



School Culture: Full Lesson Tour in Community, Virtue, & Education with Dr. Vigen Guroian

Lesson 11: The Moral Imagination and the Importance of Stories

Outline:

Education is not just about acquiring skills, it is about making virtuous persons, cultivating the child's soul, and it is about building up a moral imagination that can serve her through the whole of life.

- What is the moral imagination? How does it come to be? How does it function?

Virtues with which the moral imagination is allied and which it serves

- Virtues are among the permanent things. They empower us to become complete human beings.
- Love, justice, faith, courage, prudence, and hope
- The virtues are the components of a moral character. They give direction to the will and they define our actions.
- One does not choose to be courageous or cowardly.
- Virtues come to exist by example and exercise.
- Law is not at the heart of morality.
- Two forms of virtue (Aristotle):
 - Intellectual virtue – belongs to the rational part of the soul
 - Moral virtue – engages the will and a choice is made to do that which is right or good, it is a habit that grows out of life lived
- We must become familiar with the virtues, so that we can internalize them.
- Stories are the most powerful medium through which the permanent things of the moral life can be brought to life for children.
- Stories are crucial in the formation of the moral imagination.

Moral Imagination

- Moral imagination is active both in our waking hours and when we sleep.
- The moral imagination is transformative, unitive, and creative.
- The moral imagination is a special form of perception.
- The moral imagination unites our inner experience with the world that surrounds us.
- It gives us the capacity to make a culture.



- Stories compensate for the life experience that children lack.
- MacDonald urged that we encourage children to observe vital phenomena, to speculate from what they see to what they do not see.
- Poesis happens when the imagination takes hold of the symbolic character of creation, finds meaning in it, and brings forth some new expression of the truth.
- The world around us is an outward figuration of the condition of our minds.
- MacDonald reminds us that the coldest word was once a glowing metaphor and bold questionable originality. All words are originally poetic words, but we eventually forget the poetry in them because they grow old and we put them to the service of practical needs.
- Our children are poets, each and every one of them. God has equipped them with profound imaginative powers. Children are born with a capacity to read meaning out of life.
- Metaphor is discarded and replaced with facts in our culture.
- Plato charges us to present to our children the best stories, and to shield them from the worst, so that within them is born a moral imagination.
- Three forms of imagination warrant our attention.
 - **Idyllic** – The idyllic imagination is escapist. It shirks civic, social, and personal responsibility. It might turn to hedonistic imaginings and flagrant sensuality as it seeks liberation from existing conventions and norms.
 - **Idolatrous** – The idolatrous imagination is rampant in our society today. We call celebrity idols icons.
 - **Diabolic** – This often takes hold when the idyllic and idolatrous fail us. This is spiritual suicide, followed by physical suicide.
- The moral imagination allows us to conceive of men and women as spiritual beings, as persons and not as things. The human face is a window into spirit.
- The best of humankind's stories possess a special power to perceive spirit in the world.
- Moral truths enable us to live and prosper.