



# The Principles of Classical Pedagogy II: Mimetic and Socratic Teaching

with Andrew Kern of the Circe Institute

## Lesson 1: An Introduction to Mimetic and Socratic Teaching

### Outline:

*My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you so that you incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding – yes if you cry out for discernment and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, then you understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.*

Proverbs 2:1

- Andrew describes what brought him to the renewal of classical and Christian education.
- **Wisdom never entices, wisdom offers herself.** She offers counsel, judgement, equity, and prudence.
- Wisdom wants us to know him by inclining our hearts, giving our attention and searching and seeking, the way we do for security, safety, and riches.
- What is classical education? *Classical education is the cultivation of wisdom and virtue by nourishing the soul on truth, goodness, and beauty, by means of the seven liberal arts, so that a student is better able to know Christ and enjoy him forever.*
- In education you are cultivating wisdom and virtue which are universally applicable. The tools of a trade apply to that trade. There is a specific end of education that is different from the end of training. The end of education is that you will be a good (wise and virtuous) human being.
- Just like a plant in a garden needs water, light, and soil so the human soul needs to be fed on the true, the good, and the beautiful (Philippians 4:8).
- The seven liberating arts of truth perception and harmony. The purpose of the liberating arts is to set you free. If we want to liberate somebody, then we need to teach him truth.
- You can see truth that math reveals only by learning about math.
- When you put together the arts of the Trivium and the Quadrivium, you have learned how to see truth better, and bring harmony. If you use grammar badly, you have discord in your own thoughts.
- **Grammar helps us to bring harmony to our own minds.**



- **Math teaches a child to pay attention and to endure discord until they resolve it into a harmony.**
- **Rhetoric is the means by which we can bring harmony to a community, it is essential to decision making.**
- These seven arts are the most reliable means by which humans bring harmony to their minds, harmony to their communities, and to cultivate wisdom and virtue in their thinking.
- Christian classical education is for knowing, glorifying, and enjoying God forever. That is what we are made for. They have been cultivated and nourished to know God and serve him.
- Four faculties for two modes of teaching (Mimetic & Socratic):
  - **Attentiveness**
    - Pay attention, attention is not passive. When you pay attention you are reaching for it. The single most important thing you can do is to teach your children to pay attention.
    - 2 Corinthians 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.
      - We are held long enough to behold, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror. We are changed by gazing on Christ.
      - What you pay attention to is what you will become like.
  - **Memory**
    - If children cannot remember, how will they be changed by it?
    - Learn how to cultivate memory.
  - **Imitation**
    - Your child's ability to imitate determines his ability to learn.
    - To learn is to become like a master, to become like what you are learning.
    - We are made by God to imitate. We are an imitation.
    - The very foundation of education is imitation. It is not a question of whether we imitate, but what we imitate and how well we do it.
    - We want to imitate Christ, and we want to imitate him perfectly.
  - **Harmony**
    - Ephesians 1:9 Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to himself, which he purposed in himself.
    - God has always had this intention, that will of his is what he wants to see done. He set this purpose in place within himself. That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth in him.
    - One day all things are going to be gathered together in Christ. They will be blessed by becoming one in him. **God has given**



- **us a yearning for harmony.** We feel it in music, friendship, marriages, communities, and in math.
  - We have within us an incredible yearning for harmony.  
**Training that yearning for harmony is the very purpose of education.** This will require adults who were taught how to pay attention (*how and what to remember, how and what to imitate*), and then using that weaving a tapestry that is one in Christ.
  - If all things are one in Christ, a student's mind can be one in Christ. Orient all of their thinking toward the oneness that is possible in Christ.
- Socratic and Mimetic teaching have a goal of truth perception. The soul can resist the truth, but Socratic and Mimetic teaching can put us on the path.
- Socratic and Mimetic education can share a means.
  - In Socratic teaching the enigma is the driving energy to reveal truth.
  - In mimetic teaching the picture/types to reveal truth.
  - A type is a way of taking a logos and incarnating it. Every time we teach we get to imitate God.
- Introduction and overview of **Mimetic Teaching**, having 5 stages:
  - Preparation: Preparation of the student to receive the lesson.
  - Presentation of a type
  - Comparison of types
  - Expression
  - Embodiment: Having learned how to express the truth in words, now it is time to embody it in their own types.
- Introduction and overview of **Socratic Teaching**, having 2 stages:
  - The **ironic stage**
    - When the child or person thinks he understands something, but is confused.
    - Ask questions, ask him to define his terms, and ask him to compare things. Ask a number of different questions to help them to see that they don't understand what they thought they did.
  - The **maieutic stage** (birth-giving, "midwifery" stage)
    - When they come down the slope, and they say, "I thought I knew and I don't." The Greek word for this is repentance (turn around, lead the child upward toward the truth).