



## Urban Classical Education with Russ Gregg

### Lesson 6: Classical Education – A Liberating Education for All Children

#### Outline:

##### Introduction

- The “poisoning” of our schools: What Dorothy Sayers and C. S. Lewis (in *The Abolition of Man*) saw in 1943, we are seeing today—the deterioration of basic intellectual skills and the disappearance of transcendent, objective value and truth. Instead we have subjectivism and diminishing intellectual skill, accompanied by diminishing virtue.

##### Two Concepts of Liberty

- There are two concepts of liberty—negative and positive. See Os Guinness’s book, *A Free People’s Suicide*.
- Negative freedom is freedom from—freedom from any kind of interference or constraint
- Positive freedom is freedom for—freedom for excellence according to the objective vision and natural law ideals that define excellence
- Liberty has been exchanged for license
- Classical education is desirable for all citizens for three reasons: 1) First, a classical education is necessary for all because without virtue there can be no true, personal freedom. 2) Second, a classical education is necessary for all because democracy is unsustainable apart from an education in virtue for all citizens. 3) Finally, a classical education is necessary for all because life is more than earning a living; life is ultimately for knowing and glorifying and enjoying God.

##### Freedom to Practice the Good

- There is a relationship between moral virtue and freedom. How can we reform our actions so that they better align with the good?
- C.S. Lewis’ treatise on education, *The Abolition of Man*, once again helps us understand the problem. Lewis explains that our appetites and desires (our “belly”) need to be under the control of reason (our “head”) if we are to live a free and well-ordered life. But given the strength of our appetites, reason by itself is insufficient to control them. The head thus needs “the chest” to govern the belly. Our heart is the seat of right affections trained by habit and the spirit to pursue virtue. The heart, or “the chest” in Lewis’ words, is the



indispensable liaison officer between the mind and body and is therefore the right and proper focus of classical education.

- David Hicks writes similarly in *Norms and Nobility*, “The purpose of classical education is not the assimilation of facts or the retention of information, but the habituation of the mind and body to will and act in accordance with what one knows.” A man cannot be said to be free if he doesn’t know and love the true, the good, and the beautiful. And neither can he be free if he doesn’t have the trained habits of the heart necessary to do the right thing.

### Freedom to Serve Others

- Is classical education the best preparation for exercising man’s duty to his fellow man?
- Os Guinness writes that, “Only virtue can supply the self-restraint that is the indispensable requirement for liberty. The self-government of a free republic has to rest on the self-government of free citizens, for only those who can govern themselves as individuals can govern themselves as a people. Leadership without character, business without ethics, and science without human values—in short, freedom without virtue—will bring the republic to its knees.”
- David Hicks puts it brilliantly when arguing the democratic logic of extending classical education to all the masses in *Norms and Nobility*. He says, “The logic of democracy demands that everyone be educated as members of an elite. Each student in a democracy must be educated as an aristocrat.
- Once again Guinness concludes, “The liberty of the American republic is not self-sustaining, and it needs a safeguard beyond that of the Constitution and its separation of powers. But what does it take to turn parchment barriers into living bulwarks? What is the catalyst that can bond together the external laws of the Constitution with the internal commitments and duties of citizens—rulers no less than ruled? The framers’ answer was to understand, cultivate and transmit ...the habits of the heart that sustained the citizens and the republic alike. That is true liberal education or paideia. There is simply no schooling and no apprenticeship that is more challenging yet more fruitful than that. Freedom requires virtue, which in turn requires faith of some sort, which in turn requires freedom. Only so can a free people hope to remain ‘free always.’” Guinness, *A Free People’s Suicide*, p.129.

### Freedom to Worship God

- Only and education in truth, goodness, and beauty can prepare one to truly know and enjoy the glory of God to the fullest. A classical education is designed to bring to light the glory of God hidden in creation.
- **Calling all seers:** All persons agree that the ultimate goal of education is preparation for life. Classical, Christian education presupposes that the ultimate goal of life is the worship of God. All lesser ends will malfunction and fail and ultimately enslave those who submit to its impoverishing paradigms. In *The Talented Tenth*, W.E.B. Du Bois’ 1903 prescription for the



education of African-Americans rising out of slavery, he said, “Now the training of men is a difficult and intricate task. Its technique is a matter for educational experts, but its object is for the vision of seers. If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men. Men we shall have only as we make manhood the object of the work of the schools—intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world that was and is, and of the relation of men to it—this is the curriculum of that Higher Education which must underlie true life. On this foundation we may build bread winning, skill of hand and quickness of brain, with never a fear lest the child and man mistake the means of living for the object of life.”