



# School Culture: Full Lesson Tour in Community, Virtue, & Education with Dr. Christopher Perrin

## Lesson 17: Introduction to Socratic Education Part 1

### Outline:

#### Introduction to Socratic Discussion

##### Part 1: The Socratic Tradition

- Plato
  - 428-348 BC
  - Remarkable Athenian philosopher
  - Student of Socrates
  - He recorded over thirty dialogues featuring Socrates.
- Socrates
  - 470-399 BC
  - Teacher of Plato
  - He did not write anything down.
  - Plato recorded Socrates in action, teaching
  - Who is the real Socrates? Early dialogues are closer to what Socrates would have said and done.
- Never has a teacher such a student, and never a student such a teacher.

Don't I already know how to lead a discussion?

- Discuss: to consider or examine by argument, comment, etc.; talk over or write about, especially to explore solutions; debate.
- *Discussus* (Latin root): struck asunder, shaken, shattered

“Discussion”	Socratic Discussion
Random	Telos/Purposeful
Whim	Prepared
Associative	Deliberate
Ad hoc	Informed
Display	Discover
Bull Session	Truth-Seeking
Expressive	Reflective
Wind-Blown	Disciplined
Student Let	Teacher-led
Stream of thought	Pauses and Silence
Re-cast Lecture	Exploration with Explanation



Student centered	Text-centered
Individualistic	Communal

### Euthyphro

- Euthyphro is on his way to prosecute his father for killing a slave. He bumps into Socrates. Socrates has been charged with impiety.
- Socrates asks Euthyphro about impiety.
- **Eusebia (Greek):** reverence towards the gods or parents, piety, religion; filial respect, loyalty
- **Pius/Pieta (Latin):** dutiful, conscientious, godly, holy, filial, affectionate, patriotic, good, upright
- What is piety? Prosecuting those who commit an injustice.
- What is piety? Piety is what's loved by the gods.
  - Socrates ask questions, wonders, pauses, and thinks.
  - How is it that the gods love different things?
- What is piety? What all the gods love.
  - Socrates asks about what the gods love.
  - Is the pious loved by the gods because it is already pious or is it pious because it is loved?
  - On the other hand, what's god-loved is loved – that is to say god-loved – because the gods loved it?
  - Then the god-loved is not what's pious, Euthyphro, nor is the pious what's god-loved, as you claim, but one differs from the other... What explains it being loved, however, you still haven't said...
  - We are seeking truth and seeking to clarify what has been said. Sometimes we lack unity and clarity because we have not defined things.
  - But Socrates, I have no way of telling you what I have in mind. For whatever proposals we put forward keep moving around and won't stay put.
- Chesterton
  - Rational optimism leads to stagnation: it is irrational optimism that leads to reform. Let me explain once more the parallel of patriotism. The man who is most likely to ruin the place he loves is exactly the man who loves it with a reason. The man who will improve the place is the man who loves it without reason. If a man loves some feature of Pimlico (which seems unlikely), he may find himself defending that feature against Pimlico itself. But if he simply loves Pimlico itself, he may lay it waste and turn it into the New Jerusalem. I do not deny that reform may be excessive; I only say that it is the mystic patriot who reforms. *Orthodoxy*, The Flag of the World



- If you love your town before it is lovely, then you will make it lovely. You see the potential in it before others would find it lovely.
- We bring authors from different times and places and books together to look at a common question or theme.
- What is piety? The pious is part of the just.
  - If the pious is part of the just, we must, it seems, find out what part of the just the pious is...
  - Euthyphro: that part that tends to the gods
  - Socrates: Does tending to the gods then make the gods better?
  - Euthyphro: No, by Zeus!
- Truth
  - I don't prefer anything, if it isn't true.
  - There is a commitment to seeking out what is true.
- Truth?
  - The turn toward the Logos and Aletheia (Greek for truth)
  - The turn toward Christos the Logos: Christological Turn
  - What does the use of reason in the natural world reveal about piety? In light of the revelation of Christ, what is piety?

## What is Piety?

- In the light of Christ the Logos made flesh.
- What Christ loves?
- Loving the things that are lovely?
- Loving Christ and what Christ loves?
- Ordering our loves?
- Scriptural testimony?
- Church fathers, Christian writers?

## Socratic Irony

- Revealing Ignorance
- Use of the Elenchus (Refutation)
- The Examination
- The Awakening, The Hunger

## Socratic Birth-Giving

- *Maius, Maieutic* (Midwife, Midwifery)
- Opening up to truth
- Seeking it as one's own
- Finding it; discovery, birth

## Natural Revelation/Special Revelation

- Christ the Teacher
- Christ the Ideal Man and Logos made flesh



- Christ the fulfillment of pagan learning and philosophy
- Christ the Truth, Christ the way

## Jesus as Semi-Socratic

- Parables
- Questions
- Actions
- Quicker to the quick...with good reason
- We can learn to ask the questions that get to the heart of a matter. This will involve preparation, thought, reflection, deep reading, note-taking, and planning.

## The Socratic Seminar: Generic

- The Socratic seminar is a formal discussion, based on a text, in which the leader asks open-ended questions. Within the context of the discussion students listen closely to the comments of others, thinking critically for themselves, and articulate their own thoughts and their responses to the thoughts of others. They learn to work cooperatively and to question intelligently and civilly.

## The Socratic Seminar: CCE

- A Socratic seminar is a communal search for truth, in the light of Christ the Truth, generally led by a wise teacher with a well-furnished mind, centered around a great text and ideally around a beautiful table. Students, humbled before a text, ask questions of it and one another, encountering their own ignorance, growing in wonder, seeking and gradually finding insights into the true, good, and beautiful, and so growing in wisdom and virtue.