



The Principles of Classical Pedagogy

Dr. Christopher Perrin

Lesson 9: Educational Virtue 1 – Cultivating Habits of Learning

Outline:

The Intellectual Virtues: The Cultivation of Right Educational Habits

- The intellectual virtues comprise an important approach to education in general.
- To have a student, we need to have cultivated someone who loves the true, good, and the beautiful.
- If we could see reality for what it is, we would be at wonder, we would experience delight.
- How do we ensure that our students don't become dull students, and enable them to see what is really there?

What is the Intellectual Virtue?

- Aristotle: It is by doing just acts that a just man is produced and by doing temperate acts the temperate man.
 - Virtue has to be practiced. Human excellence has to be trained.
 - Summary: You are what you do every day.
 - Summary: "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act, but a habit." Will Durant

Charlotte Mason

- Education is an atmosphere, discipline, and life.
- Intellectual habits come from students who "do the work for themselves."
 - Anything a student learns has to pass through the intellect and work of the student. Students have to receive and accept.
- No intellectual habit is so valuable as that of **attention**, it is a mere habit but it is also the hall-mark of an educated person.
- There are habits of fitting and ready expression, of obedience, of good will...habits of right thinking and right judging.
- Habits are inevitable – either good or bad ones.
- Every habit is the result of conflict.
 - Developing habits is difficult, especially habits that will serve you but are hard to attain.
 - There will be conflict in education as we help students to develop the right intellectual habits.

Habit

- Habit comes from the Latin word *habito* (I dwell, reside, abide, live).



- These virtues become the habitations of a student. They live in the student and help the student to live well.

Dispositions

- A disposition is a state of mind regarding something.
- We want students to be disposed to learning.
- A disposition can be an arranged mind regarding something, an inclination, a prevailing tendency.
- Dispose comes from the Latin word *dispono*: to set out, arrange.

Discipline

- Training to act in accordance with rules.
- A regimen that develops or improves a skill.
- **Disciplina**: system, training, discipline, habits, teaching instruction
- **Discipulus**: pupil, apprentice, student
- We must model intellectual habits before our students.

Intellectus

- We want students to understand the world and the skills that come to them in the liberal arts.
- We want students to become wise as they study great literature.
- We want students to understand the truth, and to know reality.
- We want their minds to understand the true state of affairs so their mind is a mirror of the real world.
- This is a long tradition.
- **Inter**: between, among
- **Lego**: bring together, gather, collect; to read
 - When we look at the brilliant variety of the world, we have to try to organize and arrange to world so that our mind reflects what is really there in an intelligent way, so that it is not chaos. That is the intellect and what it does.
- **Intelligo**: to come to know, see into, perceive, understand, comprehend, gather
 - To see how things really fit together.
- **Intelligo**: Literally, “to choose between”
- **Intellectus**: a perceiving, a discernment; understanding, comprehension

Anti-Intellectual Spirit of Our Age

- **Subjective** – Whatever I feel is what I’ll go with.
- **Pluralistic** – There are so many different viewpoints, everyone can come up with his own truth. We find and make our own truths.
- **Individualistic** – I have my own truth.
- **Amused** – We look for the fleeting junk food pleasure.



- “Anti-intellectualism gives rise to the most extreme, the most morally deplorable form of sloth. It is to be found in persons for whom the ultimate objectives in life are the maximization of pleasure, money, fame, or power and who, thus motivated, express their contempt for those who waste their lives in purely intellectual pursuits. It is almost as if they wished they did not have the burden of having intellects that might distract them from their fanatical devotion to nonintellectual aims.” Mortimer Adler, *Intellect: Mind over Matter*

Cardinal John Newman, *The Idea of a University*

- If we are successful in cultivating the intellectual virtues, at the end of the process the intellect will be perfected (not flawless, but matured, fully developed).
- “That perfection of the Intellect which is the result of education, and its beau ideal, to be imparted in their respective measures, is the clear, calm, accurate vision and comprehension of all things, as far as the fine mind can embrace them, each in its place, and with its own characteristics upon it.” “It is almost prophetic from its knowledge of history; it is almost heart-searching from its knowledge of human nature; it has almost supernatural clarity from its freedom from littleness and prejudice; it has almost the repose of faith, because nothing can startle it; it has almost the beauty and harmony of heavenly contemplation, so intimate is it with the eternal order of things and the music of the spheres.” John Henry Newman
 - **Clear, calm, accurate vision** – This can only come about if the mind is trained to attend. (**grammar, logic, rhetoric**)
 - **Clarity, calmness, accuracy**
 - **Comprehension** of all things – There is an integrity. (**wisdom via great books**)
 - **Ability to comprehend the whole**
 - Each in its place – Knowing the way it fits together. (**logic, whole and parts; harmony**)
 - Ability to harmonize the parts in a whole
 - With its own characteristics (**logic**)
 - Specified and focused study
 - **Prophetic** from history – Because it studied history well, it can almost predict the future. (**history**)
 - **Prudence and predictive power**
 - **Heart-searching** from knowledge of human nature – It is able to sympathize with people because of the reading of literature and history, and imagine various places with various challenges. It has been reading over time. (**history, literature, virtue**)
 - **Deep understanding of human motivation**
 - **Supernatural charity** from lack of prejudice – The more you read and study the less prejudiced you become. You become familiar with a



wide view of experiences, arguments, opinions, and ideas. (**history, literature, virtue**)

- **Unprejudiced love for others**
- **Repose of faith** because it cannot be startled – Wide and long learning helps eliminate anything that would come to us as an astonishing surprise. (**history, literature, virtue**)
 - **Stable confidence that is not surprised**
- **Beauty and harmony** because of contemplating harmony – The intellect, soul, mind begins to reflect the harmony that exists in the cosmos. (**wisdom**)
 - **Beautiful, harmonized, contemplative intellect**
- **Could we not call this freedom? Could this be called education? Could this be called intellectual virtue?**

Virtue

- *Arete* is the Greek word for virtue. *Arete* meant excellence.
- Education involved the development of the excellencies appropriate to being a learner. Human capacity fully developed.
- For the Romans, *vir* is connected to *virtus*, which can mean “manly courage” and human excellence in general.
- *Virile, Virility, Virtue, Virtuous, Virtuosity*

What is Virtue?

- **Definition of Virtues:** Virtues are dispositional properties along with the concerns and capacities for judgement and action that constitute them. Virtues are deeply embedded parts of our character that readily dispose us to feel, think, and act in morally appropriate ways as our changing circumstances require.
 - There are moral considerations in mathematics and grammar. A student knows what to do. Will he do it?
- Habits, disciplines, routines of the mind, will, spirit, and body
- **Definition of Virtue:** The health of the soul.
- **Plato:** We think with our whole soul; it is not the mind that thinks but the man.
 - “How will you manage to think rightly with a sick soul, a heart ravaged by vice, pulled this way and that by passion, dragged astray by violent or guilty love? Passions and vices relax attention and scatter it, lead it astray, and they injure the judgement in roundabout ways...knowledge depends on the direction given to our passions and on our moral habits.” A.G. Sertillanges
- C.S. Lewis: “*You don’t have a soul – you are a soul. You have a body.*”