



The Scholé Way with Christopher Perrin

Lecture 10: Walt Whitman's "A Noiseless Patient Spider"

Outline:

In this lesson, Dr. Christopher Perrin explores Walt Whitman's poem "A Noiseless Patient Spider" as a meditation on the soul's search for knowledge and harmony. He examines the poem's use of weaving imagery, its connection to classical and biblical traditions, and its relationship to *scholé* as undistracted contemplation.

"This poem is about the soul seeking knowledge and seeking harmony, seeking wholeness. And just note that phrase, oh my soul. Maybe you haven't been conscious of it, but maybe even subconsciously you have made a connection there because that phrase, oh my soul is a biblical phrase."

Weaving as a Metaphor for Learning

- The interconnected nature of classical pedagogies
- Weaving in education: Augustine on memory and expression
- The Odyssey as a story of weaving (Penelope, Odysseus, Athena)
- The pursuit of wisdom as a process of weaving connections

Whitman's *A Noiseless Patient Spider*

- Recitation and appreciation of the poem's sound and rhythm
- The spider as an image of patience and exploration
- The poet's soul as a seeker, casting threads to find connection

Themes of Isolation and Connection

- The spider as a metaphor for the soul's solitude
- The soul's longing to find meaning in a vast, vacant cosmos
- The search for an anchor, a bridge, and a place to belong

Classical and Biblical Allusions in the Poem



- The “music of the spheres” from Greek cosmology
- The Psalmic phrase “Oh my soul” and its call to seek God
- The connection between seeking knowledge and seeking the divine

The Role of *Scholé* in Perceiving Harmony

- The importance of undistracted, unhurried contemplation
- How *scholé* allows us to make connections between ideas
- Recognizing the beauty and order in great works of art

