



Disability and Classical Education: Student Formation in Keeping with Our Common Humanity with Dr. Amy Richards

Lecture 5: Assessing Where You Are: The Anthropology Audit

Outline:

How might we work towards cultivating telic attention in the process of building genuinely doxological classrooms that welcome and bless all students including those with the seemingly strange vocations of disabilities and learning differences?

- What kinds of attention do our schools practice themselves and cultivate in their students?
- What view of the human person is implied by these forms of attention?
- Along which metrics do we define success in school or life?
- Is school connected with only one part of life or with an integrated conception of life as a whole?

The anthropology audit seeks to get us to notice what is already there, but that we might miss if we do not attend in a reflective mode.

- What do the practices of our schools say about what it is to be human?
- The (anthropology audit) exercise will be most fruitful if you can do it in community with other teachers in your school.

The Anthropology Audit

- Physical Environment
 - We are embodied creatures.
 - We must consider form and function.
 - Questions to consider:
 - What do you see?
 - What do you hear?
 - What do you smell?
 - Does your classroom or school take students with sensory sensitivities into consideration?
- Routines/Modes of Instruction
 - Routines are part of the instruction.
 - What methods do we use to introduce students to the curriculum?



- Are your modes of instruction classical?
- For how long are students asked to sit still in the same place?
- Curriculum
 - How we teach these arts (trivium and quadrivium) can be deeply unclassical if it treats the arts as means rather than ends in themselves or as primarily directed toward utility rather than towards our telos as free human persons made for communion with the infinite.
 - Is your curriculum always concerned with offering your students the most beautiful form of the topic being learned?
 - What kinds of books are being considered?
 - Is math (reading/writing) appropriately approached as a liberal art?
 - How are the curricula of different grade levels integrated?
 - To grow as a person we must learn self-transcendence (this pervades all levels of the school).
- Disciplinary Policies/Procedures
 - Discipline always needs to be a form of telic attention to the individual student.
 - The soul needs love, tenderness, and attention.
 - Saint John Bosco's system of discipline that focuses on love rather than punishment. He prioritizes relationships. This system is based reason, religion, and lovingkindness.
 - Questions about discipline:
 - Is discipline always grounded in love?
 - How can discipline be collaborative, working towards creating classroom and school culture together through virtue rather than punitive?
 - Are we requiring compliance for convenience?
 - Do the consequences for behavior show respect for the humanity of all students?
 - Are we requiring things that are possible for all students?
 - Are we failing to account for neurodivergence or embodiment in our disciplinary models?
- Communication/Documentation
 - Documentation can be all but neglected and communication can often be ad hoc at some classical schools.
 - This lack of order does not serve either the student or the school. Communication through documentation can help to identify areas of focus and growth. It can help to decide how best to serve children.
 - Questions:
 - How do you keep track of behavioral concerns for particular students?
 - How do you communicate with parents?
 - How does intra-school communication work?
 - What documentation procedures do you have in place for all students?



- Culture
 - The culture of the school guides the community towards its telos of human flourishing in this life and towards eternity.
 - Our cultures form us into the kinds of people we are and will become. This formation is the purpose of education.
 - Questions:
 - Does our culture lead us toward one another in community?
 - How are students invited to be sub-creators of our school culture?
 - How do different grades interact with one another?
 - Is there a culture of mutual care and mutual joy?
 - Does our culture value continuity and fidelity, but also welcome newcomers?
 - Does your culture lead towards truth, goodness, and beauty? Does it lead towards God?