



The Liberal Arts Tradition

with Dr. Kevin Clark and Ravi Jain

Lesson 7: The Trivium and Grammar

Outline:

A Few Principles

- The arts join imitation to reason.
- The trajectory of piety, gymnastic, and music, which are formative and seem to use imitation for the cultivation of wonder and on the other side, philosophy and theology are aimed toward living wisely in the world.
 - The arts fill this middle section, where the imitation that is cultivated is perfect for reason for the productive use of the intellect.

The Trivium

- The Trivium are the arts of language. The threefold path of education.
- Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Man and Word”
 - This a reflection on the phrase, “Man is a rational animal” from Aristotle.
 - Man is that living being with word.
 - What sort of learning is appropriate for the one who lives in word?
 - Man’s entire life is lived in word (in language).
 - The ancients understood this as a defining feature.
- To limit the understanding of classical education to the Trivium is problematic.
- Grammar as we encounter it, is a system of language in our schools.
 - A teacher might talk about grammar programs (parts of speech and forms of sentences).
 - Grammar as a liberal art joins imitation to reason. Grammar is learning how to use language and then understanding how it works in order to not be inhibited by language but being set free to use it.
 - To speak
 - To read
 - To write
 - Students might not memorize the list of prepositions, but memorize *great things that embody the parts of speech* that we want to learn.
 - What if Grammar were the art that the heart owns and reason ratifies, where students would learn to discern what was well said (Edmund Burke)?
- The arts are also irreducible content.
 - They learned the art of using Latin, the language that they spoke.
 - The students learned to read certain books from a syllabus of particular authors.



- The writings of the Fathers and the Scriptures
- Classical texts that were worthy for Christian formation
- Grammar is not properly understood.
 - We have learned that grammar is about learning to analyze language. There is a role for this, however, **there is a primacy of imitation** (syllabus and content).
 - Example: Reading Virgil
 - **Through musical education, we could learn to love the story first.** Later on we can learn the rules of style and poetry. Imitation join with reason is the art of Grammar.
 - Example: Learning an instrument
 - *Analogy of Grammar education: Imitation is perfected by reason in order to freely produce.*

