

The Classical Imagination:
The How, What, and Why of Classical Education

Craig Hefner
Craig.Hefner@covenantschoolwv.org

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And to know the place for the first time
-T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets*

Three Ways to Define Classical Education

Historically

History of Classical School Institutions: 1980, Cair Paravel Latin School; 1981, Logos School; 1991, Wilson writes *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*; 1994, ACCS; 1995, SCL; 1996, Circe.

Evangelicalism in the US: 1910-1915, "The Fundamentalists" Pamphlets; 1925, Scopes Trial; 1949-1954, Billy Graham Crusades; 1991, Mark Noll's *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*.

Pedagogically

Classical Ed has gone through 4 generations of pedagogical development: (1) Sayers and the Trivium (1992-2000); (2) Integration and the Great Books (2000-2008), (3) Virtue and Training the Affections (2008-2018), and (4) Seven Arts with Three Spheres of Knowledge (2018-Present).

Philosophically

The goal of classical education is the cultivation of an imagination in our students that is set free from the captivity to our time and place by means of the liberal arts and great books.

The Classical Imagination in the Great Tradition

Plato's' Allegory of the Cave

"Released from these chains and these misconceptions. What do you think his reaction would be if someone informed him that everything he had formerly known was illusion and delusion, but that now he was a few steps closer to reality, oriented now toward things that were more authentic, and able to see more truly?"


C.S Lewis

"In actual fact Gaius and Titius will be found to hold, with complete uncritical dogmatism, the whole system of values which happened to be in vogue among moderately educated young men of the professional classes during the period between the two wars."

T.S. Eliot

"The historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence... This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity."

The Modern Imagination

<i>Feature of Modernity</i>	<i>Philosophy</i>	<i>Education</i>
Progress	<p>“The history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom.”</p> <p>-G.W.F Hegel, <i>Philosophy of History</i></p>	<p>Forged in Progress. We are focused on the impact and the relentless pursuit of change, for good...We invent the paths of the future and forge ahead.”</p> <p>-University of Pittsburgh</p>
Certainty	<p>“I think, therefore, I am” -René Descartes, <i>Meditations</i></p>	<p>It is appropriate for the teacher to express in this regard, “I understand that you may have personal reservations about accepting this scientific evidence, but it is scientific knowledge about which there is no reasonable doubt.</p> <p>-“Science Framework” issued in 1989 by the State of California</p>
Individuality	<p>“All I need do, as I have done up until now, is to look inside myself”</p> <p>-Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>Confessions</i></p>	
Control	<p>“People were ready to have even their appetites controlled then. Anything for a quiet life. We’ve gone on controlling ever since. It hasn’t been very good for truth, of course. But it’s been very good for happiness.</p> <p>-Mustapha Mond, Resident World Controller for Western Europe, in Aldous Huxley’s <i>Brave New World</i>.</p>	<p>“We can raise the achievement of all our students and eliminate racial disparities”</p> <p>-Pittsburgh Public Schools</p>

The Classical Imagination

How: The Liberal Arts and the Great Books

What: Objective Reality

Why: To be set free from imaginative captivity to our time and place