

A Brief History of Classical Education

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Lesson 11: Summary and Conclusion

Outline:

Plato's *Republic*

- Account of the soul
 - **Appetite/desire**
 - **Spiritedness/heart**
 - **Calculation**
 - **Intellect (Nous)** is the ability to perceive beauty directly and participate in it.
- Implications for education from the *Republic*
 - Education turns from sense to the intellect, the educator is not able to make a student good.
 - The just, the beautiful, and the good can only be grasped independently from each other.

Plato's *Timeaus*

- *Timeaus* gives an account of the good Demiurge.
- There is a true poet/maker/father of the Cosmos, but this is not someone who we can reach through human reason.
- Intellect requires the aid of revelation.

What emerges from these pagan accounts?

- Poetry is important for early childhood education.
- Plato agree that poetic education must be guided by theology.

Aristotle

- Poetry can help us to appreciate independent beauty.
- *Metaphysics* reflects upon primary unmoved mover, who makes the Cosmos beautiful and good in context of the true.
- *Politics* and *Ethics* tease out implications from *Poetics* and *Metaphysics*.

Crucial steps made by the Romans

- **Cicero (Statesmen)**



Prayer Bead with the Adoration of the Magi and the Crucifixion, early 16th century, Netherlandish



- There is a beautiful ordered Cosmos.
- We encounter the beautiful in community with others.
- Political community is concrete.
- Cicero connects the works of Aristotle.
- **Seneca (Roman stoic and dramatist)**
 - In Oedipus, Seneca offers an interesting solution.
 - Because order exists with disorder, order falls apart.
 - When social order breaks down, one seeks justice through punishment.
 - This is the fundamental problem of empire and rule: in trying to restore the natural order we employ a means (punishment) whose harshness seems to subvert the harmony that we want to establish.
 - Seneca offers forgiveness as a solution.

Questions left open by pagan philosophy

- How is being and becoming related?
- How do we reconcile omnipotent being, who is responsible for order in the world, with the fact that there is evil in the world?
 - St. Augustine's contribution: If God creates out of nothing then creatures are between being and nothingness. If the creature becomes proud and puts themselves in the place of God, you turn toward yourself, but what you are is really just nothingness.
- What is the relationship between the accidental and the meaningful?
- What do you do when human beings do sin?
 - Pagans believe that if you sin against the Divine that you should be destroyed utterly.
 - The solution to this is forgiveness.

St. Augustine

- He will take up pagan philosophy, relate it to Christian teaching and move beyond it.
- Departure from ancients:
 - Beauty and wisdom are two words for the same thing.
 - God is wisdom (true), God is beauty (power), and God is goodness (justice).
 - God does not acquire wisdom, God is wisdom. God is beauty. God is goodness.
 - These come together in the mystery of the Trinity (this is departure from pagan transcendentals)
- God is eternal (immortal, incorruptible, unchangeable).
- God is wise (living powerful and beautiful).
- God is bless (spiritual, good and just).

St. Thomas Aquinas

- *Summa Theologica*, first part, question 39, article 8



- The beauty of the Son:
 - **Integrity** - The Son is perfectly the Father.
 - **Proportion and harmony** – The Son is a perfect representation of the Father.
 - **Brightness or clarity** – Christ as the word is what illuminates the intellect of human beings.
- God is being.
- The Son encompasses all the transcendentals in himself.
- A Triune God allows us to talk about relationship.
- The ultimate transcendental education is the Word being made flesh.

One key takeaway

- Always keep the dialogue as we pursue the good, the true, and the beautiful.