



Classical Education in America with David Goodwin

Lesson 1: Recovering a Christian Paideia

Outline:

The Unauthorized Biography of American Education

- What is paideia?
 - For thousands of years, man was barbaric. What happened?
 - Man progressed
 - Over time, man gradually progressed and became enlightened.
 - Those who were enlightened thrived.
 - Progressive paideia
 - Man civilized
 - A powerful idea called paideia caused man to pursue the divine resulting in civilization.
 - Classical Christian paideia
 - The Athenians intentionally created a free paideia.
 - There is among men no consensus of what is good, true, and beautiful. There must be something that is good, true, and beautiful.
 - The Greeks came up with the idea that there is a God-like thing (Logos) that represents Truth, Goodness, and Beauty in its ultimate context.
 - The Greeks raised children to think and reason well as a mechanism of attaining the Logos. This was the concept of a civilized man.
 - “Education is teaching our children to desire the right things.” Plato
 - Paideia is like a worldview but more than a worldview. Paideia is an ordered set of loves leading to desires, a base of knowledge and beliefs, a collection of virtues, and a way of seeing the world that is cultivated into children. We absorb it more than we learn it.
 - Paideia relates to what we love or what our affections desire. We do that what we desire to do.
- Paideia: The Story of Atlantis
 - The original Atlantis is described by Plato.
 - “They despised everything but virtue, not caring for their present state of life, and thinking lightly on the possession of gold and other property which seemed only to burden them; neither were they intoxicated by luxury; nor did wealth deprive them of their self-



control; but they were sober, and saw clearly that all these goods are increased by virtuous friendship with one another, and that by excessive zeal for them, and honor of them, the good of them is lost, and friendship perishes with them. By such reflections and by the continuance in them of a divine nature, all that we have described waxed and increased in them; but when this divine portion began to fade away in them, and became diluted too often and with too much of the mortal admixture, and the human nature got the upper-hand, then, they being unable to bear their fortune, became unseemly. To him who had an eye to see, they began to appear base, and had lost the fairest of their precious gifts; but to those who had no eye to see the true happiness, they still appeared glorious and blessed at the very time when they were filled with unrighteous avarice and power.” Plato, *Timaeus*

- The warning in this passage needs to be investigated.
- What happened?
 - “I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform.” John Dewey, 1920, *Progressive and Father of Modern American Education*
 - Between 1915-1925 the progressives completely remade education in the United States around a new set of goals:
 - The creation of wealth
 - The ability of children to find jobs and grow out of poverty
 - Reoriented education to industrial ends
- The concept of paideia was captured by the Christians.
 - There is a Logos (that the Greeks are pursuing through their paideia) who is Jesus Christ.
 - The Christian church understood paideia to be raising children up with the virtues of the Christian kingdom.
- Paideia Repurposed
 - “My child is first a national child. He belongs to the Nation even before he belongs to himself... We parents can hardly see this. It is a particularly difficult point of view for the highly individualized assertive Anglo-Saxon whose political weakness is undeveloped sense of social solidarity. The true end of American education is the knowledge and practice of democracy – whatever other personal ends an education may serve...; such ends are no longer legitimate.” Dallas Lore Sharp, 1922, *Education in a Democracy*
 - Democracy must control the paideia of the young
 - “...twentieth-century democracy believes that the community has certain positive ends to achieve, and if they are to be achieved they community must control the education of the young. It believes that training in scientific habits of mind is fundamental the progress of democracy...the plasticity of the



- child shall not be artificially and prematurely hardened into a philosophy of life, but that experimental naturalistic aptitudes shall constitute the true education.” The New Republic, July 29, 1916
- Christianity must go...
 - “As long as the public school is in any sort of competition with the church school, religion will not be entirely divorced from the schools...” New Republic, 1915
 - “If education was to be the principal engine of an intentionally progressive society, then the politics of education would have significance far beyond the control of schools. Or child saving institutions. Or communication organizations; in the end, it would hold the key to the achievement of the most fundamental political aspirations – in effect, the key to the American Paideia.” Lawrence Cremin, 1988
 - The progressives built a school system around commerce so that Christian paideia would be buried.
 - Mission Accomplished
 - “What can theistic Sunday School, meeting for an hour once a week, do to stem the tide of a five day program of humanistic teaching?” Charles Potter, 1928
 - “If you turn your children over to progressives to be educated, they will be returned to you as strangers.” Grant Horner, The Master’s University
 - Progressives buried a lot of words and changed their meanings:
 - Ethics
 - We think of ethics as morals.
 - It involves everything from how nature works to the way we reason. There is a perfect way to be logical and observe nature.
 - Virtue
 - Virtue is the embodiment of an ethic into a person. Virtues were wide and broad.
 - Pomp
 - Pomp used to reference hierarchy.
 - Source of ethics
 - Our current form of ethics come from within. It has been reduced to a personal form of morality (having a form of godliness but denying its power).
 - “Value” replaces “virtues”.
 - “What if education wasn’t first and foremost about what we know, but about what we love? James K.A. Smith, Desiring the Kingdom
 - “The soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined with respect to the thing it views or considers; either is inclined to them, or is disinclined and averse from them;...The will, and the affections of the soul, are not two faculties; the affections are not essentially distinct from the will



- nor do they differ from the mere actings of the will, and inclinations of the soul.” Jonathan Edwards
- “Genuine and complete virtue which, with a view to the final good for the whole of human life, rightly deliberates, decides, and commands. This alone is prudence pure and simple, and in sinners it just cannot be.” Thomas Aquinas
 - “[The virtuous man] keeps his affections also under strict control, so that he neither loves what he ought not to love, nor fails to love what he ought to love, nor loves that equally which ought to be loved either less or more, nor loves less or more which ought to be loved equally.” Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*
 - The concept of paideia is encapsulated here as the development of a child so that he loves what he ought to love.
 - “If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road.” C.S. Lewis