



## The Principles of Classical Pedagogy

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Lesson 11: Educational  
Virtue 3 – Cultivating  
Habits of Learning

### Outline:

The Intellectual Virtues: The Cultivation of Right Educational Habits

Part 3: How to Teach the Virtues

Chart of Virtues, James Sire, *Habits of the Mind*

- **Acquisition Virtues: passion for truth**
  - Inquisitiveness, Teachableness, Persistence, Humility
- **Application Virtues: passion for holiness**
  - Will to do what one knows, Love, Fortitude, Integrity, Humility
- **Maintenance Virtues: passion for consistency**
  - Perseverance, Courage, Constancy, Tenacity, Patience, Humility
- **Communication Virtues: compassion for others**
  - Clarity of expression, Orderliness of presentation, Aptness of illustration, Humility

Another Helpful Chart, Intellectual Virtues Academy

- **Starting/Beginning Study**
  - Curiosity
  - Intellectual Humility
  - Intellectual Autonomy
- **Executing Well**
  - Attentiveness
  - Intellectual Carefulness
  - Intellectual Thoroughness
- **Handling Challenges**
  - Open-Mindedness
  - Intellectual Courage
  - Intellectual Tenacity

Intellectual Vices and Virtues

- Vices: Sloth, Sensuality, Pride, Envy, Irritation
- Virtues: Love, Humility, Constancy/Studiousness, Patience, Perseverance/Courage, Prayer

Body and Mind, *The Intellectual Life*, A.G. Sertillanges

- Minds can only communicate through the body; first then, do not be ashamed to endeavor to keep well. “**A sound mind in a sound body.**” Sound hygiene, is almost for you an intellectual virtue.



- Some techniques are suggested: open air, deep breathing, rhythmic stretching, frequent walks (before and after work). Every day you should take exercise. Those who do not take time to exercise must take time to be ill.
- **Diet:** Light and moderate.
- **Sleep:** Neither too much nor too little
- For an intellectual/thinker: The **care of the body**, which is the instrument of the soul, is virtue and wisdom.
- **Simplify:** Beware of society-life; Vocation is concentration.
  - Our kids are too overloaded.
- **Solitude:** Exterior and Interior: Thomas Aquinas: “I want you to be slow to speaking and slow to going to the parlor. Don’t busy yourself about the words and actions of those in the world.” Avoid useless outings above everything. Love your cell, if you desire to be admitted to the wine-cellar.”
  - Do you students have a quiet solitary place to do reading, study, and thinking?
- **Quiet Recollection.** Solitude and silence. Without retirement there is no inspiration. Peace – the tranquility of order, puts order in your thoughts, feelings, and investigations. Compare Jesus: he preserved his solitude. Great discoveries are but the reflections of common facts common to all.
- **Friends/Fellows:** Kinship of minds. Friendship: Friendship is an obstetric art; it draws out our richest and deepest resources; it unfolds the wings of our dreams and hidden indeterminate thoughts; it serves as a check on our judgments, tries out our new ideas, keeps up our ardor, and inflames our enthusiasm. (C.S. Lewis, Tolkien, Williams)
  - The right friend to a student can make such a big difference in the intellectual life of that student.

## Excursus on Solitude: Frame of Mind & Spirit

- **Withdraw/Act: Zone of Silence:** Do you want to do intellectual work? Begin by creating within you a zone of silence, a habit of recollection, a will to renunciation and detachment which puts you entirely at the disposal of your work.
  - How do we eliminate distractions for students?
- **Ecstasy:** Every intellectual work beings by a moment of ecstasy - only in the second place does the talent of arrangement, the technique of transitions, connections of ideas, construction come into play. Now what is this ecstasy but a flight upwards, away from self, a forgetting to live our own poor life, in order that the object of our delight may live in our thought and in our heart?
- **Meditating on the truth of our eternity – that our true being lies...revealed to us only in the silence of our souls – that is in the exclusion of foolish thoughts which lead to a puerile and dissipating indulgence in distraction in the repression of the murmured suggestions *that our disordered passions never weary of uttering.***
  - Doesn’t this describe our current setting of social media?



## Rest and Joy

- **Pascal:** The whole calamity of man comes from one single thing, that he cannot keep quiet in a room.
- **Thomas:** Contemplation begins in love and ends in joy; it begins in the love of the object and the love of knowledge as an act of life; it ends in the joy of ideal possession and of the ecstasy it causes. “To see the order of the universe and the dispositions of divine Providence is an eminently delightful activity.” This is thinking God’s thought after him, and walking in the path of the Divine Walker.

## Intellectual Disciplines

- Solitude
- Time
- Attention - Zone of silence creates space for intellectual loafing.
- Lateral Thinking – Relaxing from the rigid control of vertical thinking.
- Prayer
- Model virtue ourselves. Cultivate desire to know.

## Extreme – Mean – Extreme

- Aristotle thought that a virtue is the mean between two extremes.
- Cowardice is a deficiency of courage. Rashness is an excess of courage.
- The virtue of courage exists in between these extremes
- Aristotle’s Concept of the Gold Mean
  - Cowardice, Courage, Rashness
  - Stinginess/Miserliness, Generosity, Extravagance
  - Sloth, Ambition, Greed
  - Humility, Modesty, Pride
  - Secrecy, Honesty, Loquacity
  - Moroseness, Good Humor, Absurdity
  - Quarrelsomeness, Friendship, Flattery
  - Self-indulgence, Temperance, Insensibility
  - Apathy, Composure, Irritability
  - Indecisiveness, Self-control, Impulsiveness

## Born to...Know

- Aristotle: All human beings “by nature desire to know” (*Metaphysics*, Book I).
- Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: Every virtue has two corresponding vices or defects: a vice of deficiency and a vice of excess.
- Most people struggle with a lack of intellectual virtue rather than excess. (Jason Baehr)

## Taxonomy of Intellectual Virtues, Jason Baehr

- **Starting Study**



- **Curiosity:** A disposition to wonder, ponder, and ask why. A thirst for understanding and a desire to explore. Slogan: **Ask questions!**
- **Intellectual humility:** A willingness to “own” one’s intellectual limitations and mistakes. Unconcerned with intellectual status or prestige. Slogan: **Admit what you don’t know!**
- **Intellectual autonomy:** A capacity for active, self-directed thinking. An ability to think and reason for oneself. Slogan: **Think for yourself!**
- These slogans can be helpful in talking to students.
- **Executing Well**
  - **Attentiveness:** A capacity for being “present” while learning. Notices and attends to important details. Slogan: **Look and listen!**
  - **Intellectual carefulness:** A sensitivity to the requirements of good thinking. Quick to notice and avoid pitfalls and mistakes. Slogan: **Avoid errors!**
  - **Intellectual thoroughness:** A willingness to probe for deeper meaning and understanding. Unsatisfied with mere appearances or easy answers. Slogan: **Go deep!**
    - Things aren’t often discovered given our first pass.
- **Handling Challenges**
  - **Open-mindedness:** An ability to think outside the box. Gives a fair and honest hearing to competing perspectives. Slogan: **Think outside the box!**
  - **Intellectual courage:** A readiness to persist in thinking or communicating in the face of fear, including fear of embarrassment or failure. Slogan: **Take risks!**
  - **Intellectual tenacity:** A willingness to embrace intellectual challenge and struggle. Keep its “eye on the prize” and doesn’t give up. Slogan: **Embrace struggle!**
- **Teaching the Virtues**
  - **Practices and Repetition:** “We develop virtues by practicing virtuous actions, and by practicing them at the right time, in the right amount, in the right way, and so on. Eventually, he thought, such actions will become a matter of habit and virtues will be formed.”
    - There is a context for the practice of these capacities that create excellence over time.
  - **Reactions, Routines, Ruts, and Character:** We tend to think of our choices as isolated moments of decision in which we reason through the pros and cons before making the best choice we can based on the information that we have. In reality, most of the choices we make are not the result of conscious and deliberate reasoning. – Philip Dow in *Virtuous Mind* (The quality of our mental auto pilot matters.)

## Teaching Prompts



- “For each of the target virtues, what would it look like for one of my students to manifest this virtue in one of my classes?”
- “If a student were to practice the virtue in question in this context, **what exactly would this look like?** What exactly would the student do, say, or think?”
- “How can I go about **building opportunities** to practice the relevant virtue-specific activities into my classes?”
- How can I add or structure a reading assignment in such a way that **it gives my student a clear opportunity** to think for themselves, consider alternative standpoints, avoid mistakes, and so on?
- How can I ensure that **papers or projects** I assign also provide my students with opportunities to practice intellectual virtues?
- When it comes to **lecturing or direct instruction**, how can I give my students opportunities to practice the virtue in question?
- What sort of small **group activities** can I use to give my students structured opportunities to practice relevant virtues?
- How can I build opportunities to practice target virtues in the **assignments** I give my students?
- When it comes to **tests or exams**, how can I design these activities in such a way that they require virtuous thinking?

Thinking Routines, *Making Thinking Visible* by Richhart, Church, and Morrison

- See-Think-Wonder - Present something before someone and ask what they think about it. What does it make you wonder about?
- What makes you say that? – This is something you can ask when students offer opinions. This requires the student articulate reasoning (including non-rational evidence).
- Circle of Viewpoints – Put yourself in the shoes of people in a reading or artifact that you are considering.
- “Who’s involved?”
- “Who might be affected by what’s happening?”
- “What are the different points of view represented in this story, event, or object?”
- “How do things look or feel from this viewpoint?”
- “What’s happening?”
- “What’s good or bad from this standpoint?”
- This thinking requires the exercises multiple virtues.
- This leads to humility, attentiveness, and thoroughness.

Purpose of Intellectual Virtues

- We need to continue to inflame desire to know.
- You have to model the virtues within yourself.
- The purpose are not the virtues themselves, but what they lead to.



- The virtues are a means to the end, which is truth, knowledge, understanding, insight, discernment, wisdom.
- Rooted in a stoked desire to know, so that students are calling out.
- If we can cultivate and model a desire to know, then students will grow in knowledge.