



The Principles of Classical Pedagogy II: Mimetic and Socratic Teaching

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Lesson 3: Mimetic Teaching

Outline:

Mimetic Teaching

- Human flourishing, human fullness and knowing God end up being very intimately bound together.
- The four faculties of learning (via Quintillian, *The Education of an Orator*):
 - **Attentiveness:** Attending to, you cannot do this passively.
 - **Memory:** Help the children know what to remember and then help them to remember.
 - **Imitation: Help them know what to imitate and how to imitate.**
 - **Harmony:** When our children are growing in their capacity to imitate and remember then if it is done well they attain every greater harmony within their own souls. Given how many things come into our lives to tear us apart, the ability to harmonize (resolve discord) is one of the fundamental skills to give our children.
- Students learn in two primary ways: **Mimetic** learning and **Socratic** learning.
 - The mimetic pattern of learning is evident in Genesis 1-3. Humans are made in the image or likeness of something; this means as an imitation ourselves (of God), we cannot but help be imitators ourselves. “Every child wants to be like something higher and better than himself.”
 - Preparation
 - Presentation
 - Comparison
 - Expression
 - Embodiment
 - Mimetic teaching is more foundational than Socratic learning.
 - In Greek thought, mankind was seen as having a Divine spark.
 - Among the Hebrews, the God that creates man is a mysterious God. The sense that man is made in the image of God is quite limited. God himself is beyond our understanding.
 - Mankind is an image. Mankind is a likeness.
 - We cannot think in terms of whether we are going to imitate, but what we are going to imitate.



- Every child looks around and chooses someone to imitate. We learn everything through imitation. They got good by willing a high level of imitation.
- **Imitation is what leads to creativity. Creativity is really good imitation. In the beginning God created...**
- **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.
- Attention moves to a transformation into the same image. We look in the mirror to assess ourselves, and to change ourselves. When we gaze on the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, that becomes like what we become like.
 - **The foundation of paying attention is imitation. The end of imitation is becoming like what we look at. What your soul feeds on is what you become like.**
- Ephesians 5:1-2 Be imitators of God as dear children. Walk in love as Christ also has loved us. He has given himself for us and offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma.
 - A dear child wants to be like his parents.
- Mimetic comes from the Greek work for a mime who imitates.
- Mimetic teaching is a mode of teaching that is imitative.
- Four layers of imitation:
 - **Action**
 - **Artifact:** You are taking something in, but you are not imitating the art. The artifact is what was made by means of the art.
 - **Art:** If you want to imitate the art, you will have to imitate thought processes, learn the questions that she asks, the intellectual moves that she made in order to accomplish what she accomplished as a poet.
 - You can imitate the artifact as a teacher, by having every word written out for the lesson, but you won't have gone through the thought process.
 - The art takes time, practice, and coaching.
 - **Idea/logos:** They were not imitating an art, they were imitating an idea, a logos.
 - The idea is: "David you have sinned terribly and you need to repent."
 - He takes that idea and turns it into a parable, to embody the idea.
 - The means of teaching the logos is an incarnation. He tells a story about a sheep. Every story is an act of imitation.



- Every work of art is an act of imitation. Every story is an imitation of an action. They were imitations of an imagination.
- Our Lord himself revealed himself to us by taking on flesh and blood.
- Nathan wants to talk to David, but it's a dangerous situation, and he really wants David to get the point, the idea. So he takes the idea, rolls it up into a ball and he tosses the ball beside David in the form of a story in the form of a parable. David repented and heard the message from God.
 - Would he have heard the message had Nathan not prepared it so carefully and lovingly for the king?
 - He took a logos, incarnated it, he embodied it, he imitated the truth in something that is physically imaginable if not seeable.
- Teaching is an art. The way that we do this is by embodying it, by making it at least imaginable if not visible.
- We are imitating God in how he makes himself known to us. We are presenting a truth to the eyes and senses of a child.
- How do we do this systematically and regularly?
 - Mimetic teaching involves five stages:
 - Preparation
 - Present types or incarnations of the logos
 - Compare those types with each other
 - Perception/understanding
 - Expression/embodiment
 - Nathan's Parable
 - Life has prepared him to receive this picture.
 - Because David is king, because he is a mature man, he is ready to receive it in just one story. Implied in Nathan's story is a second story.
 - The presentation of the story was by Nathan. The comparison of the stories had to be done by David, but Nathan provoked it by saying, "You are that man."
 - David expresses his repentance in words and actions. He lives out the lesson that he learned.
 - **Two ways to incarnate a logos:**
 - An example: manipulatives
 - An illustration of the behavior that needs to be repented of. Children do get analogies. Every story is an analogy.
 - The first stage is to prepare the student to receive.
 - **Teaching mimetically is a self-assessing way of teaching.**