



Theology of Beauty and Imagination: A Guide to Wonder with Dr. Junius Johnson

Lesson 7: Beauty in the Classroom

Outline:

The heart of pedagogy is romance.

- We will lead children by their loves.
- Love begins with captivation, progresses through admiration and meditation to desire and finds its consummation in union. Romance is the course of being drawn. It begins at pursuit.
- The students ought to be romanced by the subject, not the teacher. The teacher must be ever decreasing (without disappearing) so the student's heart may be free to enter into the romance of learning.
- It is essential that the student become a self-sustaining learner (internally driven rather than externally compelled).
- There is no romance (and therefore no love) apart from the perception of beauty. The first moment of captivation is the recognition of something as beautiful.
- Begin the syllabus with something beautiful, heroic, and captivating. Cast a vision for students. The students need to be able to see the beauty in the various aspects of the course.
- **What we are doing is brokering an encounter with God. We've turned learning into a species of loving God.**

A medieval model for education (reduction):

- Reduction means leading back.
- Bonaventure: Reduction of the Arts of Theology
 - All of the disciplines of human learning are grounded in theology.
 - We are to lead our students back to the source of all things.
 - This is an image of repentance (un-walking all that has been walked).
- The student encounters something in a text. The teacher guides to students to see the beauty in the text. Then, the teacher guides the students to specify what they find beautiful, and now reduction begins. The story is telling us more about the ultimate reality.
- Reduction is not destructive.
 - We do not get rid of the Iliad.
 - Disappearance is not the dynamic of beauty.



- It would be tedious to constantly perform reduction on everything. Done judiciously at opportune moments, reduction will convey to students that what you do sometimes could be done at all times.

The Teacher

- The teacher can and should be experienced by the students as beautiful.
- The beauty of the teacher is not in the way his or her external appearance; it is in the way he or she is able to be a visible image of the attributes of God. You are to always try to do this in ways the students can follow.
- Preaching the Gospel is always a translation project. Teaching is the same way.
 - How do I say these things truthfully in a way that can be understood by the students?
 - You have to deliver the message, not just what the students like.
- It is Christ who is offered to us for imitation.
 - Let them see power that empties itself.
 - Let them see a judgement that is constantly giving way to mercy.
 - Let them see judgement that is itself mercy.
 - Model humility. This deepens the respect of the student for the teacher. Own a mistake.
 - Let them see a love willing to sacrifice itself on their behalf, but when it is time for the student to let go it forces them to move on.
 - You are beautiful as you are.
 - Be present so that the students can see you.
 - Set the student on a journey to see themselves as beautiful.