

## NEWSROOM

[Home](#) / [News](#) / [2020](#) / [September](#) / Professor's Paris Discovery Yields New Volume on Moral Education



# PROFESSOR'S PARIS DISCOVERY YIELDS NEW VOLUME ON MORAL EDUCATION

DR. MICHAEL MULRYAN EDITS, TRANSLATES PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED WORK.

by [Jane Heeter](#) | September 23, 2020

*Above: Michael Mulryan*

*Read time: about 1 min*

Dr. Michael J. Mulryan, associate professor of [French](#), co-edited and co-translated a critical edition of Louis Sébastien Mercier's previously unpublished treatise on moral education.

The work, in both French and English, is titled *Comment fonder la morale du peuple? Traité d'éducation pour l'avènement d'une société nouvelle*, which translates to: *How to Establish the Morality of the People? An Educational Treatise for the Advent of a New Society*.

In this landmark work, Mercier, a philosopher and author of diverse literary genres, shared his vision for a public school system that would train students to think critically and act virtuously, learning how to identify and avoid the dangers of absolutes in a polarized society. His work reflects a profound understanding of secular and religious fanaticism and how individuals become fanatical.



Mulryan teaches a variety of classes in French literature and culture.

Written in 1801 in the wake of the French Revolution and Napoleon's rise to power, Mercier wrote the treatise out of a desire to protect the French Republic and its future. He knew that without virtuous and reasonable citizens, it might not withstand the test of time.

"In this era of political polarization, social uncertainty, and skepticism surrounding the scientific method and empirical thinking, I found that this treatise answers many of the difficult questions that still plague us in Western civilization.

"Mercier, like the founders and leaders of Christopher Newport University, found that a sound liberal arts education, like the one he promotes for a future public school system in France, could do a great deal to prevent the social and political discord caused by fanaticism and ignorance," Mulryan said.

Mulryan discovered the manuscript in the Mercier collection of the Arsenal Library in Paris during the summer of 2010, thanks to funding provided by a faculty development grant. After publishing a journal article on the work, he was eager to publish a bilingual edition in both French and English, finding a collaborator in his fellow Mercier specialist Genevieve Boucher of the University of Ottawa.

The work is published with the Modern Humanities Research Association of the United Kingdom. Mulryan notes that the book can be used in literature, history, and philosophy classes that are held in either French or English.

---