



SCHOLÉ HOUSE

in the company of friends

Spring 2025



Dear Scholé Friends,

This week I am happy to have our intern, Anna Earman, tell us about why we should take time to read in groups. I'm sorry to say that we had to leave half the essay on the cutting-room floor due to space constraints, but I think you will be inspired by her thoughts and her experience.

Anna comes to Scholé House this spring after graduating from Veritas Academy in 2024. She spent the fall studying at L'Abri in Switzerland and visiting family in Europe. In the upcoming fall, she plans on attending Grove City College in Pennsylvania. Anna has taken advantage of challenging reading groups to a degree enviable to most older adults: they include a faculty reading group at Veritas, various guided groups at L'Abri, the springtime reading group on Technology and Humanness here at Scholé House and a one-on-one with me on Mark Noll's *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*. I don't know how she keeps up with it all!

The Case for Reading Together by Anna Earman

There is something uniquely enchanting about leafing through a book or paper you would have never thought to pick up unless it was the assigned reading of a group. There is something rather revealing when someone who has read the same words you did brings up a point or insight that would have never crossed your mind. When we read together, we have the opportunity to expand our minds.

Reading in community also allows for greater accessibility to academic reading, since the individual can take on a topic beyond his own scope and venture into the unknown with support. Not only does the individual share in the intellectual benefits of a discussion group, but members find dear comrades on common ground.

A Hedge Against Deconstructionism

But reading together has an additional benefit. When we come together in order to discuss and discover, this in itself assumes there is a truth to find. In a culture that says if you talk long enough you can make anything right or wrong; when something can mean anything it means nothing. Reading groups demonstrate that no, someone might tell you they disagree and there is tremendous opportunity for finding truth together within that.

In his book, *Christianity for Modern Pagans: Pascal Pensees*, Peter Kreeft urges that if "the author is trying to break into the house of our mind with his ideas, how dare we substitute our ideas for his? That would turn the dialogue into a monologue. And that is exactly what Deconstructionism advocates and exalts. That is the philosophy of Hell."

Here Kreeft is discussing scriptural interpretation; however, Pascal warns of a broader pitfall when reading. When what ought to be a dialogue becomes a monologue, leaving the individual static and unmoved in his thought life. While the dialogue between author and reader comes first, dialogue between readers only deepens and enriches the entire conversation. There is something in forfeiting an interest in engaging with new and challenging ideas that endangers our humanity. In that, an uninterested mind isolates himself from people, from the wonder at the mystery of Creation, and is tempted to sacrifice truth for comfort. Despite what deconstructionism wants to say, truth is objective, is discoverable, and each of us has a testimony to where we have seen it in our own lives.

In the time that I have been engaging with reading groups in Scholé House and elsewhere, I have been challenged and informed in new ways. In reading about the theology of the Civil War, both North and the South fully and firmly believed in manifest destiny. It begs the question, what in our current Christian culture have we accepted or overlooked based on cultural assumptions rather than true exegesis? And from our most recent reading group, Ivan Illich illustrates the vision of a bicycle utopia, an ethical solution to the economic alienation caused by cars. I hadn't considered ethics concerning transport before, and how this could be applicable in a city like Richmond.

This is the philosophical call, where as Christians we believe there is objective wisdom to seek and find, often through reading. But this is also the Christian call to community, the importance of play and delight in discovering wisdom alongside one another.

Fight Deconstructionism, join a reading group! — Anna Earman, SH Intern



I am so grateful to Anna for this contribution — the hard part was making it fit!

Some of you will know that Anna is raising her own funds through Scholé House. She is only \$500 short of being fully funded through the middle of summer. If you would like to support Anna, please go to the donate tab on our website and you can pick Anna from the dropdown to make a contribution that will be earmarked just for her.

In the meantime, go find a book and some friends, or join us in the fall at Scholé House.

In Christ, who calls us His Friend, Missy

Contributions to Scholé House are entirely tax-deductible. Checks can be made to Scholé House, c/o Wendy Kliever, Department of Psychology, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Box 842018, Richmond VA 23284-2018 or on our website at scholehousestudycenter.org.