to make the most candid and confidential communications, upon all subjects to the ministers of our generous ally the king of France; to undertake nothing in the negotiations for peace or truce, without their knowledge and concurrence; and ultimately to govern yourselves by their advice and opinion.

Bobrick continues:

So indebted did Congress feel to France that it momentarily subordinated American national interest to French foreign policy. That policy, of course, was not only to thwart Great Britain, France's archenemy, but (with Spain, her chief ally) to keep the new United States from emerging as a great power. This was to be done by maintaining British power to the north and Spanish power to the south and west.

And then Bobrick concludes by wryly observing:

Wisely, the American plenipotentiaries, John Jay, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin, *disregarded* their instructions.

Just a few pages later, Bobrick beautifully captures *the compelling force of George Washington's character* in quelling the potential revolt at Newburgh by his own soldiers against the new Republic, as a result of their just anger at the fact they had not been paid for months.

After a speech in which Washington appealed to their duty and to their honor, he concluded with a single powerful gesture:

As he fumbled for his reading glasses to read a letter to them—Washington moved these hard-bitten soldiers to tears by apologizing for the delay and remarking quietly, "*I have already grown gray in the service of my country. I am now going blind.*"

As much as he felt the penury and pain of the men himself, Washington was not willing to usurp that liberty for which they and their dead comrades had so dearly paid in the revolution. And he was perhaps the one man to whom they would listen at the moment.

Thomas Jefferson wrote:

The moderation and virtue of a single character probably prevented this Revolution from being closed, as most others have been, by subversion of that liberty it was intended to establish.



***What, then, can we say that political judgment consists in?***

*First*, I would say that political judgment is “*unromantic*” in the sense that Gov. Hobby used to describe Sam Houston.

For it involves a certain kind of realism, which is not misled by hopes about the better angels of our nature or by the hopeful thought that the very justice of our cause will ensure its success. A person who possesses this kind of clarity sees the “facts” for what they are, and is also able, in the face of great pressures otherwise, in war or in peace-time, to make the hard choices.

But such a person always walks a fine line, which brings me to a *second* dimension of political judgment.

For this person strives to remain committed to a core set of principles, on the basis of which he or she makes the hard choice but also the just choice. Such a person does not allow his or her judgment to succumb to cynicism or mere Machiavellianism, but has the *character* to stand by principles. Or, and this is in some ways harder, to understand why, *in certain very exceptional circumstances*, deviation from those principles may be necessary.

***These considerations then lead me to what might seem a strange and difficult question:***

How do these dimensions of political judgment hold together—how do they cohere: *On the one hand*, that is, the realism, bordering on a kind of Machiavellianism, and, *on the other hand*, a character committed to principles, which may bend but not generally break?

*In answer*, I will say something even stranger, but, something I think, that is true and certainly true to the letter and the spirit of Reverend Gelwick’s work:

Such a human being—who works for the public good, placing all his or her capacities at the service of public policy and who holds together dimensions of political judgment that may sometimes strain against one another—acts out of *love*.

*Now, Reverend Gelwick himself emphasizes the importance of Christian Love in particular, and how our love for our fellow human beings must guide us.*

But I offer an understanding of his suggestion that is not so informed by faith. I am neither as courageous, nor, apparently, as Christian, as Rev. Gelwick. (But of course, he’s a Methodist and I’m a Catholic, which apparently makes him a better *Christian* than I am.)

***The more I thought about Reverend Gelwick’s suggestion, the more I came to understand it in a broad sense—indeed, in three different but related senses:***

*First*, as we all know, politicians, and I say this with all due respect to the politicians in the room, love to be loved. Sometimes, this longing to be loved can lead in very bad directions, which I don’t need to detail. But in the best case, a politician seeks to be the kind of leader who is truly worthy of being loved.

*Second*, those who assiduously serve in public office, or even who spend their intellectual life in the study of public affairs, tend to have a very deep love of their fellow human beings—first and foremost their fellow citizens.

*Third*, I recur to the Classical thinker who would be rightly be called the founder of political philosophy, Plato, who suggests that at bottom, *we are moved by a fundamental love of—a longing for—what is Good: a love that strives, when it is properly ordered, for virtue and for wisdom.*

**But if those who work for the public good are motivated in this way, *how* is it that they form the kind of political judgment that is so needed?**

***Let me turn to this question by way of a conclusion.***

First this kind of judgment requires a particular “education,” the kind of education that leaders from Themistocles to Gov. Hobby have in common.

For someone who is as wise as a serpent has been schooled in the school of hard knocks and possesses a certain kind of toughness, especially in defeat. This is the kind of person who has experienced failure, learned from it, and carried on.

On this score, I would add, I am worried about our young people—whom we too much protect from such an experience.

In addition, such political judgment requires also what I will call a “Classical Education,” something (I would dare to say) that Gov. Hobby and Themistocles also share.

When Gov. Hobby went to Rice University as an undergraduate, he had intended to major in math. But as with so many math majors, he ended up in history. This was most fortunate, in my opinion.

And at St Albans, where he went for his earlier education, he was deeply affected by a teacher and mentor: A man named John Davis, whose areas of expertise were American history, European history, and sacred studies. Hence, it did not surprise me that in his book, for example, Gov. Hobby goes back to Plato in thinking through the vagaries of democratic politics.

*So, political judgment requires a certain historical and philosophical “training,” fueled by an indefatigable intellectual curiosity.*

It requires someone who is widely read and studied, and who has what I would call a truly “scientific” mind: that is, a mind that seeks to know and to know what it knows and that it knows.

***This kind of education is and should be the ambition of the Hobby School, as it develops it unique curriculum.***

Its teachers and students should not be mere “mechanics” of the social sciences. This was the great worry of *Max Weber*, one of the twentieth century’s greatest social scientists: that the social sciences would produce what he calls “*specialists without heart.*”

***Rather, the Hobby School will aim and should aim at providing students both with topflight training in social science methods, and with a broad background in history, ethics, and philosophy.***

I am a Political Theorist—at least, that is what my colleagues call someone like me who studies Ancient Political Philosophy—but I have taught only in departments in which empirical or quantitative social science is the mainstream. *My experience is that the best social scientists invariably bring to the table not only a rigorous training in methods, but also very broad interests in politics, history, and philosophy.*

It's true that the best cases are not the usual cases, and yet that's hardly a surprise: My field, Political Theory, also has its share of mediocrities, even very famous ones. But we should always aim for the best, and if we get even within hailing distance of that aim, it will have been worth the risk.

***This view of education should infuse not just the curriculum, but it should inform the Hobby School's choice of the kind of student who should be recruited:***

A student with a genuine interest in politics—in the important and even unimportant moral and political questions of the day.

A student with a broad background, who is widely read and intellectually curious.

A student who has the desire to understand the facts—get to the bottom of things—but who also seeks to understand the human heart.

A student who is willing to take intellectual risks.

***And these qualities should inform not just the students but also the faculty.***

*I will add that in my judgment, these qualities describe my colleague and the man who is so much the helm and heart of the new Hobby School, Jim Granato.*

Now, it is true, as even or especially his wife Mary will tell you, Jim isn't always the easiest guy to love because he is sometimes—what's the word?—"bull-headed."

I was going to use the old expression that Jim can sometimes be "like a bull in a china shop." But then I had the image of some bulls standing around watching their fellow bull in the china shop, saying, "Man, that bull is acting just like Jim Granato at a faculty meeting!"

*Yet, what Jim is trying to accomplish is unique in the Academy: To bring together the best of the humanities and the best of the social sciences and to inform public policy with the finest tools we have.*

And the truth is that anything this good is going to meet with resistance in an academic world, which likes to see itself as progressive, but which is, truth be told, sometimes much hidebound and conventional.

So, in addition to his other fine qualities, Jim has needed and will continue to need his very special *bull-headedness*. But after all, he's Italian and from Chicago.

Now, the kind of education that the Hobby School can provide will never replace the policymaker him or herself. Still, it will be able to provide powerful resources for our policymakers and for all citizens concerned with the public good.

*As an added benefit, in my opinion, it will also help restore respect for the “intellectual” in civil society.* There is a great problem today for the universities: the very influential view among citizens and politicians regarding the irrelevance—the uselessness—and even perniciousness of academics, a view that is held especially of the humanities and the social sciences.

But this view is a profound problem for us as a civil society. It is related, I think, to the decline of the humanities and the social sciences, in favor of business, engineering, and the STEM faculties.

***And it is also related to an insidious decline in our capacity for self-governance.***

I can say more about that problem in the Question and Answer period, but for now just let me say that the Universities are partly—though not solely—responsible for the public’s view. If I may quote a great President of Notre Dame, who has just recently passed away at the age of 97, Father Ted Hesburgh:

*The true antidote to the Public’s view that colleges are simply ivory towers of intellectual dilettantism is engagement with important public issues—however difficult and thorny those issues may be.*

It is crucial to see how important this engagement is—it is a matter of political judgment. In the 1980s, Gov. Hobby himself wrote:

*There exists in the Legislature as well a virulent strain of anti-intellectualism that does not reflect well on this state. But it should be the duty of a governor to counteract that sort of thinking rather than to give it redneck reinforcement.*

We face that problem still today, and not just in Texas. *But the universities themselves have to look inward and ask whether they shoulder some of the responsibility for this view:* whether they are genuinely serving the common good, or whether they have become, as Fr. Ted noted, “ivory towers of intellectual dilettantism.”

***With the right support, the Hobby School of Public Affairs will be unique in its ability to engage questions of public policy and to serve the common good as it must as a school of Public Affairs:***

It will strive to obtain the “hard facts” through a rigorous and careful accounting of what we can grasp “scientifically,” one which uses statistics and well-calibrated methodologies to clarify rather than obfuscate, to help reveal the truth rather than lie about it.

It will cultivate the capacity to make the hard choices—political judgment of the finest kind: the ability to be clear about the choices, the risks, the principles at stake, and the character to make those choices or to be courageous enough to give the advice to the leader who must do so him or herself.

But it will also, first and foremost, have the intellectual depth and breadth, and the courage, to “ask the right questions”:

*Asking the right questions requires a continual search for the truth, however deeply buried this truth is.*

*This search is, I would say, at the heart of Rev. Gelwick’s legacy.*

He asks us to search not just for the facts—though these are no doubt crucial. He asks us to search also for what is right and good: what truly serves the common good that must be the aim of all public policy.

*And since we are, after all a democratic republic, these are questions that all of us—as citizens and as human beings—must ask ourselves.*

For this reason, I think it is distinctly appropriate—one could even say *providential*—that at its inception, the new Hobby School should become the home of the *Gelwick Lecture series in Ethics and Public Policy*.

**So, I end by reiterating my thanks to the Gelwick family for bringing the series to the Hobby School and for inviting me to honor Rev. Gelwick’s legacy as best as I could today.**