

PRISM AS A METAPHOR for TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

How a Single Vision Can Refract into Meaningful and Lasting Effect

In a previous message, I argued that the human person functions like a prism. Experience enters us as undifferentiated light, but it does not remain that way. It is refracted through the inner structure of attention, memory, belief, and desire, and it is the prism that gives shape to our perceptions and coherence to our lives. A clear prism produces clarity, and what we attend to, what we dwell on, and what we allow into the mind determines the quality of the light that emerges as attitude, interpretation, and ultimately character.

The prism metaphor helps us see that every human life is shaped by the quality of what enters the mind and the way it is refracted into meaning. Experience comes to us as raw light, but attitude, interpretation, and character emerge only after that light passes through the inner prism, the structure of attention, memory, belief, and desire that gives a person coherence. When the prism is clear, life becomes intelligible; when it is fractured, life becomes scattered.

Jonathan Haidt, the Thomas Cooley Professor of Ethical Leadership at the NYU Stern School of Business, warns that attention fits seamlessly into the prism metaphor because it is the first beam of experience to enter the mind. If that beam is fractured, scattered, or captured by forces outside the self, the prism cannot refract experience into coherent meaning. A distracted mind cannot form stable attitudes, and without stable attitudes, character loses its shape. In this sense, the crisis of attention Haidt describes is not merely technological but civilizational: a people who cannot hold their focus cannot hold their moral center. The formation of character begins with the disciplined stewardship of attention, for it is attention that determines what enters the prism, what is amplified, and ultimately who we become.

And so the work before us is simple to name but demanding to practice: we must guard our attention, curate what we allow into the mind, and choose—deliberately—what light we permit our prism to refract into the meaning of our lives.

If it is not already apparent, I have great respect for Jonathan Haidt's work.

Honor with Respect. Act with Responsibility. Stand in Rectitude.

**GROUNDING IN MANY YEARS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE AND INFORMED BY FORMAL STUDY,
REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS, AND EXPERT COUNSEL, MY WRITING IS CLARIFIED THROUGH THE
MEASURED CONTRIBUTIONS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.**

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