



Introduction to Classical Education

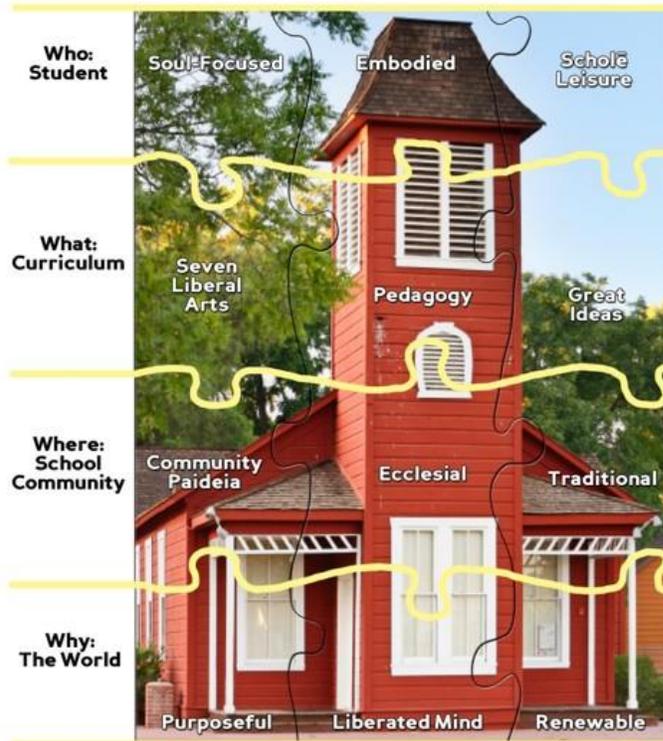
with Dr. Christopher Perrin

Course Introduction

Outline:

Four questions that every educational approach must ask:

- Who is the student? (Implicitly, what is a human being, and what is the human being for?)
- What curriculum do we teach?
- In what setting do we teach?
- To what ends or purposes do we teach?



The “Pearls” of Classical Education: Unity in Diversity

- The Liberal Arts
- Pedagogy
- The Great Books
- *Scholē* (undistracted time to study the things that are most worthwhile)
- Virtue



Affirm and Approve

- We still see goodness, truth, and beauty in the Cosmos and we affirm a fundamental harmony of being placed in this world.
- We are at wonder in the world.
- Reason without foundation of wonder is empty reasoning. Our reason must be guided by a right disposition that is at wonder in the world.
- “Every man participating in a culture has three levels of conscious reflection: his specific ideas about things, his general beliefs or convictions, and his metaphysical dream of the world.” Richard Weaver
- “What, then, is required to celebrate a feast? Obviously more than a day off work. This requirement includes man’s willing acceptance of the ultimate truth, in spite of the world’s riddles, even when the truth is beheld through the veil of our own tears; it includes man’s awareness of being in harmony with these fundamental realities and surrounded by them. To express such acceptance, such harmony, such unity in nonordinary ways – this has been called since time immemorial: to celebrate a feast.” Josef Pieper

Principles

- Unsentimental Sentiment
- First Things and Second Things
 - “Of course this law has been discovered before, but it will stand re-discovery. It may be stated as follows: every preference of a small good to a great, or a partial good to a total good, involves the loss of the small or partial good for which the sacrifice is made. ... You can’t get the second things by putting them first. You get the second things only by putting first things first.” C.S. Lewis
- **A First Thing/Principle:** “The world is true, good, and beautiful, and we are made such that we can know and perceive and love the things that are true, good, and beautiful.” Christopher Perrin
 - Philosophical Realism or Christian Realism
 - Lewis argues that if we do not start with this premise (truth exists and can be known), we are in danger of not being able to prove anything at all.
 - If you do not believe that you will find yourself in a world of individually created “facts” which are substituted for truths where everyone does what is right in his own eyes, and a kind of chaos ensues over time.

Principles that guide us in our pedagogy:

- Festina Lente (make haste slowly)
- Multum Non Multa (much not many)
- Repetitio Mater Memoriae (repetition is the mother of invention)
- Embodied learning: the rhythms, practices, traditions, and routines of learning



- Songs, chants, and jingles
- Wonder and curiosity
- Educational virtues: without educational verities we simply lack...a student
- Scholé, contemplation, leisure
- Docendo Discimus (by teaching we learn)

Two aspects of reasoning

- Ratio – Reason that collects and classifies, this is an important part of exercising our capacities
- Intellectus – The part of the mind that receptively engaged something that was true

The Ends We Seek

- Politics downstream of culture
 - Culture is a cultivation of a nation's ends.
- Culture: A cultivation of our ideals, ends
- Education: reveals those ends
 - Education is not just job training, but cultivating a human being.
 - Wisdom, virtue, eloquence
 - The perfection of our intellect, the maturing of our human capacity to know and perceive the things that are true, good, and beautiful
- Our view of the good life
 - What does it mean to be a fulfilled, happy human being?
 - To prepare us for the next life. There is an eternal aim.

Modern educators thinking about problems in education

- *The Global Achievement Gap*, Tony Wagner
 - 7 survival skills
 - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
 - Collaboration Across Networks and Leading by Influence
 - Agility and Adaptability
 - Initiative and Entrepreneurialism
 - Effective Oral and Written Communication
 - Accessing and Analyzing Information
 - Curiosity and Imagination
- The fruits of a liberal arts education are still needed today.

Analogies to try to understand classical education

- A beautiful cathedral with a unified theme.

Going Back to Go Forward

- Sometimes we have lost our way, the quickest way forward is to return home
- Do not move the ancient landmarks.
- Keep to the ancient paths.



- Every revolution is a restoration. G.K. Chesterton
- Sayers: We can go back...
- Because some things never change...
- Good ideas are evergreen, there are some ideas that are like perennial flowers, and they are for every generation.

Tradition: Democracy of...

- “Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. In the democracy of the dead all men at last are equal. There is neither rank nor station nor prerogative in the republic of the grave.” G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*
- We will give a voice to those who have gone before us.
- Modern research can inform and help classical education.

Re: to do again

- Recover
- Renew
- Recuperate
- Recreate
- Restore
- Reform
- Revive
- Rebuild
- Redeploy
- Reappropriate
- Resuscitate
- Reaffirmation
- Reapprobation
- Repetition/Revisit/Review

“We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turning then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man. There is nothing progressive about being pig-headed and refusing to admit a mistake. And I think if you look at the present state of the world it's pretty plain that humanity has been making some big mistake. We're on the wrong road. And if that is so we must go back. Going back is the quickest way on.” C. S. Lewis, *The Case for Christianity*